

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE CANVAS - NIGHT

A massive painting, split down the middle by a red line.

LEFT SIDE: Somber hues. A lone MAN stares at a blank canvas. He's frail, desperate.

RIGHT SIDE: Bursting colors. A stunning WOMAN, same blank canvas, adored by a vibrant crowd.

We ZOOM IN on the man, into the canvas... until-

INT. HIGH SCHOOL MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

A WHITEBOARD fills up with equations. Teenagers work, chatter. In the back, CARLOS SERA (16), exhausted, scribbles in a notebook. His eyelids droop.

TEACHER

Carlos. Eyes up. Detention.

INT. DETENTION ROOM - DAY

Carlos ignores his worksheet, sketching furiously in the margins.

The TEACHER (40s) leans over, grabs the notebook.

TEACHER

What is this...

Stunned. Dozens of jaw-dropping sketches.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Why the hell are you in calculus?

CARLOS

My parents. They say art won't pay rent.

TEACHER

You have a gift. Let me talk to someone.

Carlos hesitates. Nods.

They walk to the door...

CUT TO:

INT. ART COLLEGE - GALLERY - NIGHT

Early 20s Carlos. Confident. Surrounded by admirers. He stands by a huge painting of APHRODITE, basking in attention.

RUDE STUDENT
Get outta the way, Dahlia. Sera
already won!

A woman struggles with a canvas. This is DAHLIA WILKINS (20s).

CARLOS
Hey. Let her show her stuff.

She unrolls a haunting, surreal garden. Trees loom over a lone girl. Stunning.

Crowd parts. Most drift toward Dahlia's painting. Carlos too. He stares.

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

DAHLIA
(smiling)
Took you long enough.

MONTAGE:

-- Carlos and Dahlia painting side by side.
-- Press events. Interviews. Dual showcases.
-- Success builds. So does love.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

They unveil solo pieces. Carlos' is skillful but stale. Dahlia's? A girl alone in a quiet home. Evocative.

PRESS flocks to her.

Carlos watches. Plasters on a smile.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Fights. Accusations. Drinking.

CARLOS
You'd be broke if I hadn't pulled
you into my spotlight!

DAHLIA
I eclipsed you the day we met!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Carlos drinks. Flirts. Never follows through.

INT. THEIR HOUSE - LATER

She moves out. Carlos drinks alone. Collapses.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

Carlos alone. Slums. Dahlia happy, married to another. Carlos breaks.

INT. AA MEETING - DAY

Carlos gets a six-month token.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Dahlia sits in her car, debating. Carlos walks up.

CARLOS
I can't paint. Not without the chip
on my shoulder. I loved you more
than my ego.

He shows her the painting from the opening.

DAHLIA
Stay sober. Don't paint until
you're ready.

They embrace.

MONTAGE:

-- Carlos behind-the-scenes at Dahlia's events.
-- Interviews. He praises her. Downplays himself.
-- At home, romantic dinners.

CARLOS
Sketched something...

She unfolds a napkin. A sketch of her. Carlos on one knee.

REALITY: He's proposing. She says yes.

WEDDING - DAY

Joy. Artist friends jealous. Promises of love and family.

NIGHT

Carlos sneaks to the canvas. He
stares. Nothing comes.

MONTAGE:

-- Dahlia thrives. Carlos tries to paint. Nothing.

-- He admits he only paints from longing. Now he just...
longs to paint.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Dahlia throws up. Wheezing. Carlos insists on a doctor.

INT. GALLERY - LATER

She faints. Hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

DAHLIA

I'm pregnant.

Fear. Then joy.

INT. STUDIO - LATE NIGHT

Carlos paints. First time in years. Dahlia watches silently,
smiling.

MORNING

Canvas: them, holding a baby.
Carlos asleep beside it.

DAHLIA (V.O.)

Whatever happens, our child will
know love.

INT. HOSPITAL - DELIVERY ROOM

Baby born. Dahlia weak. Machines beep. She holds her daughter.

DAHLIA
Her name's Bailey.

Flatline. Screams. Nurses.

INT. LIVING ROOM - YEARS LATER

Carlos works a normal job. Picks Bailey (4) up from school.

BAILEY
I drew you!

It's a child's drawing. Looks like Dahlia's early style.

CARLOS
Mommy and I used to draw like this.

BAILEY
Show me!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

He shows her his paintings. She asks why he stopped.

CARLOS
I can only paint Mommy. And that hurts.

BAILEY
Then paint me too.

INT. GALLERY - TWO YEARS LATER

Children's exhibit. Bailey (6) presents.

BAILEY
Me and Daddy painted this. It's my family.

She unveils a joint painting. Carlos and Bailey painted Dahlia together.

Carlos tears up. Proud. Not sad.

We ZOOM IN on the canvas... Dahlia's painted face smiles.

FADE OUT.

THE END