

THE WHITE TIGER

by

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Based on the novel by
Aravind Adiga

I wondered if any wilderness would be more desolate than this! And then I remembered another of the kind - the home I'd left behind.
- Mirza Ghalib

** Dialogues spoken in Hindi are in italics. All other dialogues in English.*

SUPER TITLE: NEW DELHI - 2007

Music, "Beware of the Boys," featuring Jay-Z blasts as we see:

INSERTS - feet, hands, faces of the Dandi March statue in Delhi... leading us to Gandhi, leading the procession.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI STREETS - NIGHT

The car's headlights glow in a fog of pollution. It speeds past a large statue of Gandhi - the Dandi March.

CLOSE ON THE EYES OF **BALRAM (early 20s, clean-shaven, thin)** looking out the back seat window as the Dandi March flies by. For some reason, Balram is dressed as a MAHARAJA.

Balram's POV: ASHOK laughing in the passenger seat with his wife PINKY MADAM who is driving fast (both early 30s). They are drunk.

PINKY MADAM
Should I switch to tequila now?

ASHOK
Why not?

They look at Balram in the back.

PINKY MADAM
Maharaja, sing for me!

ASHOK
Sing, sing, sing.

She swerves around an oncoming rickshaw.

PINKY MADAM
Why's he on this side of the road?

BALRAM
(nervous)
Madam, should I drive now.

PINKY MADAM
Are you worried, Maharaja?

BALRAM
No, no, I'm not worried.

Balram's POV: her eyes flirt with him in the rear-view mirror.

PINKY MADAM
You're worried, haha.

BALRAM
Madam, a cow!

Ashok grabs the wheel to help her swerve around a cow in the road.

ASHOK
Holy cow!

They laugh.

BALRAM'S POV: HOMELESS on the roadside watch the car fly by.

Ashok sings to Pinky and they drunkenly laugh.

ASHOK
Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you!

Then, A SMALL FIGURE darts in front of the car.

BALRAM
Look out, look out!

It's too late. Before they crash, we FREEZE FRAME ON BALRAM.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Pardon me, your Excellency, this is
no way to start a story. I am
Indian after all, and it is an
ancient and venerated custom of my
people to start a story by praying
to a Higher Power.

EXT. RELIGIOUS TEMPLES - VARIOUS

Various Hindu temples, Christian churches, Muslim mosques;
iconography from each; BELIEVERS praying.

BALRAM (V.O.)
So I too should start off by
kissing some god's foot. But which
god? The Muslims have one. The
Christians have three. And we
Hindus have 36,000,000. Making a
grand total of 36,000,004 divine
feet for me to choose from.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

BALRAM (late 20s, moustachioed, pot-bellied) sits under a chandelier in the lotus position, eyes closed.

BALRAM (V.O.)

There are some, not just Communists like you, who think that none of these gods exist. But in my country it pays to play it both ways. The Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, all at the same time.

Travel to Balram; he opens his eyes, stares into the camera.

LATER - Balram watches TV news about CHINESE PREMIER WEN JIABAO's upcoming trip to India. Under maps of BANGALORE, Balram types an email to Wen Jiabao at his laptop:

BALRAM (V.O.)

Mr. Jiabao, your Excellency, when I heard you were coming to meet some Indian entrepreneurs, I just knew I had to email you. Our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs.

News SPEAKS of the two rising economic super powers: CHINA & INDIA [stock footage]. Our hero, Balram, intently listens.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I've been following the rise of your country for some time, sir. I know you Chinese are great lovers of freedom and individual liberty. The British tried to make you their servants but you never let them. I admire that, Mr. Premier. You see, I was a servant once.

We move off his face and discover the SMALL STATUE OF BUDDHA.

EXT./INT. WHITE TIGER DRIVERS / FIRST FLOOR OFFICES - NIGHT

Balram comes downstairs. Drivers loiter, OPERATORS man phones. Balram sees a YOUNG BOY, DHARAM (11) doing homework. He glances up at Balram, who nods.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Today, I'm a celebrated entrepreneur in Bangalore - the Silicon Valley of India. They say it's named after a Silicon Valley in "America," but I find that hard to believe. I think we can agree that America is so "yesterday." India and China are so "tomorrow."

He steps outside and surveys a bustling taxi service. A servant brings him coffee, "Sir." Balram is master here.

BALRAM (V.O.)

In the belief that the future of the world lies with the yellow man and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the white-skinned man, has wasted himself through buggery, cell phone usage, and drug abuse, I offer to tell you, free of charge, the truth about India, by telling you the story of my life.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE / GANGA RIVER - DAY [PAST]

Water buffaloes, plenty of them.

BALRAM (V.O.)

These are the best fed and most important members of my family. After them...

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME; LAXMANGARH - DAY

GRANNY surveys the village like a queen.

BALRAM (V.O.)

My sly old granny Kusum.

EXT. TEA SHOP / LAXMANGARH - DAY

YOUNG KISHAN (14) smashes coal at the tea shop.

BALRAM (V.O.)

She had forced my brother, Kishan, to work in the tea shop.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - DAY

BALRAM'S FATHER strains to pull the heavy rickshaw.

BALRAM (V.O.)
And she took every rupee from my
father, a rickshaw puller.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - DAY

Various images of kids, men bathing near buffaloes, hard poor living.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I come from the village of
Laxmangarh, which is in the
Darkness. India is two countries in
one...

EXT. GHATS AT A RIVER - DAY

BALRAM (V.O.)
...an India of Light.

Young Balram walks along the ghats and gawks at WHITE WOMAN & MAN (with dreads) doing yoga poses.

BALRAM (V.O.)
And an India of Darkness.

Balram sees: Sadhus bath, women wash clothes, men brush teeth, in the filthy river.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I think a rich man like you knows
which one I come from.

Young Balram sits and stares at the river.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

A scanned poster with a smudged and barely recognizable photo of his face is on the laptop. Balram prints it.

BALRAM (V.O.)
To give you the basic facts about
me, there's no beating that poster,
the one the police made of me, some
years ago, due to an act of
entrepreneurship.

As the poster he sees: **"ASSISTANCE SOUGHT IN SEARCH FOR MISSING MAN."**

BALRAM (V.O.)

Yes, the police are looking for me.
Why? I'll get to that in time, but
only if you promise not to judge me
until I've told you my glorious
tale.

INT. SCHOOL IN LAXMANGARH - MORNING

A SCHOOL INSPECTOR in a blue suit point his cane to three sentences in English on the chalkboard. Young Balram watches him point to a boy -

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Read. Yes, you.

Balram watches the Boy stand... and remain silent.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Can't you read it?

BOY #1

A, B, G, Z...

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

*Stop! Have you taught them nothing,
you useless fuck?*

TEACHER

Sorry, sir -

Balram stands and gets the Inspector's attention.

YOUNG BALRAM

(reads the English)

We live in a glorious land. The
Lord Buddha received enlightenment
in this land. We are grateful to
God that we are born in this land.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

(impressed)

Come here, boy.

Balram steps forward. The Inspector pulls out a photo.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

Who is this woman?

YOUNG BALRAM
The Great Socialist, sir.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR
And what is the Great Socialist's
message for little children?

YOUNG BALRAM
Any poor boy in any forgotten
village can grow up to become prime
minister of India.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR
In the jungle, what is the rarest
of animals that comes along only
once in a generation?

YOUNG BALRAM
... The white tiger.

The Inspector points his cane right at Balram's face.

SCHOOL INSPECTOR
That's what you are: a white tiger.
I will ensure you get a scholarship
to a school far away from here, in
our glorious capital - Delhi.

Balram beams with pride.

EXT. LAXMANGARH POND - SUNSET

Balram climbs over his Father's knotted back, passing his
palm over his forehead, eyes, nose, neck. They laugh.

YOUNG BALRAM
Papa, know what this is called?

BALRAM'S FATHER
What?

YOUNG BALRAM
It's called "Clavicle".

BALRAM'S FATHER
Clavicle?

YOUNG BALRAM
*And these are called "shoulders".
And this is called "backbone".*

The Father grabs Balram and tickles him as he rattles off
body parts in English and they laugh together.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME; LAXMANGARH - NIGHT

WOMEN sleep in one pile. MEN in another. Only Balram is awake, reading a book - in ENGLISH.

BALRAM (V.O.)

In the darkness, we all slept
together, with legs falling one
over the other, like one creature:
a millipede.

He turns when he hears someone FART.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE / MAIN JUNCTION / TEA SHOP - DAY

Balram and KIDS chase a white Ambassador car that enters the village. Kishan watches from the tea shop he works in.

RAM PERSAD (the driver) opens the door for THE STORK (late 40s, tall) and his son MUKESH (20s, dark, short, broad).

BALRAM (V.O.)

The Stork. He was the landlord who
ruled our village and collected a
third of everything we earned.

A sycophant FISHMONGER brings a basket of fish to the Stork, who smacks him in the head.

BALRAM (V.O.)

He fed so much on the village that
there was nothing left to feed on.

Balram's POV: Mukesh (Mongoose) collects money from RICKSHAW PULLERS - Balram's dad is at the end of the shake-down line.

BALRAM (V.O.)

We feared his elder son, "the
Mongoose," even more.... And my
father was always in debt to them.

Balram's POV: his father won't pay, so Mukesh SLAPS him and SHOUTS at him. This rattles Balram.

INT. SCHOOL IN LAXMANGARH - MORNING

Teacher sleeps. Kids fight & play. Only Balram reads a book.

YOUNG KISHAN

Psst.

Balram sees his brother at the door.

YOUNG KISHAN
Get your book, chalk and let's go.

Confused, Balram gathers his stuff and -

EXT. TEA SHOP; LAXMANGARH - DAY

They near the tea shop, where the Owner sees them. Balram realizes what's happening.

YOUNG BALRAM
The tea shop? I'm supposed to go to Delhi.

YOUNG KISHAN
*Father didn't pay the master.
 Granny said you have to work now.*

TEA SHOP OWNER
Kishan, what're you doing? Get to work!

Kishan pushes Balram forward.

INT. TEA SHOP; LAXMANGARH - LATER

Kishan drops a gunnysack filled with coals in front of Balram. He smashes one and pours the remains into the oven.

YOUNG KISHAN
Now break every last one.

Balram hesitates.

YOUNG KISHAN
You don't like it? Imagine it's my skull you're breaking.

He leaves. A beat. Balram breaks coal into many pieces.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME; LAXMANGARH - SUNSET

The family eats. Balram, covered in coal grime, sees his father who keeps his head down in shame.

GRANNY
Eat your dinner, sweetie.

He glares at his Granny.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I never saw the inside of a school
again.

GRANNY
(grinning)
Eat it.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE / MAIN JUNCTION - DAY

Balram watches his father strain to pull the heavy rickshaw.

BALRAM (V.O.)
By the end of the year my father
was sick with tuberculosis.

Balram's POV: His father COUGHS - blood splatters on road.

BALRAM (V.O.)
No politician had built a hospital
in Laxmangarh, so we had to travel
two days to another village.

EXT./INT. FREE HOSPITAL - DAY

They help their Father past goats into the rundown hospital.
Balram sits with his Father on the floor next to SICK PEOPLE.

YOUNG KISHAN
I'll try and find a doctor.

Balram watches Kishan run to two WARD BOYS. He bribes them.

BALRAM (V.O.)
No doctor ever came. Election
promises, sir, had taught me how
important it is not to be a poor
man in a free democracy.

His Father coughs up blood. Balram holds his father in his
arms and wipes a damp towel over his forehead.

He is holding his dying father...

EXT. GHATS AT GANGA RIVER - AFTERNOON

Balram walks with the family carrying his father's corpse on
their shoulders. A PRIEST CHANTS.

At the ghats - a funeral pyre. Balram watches the priest SET
HIS FATHER'S CORPSE ON FIRE.

Balram is transfixed -- He sees his father's foot jerk out, curl up and resist the fire.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Even in death, he was resisting his
 fate, resisting to die, be reborn
 and die again, all for nothing.

Balram stops breathing. His eyes flutter. HE FAINTS... He lies on the ghat - his face, serene in the sunlight.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I understood in this moment how
 hard it is for a man to win his
 freedom in India.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

CU on a rooster, clucking. Pull back to reveal chickens stuffed into wire cages.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Later, I came to realize "why." The
 greatest thing to come out of this
 country in its ten thousand year
 history: The Rooster Coop.

A BUTCHER de-feathers and cuts the throat of a rooster - blood - while the others indifferently watch.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 They can see and smell the blood.
 They know they're next. Yet they
 don't rebel, they don't try and get
 out of the coop.

EXT. DELHI - MORNING

Crowds of working class Indians in the streets, servants busy carrying loads, running about.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Servants here have been raised to
 behave the same way.

A RICKSHAW DRIVER pedals a heavy load of furniture.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 The furniture on his back is worth
 at least two years his salary.

EXT. POSH HOME; DELHI - DAY

The Rickshaw Driver drops off his load at A RICH WOMAN's home. She puts a wad of CASH in his hand.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 And yet he will faithfully pedal it
 all the way back to his boss,
 without ever touching a single
 rupee.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

Driver hands the cash to the STORE OWNER and bows - namaste.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 No servant does. Why? Because
 Indians are the world's most honest
 and spiritual people?

EXT. DELHI - DAY

WIDE: Masses of PEOPLE, poor, homeless, servants, traffic...

BALRAM (V.O.)
 No. It's because 99.9 percent of us
 are caught in the Rooster Coop. The
 trustworthiness of servants is so
 strong that you can put the key of
 emancipation in a man's hand and he
 will throw it back at you with a
 curse.

EXT./INT. TEA SHOP / LAXMANGARH - DAY

CU - a coal breaks into pieces. **BALRAM IS NOW AN ADULT (early 20s)** still breaking coal in the tea shop.

LATER - He wipes the floor, tables, and listens to CUSTOMERS.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I had learned to use my time to
 eavesdrop on customers waiting for
 an opportunity, something my
 brother had given up on long ago.

He sees a lethargic **ADULT KISHAN** (late 20s) serve tea.

LATER

Balram sees: a shiny MITSUBISHI PAJERO SUV enters the village, chased by KIDS. The driver, older Ram Persad (50s), opens the door for older Stork (60) and ADULT MUKESH (40).

BALRAM (V.O.)

I know communists like you don't believe in god, sir, but do you believe in fate?

BALRAM SEES **ADULT ASHOK** (early 30s) get out of the car listening to an ipod with earbuds - he looks like a god.

BALRAM (V.O.)

That was when I first saw him, the Stork's youngest son, Mr. Ashok. He had just moved from America back to India, to Dhanbad, where his family had made a fortune in coal. I knew then: this was the master for me.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

Granny glares at Balram. An exhausted Kishan sits nearby with his WIFE, BABY and 4 YEAR OLD who keeps poking Kishan.

BALRAM

I overheard them saying, they need a second driver for Mr. Ashok, he's just come back -

KISHAN

But you don't know how to drive!

BALRAM

I just need 300 rupees for the driving lessons, and -

GRANNY

- No! You have always been insolent, just like your father. You'll stay here with Kishan.

Kishan's baby CRIES. The 4 year old smears dirt on Kishan's face. Balram stares at this like it is a misery.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Granny had married him off, given him two weeks to dip his beak into his wife, and now he was stuck here. I would be too...

BALRAM

Ok, forget it. I thought if I became their driver, you'd buy a bunch of water buffaloes, and be the envy of the village.

GRANNY

So you'll become a driver for the landlords...?

BALRAM

Yes. You could be the richest woman in the village.

GRANNY

*(pulls out money)
Swear by all the gods in heaven you'll send every rupee you make every month to your Granny.*

BALRAM

I swear.

GRANNY

Stop smiling. Pinch your hand and swear!

Balram grabs her cane and starts swinging it around.

BALRAM

I'm pinching! Granny, just think... You'll be the richest women in the village! Your cane will become gold and when you swing it like this... the entire village will line up to see you!

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME / LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - SUNRISE

Balram runs through the village carrying a small sack. He hugs a water buffalo goodbye.

Kishan chases with a tiffin lunch box.

KISHAN

*(holds tiffin box high)
Wait! Granny made your favorite!*

BALRAM

You eat that oily lunch, I'm gonna eat in Dhanbad!

He sprints down the dirt road and out of the village.

INT./EXT. MOVING BUS / LANDSCAPE - SUNSET

The bus drives down the road.

Balram sits in the bus crowded with people, chickens, goats and a band singing and playing music. He's ecstatic, getting out of the village to--

SUPER TITLE: **DHANBAD**

EXT. DHANBAD STREETS; VARIOUS - DAY

A massive coal pit on the outskirts of a city covered in black grime. Big, chaotic. Nothing like the village.

MEN and CHILDREN, blackened from coal, push bikes piled high with sacks of stolen coal, or on their heads.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Now, I just had to learn to drive.

A taxi drives past KIDS carrying coal; we PAN WITH IT AND -

INT./EXT. MOVING TAXI / DHANBAD - DAY

- inside the taxi we find Balram DRIVING with joy! SMACK! - AN OLD DRIVER in a brown uniform hits his head.

OLD DRIVER

Watch out, sister-fucker! You're from a caste of sweet-makers. Only a boy from a warrior class can tame a wild stallion. Muslims, Rajputs, Sikhs, they have aggression in their blood. Why don't you stick to sweets and tea, sugar-boy?

Balram deftly dodges traffic, BEGGARS. The Driver takes note.

OLD DRIVER

It's not enough to drive. You've got to become a driver. Anyone tries to overtake you, do this - (sticks fist out window) Out of the way, sister-fucker!

Emboldened, Balram HONKS and speeds past a car -

BALRAM

Outta my way, sister-fucker!

OLD DRIVER
*The road is a jungle. A good driver
 must roar to get ahead on it!*

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - AFTERNOON

A luxury neighborhood. Balram strolls up to a gate guarding a massive villa.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 It wasn't so hard to find out where
 they lived. I just had to get
 through the door.

He peers through the gate and is amazed by the Stork's villa, large yard of green grass and trees.

He sees Ram Persad (driver #1) waxing the Mitsubishi Pajero. An older, small Honda City, gets his attention: a second car.

The GATEKEEPER, SAKET BAHADUR (50s), walks up.

SAKET BAHADUR
 Yeah?

BALRAM
 Namaste, sir.

SAKET BAHADUR
 What do you want?

BALRAM
 Any need of a driver, sir? I've got
 four years experience. My master
 recently died, so I -

SAKET BAHADUR
 Fuck off. We have a driver already.

BALRAM
 I see you have two cars, sir, but
 do you have two drivers?

SAKET BAHADUR
 What's wrong with you? Get lost,
 sister-fucker.

Balram sees the Stork and Ashok. He feigns surprise as he calls out to them -

BALRAM

Sir, this is your house? Namaste. I am from your village, sir! I am from Laxmangarh.

THE STORK

Laxmangarh?

BALRAM

Yes, sir! The gods must be watching over us! I worked at the tea stall and I would bring tea to your ambassador car -

THE STORK

Let the boy in.

SAKET BAHADUR

But, sir -

THE STORK

Let him in.

As soon as Bahadur opens the gate, Balram pushes him aside and dives at the Stork's feet.

BALRAM

I can't believe it's you, sir. Oh, how the crops died since you left, and we prayed that you'd have more sons to keep rule in the village -

THE STORK

Get up, son. - Do people there still remember me?

BALRAM

Of course, sir. Everyone says, 'Our father is gone, the best and most holy of the landlords - like Gandhi!'

ASHOK

Like Gandhi?

BALRAM

Yes, sir, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, sir.

THE STORK

Ok. What do you want?

BALRAM

Sir, with your permission, I want to be a driver for you, or for your son.

THE STORK

Hmm. Are you a Muslim, boy?

BALRAM

No, sir! I bathe regularly, I'm not lazy -

ASHOK

Hey, what's up?

Ashok extends his hand. The Stork stops him.

THE STORK

Don't do that. You need a driver. Let's go for a spin, see how good this boy is.

INT./EXT. MOVING HONDA CITY / DHANBAD STREETS - DAY

Balram drives Ashok and the Stork in the back; Mukesh (the Mongoose) eyes him from the front seat.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Just my luck - the Mongoose.

THE STORK

He drives well. What's your caste?

BALRAM

Halwai, sir.

THE STORK

What caste is that, top or bottom?

BALRAM (V.O.)

In the old days, when India was the richest nation on earth, there were one thousand castes and destinies. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies and Men with Small Bellies.

Mukesh SMACKS Balram.

MUKESH

Are you stupid or what?

BALRAM (V.O.)

And there are only two destinies:
eat or get eaten up.

BALRAM

Bottom, sir.

MUKESH

All our employees are top caste.

ASHOK

Why does his caste matter?

MUKESH

(annoyed with Ashok)- Do you drink?

BALRAM

No sir, in my caste we never drink.

MUKESH

Then what do you do? Steal? -
Halwai. Are you a sweet-maker?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

MUKESH

Is that why you're so sweet to us?

ASHOK

You can cook?

BALRAM

Certainly, sir. I cook very well.
Very tasty sweets, *Gulab jamuns,*
laddoos, anything you desire.

ASHOK

The driver can cook too? Only in
India. Start tomorrow.

MUKESH

Not so fast. First we have to check
on his family - and how much do you
want?

BALRAM

Absolutely nothing, sir. You're
like a father and mother to me. How
can I ask for money from my
parents?

MUKESH

1,500 a month.

BALRAM

No, sir, please - it's too much.
Give me half of that, it's enough.
More than enough.

MUKESH

If we keep you beyond two months,
it'll go to 2,000.

ASHOK

And you only drive me.

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Balram HONKS and SHOUTS at a rickshaw trying to overtake them. The Mongoose threatens to beat the rickshaw driver while Ashok is upset Balram is honking so much [AD LIB].

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - AFTERNOON

The Housekeeper, Bahadur, SLAMS the gate on Balram.

SAKET BAHADUR

They haven't hired you yet, hick!

Through the bars, Balram sees Ashok walking away. He then looks at Mukesh making a call while eyeing him.

BALRAM (V.O.)

The Mongoose must have called his man in Laxmangarh, because two days later, when they did hire me, they knew everything about my family.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - DAY [IN BALRAM'S MIND]

Balram's FAMILY stands outside their home, like a portrait.

BALRAM (V.O.)

The pride and glory of our nation -
"the Indian family."

Two THUGS watch from their car; one reports on the phone.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Every master has to know exactly where their servants' family live at all times, just in case a servant decides to steal from his employer and run. If so -

EXT. DHANBAD HOME - DAY [IN BALRAM'S MIND]

Balram, hands tied behind his back, stands against a wall. A Thug SHOTS him. Balram falls down - DEAD.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Fair enough. I would do the same.

EXT. VILLAGE; VARIOUS - DAY [IN BALRAM'S MIND]

The Two Thugs pull out knives and a gun and head towards the family and their home.

BALRAM (V.O.)
But it's what the masters do to
their servants' families...

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

Our older Balram seems disturbed as he types at his laptop.

BALRAM (V.O.)
This is how the Rooster Coop works.
(stops typing)
This is how it traps so many
millions of men and women in India.
So rest assured, the Stork and his
sons could count on my loyalty.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DHANBAD - DAY [PAST]

Ram Persad shows Balram a small room with one bed.

RAM PERSAD
Here is your room.

BALRAM
I have a room, sir?

RAM PERSAD
*You'll share it with me. I can help
you find a mattress.*

BALRAM
*Thank you, sir, but I'm happy
sleeping on the floor - There's
even a first class roof!*

Persad hands Balram a uniform. Balram is in awe.

RAM PERSAD
You need to wear this at all times.

BALRAM
My own uniform?

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DAY

Balram steps out into the sunny courtyard in his uniform. He adjusts his collar, he feels proud.

Until - SMACK. Bahadur hits him on the back of the head and shoves a rug into his chest - and points to a pile more.

SAKET BAHADUR
I hope you like carpets.

BALRAM
Sir?

SAKET BAHADUR
And when you're done cleaning those, wash all the windows. Got it?

BALRAM
But I'm the driver, sir.

SAKET BAHADUR
No. You are the number two driver.

LATER - Under the hot sun, Balram beats the hanging carpet with a stick - a cloud of dirt in his face. He sees Persad playing badminton with Mukesh's two KIDS.

LATER - Balram's POV: the Mitsubishi's leather seats, radio, AC, chrome rims.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Is there any hatred on earth like
 the hatred of the number two
 servant for the number one?

Balram cleans the old Honda City and enviously watches Persad wax the sleek Mitsubishi Pajero.

INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DAY

Balram cleans a chandelier in the massive villa and sees Persad quietly crossing below.

BALRAM (V.O.)
While I cleaned, he strolled about
like a master.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DHANBAD - MORNING

Balram spies on Persad praying to 20 Hindu idols.

BALRAM (V.O.)
He had every Hindu god lined up and
was always praying, as if to accuse
me of being a Naxal, a communist -
like you, sir.

Balram gets down and prays louder and harder than Persad.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I would not let him out-pray me.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - SUNSET

Balram eats with Bahadur and other SERVANTS. He notices
Persad leaving the servant's quarters.

BALRAM
Sir, why is Ram Persad not eating?
(off Bahadur's shrug)
And his mouth stinks these days.

SAKET BAHADUR
You keep your mouth shut.

Balram's POV: Persad sneaks out of the gate. - *Why?*

BALRAM (V.O.)
This man was hiding something, and
a successful entrepreneur always
finds his competition's secrets.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; TERRACE - DAY

Balram cleans the terrace table and notices PINKY with her
arms around Ashok, stretching his back (!). Ashok notices him
and Balram quickly looks away, scared.

ASHOK (O.S.)
Hey driver! Can you come here,
please.

Anxious, he sees Ashok waving him to come. So he-

INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

- enters the bedroom, worried he will be reprimanded.

ASHOK

I wanted to ask you some questions -

PINKY MADAM

Wait - can you turn around. Go on.

Confused, Balram turns around.

PINKY MADAM

No, that's not what I meant, come back!... Wow, your hips are out of alignment. - Ah, sorry, hi, I'm Pinky, we haven't met yet.

Balram's too afraid to shake her hand and namaste's instead. She touches his hips which freaks Balram out.

PINKY MADAM

You're probably stiff - sitting in a car all day. I can adjust you after Ashok.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I am ashamed to admit it now, sir, but in that moment I thought Pinky Madam was one of "those women."

Ashok eyes Balram from toe to head.

ASHOK

All right, honey, I need to talk to him. Ok, driver -- what's your name again?

BALRAM

Balram, sir. Balram Halwai!

ASHOK

Right, Balram. So, Balram, do you know what the "internet" is?

BALRAM

No, sir. But, I can drive to the market and get as many as you want.

ASHOK

No, it's ok. Thank you. Do you have Facebook?

BALRAM

Yes, sir. I always loved books.

ASHOK

I heard you can read. Have you ever seen a computer?

BALRAM

Yes, sir. We had many of them in the fields of the village, sir, with the goats.

ASHOK

Goats? They must be pretty advanced to use computers.

PINKY MADAM

All right, that's enough.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I could tell from their faces, I had made a mistake.

ASHOK

You see, he's got two, three years schooling in him. He can read and write, but he doesn't get what he's read. He's "half-baked."

PINKY MADAM

Don't be a jerk.

ASHOK

You're missing the point. Our driver represents the biggest untapped market in India, waiting to surf the web, buy a cell phone and rise up into middle-class, something I can help him do. - You represent the new India, isn't that right?

BALRAM

(smiles)

Yes, sir. I'm the new India, sir.

ASHOK

You can leave now.

Balram's smile fades.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - NIGHT

Travel towards Balram, thinking.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I didn't like the way he had spoken
about me, "half-baked," but he was
right.

He watches Ashok and Pinky through their bedroom window.

BALRAM (V.O.)
When you come to India, sir, you'll
meet hundreds of millions of men
like me. Open up our brown skulls
and look inside with a pen light.

EXT. DHANBAD STREETS / CYBER CAFE- NIGHT

Balram walks through Dhanbad. He finds a newspaper scrap and
reads it as he walks.

BALRAM (V.O.)
You'll find all these ideas, half
formed, half correct, all bugging
one another - and that is what we
live and act on.

He finds a CYBER CAFE. He watches over someone's shoulder.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Balram massages the Stork's disgusting legs and feet.

THE STORK
Good boy. Higher, good.

The Stork drinks with Ashok and Mukesh; Balram eavesdrops.

ASHOK
India's future is in outsourcing
with American companies.

MUKESH
Our future is China. They're
building superhighways and need
coal. We sell coal.

ASHOK
I know, but I think we should
diversify. The IT sector is
booming, and the internet -

THE STORK

- "The internet," what is that?
Coal is real, I can touch it.

BALRAM

Sir, I learned from Mr. Ashok-sir
that the internet is as real as a
spider's web, that it connects all
human beings -

Suddenly, Mukesh SMACKS Balram.

THE STORK

Do you know what that's for, son?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

MUKESH

For what?

BALRAM

For the internet, sir.

Mukesh SMACKS him again.

MUKESH

You're pressing too hard. Father is
getting annoyed. Slow down.

ASHOK

Why do you hit the servants? In
America they can sue you for that.

THE STORK

This isn't America. They respect us
for it. - Remember that.

Balram locks eyes with Ashok, who feels shame.

INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; BATHROOM - LATER

Balram pours the disgusting water into the toilet; flushes.
He washes his hands and smells them - awful.

He finds an air freshener, sprays his hands - smells good!
Sprays under his arms, his crotch. He notices the price tag:
Rs. 4,300 (twice his monthly salary)! Surprised, he puts it
back.

INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; DINING ROOM - DAY

Mukesh (eating) slaps money into Balram's hand.

MUKESH

*Count it, I don't want hear shit
later.*

He counts and confirms.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I was only allowed to keep 200.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DAY

Balram hands Kishan money through the gate.

BALRAM (V.O.)

*Granny sent Kishan each month to
take the rest back to her.*

BALRAM

*And they're not from the same caste
and she's a Christian.*

KISHAN

And he married her?!

BALRAM

*Yeah, that's normal in America. Her
people were against it too, but he
wouldn't listen.*

KISHAN

But is she American?

BALRAM

*No, no, she's Indian. She was born
here, but moved there when she was
twelve. She told me.*

KISHAN

She talks to you?!

BALRAM

*Of course. She tells me everything.
I am their number one servant!*

He looks at Balram with pride.

KISHAN

Are you serious?

BALRAM

Yeah.

KISHAN

Can I come in?

BALRAM

No.

KISHAN

Why not?

BALRAM

Why not?! Mukesh Sir would scold me.

INT./EXT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DHANBAD - NIGHT

Balram sleeps. *Tak tak tak.* He wakes up: Persad isn't in bed.

OUTSIDE: Balram sneaks around the corner: Persad chops vegetables under a bare bulb - *Why?*

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - SUNRISE

Persad sneaks out the back of the home. Balram follows him.

EXT. DHANBAD STREETS / MOSQUE - MORNING

Balram follows Persad through a couple streets. Then, he sees Persad take off his shoes and enter - a mosque!

BALRAM (V.O.)

What a fool I had been. It was Ramadan. He can't eat and drink during the day. The number one driver was a Muslim. And the Stork, hated Muslims.

PERSAD'S HOME - LATER: Balram spies on Persad who gives MONEY to his FAMILY. He picks up his son and smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DAY

Balram sees: Bahadur opens the gate and several government cars enter. A MAN IN WHITE exits with a Great Socialist flag, followed by BODYGUARDS and STAFF. THE GREAT SOCIALIST exits.

MAN IN WHITE

As long as there is a sun and a moon, madam's name will remain! Long live the Madam, long live socialism.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I almost fell down. There was the woman I had seen on a million election posters since I was a boy. The Great Socialist.

Stork and Mukesh bow as Ashok puts a garland of flowers around the Socialist's neck, who squeezes Ashok's cheeks.

GREAT SOCIALIST

(to the Stork)

I'm glad your son returned. We need more boys to come home and build India into a superpower.

INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - LATER

Balram "dusts" and spies on them arguing [AD LIB].

BALRAM (V.O.)

(re the Great Socialist)

She was a low caste like me and everyone from the Darkness. Like a good entrepreneur, she had pulled herself up to become Chief Minister of our state. She knew how to stick it to the rich, and we liked her for that.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST

You take coal from government mines without paying taxes, because I let that happen.

THE STORK

And we have shown our appreciation, madam. But two million rupees is a lot. We'll be happy to come to -

The Great Socialist notices Balram and waves him over.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST

Son! Come here, son. Come on.

Shocked, Balram is wary; the family is confused.

THE STORK
Come here you fucker!

Balram comes forward.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST
*Your rich employers are trying to
bugger me, what do you say to that?*

MUKESH
Driver, get lost.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST
Shut up, sister-fucker!

Balram and the family can't believe it. Mukesh turns red.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST
*You don't want to pay taxes? Then
pay me. I said two million and I
mean it.*

She spits red paan on their floor, shocking them all.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST
*Otherwise, back to Laxmangarh where
I first found you hicks!*

INT./EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD; COURTYARD - NIGHT

The Stork and his sons drink. Balram sweeps and eavesdrops.

MUKESH
*Why pay that small time sister-
fucker? Let's go straight to Delhi
and pay off the opposing party.
She's going to lose the next
election.*

ASHOK
*I agree. Papa, I was thinking, I
want to go to Delhi.*

THE STORK
*You'll stay here and learn the
family business. Let your brother
and I handle this.*

PINKY MADAM
*Excuse me, papa, you should not
have been disrespected today -*

ASHOK
Honey, please -

PINKY MADAM
Shhh! - Delhi is an international
city like New York, and it needs
someone with Ashok's expertise in -

MUKESH
Hey, Ashok, tell her this is not a
place for her to talk.

PINKY MADAM
Excuse me? I'm standing right here.
I am a doctor of chiropractic with
a DPT from NYU -

MUKESH
Pieces of paper are good for
hanging on bedroom walls - where
she belongs.

PINKY MADAM
You know what? Ashok and I are
going to Delhi, we're going to fix
your tax FRAUD problem, and then
we'll mail you a postcard.

Balram watches in awe as Pinky argues with Mukesh [AD LIB]
and Ashok tries to appease.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Where did Pinky Madam's aggression
come from? She didn't care about
traditions.

EXT./INT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - NIGHT

Balram spies on Mukesh handing money to a happy Persad.

BALRAM (V.O.)
And when the number one driver got
a bonus to drive my master to
Delhi...

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS

Balram pensive at his laptop.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I did something... I wish I did not
have to tell you.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DAY

Balram whistles and washes the Mitsubishi. Persad approaches.

RAM PERSAD
What are you doing?

BALRAM
I've got to make the Mitsubishi look perfect for when I drive my master and mistress to Delhi.

RAM PERSAD
You're mistaken. I'm taking them to Delhi.

BALRAM
Really? To visit all the mosques there, sir?

RAM PERSAD
... - Get away from that.

He tries to take the sponge away - Balram refuses.

BALRAM
I don't think Mukesh-sir wants to give a 3,000 rupee raise to Mohammad Mohammad, or whatever your name is.

Persad's fears are confirmed.

RAM PERSAD
Please, sir, I've been their driver for over 20 years. Mr. Ashok is like my own son, I drove him to school when he was a boy...

BALRAM
That's a good point... But only Allah knows what corrupt ideas you put into my poor master's mind!

RAM PERSAD
Please, sir, I have a family.

BALRAM
... Don't we all.

EXT. ASHOK'S HOME IN DHANBAD - DUSK

Balram looks through the gate at Persad leaving with a bag.

BALRAM (V.O.)

What a miserable life, having to hide his religion and name just to get a job as a servant. I wanted to run to him and apologize, 'You go be their driver in Delhi. Forgive me brother.'

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DHANBAD - MOMENTS LATER

Balram enters. Persad's belongings are gone, except his Hindu idols. Balram collects them into a satchel and --

BALRAM (V.O.)

You never know when they'll come in handy!

EXT./INT. HIGHWAY TO DELHI / MOVING MITSUBISHI - DAY

The glorious Mitsubishi speeds past buses. Stickers of Hindu gods are now freshly stuck on the dashboard. Balram - with a big smile - drives Ashok (front seat), Pinky... and Mukesh.

Balram's POV: sweaty PASSENGERS hang on the doors and roof of pattering bus next to him. Balram SHOUTS at them:

BALRAM

I'm going to Delhi in a car - in an air-conditioned car!

Passengers stare at Balram, who did not really shout this. He looks at Ashok and smiles; Ashok smiles back.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / VARIOUS DELHI - DAY

Wide-eyed, Balram gawks at DELHI. It's massive! Large tree-lined boulevards, majestic government buildings. Cows, autorickshaws and beggar kids crowd the roads - chaos.

Balram slams on the brakes, HONKS and swerves around HOMELESS FAMILY with KIDS who jut through heavy traffic.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / GURGAON - DUSK

Balram looks up at the giant, luxury apartments.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

Balram unloads the suitcases and looks up at the towering apartment buildings - their new home. His masters enter.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Balram's first elevator ride with a cart full of luggage. He watches the numbers.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

Balram enters with the luggage and is startled by the wealth and expansive views. Ashok is happy that Pinky likes it.

PINKY MADAM

Wow.

ASHOK

Not bad, right? Check out the view.
Balram put the bags down anywhere.

Balram can't believe the view, how high they are. He has never been in a skyrise.

BALRAM

Wow, look, the sky!

MUKESH

You want to see a shooting star?
(smacks Balram)
Put the bags down exactly in the
rooms I tell you and then get this
place cleaned up.

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Mukesh eyes Balram as he sets the bags down.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

Balram drives the car down to the garage.

BALRAM (V.O.)

After making dinner for Mr Ashok, I
took the car down to the garage.
That's where all the servants
lived, including the drivers.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; SERVANT'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Balram follows VITILIGO-LIPS - a driver with pink lips in a dark-skinned face - who shows him the servant's quarters. Two DRIVERS follow and sometimes heckle Balram [AD LIB].

VITILIGO-LIPS

The main thing to know about Delhi is the roads are good, the people are bad, and the police, totally rotten. (points) The masters' clothes get washed here and sent back up. Toilets are here. This is the phone when your master calls you, there's even a temple in case you want to pray.

He shows Balram where the drivers hang out.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Here is our den of sin. When we have money, we play cards here.

BALRAM (V.O.)

This driver had a disease called vitiligo that made him look like a clown. It made my stomach churn.

As Vitiligo leads Balram to his room, he slaps a mosquito dead.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Watch out. The mosquitoes'll eat you alive. If they're malaria mosquitoes you'll just be raving for weeks; but if it's dengue mosquitoes, I swear on my mother you'll shiver all over and die for sure.

BALRAM

Die from a mosquito?

VITILIGO-LIPS

Definitely. - Here's your room.

Balram sees a small room with a bed.

BALRAM

Who do I share this with?

VITILIGO-LIPS

You plan on bringing your family?

BALRAM

No.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Then what? You want to fuck *some*
whores here?

BALRAM

No.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Huh? How's your little guy?

He strokes at Balram's cock.

VITILIGO-LIPS

- *So tell me, Country-Mouse, how*
much are they paying you?

BALRAM

Enough. I'm happy.

VITILIGO-LIPS

You're a sweet, loyal dog.

Then he moves closer to Balram, who backs up.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I tilted my body as far as I could
from his face.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Does your master need anything?
Foreign wine? I have a friend at an
embassy. He'll hook it all up. Golf
balls? Women?

BALRAM

My master doesn't do those things.
He's a good man.

VITILIGO-LIPS

A "good" man? He's a "rich" man.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - LATER

Balram writes his name on the wall in chalk, proud to have
his very own room.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

Balram counts the balconies of the apt towers, amazed such a thing exists.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

Balram opens the door for Ashok and Mukesh, who carries a RED LEATHER BAG.

MUKESH
National Party headquarters.

BALRAM
Yes, sir.

Ashok stops Balram from closing the door for him.

ASHOK
No worries.

BALRAM
Please, sir.

ASHOK
No, seriously dude, I got it.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI STREETS - DAY

Balram drives the brothers through traffic.

BALRAM (V.O.)
For the next few days I drove Mr. Ashok, the Mongoose and a red bag to see various government officials.

EXT. NATIONAL PARTY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Balram arrives. The brothers get out with the RED BAG and shake hands with party members. Balram looks around.

BALRAM (V.O.)
"Democracy," something that you yellow-skinned men, despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, still don't have. If I were in charge of India, I'd get the sewage pipes first, then the democracy.

LATER - Mukesh and Ashok return. Balram opens the doors.

MUKESH

To the President's House. Get moving.

Ashok tries to stop Balram again from opening the door.

ASHOK

Please dude, I got it. Ah...

INT. MITSUBISHI / BANK - DAY

Balram's POV: the brothers put cash into a leather bag.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI STREETS - DAY

Balram misses the turn - Mukesh SMACKS him.

MUKESH

That was our exit, idiot! Turn around.

ASHOK

What's wrong with you? Don't do that. Relax.

MUKESH

We need to dump him and get a local who knows Delhi.

ASHOK

We just got here. Remember when you came to New York - you couldn't even find 42nd street.

He touches Balram's shoulder; Balram tingles.

ASHOK

You'll figure it out, don't worry.

BALRAM (V.O.)

It was the first time he touched me.

BALRAM

Sorry, sir.

He locks eyes with Ashok in the rear-view mirror. Connection.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / PRESIDENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Balram is dwarfed by the President's House and other massive government buildings. He takes it in. Impressive.

LATER - Balram sees Ashok and Mukesh exit with THE MINISTER'S SIDEKICK; they talk and shake hands. Ashok sulks.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Why was Mr. Ashok upset? If I had gone into the President's House I would be shouting: "Balram was here, Balram was here!"

He opens the door for sullen Ashok, who allows it this time.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - AFTERNOON

Balram drives the brothers and notices Ashok remains sullen.

MUKESH

You'll keep visiting them while I'm gone. And don't let them push you for more money.

ASHOK

Look

Balram looks out the window and sees Gandhi and the Dandi March statue.

ASHOK

We're driving past Mahatma Gandhi, after just having given a bribe to a minister. The world's biggest democracy. It's a fucking joke.

MUKESH

You sound like your wife.

ASHOK

Don't talk about her.

MUKESH

I hope your "madam" knows you're staying on in India?... Ashok?

Balram keeps an eye on Ashok.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - MORNING

Balram buys *dosa* from a stall. He removes the potatoes as he carries them to Mukesh who waits with Ashok at the train.

BALRAM (V.O.)

A good servant must know his
masters from end to end - from lips
to anus.

BALRAM

*Here you are, sir. I removed all
the potatoes.*

BALRAM (V.O.)

And potatoes made the Mongoose
fart.

MUKESH

Ah, you have a good memory.

Balram smiles.

MUKESH

Give my brother a reading of the
meter each day so we know you don't
drive without permission and try
and fuck the maid.

(off Balram's laugh - he
hits him)

What the hell are you laughing at?
The police have put cameras in the
eyes of all the statues in Delhi,
so they're watching you, got it?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

MUKESH

And the air conditioner and music
should be turned off when you're on
your own.

ASHOK

All right, who cares about the air
conditioner.

MUKESH

If you give them air conditioning
they will sit on your head, *and*
then fuck you in the ear, trust me.

ASHOK
 You're gonna miss the train. Come
 on.

Balram watches Ashok pull his brother to the train door.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Once the Mongoose left, Mr. Ashok
 would be my only master. In
 Laxmangarh we would have called him
 "the Lamb."

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI - DAY

MUSIC plays. Balram drives Ashok who smokes a joint in the
 back seat and texts on his phone. The SONG changes and -

ASHOK
 Dude, I love this song, turn it up.

BALRAM
 Yes, sir.

ASHOK
 Mukesh isn't here, turn it up!

TIME SLOWS DOWN FOR BALRAM as Ashok leans over him to turn up
 the music.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 My master's fruit-flavored perfume
 rushed into my nostrils.

ASHOK
 You like this?

BALRAM
 Oh yes, sir.

He sees Ashok bob his head to the music and does the same.

ASHOK
 (re the joint)
 Don't tell anyone, not even Pinky.

BALRAM
 Of course, sir. Everything between
 master and servant is a secret.

ASHOK
 I'm not your master, don't say
 things like that.

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

And stop calling me, sir. My name is Ashok. Call me Ashok.

BALRAM

Ashok.

ASHOK

Yes, Ashok. I know it's not the best name in the world, but you gotta live with it.

BALRAM

No sir, it is a really good name.

ASHOK

Really? You like it?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

You can keep it then.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Ashok practices his serve while Balram dodges balls and gathers them into a bucket.

BALRAM

You should represent India in the Olympics!

He chases another ball.

BALRAM

Sometimes I wish I had arms like you, sir.

Ashok slams another serve.

ASHOK

Would you be quiet please?

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GAME ROOM - AFTERNOON

They sit before a big TV playing video games. Ashok tries to teach him [AD-LIB]. Balram is transfixed by Ashok.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I had never seen a man so happy in
the Darkness.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Balram finishes cleaning dishes. He hears some noises.

He tiptoes to Ashok's closed bedroom door and eavesdrops:
Pinky Madam and Ashok are fucking. Balram laughs to himself.

BALRAM (V.O.)

The "lamb" still had the blood of a
landlord in him after all.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / MALL ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

An impressive, luxury mall. Balram pulls up to the GUARDED
entrance. He watches Ashok and Pinky enter.

EXT./INT. MALL PARKING LOT / MITSUBISHI- AFTERNOON

Balram stands with Vitiligo and other DRIVERS who smoke, chew
paan, and pass around a pulp magazine (**MURDER WEEKLY**).

VITILIGO-LIPS

*This magazine is great for when
you're lonely or upset with your
master. It has revenge, sex,
murder, rape all the good stuff.
You can really enjoy yourself.*

Balram gawks at a SEXY RICH WOMAN coming out of the mall.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*Country mouse, you like it? Big
tits, huge asses. Hold them like
mangos and nibble with your teeth.
And suck 'em right up!*

BALRAM

*(giggles nervously)
What's he talking about?*

He runs his hand over Balram's cock.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*But don't let your little mouse get
sucked up in their dark caves! Want
me to put in a good word?*

BALRAM

*I noticed how the ladies here don't
have hair in their armpits or legs.*

Vitiligo and the other drivers start laughing in disbelief.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*What? Does your mom have hair here
or here?*

He grabs Balram's chest and cock while the drivers all laugh at him. Upset, Balram shoves his hand away.

DRIVERS

*Are all the women in your village
hairy beasts?*

BALRAM

Why talk about mothers and sisters?

VITILIGO-LIPS

*Did your family all hang from the
trees and fuck like monkeys?*

They crack up, poking fun at Balram.

BALRAM

*Do I talk about your mothers and
sisters?*

He walks away from them as they laugh.

BALRAM (V.O.)

*There and then I resolved never
again to tell anyone in Delhi
anything I was thinking.*

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; SERVANT'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Balram exits his room with his bag and sees Vitiligo and the servants (drunk, playing cards) still LAUGHING at him.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*Where you going, to die? It's just
a joke, come on!*

Balram walks away. He sees an OLD JANITOR sweeping.

BALRAM

*Is there a room I can sleep in?
Where I can be alone?*

OLD JANITOR
*Over there, but who wants to live
 alone?*

Balram walks that way.

INT./EXT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - CONTINUOUS

He finds an abandoned storage room, disgusting with a cot and mosquito net. He sets his bag down. This is his new home.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

MOVING: vast, beautiful country. Balram drives. In the back, Pinky Madam shoots video with her Motorola Razr flip-phone.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Pinky Madam wanted to go to
 Laxmangarh, and so here I was,
 driving home, in the Stork's car!

Pinky leans over Balram to take photos and her breasts rub over him.

PINKY MADAM
 Look how beautiful!

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I hated her for this. If I crashed,
 it would be her fault.

PINKY MADAM
 Balram, are you happy to see your
 granny?

BALRAM
 Very happy, madam.

ASHOK
 Balram, what did you just do? --
 You touched your finger to your
 eye. Did we pass something holy?

BALRAM
 (lies)
 Yes, sir. We just passed a sacred
 tree. I was offering my respects.

PINKY MADAM
 Really? Where?

BALRAM

There, Madam. Yes, this is a very holy area.

ASHOK

See how they worship nature. Who would do this in New York?

PINKY MADAM

People in Brooklyn with a backyard?

ASHOK

He did it again. What was that for?

BALRAM

That's a holy path, sir, where the Lord Buddha walked until he found the tree of enlightenment. Pardon me, but you and Madam should really do the same. It's very important. If you don't, you will become infertile.

ASHOK

What? No!

PINKY MADAM

You better do this right now.

Ashok and Pinky each touch their eye; Balram instructs them how to do it properly [AD LIB]. They laugh, have fun.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I gave them reactions of piety for every tree, rock and temple we passed. I was like a Sadhu to them.

He slyly smirks at them.

EXT. ASHOK'S FAMILY'S HOME - LATER

The FAMILY greets Ashok and Pinky with garlands; SERVANTS touch his feet. Ashok touches his UNCLE'S feet.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I dropped them off at Mr. Ashok's Uncle's villa. We called him, "the Buffalo."

Balram's mood changes.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Then I knew, I had to face my
family.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

KIDS chase the car as Balram drives up. The family and NEIGHBORS have gathered. He parks and proudly exits as the kids touch the car and admire his uniform.

Kishan and Granny stand at a distance and coldly stare at him. Anxious, Balram touches Kishan's feet.

BALRAM
How's it going brother?

KISHAN
Now he remembers his family. You haven't sent money home since you went to Delhi.

BALRAM
Forgive me, brother. I'm here now.

GRANNY
My grandson is a big shot but he still forces his granny to do all his work for him. This is the fate of an old woman in this world.

Balram touches his Granny's feet and gives them sweets.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME - LATER

Family gathered for lunch. Balram sees Kishan counting the money; his BABY crawls between him and his wife.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I wanted to bring him to Delhi and save him from all this.

GRANNY
Eat the chicken. I made it myself. You haven't had any like it in ages.

She serves Balram lunch, some wretched chicken curry.

BALRAM
Mr. Ashok Sir, is a vegetarian.

GRANNY

America made him completely lose his mind.

BALRAM

I'm thinking of doing the same.

GRANNY

Huh? You think you're a Brahmin? Eat. You've gotten thin. You need to be plump for your wedding.

BALRAM

Whose marriage?

GRANNY

Yours! We've found a girl for you. You'll be married by the end of the year.

BALRAM

I need more time. I'm not ready to be married.

GRANNY

What does that mean? Now eat your chicken. I made it just for you.

She pushes his lunch closer.

BALRAM

I don't want to marry.

He pushes the food back. The family goes silent. A face off.

GRANNY

Stop thinking of yourself and think of the family.

(pushes food back to him)

Eat.

BALRAM

No.

GRANNY

You're not your master, Mr. Ashok. Now eat.

Balram boils. He pushes the plate, sending the food flying.

BALRAM

Did you not understand? Are you going to force me? I don't want to get married!

He gets up and leaves.

BALRAM
You're driving me insane.

Kishan chases him and grabs his arm.

KISHAN
What're you doing? You can't leave.

Balram shakes his arm free and walks to the car.

KISHAN
You have to send money home.

BALRAM
I won't.

KISHAN
It's the family's money.

BALRAM
*She's sucked the blood out of you
and left you a shell. And she'll
leave you to die, like Dad.*

He gets in the car and slams the door closed.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / COUNTRY SIDE - DAY

Balram drives Ashok and Pinky.

EXT. RICE FIELD BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Pan across expansive rice fields. Ashok and Balram pee.
(Ashok, texting on his phone). Pinky asleep in the car.

ASHOK
*"Why don't I eat meat? Why does
Pinky wears pants? Why don't we
have kids." They wouldn't stop.*

BALRAM
*I think we shouldn't go back there,
sir.*

Ashok's surprised Balram has spoken, but he agrees.

ASHOK

...Maybe. - Did you know one in every three buildings in India is being built in Bangalore. You know why? "Outsourcing" with America.

BALRAM

"Diversifying," sir?

ASHOK

Yeah, right. Good Balram... I'm thinking to offer financial services to Wall Street firms I know.

BALRAM

Why don't I drive you to Bangalore right now.

ASHOK

Now?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

Well, it's on the other side of the country.

BALRAM

I'll drive all night, I don't need sleep, sir.

ASHOK

... I gotta make a business plan first, do it the right way.

BALRAM

You'll do it, sir.

Balram watches Ashok walk back to the car, texting.

BALRAM (V.O.)

If only Mr. Ashok was a real entrepreneur, if only we had left for Bangalore that very day...

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

Older Balram types at his laptop under maps of Bangalore.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 ... then things would have turned
 out differently for us

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Balram sees Ashok texting on his phone in the back seat.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Rich men are born with
 opportunities they can waste. But a
 poor man...?

SLOW MO: Balram sees SCHOOL KIDS in uniforms with BOOKS enter
 an IMPRESSIVE SCHOOL.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pinky talks with her FRIEND.

PINKY MADAM
 Are we going back to New York or
 staying here?

PINKY'S FRIEND
 You need to talk to him, put your
 foot down.

PINKY MADAM
 He won't talk, he's just vague--

Balram brings in a tray of tea --

PINKY MADAM
 Balram! What are you doing?

BALRAM
 Bringing your ginger teas, madam.

PINKY MADAM
 No. With your hand.

Balram looks down and sees he is scratching his groin.

PINKY'S FRIEND
 That's disgusting.

PINKY MADAM
 Your uniform is filthy. And your
 mouth, the paan, - Get rid of this
 tea and get away. Go.

He takes the tea and leaves.

PINKY MADAM
Ugh, sorry about that.

PINKY'S FRIEND
These lower caste, they are all the same.

LATER - Pinky shows her cousin out. She thinks for a beat.

PINKY MADAM
Balram, come here.

Balram enters.

PINKY MADAM
I want to talk. Sit down.

BALRAM
I'm really sorry, Madam, I'll stop eating paan.

PINKY MADAM
Just sit down. Sit.

Nervous, Balram sits. She sits next to him.

PINKY MADAM
It's wrong that you work for us like this. You should be finishing your education and starting a family.

BALRAM
You and Mr. Ashok are my family now, madam.

PINKY MADAM
That's not true. Don't say that.

BALRAM
But I like serving you. Nothing makes me happier -

PINKY MADAM
You can't possibly believe that... Do you know what my mom and dad do in America? They run a shitty bodega in Jackson Heights selling beer, paan, and porn. I did my homework in the basement.

(MORE)

PINKY MADAM (CONT'D)

One night I saw my mom held up at gunpoint and she still worked that entire night. She taught me to never give up, and I made it out. So, what about you? Huh? What do you want to do?

BALRAM

... I want to serve you and Mr. Ashok Sir-

PINKY MADAM

No! Stop saying that! No. This is exactly why the caste system is total shit. The kind of shit Mukesh believes in. He tried to stop Ashok from marrying me! Yeah. Fuck him... fuck this.. -

KITCHEN - LATER

Balram picks up a silver tray and looks at his warped reflection. He flashes his teeth: stained from paan. His uniform: filthy. She was right, he's a dirty hick.

EXT. STREET MARKET - NIGHT

Balram buys toothpaste (**SHAKTI WHITENER TO CLEAN YOUR TEETH**) black shoes, and a shirt (like Ashok wears) from MEN hawking their goods in a busy market

INT. DELHI APARTMENT; SERVANT'S QUARTERS; BATHROOM - NIGHT

He looks at his teeth - stained with paan. Brush, rinse, spit, look, repeat.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Why had my father never told me not to scratch my groin? Why had he never taught me to brush my teeth?

He looks at his foamy teeth - still stained.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Why had he raised me to live like such an animal?

Balram rinses and SPITS. He stares at his teeth in the mirror, still stained with paan. He brushes even harder.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 If only a man could spit his past
 out so easily.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - CONTINUOUS

Balram sleeps under the mosquito net. A CLICKING sound wakes him. He sees cockroaches crawling all over the net. He calmly crushes one between his fingers... DEAD.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 If you ask me to explain how one
 event connects to another, or how
 one motive strengthens or weakens
 the next - I will tell you I don't
 understand these things.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

A match lights up the dark and burns the poster with Balram's face on it... all the way to the words: **WANTED FOR MURDER.**

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I should warn you, my story gets
 much darker from here.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT [PAST]

Ashok opens the door: Balram dressed as a maharaja (like the opening scene) with balloons and a tray of pizza boxes. He bows to Pinky.

BALRAM
 Happy birthday, madam. Allow me to
 serve you, your highness.

PINKY MADAM
 Oh god, this is beautiful, thank
 you Ashoky. Welcome Maharaja!

EXT. CONNAUGHT PLACE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Still dressed as a maharaja, Balram bobs his head to the faint music and flashing lights of a disco club. He sees Vitiligo and the other drivers smoking and chewing *paan*.

VITILIGO-LIPS
*Country-Mouse! Don't stand there
 alone. It leads to bad thoughts.*

He declines to go to them.

DRIVER #1
*What a snob, look at him, dressed
 like the maharaja of England!*

DRIVER #2
*How's the new room maharaja? Are
 you the king of the roaches?*

The drivers LAUGH. Angry, Balram turns away from them.

LATER - INSIDE THE CAR

A drunk Ashok and Pinky come out of the club and see Balram asleep in the car. They come to his window and Pinky BANG BANG BANGS her hands on the window startling Balram awake.

PINKY MADAM
 Oh my god, I think he just shat his
 pants.

They burst into laughter at him as he scrambles to open the doors for them.

BALRAM
I must have dozed off.

ASHOK
 Come on, don't cry.

They continue to rib him [AD LIB].

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - NIGHT

Balram drives and watches the rear-view mirror: Ashok and Pinky make out. He rubs his crotch with his hand.

Ashok catches Balram watching them. A sexually charged beat for Balram before he looks away.

ASHOK
 Stop, stop... We're not alone.

PINKY MADAM
 It's just Balram.

She pulls him back in, but he resists.

PINKY MADAM
You're so boring.

ASHOK
You're drunk.

PINKY MADAM
Not drunk enough. I want to go back
to New York.

ASHOK
Not this again.

PINKY MADAM
"Again?" What "again?" You won't
even talk about it. I agreed to six
months in India, and then we would
decide.

ASHOK
I'm trying to help my family -

PINKY MADAM
Let's not talk about them now. God,
you're a nonentity around them.
Like skim milk.... Nobody likes
skim milk.

Balram sees Ashok is defeated.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

Balram stops at a red light. A TAP at the window: a BEGGAR
CHILD tries to sell a Buddha statue (*from the opening scene*).
Pinky unrolls her window.

BEGGAR CHILD
*Only 100 rupees, please madam, I'm
hungry, please.*

PINKY MADAM
Oh, hi precious. Can I see that?

The Beggar Child gives her the statue, then shows more.

BEGGAR CHILD
*If you buy three it's only 200,
please.*

PINKY MADAM
What's your name?

BEGGAR CHILD

Khushnuma, please 200 madam, I'm hungry.

The Child holds her hand out for money. Pinky's heart melts.

BALRAM

Don't touch the car.

PINKY MADAM

Don't say that. That's awful.

BALRAM

Sorry, madam.

She pays 200 to the beggar child and smiles. The kid runs off. The light turns green and Pinky squeezes Balram's shoulder.

PINKY MADAM

Stop the car, Balram. Get out. You can't speak to a kid like that.

He looks at Ashok.

ASHOK

She's the boss.

Pinky gets out and opens Balram's door. Balram gets out, she gets in; Ashok gets into the front passenger seat. Pinky hands Balram the Buddha statue.

PINKY MADAM

We're leaving you with your Buddha for the night.

BALRAM

Madam, I think it would be best if -

She squeezes his cheek and flirts:

PINKY MADAM

The maharaja and the Buddha. So cute. I love you, Balram.

She floors it. They laugh and wave as Pinky speeds away.

ASHOK

Goodbye, Balraaaaam!

Balram looks around. Nothing in the dark night. He sits on the curb. He sees HOMELESS huddled near garbage. A stray dog wanders around. The wind blows through Balram. He looks up at the moon, he sees leaves blowing in the trees.

Balram's POV: the statue of Buddha in his hand.

BALRAM (V.O.)

What is a servant without a master?

LATER - He sees the Mitsubishi's headlights coming at him. He gets up. Pinky Madam SCREECHES to halt a foot from him.

Pinky and Ashok get out, laughing.

ASHOK

That was awesome!

PINKY MADAM

Thought we had really left you behind?

BALRAM

No, madam.

PINKY MADAM

You're not angry, are you?

BALRAM

Not at all. Master and mistress are like mother and father to me. How can one be angry with them?

ASHOK

I'm not your father, don't call me that.

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Ashok opens the back door and bows to Balram.

ASHOK

And no more "sir!" We're all friends, right?

BALRAM

Yes, ss--

Ashok puts his hand on Balram's mouth.

ASHOK

No! Get in, let's go, let's have some fun!

Ashok pulls Balram in -- Pinky Madam screeches off.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - CONTINUOUS

Pinky drives fast, erratic. "Beware of the Boys," plays again. -- **WE HAVE CAUGHT UP TO THE OPENING SCENE.**

Balram looks out the window: the Dandi March statue.

PINKY MADAM
Should I switch to tequila now?

She swerves around an oncoming rickshaw.

Balram's POV: her eyes flirt with him in the rear-view mirror.

Ashok grabs the wheel to help her swerve around a cow in the road. They laugh.

BALRAM'S POV: HOMELESS on the roadside watch the car fly by.

Ashok sings to Pinky and they drunkenly laugh.

ASHOK
Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you!

Then, A SMALL FIGURE darts in front of the car.

BALRAM
Look out, look out!

PINKY SMASHES RIGHT INTO IT and drives over it. She keeps driving for a beat...

...then stops, her hands frozen to the wheel in shock. Balram looks out the back window and sees something in the road.

Balram gets out. Ashok follows.

EXT. MITSUBISHI / STREET - CONTINUOUS

Balram looks down the street: **THE LUMP IN THE ROAD IS A CHILD.** Ashok comes out and approaches Balram.

BALRAM
Sir, sir, we need to leave, sir.

ASHOK
We need to take him to the
hospital.

BALRAM
Pinky madam will be in trouble,
sir.

Pinky gets out and sees the same.

ASHOK
(pulls out his phone)
I'm gonna call the cops.

BALRAM
No, sir, what're you doing?
(he sees Pinky approach)
Pinky Madam, sir -

ASHOK
Please go back to the car.

PINKY MADAM
Is it a kid? Oh god, we need to
call an ambulance.

They move her back to the car, to the back seat.

ASHOK
I'll do it, just stay in the car,
please.

PINKY MADAM
Is it alive?...

BALRAM
If we don't leave right now Pinky
Madam will be in trouble, sir...
someone will see us, please sir.

Ashok and Pinky are a mess. Balram pushes them into the car.

BALRAM
Please get in the car, sir.

He closes the door, gets in the front and speeds away.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - CONTINUOUS

Balram drives away; he sees Pinky, hysterical in the back,
Ashok trying to calm her.

PINKY MADAM
We have to call the police. Stop
the car. Make him stop.

She flails, Ashok holds her tight.

ASHOK
Calm down, calm down, honey,
please.

PINKY MADAM
I killed a kid, I killed a kid, god
please, We have to go back, please.

She grabs at Balram, but Ashok holds her back. She's weeping.

ASHOK
Please honey, please.

PINKY MADAM
We have to see if it's alive.

Balram watches them in the rear-view mirror.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GARAGE - LATER

In the dark corner of the garage: Balram (in his normal clothes again) sees blood on the tires and fender. He scrubs them with a rag and bucket.

He finds a bloody fabric. Ashok approaches and sees it.

ASHOK
What is that?

BALRAM
Stuff those kids wear, sir.

ASHOK
What was he doing in the street at
two in the morning?

BALRAM
Exactly. It's not our fault. It
just jumped in our way, stupid kid.

ASHOK
Don't call him stupid.

BALRAM
Sorry, sir.

ASHOK
... What am I going to do?

BALRAM

Nothing, sir. You know how those people are: they have ten, twenty kids, they don't even know their names. No one will miss this one, sir.

ASHOK

What if someone reports it?

BALRAM

I don't think so, sir. The street was empty. And the parents, even if they're in Delhi - the police won't let people like that into the station.

ASHOK

I shouldn't have listened to her.

BALRAM

Don't worry, sir. Please, it's been a difficult night for you, sir. Go up and rest, I'll take care of this.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT

Balram lies in bed with a smile.

BALRAM (V.O.)

On my lips there was a big, contented smile that comes to a servant who has done his duty by his master even in the most difficult of moments.

He turns and sees the BUDDHA STATUE. His smile fades.

EXT./INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - MORNING

Balram burns incense inside the Mitsubishi. He steps back and stares at the car under the morning sun.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens - Balram is surprised to see a smiling Mukesh.

BALRAM

Sir, namaste.

MUKESH
Balram, come in.

Balram sees the Stork, a distraught Ashok and a LAWYER sitting around the table.

BALRAM
 Namaste, sir.

THE STORK
Ah my son, good to see. Sit, sit.

Balram touches the Stork's feet and sits on the floor.

MUKESH
 No, here on the sofa. *Make yourself comfortable.*

BALRAM
No, sir, I can't.

MUKESH
 You're part of the family now.

He sits on the sofa with pride and smiles.

MUKESH
 Have you spoken with anyone about what happened last night?

BALRAM
No, sir. I washed the car and went to bed.

MUKESH
 Good. It's important that you not say a word to anyone.

BALRAM
 Yes, sir.

MUKESH
 - Would you like some *paan*?

BALRAM
No, sir. I quit paan, Ashok Sir, tell them.

MUKESH
Don't be shy. You chew paan.
 (to the Lawyer)
 Give him some.
 (lawyer hands him *paan*)
 Put it in your mouth.

BALRAM

Ok, sir.

MUKESH

It's good right?

BALRAM

Wow, it's very good, sir.

LAWYER

The judge has been taken care of.
If your man does what he is
supposed to do, we'll have nothing
to worry about.

MUKESH

My man will do what he is to do.
Right, Balram?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Mukesh hands the papers to Balram.

LAWYER

Can you read?

MUKESH

Of course he can.

LAWYER

Read it to us.

Balram watches an Ashok go to the window, his back to Balram.

BALRAM

To whomsoever it may concern, I
Balram Halwai do make the following
statement of my own free will: On
the night of November 3rd this
year, I drove the car that hit an
unidentified person, or persons or
objects...

BALRAM

I don't understand, sir.

MUKESH

I'll explain later. Keep reading.

BALRAM

... That I panicked and refused my
obligations to the injured party
and fled the scene.

(MORE)

BALRAM (CONT'D)

That I was alone in the car and
alone responsible...

Balram reads silently. He looks at Ashok who averts his eyes.

MUKESH

We've already told your family.
Your granny, what's her name? Hey,
Balram?

BALRAM

Kusum, sir.

MUKESH

Yes, Kusum ji. I drove down to
Laxmangarh and explained everything
to her. And your brother. Your
whole family was there. Your granny
is proud of you for doing this and
agreed to be a witness to your
confession. That's her thumbprint.

Balram sees her thumbprint. Mukesh hands him a pen.

MUKESH

You need to sign just below that...

LAWYER

If he doesn't know how to write, he
can press his thumb.

ASHOK

He knows how to write. Stop
treating him like he's a moron.

MUKESH

Be quiet, Ashok. - Go ahead.

ASHOK

We shouldn't do this. It's wrong.

MUKESH

Then why don't you and Pinky go to
the police station and tell them
what happened. If you understand
law, then handle this, otherwise,
shut up!

Balram watches Ashok who remains silent and averts his eyes.

MUKESH

Balram, go on, sign there, next to
granny. I'm here, don't worry.

Balram's hands shake as he signs the confession. Mukesh takes it from him and hands it to the lawyer. Balram is stunned.

MUKESH

*Aren't you my brother? Don't we eat
and hang together?*

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

MUKESH

*I'm here, Ashok brother is here,
father is here. There's nothing to
worry about, right?*

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

MUKESH

*Good. Now go outside and wait, we
will call you.*

BALRAM

Yes, sir

He gets up and touches the Stork's feet. He looks at Ashok as he exits, but Ashok averts his eyes.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APART; HALLWAY

He exits and waits for the elevator.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APART; ELEVATOR

He rides down. His heart sinking...

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

Balram walks out. The sun blinds him.

He stares up at the towers of the masters looming over him.

He hides in some weeds, curling up, trying to save himself.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

Underneath the chandelier, Older Balram is in the lotus position. He opens his eyes and LOOKS INTO THE CAMERA:

BALRAM (TO CAMERA)
 To think of this again makes me so
 angry I might go out and cut the
 throat of some rich man right now.

Hold on his face staring at us, implicating his audience.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT [PAST]

Balram sits in the mosquito net, legs curled up to his chest.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Not once did I think I had options,
 not once did I think "I'll tell the
 judge the truth," or run away.

INT./EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Balram pushes through a crowd of POOR MEN to buy a bottle.

BALRAM
Whiskey, the cheapest kind!
Immediate service - or someone will
get hurt, I swear!

He opens the bottle, takes a big swig, and walks away. LATER -
 He looks at WRETCHED HOMELESS living on the road-side.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I was trapped in the Rooster Coop.
 And don't believe for a second that
 there's a million-rupee game show
 you can win to get out of it.

He squats in the dirt with some drunks.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 The World's greatest democracy.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 For hundreds of millions of people
 like me, there is only one way to
 break free.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashok, sullen, smokes a joint. Balram watches.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I would have to accept what this man's family would do - not just to me - but to my family.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GARAGE - NIGHT

Balram sits in the dark garage.

BALRAM (V.O.)

And that takes no normal human being, but a freak, a pervert of nature. It would, in fact, take a White Tiger.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - DAY

The servant's phone is RINGING and RINGING. In his room, Balram sits in the mosquito net.

VITILIGO-LIPS (O.S.)

Country-Mouse! Hey!

He enters and sees Balram in the net.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Your boss is ringing like crazy for you. He was here the other night.

Balram buries his face in his pillow. Vitiligo comes closer.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*You ill? Typhoid? Dengue? Malaria?
(smiles his white lips)
You seem to be in some big trouble?
Tell me... say something... Ah!*

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; LIVING ROOM - DAY

Balram enters and sees the Stork and Mukesh watching cricket on TV.

THE STORK

*Sisterfucker, where were you? Go
get the oil and massage my legs,
you fucker.*

Balram gets the oil, squats before the Stork, and begins to rub oil over his leg.

Ashok and Pinky (she looks like a wreck) enter the apartment.

THE STORK
You're back. Sit down.

ASHOK
 Who's winning?

MUKESH
 We are losing.

Pinky is focused on Balram and taps Ashok.

PINKY MADAM
 Balram...

ASHOK
 Balram. - Have they told you?

BALRAM
 Sir?

ASHOK
 You haven't told him?

Mukesh shakes his head, "no." Balram wonders what's going on. Pinky holds Ashok's arm to stop him - she wants to do it. She surprises everyone by sitting on the floor near Balram.

PINKY MADAM
 They have a contact in the police,
 no one reported seeing what... what
 I did. They don't need you anymore.

Balram is stunned with relief. He take a beat, then puts his head to the Stork's knee with gratitude. The Stork KICKS him onto his back.

THE STORK
*Enough drama you fucker. Massage my
 legs.*

PINKY MADAM
 Why - why would you hit him? Why?!

ASHOK
 Ok, calm down, it's all right.
 Let's just go to the room and -

PINKY MADAM
 Don't tell me to calm down, it's
 like you don't even care -

Suddenly, Pinky STRIKES the Stork. Ashok holds her back.

PINKY MADAM
Why would you hit him? Why?

MUKESH
Stop it, you bitch. Ashok control her.

ASHOK
Whoa, stop, come on, calm down, stop doing this.

PINKY MADAM
Don't tell me what to do. Get away from me. Let go of me.

ASHOK
It's over, it's all good now.

PINKY MADAM
"It's all good?" What's wrong with you? I'm done with all this.

She goes back to her room. Balram watches in shock.

MUKESH
Are you ok, father?
(off Stork's silence)
I'm worried she wants to find the family and compensate them. As if we're murderers.

ASHOK
She's not going to do that.

MUKESH
You don't talk right now. - She's been raving about it for days.

THE STORK
She can't do that, Ashok. She's gone mad. Control her.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

LOUD SHRIEK of a train. CROWDS run, pile in. Mukesh helps the Stork board; he then turns to Balram -

MUKESH
(taps his jacket pocket)
I have your confession here, and will always have it here, brother.

He smiles at Balram, then enters the departing train.

Balram walks away through the crowd of PASSENGERS rushing at him, his mind a wreck.

EXT. OLD DELHI - MOMENTS LATER

Balram walks lost in thought. He sees poverty all around him.

LATER - he squats by the road. He sees a MAN passed out, covered in flies.

He notices a MAN boiling tea for WORKERS. Balram is transfixed by the bubbling milk over a HISSING blue flame.

He sees monkeys crawling across power cables overhead.

An OLD WOMAN shoves her hand into his face.

OLD WOMAN BEGGAR
Hey Brother, give me a rupee.

BALRAM
Move on.

OLD WOMAN BEGGAR
Give me something to eat, I haven't eaten in days.

BALRAM
Get moving.

OLD WOMAN BEGGAR
Where? Give me a rupee, give me -

He gets up and shouts at her.

BALRAM
Get away from me! What do you want from me? Do you want me to rip my clothes off and give it to you.
(opens his wallet)
Here, here is the 36 fucking rupees I made this month, do you want that to? Then what the hell will I eat?

OLD WOMAN BEGGAR
Give me a rupee.

BALRAM
This woman is insane. She's crazy! Get her off the streets. What the fuck does she want?

He wanders off into the crowd of people staring at him...
he's becoming unhinged.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT

Balram lies asleep in the dark. The lights turn on.

PINKY MADAM (O.S.)

Balram.

Balram wakes up and sees Pinky.

PINKY MADAM

I need you to drive me.

Balram notices: her SUITCASE.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - NIGHT

Balram drives Pinky without Ashok; she stares at him in the
rear-view mirror.

PINKY MADAM

You were looking for the key for
years / But the door was always
open.

BALRAM

... Did you say something, madam?

He looks at Pinky, but she's not looking at him at all; she's
smoking a cigarette and staring silently out the window.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / AIRPORT - NIGHT

Balram pulls up and stops.

She gets out pushes a brown envelope through his window. He
takes it. They lock eyes. She leaves and enters the terminal.

He opens the brown envelope in hand: there is money inside.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - MORNING

Ashok argues with Balram:

ASHOK

Flight? What flight?

BALRAM

I don't really know what flight,
sir.

ASHOK

Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't
you wake me up.

BALRAM

I'm sorry sir, please! I just did
what she told me.

ASHOK

Why did you drive her there, behind
my back?

BALRAM

You can't blame me, sir.

ASHOK

You're my driver! You piece of
shit.

BALRAM

I'd never heard of a woman leaving
her husband -

Ashok SMACKS Balram in the face, like his father would.

ASHOK

Shut up! She has not left me.

BALRAM

Sir, don't hit me.

He SMACKS Balram again in the face. He grabs him by the
collar and shakes him around.

ASHOK

She has not left me. You piece of
shit.

BALRAM

Sir, please release me, please sir.

It gets more intense until Balram shoves him off, sending
Ashok flying into the sofa.

BALRAM

Get off me!

They're both surprised. Ashok stares up at Balram. A silent
beat between them.

A crow suddenly lands on the balcony railing. They both turn to see it. It CAWS, looks at them, then flies away.

ASHOK

I wish they had put you in jail.

Balram leaves.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - DAY

Balram anxiously waits.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I waited two days for my master to call me.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - SUNSET

He stares at the giant luxury towers.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT

Balram paces.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Had he gone back to America and not told me?

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Balram enters and sees Ashok smoking and drinking whiskey. He's a mess.

BALRAM

Sir... Sir, are you all right?

ASHOK

Why didn't you pack up and leave too?

BALRAM

It's not good to starve yourself. Let me make you dinner.

ASHOK

The whole thing was her fault, bitch. (convulses) Ugh...

BALRAM

Should I call for pizza, sir.

He gets up and rushes to the bathroom and throws up. Balram follows.

BATHROOM - Balram enters and sees Ashok on the floor near the toilet. He wets a towel and wipes Ashok's mouth clean.

BALRAM

Feeling better sir?... You must believe in God, sir. My granny says if you believe in God, then good things will happen.

ASHOK

... Why are you so kind to me?

BALRAM

It is my duty, sir.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; VARIOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

KITCHEN - Balram squeezes lemon into a glass. He adds sugar, salt, and fresh mint leaves with care.

He puts it on a tray and brings it to the living room.

BALRAM

Sir, I squeezed you a Nimbu pani. It will make you feel better.

But Ashok is passed out. He TAPS him. Nothing.

BALRAM

Sir?... Sir. Wake up...

He SLAPS Ashok, but he doesn't wake.

He SLAPS his master again, HARDER - Ashok is out cold.

He sits down and drinks the Nimbu pani himself. And looks at Ashok passed out on the sofa. He puts his feet on the table.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Do we loathe our masters behind a facade of love, or do we love them behind a facade of loathing?

LATER - SLOW MO He puts Ashok's arm around his shoulder and helps him to the -

BEDROOM - SLOW MO They've never been this close. Balram lays Ashok in bed, pulls the covers over him.

ASHOK
... Where's Pinky?

BALRAM
Shhh. You need to sleep, sir.

ASHOK
Balram... don't leave.

BALRAM
I'm right here, sir.

Ashok gazes at Balram, then passes out. Balram looks at Ashok's skull on the pillow: like a religious icon.

LATER - DUSK: Balram looks through Ashok's closet. He slips on Ashok's jacket and looks at himself in the mirror. He changes his hair to a side part - like Ashok.

He cleans his ear with a Q-tip, then talks to it, imitating Ashok:

BALRAM
"Why are you so kind to me, Balram"

He puts the dirty q-tip back in the glass with the others.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT: Wearing Ashok's jacket, Balram pours himself Ashok's top-line whiskey and enjoys.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; BALCONY - NIGHT

Balram looks at an impressive view of Gurgaon being built. He enjoys his moment as master with a glass of whiskey.

BALRAM (V.O.)
With Pinky Madam gone...

EXT. MARKET - NIGHT

Balram and Ashok walk the CROWDED market laughing, talking.

BALRAM (V.O.)
... I knew it was my duty to be
like a wife to him. I didn't let
him drink and I lifted his spirits.

INT. POOR MAN'S CAFE - NIGHT

The WAITER slams down plates of okra, cauliflower, *daal*.

BALRAM

Once you have the food here, you'll never forget it.

Ashok takes a bite and loves it.

ASHOK

This is amazing. From now on, I only want to eat your kind of food.

BALRAM (V.O.)

And I only want to eat your kind of food.

ASHOK

You know the real India so much better than me. My mom was the one who encouraged me to go to America to study... Pinky really loved her.

Balram sees Ashok suddenly darken... and so he lies to him:

BALRAM

Sir, Pinky Madam told me you were a great man who was going to do great things in India.

ASHOK

When did she say that?

BALRAM

The morning she left. She was crying the entire way to the airport, sir. She said you would not let Mukesh-sir tell you what to do. She said she believes in you.

Ashok takes this in...

INT. ROADSIDE TEMPLE - SUNRISE

They enter the temple. Balram puts a rupee between statues and prays. Ashok does the same. They pray.

BALRAM

She'll come back to you, sir.

ASHOK

Yeah... she's coming back. I can feel it.

BALRAM

I can feel it too, sir.

LATER - SLOW MOTION: A PRIEST puts a tika on their foreheads. They stare at the religious icons of gods like Hanuman.

EXT. DELHI - VARIOUS

Images of the city.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

Ashok and Balram stand side by side waiting. Mukesh side-hugs Ashok, then shoves his luggage into Balram's chest to carry.

MUKESH

Why is he here? - *Go get the car.*

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

KITCHEN: Balram prepares lunch and spies on Ashok and Mukesh in the LIVING ROOM.

ASHOK

... Divorce? She said that?

Balram sees Ashok's face fall.

MUKESH

Don't worry. I'll handle everything.

ASHOK

You're probably happy she's gone.

MUKESH

That's not true. I just want your happiness.

ASHOK

(gets his phone) I'm gonna book a flight and go there and talk to her-

Mukesh moves closer and puts his hand on Ashok's knees.

MUKESH

Don't call now. Breathe. Don't go begging. You'll regret it.

ASHOK

All I regret is letting her drive that night.

MUKESH

That was not your fault.

ASHOK

It is my fault.

MUKESH

It's not your fault and you know it. I can stay here with you as long as you like.

Balram sees Mukesh put his arm around Ashok.

MUKESH

You want that pizza you like? Macaroni?

ASHOK

I'm sorry. Without you, I'd ...

Balram serves them lunch.

BALRAM

Here you are, sir.

ASHOK

I don't want food right now.

BALRAM

I made it like we had together the other night, sir.

Mukesh wonders what this is about.

ASHOK

I don't give a shit.

BALRAM

Just a taste, sir.

Ashok slaps the food out of his hand, sending it crashing to the floor, the bowl breaking apart.

ASHOK

I said I'm not hungry.... Get lost.

MUKESH

He doesn't feel like it, why are you up his ass! Ged rid of it, you fucker.

ASHOK

Just leave me alone for a fucking second.

Balram walks away with the tray.

MUKESH

Until Ashok Sir calls you, don't hover over him like a fly!

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Balram pinches his hand hard, again and again. - *Why am I still in servitude to this man?*

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Balram walks under the tubes of light.

BALRAM (V.O.)

The desire to be a servant had been bred into me, poured into my blood. Hammered into my skull.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - MOMENTS LATER

Balram pulls the money out from under his bed and counts it.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Ninety-three 100 rupee notes. A strange sum. Almost three months my salary, but not quite. Maybe she started with 10,000 and then deducted 700. - No. No.

He paces and talks to himself, to the Buddha statue.

BALRAM

That's not how rich people think. Haven't you learned yet, you idiot? If she thought she owed you 10,000, then what she truly owed you was ten times more. -- No! A hundred times more!

He stops pacing.

BALRAM

They made me sign that confession -
and I asked for nothing in
return... I didn't even think to
ask.

INT. GARAGE - LATER

Balram speaks with Vitiligo.

BALRAM

*So what's gonna happen to you when
you get older?*

VITILIGO-LIPS

*Eyes, it's all the eyes. You work
'till they work. When you're fifty,
fifty-five they'll kick you out.*

BALRAM

And then what?

VITILIGO-LIPS

*If you save, you'll make enough to
buy a shack in a slum. If you've
been a bit smarter, and make extra
on the side, then maybe more.*

BALRAM

That's it?

VITILIGO-LIPS

*This is the best case scenario. But
odds are your boss sacks you for no
reason, or you get into an
accident. Then you'll be dead or
have nothing.*

Balram grows sullen. Vitiligo pulls him away from the others.

VITILIGO-LIPS

Country-Mouse, are you ok?

BALRAM

Yeah, first class.

VITILIGO-LIPS

*I'm sorry to tell you this, but the
other drivers are talking about you
openly... You sit in your master's
car alone; you talk to yourself...
is it true?*

Balram wonders if it is...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APART - NIGHT

Ashok smokes a joint and plays video games... while Balram watches him from outside on the balcony.

BALRAM (V.O.)
I would not let him tell him, my
fate was a shack in a slum.

EXT. MECHANIC SHOP - DAY

Lots of auto-body shops around a mud circle. A MECHANIC hands Balram an invoice, Balram hands him a small amount of money.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Over the next weeks, I learned the
ways driver's cheat their masters.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

He hands an invoice to Ashok who gives him a wad of cash.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Number one, give your master phony
invoices for repairs that are not
necessary.

BALRAM
Thank you, sir.

EXT. GAS STATION / STREETS - NIGHT

Balram pumps gas into a gas can. LATER - he pours the petrol into a taxi. The DRIVER pays him.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Two: sell your master's petrol to
other drivers.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / DELHI STREETS - NIGHT

Location 1 Balram pulls over and picks up a CUSTOMER.

BALRAM (V.O.)

As you gain confidence, cruise
around picking up and dropping off
paying customers. Delhi has many
pick-up points. Over time you will
learn them all.

Location 2 Customer puts money in Balram's hand and he picks
up more people and drives off.

EXT. STREETS OF DELHI - NIGHT

Balram speeds through the streets.

BALRAM (V.O.)

When I looked at the cash, I didn't
feel guilt. I felt rage.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / STREETS - NIGHT

Balram speeds and turns on the AC full blast. He's drunk and
drinking whiskey. He turns up pop MUSIC and SINGS.

BALRAM (V.O.)

There are only two castes in India.
I was growing a belly at last.

He talks with an imaginary Ashok in the back seat - *does
Balram really think he is there?*

BALRAM

*Ashok Sir, I'll fuck your mother,
what about that? Hey are you
listening to me? I can't drive like
this, take this.*

He tries to hand "Ashok" the whiskey bottle.

BALRAM

*Take it. You're a eunuch, you
motherfucker! A eunuch!*

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GARAGE; BALRAM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Balram pauses before he enters his room. Ashok is under his
mosquito net, drinking.

ASHOK

I know what you were doing.

BALRAM

Please sir, don't get upset with me, I -

Ashok drinks whiskey from a bottle. He's drunk.

ASHOK

You were at the temple offering prayers for my health.

BALRAM

(!) Yes, sir. I've been worried about you. I made an offering of 101 rupees in your name.

ASHOK

Come inside, sit down with me.

Balram sits inside the net facing Ashok, their knees touch.

ASHOK

Is this really where you live? It's so damp, and the smell.

BALRAM

Please sir, this place is like the Taj Mahal for me.

ASHOK

No. No. Taj Mahal is a tomb Balram, you don't live in the Taj Mahal.

BALRAM

Ok, sir.

ASHOK

You know, I have never done what I wanted to do with my life.

BALRAM

What did you want to do, sir?

ASHOK

Music. Or produce it, anyway. You know I lived in the US for so many years, I tried to be like them, but I'm a fucking Indian at heart, you know? *We are fucking Indians.*

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

I want to go to Bangalore and
change my country's future. That's
what I want to do.

BALRAM

Sir, you can do anything you want.
You're a man of quality, sir.

ASHOK

(laughs)
A man of quality..

BALRAM

Yes, sir!

ASHOK

(sings)
You and I, we live in Paradise, but
we refuse to see it.

His singing is terrible.

BALRAM

*Wow, sir. Wow! I didn't know you
could sing. That's beautiful.*

ASHOK

Thank you, I try.

BALRAM

You know, I also sing.

ASHOK

Really?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

Sing for me then!

BALRAM

Ok, maybe a little.
(sings)
Oh Morari, what can be said of you?

ASHOK

(sings)
Said of you!

BALRAM

(sings)

*In this world of yours I don't want
to live!*

ASHOK

(sings)

To live!

(speaks)

Wow, you're good, we should form a
band Balram.

BALRAM

Ok, sir. Thank you, sir.

ASHOK

I wish I had a simple life like
you.

(touches Balram's face)

My sweet Balram-ji.

Balram cringes.

INT. FIVE-STAR BANGALORE HOTEL - NIGHT [PRESENT]

Older Balram sits at the bar and stares at his whiskey. The
TV news gets his attention: WEN JIABAO has arrived in India.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I see you've arrived in my glorious
capital, sir. Maybe we can have a
drink together when you visit
Bangalore. You know, I would not be
able to afford even one Johnny
Walker Black with the money I had
cheated from my ex employer. Or get
a room in this five-star hotel with
the money Pinky Madam had given me.

Balram looks at a plump INDIAN ESCORT, she looks back.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Men born in the light, like my
master, have the choice to be good.
Men born in the coop, like me, we
don't have that choice.

INT. MITSUBISHI / TRAFFIC JAM - NIGHT

Balram stuck in a traffic jam. Ashok and Mukesh, who has
returned with the RED BAG. Balram eyes them in the rear-view
mirror.

NEWS HOST (ON RADIO)
*The opposition party and underdog,
 The Great Socialist, hopes to have
 support from rural India.*

MUKESH
 Her party is a total mess. The
 government is going to win for
 sure. We just have to keep paying
 them until the elections.

Balram eavesdrops while watching a BEGGAR WITH NO LEGS
 approach the car:

ASHOK
 I can't keep doing this.

MUKESH
 Things will change after the
 election. Then you can do what you
 want to do.

Balram unrolls the window and hands one rupee to the Beggar.

MUKESH
*What was that? Who the hell told
 you to do that? Can you believe
 that?*

ASHOK
 Balram, why'd you give him money?

MUKESH
Turn the radio off, motherfucker.

Balram does.

MUKESH
 Sister fucker, I told you not to
 come this way.

ASHOK
 I don't know why he did that.

MUKESH
*You think it's your father's money,
 asshole?*

ASHOK
 Who do you think you are?

BALRAM
 Sorry, sir. It won't happen again.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

At the bar, Balram prepares whiskey for Mukesh and Ashok who eat food - the RED BAG on the coffee table between them. His back is turned, but he spies on them through a mirror.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Be careful what you say around drivers. We have grown skilled at reading lips. I was certain I saw the Mongoose say my name and then a word no servant wants to hear: "replacement."

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - MORNING

Balram opens the car door for Ashok who walks towards him, the RED BAG in hand.

ASHOK

To the Parliament House.

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Just before Ashok sits, he pauses.

ASHOK

Ah, my phone. Just keep it in the car.

He hands Balram the RED BAG and returns to the apartment. Balram can't believe, the bag is in his hands.

Balram looks around a beat - confirms that Ashok is gone, that the LOBBY ATTENDANT is not watching.

He puts the RED BAG in the back seat, unzips it and sees: STACKS OF 100 RUPEE NOTES. He rifles through, counting.

BALRAM (V.O.)

This was at least two year's salary, maybe three... I was worth more.

He shoves the cash back in and zips it closed.

INT./EXT. [MOVING] MITSUBISHI / PARLIAMENT HOUSE - DAY

GUARDS eye Balram as he drives Ashok into a government building. Ashok gets out with the RED BAG.

Another Government Building - Balram spies on Ashok carrying the RED BAG into another building.

BALRAM (V.O.)
Over the next days, I tried hard
not to look at the red bag.

INT./EXT. [MOVING] MITSUBISHI / DELHI STREETS - NIGHT

Balram's POV: the RED BAG near Ashok, illuminated by his phone. Delhi streets, MEN under lamps read newspapers, OTHERS lie asleep in the street, headlights flash his eyes.

BALRAM (V.O.)
The city knew something was burning
inside of me, and she burned too.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / DELHI BANK - AFTERNOON

Balram's POV: Ashok gets cash from an ATM and puts it in the Red Bag.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / TRAFFIC - AFTERNOON

RED BAG in the rear-view mirror. An RICKSHAW DRIVER KNOCKS on his window - it is his FATHER! Balram unrolls the window.

BALRAM'S FATHER
*Even if you were to steal it, it
wouldn't be stealing.*

BALRAM
...

BALRAM'S FATHER
*Mr. Ashok bribes politicians in
order not to pay taxes. So who is
he stealing from? The ordinary
people of this country - me and
you.*

HONK. Balram HITS the brakes. His window is rolled up, and the RICKSHAW DRIVER is no longer his father.

ASHOK
Hey. Balram, hey. Let's go!

INT./EXT. [MOVING] MITSUBISHI / SHERATON HOTEL - NIGHT

Ashok gets out with the RED BAG.

ASHOK
I'll be a couple of hours.

Balram drives away.

EXT./INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Balram enters the station, lit up red at night.

At the skywalk, Balram notes destinations on two boards:
Benares, Jammu, Amritsar, Mumbai.

BALRAM (V.O.)
What would my destination be, if I
came here with the red bag?

FLAP FLAP FLAP. Balram sees pigeons fly between roof beams.
BARK BARK. A mangy dog growls at him, circling.

BALRAM (V.O.)
The pigeons, the dog, the station,
they could sense it: a rooster was
trying to escape from the coop!

He looks at the flying pigeons. All sounds die out except for
the FLAPPING of their wings... Balram is in terror.

BALRAM (V.O.)
What would Mr. Ashok do to my
family?

The FLAPPING continues over the NIGHTMARE IN BALRAM'S MIND:

EXT. TEMPLE ON HILL; LAXMANGARH - MORNING [BALRAM'S MIND]

FLAPPING continues as we see: a Thug beats Kishan to death
and dumps him next to his dead WIFE at a temple on a hill.

EXT. BALRAM'S FAMILY HOME; LAXMANGARH - MORNING [BALRAM'S
MIND]

A massacre: beaten, bloody and dead uncles, aunts and kids. A
THUG shoots a feeling COUSIN dead. Another Thug stabs Granny
to death.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

The mangy BARKING dog pulls Balram out of his nightmare.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - NIGHT

Balram drives and stares in the rear-view mirror at Ashok on his phone, the RED BAG near him.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT

They pull up. Balram opens the door for Ashok - but holds his arm. Strange beat as the men stand at the car door.

BALRAM

Sir, there's something I... I have to tell you.

ASHOK

Yes... go ahead.

BALRAM

... Sir, I want to smash your skull and steal your money.

Ashok considers this.

ASHOK

I know what you're thinking. You miss home, don't you?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

ASHOK

Plan a trip back. I'll take care of your expenses, don't worry.

Ashok hands him a couple hundred rupees.

ASHOK

Good night.

Balram watches him enter the apartment. He looks at the money and crumples it up.

BALRAM (V.O.)

He only gave me enough for a one-way ticket.

EXT. SLUM - DAY

Balram walks towards tents in a SLUM. He sees KIDS playing in sewage. He sees a MAN crapping in daylight. The Man laughs and encourages Balram to join him.

Balram squats in front of the crapping man and smiles strangely at him. The Crapping Man laughs and laughs. Balram laughs too.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - DAY

Through the front windshield: SUPPORTERS of the Great Socialist celebrate their victory, chanting, waving flags.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST (ON RADIO)
*Upending all expectations, and
 riding a wave of support from the
 poor, the Great Socialist has won a
 vast majority of the votes. There
 is no water in our taps, and what
 do the rich politicians in Delhi
 give us: Cell phones!*

ASHOK (INTO PHONE)
 We went with the wrong side. - Turn
 that off, asshole!

Balram turns off the radio and eavesdrops on Ashok.

ASHOK (INTO PHONE)
 All the idiots from the villages
 voted for her! What the fuck are we
 going to do?

Protesters bang on their car. Ashok yells at Balram.

ASHOK
*Sister-fucker, why the hell did you
 come this way? Drive!*

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / SHERATON HOTEL - NIGHT

Balram's POV: Great Socialist, Man in White and Ashok exit the hotel surrounded by her guards and staff. A CROWD chants for them

CROWD
Long live socialism!

Balram opens the door for The Great Socialist to get in.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - NIGHT

Ashok sits in the back seat between The Great Socialist and the Man in White. Balram drives and eavesdrops:

ASHOK

Father sends his warm
congratulations. We're all very
happy for your success.

THE GREAT SOCIALIST

Oh that's very sweet of you.

ASHOK

We would like to show our
appreciation by making a 10 lac
donation to your party.

MAN IN WHITE

*Is that how much you paid the
opposition party you fucker? 40
lacs, Monday night, the Sheraton
Hotel.*

4 million rupees! Balram takes that in.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DUSK

Balram finds a wrench. He feels its weight. The wind blows
garbage, a whirlwind of filth around him.

CRACK! He swings the wrench into a concrete block. Again -
CRACK - imagining what it would be like to do it.

INT. GARAGE OUTSIDE BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT

Balram enters, surprised to see a Dharam waiting.

DHARAM

*I took the bus, the train and asked
people and found you. Granny said
you have to take care of me and
make me a driver too.*

BALRAM

Who are you?

DHARAM

*Dharam. I'm Luttu Auntie's fourth
son.*

Balram remembers. He sees a letter in Dharam's hand.

BALRAM

What's that?

DHARAM

A letter.

BALRAM

A letter? Give it to me.

He takes the letter from Dharam and reads it.

GRANNY (V.O.)

Dear grandson. It has been seven months and two days since you sent us money.

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - DAY

Kishan and family surround Granny, who SPEAKS TO THE CAMERA:

GRANNY

The city has corrupted your soul. Life has become hard here. Lord Indra is not happy. You must send us money again. Also, I have arranged for your wedding. If you do not come here, we will send the girl to you by bus. If you refuse, we will write a letter explaining everything and send it to your master.

She grins to the camera.

INT. GARAGE OUTSIDE BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - CONTINUOUS

Balram puts the letter in his pocket. **He SLAPS Dharam hard.**

BALRAM

Is she really going to marry me?

DHARAM

Yes Uncle.

BALRAM

Turn around, I am going to hit you again. Turn around.

Dharam turns. Balram sees the boy's lip is bleeding. He is shocked by his own behavior.

He tosses the wrench aside and walks away. He crouches in the corner, trembling. He's breaking apart.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - DAY

Ashok looks at Dharam standing next to Balram.

BALRAM (V.O.)
The next morning, Mr. Ashok did something he had never done. He gave me a day off.

ASHOK
Who is this? Your nephew?

BALRAM
Yes, sir. My family.

EXT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; LOBBY - DAY

Balram spies on a dark-skinned SERVANT walk into the lobby.

BALRAM (V.O.)
But by now I knew, the rich never give anything for free.

Ashok greets him with a hand shake.

BALRAM (V.O.)
He had found my replacement.

EXT. NATIONAL ZOO - VARIOUS

Golden-beaked storks, hippos, and more stare at the camera. Balram points out animals to Dharam, who is happy.

BALRAM (V.O.)
That's when we saw the creature that gets born only once every generation.

They arrive at the last animal: THE WHITE TIGER.

BALRAM (V.O.)
The White Tiger.

Balram is transfixed as the tiger paces behind bars; black stripes and sunlit white fur, dizzying to Balram.

IN BALRAM'S MIND: his father pulls a rickshaw.

The tiger focuses its eyes into Balram's eyes.

IN BALRAM'S MIND: funeral pyre: father's foot curls up. // Granny laughs at him // Pinky Madam smiles at him // Ashok claps and smiles at him

Balram sweats, feels weak, his eyes flutter.

IN HIS MIND: Ashok slaps him in the face.

Balram faints. His face serene, like when he was a boy.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Iqbal, that great Muslim poet, was right when he wrote: "The moment you recognize what is beautiful in this world, you stop being a slave."

EXT. LAXMANGARH VILLAGE - SUNSET

Young Balram stands on a cliff looking at the river.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; GARAGE - NIGHT

Balram picks up a Johnnie Walker bottle and rotates it in his hand, feeling its weight. He SMASHES the bottle against a column.

CLOSER on the bottle - long, cruel, clawlike jags.

INT. ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT; BALRAM'S ROOM/GARAGE - VARIOUS [RAIN]

MORNING - Balram lights incense sticks inside the car. He wipes it clean, massaging the car for the last time.

Balram puts a plastic bag with clothes by the floorboard of his seat. Next to it, he places the broken bottle.

Dharam watches Balram bow twice with folded palms to the car.

EVENING - Balram and Dharam eat together in silence. The boy wonders what is happening.

NIGHT - Balram puts a few hundred rupees in Dharam's pocket.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I hoped the next morning, when I didn't return, he'd know to run.

He gets in the car. Dharam watches him drive away.

INT./EXT. MITSUBISHI / ASHOK'S DELHI APARTMENT - NIGHT [RAIN]

Balram pulls up. Mr. Ashok and the RED BAG get in the car.

BALRAM
To the Sheraton, sir?

ASHOK
(how did Balram know?)
... Yeah, the Sheraton.

Balram drives away.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - NIGHT [RAIN]

MUSIC. Rain hits the car. Balram drives. He looks at the RED BAG next to Ashok.

ASHOK
Pinky called. She wants to know if I'll come back to New York.

BALRAM
Will you go back, sir?

ASHOK
And pretend to be someone I'm not?
(shakes head, "no")
This is my country after all.

BALRAM
There is a story of a cunning Brahmin, trying to trick Buddha. The Brahmin asked, "Master, do you consider yourself a man or a god." The Buddha smiled and said, "Neither. I am just one who has woken up while the rest of you are still sleeping."

Balram and Ashok stare at each other in the rear-view mirror.

EXT. SECLUDED DELHI STREET - NIGHT [RAIN]

Balram turns onto a secluded road.

INT. MOVING MITSUBISHI - CONTINUOUS [RAIN]

Balram sees Ashok's face lit up by his phone. He looks out the window: dark, empty streets. Balram stops the car.

ASHOK
What's wrong? Why'd we stop?

BALRAM
Something is off with the wheel,
sir. Just give me a minute, sir,
I'll go check.

ASHOK
Ok.

Balram picks up the broken bottle and exits the car.

EXT. SECLUDED DELHI STREET - CONTINUOUS [RAIN]

Balram steps into the rain and soggy mud. He squats near the left rear tire. He confirms that the road is dark, deserted.

He looks at bushes on the side of the road - a stretch of wasteland beyond it. He places the broken bottle by the tire.

He looks in the car: the blue phone light illuminates Ashok's face. Balram taps the window. Ashok looks up.

BALRAM
There's something off with the
wheel, sir.

ASHOK
Ok... maybe we should call for
help?

BALRAM
Who will come here, sir? If you can
just step outside we can fix it
together.

ASHOK
It's raining, let's just call for
help.

BALRAM
But sir, you'll be late for your
meeting otherwise. If you can just
step outside, it won't take much
time.

ASHOK
Ah... Ok.

Ashok puts his phone away; the car darkens. He gets out.

BALRAM

Be careful of the bottle, sir. Let me get it away.

Balram points to the BROKEN BOTTLE AND PICKS IT UP.

ASHOK

This tire?

BALRAM

Yes, sir.

Ashok gets on his knees.

Balram's POV: Ashok's skull. He wants to strike, but can't. The bottle feels heavy.

Ashok turns and looks up at Balram.

ASHOK

It seems fine.

BALRAM

No sir, you should have found a replacement a long time ago.

BALRAM RAMS THE BOTTLE DOWN INTO ASHOK'S SKULL.

He thrusts it down three times. Ashok falls into the mud. A HISSING sound from his lips.

Balram stands over him, watching Ashok crawl about in the mud.

Balram steps forward, he puts his knee onto Ashok's chest and rubs his hand over Ashok's clavicles and neck.

BALRAM CUTS ASHOK'S THROAT AND KILLS HIM.

He stands up and stares at Ashok's dead body. He drops the broken bottle and stares up into the rain before falling to his knees... he has done it, he is free.

INT./EXT. MOVING MITSUBISHI / SECLUDED DELHI STREET - NIGHT
[RAIN]

Balram floors it. His eyes are wild as he speeds away. He SHOUTS as loud as he can.

He sees the red bag on the seat next to him and laughs. But then he is scared, realizing that he has actually done it. He has killed his master.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. Balram holds the RED BAG. He's changed clothes: a T-shirt, new pants, shoes.

Anxious, still no train. He sees pigeons FLAP between the roof beams; a sleeping dog.

He sees a HOMELESS FAMILY AND KID. The Kid stares at Balram. ... Should he go back for Dharam? Balram curses himself and leaves the station.

INT. BALRAM'S ROOM; DELHI - NIGHT

Balram sees Dharam awake under the mosquito net. Balram reaches out his hand. Dharam takes it. They leave.

INT. MOVING TRAIN - MORNING

The train travels through the landscape. Balram hugs the Red Bag and holds Dharam's hand tightly.

Balram stares out the window, anxious, scared... the future...

EXT. RURAL TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Balram and Dharam wait for the train in the middle of nowhere. It arrives. They get in and leave.

INT./EXT. MOVING TRAIN IN LANDSCAPE - DUSK

The train travels under the vast sky. Balram stares out the window, the RED BAG in hand, Dharam asleep on his shoulder.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT./INT. HOTEL IN BANGALORE - VARIOUS [PAST]

NIGHT - Dharam sleeps on the floor. Balram (with beard) lies awake in bed, food has been left next to him - untouched.

DAY - Balram, in bed, wakes up. He sees Dharam watching him.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I am not a politician. They are
extraordinary men who can kill and
move on. Not me.

(MORE)

BALRAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I didn't leave this room for four
weeks until my nerves were calm.

EXT. BANGALORE STREET; BARBER - DAY

Dharam watches Balram get his hair/beard trimmed - a new man.

BALRAM (V.O.)
The last stage in my amazing
success story, sir, was to go from
social entrepreneur to business
entrepreneur. This was not easy.

EXT. BANGALORE; TECH CITIES; VARIOUS - VARIOUS

Bustling modern city of Bangalore. Impressive tech cities,
campuses that resemble Silicon Valley.

BALRAM (V.O.)
But I had an edge. I had come to
Bangalore -

INT./EXT. MOVING RICKSHAW / ELECTRONICS CITY - VARIOUS

DAY - Balram and Dharam sit in the Rickshaw and see the tech
buildings: **Yahoo! Dell, GE, Siemens, HP, IBM.**

BALRAM (V.O.)
- and Mr. Ashok had told me the
future: "Outsourcing!"

Balram and Dharam ride down an escalator.

NIGHT - Balram's POV: a lot of SUVs drop off MEN & WOMEN.
Balram notices the DRIVERS getting out to open doors.

BALRAM (V.O.)
When I saw all those SUVs coming in
and out of the call centers to
America, I knew what my place would
be.

INT. BANGALORE POLICE STATION - DAY

A POLICEMAN escorts Balram (better dressed now) into the
police station.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 But how would I get rid of the
 competition? Then I wondered, 'what
 would Mr. Ashok do?'

Balram says namaste to the ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER. Balram
 hands him a leather bag.

BALRAM
 Sir, I want to make a small
 offering of my gratitude to you.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
 For what?

BALRAM
 For all the good you are going to
 do for me, sir.

As the Commissioner pokes in the bag...

BALRAM (V.O.)
 Don't worry, it wasn't all of it.
 But it was enough.

The Commissioner smiles.

Balram sees lot of **WANTED POSTERS** covering a wall and spots
 HIS OWN FACE, a blurry photo on a **WANTED FOR MURDER poster.**

BALRAM (V.O.)
 You know why they never found me?
 Because my face could be the face
 of half the men in India.

EXT. BANGALORE TAXI SERVICE - NIGHT

POLICE raid a taxi service, hassle DRIVERS, arrest the OWNER.
 The Asst. Commissioner nods at Balram who is across the
 street watching with Dharam. Balram smiles slyly.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 The police arrested all the call-
 center drivers for "expired"
 licenses... Entrepreneurs create
 opportunity. And that's how I got
 my own "start-up."

EXT. WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT [PRESENT]

We travel past shining Toyota Qualises and lots of DRIVERS.

BALRAM (V.O.)

White Tiger Drivers! I've got thirty drivers who work in shifts with twenty-six vehicles, all air-conditioned for the summer months.

It's three years later. Our pot-bellied, older Balram oversees it all.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Put together with my bank holdings, and I am worth fifteen times the sum I borrowed from Mr. Ashok.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT

Balram's laptop, open to his website: **WHITE TIGER DRIVERS, We Drive Technology Forward!**

BALRAM (V.O.)

Your Excellency, please visit my website. If you like what you see, you can click where it says:

LAPTOP: **CONTACT ASHOK SHARMA NOW.**

Balram turns and looks into the camera.

BALRAM (TO CAMERA)

Yes, "Ashok." That's what I call myself these days.

INT./EXT. WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT

A line of drivers, all from the darkness. Balram hands them pay-checks while Dharam does the book-keeping.

BALRAM (V.O.)

But I don't treat my drivers like servants, I don't care about their religion and I certainly don't call them my "family." They are my employees. I make them sign a contract and I sign it too.

EXT. SITE OF ACCIDENT - NIGHT

Balram gets out of his car at the scene of a hit-and-run. TEENAGE BROTHER yells at a DRIVER. The DEAD BOY (12) lies in the mud.

BALRAM (V.O.)
 And if there is a problem, I don't
 let my drivers take the blame.

POLICE welcome Balram, shake his hand.

POLICE AT SCENE
 That's the dead boy's brother. Your
 driver that hit him is there.

Balram looks at the corpse in the mud next to a mangled
 bicycle. A beat, then he speaks loudly.

BALRAM
 I am Ashok Sharma, I am the owner
 of this vehicle. The blood is on my
 hands, not my driver.

INT. BANGALORE POLICE STATION; OFFICE - NIGHT

Balram and the angry Teenage Brother wait. The ASSISTANT
 COMMISSIONER enters with two POLICEMEN.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
 It's a terrible thing that has
 happened. But it's late....

BALRAM (V.O.)
 I choose to do differently than my
 masters, I live in the light now.

INT. DEAD BOY'S HOME - DAY

A photo of the Dead Boy with a jasmine garland around it.
 Balram and Dharam sit opposite the Mother and FATHER.

BALRAM
 I want to express my deep sorrow at
 the death of your son.

He pulls out a BROWN ENVELOPE and sets it on the table.

BALRAM
 There are forty thousand rupees in
 here. I don't give it to you
 because I have to, but because I
 want to.
 (in Kannada)
 Do you understand?

Balram sees the Teenage Brother watching from the hallway.

BALRAM

I want to help your other son. He can come and be a driver with me and I will take care of him if you want.

EXT. BANGALORE CAFE - SUNSET

Dharam (school uniform) does homework; Balram reads newspaper headline: **FAMILY OF 17 MURDERED IN NORTH INDIAN VILLAGE.**

BALRAM (V.O.)

I'll never know what happened to my family. I could only wonder...

He folds the newspaper and puts it away.

BALRAM (V.O.)

But for the poor there are only two ways to get to the top, crime or politics. Is it like that in your country too?

Balram notices Dharam staring at the newspaper headline.

BALRAM

Do you think about your mom and dad?

DHARAM

... Give me another glass of milk, won't you, Uncle? And a bowl of ice-cream too.

BALRAM

Ice cream is for Sundays.

DHARAM

(hands him empty bowl)
No. It's for today.

BALRAM (V.O.)

Smart boy.

EXT. BANGALORE LUXURY HOTEL - DAY

Balram, with his own POLICE ESCORT, gets to the front of a SMALL CROWD as a DELEGATION arrives with POLICE ESCORT. Balram sees a MAN emerge from one of the cars: **WEN JIABAO.**

BALRAM

Your Excellency, it's me, from our emails, sir Ashok Sharma, The White Tiger, how are you?

He shakes Wen Jiabao's hand. PRESS take photos.

BALRAM

I wanted to tell you one more thing, sir, we great entrepreneurs always have our sights set on tomorrow: real estate. With all these American companies coming to Bangalore, the white people will need somewhere to sleep.

WEN JIABAO

Thank you, sir.

But Mr. Jiabao's delegation whisks him away into the hotel.

BALRAM

Enjoy India, sir.

Balram watches him enter the hotel. Balram is flanked by his police escort and speaks with them.

BALRAM

White people are on the way out. They will be finished within our lifetime. It's the century of the brown man and the yellow man, and God save everyone else.

He puts his sunglasses on and walks away.

INT. BALRAM'S MOVING CAR; BANGALORE - NIGHT

Balram drives his BMW and looks out the window thinking.

BALRAM (V.O.)

I do think about my ex a lot, and I do miss him. He didn't deserve his fate.... AH, I should have cut the Mongoose's neck.

INT. BALRAM'S OFFICE; WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT

Balram typing the email at his laptop, where we first found him.

BALRAM (V.O.)

And sometimes I think, even if they catch me, I'll never say I made a mistake. It was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant.

INT./EXT. WHITE TIGER DRIVERS - NIGHT

Balram speaks directly to his Drivers as he gathers them and brings them outside to the front of his business.

BALRAM

Now, what happens in your typical Hindi film about murder? A poor man kills a rich man and then gets nightmares of the dead man pursuing him screaming: "Murderer! Shame!" It doesn't happen like that. The real nightmare is the other kind - where you didn't do it, that you didn't kill your master, that you lost your nerve, and that you're still a servant to another man. But then you wake up, the sweating stops, your heartbeat slows. The nightmare is over. You did do it. You killed your master.

Balram steps away from them and speaks directly into the camera:

BALRAM (TO CAMERA)

I have switched sides. I've made it. I've broken out of the coop.

He exits frame, leaving a wall of drivers, servants, perhaps new White Tigers, ready to strike, confronting the camera, confronting the audience...

CUT TO BLACK