

Pala

CREDIT: Written by
AUTHORS: Vindhya Buthpitiya, Theena Kumaragurunathan
NOTES: Working Production Draft

COPYRIGHT: (c) 2022, Vindhya Buthpitiya, Theena
Kumaragurunathan

Deniyaya

EXT. BLACK SCREEN

CHANTING IN THE BACKGROUND AND THE FLICKERING OF A FIRE

CUT TO:

EXT. A MAN SEEN FROM BEHIND.

A bare-shouldered man is walking through the dark into a jungle, torch in hand. The torch is made out reeds and requires constant waving to keep it lit. As he walks, waving his fire-y wand, we see parts of his body lit up briefly before the dark shadows consume it. This battle between light and shadow is being played out on the canvas that is this man's body.

Pala (VO)

'I have always wanted to do what my
father and grandfather wanted to
do.'

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRE

Closeup of a burning bonfire, wood crackling, the faint whisper of a chant building up.

CUT TO:

EXT.

The bare-shouldered man, again seen from behind and over his shoulder. The camera continues to follow him as the battle between light and darkness continues to play itself out on his bare back.

EXT.

Closeup of oil/water being poured into a container. The incantations, the sheer sonic assault of this seeming ritual is reaching for a crescendo.

EXT. FACE

Closeup of a face. Like the bare-back canvas of the man we are following, this man's face is also a battleground between light and dark. In fact, we only see the illuminated half of his face.

EXT.

Back to the fire (more intense crackling while music swells)

EXT. FACE

Close up of the mouth again, the incantation is now more intense.

EXT.

Back to the prop in the hands of the ritual performer.

EXT. FACE

Closeup of eye - the reflection of the fire can be seen, the incantation, the wave of sheer sonic mass is rising to a crescendo, and then ...

ZOOM OUT (RAPIDLY)

EXT. THE CEREMONIAL GROUND

EXT. DENIYAYA

EXT. ZOOMING OUT OF SRI LANKA, UNTIL WE SEE THE ISLAND FROM SPACE. AS WE ARE ZOOMING OUT, IMAGES OF STATE-SPONSORED VIOLENCE DURING THE JVP INSURRECTION - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, NEWSPAPER REPORTS, RADIO NEWS FROM THAT ERA - ARE JUXTAPOSED WITH RAPID CUTS OF PALA'S WORKS, FOCUSING ON HIS MAPS SERIES ESPECIALLY; THE MUSIC HAS NOW CRESCENDOED. THE 'CAMERA', TAKES A SECOND TO BREATHE BEFORE..

ZOOM IN (RAPIDLY)

EXT. DENIYAYA

EXT. THE CEREMONIAL GROUND. THE CAMERA ARRIVES BACK IN THE CEREMONIAL GROUND, THIS TIME CENTERING PALA INTO THE CENTER OF THE FRAME.

DOLLY (OUT)ZOOM (IN)

EXT. PALA (CENTERED) AS WE DOLLY OUT AND ZOOM IN AT THE SAME TIME, WE CAN SEE PALA'S FACE WARP AND CONSUME THE NEGATIVE SPACE AROUND HIM, WHILE THE BACKGROUND SEEMS TO SHRINK.

CUT TO:

(On screen-title): **PALA**

FADE TO:

INT. AN ARTIST'S STUDIO. WE DON'T SEE MUCH OF OUR

PROTAGANIST, AS THE CAMERA IS INTERESTED IN HIS HANDS. AND THE SOUND OF HIM AT WORK - SCRATCHES ON PAPER, LED ON TEXTURED PAPER.

PALA: (VO)
Duwa, we come from Deniyaya, in the
deep south of Sri Lanka.

CUT TO:

EXT. SINHARAJA.

We are looking at the Medarapitiya-Sinharaja bridge, spanning over the Gin Ganga from above. Against the sound of Peacocks in the distance, we can also hear the sound of food steps on brittle branches, as they crack. Someone is walking through this ancient forest...

PALA:
This is ancient land with an ancient rainforest that has always seemed to want to swallow the town, but the river holds the jungle back, protecting our ancestors and us for thousands of years. I was born there in 1972, the year this country finally threw away its colonial name, and we named ourselves.

PALA (VO):
What did you father and
grandfather do?
My father, your grandfather, and my grandfather and his father before him were..

CUT TO:

(Split screen into three equal parts)

INT. PALA'S HANDS WORKING IN THE STUDIO

EXT. AN OLD MAN'S HANDS LOOKING FOR RAW MATERIALS THAT ALLOW HIM TO PRACTICE THE ART OF HIS FOREFATHERS.

EXT. THE BROKEN BRIDGE CONNECTING MEDIRIPITIYA AND SINHARAJA.

PALA (VO):
Describe this to us?

CUT TO:

EXT. (LONG SHOT) THE OLD MAN IS REVEALED, JUNGLE AROUND HIM.

PALA (VO):
How did you perceive/understand this as a child?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of your father's work?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of
your grandfather's work?

PALA (VO):
What was your most significant
childhood memory?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your family?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your father?

PALA (VO):
Can you describe him for us?

PALA (VO):
Did have a speciality in his work?

PALA (VO):
What did people specifically seek
him out for?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific/memories of
any such occasions?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your mother?

PALA (VO):
Can you describe her for us?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of
your mother?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your siblings?

PALA (VO):
Can you describe them to us?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of
your siblings from your
childhood/youth?

PALA (VO):
Were your grandparents around when
you were growing up?

PALA (VO):
Were they also from the village you
grew up in?

PALA (VO):
Can you describe them to us?

PALA (VO):
What did they do?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of them?

PALA (VO):
Can you tell us about your childhood home/house?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of the house you grew up in?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
Where did you live?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your village? Can you describe it to us?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
Who lived there?

PALA (VO):
What did they mostly do?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of your village from when you were growing up?

PALA (VO):
How did your family fit into this picture?

PALA (VO):
How did you begin to become aware of this difference?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of this?

PALA (VO):
How did you begin to understand your
(MORE)

PALA (VO): (CONT'D)
family's relationship to the village
and their place in the village?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of
this?

PALA (VO):
Did your parents or other family
members talk about this?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
Were you aware of what life was like
outside the village?

PALA (VO):
How so?

PALA (VO):
Were you curious about life outside
the village?

PALA (VO):
Did you get to travel outside the
village much?

PALA (VO):
Did your family?

PALA (VO):
Did you have a sense of the wider
country/ Sri Lanka at the time?

PALA (VO):
How? What exposed you to what was
happening outside the village?

PALA (VO):
Where did you go to primary school?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
What was your school experience
like?

PALA (VO):
What did you like about school?

PALA (VO):
What did you dislike about school?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories
from your time in school?

PALA (VO):
Who were your childhood friends in
the village?

PALA (VO):
Can you describe them for us?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories of
them?

PALA (VO):
What are they doing now?

PALA (VO):
Tell us about your teachers?

PALA (VO):
Did you have art lessons in school?

PALA (VO):

PALA (VO):
How did you begin making art? At
home? At school?

PALA (VO):
Why was it something that interested
you?

PALA (VO):
How did these acts of
making/creativity make you feel?

PALA (VO):
Was your talent for art recognised
at this stage?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories
about how either other children in
the school or your teacher responded
to your art work?

PALA (VO):
Did you have any conflicts or
problems in school?

PALA (VO):
Why do you think this was?

PALA (VO):
When and how did you realise what
this was about?

PALA (VO):
What community does your family
belong to?

PALA (VO):
How did you become aware of this
identity?

PALA (VO):
What did belonging to this community
mean in practice?

PALA (VO):
Can you tell us a little bit about
the history of this community?

PALA (VO):
What were you learning from home
about your community? How?

PALA (VO):
Was this from your father, mother or
both?

PALA (VO):
Do you have any specific memories
about how you got involved with or
learned your family's practice?

PALA (VO):
What did you fear as a child?

PALA (VO):
What did you hope/wish/dream for as
a child?

PALA (VO):
What did you want to do when you
grew up?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What is your name?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What is your age?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Can you tell us a little bit about
yourself?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Can you tell us about your work?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What is the importance of this work?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
How do other people seek out your
services?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
How long have you been doing this?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
How did you learn?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What did you father do?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Can you describe this to us?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Tell us about your family?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Where were you born? Where did you
grow up?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What community does your family
belong to?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
How did you become aware of this
identity?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What did belonging to this community
mean in practice?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Can you tell us a little bit about
the history of this community?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
How has this knowledge been passed
on?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Can you give us some examples?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
What were you learning from home
about your community? How?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Was this from your father, mother or
both?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Do you have any specific memories about how you got involved with or learned your family's practice?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What do you think the value of these practices are?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Why are they important/necessary?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What is the present situation so far as these traditional practices go?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What are your thoughts about the future of these practices?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What is the relationship between your community and the rest of the village like?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What do you think about this?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

How do you feel about this?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Can you tell us about your children?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Can you tell us about your son Pala?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What was he like as a child?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Do you have any specific memories of him as a child?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Do you have any memories about his involvement in learning the family's ritual or craft practices?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Do you have any memories of Pala making art in his childhood?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Did you imagine Pala would become an artist in the way that he has today?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

How would you describe Pala's art to us?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

Pala uses his community's skills and practices and incorporates into his artwork that has been commended internationally - wh do you think about this?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

How do you feel about this?

PALA'S FATHER (VO):

What has your experience of making art together with Pala been like?