

A New Canvas

FADE IN:

INT. ART STUDIO - NIGHT

A CANVAS, half-finished. On the left, a MAN, detailed and vivid. On the right, a WOMAN, just as vivid. We PUSH IN on the MAN--

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A teenage boy, CARLOS SERA (17), struggles to keep his eyes open. He's drawing in his notebook instead of listening to the TEACHER.

TEACHER

Carlos. Stay after class.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The teacher flips through Carlos' notebook, stunned by the sketches.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

These are incredible. Why aren't you in art class?

CARLOS

My parents said art won't get me anywhere.

TEACHER

Come with me.

They walk out together--

INT. ART COLLEGE - GALLERY - NIGHT

Early 20s now, CARLOS shines. His latest work is surrounded by fans. Enter DAHLIA WILKINS, early 20s, quietly judging.

A RUDE STUDENT snarks at her.

RUDE STUDENT

If you don't like it, leave.

Carlos overhears, interjects--

CARLOS

Maybe she's just seen better.

He turns to her with a sly smile. Dahlia raises an eyebrow. She unveils her own work.

The crowd flocks to her painting. Carlos is stunned.

DAHLIA

Got anything to say?

CARLOS

...It's better than mine.

She smiles for the first time.

MONTAGE -- THEIR RISE:

- They paint side by side.
- Attend gallery openings.
- Laugh in cafes.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Carlos watches as all the attention shifts to Dahlia's work. He claps, but his eyes betray him.

INT. THEIR HOME - NIGHT

Tension. Carlos drinks. Dahlia comes home late from another interview. Fights erupt.

CARLOS

You'd be nowhere if not for me.

DAHLIA

I passed you a year ago.

They drift. She moves out. He spirals.

INT. AA MEETING - DAY

Carlos receives his 6-month chip.

INT. OLD HOUSE - NIGHT

Carlos walks in. Dahlia sits there. He shows her the only thing he's painted--*the opening canvas*.

CARLOS

I hated that you were better.

DAHLIA

Then get over it. Don't paint till you do.

They embrace.

MONTAGE -- RECOVERY AND LOVE:

- Wedding day. Male artist friends look on, bitter.
- Carlos stares at his canvas--nothing comes.
- Dahlia throws up.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DAHLIA is pregnant. Complications possible. They're scared.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carlos paints: the two of them holding a radiant baby.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dahlia cradles the baby, kisses her, begins to wheeze. Machines SCREAM.
Flatline.

Carlos cradles his daughter, forcing a smile.

INT. PRESCHOOL - YEARS LATER

BAILEY (4), full of life.

BAILEY

I made you something!

It's a drawing of him--like Dahlia used to draw. Carlos tears up.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Can you show me yours?

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Carlos shows Bailey his old paintings.

BAILEY

I wanna see mommy.

CARLOS

I'll paint the three of us.

INT. CHILDREN'S GALLERY - TWO YEARS LATER

Bailey, now 6, presents her painting.

BAILEY

Me and my daddy painted this.

It's a beautiful piece. Carlos and Bailey on one side. DAHLIA on the other--painted by Bailey.

Carlos wells up. Not sad. Proud.

FADE OUT.

THE END