

THE KALAMA AWAKENING

by

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FADE IN:

INT. RUSTIC HALL, USA - NIGHT

A rose aura glows around the distinguished features of ARIYA VASUKI, 52, as a spotlight shines on the portrait, his name displayed below it. His eyes sparkle above his graying beard, his spell seems tangible even from the painting.

Candles flicker. Incense smoke rises with the deep throbbing NOTES of the Australian Aboriginal instrument, a DIDGERIDOO.

Unique with his shaven head, brown pants and saffron shirt, an Australian man, KANUKA, 40, plays the didgeridoo in the centre of Vasuki's thirty disciples. Other men wear maroon pants, white shirts. Flowing Indian outfits adorn the women.

CRYSTAL, 34, nose stud, beads, harmonizes with a DULCIMER. Everyone CHANTS repeatedly and appears to be in a trance.

DISCIPLES

Ariya Vasuki, Ariya Vasuki...

SILENCE. ARUN, 36, shoulder length hair cascading in soft ringlets, takes the hand of a nervous, striking blonde, JULIE, 22, and they kneel in front of Kanuka.

KANUKA

Julie, are you ready to devote yourself to Master Vasuki?

Julie places her palms together in a prayer devotion, bows her head in assent. Crystal hands Kanuka beads, which he puts over Julie's head.

KANUKA

Julie, you are now, "Sharini",  
Ariya Vasuki's newest devotee.  
(he chants)  
Sharini, Sharini, Sharini...

CROWD

Sharini, Sharini, Sharini...

EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

Julie and Arun stroll to a rustic wooden cabin.

JULIE

Sharini, the Earth. Arun, the Sun.  
Perfect.

ARUN

When the Sun and the Earth unite...

JULIE  
...Earth transforms into heaven.

Against a backdrop of stars, they kiss.

INT. RUSTIC CABIN - NIGHT

Julie and Arun lie naked under a sheet. Candlelight illuminates Vasuki's smiling face on a DVD case.

VASUKI (V.O.)  
With love and trust we experience  
the sacred union.

Music with SITARS. Julie opens her eyes, swoons.

JULIE  
Arun, Vasuki's teachings penetrate  
to the very center of my being.

Arun rolls on his side, strokes her face.

ARUN  
Connected to the energy center, we  
come close to the divine.

Julie sighs, shivers. The music stops.

JULIE  
How wonderful that an enlightened  
being exists in the world.

EXT. CROWDED SIDEWALK, INDIA - DAY

VASUKI walks along in flowing robes. Attendants follow. Indians strain to be near him. Vasuki touches heads, mumbles prayers. Faces convey venerated bliss.

A small BOY, 10, dirty, tattered clothes, endeavors to reach Vasuki. Two well-dressed, male TEENAGERS block him.

OLDER TEENAGER  
(in Hindi,  
subtitled)  
Outcaste. Stay away.

They poke fingers through his clothes and snicker. The boy tries to slip away. They obstruct and mock him. His distress transforms to determination. The boy crouches down, feigns subjugation. The teenagers smile smugly.

YOUNGER TEENAGER  
(in Hindi,  
subtitled)  
Keep your place, runt.

The boy tries to zip between their legs. They quickly squeeze him in a vice like leg grip. He YELPS.

Vasuki stops, scans the crowd. He sees the boy's straining face, eyes wide in devotion, and the teenagers' taunts. Vasuki whispers to the people in front. They move aside.

Vasuki places his hand on the nervous, older teenager's shoulder, nods. The teenagers release the boy, who scrambles to kiss Vasuki's feet. Vasuki touches the boy's head, intones a prayer, helps him up.

Holding the boy's hand, they walk away together. Enthralled, the boy looks up at Vasuki, who smiles.

EXT - BEACH - DAY

Vasuki smiles on the cover of his book: "LOVE IS THE WAY" that Julie reads. Arun lays next to her. He sits up, strokes her hair.

ARUN

Reading is never the same as  
experience. Let's go to India.

JULIE

Next summer. I have Grad school.

ARUN

What's more important?

Julie smiles, kisses him.

JULIE

Teach me everything Vasuki taught  
you... and more.

ARUN

The earth will never catch up with  
the sun.

He springs up, darts off, looks back playfully. Julie sprints after him, dives, grabs his ankles. He tumbles to the soft sand, laughing.

ARUN

Wow. Good move. Have you been  
taking Kung Fu lessons?

They laugh.

EXT. KUNG FU SCHOOL, THAILAND - DAY

A Thai MAN, in a Kung Fu outfit, smashes onto the mat.

He gets up, bows to a well built, Western man, SAGE, 35, ponytail, Fu Manchu moustache, Kung Fu outfit.

The Thai moves to the edge of the open-sided, Thai style hall, set on a hillside with a magnificent view to the sea.

Four Westerners and two Thai men stand ready. Sage nods to a tall Westerner, NAT, 32, and a stocky Westerner.

A buxom blonde, JASMINE, 30, and a svelte brunette, AMBER, 28, in bikini tops, low slung sarongs, sashay to the edge of the Hall.

The two men lunge at Sage. In lightening speed, Sage sends them crashing down. They struggle up, bow.

Jasmine gazes at Sage with longing, whispers to Amber.

JASMINE

What a hunk!

(she giggles)

But I'm sure I'd end up on top.

Please get Nat to help.

Session finished. The men bow, relax.

AMBER

Nat, surf's up. Want to ride... the waves?

All the men, except Sage, look over to the women with interest. Sage stacks the mats. Nat grins.

NAT

When I take off my clothes.

AMBER

Bring your cute master, too. The way he moves his body, I'm sure he's a master of... other moves.

The other men snicker, eye the women as they leave. Jasmine looks seductively at an indifferent Sage. Nat encourages Sage, who dissents, walks to an office near the back.

Amber shoots a silent command to Nat. He catches up to Sage.

NAT

Hey Sage, all work no play... she looks hot.

SAGE

Not my type. And blonde.

NAT

You're too focused and serious -  
loosen up.

Sage enters the office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He walks over to the desk, rips open a letter.

NAT

It's been three years. Aren't you  
over her yet?

Sage glances at him, reads the letter.

Nat looks up to a shelf at a Buddha statue and over to a  
portrait of a saffron-robed Monk, meditating.

NAT

You're not a Monk. Have some fun.  
Read a great book - "Love is the  
Way" by an Indian Guru--

Sage throws down the letter.

SAGE

Vasuki, the King of snakes.

NAT

Hey, it's good stuff. How would you  
know? You met Vasuki?

Sage's eyes squint, he nods.

INT. ARUN'S BMW SPORTSCAR - DAY

Julie reads Vasuki's book as Arun drives past a sign,  
WELCOME TO SAN DIEGO. He exits into a street lined with  
stately homes. Julie glances out, throws the book down.

She grabs her beads, raises them almost off her head. With  
authority, Arun coughs. She lets them go, slumps.

ARUN

Why not give your Mom the book?

Julie brightens, picks up the book. Arun pulls up in the  
spacious grounds of Julie's home.

ARUN

Might get past her aversion to me.

JULIE

I want to live my life from the  
heart, not the head.

ARUN

From the heart? So, when is the Sun  
going to shine on the Earth at  
night, every night?

JULIE

You serious? No way she'd pay for  
Grad school if we live togeth--

His lips prevent her finishing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Immaculately tidy, a show piece living room where nothing is  
out of place.

Julie's mother, a slim, tight-lipped woman, YVONNE, 50,  
psychologist, reads an online article.

Headlines: "MILLIONAIRE WIDOWER LEAVES ESTATE TO YOUNG  
MASSEUSE. FAMILY SUSPECTS FOUL PLAY."

FOOTSTEPS, a door OPENS. Wearing her backpack, a shining  
Julie bounces in. Yvonne gives her a hug.

YVONNE

Looks like you had a good vacation.

JULIE

Heaven on Earth. I am Earth. And  
the Sun revolves around me. And I,  
the Earth, revolve around the Sun.

YVONNE

You are the Earth?

Julie touches her beads tenderly.

JULIE

I am Sharini. I've been initiated  
and am now, Sharini.

Yvonne's smile disappears.

JULIE

Vasuki is enlightened.

YVONNE

Julie, you're so swayed by  
appearances.

JULIE

Stop it! I'm not one of your patients. How many times--

YVONNE

Do you see Vasuki clearly as he is, or simply your own projected longings?

Julie grabs a cushion, scrunches it, throws it down.

JULIE

Don't stereotype me! You don't have to be suffering to be interested in spiritual meaning.

Without blinking an eye, Yvonne picks up the cushion, plumps it up, places it neatly back on the couch.

YVONNE

Please be careful. Do you really believe Vasuki can release you from the "mundane"?

JULIE

The human potential is longing to be realized, not psychoanalyzed.

Julie reaches in her bag, pulls out Vasuki's book.

JULIE

Besides, I've read Vasuki's books, you haven't. Don't let yourself be so swayed by appearances. It's called prejudice.

YVONNE

Julie, I--

Julie covers her face with the book.

JULIE

Not until you read the book.

Julie drops the book on the coffee table, strides off.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ponytail swinging, Julie jogs with ANGEL, her Collie. Angel stops short, jerking the leash.

JULIE

What is it, Angel?



Angel scurries behind a bush where a bird struggles to fly.  
Julie scoops the bird up, inspects the wing.

JULIE  
It's not broken. You'll be flying  
again in no time.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Below a vine-covered pagoda, the bandaged bird drinks from a bowl of water. Julie strokes Angel's tummy with her foot as she pours soymilk on muesli. A fan blows her hair back. Yvonne arrives with coffee. Julie focuses on her muesli.

YVONNE  
Julie, I've been thinking...

JULIE  
I feel--

YVONNE  
...about the human potential.

Julie relaxes.

YVONNE  
So, I want you to transfer to a  
better college.

JULIE  
I bet it's far away from the Sun.

YVONNE  
I called the head of the department  
at my old college in Connecticut.  
They're so keen to accept you,  
they've even offered a scholarship.

JULIE  
Snow clouds are gathering.

Julie turns off the fan, shivers.

YVONNE  
Naturally with the school term so  
close to beginning, you'll have to  
go immediately to settle in.

Julie stares at her mother. Eyes glistening, she springs up.

YVONNE  
Your breakfast.

JULIE

I'm freezing. Need to soak in some warm sunrays.

Julie speeds off. Perplexed, Yvonne turns on the fan.

EXT. LARGE TEMPLE, THAILAND - NIGHT

Dead leaves swirl around the peaked roof temple, tree branches sway. Lightning flashes. Rain pelts down.

INT. LARGE TEMPLE, THAILAND - NIGHT

Candlelight illuminates a Buddha statue. Incense smoke rises. Five Thai Buddhist MONKS, shaved heads, saffron robes, meditate. Nearest the Buddha, AJAHN PANYA, 65, the Monk in the picture from Sage's office, sits serenely.

Sage and a white-clothed, shaven-headed, Western man, JAY, 40, sit nearby, their faces peaceful.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A tear rolls down Julie's cheek as she sits slumped on a bench and watches beaming couples stroll by.

Arun hastens along the path. Julie wipes her eyes quickly, jumps up. He twirls her around.

ARUN

Sharini, my Earth woman.

JULIE

Arun, my Sun God.

He notices her red eyes.

ARUN

It's been raining.

JULIE

No, a blizzard.

ARUN

Best thing I ever did was to quit the family company and become a free lancer. Freedom.

Julie looks at him admiringly, sighs.

ARUN

Yeah, I can't be bought. Honey, you're getting stronger, too.

Arun whisks out a jewelry case, opens it. A gold necklace. Delicate wavy lines emanate from a solid gold circle giving the impression of the sun.

JULIE

The sun. Warm, golden sunrays.

Arun clips it on her. She throws herself into his arms.

ARUN

To be free, you need courage.

JULIE

She's my only family.

ARUN

You have me.

Subdued, they walk silently along the path. Heads of men and women turn as they pass, drawn to this striking pair.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Downcast, Julie searches Yvonne's face as Yvonne hands Vasuki's book to her.

YVONNE

Eastern Philosophy is exotic. But, Vasuki, well honestly, Julie, he comes across to me as insincere and manipulative.

JULIE

Manipulation is certainly your field of expertise more than mine.

Yvonne smiles curtly, walks to a counter stacked with salad vegetable, tears lettuce leaves into a wooden salad bowl.

JULIE

It's always been my dream to become a Doctor of Philosophy.

YVONNE

I found you a place just a walk from campus.

JULIE

But dreams change. We're leaving for Thailand and India next week to go practice with Vasuki.

Yvonne knocks the bowl to the floor, stands frozen. Julie retrieves it. Yvonne resumes tearing lettuce.

JULIE

Arun's so sensitive and spiritual.  
You just don't understand him.

Yvonne energetically rips the heart of the lettuce apart.

YVONNE

Julie, come back down to earth.  
Study first. There'll be plenty of  
time to travel later.

JULIE

You'll never give up.

Yvonne's eyes well with tears. Julie storms out.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julie bursts into her world of tidy disarray, a "lived in" room. Cushions, open books lie scattered on the floor.

A framed Diploma: "BACHELOR OF ARTS, MAJOR-PHILOSOPHY, MINOR-ART, JULIE SHORBERG" hangs on one wall. Vasuki's portrait presides over her desk. Ethereal paintings, signed by Julie, grace the rest of the walls.

She walks to an easel and soaks in her uncompleted painting of a white dove, flying up towards clouds.

YVONNE (O.S.)

Life isn't only about dreams.

Behind Julie, Yvonne stares at the painting, agape.

Julie grabs a book, hugs it.

JULIE

Nor is it about your reality. Who  
remembers those who didn't have the  
courage to dream?

YVONNE

When I was young I thought--

Julie spins around. She stares at her mother intensely.

JULIE

So your dreams didn't come true.  
Does that give you the right to try  
to take away mine - all my life?

She throws the book on the bed. It lands face up. The title,  
"THE SAGES OF THE EAST."

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOK, THAILAND - DAY

A rainbow arches over the valley. Sunshine shimmers on tree leaves heavy with moisture. Ajahn Panya sits with Sage on a concrete chair soaking in the expansive view.

AJAHN PANYA

Like a flash of lightning in the summer sky, a bubble and a dream is human life.

SAGE

And those we love can die young.

Ajahn Panya looks at Sage compassionately.

AJAHN PANYA

Even though suffering exists there is a path that leads to the ending of it within ourselves.

SAGE

Not so easy to walk at times.

AJAHN PANYA

Yes, we need courage to uncover our vast human potential.

SAGE

And the courage to be different.

AJAHN PANYA

True.

SAGE

It can be lonely. People don't understand me. Think I'm too serious.

Ajahn Panya sweeps his hand towards the valley.

AJAHN PANYA

Those who have never seen the view from the mountain, know nothing of its beauty.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julie drops "SAGES OF THE EAST" near a huge pile of clothes, which she stuffs into a large backpack. Those she doesn't want, land on the floor. She slips in Vasuki's book.

Yvonne enters. She nervously holds a small leaflet book.

YVONNE  
Mali... gave me this.

Yvonne gauges Julie's reactions. Julie stops packing.

YVONNE  
Eastern philosophy... I like it.

Julie takes the booklet. Yvonne smiles.

The title reads, THE KALAMA SUTTA. Julie feigns interest.

JULIE  
Thanks, Mom. Looks interesting.

Yvonne leaves. Julie tosses the book on the floor, tenderly picks up a photo of her with Arun.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Arun and Julie walk arm in arm towards a gate marked BANGKOK. She points. He nods. She gives him an excited hug. He picks her up, twirls her around.

EXT. PASSENGER BOAT, THAILAND - DAY

Julie and Arun sit on the windswept deck of the THAILAND ISLAND TOUR, which cuts through an aqua sea, advances towards a mountainous island, ringed with white beaches.

A long-haired, Thai man, POMME, 30, climbs up from below, carrying a wooden birdcage, which houses a beautiful bird. He sets the cage down. The bird SINGS melodiously. Julie stares at it, shakes her head sadly.

JULIE  
Why is the bird in such a small cage? Why don't you let it free?

POMME  
Oh, very rare bird, very beautiful. I set it free, others will cage it. It's bird's Karma.

JULIE  
I guess it's bad Karma to be so beautiful and rare.

A flock of plain white birds fly overhead. Julie gazes at them as they soar off toward a small temple, with a Pagoda styled roof, in the foothills of the island.

EXT. HILLSIDE MONASTERY - DAWN

Darkness, a vibrating BELL echoes.

Silence, another gong as the day brightens showing the small temple. The light from the rising sun flashes off the mirror and golden tiles of the roof. On a higher slope is a larger temple.

The bell stops. The sound of Monks CHANTING.

Sage meditates on sand surrounding the small temple. White birds land around him. One jumps into his lap.

EXT. PARADISE BEACH BUNGALOWS - DAWN

Julie hurries off her verandah, gazes up at the temple, rapt, breathes in the atmosphere. She races back.

INT. ARUN AND JULIE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Julie bursts in just as Arun puts a pillow over his head.

JULIE

Arun, did you hear the bell? The chanting is so exotic. Come--

ARUN

Stupid gong. Who wants to wake up!

EXT. HILLSIDE MONASTERY - DAY

Five Buddhist Monks arrange their robes, pick up black bowls and gracefully, single file, walk past a Buddha statue, down the road and disappear into the mist.

EXT. PARADISE BUNGALOWS' RESTAURANT - DAY

Pomme's bird SINGS in an open-sided, thatched restaurant, on the beachside. Pomme gives Arun a mushroom. He eats it.

Julie, dripping wet, navel stud, tiny bikini, strolls up from the sea. She wraps on a sarong, walks to them.

Pomme gives her a mushroom. She stares at it, looks at Arun.

JULIE

You sure it's okay?

ARUN

Pomme knows. He lives here.

Pomme downs one. Julie wavers. Arun slips his arm around her, whispers in her ear. She nibbles.

EXT. ROAD TO MONASTERY - DAY

Sage hikes up a steep road, flanked by tropical forest.

Ajahn Panya with four other monks walk mindfully down the hill. Sage "wais" them by putting his palms together, prayer-like to his face. They stop.

AJAHN PANYA

There are funeral ceremonies until  
the night before I leave for  
Bodhgaya. How about Wednesday?

SAGE

Fine, thank you, Ajahn Panya.

They move aside as a car approaches uphill. Pomme, driving the car, waves. Julie and Arun, squished beside Pomme, eyes wide, also wave as they pass. The car weaves precariously.

EXT. MONASTERY DINING HALL - DUSK

Sprawled on the floor, Pomme shakes in convulsions. Jay takes his pulse. Sage appears beside him.

JAY

Jeez, probably ate bad mushrooms.  
Pulse is okay, but I better get him  
to hospital.

SAGE

What about the two Westerners?

JAY

Spacey - headed for the lookout. No  
telling how much they ate.

Sage speeds off.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH - DUSK

An eerie light casts shadows across a steep, narrow path. The bad mushrooms take effect on Arun and Julie. Arun trips on a rock.

JULIE (O.S.)

Arun, Arun, where are you?

He staggers up, spins around.

ARUN

Here, Sharini, come on.

JULIE (O.S.)

My legs are rubber, help me.

Arun back tracks as Julie lurches, falls. He hugs her.



JULIE  
We're lost!

ARUN  
No, no, it's okay, honey.

JULIE  
My head hurts. It's getting dark.

Arun fumbles in his small backpack, pulls out two Maglites.

ARUN  
Got flashlights.

Arun hands one to Julie. SCREECH of fighting CATS. They jump up as two cats zip by.

Julie spotlights a grotesque dragon on a Spirit House and gasps. Arun holds her hand. They stumble on.

Arun's backpack lies abandoned.

Gnarled tree trunks look like hideous faces. An iridescent green snake hangs from a branch. Julie grips Arun's arm. A bat swoops. They duck. It misses Julie's face by inches.

JULIE  
Ahhh! What's that?

ARUN  
It's okay... come on.

The path narrows. Arun takes the lead.

A disorientated Julie watches Arun stumble off. She whimpers, runs, trips. She panics, tries to yell but no words come out. Arun's light disappears.

EXT. FORK IN THE PATH - CONTINUOUS

Arun, in a stupor, turns right at a fork in the path. He heads into a Thai cemetery. Arun's light beam flashes on tiled domes and points of pagoda tombs. DOGS bark. He runs.

EXT. FORK IN THE PATH - NIGHT

Julie stumbles to the fork, she turns left, crumples, unconscious.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH - NIGHT

A flashlight beam advances, spotlights the backpack. A hand scoops it up.

INT. ARUN AND JULIE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Arun's Maglite beam swings wildly as he staggers. He collapses on the bed.

EXT. FORK IN THE PATH - NIGHT

A flashlight spotlights the unconscious Julie. A hand feels for a pulse. Arms encircle her, pick her up.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Hanging bottles feed liquid into an unconscious Julie's arm through intravenous tubes. A Thai DOCTOR walks over to a concerned Sage.

DOCTOR  
(in Thai, subtitled)  
Not sure she will see.

Somber, Sage holds Julie's hand.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Sage sleeps slumped in a chair. Julie's eyes open. Fearful, she tries to rise, but can't - no strength.

JULIE  
Arun! Where, I can't see!

Sage jolts awake, takes her hand gently, speaks soothingly.

SAGE  
No, I'm Sage. I found you in the  
jungle. You're in the hospital.  
Rest, Julie.

Sage picks up one of two American passports on the bedside table, opens it to Arun's photo.

SAGE  
If Arun's name is really Robert...  
who knows where he is.

She struggles up, but passes out.

SAGE  
Nurse!

A nurse hurries in, takes Julie's pulse. Sage watches.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Julie lies asleep. She opens her eyes, turns her head to see the blurred outline of an empty seat. She scans the room,

pauses at a wavy outline of Sage who meditates on the floor. He comes in and out of focus.

Julie closes her eyes, breathes deeply, opens them. Sage gradually comes into focus - a tranquil face, a still form. Mesmerized, Julie's eyes water.

Sage opens his eyes, sees her tender face. He springs up.

SAGE  
Hey, you okay?

JULIE  
I am now. I can see you. Sage?

Sage takes her hand, smiles.

SAGE  
Yeah, good.

INT. ARUN AND JULIE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Arun lies, zonked. He opens his eyes, looks around, disorientated. He glances beside him.

ARUN  
Sharini!

He jumps up, frantically searches.

ARUN  
Shit!

He staggers, grabs his head in pain, leans against a wall. Gathering his energy, he bolts out in a frenzy.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Sage buys a flower necklace with small white flowers, interspersed with purple orchids, from a sidewalk vendor.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sage slips the necklace over Julie's head. She hugs him and smiles shyly.

JULIE  
Thank you. It's beautiful. I'm so sorry for bothering you. I didn't really want to eat the mushrooms. Arun said it'd be okay.

SAGE  
No problem.

JULIE

Is Sage your spiritual name?

SAGE

Nickname. My buddy, Nat, read a book and thought I fit the bill. It stuck. Now he complains. Anyway, why does Robert call himself, Arun?

JULIE

It's his spiritual name.

SAGE

Who's his teacher?

JULIE

Our teacher is the enlightened master, Ariya Vasuki.

Sage flinches.

JULIE

His teachings transport me to a higher level of inner joy.

SAGE

How'd you become interested in Vasuki?

JULIE

Eastern philosophy was my favorite subject at college... gives so many answers to this crazy world. I met Arun at my yoga class. Now we're going to India to meet Vasuki.

SAGE

So why'd you come to Thailand?

JULIE

Arun wanted a beach vacation before traveling to India. I read a great book, "The Sages of the...

Embarrassed, Julie glances at Sage, who smiles.

SAGE

...East." Yes.

JULIE

Your name came from that book! Wow, is that--

SAGE  
Your good Karma. So how's Crystal  
and Kanuka these days?

JULIE  
How do you know them?

INT. RUSTIC HALL, 2005 - NIGHT - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

A younger Sage sits with twenty people. All have euphoric faces and hold silver goblets. Crystal, opposite Sage, gazes at him.

Kanuka, long hair, plays the DIDGERIDOO. A woman harmonizes with a DULCIMER. A man beats a DRUM as an Indian man, NAGA, 41, shaven head, white clothes, enters, sits on a higher chair. The music stops. Naga enters a trance.

NAGA  
I've contacted Vasuki. The power is strong.

Sage opens his eyes to see Crystal's intensity.

NAGA  
Each of us has shared many lives together, each of us meet again in this life to learn.

Light flashes off Crystal's diamond nose stud.

Sage sees a VISION of a temple with light flashing off mirror tiles of a pagoda type roof.

INT. RUSTIC HALL - LATER

Sage gazes at Vasuki's portrait with glowing aura. Disorientated, Sage closes his eyes as Naga saunters over.

NAGA  
I've been waiting for you.

SAGE  
Huh?

NAGA  
We've known each other before.

SAGE  
Not me, it's my first time here.

Naga stares into Sage's eyes intensely.

NAGA  
Last lifetime, last lifetime.

Crystal slides up. Confused, Sage glances at her.

NAGA  
Crystal's been waiting, too.

Her diamond sparkles. Sage looks down.

SAGE  
Yeah, hi, Crystal.

CRYSTAL  
I've waited so long.

NAGA  
Yes, connected through lifetimes.

Naga leaves. Vasuki's aura shines, Crystal glitters.

CRYSTAL  
Do you feel--

SAGE  
Spaced. Anything in the drinks?

CRYSTAL  
Vasuki's psychic energy. Come.

Crystal pulls Sage toward the door.

EXT. RUSTIC HALL - NIGHT

Crystal guides Sage down a rock staircase. WIND CHIMES jingle. Flags flutter.

They reach an open area lit by the full moon. She gazes into his eyes. Moonlight flashes off her diamond. She kisses him. Spellbound, he returns the kiss. They head towards a cabin.

INT. FITNESS CENTRE - DAY

Sage in a Kung Fu outfit spreads out mats with GRANT, 32, muscular trainer. A poster on the wall advertises "KUNG FU CLASSES, AUGUST SESSIONS, 2005."

GRANT  
Met a chick from your past life?

Sage appears embarrassed.

GRANT  
Already? Man, that was fast.

SAGE  
Hey, Crystal's great. She gives old people free massage and herbs.

GRANT  
 Spell bound already. What hope do  
 the widowers have?

Sage stares at Grant, whose eyes are mocking, but firm.

INT. FITNESS CENTER - NIGHT

Grant walks in as teenagers leave. He and a subdued Sage  
 pick up mats. A poster reads: "JANUARY SESSIONS, 2006."

GRANT  
 Sure was weird the old widower died  
 so soon after Crystal visited him.

Sage nods.

GRANT  
 When're you going to do something?

SAGE  
 Hey? Challenge Vasuki? Me?

INT. HOSPITAL BED - PRESENT DAY

Sage looks directly into a shocked Julie's eyes.

JULIE  
 You don't really believe Crystal  
 caused his death.

Sage assents.

JULIE  
 Oh, she wouldn't.

SAGE  
 She told me a lot.

JULIE  
 Even if Crystal... Vasuki wouldn't  
 ever do anything wrong.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - DAY

Vasuki sets new clothes next to a poor Indian boy wolfing  
 down food.

VASUKI  
 (in Hindi,  
 subtitled)  
 When you're finished, take a bath  
 and put on these clothes.

The boy looks up at Vasuki like he's a God.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dressed, Julie looks admiringly at Sage, who smiles, grabs his side-bag, takes out a small leaflet book.

SAGE

Here.

He holds out the book, THE KALAMA SUTTA. Julie stares at it.

SAGE

It's my favorite.

Julie smiles, takes it from him. Their eyes catch.

JULIE

Thank you.

Sage picks up Arun's backpack. They walk to the

RECEPTION.

Arun bursts in. Seeing Julie, his frantic expression dissolves. He races over.

ARUN

Sharini!

Arun hugs her, holds her closely. Julie's eyes glisten. Controlled, Sage steps back.

ARUN

You okay, honey?

JULIE

If Sage hadn't found me...

He gives Sage a bear hug. Sage with difficulty, receives it, pulls back, looks directly into Arun's eyes.

SAGE

Robert... Julie almost died.

Smile vanishing, Arun nods stiffly. Sage hands Arun his backpack. Relief floods Arun's face.

SAGE

Bad news to lose your valuables in Asia.

Sage's face softens as he returns his attention to Julie.

JULIE

I really don't know how to thank you. I'm so grateful.



She hugs Sage, kisses him on the cheek.

SAGE

Yeah. Maybe I'll see you around.

Sage walks out. Arun stares after him.

INT. SONG-TOW TAXI - DAY

Arun and Julie sit on benches in the back of a pickup covered with a canopy.

ARUN

That guy's got a chip on his shoulder.

JULIE

He saved my life. You weren't much help. Can't you take justified--

ARUN

We all make mistakes and you agreed to eat them. Don't blame me.

Julie recoils. The taxi pulls up. They scramble out. Arun pays the driver. Julie stomps to the bungalow, bursts in.

INT. ARUN AND JULIE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

A fuming Julie walks back and forth. Apprehensive, Arun enters. Julie waves her hands wildly.

JULIE

Would you like to wake up blind?  
Can't you even say, sorry?

ARUN

I'm sorry, sweetheart.

JULIE

You left me in the jungle!

ARUN

I was out of it, don't even know how I got back. Really, I'm sorry.

Julie calms down. Gingerly, Arun strokes her hair.

ARUN

Why don't we let it go, feel grateful we're back together again. Maybe Vasuki was taking care of us.

INT. INDIA, VASUKI'S ASHRAM, WESTERNERS' HALL - DAY

Vasuki and Naga sit on raised chairs. Westerners encircle them. A sexy, buxom DEVINA, 28, gazes at Vasuki.

DEVINA

Are you saying, having a partner is  
not a barrier to enlightenment?

Vasuki smiles, turns his head towards her. His eyes twinkle.

VASUKI

In the sacred union, we come close  
to understanding the infinity of  
the present.

MITRA, 30, matted blonde hair, eyebrow stud, wild clothes,  
sits next to Devina. He chuckles.

MITRA

How's making it with our honey  
different from the normal world?

Vasuki, eyes riveted on Devina, speaks slowly, hypnotically.

VASUKI

With heightened awareness, we are  
present in whatever we do. We know  
how to become one with our partner  
and also merge into the silence of  
solitude. Ultimate contentment.

EXT. WESTERNERS' HALL - LATER

Devina and Mitra, arm in arm, exit. Naga approaches.

NAGA

Devina, Vasuki's granted you the  
privilege of a private audience.

Stunned, Devina points to herself. Naga holds out his hand.  
Mitra steps back. Unsure, Devina looks at Mitra. Humor gone,  
he nods. Naga smiles, leads her away.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Vasuki, relaxed and powerful, strokes his beard. A nervous  
Devina enters. The door closes. She drops to her knees in  
front of Vasuki, hands prayer-like. Vasuki places his hands  
on her head, intones a prayer in Hindi.

VASUKI

Your purity of heart has been  
revealed to me.

He slides his hands down her hair to her shoulders.

VASUKI

I will teach you more about the  
infinity of the present.

Devina blushes. Eyes sparkling, Vasuki smiles.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Topless Jasmine and Amber frolic in the shallow water.  
Jasmine whispers, nods towards the beach where Arun  
sits totally absorbed in Jasmine's movements.

Julie, in street clothes, hurries to him, flops down. Arun  
glances at her, returns his gaze to Jasmine.

ARUN

Back so soon. Buy anything?

Julie smiles curtly at the women. They sashay away with  
Jasmine in search of another man to entice. Arun watches.  
Julie waves a silver Buddha pendant in front of his face.

ARUN

You're not going to wear that, what  
about my--

JULIE

Of course not, my Sun God. It's a  
gift for Sage. He's into Buddhism.

ARUN

What! Why? Come on, Sharini. It's  
silver. I won't let you give him  
that. It's expensive.

JULIE

What value is my vision or life?

ARUN

You're so naïve. He'll think--

JULIE

Don't be stupid. It's just to  
express my gratitude.

EXT. PATHWAY TO KUNG FU SCHOOL - DAY

A determined Julie walks briskly. Upset, Arun catches up.

ARUN

Maybe that's what you want him to  
think.

JULIE

If it wasn't for Sage I'd be dead,  
not sleeping with you. Try being  
thankful to him.

EXT. KUNG FU SCHOOL - DAY

Sage and Nat spar.

Nat blocks Sage, dodges his kick. Intense, Nat attacks. Sage sends him flying, but Nat springs up quickly. They ready themselves. Three Westerners and two Thai men observe.

Julie and a tight-lipped Arun walks to the edge. Julie watches, engrossed while Arun scowls.

Sage and Nat both attack and defend skillfully until Sage throws Nat down. Nat rises and bows. They spot Julie.

NAT

She the chick you saved?

Sage nods, strolls over to Julie as everyone, except Nat, leaves. Nat watches.

SAGE

Hey.

JULIE

Hi Sage. I wanted to--

ARUN

Really appreciate you helping  
Sharini. So we got you a gift.

SAGE

No problem. I'm glad I found you.

JULIE

I'm so grateful, I had to--

ARUN

Yeah, thanks. Come on 'Rini, Sage  
looks like a busy man.

SAGE

The session's finished. You guys  
like a drink?

ARUN

Not thirsty. Thanks anyway.

Julie shyly hands Sage a packet. He hugs her, gives Arun a brief handshake. Sage pulls out the Buddha.

JULIE

I hope you like it. I don't have any experience, but to my eye this Buddha is--

SAGE

Perfect. Thanks, Julie... Arun.

Arun nods stiffly. Sage puts on the necklace, fingers the Buddha gently as Arun grabs Julie's arm.

ARUN

Come on 'Rini. Thanks again.

Arun pulls Julie quickly along the path. She turns, waves.

Sage nods, his hand on the Buddha. Amused, Nat slides up.

NAT

She's blonde.

SAGE

She's got a boyfriend.  
(frowning)  
He's not good for her.

NAT

So save her.

Nat inspects the Buddha.

NAT

Nice Buddha.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

The Buddha bounces on Sage's tanned, well formed, bare chest as he jogs. He wears kneepads on both knees. He approaches Paradise Bungalows.

In a tiny bikini, Julie emerges from the water, strolls up the sand, eyes downcast.

Sage stops, gazes at her as she wraps a sarong low around her hips. He scans the vacant restaurant, touches his Buddha. Julie sees him. Thrilled, she hurries to him.

JULIE

Sage. I was hoping you'd come by.

Sage questions silently, embarrasses her.

JULIE

The book you gave me is really interesting. I have questions.

Her innocent expression impels Sage to look away.

SAGE  
Where's Arun?

JULIE  
He hardly ever gets up until nine.

Sage hesitates.

JULIE  
It's about the part where we have  
to decide for ourselves what is  
skillful. How do we know when to  
trust ourselves?

SAGE  
Let me cool off first, okay?

Delighted, Julie nods. Sage takes off the kneepads. He bounds to the water, dives in. Julie watches, smiles.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Julie points at herself as she and Sage sit under a tree.

JULIE  
Me, too trusting?

Sage assents. Julie shakes her head.

JULIE  
Everything Vasuki says seems so...  
right. Can't we intuitively know  
who to trust?

SAGE  
What a person says and what they do  
may be quite different. Didn't you  
eat the mushrooms?

Ashamed, she looks away.

SAGE  
Trust is a gift we only give to  
people whose actions prove they are  
worthy of such a valuable gift.

Protecting her pride, Julie resists.

JULIE  
Well... maybe. I'm not sure.

Perceptive, Sage retreats.

SAGE

Ajahn Panya'd be able to explain it better. But he's gone to Bodhgaya.

Julie looks at him admiringly.

JULIE

Your insight is deep.

They catch eyes. Sage glances at his watch, slides on the kneepads, gets up. Julie jumps up, points to the kneepads.

JULIE

Do you have bad knees?

SAGE

No. They're handy sometimes. Are you staying long?

JULIE

Two weeks. I'd love to learn more about Buddhism while we're here.

Sage nods, smiles, jogs off. Julie watches him.

ARUN (O.S.)

How far will you go to express your gratitude?

Julie guiltily turns to see a frowning Arun. She brightens.

JULIE

I've been waiting for the Sun to rise.

She rushes to hug him.

ARUN

Yeah, sure.

EXT. PARADISE RESTAURANT - DAY

Wearing a backpack, Arun carries a dulcimer, scrambles out of a Song-tow. Another backpack on, Kanuka jumps out. He carries a didgeridoo. Crystal gingerly gets out.

ARUN

Sure glad you guys are here.

CRYSTAL

We'll have a circle tonight. Get Sharini back on track.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

Julie stands in a yoga posture. The SOUND of a DIDGERIDOO throbs from the restaurant. She relaxes, glances over.

Westerners emerge from bungalows, walk curiously toward the sound. A DULCIMER harmonizes with the Didgeridoo.

Julie advances toward the restaurant where people sit in a circle in meditation postures. She pauses.

Arun jumps up, holds his arms out, walks toward her. His arm reaches around her. They walk into the open-sided restaurant and sit down. The Didgeridoo drones.

EXT. SMALL MONASTERY HALL - NIGHT

Sage and Jay meditate. The far off SOUND of the Didgeridoo drifts up from the valley. Sage springs up, strides away.

EXT. BEACH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sage approaches, stays in the shadows, scans the silent figures. He enters, sits on an empty cushion opposite Crystal and stares at her intensely.

She opens her eyes, GASPS. Kanuka glares at Sage who runs his hand over his head, nods to Kanuka, unnerving him.

Julie smiles at Sage. Their silent chemistry angers Arun.

His message made clear, Sage rises, walks out. Julie begins to rise but Arun restrains her. Crystal springs up, leaves.

INT. KANUKA AND CRYSTAL'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

An agitated Crystal walks back and forth.

CRYSTAL

She's awestruck by him.

KANUKA

Guess you'd know his charms.

CRYSTAL

Cut it out. What're we going to do?

KANUKA

He made it quite clear.

CRYSTAL

Huh?



KANUKA

We have to leave. Get Sharini to India as soon as possible.

CRYSTAL

But how will she agree... so soon?

INT. JULIE AND ARUN'S BUNGALOW - SUNRISE

Soft vibrating BELL echoes. Julie awakens, stretches. Arun pulls her down, rolls on top of her.

ARUN

The Sun's already rising.

Arun kisses a stunned Julie.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Seeing Sage jog towards them, Arun dashes to the water, swims to Julie, twirls her so that they look seaward.

JULIE

The Sun's up early, shines brightly today.

ARUN

When the Earth revolves around the Sun, the Sun shines brightly.

Arun kisses her. Sage slows, sees them, sprints away.

Jubilant Arun shifts his mind to other conquests, sneakily unties and pulls off Julie's bikini top. They wrestle.

JULIE

Arun!

ARUN

Come on... go European.

Arun bounds to shore with it. Humoring but not conceding, Julie wades out, covering her breasts as Arun admires her.

She glances up the beach, sees the receding form of Sage. Her smile fades. Returning her vision to Arun, she sees him search her face. She feigns a smile, grabs her top.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

Julie sadly admires her finished painting - a beautiful bird in a gilded cage. She packs up her paints.

A temple BELL reverberates. Monks' CHANTING. The sound of a TAXI drowns out the chanting. Arun, Crystal and Kanuka get out. An excited Arun races towards the beach.

ARUN

Sharini. I've got some great news!

He twirls her around, kisses her.

ARUN

Vasuki wants me to design the new temple at the Ashram.

JULIE

Wow! How?

ARUN

Yeah, wow. Crystal told him I'm an architect. You could design the stain glass windows.

JULIE

Wonderful.

ARUN

We're going to India tomorrow.

JULIE

What? You changed our tickets already, without asking me?

ARUN

I had to make a decision quickly. It's difficult to get seats to Calcutta.

JULIE

Calcutta? But we were going to Delhi in two weeks.

ARUN

I have to meet his top donors on the way to Delhi. It'll be our chance to really get close to Vasuki.

JULIE

But why didn't you ask--

ARUN

I assumed you're as interested in Vasuki as I am. I guess I'm wrong. Vasuki won't be pleased if I tell him you want to postpone it, but if you want...

JULIE  
If it will help us get closer to  
Vasuki--

ARUN  
Without a doubt. Meeting Vasuki is  
the whole purpose of our trip.

JULIE  
Yes, nothing must interfere.

Arun takes out travel brochures.

ARUN  
I got some info on Calcutta and the  
route to Delhi. There's lots of  
temples on the way.

Julie takes them. Arun slips his arm around her, smiles.  
They walk towards their bungalow as the sun sets.

EXT. PARADISE BUNGALOWS - MORNING

Sage jogs up. Dark haired Westerners sun bathe. A blonde  
woman stands shoulder deep in water, gazing seaward.  
Decided, Sage swims out, stops ten yards from her.

SAGE  
Julie?

Surprised, Jasmine turns, beams.

JASMINE  
Very close - Jasmine.

Jasmine seductively moves towards him, the water level  
dropping to her nipples.

SAGE  
Sorry, I made a mistake--

JASMINE  
Julie, Jasmine, whatever. Amber  
told me you're shy. No problem,  
I'll help you get over it.

The water slides to her waist, as Sage backs away. Sage  
stops. A long moment. He smiles.

SAGE  
You're really gorgeous, Jasmine.

Jasmine delights in the praise.

SAGE

Are you interested in meditation?

JASMINE

Sure. I'll meditate on your navel  
and you meditate on mine. Or do we  
focus lower...

SAGE

That's sure to please... most guys.

Sage swims back, hurries towards Julie's bungalow where a  
Thai couple relax on the verandah. Sage nods seriously,  
turns and sprints up the beach.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

The phone RINGS. Vasuki picks it up.

VASUKI

Yes, two Western women. Quarter  
million each.

(pause)

Yes, one nice little boy.

(pause)

A virgin? Call tomorrow. Sure to  
have one.

EXT. INDIA, GAYA, MARKETPLACE - DAY

A young, thin girl, tattered clothes, begs amidst a  
thronging crowd. Street stalls display an array of goods.  
Children clutch their mother's saris or pantsuits, stare,  
wide eyed, as Julie, in a huff, weaves through the crowd.

Seeing the girl, Julie's face softens into compassion. She  
bends over, gives a hundred rupee note to the girl, who  
gazes at Julie like she's seen an angel.

A smiling Indian man approaches the bent over Julie.

ARUN (O.S.)

You touch her, you'll have a fist  
in your face.

The man freezes. Julie, shocked, jumps up. The man turns to  
see Arun, threatening. The man hurries away.

ARUN

Wish you'd be more aware, stay  
close to me. Racing off like that.

JULIE

You wouldn't listen.

Arun pulls her to the fruit stall, protectively stands behind her, picks out and pays for fruit.

JULIE

But Bodhgaya is so close. It's a famous Buddhist pilgrimage site.

ARUN

Just another temple, no big deal.

He pulls her into an auto rickshaw. It drives off.

INT. RICKSHAW - CONTINUOUS

JULIE

You're not listening to me.

ARUN

Who's going to get the fruit?  
You're off in your dream world.

JULIE

Two weeks of just your temple design! Let's have one day for ourselves to experience the real India?

Arun gazes at the village bustle. Exasperated, Julie looks the other way. The rickshaw stops. Arun pays, climbs out. Dejected, Julie gets out. The rickshaw drives off.

Arun heads to an expensive hotel, cocks his head. Defiant, she stands firm. He returns as a rickshaw pulls up close by. A tall, muscular, no-nonsense Australian woman, AMY, 35, jumps out.

ARUN

We have to meet an important benefactor tomorrow.

Amy notices Julie's distress, asks the driver to wait. Amy's stern look irritates Arun, but he softens.

ARUN

We can go to the Hindu temple near the river tomorrow night.

JULIE

But, I want to go to Bodhgaya. If you won't come, I'll go by myself.

ARUN

Alone? They try to grope you even when I'm around. You space out but

your blonde hair remains in this world.

JULIE

I'll wear a scarf. Other Western women travel alone. The temples here are so exotic.

ARUN

What's wrong with Hindu temples? Why such a sudden fascination with Buddhist temples?

Julie momentarily starts, becomes subdued. Acting protective, Arun holds her hands.

ARUN

Your mother doesn't like me already. How would she feel about me if something happened and I'm not there to protect you? No way.

Firm, Arun strides to the hotel. Awkward, Julie glances at Amy. The impatient DRIVER bellows.

DRIVER

Where - when?

AMY

Bodhgaya, six A.M., mate. Don't be late.

Amy gives Julie a "want to come too" smile. Brightening, Julie rushes to her. The rickshaw leaves.

JULIE

Hi, I'm Sharini. Would it be okay if I come with you to Bodhgaya? My boyfriend's busy, doesn't--

AMY

No worries. I'm Amy. Bad news if ya let ya man push ya around, Luv.

JULIE

Well, The Indian men are--

Amy holds up an umbrella. Her biceps bulge.

AMY

All ya need is one of these. Hit 'em on the head when they reach for ya bum. Works every time. Save the knee for tight jams.

JULIE

I'll remember that. Thanks.

AMY

I'm goin' budget next door. Meet ya  
at six in ya lobby.

INT. ARUN AND JULIE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Luxurious. Unyielding, Arun clenches the bathroom doorframe.

ARUN

Out of the question.

Agitated, Julie shuffles pamphlets near the bed.

JULIE

You don't need me tagging along.

ARUN

'Rini, you're coming with me.

JULIE

It's only one day! Shit, I'm  
American not Indian.

ARUN

And I'll bet she's gay. I have to  
protect you from Indian men and  
bitches like her.

JULIE

Don't be such a cave man. Why do we  
always have to do what you want to  
do?

ARUN

Enough. I'm tired.

Arun enters the bathroom.

Julie flings the pamphlets down. Her face sets in  
determination. She gathers clothes, her small backpack and  
passport holder, sets them close to her side of the bed,  
hops in and pretends to be asleep.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Julie paces. Amy appears, smiles broadly.

AMY

So ya told him who's boss.

JULIE

Not exactly... but I'm here.

EXT. MAHABODHI TEMPLE, BODHGAYA - DAY

The tall spire rises majestically. Saffron robed Thai, Sri Lankan Monks and Nuns meditate. Maroon and gold robed Tibetan Monks and Nuns prostrate. Lay Western, Asian and Indian pilgrims mingle.

Julie and Amy absorb the atmosphere and stroll to the Bodhi Tree where an Indian guide speaks with Thai pilgrims.

GUIDE

The Buddha got enlightened here.

Julie takes out a sketch pad.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Julie points at the golden Thai temple that comes into view.

JULIE

Can we stop at the Thai temple? My friend's teacher may be there.

AMY

Sounds good.

INT. THAI TEMPLE HALL - DAY

Julie and Amy sit with Ajahn Panya. Julie eagerly pulls out "THE KALAMA SUTTA".

JULIE

Sage said you gave him this book. Could you please explain some parts to me?

AJAHN PANYA

The Buddha encourages people to test the wisdom of their teachers.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

An angry Arun strides in, approaches the RECEPTIONIST.

ARUN

Is Miss Sharini back yet?

RECEPTIONIST

No, sir.

He frowns, stomps out.

INT. THAI TEMPLE HALL - DAY

Julie and Amy sit with Ajahn Panya.



AJAHN PANYA

If we develop compassion and loving kindness for all living beings, the Buddha assures us it will produce conditions for happiness both now and in our future.

JULIE

But what about people who try to control us or are abusive? How do we protect ourselves?

AJAHN PANYA

You can have compassion for these people, yet it would be wise to go away from them.

JULIE

Sure, that's compassion to myself. But don't we try to help them?

AJAHN PANYA

This also helps them. It shows them that their actions are unwise and will bring unbeneficial results.

AMY

That's the truth. Well said. Ya listen to him, Sharini.

Ajahn Panya picks up a Temple postcard and pen.

AJAHN PANYA

Sage would be happy to receive a postcard.

He hands it to her as Julie gives him a questioning expression. He smiles, nods.

EXT. THAI TEMPLE - DAY

Julie looks at the temple affectionately.

JULIE

Amy, what are you doing tomorrow?

Amy grins, holds up her umbrella.

AMY

Sure, come again. I'll be ya bodyguard. Another talk with that Monk'll do ya good. He's dinky-die.

JULIE

Dinky-die? Where are you from?

AMY

Genuine, no fake. Nurse with the flyin' doctors near Darwin in Australia or as we call it Oz.

JULIE

That's cool. The Land of Oz.

Amy pulls out a small paperback, hands it to Julie. Back grounded by the red Uluru (Ayer's Rock), the face of a painted Aboriginal man. The title, "ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME."

AMY

Here, have one. Everythin' has spiritual meanin' for the aborigines.

Julie smiles, takes it. A taxi pulls up. They get in.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Julie twirls hair around her fingers, glances at Amy.

JULIE

About tomorrow, I'll have to see if Arun... will agree, I mean... has anything important...

AMY

Look Luv, ya got to remember you're as important as he thinks he is. Staying long in Gaya?

JULIE

Arun said at least four more days.

AMY

Arun said this, said that. What do you want?

Anxious, Julie pulls out Sage's postcard.

JULIE

Amy, can I ask a favor?

AMY

Go for it.

JULIE

Can you please post Sage's card?

AMY

Double trouble if Arun's the jealous type, Luv.

JULIE

He doesn't want me to go--

AMY

Sure I'll post the card. Please, be careful. Okay?

Amy writes down an email address, hands it to Julie.

AMY

Email me if ya need help. Ya got a friend here. Where ya traveling to?

Amy hands Julie a pen and notebook. Julie writes as the taxi turns into the street of their hotels.

JULIE

Near a village north of Delhi.

AMY

Goin' that way myself in another week or so. I'll drop by to see ya.

They arrive. Amy gives her a bear hug. Apprehensive, Julie shuffles to the hotel, turns back.

JULIE

Amy, please check the desk if I'm not on time tomorrow.

AMY

Sure, Luv.

Julie slips through the doors.

AMY

But I don't expect ya to be there.

Amy reads Sage's name on the postcard.

INT. KUNG FU SCHOOL - DAY

Sage, stubble, hair not so neatly pulled back, throws a THAI MAN down. A blonde woman walks by. He sees her out of the corner of his eye, turns his head. Sage slams into the mat. The Thai stands over him.

THAI MAN

Got problem today?

Sage scrambles to his feet, straightens his jacket.

THAI MAN

When Thai got problem, go see Monk.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Vasuki looks out the window, strokes his beard.

KANUKA (O.S.)  
Sharini's acting strange. We'll  
have to watch her.

Vasuki turns, sees Crystal pace, Kanuka relaxed.

VASUKI  
Kanuka, you stay in India. I'll  
call Arun, so he comes immediately.  
Maybe we can help her, too.

CRYSTAL  
We should just get rid of her.

VASUKI  
That's a bit premature.

CRYSTAL  
But Sage--

VASUKI  
He's no threat. He's done nothing  
for fifteen years. He's too  
conceited, but women are more  
sensitive, open to my influence. If  
not, then...

KANUKA  
She's a deep thinker with a  
philosophy degree. Sage has  
weakened Arun's influence with her.

Vasuki's impressed. Kanuka smirks.

KANUKA  
Sage has a certain magnetism with  
women. Knows ways--

CRYSTAL  
Drop it already.

Focused, Vasuki appears oblivious to their chatter.

VASUKI  
Put them in Room #6 so I can get to  
know her better.

Crystal assents. Vasuki sits down, gives Crystal a  
penetrating eye contact.

VASUKI  
I'm feeling a bit stiff.

She massages Vasuki's shoulders. Vasuki dismisses Kanuka with a curt nod. Kanuka leaves. Vasuki smiles.

EXT. MONASTERY PATH - DAY

A concerned Sage walks alongside a cool Jay.

SAGE  
Vasuki's a smooth talker. She's too trusting.

JAY  
Let's hope the Kalama Sutta will help her question--

SAGE  
Should have told her more. If I'd had more time--

JAY  
Everyone is the owner of their own Karma. Equanimity.

SAGE  
Hey, a bit cold. Equanimity... or indifference? If I'd done something before, she wouldn't be in danger.

JAY  
Grief and guilt from attachment can also be mistaken as compassion. Forgive yourself.

Sage stops, stares at Jay.

SAGE  
Forgiving myself doesn't help her.

Sage strides away.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Amy marches into the lobby, umbrella under her arm. The receptionist gives her a letter. She opens it.

AMY  
Classic. Arun's a bloody Drongo.

INT. TRAIN, FIRST CLASS, PRIVATE COMPARTMENT - DAY

Arun glances at Julie who sulks, gazes out the window.

ARUN  
Want something to drink?

Without looking at him, she shakes her head. She covers her face with hair, twirls strands in her fingers.

ARUN  
Hungry?

Julie ignores him. Arun frowns. Silence.

ARUN  
Going to be a long journey if--

JULIE  
Only one day.

ARUN  
The spiritual life is about  
commitment... on all levels.

JULIE  
I thought it was about freedom.

ARUN  
You can't be free without devotion.

JULIE  
I am totally devoted to following a  
path that leads to freedom.

ARUN  
Why are you so attracted to him? He  
was weak, lost the True Path.

JULIE  
What does going to Bodhgaya--

ARUN  
And seeing a Buddhist Monk? Come  
on, I'm not that thick.

JULIE  
Ajahn Panya is very wise and--

ARUN  
You'd like to convince yourself of  
that, wouldn't you?

Julie jumps up, yanks the door open, stumbles into the aisle. Arun follows, restrains her. Intense, he whispers.

ARUN  
Can't you see what's happening?  
Sage has you thinking some obscure

Monk is more important than your  
master, Vasuki.

JULIE

I don't see how one day--

ARUN

You're losing your spiritual focus.  
I'm just trying to help.

She returns, flops down. Satisfied, Arun slides close, puts his hand over hers. She pulls away, stares out at the passing countryside. Icy silence.

INT. KUNG FU SCHOOL - DAY

Sage stands gazing at the view blankly. Nat walks up.

NAT

So when're going to do something?

SAGE

You're early.

NAT

Better than being too late.

Sage looks at Nat. Nat touches Sage's Buddha, nods.

SAGE

I hardly know her.

NAT

So why'd you fall so hard?

Sage heads to the mats. Nat grabs his arm.

NAT

You're not fooling me. You haven't  
been like this since Mary.

Nat looks Sage directly in the eyes. Sage pulls away.

SAGE

She's probably forgotten all about  
me.

NAT

It's hard to forget someone who  
saves your life.

SAGE

Jay's probably right. I'm too  
attached.

NAT

Jay! Why're taking advice from that cold fish. Where's your teacher?

SAGE

In India.

NAT

So go to India.

EXT. DELHI TRAIN STATION - DAY

Lugging a backpack, Arun hops onto a crowded platform, offers his hand to Julie. Dwarfed by her backpack, yet proud, she ignores him, jumps, stumbles. He catches her.

Embarrassed, Julie regains balance, pulls away. Ignoring her resistance, Arun takes her backpack, grabs her hand, pulls her through the swirling crowd out to an auto rickshaw.

INT. BUS - DAY

Julie and Arun squeeze through a cluttered aisle past a sea of dark haired Indians towards two empty, rickety seats in the back. Despondent, Julie inspects the ceiling - rusty, with holes.

JULIE

Geez, all I need to top off this trip is a downpour.

Arun quickly takes out a can of processed cheese.

ARUN

No problem, I bought some cheese.

Julie gives him a "so what, are you crazy?" expression.

JULIE

I'm not hungry.

She flops down, jumps up, pokes at a bulge in the seat. Arun quickly folds his jacket, lays it on the seat, smiles. Suppressing a smile, she nods, sits.

JULIE

Maybe you better get our umbrellas.

Arun settles in, shows the cheese to an impatient Julie.

ARUN

Great for plugging holes.

Unable to disguise it, Julie's face betrays interest.



ARUN

Learned the trick last time I was here during the rainy season. Made me popular with the Indians.

JULIE

Cool.

Julie grins. Buoyed up, Arun puts his arm around her. Julie snuggles up, closes her eyes.

Arun smiles at the rusty ceiling, kisses her head.

MONTAGE - JULIE AND ARUN ARRIVE AT THE ASHRAM

-- Winding road - The bus climbs, stops at a crowded village market on a plateau. Arun and Julie alight.

-- Ashram - Faces beaming, Julie and Arun spring out of a rickshaw, survey the roofs that rise behind massive walls. They hurry through a large gate into a courtyard where devotees walk towards other gates in high internal walls.

-- Reception - A sign reads: PRIVATE PROPERTY - ALL VISITORS MUST REGISTER HERE. Crystal greets them outside, pins broaches, with Vasuki's photo, to their shirts.

EXT. LANE IN VIP SECTION - DAY

Crystal leads them past a sign, RESTRICTED AREA - ACCESS BY PERMISSION ONLY, down a lane of low set rooms.

JULIE

Do any other Westerners live in this part of the Ashram?

CRYSTAL

Not at the moment, only Indian disciples. Got to wear your pin to come here. The rooms are special.

Disappointment crosses Julie's face. They pass a cage with two beautiful birds. Julie stops. She looks at them compassionately as Crystal and Arun enter room #6.

JULIE

Oh dear, how can they lock you up?

One bird hops closer, SINGS.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Crystal slides to Arun, becomes provocative.

CRYSTAL

I'm staying in room 14. Kanuka's staying with the Inner Circle.

Arun's eyebrows arch. He smiles and turns to the door. Julie enters, scans the room, touches her pin, insecure.

JULIE

Nice. But can't we stay with the other Western devotees?

CRYSTAL

You're not normal devotees. Arun's the designer of the new temple.

Arun smiles broadly, stands proudly.

CRYSTAL

Sharini, believe me, you'll need better conditions for your work. It's noisy, cramped over there, with many travelers on the move.

ARUN

Room's great. Thanks, Crystal.

JULIE

But I'd like to talk with the travelers, and mingle with the Indian villagers.

CRYSTAL

Quit worrying, you'll get wrinkles and spoil your beautiful face.

Julie stiffens, gives Crystal a challenging stare.

CRYSTAL

Blondes are rare here. Vasuki doesn't want you going to the village. He's afraid you'll be harassed by the Indian men.

JULIE

Maybe I better dye my hair.

ARUN

'Rini, you're not being very grateful. Who do you think you are trying to dictate where we stay?

JULIE

I didn't mean to sound ungrateful, but... it's my first time here.

Arun's face sets hard. Julie withdraws. Crystal gloats.

CRYSTAL

You'll also get better food,  
prepared specially for you. And  
healing herbal drinks.

Crystal points to bottles of pink liquid. Julie turns white.

ARUN

Sharini, you okay?

Julie gulps, nods. Excited, Crystal turns to Arun.

CRYSTAL

Vasuki wants to meet you now.

JULIE

Wow, a private audience.

She smooths her hair, adjusts her blouse, grabs Arun's arm.

CRYSTAL

He only wants to see Arun.

JULIE

Oh.

Arun shrugs. Crystal links arms with Arun, beams. They leave. Julie frowns.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Julie frowns on a large computer. A shocked Vasuki touches her face on the monitor tenderly. His eyes glisten.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL BEDROOM, INDIA - DAY - FLASHBACK

Vasuki, 28, kisses a blonde, Western woman, TANYA, 25. She pulls away, revealing features very similar to Julie.

TANYA

It's not going to work.

VASUKI

Tanya, I love you. Please marry me.

TANYA

What can you offer me? You have  
nothing.

She looks into his pleading eyes. A tear rolls down her cheek. She turns away, walks to the door. It opens and shuts. His face in pain, Vasuki takes a deep breath.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY - PRESENT

Vasuki takes a deep breath as Julie lies on the bed.

VASUKI

To Tanya, I could give nothing. To  
Sharini, I can give Heaven on  
Earth.

He flicks off the monitor, gets up, walks out.

MONTAGE - JULIE AND ARUN SETTLE INTO THE ASHRAM

-- Vasuki greets Arun in Arun's new studio. Arun beams.

-- Indian men move a desk and art supplies into room #6.  
Happily, Julie sets up her work area.

-- Absorbed, Julie sketches. Arun enters, admires the lotus  
design. He gives her an outline of a window shape. She shows  
Arun a painting. Delighted, he nods.

-- Julie strolls towards the main courtyard. Four Indian  
women feign delight, lead her to a library with Vasuki's  
books and DVDs.

-- Julie walks towards the Westerners' section. Four Indian  
women pull her to an open-sided Hall where Indian women  
practice yoga. They encourage her to perform a posture.

EXT. BEACH, THAILAND - DAY

Sage stretches, jogs. A serious Nat runs up next to him,  
holds out a newspaper, points to an article. The headline  
reads, "EUROPEAN WOMAN MISSING IN INDIA. LAST SEEN AT ARIYA  
VASUKI'S ASHRAM NEAR DELHI."

Sage stops abruptly, his face sets hard.

NAT

So what's Vasuki really up to?

INT. PALATIAL LIVING ROOM, MIDDLE EAST - DAY

A Middle Eastern, bearded, WEALTHY MAN in robes and turban  
reclines on a luxurious couch. Three subdued women, robed  
and veiled, stand motionless in front of him.

The smug man smiles, rises slowly, his eyes riveted to one  
woman who looks down. He waves his hand to two male  
servants. They lead the other two women out.

He saunters over, lifts her head up, looks into her blue,  
watering eyes, removes her veil. A forlorn, Western beauty.

WEALTHY MAN

Oh, he has good taste. Once they see you, my clients will be assured Vasuki will deliver quality goods.

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Julie and Arun walk past a large serving table heaped with pots of food. Indians eat, watch them sit down at a special table. Arun spoons out two bowlfuls of porridge.

ARUN

Haven't been poisoned yet, eh? What Sage told you is full of crap. He's just bitter Crystal dumped him.

(he smirks)

Must be something wrong with him. All those hot chicks at the beach and he ain't got a girlfriend.

JULIE

Can't we move on?

Arun stares at her as she eats.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie sketches. Dizzy, she lays her head down in her arms. She struggles to the bed, lies down. Clutching her stomach, she staggers to the bathroom, vomits.

INT. SMALL HALL, ASHRAM - NIGHT

Julie and Arun meditate in a circle of Indians. An Indian woman, BEHULA, 40, passes around goblets as ethereal MUSIC plays. Arun drinks. Julie refuses. He whispers.

ARUN

It's probably hormonal or psychosomatic. Herbs'll help.

Julie shakes her head. Arun frowns.

EXT. SMALL COURTYARD, ASHRAM - DAY

Julie studies the Kalama Sutta that rests inside Vasuki's open book. Unnoticed, Behula approaches, turns on an audio recorder, hides it in her pocket. She sits as Julie snaps Vasuki's book shut.

BEHULA

Hello, feeling better today?

JULIE

Yes, thank you, Behula, but those drinks make me feel ill.

BEHULA

They're nectar of the earth. Crystal makes drinks worthy to be given to gods. People, not sufficiently evolved, can't drink celestial potions.

Condescending, Behula pats her on the back. Julie frowns.

BEHULA

Not to worry, keep practicing. Coming to yoga today?

Julie nods, gets up. As they walk, Behula slips her arm through Julie's. Indians pass by, nod greetings.

BEHULA

How long have you been a devotee?

JULIE

Oh, I'm only new. But Vasuki's teachings touch me deeply. Do you know how I can get a private--

BEHULA

Vasuki knows when a devotee is ready. I was here six months before I got personal instruction.

Julie stops, stares at her. Behula strokes her arm.

JULIE

Arun meets him every day.

Behula acts shocked. She grabs Julie's hands, gushes.

BEHULA

Really? Wow, he must be so evolved.

Julie proudly smiles. They walk again.

JULIE

Why were you drawn to Vasuki?

BEHULA

Vasuki's linked to the early Indian mystics. God revealed to them the correct path to union with Him.

JULIE

How do you know that's true?

BEHULA

I have faith.

They approach a Yoga Hall where Vasuki's portrait hangs above the entrance. Julie halts, looks at it.

JULIE

But Vasuki teaches that Love is the way to the Truth. Isn't how we manifest love, in the present, more important than faith?

INT. KUNG FU SCHOOL, OFFICE - DAY

Sage picks up a pile of mail, flips through it, stops.

Julie's postcard from Bodhgaya.

He pulls it out, reads. He dashes out, bumps into Nat in the OPEN HALL.

NAT

Hey man, what's the rush?

Sage waves the postcard.

SAGE

A postcard from Julie. She met Ajahn Panya in Bodhgaya.

NAT

I told you to go see him in India.

SAGE

He's due back today.

INT. DINING HALL, ASHRAM - BREAKFAST

Julie seats herself facing the kitchen door. Arun sits across from her. Crystal exits the kitchen and freezes.

She races back just as Julie looks up and sees her. Julie picks up a bowl, walks toward the communal food table. Indians spring up, hurriedly take all the pots to the kitchen. Perplexed, Julie returns to Arun.

JULIE

I wonder why they won't let me eat their food.

ARUN

Why do you want to eat that slop?  
We have much better food.

Julie peels a banana. Arun dishes out porridge, sets a bowl in front of her. She pushes it away. Arun shoves it back. He silently commands her. Julie ignores him.

ARUN  
Please, 'Rini, eat some solid food.

She declines firmly, pushes it away, eats her banana.

ARUN  
It's been days since you ate properly. Why are you so paranoid? Look, I'll eat some.

Full of expression, Arun eats a couple of spoonfuls.

ARUN  
Delicious. See I'm still alive.

JULIE  
Not funny. You know how ill--

ARUN  
I didn't get sick. Why blame Crystal's special food?  
(sarcastic)  
Can't we move on?

JULIE  
Bigger body. In Thailand--

Arun slams his spoon down.

ARUN  
How many times are you gonna drag it up? It's food, not mushrooms.

Arun strides out. Indians stare. Julie flushes, hurries out.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie sheepishly enters, closes the door. Arun stares out of the window. She twirls her hair, nervously.

JULIE  
But I saw Crystal--

Arun spins around, explodes.

ARUN  
Are you so blind? Sage was chatting you up. Great game plan - sow seeds of doubt about Crystal - link it to me and Vasuki.



Her tightly wound hair drains the color from her fingers.

ARUN

He'll lure you away from the True Path.

JULIE

He saved--

ARUN

I told you, sorry, umpteen times.

A confused Julie's eyes glisten.

ARUN

You're in love with him.

JULIE

I'm here with you.

She touches him. Arun's face softens, he breathes deep. Jealousy abating, he now sees her wet eyes. He hugs her.

INT. LARGE TEMPLE, THAILAND - DAY

A serene Ajahn Panya sits in front of a Buddha Statue.

AJAHN PANYA

Penetrate through surface appearances. See the insecurity that motivates them. Then compassion will replace anger.

Righteously angry, Sage shakes his head.

SAGE

Compassion is so inactive.

AJAHN PANYA

Wrong, compassion is like a multifaceted diamond. The firmer face of compassion is very active.

Sage gives him an uncomprehending expression.

AJAHN PANYA

Considering Karma, is it really compassion to allow people to harm themselves or others?

SAGE

I... suppose not.

AJAHN PANYA

Can you really think clearly when  
you're angry? Like a hot coal,  
anger burns the hand that grabs it.

Sage's face relaxes.

AJAHN PANYA

Compassionate understanding gives  
clarity and has an enduring  
strength.

Sage wais Ajahn Panya, gets up. Ajahn Panya smiles.

AJAHN PANYA

Safe travels.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie sketches. Arun comes out of the bathroom.

JULIE

Arun, can you help me?

He wanders over, looks at her sketch.

ARUN

If you'll let me...

JULIE

You see Vasuki every day. Could you  
ask him if he'll meet me? I have so  
many questions.

ARUN

Patience. When the student is  
ready, the teacher manifests.

INT. TRAVEL AGENT - DAY

Sage sits with a Thai travel agent who stares at a computer.

AGENT

Full. Only empty seat, two weeks.

Frustration flashes across Sage's face.

SAGE

Calcutta then flight to Delhi?

AGENT

Calcutta 3 days. No flight to Delhi  
until next week. Many pilgrims this  
time of year. Train?

SAGE  
Calcutta then train.

AGENT  
Fly to Bangkok?

SAGE  
Next flight?

AGENT  
Two days. Tonight's train?

Sage looks up to the portrait of Ajahn Panya that graces the wall. A now controlled Sage nods.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Vasuki nods approvingly. He and Arun look at plans with three shaven headed men who express admiration.

VASUKI  
Magnificent. What soaring lines.  
You're a great asset here.

Arun beams. Vasuki motions for the others to go. They leave while he and Arun sit down.

VASUKI  
Sharini's much younger. Is this a  
pattern of yours?

Vasuki's eyes pierce him. Arun looks down, taps his fingers.

ARUN  
I hate being mothered or  
controlled. Younger women show me  
more respect.

VASUKI  
So why do you let Sharini control  
you?

ARUN  
What?

VASUKI  
You're too attached and allow her  
actions to get you upset, so she  
succeeds in having power over you.  
Learn emotional detachment.  
Understand that women are simply  
for our enjoyment.

Vasuki saunters to a long-stemmed, deep red rosebud, in a crystal vase, sitting on his desk. He runs his fingers sensuously over the rosebud's outline.

VASUKI

Younger women are like rosebuds.

EXT. SECLUDED GARDEN NEAR OUTER WALL - DAY

Julie contemplates her painting of a weeping fig tree. Its limbs reach over the wall. Satisfied, She packs up her supplies in her backpack and slips out a can of cheese. She takes a small chunk, savors it and puts it away.

RAVANA (O.S.)

Miss, it may be dangerous here. I will sit with you to protect you.

Julie grimaces, turns. A large Indian man, RAVANA, 45, walks up. Julie strides away. Ravana follows.

RAVANA

My wife, Behula, told me that you like to ask questions.

Julie stops, her expression changes to interest.

JULIE

What excites you most about Vasuki?

RAVANA

Vasuki's teachings agree with the ancient Indian Scriptures.

JULIE

But, how do you know the scriptures weren't corrupted? Don't we need to test all teachings with our own experience?

Displeased, Ravana steps closer.

RAVANA

My faith is not corrupted.

Julie steps back, uneasily.

RAVANA

Here, Crystal sent some healing herbs for your stomach problem.

He unscrews the top, offers her a bottle of pink liquid. Julie moves away, shakes her head. He holds it out, steps closer. She takes it, feigns clumsiness, drops it purposely, all over a stunned Ravana, and dashes away.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie bursts in, paces, races to Vasuki's book, reads and shakes her head. A puffed-up Arun enters. Julie runs to him, hugs him tightly.

ARUN

Hey?

JULIE

If only I could meet Vasuki. Nobody understands what he teaches. I can't talk deeply with anyone.

ARUN

Nice compliment.

JULIE

Except you. But I did that back in the states. I don't like it here, I'm being watched.

ARUN

Oh 'Rini, you're just imagining it. Takes time to get used to a different culture, communal living.

Arun puts on a DVD. Romantic MUSIC. He leads Julie to the bed. They sit down. He holds her closely.

ARUN

Indians don't have our concept of privacy. I used to think they were nosy, too. Feel a bit crowded?

JULIE

Yeah. Love to go hiking in the mountains.

ARUN

And make love in a mountain cabin.

Calmer, Julie twirls her finger in one of his curls.

ARUN

You're so beautiful, people can't help looking at you.

Arun pulls the curtain's cord. The room darkens except for a thin shaft of light streaming in from a gap in the middle.

ARUN

Same as when I first saw you. You stood out in the crowd, I couldn't take my eyes off you.

Julie strokes Arun's chest, nestles her face into it. Arun lifts her chin. They kiss.

The light beam spotlights a long stemmed, deep red rosebud, in a narrow, elegantly curved vase on the desk.

INT. BANGKOK, INDIAN EMBASSY - DAY

An orchid in a vase sits on the counter. An Indian flag. Disgruntled travelers wait for visas. With her legs tightly woven, one woman chews her fingernails.

An uptight, bespectacled MAN, glances at his watch, taps his fingers on his knees, frowns and looks at a relaxed Sage, who sits next to him with his eyes closed.

UPTIGHT MAN

Yeah, may as well go to sleep at this rate.

Sage opens his eyes, smiles.

SAGE

Do you work in India?

UPTIGHT MAN

No way. I'm out of the rat race for a while. Traveling. How about you?

SAGE

A friend's in danger.

Surprised, the man's fingers come to rest. The woman stops chewing her fingernails, listens.

UPTIGHT MAN

Hey, I'm sorry. Did you tell them?

Sage assents. An Indian official comes out. Sage jumps up.

INDIAN OFFICIAL

Unfortunately, we can't hurry the Visa process.

Sage nods calmly, turns to leave. The man gets up.

UPTIGHT MAN

Geez, cold hearted, aren't they?

SAGE

Many things are beyond our power to control.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Vasuki and a MIDDLE EASTERN MAN, in white robes, look at a computer screen.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
She fetched a good price. Another customer. Very rich, very choosy.

The man fidgets. A woman's face comes on the screen.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
Nice white skin. Body?

On the screen, the topless woman looks in the mirror.

The man shakes his head.

She disappears. A couple kissing replaces her.

The man shifts from one foot to the other as he stares.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
Better, but not quite. Any blondes?

VASUKI  
No.

The man catches sight of a photo of Julie, half covered by an envelope, on Vasuki's desk. The man grabs the photo.

Julie, in a see through lace bra, combs her hair.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
Stunning. How much?

Vasuki snatches the photo out of the man's hand.

VASUKI  
She's mine.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
Half a million.

Vasuki hesitates. He stares at the photo.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
He wants a blonde now. Price guaranteed. The offer may not be open long if I look elsewhere.

Vasuki shakes his head.

MIDDLE EASTERN MAN  
Devina?

Devina appears on the screen. The man smiles lecherously.

VASUKI

Not yet. I need her for a special project.

INT. ARUN'S STUDIO - DAY

A massage table lines one wall. Arun stands, bent over plans spread on his desk. Straightening up, he stretches. A KNOCK on the door. He opens it. Devina and another young woman, MAYA, stand, smiling.

DEVINA

Vasuki sent us...

Surprised, Arun steps back. They move in. Devina locks the door, slides up to him, undoes the top button of his shirt, smiles seductively, purrs.

DEVINA

...to massage you. He's sure you get stiff.

Maya moves to the desk, looks at Arun's plans, gushes.

MAYA

Your temple has such magnificent thrusting spires.

Uneasy, Arun looks down at Devina's swift fingers.

MAYA

This must be an illusion. The designer of the temple. A person touched by the divine. Let me touch you to make sure you're real.

Devina reaches the last button. Arun relaxes, takes off his shirt. Devina slides her hand over his chest. Maya glides her finger down his spine.

INT. ARUN'S SECRETARY'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Ravana sits at the desk, grins broadly. Julie, with two Indian women trying to restrain her, enters. Julie shakes them off, goes towards Arun's door. Ravana blocks her.

RAVANA

Arun's busy.

JULIE

Never too busy to see me, get out of my way.



RAVANA  
Can't interrupt the creative flow.

Ravana stands firm. Julie shouts.

JULIE  
Arun, Arun, get your bodyguard out  
of my way!

INT. ARUN'S STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The women giggle, race into Arun's private bathroom. Arun hurriedly puts on his shirt, buttons it. He ties the drawstring on his pants tightly, breathes deep, unlocks and opens the door. He slips out, closes it quickly.

INT. ARUN'S SECRETARY'S OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ARUN  
Honey, what's up?

He hugs her.

ARUN  
Come on, let's take a walk.

JULIE  
Let's talk inside.

ARUN  
I've had enough of the office. It's  
stuffy and I need some fresh air.

Arun puts his arm around her, looks at her questioningly. Julie sighs. They walk out. Ravana smiles.

EXT. BANGKOK STREETS - DAY

Rain pelts, gutters overflow. With rain gear or carrying umbrellas, motorcyclists weave through snarled vehicles. Rain poncho over his backpack, Sage gets out of a car taxi, races to a Thai motorcycle-taxi.

SAGE  
Airport, fast.

MOTORCYCLE DRIVER  
Thousand baht.

Stunned, Sage hesitates. Anxious people line up behind him. Sage nods, gets on. The pleased driver weaves through the cars, past a golden Temple. Face dripping, Sage smiles.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie smiles, covers her hair with a scarf, takes off her Vasuki pin and leaves the room.

EXT. MAIN COURTYARD - DAY

Julie walks briskly into the crowded courtyard, head down. She sees people's legs go in different directions. A gate in a wall gets closer. Her hand reaches for it.

VASUKI (O.S.)  
Sharini, no Westerner will be able  
to satisfy your longings.

Julie freezes, her hand in the air. She turns slowly.

Vasuki smiles at her benevolently. Silence reigns. Everyone kneels, palms together in devotion. Self conscious, Julie drops to her knees.

VASUKI  
Please give me the pleasure of  
escorting you through the compound.

Vasuki holds his hand out to her. Shaking, she takes it. He pulls her up, keeps her hand in his. She looks down at her hand in awe. He opens the gate, gallantly motions for her to go through. She hesitates, totally off guard and unsure.

VASUKI  
Please.

She goes through the gate. He follows.

EXT. ASHRAM, WESTERNERS' SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Julie watches Vasuki close the gate. He turns to her.

VASUKI  
Why the scarf? I still recognized  
you.

Julie pulls it off quickly. He smiles charmingly.

JULIE  
I... I... Recognize me? But you  
haven't--

VASUKI  
I know more about you than you  
could imagine. Come.

He holds out his hand. Embarrassed, she takes it. They walk. Deferential devotees step broadly aside, stare.

VASUKI

Sharini, you are right, Love is the way to truth in the present moment. I hope to teach you more about this important connection soon.

Everything before Julie swirls. Overwhelmed and weak, she turns white, sways and faints. Vasuki catches her, nods soberly. Two Westerners, a chubby woman, LEYA and a muscular TATTOOED MAN, race up.

TATTOOED MAN

Can I help?

VASUKI

Yes, please carry her to my quarters. Leya come, also.

A sparkle in Vasuki's eyes contrasts with his outward expression of concern.

INT. FOYER, VASUKI'S QUARTERS - DAY

Vasuki emerges through a doorway. With the Westerners supporting her, Julie walks towards him.

VASUKI

Come, lay down for a while, Sharini. I'll get a doctor.

JULIE

No. Really, I'm fine now. I'm so sorry for bothering you.

Julie's eyes well with tears. She sees a luxurious bedroom, hesitates, out of her depth. Tuning in, Vasuki takes Julie's hand, urges her inside, motions to Leya.

VASUKI

Your welfare is indeed my concern. Leya, please stay with Sharini, help her feel comfortable.

INT. VASUKI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vasuki leads Julie to a King size bed, draped with embroidered silk. He smiles lovingly at her, leaves. Leya sits on the bed, grabs Julie's arm.

INT. VASUKI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Julie lies on the bed, eyes closed. In awe, Leya touches ornately-framed, religious paintings, wide-eyed.

LEYA

Wow, oh wow. I never thought in a million years, I'd see Vasuki's bedroom. I must be dreaming.

She glides to the bed, sits down, runs her hands over the silk cover, lies down, as though in rapture. Julie opens her eyes, looks at Leya with amusement.

LEYA

Surreal.-- Sharini, how long have you been hiding out with Vasuki?

JULIE

I only met him this morning.

LEYA

No, impossible.

JULIE

True. He's so kind, I feel so embarrassed, fainting like that.

LEYA

Hey, that's neat.

Leya gets up, acts fainting, falls on the bed.

LEYA

Act the distressed damsel. What a move. Now you're in his bedroom.

Julie flashes crimson. She springs up, offended.

JULIE

Not at all. I better get going.

Leya quickly grabs Julie's arm, afraid.

LEYA

Please don't leave. Vasuki'll get upset at me. We have to wait for him to tell us to leave.

Julie stops, confused, but sees Leya's positive expression.

JULIE

We do?

Leya nods a definite "yes".

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - DAY

Vasuki directs Indian women with flowers. Others set out silver cutlery, crystal glasses, food bowls on a low round table and cushions. Vasuki smiles as they go to and fro.

INT. VASUKI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leya nods to Julie.

LEYA

Vasuki's famous. Everything he says  
I intuitively feel is true.

Julie, sitting next to her, appears intense.

JULIE

But heaps of famous people are not  
wise. How do we know when our  
feelings are the truth?

LEYA

Obviously more evolved than me.  
First meeting, whammo, you're in  
his bedroom.-- What's your point?

JULIE

Doesn't faith need a firmer  
foundation based in experience?

Leya's brow furrows, then relaxes.

LEYA

First time he touched me I had an  
experience.

She drops back on the bed as if in a swoon.

LEYA

An electric shock shot through me.  
Ooh, what a spiritual orgasm. Talk  
about psychic powers.

JULIE

Wow. Then what?

Leya sits up, frowns.

LEYA

Isn't that enough?

Leya grins, hits Julie playfully on the arm.

LEYA

Geez, I'm stupid. Go for it, you're beautiful enough.

JULIE

Come on, Leya, I told you I didn't faint on purpose.

Julie playfully hits her back. Reflective, Julie strolls to Vasuki's portrait, scans the other paintings.

JULIE

Did you get a deeper insight, grow in wisdom and compassion?

Leya slides up next to her.

LEYA

You're too cerebral. More faith - more explosions.

Leya smiles, in an elder sisterly way.

LEYA

Sharini, try just "being" for awhile.

JULIE

Being? Being what?

INT. BANGKOK AIRPORT - DAY

A Buddha sits surrounded by ancient temple ruins in the wall mural. Sage hurries past, dodges people, heads towards a departure gate.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - DAY

Vasuki guides a dazed Julie to the table, motions to sit.

She lowers slowly, stares at all the dishes as an anxious Arun enters. Vasuki nods to a cushion. Arun sits.

ARUN

Hi honey, are you okay?

Embarrassed, Julie nods.

VASUKI

Being anorexic is a hindrance to spiritual growth, Sharini.

JULIE

Please, I'm not anorexic. It's Crystal--

ARUN  
Not here 'Rini, you're talking with Vasuki.

JULIE  
But he wants to help me, Crystal--

ARUN  
Cut it, 'Rini.

VASUKI  
Sharini, we can talk about Crystal later. Please relax, eat. Arun, speaking like that with Sharini is not helping her. You have much to learn about women.

Stung, Arun looks down.

VASUKI  
Please excuse me, I must go.

They both put their hands in a gesture of respect. Vasuki leaves. Julie ignores Arun, hoes into the food.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

A contented Julie and an uptight Arun enter. Arun slams the door, explodes.

ARUN  
You almost blew it for both of us.

JULIE  
What on earth--

ARUN  
Your Crystal delusions. Talking like a buddy with Vasuki.

JULIE  
Vasuki is charming. You've never been able to take justified blame.

Arun glares at her.

ARUN  
With a belly full of food and Vasuki's attention, you've got no more excuses for whining. Satisfied?

JULIE  
Arun, are you jealous?

ARUN

Of course not. I... look, I just  
don't want anything to...

Julie strokes his shoulders. He takes her in his arms.

ARUN

We'll get through this, honey.  
We're just getting adjusted.

INT. LARGE HALL, ASHRAM - NIGHT

Arun and Julie sit with Leya in the audience of two hundred people, 80% Indians and 20% Westerners. Ethereal MUSIC.

Conspicuous with his blonde, matted hair, Mitra smiles at Julie and nods to Arun as he passes them on his way to a special cordoned off section where Devina, Crystal and high ranking women occupy seats of honor.

Mitra smiles at Devina, who looks away. He settles into the seat closest to her, outside the cordon.

On a main stage, the "Inner Circle" shaven-headed men, eight Indian and four Western sit behind Vasuki's jeweled "throne" and Naga's carved seat. The crowd CHANTS repeatedly.

CROWD

Ariya Vasuki, Ariya Vasuki...

Vasuki walks majestically along a red carpet as everyone bows. Loving the limelight, he sits, soaks in the adoring crowd, spots Julie. He keeps his eyes on her, smiles.

INT. LARGE HALL, ASHRAM - LATER

Vasuki gives blessings as SITARS play. A long line of devotees stretch out in front of him.

Each person kneels. Vasuki places his hands on the devotee's head, mumbles a prayer. Arun and Julie join the long line.

Vasuki nods to Kanuka, who directs the line to Naga and escorts Arun and Julie to Vasuki.

She lowers to her knees. His flashing eyes meet hers. Self conscious, she half smiles. She drops her head.

He gently places his hands on her head, watches her as he intones a prayer, with much feeling. Julie's whole body shudders, startling her. He lifts his hands.

Julie begins to rise. Vasuki rests his hand on her shoulder, takes off his beads, places them over her head, smiles lovingly. She timidly rises, hurries to a confused Arun.



Vasuki gazes at her as they walk away. Leya rushes to Julie.

LEYA

I saw it. Your first experience!

Julie assents. Leya touches the beads.

LEYA

Wow, oh, wow. I've never seen  
Vasuki give his beads to anyone.

Crystal glares at Julie, dashes away. Women mob Julie,  
strain to touch the beads.

INT. CALCUTTA TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Milling, angry crowd. Sage weaves through the melee, pushes  
towards an official-looking, ticket SALESMAN.

SAGE

Delhi.

SALESMAN

Train accident on line. No go.

Sage slides his way back through the crowd.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Eyes closed, Sage sits in a rusty, crowded bus as it rattles  
along. A grumpy, Western MAN slouches next to him, his arms  
and head rest on the seat in front of him.

GRUMPY MAN

At this rate, it's gonna be a long  
journey.

SAGE

We're moving.

GRUMPY MAN

One way to look at it. You been to  
India before?

SAGE

Yeah. That's the way things are  
here.

The Man relaxes, settles back.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

Julie sits at her desk with a food tray. She tentatively  
pokes her fork into carrot, in the stir fry vegetables.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

On the screen, Julie raises the carrot to her mouth.

Vasuki smiles as Julie eats the rest of the vegetables.

INT. ROOM #6 - DAY

An Indian woman picks up the food tray, leaves. Julie removes her blouse, flings it on the bed. Arun slides over, strokes her hair. She turns, he pulls her close. They kiss.

JULIE

Let's go away for a week.

ARUN

I'm almost finished--

JULIE

You haven't even started.

She runs her hands down his body to his hips.

JULIE

Remember the week in the Sierras? A cabin in the Himalayas, tomorrow?

Her hands slide to the front of his thighs. Ignited, he kisses her, passionately. He unhooks her bra.

A KNOCK at the door. Julie quickly puts on her blouse as Arun opens the door. Kanuka stands, grinning.

ARUN

Hey, what's up... Uh, come in.

KANUKA

G'day. You guys are both in Vasuki's favor. Arun, he wants to see you.

ARUN

I need a few more days.

KANUKA

No worries. He wants to talk with you about something else.

JULIE

Arun, please tell Vasuki we're going to the Himalayas for a week.

Arun stiffens. Kanuka questions Arun silently.

ARUN

As I already made quite plain, I have to finish the plans.

JULIE

I did hope you'd come with me. I guess now, I'll have to enjoy the mountains alone.

KANUKA

Arun, Vasuki's expecting you.

They leave. Julie slams the door.

EXT. ROOM #6 - CONTINUOUS

Kanuka placates an uptight Arun.

KANUKA

Inner circle members mustn't let their women control them. You can't train her, so Vasuki will. Practice emotional detachment.

Arun nods stiffly.

INT. ROOM #6 - LATER

Julie stares at Vasuki's portrait. His aura glows, his eyes sparkle. She closes her eyes. Face guarded, Arun enters. She rushes to him, sways. Arun steadies her.

ARUN

Are you okay, honey?

JULIE

I feel a bit dizzy.

A subdued Arun looks at her strangely.

ARUN

Vasuki wants to see you.

Julie's eyes widen. She turns to the portrait. A gold aura glows around Vasuki.

JULIE

The aura in the picture - is it glowing to you?

Arun looks at Vasuki, breathes deeply.

ARUN

No, my Earth woman. Maybe Vasuki's giving you a vision.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - DAY

Vasuki speaks Hindi as he sits regally, encircled by Indians on the floor. Julie and Arun enter, sit at the back.

Julie sees Vasuki's form surrounded by a golden aura. She closes her eyes, blinks. The aura disappears.

Vasuki becomes aware of her presence, smiles at her.

His eyes shine, the aura glimmers. She smiles timidly, looks away. Vasuki speaks in Hindi and the Indians leave.

VASUKI

Sharini, come closer.

They draw near. Vasuki's gold aura changes to rose pink.

VASUKI

It's very rare for a teacher to meet people who have been connected to him for thousands of lives.

Enthralled, Julie gazes at Vasuki's color bathed form.

VASUKI

It is time to make the most of this lifetime. I want to prepare you and Arun for special initiations.

JULIE

What initiations?

VASUKI

No need to worry about that yet. You first have the precious opportunity for silent meditation, in solitude, to prepare for them.

Fear flashes across Julie's face.

JULIE

Solitude, no I can't... Arun--

ARUN

It's okay, honey, just for a week before and after the initiation.

JULIE

After the cabins--

ARUN

It's why you came to India.

Julie's eyes water, a tear escapes. She wipes it quickly, embarrassed. Subdued, she whispers to Arun.

JULIE

Arun, I need you. I can't--

Arun whispers back.

ARUN

Sure you can, my strong Earth woman. Don't doubt yourself.

VASUKI

All the great masters needed courage to leave the known.

JULIE

Can't we practice together?

VASUKI

We all feel sadness when we part from those we love. But times of solitude help us experience a more unselfish love. Remember your own spiritual journey.

Julie looks up.

Vasuki's whole body glows, appears to float in the air. He smiles, lovingly.

She turns to Arun. His form recedes, gets smaller.

She looks down.

VASUKI

It's time for the Guru to guide you. Arun can't take you any further and is pulling you back.

Julie takes a deep breath, concentrates, musters courage.

JULIE

I want to see Arun before any initiation. And we have the choice on the initiation?

She looks up. A glowing Vasuki smiles. Julie takes it as an agreement. She turns to Arun. He smiles. She assents.

EXT. MAIN COURTYARD - DAY

Arun holds Julie steady as they walk along. Crystal comes from another direction. She sees them, halts.

Julie hallucinates.

Crystal's face becomes hideously gleeful. A sad, disembodied face of an old man hangs above her head. A coffin and crying people stretch out behind her.

Julie pulls away, races toward Crystal, grabs her.

JULIE  
Stop it. Quit drugging me!

CRYSTAL  
You're crazy!

Crystal pulls away. Others in the courtyard turn to stare. Shocked, Arun grabs Julie, who resists strongly.

ARUN  
Sharini, come on, not here.

Julie shakes free, turns back to Crystal. People gather, their faces close in on Julie. Arun blurs.

JULIE  
Arun, you don't see him.

Julie points to the sky and the old man's face. Arun looks up and around, searching the clear blue sky.

JULIE  
Crystal, you're evil. You're trying to kill me, like you did the poor old widower. I won't let you! I'll tell Vasuki.

Crystal's eyes widen in fear. Arun grabs Julie firmly.

CRYSTAL  
You're paranoid. You're killing yourself with your anorexia.

Crystal runs off.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Vasuki calmly stands by the window, strokes his beard.

CRYSTAL  
We have to get rid of her!

VASUKI  
If she said she'd tell me, then there's nothing to worry about.

CRYSTAL

What!

Vasuki turns. He looks at Crystal calmly, intensely.

VASUKI

She blames you, not me. Once you're  
out of the way, she'll devote  
herself to me, totally. Keep away  
from Sharini's food.

EXT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Behula and a downcast Julie walk through gardens towards a cottage. A high wall encircles the gardens and cottage.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Anxiously, Julie enters the spacious room with king size bed, massage table, wardrobe, small dining table. Vasuki's portrait hangs above an altar.

Back dropped by a huge TV screen, Vasuki sits with a zafu in front of him. He smiles, motions Julie to the zafu.

Julie sees Vasuki bathed in the golden light. She lowers down, drops her head.

VASUKI

Welcome, Sharini. We are about to  
embark on a magical inner journey  
as I guide you to realization.

Julie twirls a strand of her hair.

JULIE

I feel dizzy... I'm not sure I can,  
alone, without Arun...

VASUKI

Your spiritual longing will triumph  
over fear of the unknown.

Vasuki crouches close to her, gently lifts her chin, gives her a tender expression.

VASUKI

I will guide you. As you will be in  
silence, hold my beads when you  
meditate. I will understand.

JULIE

But how?

He looks into her eyes, intensely. Overwhelmed, Julie looks away. He walks to the TV Screen.

VASUKI

As you must first come to know solitude, I will send a DVD daily with instruction. These will prepare you for the next stage of personal connection.

He grabs a yoga mat, unrolls it.

VASUKI

Your yoga postures are well performed except the cobra and plough. I need to correct these.

JULIE

You haven't seen me... how?

VASUKI

Many things you will not be able to understand. The cobra first.

Vasuki motions Julie to the mat. Shaking, Julie lies down on her stomach. She prepares, raises up. He crouches, places his hand gently on her lower back.

VASUKI

You're straining here.

His hand slides to her buttocks.

VASUKI

Tighten your buttocks to support the lift.

Julie tightens her buttocks, raises higher. His hand lingers, glides up her back. He shifts, lifts her chin higher, his face inches away from hers, smiles.

VASUKI

You're flexible - like a goddess.

Julie lowers, relaxes. She sits up, but hangs her head.

JULIE

I've never stretched so high before. Thank you.

VASUKI

I hope to teach you many things.

He looks deeply into her eyes.



VASUKI  
Anything special I can do for you?

JULIE  
Please stop Crystal making my food.

VASUKI  
Oh?

JULIE  
She's spiking it with drugs.

Vasuki feigns surprise. He sits on his chair.

VASUKI  
My, my, why do you think that?

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

Sage and the now smiling Westerner hop off the bus.

GRUMPY MAN  
Come on - go with me to the  
waterfall.

SAGE  
I need to get to Delhi.

GRUMPY MAN  
Relax. What's the rush? One day  
won't make much difference.

SAGE  
I wish I could believe that.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Julie sits with Vasuki's beads in her right hand and watches a screen. Celestial music, with SITARS.

Against a backdrop of snow capped mountains, a close up of Vasuki. He speaks slowly, hypnotically.

VASUKI  
Don't be afraid of solitude. It's a  
rare opportunity to learn to love  
ourselves. If we are lonely, we  
haven't yet made friends with  
ourselves.

The camera scans out. As a solitary SITAR plays, Vasuki walks over flower-covered meadows towards the mountains.

EXT. HIMALAYAS - DAY - JULIE'S DREAM

Snow capped mountains.

Holding hands, Arun and Julie stroll through a flower-covered meadow towards a rustic cabin. They race up the steps, exhilarated.

JULIE  
Oh, Arun, thank you.

ARUN  
A week, just you and me.

He unlocks the door. They move inside.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Julie hugs him.

JULIE  
How'd you get Vasuki to agree?

ARUN  
Don't worry. Let's be here, okay?

She nods enthusiastically, hurries to open large, glass windows, breathes in. Euphoric, she gazes at the mountains.

JULIE  
It's so beautiful.

She turns around. No Arun.

JULIE  
Arun?

She races out on the VERANDAH. Arun stands, his arms out, breathing in the view. He turns, smiles lovingly, his arms beckon. Relieved, she runs to him. He disappears.

JULIE  
Arun! Arun!

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - MORNING

Julie thrashes in bed.

JULIE  
Arun! Arun!

She wakes up, grabs a pillow, presses it over her head.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - LATER

While eating a banana, Julie looks into a gold bowl. She pulls out her cheese can, eats a morsel and sighs.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Julie holds Vasuki's beads, watches the screen.

BIRDS sing. Deep forest, with a flowing creek. Close up of Vasuki. Filtered light makes his eyes sparkle.

VASUKI

Flow with your experience. Open to  
the spiritual world, with the Guru  
as your guide, and it will be  
easier to let go.

He turns, walks towards the creek, sits down in a meditation posture. Water flows smoothly over rocks. A FLUTE echoes.

INT. EXCLUSIVE INNER CIRCLE ROOM - NIGHT

Arun enjoys himself at a round table with Inner Circle men. Naga holds out his arm. Arun gives him a bonding handshake, beams. Kanuka hands Arun a golden goblet.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Next to her weeping fig, Julie tapes a painting of the Thai bird in the gold cage. Above, she adheres one of the bird flying out of the cage. Higher still, she places a white dove flying into the clouds. She smiles.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Julie, blissful and trancelike, fondles Vasuki's beads, gazes at the screen as celestial MUSIC plays.

Against a backdrop of floating clouds stands Vasuki.

VASUKI

When determination comes into union  
with faith, the doors of the  
spiritual world are flung open.  
Before we can truly love we have to  
learn how to trust.

Vasuki walks through the clouds as if weightless, while two HARPS play a melody, answering each other, harmonizing.

MONTAGE - SAGE IN DELHI

-- On clouds, a man slides a ring on a woman's hand. Sage walks past the poster into "DELHI'S FINEST JEWELER'S."

-- He exits an optometrist.

-- Carrying packages, he leaves a fashion store.

-- He searches a hardware shop.

INT. ASHRAM KITCHEN - NIGHT

Crystal slinks to Julie's golden tray, lifts the lid of the empty gold bowl. Using an eye dropper, she drops four drops of clear liquid into the bowl, returns the lid.

INT. ASHRAM KITCHEN - DAY

The lid raises off the bowl. An Indian cook peers in. The bottom appears discolored. She wipes it with a tissue. A small dot remains. She pours rice porridge into it.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Serenely peaceful, Julie puts on Vasuki's beads while Behula places the golden tray on the table. One covered gold bowl. A small plate of Indian sweets. Julie stares at it, panics.

JULIE

Behula, there's no fruit.

Behula touches the beads, smiles.

JULIE

Crystal?

BEHULA

She left for Delhi this morning.

Behula leaves. Julie stares at the door. HARPS play.

VASUKI (V.O.)

Before we can truly love, we have to learn how to trust.

Hypnotized, she sits down, eats.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Sage stares at Vasuki's picture that hangs above the desk. The RECEPTIONIST pulls out a brochure.

RECEPTIONIST

Vasuki's ashram is only three miles out of town. Are you interested in one of our guided tours?

SAGE

No, thanks.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sage sits on the floor in meditation.

SAGE'S VISION - A thin, spaced out Julie wearing beads. Vasuki slinks up behind her. She turns. He reaches out, smiles seductively. She hypnotically walks towards him.

BACK TO ROOM

Sage opens his eyes, gets up, grabs his small backpack.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Julie meditates, wearing Vasuki's beads.

The candle glow grows into a brilliant white light, which changes into Vasuki's shining face, smiling, lovingly. His face recedes until his whole body, lustrous, with arms outstretched, beckons. He disappears.

Light flashes on a gleaming Buddha statue, which transforms into Sage, his expression compassionate.

SAGE

Trust is a gift we only give to  
people whose actions prove they're  
worthy of such a valuable gift.

His form metamorphoses into Ajahn Panya, his face serene.

AJAHN PANYA

Disciples of Noble Ones, suffuse  
all living beings, in all  
directions, with the boundless  
thought of compassion that is free  
of hate or cruelty.

Light beams emanate from Ajahn Panya's form. His body becomes translucent, changes to a brilliant white light.

Darkness. A KNOCKING sound.

Julie staggers to open the door. She glances around, Sage appears from the bushes, holds out his hand. Dumbfounded, Julie takes it.

They go out the gate to the LANE, creep along. Windows glow behind closed curtains.

They reach the COURTYARD.

Sage puts his hand up to wait. He looks around. No one. They press themselves against the walls, hug the shadows.

They slide toward the main gate, slip through. Julie throws herself into Sage's arms. He disappears.

Julie collapses.

MONTAGE - SAGE PREPARES - NIGHT

-- Reflected in a mirror, Sage stands wrapped in a towel. The Buddha shines against his bare chest. He lathers on shave cream, shaves off his Fu Manchu.

-- Hair out to shoulders, he grabs fistfuls. Scissors cut, until all is roughly finger width length.

-- He hooks on tinted glasses, pushes a gold earring through a freshly pierced ear and slides on a bulky metal ring.

-- Wearing dark pants with zippered leg pockets, Sage pulls on a black T-shirt, picks up a navy fisherman vest, covered in bulging pockets, slips it on.

-- Sage unclasps his Buddha, gazes at it, slips it in his coin change pocket.

-- He picks up a large backpack, slips it on, grabs a small one and a bamboo cane. He checks his watch - 11 P.M.

-- Street lights illuminate a sleeping beggar. Sage gives the beaming beggar the large backpack, walks up the street.

EXT. VIP LANE - NIGHT

Julie lies crumpled. She opens her eyes, looks up at the moon. Vasuki's silhouette blocks out the moon. He reaches down, picks her up.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Vasuki lies Julie down gently on the bed. Weak, jangled, she pulls herself up to sit. Tears stream down her face.

JULIE

You didn't believe me.

Vasuki takes her hands in his.

VASUKI

What? I don't understand. Don't cry, my goddess.

JULIE

There were drugs in the food. Crystal's trying to kill me.

VASUKI  
Crystal! She'll pay for this.

He softens his voice.

VASUKI  
Really Sharini, I did believe you.  
Trust me, she won't come back.

He wipes the tears, hugs her closely. Julie melts into his arms. Eyes sparkling, he strokes her hair.

VASUKI  
You need pampering. You can't  
imagine how much I care for you.

Julie stiffens, pulls away, clutches her stomach, struggles up, rushes to the BATHROOM, vomits violently in the toilet.

EXT. ASHRAM OUTER WALL - NIGHT

Sage spotlights the top of the sheer wall with a mini flashlight. Jagged, broken glass, below three rows of barbed wire, stretched between metal brackets.

From a pant pocket, he pulls out a "J" shaped, heavy metal bar, with an "eye" opening on the long end.

He reaches into his vest pocket for a roll of super strength fishing line, ties the line to the metal.

He attaches the bar to a small nail driven through the end of his cane and hooks the bar to the metal bracket.

He pulls off his kneepads, "opens" them, exposing "fingers," like large gloves. He puts them on, tests the line, climbs, grabs the metal bracket. His other hand cuts the barbed wire with miniature wire cutters.

He pulls himself up. His boots crunch the glass. He rolls up the line, puts it and the hook away, slides the cane down the back of his shirt. He jumps to a grassy area.

INT. INITITATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Julie lies on the bed. Vasuki wipes a wet washcloth over her face, strokes her hair with the other hand.

VASUKI  
Behula will stay with you.

Vasuki looks over to Behula who stands nearby, nods.

VASUKI

You must get physically stronger  
before we can go any further.

Vasuki rises. Behula sits down, holds Julie's hand.

EXT. ASHRAM NEAR THE WALL - NIGHT

Sage walks along a path. VOICES, FOOTSTEPS.

Vasuki and Kanuka approach in the opposite direction.

Sage ducks behind a bush, watches them walk past. He slips out, walks further, spots a wooden table and benches.

He crawls under the table, sets his watch alarm, takes off his backpack, lies down, head on the backpack.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Julie pours milk from a carton, drinks.

INT. WESTERNERS' BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

Westerners sip yogurt smoothies at low, round tables. Sage walks in, searches, leaves.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

A painting of a Golden Buddha rests on the altar.

Julie tapes a painting to the wall - a vine with purple Passionflowers that hangs downward from a tree branch.

Above it, she places a painting of a fully open, white Lotus flower emerging from leaf covered water.

A KNOCK on the door. Julie opens it, Behula hustles in with a bag, moves to the wardrobe, hangs up silk saris.

JULIE

What's with the saris?

BEHULA

Vasuki wants you to wear Indian clothes. They're the finest silk. This one will be beautiful on you.

JULIE

It's not necessary.

BEHULA

Don't you want to please Vasuki?



JULIE

What do outward appearances have to do with spiritual progress?

BEHULA

Wearing Indian clothes will help you to let go of your strong Western conditioning.

JULIE

I don't see how--

BEHULA

You cling too much to the past. Immerse yourself totally.

JULIE

Can I talk with Arun?

BEHULA

Arun's in training. So are you.

Julie appears faint. Behula drops the sari, supports her.

BEHULA

You had a difficult night. Vasuki wants you to relax. First a bath, then a massage.

Julie sighs, goes into the bathroom, shuts the door.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - LATER

The sound of a FLUTE flows as smoothly as Behula's hands massage Julie's back. Julie relaxes.

INT. ALTERNATIVE THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Devotees massage stripped Westerners. Soothing MUSIC. Sage steps in. A young devotee jumps up, tries to take his vest off. Sage resists, searches, exits.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Stunningly dressed in a blue silk sari, Julie crosses off another day on a calendar. She counts four days, draws a circle around it, writes "see Arun". She pulls out a photo of them hugging at a mountain overlook, sighs.

INT. DEVINA'S BEDROOM, ASHRAM GUESTHOUSE - DAY

In a photo in Arun's wallet a healthy Julie smiles.

Shirtless, Arun stares at her photo. Devina tiptoes up behind him, runs her arms around him. He doesn't respond.

ARUN  
Hope she's okay.

DEVINA  
Probably having the time of her  
life. Vasuki's the master.

Arun stiffens. Devina tries to placate him.

DEVINA  
Do you really think you had a  
choice? You'll have to forget her.

Devina's hands slide down his body. Arun pulls away.

INT. ASHRAM CAFE, WESTERNERS' COMPOUND - DAY

Sage, his back to the window, eats with blonde Mitra.

MITRA  
Give me brunettes, more brains. If  
you're really horny--

SAGE  
Got to be a blonde.

MITRA  
I ain't gay.

SAGE  
Women, thanks.

MITRA  
Wrong country. Swedish girls are--

SAGE  
Can't wait. Too long already.

MITRA  
Only blonde I know came with the  
hot dog architect.

SAGE  
Yeah? So where is she?

MITRA  
Probably in Vasuki's bedroom. You  
ain't got a prayer. He crowned her  
with his beads in front of  
everyone.

Sage's eyebrows raise. Mitra laughs.

MITRA

Yeah, that's what we all thought.  
Now hot dog's hanging out with  
Vasuki's and my ex-honey, Devina.

Sage breathes deep, speaks softly.

SAGE

Devina's got a problem.

Arun and Devina walk by the window.

MITRA

Speak of the devil, there he is  
now. Go ask him where she is.

Sage spins around, gets up quickly.

SAGE

Thanks, friend.

EXT. ASHRAM LANE - CONTINUOUS

Sage follows a swiftly walking Arun and Devina. Arun stops,  
whispers to Devina, strides off.

Devina sweeps past Sage, into a flash Guesthouse, THE DEVA'S  
ABODE. Sage notes it, pursues Arun.

EXT. LANE TO VIP SECTION - DAY

Sage stops at the sign, RESTRICTED AREA. ACCESS BY  
PERMISSION ONLY. He peers down the lane. Kanuka races up  
behind Arun. Sage turns quickly, walks away.

FURTHER DOWN THE LANE

Kanuka grabs Arun, shakes his head. Arun pulls away.

ARUN

Piss off. She's my girlfriend.

KANUKA

Vasuki's there now.

Arun freezes. He closes his eyes, boils. Kanuka puts his arm  
around him.

KANUKA

Nothing is truly ours. All must be  
given to the Guru.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Vasuki, with a loving smile, walks slowly towards Julie. She backs away. He stops.

VASUKI

It's time for the next stage of  
your magical journey to awakening.

His sparkling eyes are kind, but penetrating. Confused, Julie stands frozen. He moves very close.

VASUKI

Together we will fly to heights  
you've never imagined.

He glides his hand seductively over her hair, down her shoulders bringing it to rest just above her breast. Spellbound, Julie responds with a slight shiver.

VASUKI

Fly with me to ecstasy on all  
levels, merging into oneness.

For a long moment Julie appears hypnotized. She pulls away, steps back. Vasuki takes a deep breath.

JULIE

Arun?

VASUKI

His power is feeble. You need the  
Guru to awaken you to your vast  
spiritual potential.

Vasuki draws close, takes her hand, looks her directly in the eyes. She blushes. Heavy with decades of longing, his emotional voice whispers.

VASUKI

I've waited so long for you. My  
soul mate throughout lifetimes.

He pulls out a small gift box, opens it. A large diamond ring sparkles. Julie stares at it.

She looks up. Vasuki smiles tenderly. Behind him, the painting of the Thai bird in the gold cage pulls Julie's attention. Her eyes open wide.

Overwhelmed, she sways, drops to her knees, head in her hands. He joins her on the floor.

VASUKI

With love and trust, we can  
experience the sacred union.

Julie shakes her head, springs up, races to the altar, her  
back to him. Vasuki sighs, slowly rises.

VASUKI

All that is mine can also be yours.

Apprehensive, Julie stands frozen.

With the pain of rejection etched deep on his face, he  
places the ring on the desk. He slowly, silently, walks to  
the door, turns, looks at her again for a long time.

Julie stares at the caged bird painting, the door OPENS and  
SHUTS.

She dashes to the painting, touches it. Her eyes glisten.  
She looks up to the dove. She grabs Vasuki's book, beads,  
the ring box, throws them into the trash.

JULIE

We've got to get out of here.

She puts on her sun necklace, passport belt, slides the  
Kalama Sutta into her small backpack, races out to the metal  
GATE.

It's locked. She looks up at the spiked top.

Frantic, she grabs a rock, pounds on the gate. The SOUND  
echoes. She SCREAMS.

JULIE

Let me out! Let me out!

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - LATER

Julie SCREAMS, struggles against the strong arms of Ravana  
and Behula, who hold Julie down on the bed.

JULIE

No, No! How can you lock me up!

BEHULA

Trust us. You're anorexic, bulimic,  
delusional, you see things. We  
can't let you out on your own.

JULIE

No, Crystal drugged me. Let me go!

An Indian DOCTOR dressed in a white coat, approaches the bed, opens a black bag, takes out a syringe. Seeing it, Julie thrashes more, tears stream down her face.

JULIE  
No drugs! No! No!

BEHULA  
It's just a blood test to see if  
you're anemic. We try to help you.

Behula takes the syringe from the doctor, shows Julie.

BEHULA  
See Sharini, it's empty.

Julie calms down. Behula wraps a rubber around Julie's arm. Julie looks at her arm. From her pocket, the doctor replaces the syringe with one with a small amount of white fluid.

The doctor plunges it in, presses the liquid in. Julie grimaces. The Doctor pulls it out.

DOCTOR  
Couldn't get the right place.

The doctor presses the syringe in, draws blood, withdraws, slips the sample in her bag and walks out.

Ravana releases an exhausted Julie, leaves. Behula sits beside Julie whose eyes are closed. Julie opens her eyes.

BEHULA  
Sharini, Vasuki believes you are  
very special. Your doubt prevents  
you from opening to his help.  
Remember why you came to India.

Behula smiles, nods, exits. Julie stares at the door.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - LATER

Julie gazes at her painting of the Buddha on the altar.

BEHULA (O.S.)  
Good to see you've calmed down.

JULIE  
Yes, my doubts have vanished.

Julie turns. Behula smiles.

JULIE  
Can I go to town for medicine?

BEHULA

I can get the medicine.

JULIE

No, I've forgotten it's name, I'd recognize it if I see the box.

BEHULA

Let me see if I can arrange it.

Behula leaves. Julie picks up Amy's "ABORIGINAL DREAMTIME". Her face takes on a determined expression. She grabs her notebook, rips out paper, draws a map, writes and signs.

INSERT - THE NOTE

"I'm held captive at Vasuki's ashram. Please contact the American embassy. Julie Shorberg Passport #365489431

Julie Shorberg."

BACK TO SCENE

Julie flips to Amy's email address. She rips out the page, folds both, slips them in her passport holder, puts her hand to her head and leans against the wall.

EXT. DEVA'S ABODE GUESTHOUSE - DAY

Sage leans against the wall. Devina, sheer blouse, bare midriff, long skirt, exits. Sage pitches a coin towards her.

It spins and lands at her feet. She stops. Sage slides swiftly to the coin, eyes her ankles.

SAGE

In a celestial garden, a Serpent lies coiled at the foot...

Intrigued, Devina waits. Sage raises, eyes level to her hips, pauses.

SAGE

Of a rose bush.

Surprised, Devina gazes at him. He rises, looks intently at her bare, studded navel.

SAGE

Long graceful stems...

Sage raises slowly to Devina's breasts.

SAGE

Support curved golden rosebuds.

Sage rises to Devina's partly opened lips.

SAGE

When they begin to open...

Sage raises to Devina's eyes. A long moment of eye contact.

SAGE

The serpent sells them for a  
quarter of a million.

Devina's eyes flash from arousal to confusion.

SAGE

Now the serpent is enamored by  
Sharini, the next flower to bloom  
in the Sahara desert will be you.

DEVINA

Sell me?

SAGE

The man in white robes is here.

Sage nods soberly. Fear floods Devina's face.

EXT. CROWDED LANE, INDIAN MARKET - DAY

Toting her umbrella, Amy weaves through a crowd.

Advancing from the other direction, Behula and an Indian  
woman, firmly hold a stumbling Julie. Julie sees Amy.

JULIE

Dreamtime! Dreamtime!

Amy looks over just as Julie collapses. Behula SHRIEKS,  
catches Julie. Amy races over.

AMY

I'm a nurse.

BEHULA

She's mentally ill, hallucinates,  
thinks life is a dream. Dreamtime.

Amy takes over supporting Julie, lifts Julie's head up. A  
nervous Behula talks to the other woman in Hindi.

AMY

Strewth. No dream. Nightmare.

Amy lifts Julie's eyelids, sees her red eyes, frowns.



AMY

She needs a hospital. She's coming with me.

Behula steps forward.

BEHULA

Out of the question.

Amy takes Julie's pulse.

AMY

You ain't her mum, lady. She needs a doctor. Her pulse is racing.

BEHULA

All right, Miss. We will come, too.

AMY

Ain't necessary.

Behula talks in Hindi with the other woman as Julie comes to, pulls out her passport, note and shoves them into Amy's hand. Amy puts them in her money belt.

JULIE

Take these, go to the Embassy.

AMY

What's this nightmare?

JULIE

Rare birds end up in cages.

Behula's friend runs off. Behula turns back, crouches.

BEHULA

Miss Sharini, you okay, now?

JULIE

I have to talk with Arun.

Behula declines firmly. Julie clings to Amy.

JULIE

My friend, wake me from my dream.

BEHULA

I'll arrange it.

JULIE

When?

BEHULA

This afternoon.

Amy sees Behula's friend approach with three large Indian men. Behula jumps up, relieved.

AMY

In your Dreamtime, the Dove flies  
with the Bald Eagle to Lady  
Liberty.

Julie hugs Amy tightly, whispers.

JULIE

Nine P.M. tonight?

Amy helps her up. The men move forward, menacingly. A Mercedes pulls up next to them. Amy steps back.

Behula takes Julie's hand. They get into the car. Julie waves as the car leaves.

The men step toward Amy. She runs, glances back. The men pursue. She dashes through a crowded market.

A vendor pushes a heavily-laden, big wagon into the lane. She zips past before he blocks the through way, halting the advance of the men.

She runs to a rickshaw, gets in. It drives off.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

Vasuki looks out the window, strokes his beard.

BEHULA (O.S.)

I had to think quickly.

Vasuki turns. Behula and Kanuka stand waiting.

VASUKI

We can use her devotion to Arun.  
Kanuka, prepare Arun immediately.

EXT. LANE LEADING TO JULIE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Arun, shaved head, saffron shirt, brown pants approaches the cottage. Kanuka unlocks the gate. Arun goes through, Kanuka locks the gate behind him.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - DAY

Julie looks out the window. Her eyes widen with shock.

Arun enters. Julie races to him, pulls wildly at the shirt. It rips as she tries to tear it off.

JULIE

No, you can't. You can't!

Arun grabs her hands, stops her.

ARUN

You gone mad? 'Rini, stop it!

JULIE

You're crazy! You think it's okay for me to be locked up!?

ARUN

Calm down. Too much meditation. You need a rest from it.

JULIE

Bullshit! You don't care about me! Afraid you won't get the power you crave if I don't please Vasuki?

ARUN

'Rini, calm down, let's talk sense.

JULIE

Yes, you're right I'm crazy and blind! Amy and my mom were right.

She sweeps her hands up and down in the air.

JULIE

Inner Circle initiate, Arun. How'd that happen so quickly?

Arun grimaces.

JULIE

Do you think I'm your property to be traded like a slave? How disgusting!

ARUN

You're jumping to conclusions.

JULIE

I'm not stupid! How could you sell yourself so easily?

A furious Arun grabs Julie by the shoulders, shakes her.

ARUN

Stop it 'Rini, shut up.

She pulls away, flares.

JULIE

Two of a kind, selling out for fame  
and power. Are you going to allow  
him to rape me? Maybe you'll join  
in, too. Will it be an Inner Circle  
group sharing activity?

Raging out of control, Arun slaps her. Julie falls.

The light shining in the window flashes on her sun necklace  
into Arun's eyes.

Holding her face, Julie struggles up.

JULIE

When the Sun collides with the  
Earth, the shooting star flashes to  
extinction.

Ashamed, Arun puts both of his hands to his face.

JULIE

Arun, we've got to leave. I don't  
want to live my life in a cage.

Arun's eyes glisten.

JULIE

Vasuki's very skillful. Isolate me,  
drug us, shower us with praise and  
fame. Please, let's go home.

Arun runs his hand over his freshly shaved head. Julie puts  
a photo of them on the desk.

JULIE

Maybe this will help you make up  
your mind.

He stares at the photo. On a mountain outlook, a beaming  
Arun hugs Julie.

JULIE

And making love in the Sierras.

Arun sighs, he takes the photo, hugs her.

ARUN

I'll tell Vasuki we're leaving.

JULIE

Let's go now. Vasuki won't let us  
leave.

ARUN  
Gate's locked. Kanuka's waiting.

Arun pulls away. He nods.

ARUN  
I'll agree to return to India after  
I get you home. It'll be okay. He  
needs me for the temple.

Arun walks to the door, turns back. They catch eyes. A long moment. Arun leaves.

INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - DAY

A nervous Arun sits on the other side of Vasuki's desk. Vasuki leans back in his office chair.

ARUN  
Sharini wants to go home. So we're  
leaving tomorrow.

Vasuki sits up. Face even, Vasuki nods.

ARUN  
I assure you I'll return, stay  
until the temple is completed.

Vasuki presses a button on the inner side of the desk.

VASUKI  
Have a good trip.

Arun relaxes. Vasuki dismisses him. Arun walks to the door, opens it. Ravana, Kanuka and two Indian thugs stand solid. Fear engulfs Arun's face.

VASUKI (O.S.)  
Arun, you're a fool.

EXT. WESTERNERS' COMPOUND - DAY

Sage slides up next to Mitra as he walks.

SAGE  
Still care about Devina?

Mitra sighs.

SAGE  
Why do you stay?

Pain crosses Mitra's face. He stops walking.

SAGE  
You waiting?

Mitra assents.

SAGE  
Not much time left, friend.

Sage cocks his head toward the Deva's Abode. Mitra looks at him strangely. With an urgent expression, Sage nods. Mitra races towards the Deva's Abode.

INT. UNITED STATES EMBASSY, DELHI - DAY

An American flag. Amy rushes out from an office with PHIL JONES, an embassy official.

PHIL  
Nine P.M. will be cutting it close.

EXT. GATE, WESTERNERS' COMPOUND - NIGHT

Devina and Mitra, both in dark clothes, hair covered, walk swiftly towards the gate. Sage sits nearby. Devina whispers.

DEVINA  
Sharini will be at the hall  
tonight.

MITRA  
We'll love you forever.

Mitra gives the thumbs up. Sage smiles, nods. With heads down, they go out the gate.

Two Indian men and the Middle Eastern man march towards Deva's Abode. Sage slips away quickly.

INT. LARGE HALL, ASHRAM - NIGHT

Sage stands near a chair in the back, closest to the aisle amidst the large gathering. He searches for Julie or Arun. No one. He sits. Everyone CHANTS.

CROWD  
Ariya Vasuki, Ariya Vasuki...

Julie, silk sari, hair up with ornaments, enters with Behula, who holds Julie firmly. Sage momentarily starts, rises, stops, wills himself to sit and stares after her.

Behula leads her to the special section.

Focused, Sage moves to an aisle seat closer to the front.

Julie searches for Arun. No one. She slumps.

Everyone bows as Vasuki enters down a red carpet. Sage squints as he watches Vasuki.

Vasuki sits on his "throne", scans the crowd. He turns to Julie, looks long, smiles. Unsmiling, Julie stares defiantly. He speaks into a microphone.

VASUKI

Love is the way. We are bound together by our past Karma. By serving the Guru, you serve God and will be united with him at your death.

Julie stands up abruptly, interrupts.

JULIE

Excuse me, I have a question.

Vasuki's eyes narrow. He directs a man to give Julie a microphone. She takes it, goes weak at the knees, steadies.

Intense, Sage watches.

JULIE

Where's Arun?

VASUKI

As a new inner circle member, Arun is learning his most important responsibilities to the Guru.

JULIE

You teach "LOVE IS THE WAY". Locking me up, drugging me, is hardly what I call love.

The crowd GASPS. Many people talk loudly amongst themselves.

VASUKI

Anorexia is a very difficult condition to treat. The gentle touch didn't work. Now a firmer face of love is needed.

JULIE

I doubt your intentions are pure.

After a momentary stunned expression, Vasuki closes his eyes. A long silence. Everyone in the crowd is stunned, waits. All faces strain with anticipation. Vasuki opens his eyes, smiles.

VASUKI

Unless you respect the Guru, you will never know him well enough to judge wisely.

JULIE

Doesn't respect arise due to a person being worthy of respect and having teachings worthy of being respected?

Vasuki closes his eyes. Complete silence. Julie looks down, clenches her hands tightly on the microphone, steels herself to prevent shaking.

Sage rises quietly, walks to a back chair.

VASUKI

When you're better, your paranoia may cease.

Confident and courageous, she looks him straight in the eyes with a fearless expression.

VASUKI

Besides, what do Westerners know about respect? It is easy to see the results of Western conceit in the world.

JULIE

A wise Asian Monk in Bodhgaya said that the Buddha encourages people to test the wisdom of their teachers.

Some women stare, amazed, others show enjoyment, whisper. Sage slinks to the back wall, near the door. Kanuka eyes Sage's movement. Perplexed, Kanuka stares at Sage, shakes his head.

VASUKI

Time is limited. I cannot satisfy you here. We can continue in private. I promise, I will give you my utmost personal attention.

Eyes desirous, Vasuki locks his eyes on hers, smiles. Shocked, Julie looks away, slumps.

The crowd murmurs, then silence. All faces turn to Julie.

Sage slips out of the Hall.



## JULIE

If I know a teaching is unskillful,  
I turn away from it.

She drops the microphone, runs down the aisle.

Vasuki withdraws behind a mask of detachment.

Some women get up, exit, partners trailing after them.

EXT. LARGE HALL, ASHRAM - CONTINUOUS

Sage hugs the shadows, watches the exit door.

Julie emerges. Two body guards grab her, two others trail as they lead her towards the gate of the VIP Indian Section.

Sage follows at a distance. Confused people stream out, head towards the front gate, giving good cover for Sage.

EXT. LANE LEADING TO JULIE'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

The guards march Julie down the deserted lane.

Sage slinks along. His dark clothes merge into the shadows.

Julie and the guards reach the gate to her cottage. Two guards pull her inside. Two wait. Moments later the guards emerge, lock the gate. They walk back.

Sage ducks behind a bush, watches them march by.

Silently, quickly, he advances toward the gate, moves along the wall until a shadow of a tree gives him cover. He removes his glasses and earring, takes out the Buddha, clasps it around his neck.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

A wall clock reads 8:45. Julie paces like a newly caged lioness. Her eyes dart to Vasuki's portrait, the Buddha, her paintings. She races to a painting.

She traces her finger up the passion fruit vine, to the tree branches, over to the edge of the paper. Her eyes widen. She hurries to her weeping fig tree, traces a branch over towards the wall.

Julie tears off her sari, drops it to the floor.

EXT. LANE LEADING TO JULIE'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sari flapping, Behula catches up with Ravana.

BEHULA

I'm sure I saw a man on the wall.

RAVANA

You're probably seeing things. Lay off the celestial potions.

BEHULA

You know how obsessed Vasuki is with her.

RAVANA

Go lie down. I'll check it out.

EXT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Julie, T-shirt, long pants, scarf, runs out, sweeps around the back to the tree and scrambles up the trunk. She crawls along the vine covered branch. It stops a few feet from the wall. She stares at the expanse, unsure.

INT. INITIATION PREPARATION COTTAGE - NIGHT

Sage races in the open door.

SAGE

Julie, Julie?

He sees the sari, dashes to the bathroom, knocks.

SAGE

Julie?

Quiet. He opens the door. Empty. He races out.

EXT. TREE - NIGHT

Julie finishes twisting vines together into a thick rope.

SAGE (O.S.)

Julie?

Alarmed, she grabs the vine, swings. As she goes over the wall, a leg drags on the glass. Her pants rip, blood spurts out. She grimaces.

Sage sees her swing, hurries to the tree, scrambles up.

Swinging back, Julie's buttock slams into the wall, stuns her.

Ravana prowls the wall, sees her dangling, bolts over. Julie slides down the vine. Ravana grabs her.

RAVANA  
Going somewhere?

Horrified, Julie struggles wildly but he holds her firmly. She knees him in the crotch. He crumples.

She runs. Ravana struggles up, pursues, grabs her from behind, pins her arms behind her.

A boot contacts Ravana's head. He drops unconscious.

Julie spins around, sees the Buddha. She looks up into Sage's clean-shaven face.

JULIE  
Sage?

SAGE  
Yes.

Julie throws herself into his arms.

SAGE  
Come.

He grabs her hand. They race to the laneway. He turns toward the main gate. She pulls the other way.

JULIE  
A Fig tree down here.

They run, reach the tree. The limb that went over the wall has been lopped off.

JULIE  
They cut it.

Sage takes the twine out from his pocket.

KANUKA (O.S.)  
Sage? Vasuki'll be ecstatic.

They spin around. Kanuka flanked by two burly thugs stand threatening. Sage whispers to Julie.

SAGE  
When I say, "Go", run to the front gate.

KANUKA  
It's not a time for endearments.

Kanuka nods to the guards. Sage's face sets, his body tenses. Ready. The two men step closer. Sage waits.

They lunge at him. Sage's boot contacts one of the men's jaws sending him to the ground, Sage's fist slams the other man's stomach, winding him badly. He throws a punch at Sage. His fist comes within inches of Sage's face.

Sage grabs his arm, sends him flying. The other man runs from behind. Sage bends, propels the man over his back, sprawled on the ground.

The other thug jumps up before Sage has time to recover. His fist slams into Sage's face. Sage falls. The thug goes to kick him. Sage grabs his foot, the man topples. Sage springs up, prepares. The thug barrels towards Sage.

Sage jumps. His boot contacts the thug's head. He drops unconscious. The other man gets up, races towards Julie.

Sage pulls Julie aside. Sage's fist smashes into the man's jaw. He drops to his knees. He raises up but Sage gives him a chop to the back of his head. He falls unconscious.

SAGE

Go.

Julie runs. Kanuka tries to grab her. Sage flings Kanuka to the ground. Kanuka gets up, lunges at Sage. Sage contacts Kanuka's jaw. He falls, stunned.

Sage sprints.

EXT. MAIN COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Julie runs frantically.

Her scarf slips off, hair ornaments drop to the ground, hair falls down in her face, blood soaks her pant leg. The Western tattooed man sees her.

TATTOOED MAN

Sharini, it's night, it's not safe.

Julie speeds. Twenty yards to the gate. An INDIAN MAN sees her.

INDIAN MAN

Miss Sharini.

Ten yards. Both men pursue her as she closes in on the gate. The men get closer from different directions.

Almost there, but the tattooed man grabs her. She struggles wildly. Sage's boot smashes into the back of the man's head. He falls. Julie spins around, sees the Indian man sprawled on the ground. They run out.

AMY (O.S.)  
That's her!

Gun aimed, a POLICEMAN lets them pass. Amy and Phil race over.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

In the back, Julie's head rests against Sage's shoulder, his arm wraps around her. Phil and a plain clothes, Indian Delhi DETECTIVE sit in the front seat. The Policeman strides up to the window.

POLICEMAN  
Mr. Jones. My chief says to come in the morning. Too late now.

The Policeman leaves. The Detective scowls.

DETECTIVE  
Lazy or corrupt. My guess, corrupt.

PHIL  
Show your badge?

DETECTIVE  
This is big. We may be able to nail Vasuki. We need help from Delhi.

The Detective pulls out a cell phone. Phil drives off.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Vasuki's portrait hangs above the reception.

Phil and the Detective sign in. The suspicious-looking receptionist eyes Amy, Sage and Julie, who wait on a couch. Julie's body shakes, blood soaks her pant leg.

AMY  
Shock. Got to observe her closely.  
The leg needs dressing.

JULIE  
I can't stop shivering.

SAGE  
We know. It's okay.

Phil hands two keys to Amy. Julie tries to stand, crumples. Sage picks her up, carries her up the stairs towards room #215. Amy unlocks the door, enters. Sage carries Julie in.

INT. ROOM #215 - CONTINUOUS

Amy drops her backpack on one bed, enters the bathroom. Sage lays Julie down on the other bed, sits next to her, strokes her hair and looks at her tenderly.

JULIE

Am I dreaming? Are you real or will you disappear again? Will I wake up, return to the nightmare?

SAGE

I'm real. No dream.

Amy comes back. Discreetly looking towards the door, she takes out pajamas and a First Aid kit. Sage glances at Amy.

SAGE

Julie, rest.

Sage walks to Amy, looks at her backpack.

AMY

Not goin' anywhere, mate.

A firm Amy holds up the key to #217.

AMY

She's safe here.

Sage's eyes betray doubt, feeling of an uncompleted task.

AMY

She's in shock. She needs me. She can't do everything herself.

Amy keeps eye contact with Sage. Sage nods, takes the key. Amy turns toward the door. Sage returns to Julie, sits down.

SAGE

Good night, Julie.

Julie reaches out for him. Sage hesitates.

The moment hangs heavy with a decision that will change his life. Their eyes catch. Time seems to stop.

He lowers. Her hands clasp his neck, pull him down. Their lips touch. The kiss becomes a mere symbol for the connection taking place. Julie's whole body relaxes.

JULIE

Sage... thank you.

Sage breathes deeply, forces himself to leave.

SAGE  
Look after her.

AMY  
Do my best, mate.

Amy walks over to Julie.

AMY  
Come on Luv, I need to wash ya up,  
dress the leg. I'm not as strong as  
ya Sage, so ya gonna have to help.

Julie struggles up, Amy's trained arms encircle her. They walk towards the bathroom.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sage exits Julie's room, unlocks the next door, walks in.

INT. ROOM #215 - LATER

A stronger Julie, hair out, exits the bathroom, dressed in Amy's silk pajamas. The legs and arms are rolled up. She looks angelic, almost childlike, if it wasn't for her woman's form that the soft, shimmering silk accentuates.

JULIE  
Thanks so much, Amy.

AMY  
My pleasure. Ya got a good one  
there in Sage.

Julie glows. They get into bed, turn off the light.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A van pulls up. Five big men wearing face masks, carrying guns, tumble out. One man carries two large metal braces. A rickshaw pulls up behind them. One man talks to the rickshaw driver. The men go inside.

INT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist exchanges a key for a thick envelope. They thugs quietly climb the stairs. Three men stop at ROOM #215.

One man with a brace continues to #219, places it in the door frame, latches it to the handle, nods. Another man does the same to #217.

INT. ROOM #215 - CONTINUOUS

Julie lies asleep. A hand covers her mouth. Her eyes open wide. The man pokes a gun, with a silencer, in her face. He yanks her up.

Another man covers Amy's mouth. Amy struggles, bites the man's hand, SCREAMS. The man knocks her over the head with the butt of the gun. She falls back, unconscious.

INT. ROOM #217 - NIGHT

Sage jolts awake, jumps up, races to the door, tries to open it, but it won't budge.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

The men bound down the stairs. One man carries Julie, her mouth gagged shut, over his shoulder.

INT. ROOM #217 - NIGHT

Sage hurries to the window, sees them exit. He slips on his boots, vest, grabs his cane. He runs at the door, jumps, kicks. The door flings open.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He dashes to room #219, rips off the brace, KNOCKS loudly. Phil opens the door.

SAGE

Julie's been kidnapped.

Sage spins around, Phil grabs his arm. The Detective stands behind Phil, pulls out his cell phone.

PHIL

Wait, help's already on the way,  
come with us. It's too dangerous.  
What about Amy?

SAGE

It may be too late. Only Julie.

Sage rushes away. Phil darts to room #215.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Sage runs to the rickshaw, gets in.

EXT. HILL BEFORE ASHRAM - NIGHT

The rickshaw pulls up. Sage gets out, walks swiftly away. The driver dials on his cell phone.



INT. VASUKI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dressed in ceremonial robes, Vasuki reclines in his chair. The door opens. He springs up. Ravana pulls in a bound Julie and leaves. Julie shakes. Vasuki smiles. Julie's face is set in stone. He unties her hands.

She looks down. Vasuki lustfully looks her over. He runs his hands over her breasts to her waist. Julie stands rigid. Vasuki yanks her chin up, kisses her roughly. Julie's lips are as tight as her body.

VASUKI

You'll give yourself to me in time.  
The ceremony is in ten minutes.

JULIE

Never.

VASUKI

Stubbornness will not help you.

Julie stares at him with contempt. Vasuki grabs her hand, pulls her out into the foyer.

VASUKI

You need to understand the results  
of not yielding to my will.

EXT. ASHRAM WALL - NIGHT

Sage grabs the line, climbs. Light beams spotlight him. He scrambles higher. Bullets ricochet near him.

KANUKA (O.S.)

You're dead if you go any further.  
I suggest you cooperate.

Sage drops. Kanuka's fist swings towards Sage's face. Sage dodges. A thug smashes Sage with a gun butt. Kanuka lays into him. Kanuka stops.

KANUKA

We're itching to do more, Sagey  
boy, but Vasuki wants you alive.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - NIGHT

The wedding fire burns near the altar.

Vasuki pulls Julie roughly in, haughtily points to Arun, who sways back and forth on the floor, eyes vacant. He MUMBLES chants and dribbles.

Julie speeds to him, crouches down close.

JULIE

Arun... Arun? It's me, Julie.

He stares, face empty, shows no recognition. He chants.

Julie springs up in shock, covers her mouth in horror, face contorting in grief.

JULIE

Oh no! No, no... How could he do this to you?

Like a rag doll Julie crumples, tears stream down her face. She touches her sun necklace, takes it off, clips it around his neck, kisses him gently on his cheek. He stares blankly.

JULIE

A shooting star flashes across the night sky.

VASUKI (O.S.)

Very touching. Your love for him destroyed him. If you'd let him go, he'd be just fine now.

Julie springs up, spins around, rages.

JULIE

That's not true! You did this to him, not me!

VASUKI

Sage will be here shortly. His fate is a painful, horrifying death, if you don't come to your senses.

Julie races at him, pounds her fists into his chest. He grabs her arms, holds her close, kisses her hard. She strains with all her strength, pulls away.

JULIE

You'll never cage my mind.

VASUKI

I promised you everything.

JULIE

Except the freedom I seek.

VASUKI

You're worth half a million. Your lack of gratitude tempts me.

The impact of his statement acts like a fist to her stomach.

Vasuki presses a button on the wall. The Middle Eastern man saunters in, leers at Julie.

VASUKI

I offer you more freedom than my  
client in the Middle East.

Julie reels with the revelation.

A Pandit priest enters, moves to the wedding fire.

Three thugs stomp in, pulling Sage, hands bound behind him, the side of his head blue and bleeding. They force him into a chair, bind his feet.

JULIE

Sage. No!

Vasuki looks at Sage smugly. Julie rushes towards Sage. An Indian thug blocks her.

Behind his back, Sage fiddles with his bulky metal ring.

VASUKI

Will you cooperate?

JULIE

Let him free, I'll agree to  
anything you want.

VASUKI

Glad you've finally come to your  
senses.

Sage flips open the ring, exposing a sharp edge and rubs it against the rope.

SAGE

No way he'll let me go. Never let a  
sick snake take over your mind.

Vasuki strides over, slaps his face. Sage shows no emotion.

JULIE

Kill me, too!

VASUKI

Half a million alive, nothing dead.

The Middle Eastern Man steps forward eagerly.

Vasuki returns to Julie, holds out his hands. Julie puts hers in his.

A twine on the rope breaks. Sage rubs and rubs.

The SOUND of helicopters and SIRENS pierce the air.

EXT. ASHRAM - NIGHT

Helicopters, with spotlights, hover above the Ashram. One lands in the courtyard, the other outside the gate.

Heavily armed police tumble out. Police cars, lights flashing, screech to a halt. A MEGAPHONE blasts.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Send out Vasuki and his Circle. All others who cooperate will be given amnesty. Do not resist.

INT. VASUKI'S PRIVATE MEDITATION HALL - NIGHT

Naga speeds in.

NAGA

Cops! Everywhere. The tunnel!

VASUKI

No! Stay here!

All the others run out. Vasuki locks the door.

Another twine breaks on the rope. Sage smiles.

An infuriated Vasuki bolts to a table, picks up a syringe, spins around, waves it at Sage.

VASUKI

Smile all you want. You have lost. You're going to die. How do you feel about that?

Forgotten, Julie edges closer behind an obsessed Vasuki.

Sage closes his eyes.

SAGE

I feel...

Sage opens his eyes. Serene, he looks at a sneering Vasuki with compassion.

SAGE

Compassion. You chose to harm rather than help others. All that supports your power is crumbling. You are left with nothing. You have lost. And you are lost.

Vasuki stares. Breaking out of shock, Vasuki rages, barrels towards Sage, needle in hand.

Julie dives, grabs Vasuki's ankles.

Vasuki falls, drops the needle. It lands upright pointing towards his stomach. He falls on top of it. The needle pierces into his flesh, the liquid drains into him.

Vasuki's eyes open wide with horror and fear. His body shakes in violent convulsions. His body stiffens.

The rope tying Sage snaps.

Julie jumps up, races into Sage's arms. They cling to each other.

EXT. HILLSIDE MONASTERY, THAILAND - DAWN

Darkness, a vibrating BELL echoes. Silence, another GONG. Silence. Another, as the day brightens showing the hillside with two temples.

Light from the rising sun flashes off the tiles. The bell stops. The sound of Monks CHANTING.

At the base of the temple, Sage sits in meditation. Julie meditates a few feet away.

A flock of white birds swoop low over them, soar off. They shrink, disappear into the colored clouds.

FADE OUT: