

**KUNDUN**

by

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**FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY**

The Himalayas.

A still photograph, a portrait, of a mountain; the north face of Chomolungma - a peak also known as Mount Everest - twenty-nine thousand feet high.

We hear a very young boy speak.

BOY (V.O.)  
Mama, my story.

A WOMAN SPEAKS:

WOMAN (V.O.)  
Again?

BOY (V.O.)  
Tell me.

Portrait of a mountain - Khangbochen - craggy peaks covered with snow, twenty-four thousand feet high.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
Your father had been very ill, We  
thought he would die, and some animals  
had died.

BOY (V.O.)  
Cow.

Portrait of a mountain - Shishapangma - twenty-six thousand feet high.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
And a yak. And chickens. And we  
had four years of bad crops, all the  
farmers did.

Portrait of a mountain - Anye Machin II - twenty thousand feet high and slightly obscured by clouds.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
In the night, I knew you were coming.

Now, the foothills. The still photograph of this barren mountain range comes to life as we see something moving.

It is a small caravan - traveling this narrow mountain pass.

WOMAN (V.O.)  
At dawn, you were born.

CLOSER on this caravan. We can make out eight or ten men, walking, and on horseback, dressed in heavy, brocade coats, and large woolen hats, black braids trailing down their backs.

A yellow palanquin is carried by four large monks, wearing maroon robes.

The caravan reaches the top of the mountain pass and turns - a sudden shift in direction - a switchback. The travelers head downhill.

BOY (V.O.)

Tell me.

Now, we see the mens's destination. A lake. An incredibly blue, circular lake, sunk between snow-dusted mountains. It is LHAMO I' LATSO - "the Oracle Lake" - and it shimmers in the sunlight.

As the lake comes into view, a young man pushes back the curtain of the yellow palanquin and peers down at it.

The man is dressed in royal robes. He is young, twenty four years old. His name is RETING RINPOCHE. He is the Regent of Tibet.

The color of the lake changes - from brilliant turquoise, to a deep, murky, unfathomable darkness.

WOMAN (V.O.)

You were a beautiful baby. So calm.

BOY (V.O.)

No cried?

The woman laughs.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Maybe, just a little.

The palanquin is set down on a flat rock overlooking the lake. The water's color changes again, to a deep purple, then blue again, then red, then indigo.

WOMAN (V.O.)

And that day, your father got better.  
He named you Lhamo. "The Protector."

BOY (V.O.)

I know.

Silence.

The noblemen and monks surround Reting as he steps out of the palanquin.

One man stands out here, a monk, a high lama in fact, with a kind face and fantastic, mesmerizing eyes. He is the LAMA OF SERA.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Go to sleep, Lhamo.

Reting stares at the lake.

The water turns a light grey, and an image appears - obscure at first, then becoming more solid. A vision.

He sees a house - a small, stone, one-story, u-shaped house.

The house has a flat, tile roof and an unusual, wooden rain gutter, with windows outlined in black and a prayer flag in the courtyard. A spotted dog is in front of the house, barking, though we cannot hear him. The vision becomes completely clear, for an instant - clear enough to see the face of a young boy at the window.

CLOSE on Reting Rinpoche. Looking. Searching.

Cut to: a portrait of a mountain: Kyeri - a majestic, glacier mountain - the "house mountain" of the village of Takster, Amdo Province, North Eastern Tibet.

Sound returns as the wind whistles around this jagged, mountain peak and then the view moves down, below the tree line, and into the rhododendron forest and the farmlands, until it comes to rest on a small, stone, u-shaped house. A house caught in the dawn's mist.

CLOSE on the face of a sleeping child: a boy, LHAMO DHONDRUP, age two and one-half years. He is dreaming. He is about to wake up.

Today, his life will change.

We stay on the boy's face until, slowly, his eyes open - beautiful, dark, eyes.

INT. TIBETAN PEASANT HOME, KITCHEN DAWN (1937)

The MOTHER walks past the boy, her woolen skirt swaying in the rosy light. A seven year-old brother - LOBSANG SAMTEN - and a teenage sister - TSERING DOLMA - share Lhamo's kitchen mattress. Lhamo looks at them, and then he turns to see the heavy felt boots of his FATHER, as the man walks through the room and out the door. Lhamo finds the kind face of his MOTHER. She is looking at him.

EXT. COURTYARD DAWN

The boy walks across the stone courtyard as we hear the sounds of this country morning: the snorting of horses, clucking of hens, a command from the Father as the man feeds the animals.

The boy scratches, he pees. He sees his Mother on the roof.  
 |She is a silhouette against the dawn, as she feeds cedar  
 and yak chips into the incense burner - sending white, curly  
 smoke up, to circle the prayer flag and its clusters of  
 printed mantras.

We pull back as the spotted dog begins to bark.

Lhamo's house is the house in the vision.

INT. KITCHEN MORNING

It is a good day. There is cheese for breakfast.

Lhamo's Father sits on a cushion at the head of a low table.  
 Fresh bread appears, yogurt, roasted barley (tsampa).

Lhamo pushes at his Father.

LHAMO

Me.

FATHER

No. This must stop.

LHAMO

Me. Here.

FATHER

I am the father. You sit there.

LHAMO

Me here.

MOTHER

What is the harm?

FATHER

He will grow up all wrong. Only you  
 can serve him, only you can wash his  
 bowl. Too tidy, everything just so.  
 He must know his place.

LOBSANG SAMTEN

He thinks he is king here. No  
 respect.

MOTHER

What is the harm?

The Father reluctantly gets up and gives his seat to Lhamo.

Lhamo settles and waits for his Mother to hand him his bowl  
 of tsampa. He bestows a most beautiful smile on his family.

EXT. COURTYARD DAY

The Father is leaving the yard with a short string of horses when there is a sudden commotion.

The CHINESE GOVERNOR is passing through this little village.

He is a ferocious looking man, dressed in ornate brocade, his horse equipped with tack that looks like armor. He is surrounded by a dozen Chinese soldiers, all on huge horses, ruling the road, kicking up mud.

Lhamo's Father stops. He holds still. He looks to the house.

The Mother is holding the children against her in the doorway. Quiet. Watching.

The Governor and his entourage move on. When they are out of sight, Lhamo's Father makes his departure.

EXT. COURTYARD DAY

Lhamo straddles the window sill, slapping his bottom as if he were a horse, shouting:

LHAMO  
I go away. Look, mama, I go away.  
Far, far, far.

His Mother is making bread in the kitchen.

MOTHER  
Oh, no. Where will he go?

LHAMO  
Far, far away.

INT. KITCHEN DUSK

Lhamo is playing a game with pebbles on the raised, wooden platform in the kitchen. The fire is lit. He is alone.

The dog begins to bark.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Good day.

MAN (O.S.)  
Good day.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Please, come in, so cold.

MAN (O.S.)  
We are traveling to Lhasa. May we...?

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Of course, please, this way. Your  
servant may use the kitchen.

MAN (O.S.)  
Thank you.

A middle-aged man, the SERVANT, wearing heavy, ragged clothes and wrapped boots, enters the kitchen.

Lhamo slides over so that the man can sit on the platform beside him. The man picks up a few pebbles and drops them - he knows the game.

We recognize this servant. His name is KEUSTANG RINPOCHE.

He is one of the monks we saw at the Oracle lake, the one with the mesmerizing eyes. Keustang Rinpoche is the Lama of Sera Monastery.

Lhamo sees a dark brown rosary around the Servant's neck and immediately pulls at the string of beads.

LHAMO  
Mine.

The Servant takes the rosary off and gives it to the boy. Lhamo hangs the string of beads around his own neck. The Servant makes a move to take back the rosary, but Lhamo resists.

LHAMO  
Mine.

SERVANT  
Mine.

LHAMO  
Please.

SERVANT  
I will give it to, if you can tell  
me who I am.

Lhamo looks up, into the man's piercing, black eyes.

LHAMO  
The Lama of Sera. You come.

The Mother enters and immediately sees the rosary around her son's neck. She gives it back to the Servant.

MOTHER  
Lhamo, no.

Lhamo goes back to his game. The Mother hands the tired man a slice of bread and a steaming cup of tea. The man's hands are shaking. He cannot look the woman in the eye.

SERVANT

Thank you.

EXT. COURTYARD DAWN

The travelers make their departure at dawn.

As the party reaches the gate, Lhamo runs from the house, crying:

LHAMO

Wait! No!

The men stop. Lhamo runs to the Servant.

LHAMO

Me, too. Me go, too. Lhasa!

Lhamo is in tears.

MOTHER

No, no, no. Lhasa! He always says he will travel far away. He always wants to go.

SERVANT

We cannot, young master.

LHAMO

You come back?

A pause.

SERVANT

We will.

The travelers head down the road.

Mother and child return to their home, the Mother carrying the boy on her hip as he swings himself around to take a last look at the strangers.

EXT. COURTYARD DAWN

The Father readies a pack train of horses. Lobsang and Lhamo pull on the cinche straps.

EXT. FARMLAND DAY

The Mother plows with a heavy yoke attached to a large yak. Lobsang Samten and Tsering Dolma help their mother.

Lhamo sleeps under an umbrella.

EXT. COURTYARD DAY

Lobsang and Lhamo running, carrying a bowl of eggs.

INT. KITCHEN NIGHT

Lobsang is wrapped in maroon wool, trying to hold still as his Mother pins and stitches. Lhamo sits, sipping tea, watching, woefully.

MOTHER

Say, Kumbum Monastery.

LOBSANG

Kumbum. It is not far away.

MOTHER

It is not far at all, and it is a beautiful place. And your big brother is abbot there. You will not be alone.

LOBSANG

I will be very smart.

MOTHER

You will be fine. You will be a fine monk.

INT. ALTAR ROOM DAWN

Lobsang pours water from one small, copper bowl into six others, seven in all, placed on an altar before a statue of Buddha. As the rest of the family watches, the Mother lights the butter lamps, whispering:

MOTHER

Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum.

EXT. COURTYARD DAY

Lobsang is perched on the back of a horse - in front of his Father. The two leave home, goodbyes having already been said. Mother, sister and little brother remain behind.

EXT. PARENT'S ROOM NIGHT

Mother lies down with Lhamo, holding him.

MOTHER

Your father had been very sick.

MOTHER

He had been sick from the time you began growing in me. We thought he would die.

LHAMO

Cow.

MOTHER

Yes. A cow had died. One night, you stopped all your moving, and I said to your sister, "His time has come."

LHAMO

Me. First break of day.

MOTHER

At dawn, you were born. One eye was closed, and your sister opened it with her thumb. We gave you the sweet drink.

LHAMO

I pooped.

His Mother laughs.

MOTHER

You did. We washed you and wrapped you in sheepskin and took you to your father. That day he father got better And that day, a pair of crows came to nest in our roof. I just remembered.

LHAMO

I miss my brother.

MOTHER

I miss him too.

CLOSE on the Mother as she holds Lhamo, now her only son at home.

A view of Kyeri mountain turning from a pre-dawn purple to light pink in the sunlight.

EXT. COURTYARD DAWN

The multi-colored prayer flags flap in the wind as the cock crows and the animals come awake. Father exits the house and begins his day.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HOUSE DAY

Lhamo is watching two bugs fighting when he hears the dog bark. He climbs the low, stone wall and looks out at the road.

Six TRAVELERS approach. Four of the men are dressed as nobility, wearing red and gold silk. Two men are monks.

The Mother meets the men in the courtyard. A monk steps forward. He bows.

LAMA

I am the Lama of Sera.

MOTHER

Sera Monastery? From Lhasa?

LAMA

Yes. We have business here.

Lhamo jumps off the wall. He carefully lifts the smaller beetle from the path of the larger beetle. He places the rescued bug safely in a clump of grass.

INT. PARENT'S ROOM DAY

CLOSE on the faces of the six men.

CLOSE on the small face of Lhamo as he looks down at the bed.

Lying on a piece of yellow silk are many objects. There are three of each type of object: three walking sticks, three drums, three silver pens, three eating bowls, three bells, three rosaries, three pairs of spectacles.

The Lama of Sera - Keustang Rinpoche - hands Lhamo the rosary he had so coveted when the man first visited.

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

This is yours, you say. What else belongs to you?

Lhamo considers the request, then climbs onto the bed to study the objects. The drum and the bell he chooses quickly.

Keustang Rinpoche watches the boy gather the items. He looks at the yellow silk and the boy's small, fine hands.

He dares not look directly at the boy.

Lhamo picks up one walking stick - a lovely, bronze-handled one. He swings it around, but he finally rejects it in favor of a plain, iron-handled stick.

He makes his own pile of these things, then looks at the Lama of Sera.

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

Yes, those are yours.

Keustang Rinpoche takes the boy's hands in his own. He turns them over, examines them.

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

With permission?

The Lama carefully pulls back the boy's overalls. There is a little birthmark, like a conch shell, on his shoulder.

Keustang Rinpoche pulls up the boy's pants legs. There is a funny skin marking on the legs, like tiger stripes.

The Lama rearranges the boy's clothing, then one more time, takes the beautiful, little hands in his own and whispers:

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

"Kundun"

He says to the others, in a soft, secretive voice:

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

He is the Presence.

In the background, by an open curtain, we see Lhamo's Mother.

She says, softly:

MOTHER

My oldest boy is an incarnation.

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

So is your youngest.

Keustang releases the boy's hands and brings his own closed palms up to his forehead.

KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

I wish you long life.

The Mother begins to cry.

INT. ALTAR ROOM DAY

Little Lhamo, now dressed in yellow, fills the copper water bowls with difficulty.

His parents stand beside him. They share one, frightened curious look.

CLOSE on the statue of Buddha. It is an image of Chenrezig, the Buddha of Compassion. He has eleven heads and four, outstretched arms.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE DAY

Lhamo sits in the saddle in front of his Mother. His Father and Sister ride beside them, through an incredible, empty, Tibetan landscape. A Monk rides lead.

EXT. EST. SHOT / KUMBUM MONASTERY DAY

Turquoise-roof, golden-pagoda, a beautiful, white-washed monastery built against a terraced, green hillside of Amdo.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, MONASTERY DAY

Mother pats her son Lhamo's unruly hair and makes a soft, comforting sound. Lobsang is there beside his brother. Lobsang is already dressed as a tiny monk - in a maroon robe, with short, clipped hair. An older brother, TAKSTER, age 17, a lama, is there.

THE MOTHER LIES:

MOTHER

I will be back in a few days.

LHAMO

How many?

MOTHER

Two.

Lhamo holds up two fingers.

LHAMO

This many?

MOTHER

Yes, yes. Your brothers are here.

Takster moves closer. She places the sad youngster in Takster's arms.

MOTHER

One more kiss.

Lhamo kisses her, as does Lobsang and even Takster falls into her arms for a moment. Then, she turns and goes, quickly.

A Monk appears. He produces a concertina and begins to play for the little boy.

But, Lhamo begins to cry, through the music, through the hugs of his brothers. As a result of Lhamo's tears, Lobsang begins to cry. Takster holds them both. The music continues. The older, wiser, Takster begins to cry, too.

The three brothers hold one another. Three brothers, three monks, crying for their mother. The music continues, echoing in this stone monastery.

The young "Kundun" is gently rocked by his older brother.

He begins to fall asleep.

#### DREAM SEQUENCE

The sound of the concertina becomes chanting and we see row after row of monks, in a temple, their voices mingling in the empty room.

View of a courtyard, with young novices, reciting. Lobsang is among them.

#### BOYS'S VOICES (V.O.)

"May I be the doctor and the medicine,  
And may I be the nurse, For all sick  
beings in the world, until everyone  
is healed."

A TEACHER, a very stern-looking monk, carrying a thick, flat board, menacingly, behind his back, walks among the students.

A golden head of a Buddha - a huge head - appears to be bursting through an archway at the end of a dark hallway.

The Chinese Governor stands, like a giant, against the blue sky. Omnipotent. Frightening.

#### CHINESE GOVERNOR

I want him accompanied by my Chinese  
soldiers.

Keustang Rinpoche, also a head against blue sky, argues:

#### KEUSTANG RINPOCHE

This is Tibet. We are not under your  
authority.

CLOSE on the Chinese Governor.

#### CHINESE GOVERNOR

I want one hundred thousand Chinese  
dollars, if you want the boy.

CLOSE on Keustang Rinpoche. Slowly, he nods.

An image of the Father and the Mother, standing in their courtyard, staring at the departing search party.

THE MOTHER ASKS OVER AND OVER:

MOTHER

But why? Who is Lhamo? Who do they  
say he is?

Her husband does not know.

View of the Mother, on the roof, feeding cedar and yak chips into the incense burner. We hear:

BOYS (reciting)

"May I be protector for those without  
one."

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS

Lhamo wakes up. He is in a brilliant, green room.

INT. STUDY ROOM, KUMBUM MONASTERY DAY

The stern-looking Teacher from his dream is there, reading scripture, reciting:

TEACHER

"May I be a bridge, a boat, a ship  
For all who wish to cross the water."

Lhamo looks down at the complicated words.

TEACHER

Can you recite?

The boy just waits, sad, lonely.

The Teacher offers Lhamo an apricot. Lhamo takes the fruit.

The Monk pats the boy's head, gently, and Lhamo takes shelter in the kind man's massive robes. The view becomes sunlight through deep, maroon wool.

INT. DRELJAM DAY

Lhamo and Lobsang sit inside a "dreljam" - a rough palanquin, which is attached to two poles and carried between two mules. The vehicle rises and falls, pitches and twists as it is carried along the roadless, Tibetan plains.

Lhamo reaches forward and pulls back a curtain.

EXT. TIBETAN PLATEAU DAY

The boy is traveling with a caravan. It is not, in fact, an enormous caravan, maybe fifty people, including: Lhamo's family, members of the search party, monks, Muslim traders.

The dreljam DRIVER looks over at Lhamo and signals that the boy should close the curtain.

Lhamo does so, only to lean across his brother to look out the other side of his tiny carriage.

The other side opens to a view of the great, empty land. A herd of deer grazes beside the travelers. Mountains rise in the distance. A flock of geese flies overhead.

Lhamo closes the curtain.

INT. DRELJAM DAY

Lhamo elbows his brother. Lobsang elbows him back. The two begin to squabble.

LHAMO  
You have all the room.

LOBSANG  
Don't be a baby, move over.

LHAMO  
You move.

LOBSANG  
You! You think you are so big!

They hit and pinch until finally the movement of the carriage stops. The Driver reaches in through the open curtains and separates the boys, each to his own side of the dreljam.

Inside his tiny carriage, young Lhamo now sits quiet and composed.

EXT. CAMPSITE NIGHT

A cluster of fantastic, Tibetan tents are set up; white cotton tents, with sharp corners, peaked ceilings and elaborate, appliqued designs. Campfires glow, animals bed down, stars shine overhead.

INT. TIBETAN TENT NIGHT

CLOSE on a group of ancient, stern-faced MONKS.

CLOSE on the baby-faced, Lhamo Dhondrup.

One Monk pulls a huge pair of scissors from his robes.

Lhamo makes a dive for the tent's door.

EXT. TENT NIGHT

Standing outside the tent is a BODYGUARD - a huge, burly man, wearing monk's robes. He turns to the boy. In one hand he holds a big stick. His face is distorted and deformed by a large tumor under one eye. It is a frightening sight. He looks like a monster to the child.

Lhamo jumps back inside the tent. The Bodyguard closes the appliqued flap.

INT. DRELJAM DAY

Lhamo has had a haircut. His Mother walks beside the carriage, holding his hand.

LHAMO

Who am I?

MOTHER

We do not know.

EXT. PLAINS OF TIBET NIGHT

By candlelight, Lhamo is transferred from the rugged, simple carriage, to one of exquisite, yellow silk.

INT. PALANQUIN JUST BEFORE DAWN

Lhamo peeks out of the silk curtain as he hears the arrival of many horses, many men. SOLDIERS - hundreds of Tibetan soldiers - surround the palanquin.

EXT. PLAINS, OUTSIDE LHASA DAWN

The yellow palanquin is carried across a human border of Tibetan noblemen. These fantastic-looking men and women part, and drop to the ground in prostration, as the palanquin moves through their welcoming committee.

INT. PEACOCK TENT DAWN

Lhamo walks along a long, patterned carpet, looking up, at this lofty tent's stunning, blue silk, ceiling.

He is led to a tall, wooden throne, and he is lifted, and then he climbs to the top. Lhamo settles in a cross-legged position on the brocade cushion.

He looks down.

Hundred of monks, abbots, noblemen, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Chinese, even a red-headed Englishman - they all bow to Lhamo.

Reting Rinpoche, the young Regent of Tibet, the man who saw this boy's face in his vision, stands below the throne. He addresses the crowd:

RETING RINPOCHE  
Chenrezi, the Buddha of compassion.  
The Wish Fulfilling Jewel. The  
Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

And the Regent turns, hikes up his gorgeous robes, and prostrates before the child.

RETING RINPOCHE  
Long life.

In the crowd stand Lhamo's Mother and Father and Lobsang Samten.

On their faces, we must see that they did not realize who their son, their brother, was believed to be.

First the Mother, and then the Father, bow in front of their youngest child.

MOTHER  
Long life.

FATHER  
Long life.

Finally, Lobsang.

LOBSANG  
Long life, Lhamo.

We hear the sound of a great, Tibetan horn.

We hear peels of childish laughter.

INT. THE POTALA DAY

Lobsang and Lhamo skid, slide, skate down the endless, slippery hallways of this huge, labyrinthine monastery.

Three Monks scurry behind the boys, trying to keep up, trying to keep the young incarnate from slipping out of their sight.

They shout, in loud stage whispers:

MONKS  
Kundun! Kundun!

The monks are no match for the little boys, who are quickly out of sight.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS THE POTALA DAY

Reting Rinpoche sits cross-legged on the floor of this brightly-painted, red room.

Across from him sits Lhamo, dressed in fine, yellow silk.

These are simple rooms, decorated with statues, deity scrolls and mandalas, an altar to Buddha. Behind a glass case are toys, mixed in with the Buddhist artifacts: dolls, puppets, balls, blocks, trains.

Reting Rinpoche is speaking.

RETING RINPOCHE

Centuries ago, a young boy was born. His name was Gedundrub. The night of his birth, robbers came to his home and his family fled hiding the baby in a cattle pen. When they returned the next day, the baby was safe. They found him guarded by a pair of black crows. He was the first Dalai Lama. The Living Buddha of Compassion. Now, you have chosen to come back to this life once again.

Reting blows his nose.

RETING RINPOCHE

We name you Tenzin Gyatso.

CLOSE on Lhamo - Tenzin Gyatso.

RETING RINPOCHE

Your job is simple. You are to love all living things. Just love them. Care for them. Have compassion for them. "As long as any living thing draws breath, wherever he shall be, there in compassion, shall the Buddha appear, incarnate."

At the curtain behind Lhamo, we notice the curly-toed shoes of a monk, a man who must be standing in the next room.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DAY

In the room immediately adjacent to this bedroom, we now see the three Monks who chased the young boy down the slippery halls.

They are the Dalai Lama's personal attendants - the MASTER OF THE RITUAL, the MASTER OF THE KITCHEN, and the MASTER OF THE ROBE. (It is the Master of the Kitchen who stands directly behind the curtain.)

The LORD CHAMBERLAIN is also there. He is a monk. A tall, angular man, with almost nordic features: large, round eyes, a yellowish mustache, sharp nose.

All of these men will become quite familiar to us, as will the man standing, listening, behind the attendants.

He is a sweeper, a man named NORBU THUNDRUP, age thirty. He is tall, and gangly, with a wispy beard and a pock-marked face.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM DAY

RETING RINPOCHE

You will be the leader of the Tibetan people when you come of age. Until that time, I will be your teacher, and as your Regent, I will rule in your name. I will tell your Lord Chamberlain you are ready to see him.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM DAY

The Regent walks through this room on his way out.

A passing look from Norbu lets us know that Reting Rinpoche is not well-liked.

RETING RINPOCHE

He will see you now.

The Lord Chamberlain goes to meet with the Dalai Lama.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM DAY

The Lord Chamberlain bows to the boy and then unpacks his parcel.

He has a rolled, parchment document.

He has a beautiful, carved, wooden box.

The Lord Chamberlain points to the mural on the wall behind the boy. It is an elaborate, story-painting.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Fifth Dalai Lama.

The boy looks.

The Lord Chamberlain points to a golden statue of a round man in a peaked hat.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
Seventh Dalai Lama.

Tenzin Gyatso nods.

The Lord Chamberlain lifts a framed photograph of a bald, charismatic man, with razor sharp eyebrows, pictured sitting on a throne.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

The boy looks at the photo.

The Lord Chamberlain places the state seal in the young boy's hands and indicates that the boy should bring the heavy instrument down hard on the parchment.

The boy does. The Lord Chamberlain scribbles a little something on a tab of attached paper, then bows to the boy.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

VIEW FROM A HIGH WINDOW

Outside, up a country path, young herders lead their cattle in from the grazing fields. We can hear the boys singing - a Tibetan street song.

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)  
I am the good one. You be bad. The  
bad man.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM DUSK

The view comes in the window and reveals the young Dalai Lama, sitting on the floor with Norbu Thundrup, the sweeper.

Tenzin Gyatso has arranged a battlefield of soldiers - little men, made of colored-dough.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
My name is Norbu, Holiness. I will  
be good, you be bad.

Tenzin Gyatso is ferocious in his strategy, taking Norbu's men.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I'm on a big mountain and hitting at  
the bad men.

TENZIN GYATSO

And after the game, we're going to trade. You just stay over there, no, there!, Norbu, and I will shoot at you. I want your land. I take it. I am stronger.

NORBU THUNDRUP

I am braver.

Norbu Thundrup plays like a child. It is a fight to the finish.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have more men.

NORBU THUNDRUP

I have smarter men.

Tenzin Gyatso has lost; he dissolves into tears.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Today you lose. Tomorrow you may win.

Norbu snaps his fingers.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Things change, Kundun.

TENZIN GYATSO

Why is your beard so funny? Let me touch this.

Tenzin touches the soft, bald, chin of Norbu.

TENZIN GYATSO

Soft.

And then, Tenzin Gyatso tries to snap his fingers. He cannot.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DUSK

Tenzin Gyatso stands at the window, watching, listening.

His hands knead the colored dough into balls, ready to create the next army, the future battleground, as he recites, softly:

TENZIN GYATSO

"As long as all living draw breaths,  
there Buddha is."

Norbu Thundrup smiles as he polishes the floor, clearing it of tsampa dough.

INT. GREAT HALL, THE POTALA DAY

The Great Hall in the Potala is the seat of Tibetan Government.

These palace walls are hung with beautiful, old thangkas (silk embroideries or paintings), depicting the life of Buddha.

Inside the hall sits the acting government: the YIGSTANG and the TSITANG - four monks, four laymen - all dressed in their appropriate simplicity and elaborateness. These men sit in two rows, facing one another. The senior monk and the senior layman sit a bit forward. They are the speakers.

The senior LAYMAN is on his knees, speaking.

LAYMAN

I believe that the Regent is asking for too high a reward for his part in finding the Dalai Lama. Too much money, too much land.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

Tenzin Gyatso peeks through a door at the great assembly.

The Lord Chamberlian stands behind him.

INT. GREAT HALL DAY

The Layman continues.

LAYMAN

Our treasuries are empty. Our army is depleted. He would have us pull the hair from our noses.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

The Dalai Lama is confused, but continues listening.

INT. GREAT HALL DAY

The Layman returns to his cross-legged position.

The senior MONK speaks.

MONK

We note this. Now, the Chinese.

There is audible expression of tension.

## MONK

The Allies wish to build a supply-road from India, crossing Tibet, as part of their war effort. The road would lead directly to China.

The Layman gets to his knees.

## LAYMAN

We cannot allow it. Right now, we have a only a small Chinese mission in Lhasa, the first since the Thirteenth Dalai Lama threw them out in 1912. The road would increase the size of that mission. The Chinese would try to control our trade, as they did once before, control our contact with the outside world.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

The Lord Chamberlain touches the boy's shoulder and Tenzin Gyatso leaves his hiding place, as the speaker's voice fades away.

As the two walk down the hallway, Tenzin Gyatso spots an unusual wooden door. He lets the Lord Chamberlain get a little bit ahead of him, and then the boy tries the door. It is heavy. It almost opens.

INT. HALLWAY LATER, DUSK

Tenzin Gyatso and his brother Lobsang are pulling at the heavy door. Behind them, in the distance, we hear:

MONKS (O.S.)

Kundun! Kundun!

The door opens. The boys disappear inside.

INT. STORAGE ROOM DUSK

A treasure awaits them.

It looks like Aladdin's cave - full of odd, European items.

There are glittering music boxes, a porcelain sink, a gilded mirror, a lacquered rocking horse. There are hats, umbrellas and even a pair of lace-up, cordovan shoes.

Tenzin Gyatso lifts a reel of film. There are piles of magazines and books. There is a stack of tires in the back corner. The boys uncover a train set and a good collection of lead soldiers. The Dalai Lama pockets a gold watch.

Just as the monks find their young charges and we hear them at the door, Tenzin sees something truly spectacular. It is a telescope.

The monks enter the room as the young Dalai Lama reaches for this miracle.

TENZIN GYATSO

What is it?

THE ATTENDANTS

Ah, it is a telescope, Holiness.  
With this you can see a long way.

TENZIN GYATSO

And, is it mine?

ATTENDANT

These are all gifts sent to your predecessors.

LOBSANG SAMTEN

Yes! Then it is yours!

TENZIN GYATSO

I need it.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

We are in the adjacent room, listening, as Norbu Thundrup tells a bedtime story.

Golden butter lamps burn before a statue of Buddha.

NORBU THUNDRUP (O.S.)

One night, not too long ago, an old monk saw a woman in that very same hallway where you ran away.

INT. BEDROOM NIGHT

The boy is in bed. The Sweeper finishes-off his story as the boy wiggles deeper under the covers.

NORBU THUNDRUP

She carried a basket in her arms, a big, heavy basket, and the old monk cautiously approached. She opened her basket and showed what she had. Heads. Human heads. Only the heads.

TENZIN GYATSO

Is that true or pretend?

NORBU THUNDRUP

It is a story, you decide.

TENZIN GYATSO

Pretend.

NORBU THUNDRUP

As you say.

The Sweeper tucks the boy in as the Master of the Robe finishes his nightly preparations and with a pat and a smile, the two men leave the room.

A mouse steals a bit of tsampa from the offerings placed on the altar before the Buddha.

Tenzin Gyatso peeks out from under his covers and looks to see if those curly-toed shoes are visible under the partition. They are. The Master of the Kitchen is still near.

Tenzin Gyatso pulls the golden pocket watch from under the covers. He pries and digs at the back of the watch until he succeeds in popping it open, revealing its miraculous insides.

Finally, Tenzin Gyatso's eyelids grow heavy. The camera passes over his face, as his eyes close.

The boy begins to speak, mumble, as he falls asleep:

TENZIN GYATSO

"I be an island for those who seek  
one, a lamp for light."

We find two scrolls; the first is PENDEN LHAMO, the special protectress of the Dalai Lama.

She rides her wild mule through a sea of blood - between rows of jagged mountains. Pointed fingers and spreading toes, her hair gone crazy, her fangs revealed - the details are incredible. A garland of freshly severed heads hangs around her body, snakes hold up her skirt, five skulls form her crown.

TENZIN GYATSO (V.O.)

"May I be a bed for all who wish to  
rest, and a slave for all who want a  
slave."

Beside her, on the second scroll is MAHAKALA. He is the fierce representation of the Buddha of Compassion. Crows fly in the clouds to the left of the terrifying, black, six-armed figure.

A skull rosary is held in the upper right arm, a Trident is held in the left hand.

The deity wears a crown of five skulls. He has three eyes. He tramples an elephant.

We might have been in a dream, as the camera finally moves back to find the peaceful protected face of the young Dalai Lama. Asleep.

The camera moves across the mural devoted to the story of the Fifth Dalai Lama. It is a fantasy of green, with mountains and lakes and deities and monsters.

We find the statue of Seventh Dalai Lama, sitting on his golden cushion, and we look, deep into the eyes of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Fantastic. Deeper. Deeper.

TENZIN GYATSO

"May I be wishing jewel, a magic vase...

VIEW THROUGH AN EYEPiece

We see the Dalai Lama place his young eye at the viewfinder.

EXT. TERRACE, POTALA DAY

Norbu Thundrup holds the boy steady.

And, a wondrous view of Lhasa is presented.

Vendors hawk their goods to elegant ladies, wearing turquoise jewelry and carrying silken parasols. Animals are herded through town by young boys. Children play and squabble. A white wall is covered with cartoons, lampoons - political posters - picturing the Regent, perhaps, as a man holding too much power.

TENZIN GYATSO

I want to go down there.

NORBU THUNDRUP

You can only go with attendants and a big ceremony.

TENZIN GYATSO

I want to run down the street. I want to buy a toy. Eat from the shops.

NORBU THUNDRUP

You cannot.

TENZIN GYATSO

I want to be a shepherd, taking those goats and cows out to the hillside.

NORBU THUNDRUP

But you are not a shepherd, you are  
the Dalai Lama.

TENZIN GYATSO

Maybe in the next life, the world  
will not need a Dalai Lama.

NORNU THUNDRUP

I would not know. Maybe.

The view travels and we see a prison yard. Shackled men  
share the yard with hairy, fat dogs.

One man looks up and sees that the yard is under

surveillance. Of course the men all know that this terrace  
belongs to the boy Dalai Lama.

As the boy watches, first one poor, ragged man, then another  
prostrates.

Tenzin Gyatso pulls away from the telescope. He waves to  
the prisoners.

EXT. VALLEY OUTSIDE LHASA DAY (SUMMER, 1942)

The boy rides in his palanquin of yellow silk.

He is older now, seven or eight. He peers through the  
curtain.

A grand procession carries the Dalai Lama from the Potala to  
his summer residence, the Norbulinka.

Monks walk in procession, as do members of the aristocracy,  
wearing their finest gowns and jewelry, holding their finest  
parasols, and soldiers, wearing ancient uniforms. There are  
horses, banners and carriages. Bodyguards carry the Dalai  
Lama's possessions - wrapped in yellow silk. A band plays,  
"God Save the King."

It is a magnificent display, and along the side of the road,  
Tibetans prostrate in the presence of the boy, not daring to  
look at him.

EXT. THE NORBULINKA DAY

Establishing shot of this lovely park.

It looks like a sweet, summer home compared to the looming  
expansiveness of the Potala. It is filled with deer and  
antelope, peacocks and nesting birds. An eccentric collection  
of trees grow here - some indigenous, some gifts - bearing  
flowers and fruit.

There are fish ponds and even a Kyichu river tributary nearby.

We find the young Dalai Lama standing by this tributary daring to put one foot on a slippery, stepping stone. An Attendant gently pulls him back.

Beyond the river, a herder leads a small group of braying sheep towards town. The boy watches. He listens to the herder's song.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

The Dalai Lama drops bits of food into a fish pond. He calls the huge, lazy fish to come eat.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Little ones first, only little ones.

The boy pushes the bigger ones away with a stick.

EXT. YELLOW WALL, NORBULINKA DAY

Tenzin Gyatso runs through an open gate in a mustard yellow wall (which separates the Dalai Lama's residence from the rest of the Norbulinka), and up the steps leading to a white, one story, home - his parent's.

INT. PARENT'S HOME, NORBULINKA DAY

A startling, blue room.

The young Dalai Lama leans on the table where is Father sits eating pork rinds.

Lobsang is there, practicing his writing on a chalk board.

Tenzin Gyatso grabs one pork rind, then another, then a third.

LOBSANG SAMTEN  
The Dalai Lama is not supposed to  
eat pork. It is not good for your  
brain.

The Father uses the grease from the roasted lamb on the table to caress his long mustache and twirl each side into a point.

The Dalai Lama takes another, and then, suddenly, the boy reaches up and for no reason, he pulls on his Father's mustache, obviously hurting the man. The Father slaps the boy's hand, hard.

The boy sits back, and begins drawing imaginary letters on the tabletop with his slapped hand.

His Father reaches out and takes the hurt hand. He pulls the boy into his arms.

FATHER  
I am sorry, Lhamo.

TENZIN GYATSO  
It is alright, Father.

The Master of the Robe knocks at the door. Father and son look up.

MASTER OF THE ROBE  
Kundun, you must come back now.

The young boy sits straight up on his Father's lap and says, defiantly:

TENZIN GYATSO  
Go away.

The surprised Monk backs away from the door.

FATHER  
Not the way to talk to people.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Can I do anything I want?

FATHER  
No.

TENZIN GYATSO  
But, I am in charge.

FATHER  
Are you? Of whom?

The boy thinks.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Can I save the sheep from going to the market? So they don't die.

LOBSANG  
You could buy them.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Do I have money?

LOBSANG  
What do you think?

TENZIN GYATSO  
Do you have money?

FATHER

I do, now.

TENZIN GYATSO

And you have horses? You love horses.

FATHER

I do, beautiful horses. Thank you,  
Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Will you buy the sheep for me?

FATHER

Where will you keep them?

TENZIN GYATSO

Here. We'll collect them.

FATHER

I will buy them for you.

TENZIN GYATSO

Can I free the prisoners?

FATHER

Hmmm.

LOBSANG

You can't do anything real until you  
are Dalai Lama.

TENZIN GYATSO

I am him.

LOBSANG

Not until you are eighteen.

MOTHER (O.S.)

You have escaped once more.

The Mother has been in the doorway, listening.

Tenzin Gyatso disengages from his Father's arms and goes to his Mother. Tenzin reaches into one of her large, apron pockets and finds nothing. Another. Nothing. He reaches into her sash and pulls out a special-looking sweet. She takes the boy's hand and leads him from the house.

LOBSANG

Go study. I get in trouble if you  
do not study.

Lobsang looks at his Father.

LOBSANG

I do.

FATHER

Sometimes you strike the goat, to scare the sheep.

LOBSANG

I am the goat. He is a naughty sheep.

FATHER

He will not be ours much longer.

CLOSE on the Father's face.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

The Mother walks the boy back to his residence, through the gate in the yellow wall.

MOTHER

I have news. The Regent has resigned his post.

TENZIN GYATSO

Is he a bad man? Norbu says he is "lavish" and "willful". "How can he give you monk's vows if he has not kept them himself?"

MOTHER

Well, some say. It's not for you to worry about. Another will be chosen.

TENZIN GYATSO

He was always nice to me. He found me. He saw me in his dreams.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE, NORBULINKA DAY

They have reached the residence. The boy's Mother caresses his little head.

MOTHER

I turn you over again, today, Lhamo. One day, you will not be able to come running to us.

TENZIN GYATSO

But you will always be here?

MOTHER

Me?

TENZIN GYATSO  
You will always!

MOTHER  
I have one more piece of news. A  
baby is coming.

Tenzin grabs at her stomach and shrieks with laughter.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Oh, Mama! Who will it be?

The Mother places her hands on Tenzin Gyatso's.

MOTHER  
Oh, no! Who can it be?

A string of old monks, stand, waiting for the naughty boy.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL, DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE, NORBULINKA, DAY

The boy runs up the stairs and towards the old men, but he stops and looks at a small cabinet standing, unobtrusively, in a corner. Tenzin Gyatso goes to the cabinet and rattles the locked door.

TENZIN GYATSO  
My teeth! My teeth are in here!

A monk takes the boy by the hand and leads him down a hallway.

TENZIN GYATSO  
My old teeth!

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, EVENING

A bell and a dorge are laid out on a small table. Tenzin Gyatso sits in front of this table.

A monk is chanting in low, deep tones, in the background.

The Dalai Lama's teacher, TAKTRA RINPOCHE, sits on the floor. (Being the teacher, Taktra Rinpoche sits slightly higher than the Dalai Lama.) Taktra is an older man, in his sixties. He is stern, solid, no-nonsense.

Taktra Rinpoche begins a prayer.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE  
"I take refuge in the three jewels,  
The Buddha, the Dharma and the  
Sangra."

But the boy leaps up from his table and goes to Taktra and hangs around his neck, shouting:

TENZIN GYATSO  
 You recite! You recite!

Taktra gives the boy just the slightest of looks.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE  
 "I take refuge in the three jewels,  
 The Buddha, the Dharma and the  
 Sangra."

Tenzin Gyatso releases the Lama and goes back to his own table.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE  
 "Until I attain enlightenment."

Taktra Rinpoche has a small table with the same hand instruments in front of him. The teacher lifts the dorge, in a particular fashion, and rotates it.

Tenzin Gyatso lifts his dorge. Taktra's hands move to the boy's and show him the correct movement. It is tried again.

Now, the bell is lifted and rung.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 I would like you to be my new Regent.

Taktra stops. He nods to the boy.

As the chanting continues, Taktra Rinpoche begins a weaving motion with his hands, delicate, beautiful, hypnotic.

Tenzin Gyatso copies the elder.

We are CLOSE on the boy's moving hands. The chanting becomes the voices of a hundred men, as we FADE OUT.

FADE IN: on the boy's hands, but they are a little larger - they are the hands of an eleven or twelve year-old boy - and the motion they carry out is on the verge of becoming extraordinarily beautiful.

INT. DARK ROOM, POTALA EVENING (1944)

Tenzin Gyatso sits alone, in a small, dark green, room. He is older. His robes have changed slightly, his manner is more refined, more dignified.

He is on a retreat.

There is a soft knock at the door. The door is opened and food is placed inside the small room by bodiless hands.

Tenzin Gyatso collects his food. He sips his tea and eats his tsampa, while reading from a long, narrow stack of scriptures. Thangkas of MILERAPA - the great Tibetan poet and teacher - hang on the walls.

We notice the curly-toed shoes of the Master of the Kitchen, just visible beneath the wooden door.

EXT. COURTYARD, THE POTALA NIGHT

The boy walks alone, moving to the rhythm of a memorization. His breath consolidates in the cold night air. The sky is brilliant with stars.

TENZIN GYATSO

(reciting)

"As long as any living thing draws  
breath, wherever he shall be, there,  
in compassion, shall the Buddha  
appear, incarnate."

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA DAY

School is in session.

LING RINPOCHE is teaching. Ling is a young, shy, brilliant monk, with a very round face. He is now senior tutor.

LING RINPOCHE

The Four Noble Truths.

Tenzin Gyatso, sitting cross legged on a cushion, responds.

TENZIN GYATSO

The Four Noble Truths, as taught by  
the Lord Sakyamuni Buddha are: The  
Truth of Suffering The Truth of the  
Cause of Suffering, The Truth of the  
Cessation of Suffering, the Truth of  
the Way which leads to the cessation  
of Suffering.

LING RINPOCHE

I accept it. What is suffering?

TENZIN GYATSO

True suffering arises from  
contaminated actions and afflictions.  
Birth, illness, grief, old age,  
poverty, pain, death - these are  
surferings.

LING RINPOCHE

I accept it. What are the causes of  
suffering?

TENZIN GYATSO

The causes of suffering arise from true sources. Attachment, desire, envy, hatred, greed, unkindness, wrong view and so forth - these are some causes of suffering.

Now we CUT BACK to Ling Rinpoche, but he is standing, outside, in a courtyard. He asks another question, but he raises his right hand as he speaks, and lowers his left, completing the question with a clap of the hands.

EXT. COURTYARD, THE POTALA DAY

It is a beautiful, blue-sky day. The Dalai Lama is learning "debate". High Lamas sit on tapestry pillows, under appliqued canopies, observing. Young monks can be seen, watching, from a greater distance.

The Lord Chamberlain sits to one side. Taktra Rinpoche, now Regent, is beside him.

The Dalai Lama sits on the ground at Ling's feet.

LING RINPOCHE

How does one progress from the realization of one Noble Truth to another?

(clap)

A long silence from His Holiness. The Lamas wait on tender hooks. Finally, the boy says:

TENZIN GYATSO

We will have to think about that.

There is laughter. Even Ling Rinpoche laughs and the boy erupts into his beautiful, free, easy laugh.

TENZIN GYATSO

I need to squeeze this brain.

LING RINPOCHE

Answer.

(clap)

A pause, and then:

TENZIN GYATSO

When one understands that he causes some of his own suffering, needlessly, then he looks for the causes in his own life.

TENZIN GYATSO

And when and he looks for those causes, when he investigates, then he is putting confidence in his own ability to eliminate the sources and end the suffering. A wish to find a path to peace arises. For all beings desire happiness. All wish to find their purest selves.

Ling nods in approval.

He looks to the elders.

LING RINPOCHE

I accept it.

Taktra Rinpoche and the Lord Chamberlain are proud.

EXT. SAME COURTYARD DUSK

Tenzin Gyatso runs up a slant board and leaps off the edge - a big jump, a flying leap. He falls to the ground, then gets up, laughing, and runs up the board again.

The same old monks who watched him debate, watch him play.

The Lord Chamberlain and Taktra Rinpoche are among them.

The Lord Chamberlain obviously loves watching his young charge play. The Regent is not so sure.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

Careful! Careful!

TENZIN GYATSO SHOUTS:

TENZIN GYATSO

I need to jump! I love to jump!

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA NIGHT

The Nechung Oracle is the protective deity of Tibet.

Tonight, he is in full trance. It is an amazing sight.

The monk who is his medium spins and twirls, he wags his heavy headdress about. A round mirror glitters on his chest. Sweat pours from his brow, over his wildly grimacing face.

The Oracle spits at the government officials in the room.

Horns blow, cymbals crash, incense burns. The Oracle nears the Dalai Lama and retreats from him. Finally, he whispers in the boy's ear.

## ORACLE

Heed the warning of your predecessor.  
Or the war will end here.

And then, the Oracle gently straightens Tenzin Gyatso's yellow robes, before the trance ends and the Oracle falls into the arms of his attendants.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

Wind whistles through the Potala's hallways and porticos.

The Master of the Kitchen is clearing away the dinner dishes.

The view of the floor reveals that a "toy" war is being waged.

With a "Meccano" set, the young Dalai Lama has created what looks like an airplane, and a tank. These vehicles are manned by beautifully detailed lead soldiers - British World War One Field soldiers, French Legionaries and American Artillery men.

Norbu Thundrup, is flying low with a tsampadough airplane. He drops little tsampa-dough bombs from his hand. He hits a tank and knocks down a few lead soldiers.

TENZIN GYATSO

Oh, nicely done, Norbu. I will get you.

The Lord Chamberlain enters.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

May I listen to the news with you, Holiness?

TENZIN GYATSO

Please.

A large, old-fashioned, short-wave radio broadcasts that there is still a real war in progress. The BBC report is of the Pacific front.

TENZIN GYATSO

How big is Tibet's army?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Roughly five thousand men.

TENZIN GYATSO

Is that big?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

No. Not very big.

TENZIN GYATSO  
The Regent is adding men. And he  
bought rifles and ammunition from  
India. Mountain guns, too.

The broadcast reports news of the civil war in China.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Will we be in this war?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
No. This war is almost over.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Will we ever be in war?

The Lord Chamberlain is silent. Norbu answers.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
We have enemies.

TENZIN GYATSO  
The Chinese.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
Yes.

TENZIN GYATSO  
But, surely, we are safe in Tibet.  
We don't believe in killing.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
No, we don't.

Tenzin Gyatso gets to his feet and takes an atlas from his  
table. He lays the book open on the floor.

TENZIN GYATSO  
This is Britain.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
Ahh.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Where is Poland?

The Lord chamberlain sits on the floor. He points to Poland.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Where is Pearl Harbor?

The Master of the Kitchen comes to look at the atlas.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
In the Pacific Ocean.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
It is an island. American territory.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Where is Alsace?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
I do not know, Holiness.

Tenzin Gyatso turns to a well thumbed page: Tibet.

TENZIN GYATSO  
This is Tibet. And this is China.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
Ahh.

They all look at huge China.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Certainly, we are safe in Tibet.

No one answers.

Finally, as Norbu Thundrup begins to gather up the tsampa-dough:

NORBU THUNDRUP  
We hope, Kundun.

Tenzin Gyatso turns to the Lord Chamberlain.

TENZIN GYATSO  
What was the warning of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
He warned about the future of Tibet.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Tell me.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
When it is time.

INT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

His Holiness works on an old movie projector. A white-haired, CHINESE MONK works with him. The old Monk has very little patience. He bangs his hand on the table, and huffs and puffs as the two try again to fiddle with this and that.

Tenzin Gyatso works diligently and calmly.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Patience is the first of the Six  
Perfections.

The old Monk mutters something in Chinese. They thread a roll of dusty film into the reel and spin the wheel. The film breaks. The old monk bangs the table again. The work continues.

TENZIN GYATSO  
One day, we will get that automobile  
running.

The monks slaps his head in horrid anticipation.

INT. DARK ROOM, NORBULINKA NIGHT

A movie begins, shown on a piece of cloth tacked to a wall.

It is a newsreel - footage from World War One. The trenches.

The boy goes up to the cloth screen and touches it gently, playing with his own shadow as men dash from foxholes across a muddy, body strewn field.

The boy steps back and stares at the horror of real war; men sleeping in the muddy foxholes, make-shift hospitals tend the dying. Youths - not much older than His Holiness - weep into their filthy, bloody hands.

The Old Monk keeps his trembling hand on the noisy, hand-operated, projector.

Tenzin Gyatso slowly sits, cross-legged, on the bare floor.

War does not look good on film.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, NORBULINKA NIGHT

The boy sits alone, in front of his altar, praying.  
Meditating.

INT. ALTAR ROOM, THE NORBULINKA DAY

A black room, lit by butter lamps.

Taktra Rinpoche and Tenzin Gyatso sit opposite one another, cross-legged on the floor. Taktra is the teacher, he sits a bit higher.

The room is a shrine to Mahakala, the Dalai Lama's personal deity. Mahakala is present, in the form of a huge, golden statue.

The boy has his head bent low to catch the Rinpoche's words. There is much gesturing, much murmuring. We might catch only a word or two.

An oral teaching is being passed on, a lineage teaching. It is sacred and secret.

EXT. UPPER COURTYARD, THE POTALA DAY

CLOSE on a thangka of Penden Lhamo.

We hear monks debating. It is Ling Rinpoche answering, playing the student.

LING RINPOCHE

"To be born in a time when the Buddha has appeared. To be born in a time when the Buddha has taught. To be born when the teaching of Buddha is alive."

We find His Holiness, sitting, listening to the debate.

LING RINPOCHE

"To be born where the dharma is practiced. To be born in a time when people have compassion for other people."

The view widens now and we are under a softly billowing, appliqued canopy. Maybe fifty monks and lamas are present.

This is an informal group.

QUESTIONER

How is human life precious?

LING RINPOCHE

As a result of previous karma, you have obtained this human life. By means of this rebirth, through work and study, you can attain all everlasting happiness. In the words of Shantideva: "With the boat of this precious life, You can cross the waters of Samsara. How rare to find this boat!" "Oh, ignorant one, do not fall asleep now!"

Shots ring out.

The men jump to their feet, and rush out from under the canopy. The Dalai Lama is right in front.

More shots as the men stare out across the countryside.

We hear murmurs of:

VOICES

Sera, Sera Monastery. Reting. Under arrest. The army is taking him right past Sera! Monastery! Those crazy monks! Have been threatening trouble. Reting tried to assassinate Taktra Rinpoche.

We hear these snippets as the Dalai Lama runs from the group.

INT. HALLWAYS, POTALA DAY

It is almost black inside this old building. The panting boy runs up and up and up several staircases.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

Tenzin Gyatso runs down the hall and enters his red rooms.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DAY

Norbu Thundrup is in the room and he moves ahead of the boy out to the terrace.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S TERRACE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso climbs up on a small, wooden platform, and mans his telescope.

TENZIN GYATSO

It's the army, firing on Sera Monastery! Oh, no! Oh, no!

The shooting continues.

TENZIN GYATSO

Why is this? What is happening? Tell me!

NORBU THUNDRUP

Reting Rinpoche has been arrested. He tried to overthrow Regent Taktra. Today, he is brought back to Lhasa by government officials. The monks at Sera Monastery have been on his side. Now, there is trouble between them and the army.

The Lord Chamberlain arrives on the terrace.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

I am sorry for you to have to witness this, Kundun.

TENZIN GYATSO

Look here!

The Lord Chamberlain peers through the telescope as the shooting continues.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Tragic. Unnecessary.

The Lord Chamberlain steps away from the telescope and the boy takes his place.

The shooting slowly stops.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Holiness? I have a letter.

The boy looks up.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama's warning.  
He wrote to you, the year before he  
died. The year before you were born.

The Lord Chamberlain walks to a far, sheltered end of the terrace.

Tenzin Gyatso slowly turns the telescope to see the prison yard.

View through the telescope; the yard is full of prisoners, listening to the shooting. One man sees the telescope aimed at the prison and prostrates. Then another, and another.

Tenzin Gyatso steps away from the telescope and turns to follow his Lord Chamberlain.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF TERRACE DAY

The Lord Chamberlain opens a yellowing letter and begins to read. Tenzin Gyatso sits down beside him.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

"It may happen, that here in Tibet,  
religion and government will be  
attacked both from without and within.  
Unless we guard our own country..."

CLOSE on the Lord Chamberlain. Today, he appears tired; the whites of his eyes appear enormous. His voice is quite beautiful.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

"...it will now happen that the Dalai  
and Panchen Lamas, the Father and

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
 the Son, and all the revered holders  
 of the faith, will disappear and  
 become nameless."

Tenzin Gyatso unwinds the rosary from his wrist and begins  
 thumbing the brown beads.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
 "Monks and their monasteries will be  
 destroyed. The rule of law will be  
 weakened. The lands and properties  
 will be seized. They themselves  
 will be forced to serve their enemies  
 or wander the country like beggars."  
 "All beings will be sunk in great  
 hardship and overwhelming fear; the  
 days and nights will drag on slowly  
 in suffering."

He is finished.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 What can I do? I am only a boy.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
 You are the man who wrote this letter.  
 You are the man who has come back to  
 lead us. You will soon have great  
 responsibilities. You must know  
 what to do.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, ADJACENT ROOM, DAY

The Regent and the Lord Chamberlain are present.

Also present is the KASHAG - a council of four men: one  
 monk, three laymen. They are the Dalai Lama's advisory  
 cabinet.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM DAY

The boy rises from his desk. Norbu says:

NORBU THUNDRUP  
 You remember who you are. You called  
 for them.

Tenzin Gyatso enters the adjacent room.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM DAY

The boy climbs onto a cushion and sits - a head above his  
 officials. He is tentative, unsure of form and procedure.

There is an awkward, formal silence. Then:

TENZIN GYATSO  
Takttra Rinpoche, I understand there  
was an attempt on your life.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE  
It is possible, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO  
You are unharmed?

TAKTRA RINPOCHE  
Completely.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Good. Where is Reting Rinpoche now?

KASHAG MEMBER  
He has been imprisoned, here in the  
Potala, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO  
The Sera monks have surrendered?

KASHAG MEMBER  
It is calm.

The boy motions to the table.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Please, have tea.

The tea is poured.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I need to know what you know. I am  
no longer a child.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
Ask whatever you will.

TENZIN GYATSO  
What is the danger from the Chinese,  
now?

KASHAG MEMBER  
Very complicated, Holiness. Let me  
tell you current news. The Chinese  
have launched a deceptive campaign  
aimed at convincing the world that  
Tibet belongs to China. We sent a  
mission to the Chinese National  
Conference. Our attendance was a  
grave mistake.

KASHAG MEMBER

The Tibetans were introduced as delegates from the "Chinese region of Tibet". We protested this reference and demanded a letter rebutting it.

TENZIN GYATSO

Did you receive the letter?

KASHAG MEMBER

We did not.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The war is over. This is a time in when nations are redefining themselves.

TENZIN GYATSO

So, Tibet, too, needs to define itself.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Yes. As a free country. But our attempts have proven futile. We continue to be badly outmaneuvered by the Chinese.

TENZIN GYATSO

Can India help us?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

India is a newly independent nation. They are struggling. India is in no position to help us.

TENZIN GYATSO

Britain?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Britain chooses not to.

TENZIN GYATSO

And, America?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

America, we shall see.

TENZIN GYATSO

Ask the Chinese mission to leave our country. Immediately.

A shocking suggestion.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
Quite simple. Yes. Good.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I shall send a letter to America, to  
the President, informing him of our  
problem.

The men agree to this.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I want Reting Rinpoche well cared  
for. He is my teacher. He found  
me.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM NIGHT

The Dalai Lama sits at his desk, writing a letter.

The radio is on. It is the BBC - with news of a Communist  
advantage in Kuomintang China.

Norbu Thundrup enters. The boy looks up.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Listen to this, Norbu.  
(he reads:)  
To Mr. Truman The President of the  
United States of America I am glad  
that you are enjoying the best of  
health and doing good service to  
uplift the happiness and prosperity  
of the whole world. Here, I am well  
and doing my best for the religion  
of Lord Buddha and welfare of all  
beings.

This is all, so far.

NORBU THUNDRUP  
Reting Rinpoche has died in prison.

Tenzin Gyatso lays down his pen.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S TERRACE NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso is alone. He has a little smelting arrangement  
built out on the terrace. He lays a lead soldier on the hot  
bottom of a heavy, metal bowl.

CLOSE on the soldier. It begins to melt.

The boy has a pile of the soldiers. He drops a second one  
in the bowl.

We bear the sounds of Lhasa - laughter, street songs - and we see the stars, hanging, it seems, just above the young boy's head.

EXT. NORBULINKA DAY

The young Tenzin Gyatso bursts through the gate in the Yellow Wall and runs across the beautiful garden to his parents's home.

INT. PARENTS'S HOME, NORBULINKA DAY

A family gathering meets the boy's eye when he enters.

There is his Mother, his oldest sister, Tsering Dolma, Lobsang Samten, a younger sister, Pema, baby brother Tendzin Chuta, and his oldest brother, Takster.

We don't recognize these faces, of course, but the gathering is obviously familial.

Only the boy's Father is missing.

Tenzin Gyatso goes to his Mother and lays his head in her lap.

On an altar behind her, is a silver frame. In the frame is a picture of her husband.

DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. HILLTOP DAWN

The body of the Dalai Lama's Father lays on a flat boulder.

Incense smoke curls into the air. Prayer wheels are turned, hand drums are played - the burial men stand off to one side, their hatchets and knives in view.

Tenzin Gyatso is present. He is the boy we know, but beside him stands the four year-old boy, Lhamo, from the beginning of the movie, and on the other side of him stands the boy who will play the Dalai Lama in the next section of the film

A BOY ABOUT FIFTEEN OR SIXTEEN.

Tenzin Gyatso wraps his brown rosary around his left wrist.

The beads catch the brilliant afternoon light. The sixteen year-old Dalai Lama wears the same colored rosary around his left wrist.

The cutters move in to the corpse, and as we hear them begin the work of dismembering the body, the view pans up to reveal the vultures circling overhead.

The last person leaving the hilltop with is the Dalai Lama as an older man - not a character from this movie - but a man of about fifty years, wearing glasses, wearing the same robes, the same rosary. Little Lhamo walks beside him.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. SKY OVER TIBET NIGHT

We hear a loud explosion, and then another and another and another. The sound begins to fade, but the blue-black, peaceful, star-filled sky is shattered by bright bursts of red and yellow and pink light.

It is a frightening sight.

EXT. GARDEN, NORBULINKA DAWN (1950)

The still waters of the fish pond begin to move. The fish swim in nervous circles; the water laps over its stone banks.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE DAWN

The whole building shakes. Earthquake.

One monk runs down the stairs, another monk runs up, both staring at a second floor window - a black-rimmed, glass window.

A red cloth is pulled back and the window is opened.

The fifteen year-old Tenzin Gyatso looks out.

There is a terrible rumbling: the rumbling that accompanies an earthquake. Finally, slowly, the sound, and the movement subsides.

CLOSE on Tenzin Gyatso. He lets the curtain fall.

INT. GREAT HALL, THE POTALA DAY

The General Assembly is in session.

Once again, the Yigstang and the Tsitang - four monks and four laymen - sit facing one another. But the room is crowded today - this is a full session. The Lord chamberlain sits in. Regent Taktra is there.

The senior Layman is on his knees.

LAYMAN

The Communist have control of China.

In the back of the room we notice an open door.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

The Dalai Lama is listening. He stands taller than the first time we caught him eavesdropping. He still is not a part of this assembly, but he doesn't seem to care if he is spotted.

INT. GREAT HALL DAY

The Layman continues.

LAYMAN

Now, as his great army, stands idle on our borders, Chairman Mao has presented Tibet with three demands: One, Tibet must accept that it is part of China.

A murmuring in the room.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

Shock on the face of His Holiness.

LAYMAN (O.S.)

Two, Tibet's defenses must be handled by China. Three, all political and trade matters concerning foreign countries must be conducted through China.

Voice shouts out:

VOICE IN BACK OF ROOM (OC)

Give the Dalai Lama his majority!

INT. GREAT HALL DAY

The senior Monk is on his knees.

MONK

We can concede that Tibet is a part of China if we can guarantee that the Dalai Lama's name and authority will remain...

LAYMAN

And do you believe that the Tibetan government will be allowed to continue to function as it is? Do you believe that our religion will be protected?

VOICES

Give the Dalai Lama his majority!

MONK

We have dealt with this Chinese  
obsession for hundreds of years. We  
can deal with it now.

LAYMAN

These are not the Chinese we know.  
These are Communists.

VOICES

Make him Dalai Lama now!

We see the Lord Chamberlain look toward the open door.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

Tenzin Gyatso looks at his advisor, and then, he closes the  
door as the demand for his enthronement continues.

He walks down the hall, past the door leading to the treasure  
room, alone now - an adult. He is wearing those European,  
lace-up shoes found in the treasure room so long ago. They  
are still too big for him.

EXT. TRIBUTARY OF THE KYICHU RIVER, NORBULINKA DAY

Tenzin Gyatso and Taktra Rinpoche walk side by side along  
the waterway.

TENZIN GYATSO

If we agree that we are part of China,  
nothing else will matter. Not trade,  
not defense. We will be lost.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

What would you do, Holiness?

The boy looks out over the water.

Shepherds are leading their flock of sheep back toward town  
on the far side of the tributary.

The two men stand side by side, one so young, one seeming so  
old.

TENZIN GYATSO

What should I do about my doubt,  
Teacher?

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

It is a difficult situation.

TENZIN GYATSO

I mean, my doubt. Why me? Am I  
Him?

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

Doubt is an affliction. Relinquish  
it. Accept.

Pause.

TENZIN GYATSO

I believe we must make no concessions  
to the Chinese. But, I am one voice.  
The Dalai Lama has always trusted in  
the forces of Buddha. Let us consult  
the protective deities.

Taktra Rinpoche bows and leaves him.

Tenzin Gyatso stands alone by the river. The boy watches  
the herders, and before the young shepherds disappear from  
sight, the Dalai Lama turns and waves a hand behind him.

Two Bodyguards approach. We can not hear, but as the Dalai  
Lama walks away from us, down the river, one Bodyguard runs  
up river, shouting:

BODYGUARD

(shouting)

We will buy them! We will buy them!

INT. ALTAR ROOM, NORBULINKA DAY

In this black room, under the protective view of the statue  
of Mahakala, a divine lottery is performed.

Tenzin Gyatso, the Regent Taktra Rinpoche, The Lord  
chamberlain, the Kashag, the Yigstang and the Tsitang are  
all present.

Tsampa-dough balls are made, three of them, each containing  
a strip of parchment, bearing writing. The dough is shaped  
and weighed to see that each ball is equal.

Then, the three balls are placed in a silver bowl and the  
bowl is spun. The balls whirl, race, and finally one leaps  
from the bowl.

This ball is taken to the Dalai Lama and he makes a mark on  
it. The ball is returned to the bowl, the procedure is  
repeated, and a ball leaps again, almost immediately. This  
ball is presented and the Dalai Lama places his mark - next  
to the mark he just made. It is the same ball.

Tenzin Gyatso makes the twelfth mark on the same ball, and  
the spinning begins again and then the thirteenth mark, and  
then the ball is broken open and the strip of parchment handed  
to the Regent.

## TAKTRA RINPOCHE

We should not accept any conditions  
from the Chinese.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

In a paved area, adjacent to the Yellow Wall which marks the Dalai Lama's private grounds, the Opera Festival has begun.

This festival involves performances by Tibetan singers, dancers and actors. It looks to be a joyous occasion; officials and their wives are dressed in their finest and sit before beautifully laid picnics. Children run here and there, amidst the monks and nomads, the swashbuckling Khambas from eastern Tibet (large people, with heavy braids wrapped in red cloth on top of their heads). There are westerners, Nepalese and Sikimese.

Dancers - dressed in wild, colorful outfits - spin and leap in time to the eerie, Tibetan music.

Atop a low building on the Yellow Wall, stands an elaborate enclosure - draped in yellow silk.

The Dalai Lama sits inside it.

INT. ENCLOSURE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso is alone in this little room; his arms rest on a window ledge as he stares down at the festival taking place below him.

EXT. GARDENS DAY

A bit more of the dancers and the people enjoying themselves - all from the isolated point of view of the Dalai Lama.

We recognize a few characters: Keustang Rinpoche. His Holiness's Mother with her younger children, the favorite sweeper, Norbu Thundrup - dressed in a fine hat.

But a distant figure becomes apparent - he is a MESSENGER - he is running, through the crowds, toward the Yellow Wall.

We stay on this desperate little figure as he draws closer.

INT. ENCLOSURE DAY

The boy is watching the Messenger.

EXT. GARDENS DAY

Back to that messenger as he works his way, ever closer to the building which holds the Dalai Lama aloft, and then we lose sight of him.

INT. ENCLOSURE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso leans back in his seat. The yellow silk curtain that his elbows have held open now fall closed and we hear the heavy footsteps of the runner.

A knock.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE (O.S.)

Enter.

The Regent is next door.

The boy climbs up on a chest and peeks through a tiny window in the wall which separates this enclosure from the Regent's.

Taktra Rinpoche reads a telegram. His aging face becomes quite grave.

The Regent leaves his side of the enclosure.

REGENT (O.S.)

Summon the Lord Chamberlain and the  
Kashag.

And then, there is a knock on the Dalai Lama's door.

TENZIN GYATSO

Enter.

It is the Regent.

REGENT TAKTRA

Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Yes.

REGENT TAKTRA

The Chinese have invaded.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

Back to a new group of performers - satirists, dressed as high lamas and monks - even as the Nechung Oracle - lampooning the rulers. The crowd roars with laughter.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, NORBULINKA DUSK

The Lord Chamberlain stands with the teenage Dalai Lama.

The room is a violent red in the sunset.

Tenzin Gyatso has cleared off his table, he is creating a three-dimensional battlefield as his Lord Chamberlain explains

the situation. Tenzin Gyatso uses papers, books, little statues to bring a physical life to the words we hear.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

They crossed the river, Holiness.  
They have invaded in six locations,  
Chando Province, Kham, eastern Tibet.

TENZIN GYATSO

What is the size of our army, now?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Eight thousand, five hundred, soldiers  
and officers. We have recently  
requested mortars, anti-aircraft  
guns and ammunition from India. We  
have several hundred in the area.

Little statues are placed facing what stands-in for the river.

The Lord Chamberlain helps the boy to create this panorama.

TENZIN GYATSO

Has anyone died?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The radio contact said one officer  
had died. Then he said, "The Chinese  
soldiers - they are coming." And  
then, the radio went dead.

Tenzin Gyatso lifts one statue, a small, golden Buddha, from the display. He cradles the Buddha in his hands.

TENZIN GYATSO

One man. A man has died. One man  
is too many.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, NORBULINKA DAY

In beautiful sunlight, the painted cabinets of this room glisten. Rainbows of color play on the glass windows. The Dalai Lama sits at a low table, a pack of colored pencils, or pastels, spread out around him. He is teaching his little brother to draw.

Together, little hand in bigger hand, they draw.

The Dalai Lama's Mother sits in a side chair, watching her sons.

The little boy screams with laughter as the brothers draw a yak.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA NIGHT

A movie is being shown - outside - on a makeshift screen.

It is "Henry the Fourth".

This is a treat for the sweepers, and gardeners and servants. children sit on the grass, mesmerized by this incredible vision.

Tenzin Gyatso sits beside Heinrich Harrer.

The boy rubs his eyes wearily. He appears distracted.

This line is spoken by an actor:

ACTOR IN MOVIE  
"Heavy lies the head, that wears the  
crown."

CLOSE on Tenzin Gyatso.

EXT. ROAD BEHIND NORBULINKA DAY

The Dalai Lama sits behind the wheel of a 1927 Austin. He is a lousy driver - a boy who never commanded a wheeled vehicle in all of his young life.

The Attendants sit in the back seat, holding on for dear life.

We hear Tenzin Gyatso's wonderful, deep laugh.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOM, THE POTALA NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso is listening to Peking Radio. Norbu Thundrup is with him.

The boy tinkers with a clock as he listens - he is swiftly becoming a master tinkerer.

RADIO  
"This week, the People's Liberation  
Army crossed the Dri Chu River east  
of Chamdo and began the peaceful  
liberation of Tibet. Tibet is in  
the hands of imperialist enemies of  
the people. The Dalai Lama, a foolish  
reminder of an illiterate past, is  
the figure head of this autonomous  
region of China. Accept our help,  
Tibet! The people shall be free!"

TENZIN GYATSO  
What do the people say, Norbu?

Norbu is not shy in his report.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Tibetan officials have retreated from Chamdo. They are scared and running. The Chinese strategy has destroyed the heart of our defense forces. Chamdo falls, several other villages are lost. You know what happens. The road to Lhasa will be wide open.

Tenzin Gyatso listens carefully to the man.

NORBU THUNDRUP

The people want you made Dalai Lama.

TENZIN GYATSO

Then, I am lucky. I am still too young.

NORBU THUNDRUP

These are dangerous times. They want the Dalai Lama to lead them.

TENZIN GYATSO

But, I have no experience.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Oh, but you do, Kundun. Who else would be here?

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA NIGHT

The Nechung Oracle spins in his trance. Horns blow, cymbals clash, the Oracle spurts sounds as lamas chant.

Finally, the Oracle approaches the boy, stands beside him, like a lieutenant, a comrade, and says:

ORACLE

"His time has come."

EXT. TERRACE, THE POTALA DAY

The Dalai Lama is reading - Tibet's appeal to the United Nations.

TENZIN GYATSO

"To the members of the United Nations: The attention of the world is riveted on Korea where aggression is being resisted by an international force. Similar happenings in remote Tibet are passing without notice.

TENZIN GYATSO

The problem is not of Tibet's own making but is largely the outcome of unthwarted Chinese ambition to bring weaker nations on her periphery within her active domination." This is very good. Quite strong.

The Lord Chamberlain and the four members of the Kashag agree.

THE BOY CONTINUES:

TENZIN GYATSO

"Tibetans have for long lived a cloistered life in their mountain fastness, remote and aloof..."

In the background, we see monks on top of a wall, long horns in front of them. The blowing begins.

In a courtyard below, a debating session is in progress. We hear the shouts and the claps and watch the beautiful body movements of the questioners. Laughter fills the air.

Below that, the small capital of Tibet - the mysterious city, the forbidden city of Lhasa - carries on, for now.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA NIGHT

A monk - an abbot, in fact - sits beside Tenzin Gyatso.

It is Takster Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's oldest brother.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

I was never alone. Two Chinese were with me every minute of the day.

Tenzin Gyatso plays with a box of those special sweets which comes from his mother.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

Their talk is always of liberation and helpfulness. They put their words like honey on a knife, but if you lick the honey, you will bleed.

Takster Rinpoche begins to say something, but holds back.

TENZIN GYATSO

Tell me.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

They think they have convinced me. They think I am on their side.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

They have allowed me to leave Kumbum  
and come to Lhasa believing that I  
will try to turn you to their ways.  
If I do not succeed, I am to eliminate  
you.

TENZIN GYATSO

You, kill me?

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

Eliminate you.

The tension is great, the idea profound.

TARSTER RINPOCHE

I can be Governor of Lhasa, they  
say.

The brothers try to resist, but cannot. They laugh like  
crazy.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

Don't eat all those sweets. You'll  
get sick.

TENZIN GYATSO

Do you remember the day I came to  
your monastery, when I was a baby?  
And you comforted me?

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

I do.

TENZIN GYATSO

I remember, too, actually. I was  
frightened then. I am frightened  
now.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

The Chinese have one goal. The  
complete dissolution of our nation.  
The destruction of our culture.  
There is no room for Buddha in their  
world. Our only hope is to fight.

TENZIN GYATSO

We cannot.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

This is not a fight to put bread  
just in one's own mouth. This is a  
fight for Tibet.

TENZIN GYATSO

Buddha teaches that we must learn  
from our enemy. We have compassion  
for all people.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

These are not human beings. They  
are worse than ghosts.

Silence.

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

You are in great danger. The Dalai  
Lama cannot fall into Chinese hands.  
You must flee.

TENZIN GYATSO

How could I ever leave?

TAKSTER RINPOCHE

It may not be your decision to make.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA DAY

In the adjacent room, the four members of the Kashag and the  
Lord Chamberlain are waiting.

The Dalai Lama enters the room.

The boy goes to a small table where a document is unrolled  
before him.

Tenzin Gyatso lifts the gold seal of power and affixes it to  
the document.

TENZIN GYATSO

I accept it.

He makes his mark on a small piece of parchment that is  
attached to the document.

He has accepted the request to be enthroned.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS HOUR BEFORE DAWN

The Master of the Robe is helping Tenzin Gyatso to dress.

He ties a piece of green cloth around his waist and helps  
him on with his maroon robes.

Norbu is there, watching.

INT. HALLS OF THE POTALA PRE-DAWN

Tenzin Gyatso walks down this dark hall. The three attendants are with him.

INT. TEMPLE DAWN

It is very dark green. Butter lamps highlight certain faces - members of the Kashag, noblemen, the tutors, an Englishman, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Tibetan Muslims - but the darkness conceals the great number of people present.

We hear the unmistakable Tibetan horns and cymbals. We hear the chanting of monks.

The boy is handed a Golden Wheel, symbolizing the assumption of temporal power.

At one moment, the Lamas all put on their yellow hats - a color that peeks at us out of this dark room. And we hear a voice:

TENZIN GYATSO (V.O.)  
 We shall send delegations to America,  
 India, Nepal and Great Britain, in  
 hope that these countries will  
 intervene on our behalf.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA DAY

The Dalai Lama addresses the Yistang, the Tsitang.

Two new faces are present.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 We have telegraphed our appeal to  
 the United Nations and await its  
 reply. I am sending a delegation to  
 China to negotiate the Chinese  
 withdrawal.

He looks around these rooms.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 It seems that I must depart Lhasa.  
 The majority wills it. Lukhangwa  
 and Lobsang Tashi?

The two men rise to their knees - LUKHANGWA, an incredible looking layman, with a long white beard, and LOBSANG TASHI, a monk.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 I am making you my Prime Ministers.  
 You will stay here.

TENZIN GYATSO

You must always keep me informed, no matter how bad the news. I want plain information.

The men bow to His Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Today, I declare a general amnesty. I have always wanted to free the prisoners.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA DUSK

Tenzin Gyatso is packing. We hear whispers in the adjacent room as the Masters of the Robe and the Ritual organize belongings into piles: rolled thangkas, precious manuscripts, maroon robes, a few english books, the radio.

The boy finds a few golden coins in a drawer and slips them into his robes.

Tenzin Gyatso adds a package of tools, an atlas, the photo of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, the European shoes. Then, he goes to the terrace.

EXT. TERRACE, THE POTALA DUSK

The boy does not need a footstool anymore.

He glides the telescope across the countryside, catching sight of the young herders leading their sheep back into town. He picks up a corner of the market place and the hub-bub of the end of the day. Wall posters show Tibetan soldiers fleeing the Red Army.

And then, he aims his view-finder at the prison yard.

It is empty. The prisoners are gone.

NORBU THUNDRUP (O.S.)

It's time to take this down.

Tenzin Gyatso lets go of the eyepiece and turns to see Norbu.

TENZIN GYATSO

You will not come?

NORBU THUNDRUP

No, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Am I running away?

NORBU THUNDRUP

The people will cry when they learn  
you are gone. But they would all  
want you safe.

Together, the friends break-down the telescope.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Let me take this.

Norbu folds up the tripod.

NORBU THUNDRUP

You must study very hard, do not  
neglect the holy things during this  
time.

TENZIN GYATSO

I will miss you.

NORBU THUNDRUP

We have had fun, you and I. Fun for  
a little boy in an old palace.

TENZIN GYATSO

We have.

NORBU THUNDRUP

You have grown up very good.

TENZIN GYATSO

And you have grown older and your  
chin has grown balder.

Norbu laughs. The telescope is wrapped.

NORBU THUNDRUP

Tonight, Kundun, you see the world.  
You place your feet on the shepherd  
boy's path.

Norbu Thundrup ties a tight knot in a cord.

NORBU THUNDRUP

"The Gods will be avenged."

CLOSE on the gold seal of state as it is packed in a silk-lined box.

EXT. POTALA WALLS NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso - dressed in the warm, woolen chuba of a layman - keeps his back against the wall. Norbu is beside him, carrying a flashlight.

A Bodyguard comes for them, and then, the Dalai Lama is outside the Potala walls.

EXT. POTALA NIGHT

The small group walks down a rocky path. A grey horse is waiting.

Tenzin Gyatso is helped onto the horse. Norbu sees that he is comfortable, and then, the flashlight goes out. Norbu fiddles with it. Tenzin Gyatso takes the torch and tries get it working again. The Guard mounts his horse. It is time to go. The horses snort, their breath consolidating the cold night air.

Tenzin Gyatso cannot speak. He tries, but he cannot. Norbu takes the flashlight.

NORBU THUNDRUP

I will send it to you. It will work.

The horse is turned and the Dalai Lama is led away to join the soldiers at the foot of the path.

Tenzin Gyatso turns once, to see his friend. The night is dark. Norbu has become invisible.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NIGHT

A cold and moonless night, lit only by the millions of stars that shine over Tibet. The caravan - made up of noblemen, monks, family members and over two hundred soldiers (armed with rifles, machine guns and field artillery) - journeys out of Lhasa.

CLOSE on the Dalai Lama: riding the shepherd's path.

EXT. YELLOW WALL, NORBULINKA NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso rides his grey horse through a gate in the yellow wall.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE NIGHT

The boy climbs the stairs to his summer residence.

INT. ALTAR ROOM NIGHT

The shrine of Mahakala. Butter lamps cast their eerie glow on the black walls as the boy presents a white, silk scarf, a kata - a traditional token of leaving and return.

INT ENTRANCE WAY, NORBULINKA NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso is about to leave the residence when he stops, and looks at the small cabinet in the corner. He goes to it.

The door is still locked.

CLOSE on the boy. Suddenly, he knows.

He reaches a hand behind the cabinet. The hand comes back to him with a key.

Tenzin Gyatso opens the cabinet doors. Several drawers are revealed.

The boy opens one. Empty. Another. Empty.

A Bodyguard says, from the stairs:

BODYGUARD  
We must go, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO  
A moment.

Another drawer. Empty. And then, success.

In a small drawer, there is something, wrapped in red velvet.

The boy opens it, with shaking hands. Teeth. False teeth.

Tenzin Gyatso releases a sharp laugh, he has been holding his breath. He wraps up the teeth and puts them back, but behind the teeth is something more.

A rolled, white silk scarf, a kata.

Tenzin Gyatso takes the scarf. He unrolls it. Something falls on the floor.

A tiny, lead soldier.

Tenzin Gyatso lifts the soldier. It is a Ghurka. An Indian soldier.

BODYGUARD  
Please, come, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Yes. I am ready.

The boy places the scarf around his own shoulders.

TENZIN GYATSO

Safe journey. Safe return.  
I am him.

CLOSE on the golden statue of Mahakala, wearing his white scarf.

We hear the roar of the Kyichu river.

EXT. KYICHU RIVER NIGHT

Coracles - skin boats - are loaded with bundles and people and pushed off the banks and into the water.

Horses, donkeys and yaks must swim across.

Tenzin Gyatso is helped into a boat. The rowers, wrapped in heavy wool and sheepskin, their arms bare, push off.

The boy is sprayed with water. He is bumped about. He is freezing cold. He floats away from Lhasa.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE DAY

The caravan journeys through a narrow mountain pass.

The flags of Tibet and of the Dalai Lama are carried by mounted soldiers.

Suddenly, monks come running from the surrounding mountain trails, shrieking, wailing.

They run to lamas, grabbing at their robes, clutching,

CRYING OUT:

MONKS

Do not let him go! We beg of you,  
do not take him from us!

One monk clutches for an instant at the layman's wrapping on Tenzin Gyatso - but he does not recognize him as the Dalai Lama.

The boy tenderly embraces this distraught figure, but the monk drops away from him and clings to the shy, sweet presence of Ling Rinpoche.

The Dalai Lama is quickly and quietly surrounded by soldiers - discreetly, so as not to give away his identity.

Ling Rinpoche speaks to a group.

LING RINPOCHE

He goes for a short time, until the danger can be determined. He will not leave Tibet. He will return.

The pain on these monks's faces, in their voices, is tragic.

Tenzin Gyatso is overwhelmed.

He sees before him a line of prostrate monks - but they are not bowing to him, they are laying down in the pass, trying to block the way of the caravan.

Ling Rinpoche goes to these men and gently helps them to their feet.

LING RINPOCHE

He will return. The Precious One will not abandon you.

INT. TENT NIGHT

The Dalai Lama lies awake in his camp bed. He cannot sleep.

He rises and walks to the tent flap. He opens it.

EXT. TENT NIGHT

A Bodyguard is posted. He turns to the Dalai Lama.

We recognize him. He is the Bodyguard from that first caravan trip so long ago: a huge monk with a big stick - the guard who stood outside the old monks's tent. The man with the deformed face.

The boy is not frightened this time.

TENZIN GYATSO

All quiet?

BODYGUARD

Yes, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Where are you from?

BODYGUARD

Kham, Holiness.

TENZIN GYATSO

Your people are very brave. They are fighting the Chinese. No one can stop them. Not even me.

BODYGUARD  
Khambas are wild men.

There is silence as the two men look out at the cold night.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I worry about them.

BODYGUARD  
Do not worry, Holiness. They fight  
for you. They are under your  
protection.

The boy steps back inside.

INT. TENT NIGHT

We hear the approach of a horse, and then the Bodyguard enters the tent.

BODYGUARD  
Holiness, this has come for you.

The Bodyguard hands the boy a parcel. Tenzin Gyatso unwraps it. His flashlight. It works.

A pause, and then Tenzin Gyatso sits in front of the thanangka of Penden Lhamo.

He reads from the scripture pages laid out on the low table.

He reads by flashlight.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE DAY

The Dalai Lama walks along a beaten, caravan path. He is still in disguise, and obviously, enjoying it.

An OLD MUSLIM MAN is beside him - an incredible looking creature.

MUSLIM MAN  
Eighteen children.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Eighteen, wonderful.

MUSLIM MAN  
And not a monk among them.

The Dalai Lama laughs.

MUSLIM MAN  
No, no son of mine will sit and read  
books and eat up the poor people's

MUSLIM MAN

butter while my people have to butcher  
the cows and sheep because these  
holy men can't kill an animal. They  
can eat it, can't they?

The boy laughs again.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATER DAY

Still walking, with two companions. A Tibetan peasant WOMAN,  
and his own mother.

TENZIN GYATSO

Did you love your husband, before  
you married?

TIBETAN WOMAN

I did not know him before I married  
him. I loved his brother, but then,  
I married his brother, too. He is  
dead now.

TENZIN GYATSO

Hmm.

TIBETAN WOMAN

The land has stayed in the family.  
We work together. The nobleman is  
not too bad.

TENZIN GYATSO

Does he treat you fairly?

A laugh from her.

TIBETAN WOMAN

Not too bad. Rich is rich, poor is  
poor. We are different. Are you  
married?

Tenzin Gyatso laughs.

The Attendants walk behind the boy, eavesdropping. Tenzin  
Gyatso's Mother plays along.

TENZIN GYATSO

No.

TIBETAN WOMAN

Too young?

TENZIN GYATSO

Much too young.

TIBETAN WOMAN

Look for a strong woman, not too  
occupied with her beauty. Look for  
a woman who keeps her hands busy.  
Look for a kind heart.

TENZIN GYATSO

Like my mother.

TIBETAN WOMAN

I see that.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, STILL LATER DAY

The Dalai Lama walks beside two boys: his older brother,  
Lobsang, and a YOUNG NOBLE BOY.

TENZIN GYATSO

This little brother was terribly  
sweet. When he died, my mother was  
so sad. A lama said to her, before  
the little brother was laid out for  
burial, take a bit of butter and rub  
a spot on his skin. He will come  
back to you, you will see. So, my  
mother did this, and a few years  
later, a new boy was born.

NOBLE BOY

Does he have the spot?

TENZIN GYATSO

He does, a little spot where the  
butter had been.

NOBLE BOY

Is that a true story, or pretend?

TENZIN GYATSO

What do you think?

NOBLE BOY

True.

TENZIN GYATSO

You decide.

They walk.

NOBLE BOY

What does the butter spot feel like?

TENZIN GYATSO

Soft. Nice. I have a good friend  
back in Lhasa.

TENZIN GYATSO

He has a very poor beard, with a little spot on his chin where no hair grows. It feels like that.

EXT. EST. SHOT, DUNGKHAR MONASTERY - ON A HILL, OVERLOOKING DROMO VALLEY DAY

It is raining as we see the Dalai Lama on horseback, climbing the dirt path leading to this beautiful, small monastery. The caravan has arrived at its destination.

We hear the chanting of monks.

INT. THE DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, DUNGKAAR MONASTERY DAY

A home has been made: books on the shelf, screwdrivers all in a row, European shoes under the bed. An old Bush radio receiver, running off a six-volt battery, sits on the floor. The telescope stands on the terrace.

Two members of the Kashag can be seen in the adjacent room. The rooms are stark white.

KASHAG MEMBER

Of the Tibetan delegations sent abroad, all have been turned away.

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)

All?

INT. ADJACENT ROOM DAY

Tenzin Gyatso, dressed informally, looking peaceful, sits with his advisors on the floor. The Lord Chamberlain is with them.

KASHAG MEMBER

Britain, Nepal, America, India. All of those governments have refused to meet with our representatives.

Silence.

TENZIN GYATSO

And the United Nations? Surely?

KASHAG MEMBER

The United Nations voted not to hear our appeal.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

One country did sponsor the resolution. A land called "El Salvador".

TENZIN GYATSO

Where is that?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

In the Americas.

Silence.

TENZIN GYATSO

So, we must face China and all her  
might alone.

KASHAG MEMBER

Yes. Most of the Chamdo region is  
now in Chinese hands. There is a  
report from Chamdo which makes quite  
clear that, unless some settlement  
can soon be reached, Communist troops  
will soon be marching on Lhasa.

TENZIN GYATSO

With much bloodshed.

KASHAG MEMBER

I am afraid.

TENZIN GYATSO

I want at all costs to avoid this.  
Do we have news from the delegation  
in China?

KASHAG MEMBER

Not yet, but the Governor of Chamdo,  
Ngabo Jigme, suggests we must  
negotiate and offers to go to Peking.

TENZIN GYATSO

He is a capable man.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Your prime ministers would argue that  
such negotiations should take place  
in Lhasa.

TENZIN GYATSO

And then they would concede that the  
times are desperate and we must go  
to Peking. Agreed. Send Ngabo.  
Is that all?

KASHAG MEMBER

Yes.

TENZIN GYATSO

Time to study.

The boy gets up. The prostrations begin.

TENZIN GYATSO

Wait.

Tenzin Gyatso waves a hand. The men get up, awkwardly.

TENZIN GYATSO

We are in the last outposts of Tibet.  
Let's do away with some of this  
formality.

The Dalai Lama leaves the room.

One man still goes down to his knees.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

He is a modern man. Just like he  
was the last time.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DUSK

Ling Rinpoche and Tenzin Gyatso sit together.

TENZIN GYATSO

"I will liberate those not liberated."  
I will release those not released.  
I will relieve those not relieved.  
May I deliver them to the state of  
enlightenment."

The lead soldier of the Indian Ghurka sits on the low table,  
beside Buddha and the tantric instruments.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso walks alone in the mountains. We see his  
Bodyguards in the distance. He comes to a chorten (a stupa

A SMALL, PAGODA-LIKE CHAPEL). HE STEPS INSIDE.

INT. CHORTEN DAY

This is where the Tibetan peasants come to make their  
offerings to Buddha. It is a small space, whitewashed, quiet.  
A painting of Buddha adorns one wall and flowers, butter  
lamps, nuts and dried fruit sit before it.

The boy looks closer.

There is a photograph pinned to the wall.

It is a picture of him, as a young boy. The Incarnate. The  
Precious One.

EXT. CHORTEN DAY

The Dalai Lama ties his piece of colored cloth, his mantra, to this public prayer flag. The beautiful valley lies at his feet, the bodyguards keep a polite distance.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

The boy is tinkering, as he listens to the radio.

It is Peking Radio he is picking up.

We hear a crackly voice begin a very important announcement.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

"Today in Peking, a Seventeen Point Agreement for the peaceful Liberation of Tibet has been signed by Representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Local Government of Tibet."

Tenzin Gyatso drops his work. He turns to face the offending radio.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

"Over the last hundred years or more aggressive, imperialist forces have penetrated into Tibet and carried out all manner of deceptions and provocations. Under such conditions the Tibetan nationality was plunged into the depths of enslavement and suffering."

The boy moves closer to the radio, he appears physically ill.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

"Today, this enslavement ends. Point One: The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet. The Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the Motherland - the People's Republic of China." Point Two: The Local Government of Tibet will actively assist the People's Liberation Army to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defense."

Tenzin Gyatso is stunned. Frozen.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (O.S.)

It means we have lost our status as  
an independent nation.

INT. PARLOR, DUNGKHAR MONASTERY DAY

Tenzin Gyatso, the two members of the Kashag and the Lord Chamberlain stand around a clicking telegraph machine. A long message curls along the floor.

KASHAG MEMBER

Ngabo did not have the state seal.  
He could not sign.

TENZIN GYATSO

Yes, but they say he did.

A Kashag Member is reading along as the message comes in.

KASHAG MEMBER

Holiness?

TENZIN GYATSO

Yes.

KASHAG MEMBER

General Chiang Chin-wu, the Chinese  
representative, is en route to Dromo.  
He is coming to meet you.

TENZIN GYATSO

Then, we shall meet.

EXT. TERRACE, MONASTERY DAY

View through the telescope: the Chinese are coming.

A group of officials are headed in the direction of the monastery. Within the group of Tibetan noblemen - dressed in their traditional red and gold silk robes - are three men, wearing drab, grey suits.

The Chinese men closer and we see that one of them is smoking a cigarette.

CLOSE on Tenzin Gyatso's face.

INT. PARLOR, MONASTERY DAY

The Chinese Delegation, led by GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU, stands waiting in a dimly-lit, yellow room.

A table holds tea and refreshments.

The Dalai Lama and his cabinet members are in the room.

Chairs are provided.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
Dalai Lama.

TENZIN GYATSO  
General Chiang.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
We bring greetings from Chairman  
Mao.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Thank you. Please sit.

The General does. So does the Dalai Lama. The other two  
Chinese remain standing.

Tenzin Gyatso is quiet, reserved. Awkward.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
Have you heard the terms of the  
Seventeen Point Agreement?

TENZIN GYATSO  
I have.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
I have a copy for you.

A document is produced. We notice that the General is wearing  
a gold rolex watch. The Dalai Lama notices, too.

A member of the Kashag takes the document.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
We come in genuine friendship.

CLOSE on the Dalai Lama.

He makes no response.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
I am certain you wish to return to  
Lhasa.

Tenzin Gyatso remains silent.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
Do you have plans to return soon,  
Dalai Lama?

TENZIN GYATSO  
Soon.

GENERAL CHIANG CHIN-WU  
 Good. Our first request is that you  
 allow us to build a road. You have  
 no roads in Tibet. We can discuss  
 the plans in Lhasa. When you return.

No response.

GENERAL CHIANG-WU  
 Thank you. We leave now.

The General rises as the boy remains seated. With a moment  
 of awkward silence, the Chinese depart.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 Let me see the agreement.

It is handed to him. He opens to the last page and looks at  
 the impression made by the state seal.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 Counterfeit.

He closes the document and hands it back to the official.

EXT. TERRACE DAY

The boy watches the delegation leave the hilltop station.

Taktra Rinpoche and the Lord Chamberlain are with him.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 I thought he would be some kind of  
 monster, even with horns growing out  
 of his head. But, he is only a man,  
 just an ordinary human being, like  
 myself. Life is always a lesson.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DAY

Again, an informal meeting is in session.

KASHAG MEMBER  
 Your Prime Ministers, support the  
 proposal that you return to Lhasa.  
 On the opposite hand, some officials  
 urge you not to return. They believe  
 you should leave now, for India.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 If I were to go into exile, could we  
 expect any serious assistance, from  
 India, suppose?

LORD CHANBERLAIN

It is unlikely. America, perhaps.  
There is great anti-communist feeling  
in America.

TENZIN GYATSO

At this point, the most likely result  
of a foreign pact is war.

LORD CHAABERLAIN

The Chinese would see such a pact as  
an open declaration of war.

TENZIN GYATSO

Tibet, at war? No. China is close,  
America is far away. After countless  
people die, China would still, always,  
be close. We will work with what we  
have.

KASHAG MEMBER

And as for your own safety, Holiness?

A pause.

TENZIN GYATSO

I am scared.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Shall we consult the protective  
deities, Holiness?

TENZIN GYATSO

My first and foremost duty is to  
protect my people. I feel sure of  
this. And, things change. Maybe  
not right away, maybe not soon. But  
I believe this - things will change.

The boy snaps his fingers.

TENZIN GYATSO

Impermanence. Our own short lifetimes  
are not the only valid consideration.  
I shall return.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso is asleep. We have not seen him this still,  
this peaceful, in a long time. He sleeps in the "Buddha  
pose" - on his right side<sup>9</sup> his head resting in his right  
hand. The wall behind him is white.

We begin to hear the unique Tibetan music.

## DREAM SEQUENCE

Tenzin Gyatso rides a grey mule across the empty, mysterious landscape of Tibet.

The boy is back in his own home in Amdo province.

But, he is not the baby he was when he left there, he is sixteen. His family is together, but they are all the sizes and ages they were at the beginning of the story. Tenzin Gyatso is very happy, sitting on the raised platform in the kitchen, playing a game with pebbles.

Taktra Rinpoche - the aged Taktra - enters and sits down beside him.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

I hope you will not feel badly about  
all the things of childhood you  
missed.

The boy does not speak, just looks, kindly, at the man.

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

You lost so much. I am sorry.

The boy shakes his head "no".

TAKTRA RINPOCHE

Goodbye, Kundun.

Suddenly, another man speaks;

NORBU THUNDRUP (O.S.)

Goodbye, Kundun.

Tenzin Gyatso turns his head to see his best friend.

TENZIN GYATSO

(he only mouths it)

No!

And now, the Dalai Lama's Father is seen in a corner of the kitchen.

FATHER

Goodbye, Kundun.

TENZIN GYATSO

(silent)

No!

The boy turns to the sweeper once more, holds out his hand, and mouths:

TENZIN GYATSO

No, Norbu!

Reverse on Norbu, fading away.

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS

Tenzin Gyatso eyes burst open. He is awake. He is older.

Twenty. But, there is something ageless about him, now.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S ROOM, THE POTALA PRE-DAWN

The boy begins this day.

He is in his old room at the Potala, in Lhasa. The green mural of the Fifth Dalai Lama is behind him. He has risen. from the red-curtained bed.

The Masters of the Kitchen and the Robe arrive and begin their preparations for the day.

A NEW SWEEPER works in the adjacent room.

The sun rises.

EXT. THE POTALA DAY

Like a painting, the beautiful monastery fills the screen with its white walls and red roof.

Shouting is heard.

GENERAL CHIANG (O.S.)

I hate meeting here, this tribute to the past! I demand a less formal meeting place.

CLOSE on the red, bulging face of General Chiang.

INT. GREAT HALL, THE POTALA DAY

Behind the General hang fantastic thangkas of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

GENERAL CHIANG

I am not a foreigner! I refuse to be treated like one.

The Dalai Lama is shaken by this violent behavior.

He adjusts his new eye glasses.

TENZIN GYATSO

You see here thangkas of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the founder of our government. It is tradition at formal meetings for these thangkas to be hung.

GENERAL CHIANG

Superstitions. Tibet is part of a modern nation.

The General sits.

GENERAL CHIANG

I want the songs stopped.

TENZIN GYATSO

Songs? What songs?

A slight smile.

PRIME MINISTER LUKHANGWA

Street songs about the General. Reference to his gold watch. He is right, they are quite insulting.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have no authority to ban singing in my country.

GENERAL CHIANG

You must also do something about the public meetings. I see this, memorandum circulating, with Tibetan grievances.

LUKHANGWA

You have cracked a man's skull and that crack has not healed. It is too soon to expect him to be your friend.

GENERAL CHIANG

We are simply respecting the terms of the Seventeen Point Agreement.

LUKHANGWA

Are you, General?

GENERAL CHIANG

We want 2,000 more tons of barley distributed.

LUKHANGWA

Impossible!

LUKHANGWA

You will bring famine down on the people of Tibet with these insatiable demands! More food, the best land for your soldiers to camp.

GENERAL CHIANG

The People's Liberation Army pays for all food and lodging.

LUKHANGWA

So far, they do. But, the quantity, it does not exist. You will have to re-evaluate your needs.

The men glare at one another.

GENERAL CHIANG

How much tea do you drink, Prime Minister?

LUKHANGWA

It depends on the quality. And, that it be Indian.

The General leaps to his feet and is about to strike the Prime Minister.

The Dalai Lama runs between them. He holds the General back.

LUKHANGWA

Why is it necessary for the Chinese to keep so many soldiers in Lhasa?

GENERAL CHIANG

To protect. To serve you. Chairman Mao wants you to feel that China belongs to you now.

LUKHANGWA

Chairman Mao can keep China. Just give us back Tibet.

The General backs away and brings himself under control.

GENERAL CHIANG

Plans for absorbing the Tibetan army into the People's Army will soon be finalized.

LUKHANGWA

I will not approve it.

GENERAL CHIANG

Then, we will begin with replacing  
the Tibetan flag with the flag of  
the Motherland.

LUKHANGWA

And we will begin with tearing it  
down.

Tenzin Gyatso stands between these furious men. He raises a  
hand, silently requesting peace.

EXT. TERRACE DAY

We hear the sound of martial drums and trumpets and tubas.

The Dalai Lama is at his telescope.

Three thousand PLA soldiers march along the shepherds's trail.  
They march behind huge, red banners of Mao Tse-tung and Chu-  
te.

This time, the soldiers do look like monsters. Their faces  
are grey - coated with Tibetan dust. Their peaked hats look  
vaguely like horns, their tattered, khaki uniforms like rough  
hide.

Monks line the trail, whipping at the soldiers with their  
long, maroon robes. Women and children spit at the Chinese,  
clap at them, hoping to chase this evil away.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE POTALA DAY

The Prime Ministers, Lukhangwa and Lobsang Tashi, submit  
their resignations to His Holiness.

The boy takes the roll of parchment from them.

TENZIN GYATSO

I am so sorry.

LUKHANGWA

It must be done. We can no longer  
meet with the Chinese, they refuse  
us.

We hear the sounds of those Chinese tubas and trumpets.

We hear trucks.

TENZIN GYATSO

I accept your resignations.

LOBSANG TASHI  
 Have you chosen your new Prime  
 Ministers, Holiness?

TENZIN GYATSO  
 There will be no new Prime Ministers.

LUKHANGWA  
 You will face great difficulties,  
 Holiness.

The boy affixes his small piece of parchment to the document  
 and makes a mark on it.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 They have taken away our silence.

EXT. KYICHU RIVER DAY

The Dalai Lama, with much pomp and ceremony, walks down a  
 white carpet and steps into a coracle.

The entourage includes: the Lord Chamberlain, the Kashag,  
 His Holiness's Mother and youngest Brother, tutors and  
 attendants.

A hundred monks stand, chanting, on the far bank.

EXT. PLAINS OF TIBET DAY

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama rides in a Chinese jeep. Dust  
 surrounds him. A yellow silk umbrella shades him.

We see that a road is under construction - a road into Lhasa.  
 The first road in Tibet. The Dalai Llama is travelling in  
 the opposite direction. He is leaving his country, traveling  
 on rugged, flattened earth.

EXT. BARREN COUNTRYSIDE DAY

The way is tougher here - the Dalai Lama is on mule back.

EXT. CHINESE BORDER TOWN, SHINGANG DAY

This is a different land. There are rice paddies and water  
 buffalo. The altitude and barrenness of Tibet have been  
 replaced by greener pastures, jagged mountaintops and Chinese  
 natives.

INT. AIRPLANE NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso gets his ride in an airplane - an antique. It  
 is bumpy and noisy. He sits on an un-upholstered, steel  
 frame.

INT. TRAIN DAY

The Dalai Lama travels by train.

INT. TRAIN STATION DAY

The train pulls into the station.

There are hundreds of people awaiting the arrival of the Dalai Lama - hundreds of "China pictorial", red-cheeked, Chinese communists; men, women and children, waving little red flags.

Tenzin Gyatso steps off the train and there is a roar of approval. Song breaks out - the People's Republic National Anthem.

The young man is overwhelmed.

We begin to sense that something is wrong, something is artificial. The people's presence is demanded here today. This is a forced display of regard.

INT. GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE DAY

The Dalai Lama, and his retinue sit in this Great Hall, decorated with a portrait of Chairman Mao.

The Great Helmsman himself is speaking.

Mao Tse Tung's presence is charismatic. His delivery is powerful - simple, yet firm. He is spellbinding.

MAO TSE TUNG

The mission of China is to bring  
progress to Tibet. Develop its  
natural resources. Help its people  
develop democracy. We welcome you,  
Tibet, back to the Motherland!

INT. DALAI LAMA'S ROOM, CHINESE GUEST HOUSE NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso snoops around this room. He opens drawers, cabinets, just as a child would. He finds odd little pieces of ceramics, pens, paper.

He moves to the bathroom, runs a bath. Hot water.

Electricity. This is the modern world.

INT. MAO'S OFFICE DAY

The Dalai Lama sits beside Chairman Mao as a horde of photographers flash bulbs in their faces. Mao offers His Holiness a plate of Chinese delicacies.

We notice that Mao's clothes are shabby and old. (His suit is always a shade lighter than everyone else's grey-drab). His cuffs are frayed, his collar is worn. But, his shoes, are beautifully polished.

He has exquisite, delicate hands and his skin is shinny.

Later, Chairman Mao and the Dalai Lama sit across from one another.

Tenzin Gyatso takes notes as Mao speaks.

MAO TSE TUNG

I am so glad that Tibet has come back to the Motherland.

Tenzin Gyatso quietly sips his tea.

MAO TSE TUNG

You must inform me at once if any of our people abuse the Tibetans trust and good nature.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have great hopes for the future of our co-operation.

MAO TSE TUNG

It is too early to implement all the clauses of the Seventeen Point Agreement. We will establish a Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. The pace of reform must meet with the desires of the Tibetan people. Changes must be made slowly, as you, yourself, judge necessary.

Mao speaks and moves very slowly. He pants and wheezes. He appears to be sick. Tenzin Gyatso takes notes.

TENZIN GYATSO

I am happy to hear you say this, Chairman Mao. I have created a reform committee to investigate grievances and we have abolished Inherited Tax, and forgiven all money owed the Government by people who are unable to pay.

MAO TSE TUNG

Good. Very good. Tibet is a great country. A a wonderful history. Long ago, you even conquered part of China.

MAO TSE TUNG

But now you have fallen behind and we want to help you. In twenty years time you could be ahead of us. Then it will be your turn to help China.

Tenzin Gyatso writes in his notebook.

MAO TSE TUNG

You know, I have great respect for your Lord Buddha. He was anti-caste. Anti-corruption. Anti-exploitation. For some, politics and religion can mix.

TENZIN GYATSO

For me, I think such a mix is crucial.

MAO TSE TUNG

Have a sweet. Made in my home province. The kind my mother used to make.

The Dalai Lama accepts.

EXT. GARDEN, GUEST HOUSE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso does physical exercise with a few Chinese Bodyguards.

EXT. GARDEN, GUEST HOUSE DAY

Tenzin Gyatso studies with Ling Rinpoche.

The Lord Chamberlain sits with them.

TENZIN GYATSO

"If moral discipline is learned from the beginning, one possesses the root for achieving higher rebirth. A staircase for achieving liberation. An antidote eliminating misery and sorrow. Without discipline there is no method."

Pause.

TENZIN GYATSO

I am thinking of becoming a Communist Party Member. I like what I see of Marxism. It is based on equality and justice for all. I believe Chairman Mao wishes the best for our people. Our path must be non-violence. Co-operation.

The Lord Chamberlain simply looks at the young man. He has nothing to say.

INT. MAO'S OFFICE NIGHT

There is a knock and Tenzin Gyatso is led into the room.

Mao is at his desk, working late, smoking heavily.

MAO TSE TUNG

Ah, Dalai Lama, thank you for coming so late.

TENZIN GYATSO

I leave tomorrow.

MAO TSE TUNG

Yes, I am aware. How has your time in China been?

Tenzin Gyatso sits. He takes out his book and pen, ready to take notes.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have been greatly impressed by your accomplishments. Industrial progress. Great efficiency. Your people are capable and courteous.

MAO TSE TUNG

You have a lot to learn about organization. How to draw out people's opinions. How to make key decisions. Train your young Tibetans. When I make contact with you, I want to reach you through a Tibetan.

DALAI LAMA

Always.

Tenzin Gyatso records Mao's words.

MAO TSE TUNG

Your attitude is good, you know. I understand you well. But you need to learn this: religion is poison. It undermines the race and it retards the progress of the people. Tibet has been poisoned by religion.

The boy cannot look up. He is in shock. We see the last words he writes:

"Religion is poison."

MAO TSE TUNG

Well, let me walk you to your car.

Tenzin Gyatso slowly gets to his feet. We must see on his face that he realizes it has all been lies. All the kind words and promises, it must all be lies.

He is unable to raise his face to Mao's. All he sees before him are those shinny shoes, those exquisitely shaped, glistening hands.

EXT. MAO'S OFFICE NIGHT

Outside this building, a black car is waiting. It is bitterly cold.

Mao - wearing no hat, no coat, and coughing - opens the door for the boy.

The Dalai Lama shakes the man's hand.

MAO TSE TUNG

Take care of your health.

Tenzin Gyatso gets into the car and Mao slams the door.

INT. CAR NIGHT

As the car drives away, Tenzin Gyatso turns to see the Chairman, still standing in the cold, still waving goodbye.

Then, Tenzin Gyatso looks straight ahead and says:

TENZIN GYATSO

He will betray us.

The view pulls back. The Lord Chamberlain sits beside the young man.

LORD CHAMBEPIAIN

Did you ever doubt it?

TENZIN GYATSO

I had relinquished doubt.

EXT. TENZIN GYATSO'S HOUSE IN AMDO DAY

The Dalai Lama and members of his retinue stand in front of his old house in the village of Taktser, Amdo Province.

The young man smiles as he enters the courtyard. He pauses to look at the prayer flag, flapping in the breeze.

He opens the front door.

INT. HOUSE DAY

A family of relatives inhabits the house. They bow to His Holiness as the young man makes his way to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN DAY

Tenzin Gyatso steps into the kitchen - he might have to bend his head under the low ceiling. He laughs his wonderful laugh.

Immediately, a woman approaches with a cup of tea.

But the hand of a Chinese official reaches out, takes the tea and returns it to her. It is not permitted.

The woman looks confused. Tenzin Gyatso is humiliated.

EXT. HOUSE DAY

A group has gathered outside the house.

Tenzin Gyatso goes toward them as they prostrate. When they have finished, he reaches out his hands to take theirs.

He says to one old woman:

TENZIN GYATSO  
Are you happy?

The OLD WOMAN says, with tears in her eyes:

OLD WOMAN  
I am very happy and prosperous under  
the guidance of the Chinese Communist  
Party and chairman Mao Tse Tung.

It is a horrifying announcement.

The Dalai Lama touches her head. She weeps and clutches his hands.

The young man looks up, over her head, to Kyeri, the protectress mountain of this small village.

We hear loudspeakers, blaring, in the background - trumpeting propaganda about Chairman Mao and the People's Liberation Army.

Tibetan horns blow. It sounds like a warning.

CLOSE on a newspaper. It is a Chinese newspaper and the picture on the front page shows a row of severed, Tibetan heads.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DAY

Tenzin Gyatso puts the paper down. He removes his glasses and turns to his advisor - the grand Lord Chamberlain.

TENZIN GYATSO

I ask them to stop, to lay down their guns.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The Khamba's gun is his most prized possession. I admire them so. They face a modern, well equipped army, and still, they fight.

The Dalai Lama rubs his face with his hands.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Land reform is underway in Amdo. The large estates are being confiscated and redistributed. Landlords are being punished.

TENZIN GYATSO

A beggar can be called a landlord if he disapproves of the Chinese.

The men are silent. We hear the constant sound of trucks and cars.

The Lord Chamberlain is notably pausing.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have always asked for plain information. Just the truth.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The Communists put their guns in the hands of the Khamba children and force the child to kill the parent. They have dropped bombs on the monastery of Lithang in Kham. It has been destroyed. Women and children, trying to escape from the fighting, have been shot with machine guns, fired from airplanes.

Again, silence.

TENZIN GYATSO

The pursuit of non-violence. Very difficult.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

Non-violence means co-operation when it is possible. Resistance, when it is not.

EXT. TERRACE DAY

His Holiness walks to the terrace. He aims the telescope.

Below him he sees a new Lhasa - a Lhasa full of trucks and Chinese soldiers. A traffic island stands in the center of an intersection. The town walls are white-washed. The political posters are gone.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, THE NORBULINKA DAY

A small group sits waiting on red velvet chairs: the Dalai Lama, the Lord Chamberlain and the Kashag.

General Chiang enters the room. He finds a chair and pours himself a cup of tea. We cannot help but notice - he is armed.

GENERAL CHIANG

We have decided that no drastic changes will take place in Tibet for six years. This should make you happy.

Silence.

GENERAL CHIANG

It seems a revolt has broken out in the east. We have decided that the Tibetan army must be used against the Khamba guerrillas.

The General sips.

The Dalai Lama answers.

TENZIN GYATSO

I will not approve it.

The General looks up, surprised. It took a great deal of courage for the young man to answer back, so determinedly.

TENZIN GYATSO

You have bombed on peaceful people.

GENERAL CHIANG

We must deal with these reactionaries!

TENZIN GYATSO

No. We are peace loving people. I am afraid we cannot trust you.

THE GENERAL SPUTTERS:

GENERAL CHIANG

We are here to heal the people of Tibet. You need reform. You have no sense of what is good for your people. We are here to liberate you!

Now, the boy finds his voice.

TENZIN GYATSO

I burn here, but I am not suppose to let the smoke show. Yes, we need reform. The monasteries. Communications. Schools. But we want change for Tibet, as Tibet needs it, not for China.

The General starts to speak but Tenzin Gyatso keeps talking.

TENZIN GYATSO

Buddha is our physician, General, he will heal us. Comapssion and enlightenment will set us free. You can not liberate me I can only liberate myself.

The General leaves the room.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

They will take Lhasa next.

TENZIN GYATSO

The people will not allow it.

INT. PRAYER ROOM, NORBULINKA NIGHT

The Nechung Oracle is in full swing. It is an especially vivid and violent spin he is in. The headdress whips this way and that, and finally he says:

NECHUNG ORACLE

Where there is no crossing a big river, no fords, no shallows, where the only hope is a boat, and there is no boat... I will put a boat, Kundun. The wish-Fulfilling Jewel will shine from the West.

It is a strange and confusing prophecy.

EXT./ INT. NORBULINKA DAY

A few random views of the Norbulinka:

The wandering deer and peacocks. The fish pond and its inhabitants.

Over these pictures we hear words:

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)  
 "I rejoice in the Awakening of the  
 Buddhas, and also in the spiritual  
 levels of their Sons."

The projection room. The full sheep pen. The parents's home.

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)  
 "And with gladness I rejoice in the  
 ocean of virtue from developing an  
 awakening mind that wishes all beings  
 to be happy..."

The Yellow Wall. The Dalai Lama's red room.

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)  
 "As well as in the deeds that bring  
 them benefit."

And now, we hear the voices of a great many people, reciting:

TENZIN GYATSO AND OTHERS (OC)  
 "With folded hands I beseech the  
 Buddhas of all directions. To shine  
 the lamp of Dharma For all bewildered  
 in the gloom of misery."

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

In the midst of war, there is beauty.

The Dalai Lama performs the Kalachakra ceremony.

It is a beautiful, ornate, colorful ceremony. A prayer for world peace.

Tenzin Gyatso sits on a platform of cushions, above the heads of the abbots and lamas and tutors, above the heads of the Tibetan noblemen, and nomads and Khambas and peasants from all corners of the land who attend the ceremony.

TENZIN GYATSO AND OTHERS  
 "With folded hands I beseech the  
 Conquerors who wish to pass away, to  
 please remain for countless aeons  
 And not to leave the world in  
 darkness."

The Dalai Lama proceeds with the ceremony. He handles and blesses sacred objects, he lifts his bell and dorge.

Rice is passed among the people. Rice is thrown.

A Tibetan chant is sung.

Beside His Holiness is a large, yellow silk pagoda.

The view moves inside the pagoda as the chanting continues.

INT. PAGODA DAY

We see a mandala - a beautiful, intricate, sand-painting.

The home of Kalachakra.

TENZIN GYATSO (O.S.)

"Thus by the virtue collected Through  
all that I have done, May the pain  
of every living creature be completely  
cleared away."

The whole screen becomes this mandala as the chanting and cymbals and deep resonating sounds of the song continue and then, a hand comes into the mandala and begins to sweep it up.

Pull back to see that the hand belongs to Tenzin Gyatso.

Tenzin Gyatso collects the ground particles of Tibetan quartz and rock. He destroys the painstakingly lovely sand painting.

The chanting becomes louder and louder and it mixes with the sound of the river.

EXT. KYICHU RIVER DUSK

Tenzin Gyatso pours the sand into the river.

We watch the river take color and the mandala floats away.

This view is overlapped by one of extreme horror.

DREAM SEQUENCE

The lovely Norbulinka garden, the park where opera pageants and Kalachakra ceremonies take place, is now, a killing field.

Hundreds of dead, slaughtered monks, lie on the blood-drenched ground, under the peach and pear trees. Chinese soldiers move amongst the monks, turning over the dead bodies, searching those silent faces. The Soldier we see is carrying a photo of His Holiness. They are searching for the Dalai Lama.

It is a nightmare.

We hear crying.

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

Tenzin Gyatso wakes up. Shaking, crying, he is alone, in the dark. He can barely catch his breath.

The screen goes black.

CLOSE ON AN INVITATION:

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, is invited to attend a Dance Recital at the newly erected, Great Hall of the Liberation Army.

10 March, 1959.

EXT. THE POTALA DAWN

A last view of the great monastery.

We hear the sound of thousands of Tibetan women shouting:

WOMEN (O.S.)  
Chinese, GO! Chinese, GO! Chinese,  
GO!

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE, NORBULINKA DAY

Tenzin Gyatso steps outside. The shouting grows louder:

WOMEN AND MEN (O.S.)  
Chinese, GO! Chinese, GO! Chinese,  
GO!

The young man looks around at the peaceful premises. People we know - members of the Kashag, attendants, tutors, the Dalai Lama's Mother, sweepers - appear in the garden, one by one, all listening to the sounds of a mob gathering outside the walls of the Norbulinka.

WOMEN AND MEN (O.S.)  
Chinese, GO! Chinese, GO! Chinese,  
GO!

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS, NORBULINKA DAY

A meeting is in progress.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
The crowd will not disperse until  
you give your assurance that you  
will not attend the Chinese

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
 festivities. Many who have been  
 invited to dine with the Chinese do  
 not return home.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 I will not go.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
 I will alert the Chinese delegation.  
 You know, I would never have let you  
 go alone, Kundun.

INT. PARENTS'S HOME, NORBULINKA DAY

The Dalai Lama enters his Mother's home.

It is very quiet here. The young man looks at the family  
 photographs on the blue walls, the needlework on the table,  
 the seven copper bowls in front of the statue of Buddha.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
 Did you come to tell me we are leaving  
 Lhasa?

The boy fills the seven bowls with water. His Mother lights  
 the butter lamps.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 Do you think I must?

MOTHER  
 You decide.

He says, softly:

TENZIN GYATSO  
 Tibet has never been part of China.  
 We are different races. We are  
 different cultures. We need change,  
 we know that. But we could do it  
 alone. We were just about to do it  
 alone.

The young man fills the last bowl with water.

TENZIN GYATSO  
 I am afraid I will go. Far, far  
 away.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DUSK

The Lord Chamberlain approaches the Dalai Lama as he leaves  
 his Mother's house.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

We are now accused of aiding the rebels. The Chinese said we can expect drastic measures to be taken to crush this revolt.

TENZIN GYATSO

Arrange for me to speak to the people's leaders.

The Lord Chamberlain hurries away.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DUSK

A last meeting in session.

The Kashag is present, as are fifty leaders of the opposition - rough, tired men.

TENZIN GYATSO

I fear that there will be great bloodshed if you cannot convince the people to disperse and go home. I am safe.

FIRST LEADER

Holiness, the Chinese tried to entice you to their garrison with out protection of bodyguard. Even now, they urge you to come to them for safety. They are bringing more troops and guns and artillery into Lhasa. There are three airplanes waiting outside Lhasa. What do they wait for? They are planning to kill the Dalai Lama. Don't you see?

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

The Dalai Lama consults the Nechung Oracle. Alone.

The Oracle whispers:

NECHUNG ORACLE

Stay.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

It is late at night. The boy is alone. He sits in front of his altar - meditating.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

The Nechung Oracle is brought in. The monk quiets himself and readies himself for the trance.

The Dalai Lama waits. Again, alone.

Slowly, the trance comes on, the heavy headdress is placed on the monk's head, the attendants leave the room and then, the Oracle speaks.

NECHUNG ORACLE

Stay. I tell you to stay.

EXT. DALAI LAMA'S RESIDENCE DAY

The Lord Chamberlain hurries up the stairs.

Tenzin Gyatso steps forward, out of the shadows.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

The Chinese are planning to attack the crowd and shell the Norbulinka. You are asked to indicate on a map where you will be so that the artillery men will not mistakenly aim at you.

The Dalai Lama walks down the outdoor stairs.

TENZIN GYATSO

Tell them I will be here. With my people. Right here.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DAY

The young man is studying with Ling Rinpoche. Books of scripture are stacked in front of him.

Suddenly, there is a tremendous, loud explosion, and then, another.

Tenzin Gyatso gets up and runs to the window he looked out of the day of the earthquake.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA DAY

There is shouting and chaos. The Chinese have begun shelling the Norbulinka. The north wall and the grounds directly in front of it are on fire.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S ROOM DAY

This time the Oracle is in the room first. He is surrounded by his attendants and the members of the Kashag, the Lord Chamberlain, Ling Rinpoche and various tutors and lamas.

The tension is thick. Finally, the Dalai Lama enters.

Tenzin Gyatso sits. He waits. The trance begins, the headdress is set upon the medium's head and the Oracle begins to dance, and then, he begins to shout:

ORACLE  
Go! Go! Tonight!

The Oracle staggers forward, snatches up some paper and a pen and begins to draw a map, a route, out of Lhasa. He keeps repeating:

ORACLE  
Go! Tonight! Go!

CLOSE on the map - drawn with a shaking, sweating hand.

We see mountains, and a pass, and the names of towns along the way.

Tenzin Gyatso rises and goes to the Oracle. He looks down at the map. The Oracle hands the Dalai Lama the map and faints as his frightened attendants rush to loosen the strap of the headdress before the poor man chokes.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS DUSK

The boy sits at the table, writing. We can hear the crowd, shouting, outside the Norbulinka walls. We see just a few words of the letter:

Please do not resist.  
Take refuge on the far side of the river.

Attendants pack, quietly and quickly.

INT. ALTAR ROOM NIGHT

The chapel of Mahakala.

We are reminded of secret, sacred moments, from long ago.

Tenzin Gyatso opens the heavy, creaking door. The Dalai Lama is in disguise. He is wearing the clothes of a Khamba guerrilla - dark, woolen chuba and tall black boots.

Monks sit on the floor, chanting. One monk stands by a large urn, ladling out butter for the lamps.

Tenzin Gyatso goes to the front of the room.

A monk begins to play the cymbals. Another puts the Tibetan horn to his lips and blows a long, mournful note.

The Dalai Lama lays a white silk scarf - a kata - over the shoulders of this imposing statue.

Then, he sits for a moment.

In the weak light, in the black room, Tenzin Gyatso is lost among the other praying monks.

EXT. HALLWAY OF RESIDENCE NIGHT

The Dalai Lama walks down the hall. He says to a sweeper:

TENZIN GYATSO  
Dim the lights.

And then he bends down, to pat a dog.

INT. DALAI LAMA'S PRIVATE ROOMS NIGHT

Tenzin Gyatso rolls the thangka of Penden Lhamo and slides it into its ancient container.

The young man places the scroll over one shoulder.

INT. ENTRANCE OF RESIDENCE, NORBULINKA NIGHT

CLOSE on the little cabinet in the corner of the entrance hall.

Tenzin Gyatso's hands open the doors.

The young man pulls open the drawer which contains the false teeth.

Tenzin Gyatso pulls a rolled kata from his coat. He tucks the lead soldier of an Indian Ghurka into the center of the scarf. He places the bundle in the drawer.

Then, he adds something. A sweet. The kind his Mother makes.

He closes the drawer, and locks it.

He hides the key, again, behind the small, unobtrusive cabinet.

EXT. RESIDENCE, STAIRS NIGHT

With a soldier on either side of him, the Dalai Lama descends the staircase.

The Soldiers start to lead him away, but he pauses.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Wait.

The young man leaves them.

EXT. RESIDENCE NIGHT

He walks to the far side of this white building.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I see a safe journey.

The boy returns to the front steps.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I see a safe return.

The soldiers wait.

TENZIN GYATSO  
Now. I am ready.

Tenzin Gyatso places the scroll over one shoulder. A soldier lays a rifle over the other one.

EXT. GARDENS, NORBULINKA NIGHT

The three men walk quietly through the empty gardens. We hear the sounds of the crowd grow louder.

EXT. WALL NIGHT

The soldiers pause, look to His Holiness. Tenzin Gyatso removes his glasses, puts them in his bag, then nods - and the soldiers open the gate.

SOLDIER  
Move aside, tour of inspection, move  
aside.

Of course, we see only a fraction of the crowd - angry men and women.

A man steps beside His Holiness.

Tenzin Gyatso looks up - face to face.

It is the Khamba bodyguard, the monk who guarded him so many times. The man with the horrible face.

KHAMBA BODYGUARD  
Move aside, let us through. Move  
aside!

The Dalai Lama is between the soldiers, shouldering his own gun. The Bodyguard falls in behind.

The little group makes its way through the crowd.

EXT. TRIBUTARY OF THE KYICHU RIVER NIGHT

In the same place where the little Tenzin Gyatso tentatively tested one rock, the escape party crosses on the slippery, stepping stones.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NIGHT

The small party makes its way across a bit of countryside.

People are camped here - Khambas, farmers, nomads. The Dalai Lama crosses to safety - unnoticed.

EXT. KYICHU RIVER NIGHT

Coracles await.

The Dalai Lama climbs in, the Lord Chmaberlian sits beside him. The soldiers push off. The Khamba Bodyguard stands on the bank, alone.

Every splash of the oars sounds like it could wake the dead.

Tenzin Gyatso looks back. He puts on his glasses.

He sees camp fires and the glow of torches. He hears echoed voices.

He looks up. He sees the stars and the moon and that incomparable Tibetan sky.

He looks forward.

He sees mountains.

TENZIN GYATSO

I have always loved mountains.

He is handed a steaming cup of tea.

And then, a cloud passes over the moon.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NIGHT

On horse back, the party makes its way up a mountain pass.

There are more members now - Tenzin Gyatso has joined those who left ahead of him - members of the Kashag, tutors, his Mother, his Brother.

It is tough going. The ground seems like quick sand with every step a struggle. When the horses have disappeared from sight, a sand storm arises, wiping away their tracks.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NIGHT

The party passes above an encampment of Chinese soldiers.  
They are not seen.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE DAY

The party travels through the emptiness.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS DUSK

His Holiness walks beside his horse.  
He joins other members of the group standing on a ridge.  
Tenzin Gyatso picks up a rock and throws it over the side.

TENZIN GYATSO  
"Right will be victorious."

And now, the others do the same. The Lord Chamberlain says:

LORD CHAMBERLAIN  
"The Gods will be avenged!"

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TIBET DAY

The Dalai Lama sits before a low table set up on this desolate border.

A document is before him.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I repudiate the Seventeen Point  
Agreement With a slap of the State  
Seal of Tibet, this is done.

The Lord Chamberlain removes this document and replaces it with another.

TENZIN GYATSO  
I constitute the Government of Tibet,  
the only legal authority in the land.

The seal comes down hard once more. It is done.

EXT. BORDER DAY

A sick and tired Tenzin Gyatso makes the last leg of his trip on the back of a black yak.

Before him, through the light rain, we see a small bamboo arch erected in the middle of nowhere.

Six Indian GHURKAS, wearing floppy, jungle hats and heavy, British boots, stand at attention.

The Dalai Lama, on his black yak, passes under this babboo gateway as the Indian Soldiers raise their guns in salute.

An Indian soldier goes to the yak and helps the sick man from his mount.

Tenzin Gyatso stands, barely able to hold himself on his feet. His hand rests on the yak's back.

The Indian soldier steps closer and, knowing he is breaking protocol, he whispers:

SOLDIER

With all respect, may I ask? Who are you?

The young man smiles at the Soldier - a man who looks like the lead soldier come alive.

TENZIN GYATSO

What you see before you is a man. A simple monk.

SOLDIER

Are you the Lord Buddha?

Pause.

TENZIN GYATSO

I think I am a reflection, like the moon, on water. When you see me, and I try to be a good man, see yourself.

INT. A ROOM IN INDIA, FOOT OF THE HIMALAYAS DAY

Tenzin Gyatso unpacks. He is dressed in maroon robes, his arms bare.

He places some books on a table next to his tinkering equipment. He lifts a heavy parcel.

EXT. TERRACE DAY

CLOSE on the young man's beautiful hands as he sets up his telescope.

The tripod is erect. The body is attached. The eyepiece is adjusted.

And then, this boy, this man, this simple monk, aims, to takes a look, at a bigger world.

On a black screen, a card reads:

The Dalai Lama has not yet  
returned to tibet.

He hopes one day to make the journey.