

FADE IN:

EXT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

A PAINTING fills the screen, split by a RED LINE. On the left, somber colors depict a frail, lonely man by a blank canvas. On the right, vibrant hues show a radiant woman, her blank canvas surrounded by adoring fans.

The CAMERA PUSHES IN on the man's canvas until it TRANSFORMS INTO --

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A WHITEBOARD covered in MATH EQUATIONS. Students scribble in notebooks, chatter filling the air.

At the back, a teenage CARLOS SERA (16, tired, scruffy, perpetually distracted) squints, struggling to stay awake. His notebook, rather than filled with numbers, contains INTRICATE SKETCHES.

A stern TEACHER notices, frowns, and approaches.

TEACHER

Carlos! Pay attention!

Carlos startles. His pencil streaks across the page, ruining his latest sketch.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

If you're going to waste time, you can do it in detention. Stay after class.

Carlos sighs, defeated.

INT. DETENTION ROOM - LATER

Carlos slouches, doodling in the margins of his worksheet. A sharp SHADOW crosses his desk. The Teacher picks up his notebook, flipping through it.

The Teacher's stern face SOFTENS as they take in the astonishingly detailed artwork.

TEACHER

Carlos... these are incredible. Why aren't you in an art class?

CARLOS

My parents say I need real classes.  
Math, science... things that get  
you a job.

The Teacher looks at him, thoughtful.

TEACHER

You have a gift. Let me talk to the  
school. We'll get you into studio  
art.

Carlos hesitates. Then, a nod.

As the Teacher gestures him toward the door, they step  
through—

CUT TO:

EXT. ART COLLEGE - WEST COAST - DAY

Carlos (now early 20s, confident, effortlessly charming)  
walks through campus, greeted by peers. He's the GOLDEN BOY  
of the art department, thriving on a full scholarship.

INT. ART GALLERY - STUDENT EXHIBITION - NIGHT

A bustling event. Carlos stands before his latest work—A  
SENSUAL PAINTING of Aphrodite, bold and magnetic. Around him,  
admirers swoon, eyes full of desire.

Carlos soaks it in. Until—

A SHUFFLING SOUND. A young woman struggles to pull out a  
canvas from her bag. DAHLIA WILKINS (early 20s, reserved yet  
fierce) maneuvers through the crowd.

A RUDE MALE STUDENT sneers.

MALE STUDENT

Give it up, Sera already won.

Carlos smirks, but his cocky tone now has a playful edge.

CARLOS

C'mon, man. Let's see what she's  
got.

Dahlia barely acknowledges him. She sets up her piece—a  
breathtaking depiction of a LUSH GARDEN, a LONE WOMAN trapped  
within towering, ominous trees.

A hush falls over the room. The crowd shifts—many leaving Carlos's side to admire Dahlia's masterpiece.

Carlos, frozen, studies the painting. Even his admirers can't hold his attention.

He steps closer, finally speaking.

CARLOS (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)  
It's better than mine.

Dahlia turns, eyes flicking up to his. A small, knowing smile.

And with that smile—Carlos never wanted another woman again.

INT. SHARED STUDIO SPACE - DAY

Carlos and Dahlia paint together. Laughter, stolen kisses, creative sparks fly. Love blooms on canvas.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Carlos stands beside a familiar landscape. Dahlia with a piercing portrait. The press flocks—to DAHLIA.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dahlia recounts praise. Carlos forces a smile.

MONTAGE - DAHLIA RISES, CARLOS FALTERS

—Carlos reads reviews calling his work "redundant."

—Dahlia appears on talk shows.

—She buys them a house.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

CARLOS  
You wouldn't even have a career if  
I hadn't pulled you in.

DAHLIA  
You mean until my painting silenced  
the room?

A glass shatters.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Carlos flirts. Pulls away. Miserable.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Dahlia laughs with other artists. Carlos watches, seething.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Screams. Dahlia storms out.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Carlos, drunk, crying.

INT. DREAM - NIGHT

Dahlia marries someone else. Carlos alone in a crumbling home.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

Carlos accepts a six-month AA chip.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Carlos sees Dahlia's car.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CARLOS

I've hated you for being better.  
This is all I've painted.

He unveils the PAINTING FROM ACT 1.

DAHLIA

I still love you. But promise me—no  
more painting until your ego's  
gone.

They embrace.

INT. TALK SHOW - NIGHT

INTERVIEWER  
Carlos, are you painting again?

CARLOS  
Not yet.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Carlos slides over a napkin. A sketch of Dahlia at the table,  
Carlos down on one knee.

She looks up—REALITY MATCHES.

DAHLIA  
Yes! Yes!

MONTAGE - WEDDING

Surrounded by artists. Joyful. Vows: "Family First."

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carlos stares at a blank canvas. He tries to paint. Nothing  
comes.

MONTAGE

—Carlos supports Dahlia.  
—He stares at blank canvases.  
—She encourages him.  
—Still nothing.

CARLOS (V.O.)  
I only ever painted longing. And  
now I have everything.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Dahlia throws up. Coughs.

INT. GALLERY - LATER

She collapses.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DOCTOR  
You're pregnant.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Carlos paints. Dahlia pretends to sleep.

INT. HOSPITAL - DELIVERY

Dahlia kisses the baby. Flatline.

Carlos holds his daughter. Grief and joy, side by side.

FOUR YEARS LATER

INT. PRESCHOOL - DAY

BAILEY  
I made you something!

She hands Carlos a drawing—"My Daddy."

CARLOS  
Mommy and I used to draw like this.

BAILEY  
You did? Can you show me?

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Bailey sees Carlos's paintings.

BAILEY  
Why no pictures of me?

CARLOS  
I stopped painting.

BAILEY  
Why?

CARLOS  
I can only paint Mommy. And that hurts.

BAILEY  
I wanna see Mommy.

CARLOS  
Then I'll paint the three of us.

TWO YEARS LATER

INT. GALLERY - DAY

BAILEY  
Me and my daddy painted this. This  
is my family.

The painting: a shared canvas. Dahlia, glowing. Bailey's half  
shines.

Carlos, in the back, teary-eyed. Not sad. Full.

We push in on Dahlia's face. She smiles.

FADE OUT.

**THE END**