

PALA

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FADE IN:

EXT. A DARK FOREST - NIGHT

Against an inky black canvas, we see the fire from a torch being waved around like a musical instrument in slow motion. The movement of the torch and the fire it breathes is inviting the viewer to come forth. As the fire waves around it illuminates parts of its surroundings: a man in dark forest is beckoning us into the dark.

He turns and walks into the abyss.

We follow him. He is bare-shouldered. The torch, we see now, is made out of reeds and requires constant waving to keep it lit. The waving of the fire illuminates his bodily canvas, as well as the dark foliage of the forest around us. Against the canvas of his skin, a battle between light and shadow. Against the black canvas of the space around our guide are dissolving images: Pala's work, the devil masks, the ritual dancers, Pala's own face, and then...

The camera stops following. The man continues walking on and on, until eventually he is nothing more than a speck in the distance like a star from another galaxy whose light has travelled eons to reach us.

DISSOLVE TO:

(on screen-title) **PALA**

PALA (VO):
Duwa, I always wanted to be a ritual
dancer like my father - your
grandfather - and his uncle - my
granduncle.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MEDIRIPITIYA - SINHARAJA BORDER - DAY

The camera is floating over the *Gin Ganga*, its path winding in sync with the rivers bends and whims, suddenly, an opening: a boat is moored a shore adjacent to a bridge. Just as the camera comes to a halt, we see a man cross the broken bridge followed by school children on the opposite end. The crossing of this obviously dangerous bridge is juxtaposed with the ghostly call and responses of the peacocks that populate this part of Sri Lanka.

EXT. THE GIN GANGA BRIDGE - DRONE (OVERHEAD) - DAY
We see a school boy and his mother cross the broken bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PATH FROM HIS HOME TO THE SCHOOL - DAY
This is an overhead shot as he is walking back turned to the camera.

PALA (VO):
You see, we come from Deniyaya. Once upon a time this is ancient land with an ancient rainforest that has always seemed to want to swallow the town, but the river folds the jungle back, protecting our ancestors and us for thousands of years.

PALA:
This path was filled with folklore and myth - so I used to curse aloud to ward the demons away from me. People used to believe that demons lived along the paths closest to rivers and streams so I was terrified. The sound of the river, even in the distance, combined with the isolation that comes from being in this path made it scary. So I would curse aloud to make sure the demons don't grab me. This was until people heard me and complained to my father.

PALA (VO):
I was born here in 1972, the year this country finally threw away its colonial name, and we named ourselves. I was born here ..

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POTUPITIYA HOUSEHOLD - DAY
We see Pala walking to his house, before follow him over the shoulder. He walks in, talking to his mother.

PALA (TO HIS MOTHER):
Back then, this seemed like such a large house.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE POTUPITIYA PROPERTY FROM ABOVE - DAY.

PALA (VO):
talks of how the father and mother
(MORE)

PALA (VO): (CONT'D)
 moved into this after the land was
 gifted by the government. Also
 references how they didn't get
 married since they had little to no
 exposure to the British ways of
 living that were being adopted
 across Sri Lanka

CUT TO:

INT. THE POTUPITIYA HOUSEHOLD - DAY

A small two room house. We see Pala and his mother walk in.

PALA:
Amma veerayak wage

PALA'S MOTHER:
*Some memories of childhood paying
 particular attention to art
 activities that he would do*

PALA'S MOTHER: (TO PALA):
*tells story of how this house was
 built*

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY (DRONE FOOTAGE)

The property seen from above. As the drone goes higher, the cartographic seeds of Pala's artistic obsessions are hinted at.

We hold this shot, as the drone rolls the frame over the POTUPITIYA property.

We also hear the sound of someone walking on a wooded footpath - tiny branches under the walker's foot crackle and crumble.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PATH TO SCHOOL - DAY (STEADICAM FOLLOW)

PALA:
 This is the path I'd take to go to
 Mediripitya Kanishta Vidhyala. We
 would pick up fruits from either
 side of this path as we made our way
 to school.

PALA:
 This was the most well kept house
 when I was a child - it was the only
 one that was built using cement so
 (MORE)

PALA: (CONT'D)
everyone knew of this house. Inside,
there was a painting that grabbed my
attention as a child. It's a
painting that I think of even today.

PALA:
*Describes this painting of Lord
Buddha*

PALA:
*Talks about the nickname 'Ratha',
how he got the name, how he came to
resent it, and why he resented it.*

PALA:
*You see, our people come from a long
line of people who believe in the
supernatural. We are called the
Navanthana.*

CUT TO:

EXT. A RAIN FOREST NEAR A STREAM - DAY

*We are peaking from above the trees at an old man sitting
on a rock, peacefully at content with everything around
him.*

PALA'S FATHER (VO):
Singing the kaviya.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEDIUM SHOT, THE OLD MAN ON THE ROCK - DAY

PALA'S FATHER:
*speaks about the Navanthana
peoples, and why it is that they are
marginalized.*

CUT TO:

**INT - MEDIUM SHOT. A DARK LIVING ROOM. PALA'S COLOMBO HOME
- DAY**

We see Pala's father at work at his desk in the house.

PALA'S FATHER:
*speaks about the process of making
the costume*

CUT TO:

**EXT - A COMMUNAL GROUND. A RITUAL. WE SEE A GURUNANSA AT
THE DRUMS IN SLOW MOTION, HINTING THAT THIS WAS WHAT THE
UNCLE AND PALA'S FATHER WERE DOING.**

PALA'S FATHER:
*speaks about his uncle who was
a Gurunansa.*

PALA'S (VO):
*I was close to my granduncle than I
was to my grandfather.*

CUT TO:

EXT - PADDY FIELD - DAY

PALA:
I remember this story of my uncle.

PALA:
This is a story that you won't find
in any history books.

CUT TO:

INT - AN ART CLASS. A CLASSROOM IS IN PROGRESS

PALA:
When did we first meet?

PRIYANTHI:
Talks about them meeting

PRIYANTHI:
*Talks about the evolution of their
relationship*

PRIYANTHI:
*Talks about the role art played in
their relationship*

PRIYANTHI:
*her favourite Pothupitiya artwork,
and why*