

FADE IN:

INT. SERA HOUSE - NIGHT

A pristine living room lies dormant, quiet. Rows of exquisite artwork line the walls. Beautiful, more-artistic-than-functional tables adorn the center of the room. A fireplace crackles. The clean view only disturbed by empty bottles on the floor.

At the edge of the room lies a canvas, upon which lies a stunning image we begin to zoom in on. The image is split down the middle by a harsh, red line. On the right, vibrant primary colors depict a beautiful redhead woman, with a colorful-but-nondescript canvas of her own, surrounded by crowds of adoring fans and photographers.

On the left side of the line, muted colors depict a ghastly, frail man with his own canvas, covered in harsher colors. Nobody is around him, no lights adorn his artwork. He is *alone*.

We zoom in on the man, as his face becomes both younger and more realistic, yet still just as lonely. The environment around us fades until it becomes...

INT. MATH CLASS - DAY

A bland, colorless classroom, with muttering teenagers around the boy. That boy, who will become the man in the picture, is a Latino teenager here, with jet black hair and hazel eyes. This is CARLOS SERA, struggling to stay awake and focus on the advanced placement calculus work being given to him.

TEACHER

Sera, are you with us?

Sera, eyes open but not aware, scribbling in his notebook, doesn't respond.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Mister Sera?

Sera jolts up and looks towards his teacher.

CARLOS SERA

Yes?

TEACHER

Can you tell us the derivative of the equation?

Sera's brows furl, focusing on the equation on the board.

CARLOS SERA

Uh... uh... it's... ummm...

TEACHER

That's detention again Sera. If you'd been paying attention instead of doodling, you'd know how to differentiate a simple quadratic.

Other students chuckle, with the teacher turning back towards the board. Carlos slumps in his chair, continuing to fight sleep.

INT. DETENTION - EVENING

Carlos sits in detention working on a packet of busywork. Or at least, he should be. Instead he's continuing to scribble to the side in his notebook.

TEACHER

Sera. Packet.

No response. The teacher groans, stands, and walks over to Sera. They rip the notebook from Sera, who only just notices.

CARLOS SERA

Hey, that's-

The teacher's stern expression suddenly changes when they eye the book. That "scribbling" is actually incredibly detailed drawings. The girls in class he likes. Landscapes. The ocean. An animal escaping a poacher. An overbearing figure at a door while a young boy cries.

TEACHER

Carlos, these...

CARLOS SERA

I'm sorry, just-

TEACHER

These are incredible.

Carlos, shaking while reaching out for his notebook, goes silent. The teacher looks back at him and hands the notebook back.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Are you taking studio art?

CARLOS SERA

No, I only had one room for one AP class.

TEACHER

Why did you choose Calculus? I'm sure Stevens would love to have you in his class with this caliber of work.

Carlos closes up, shoving his notebook into his backpack.

CARLOS SERA

My mom says "doodling" won't get me anywhere. I need a *real job*.

TEACHER

Carlos, you're hopeless here. This isn't what you should be doing. That is.

CARLOS SERA

My parents-

TEACHER

Won't control you forever. You're seventeen Carlos. And you're failing. You stay in my class, you'll be lucky to graduate. If you let me pull some strings, I can get you into Stevens' class. You'd do better there.

CARLOS SERA

I'd get thrown out.

The teacher sort of pulls Carlos from his chair, shaking their head.

TEACHER

Stevens has a class at the same time as mine. Your mom won't have to know you ditched my class until after you graduate. I'll talk to Stevens. Come on.

They motion for Carlos to follow them into the hallway.

CARLOS SERA

You'd do that?

TEACHER

You need help Carlos. Someone has to.

They step out the door and Carlos follows, still shaking a bit. He steps out...

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

And suddenly, four years have passed. Carlos steps into a crowded lecture hall filled with ARTISTS, PROFESSORS, STUDENTS, and JOURNALISTS. Carlos' hair is straightened out, he's standing tall and confident, and he has a noticeable following behind him going in. Mostly women.

Several of the professors greet him with praise and pride, many of the other artists look at him with nothing but spite and jealousy. Carlos walks up to a covered canvas with his name on it, and looks over at the professor who was guarding it. He goes to a nearby mic.

PROFESSOR 1

Now presenting... three-time
exhibition prize-winner, Carlos
Sera!

The portrait, a stunning sensual depiction of the Greek goddess Aphrodite immediately draws the attention of the crowd. The other artists stare in amazement-mixed-with-distaste. The women following Carlos shoot him bedroom eyes. Journalists quickly vacate the other, far lesser works of art.

JOURNALIST

Mister Sera. Do you think it's
likely that this will give you the
fourth win of the year in your
program?

CARLOS SERA

I think this is my best piece so
far, and I haven't seen anything
that topped my first three
Goddesses yet. But there's still a
few covered ones left, anything's
possible.

The last statement rings of sarcasm, showing a clear disdain for the rest of his program. Some of the professors nod, signaling agreement, while one professor rolls her eyes at the bravado, as well as her colleagues encouraging it.

She looks around towards the entrance of the lecture hall to see a young woman, frazzled and out of breath, running in. DAHLIA WILKINS dashes over to the professor.

PROFESSOR 2

Dahlia, where have you been?! You could've upstaged this whole room before Sera showed off!

DAHLIA WILKINS

Car... broken down... too expensive... to fix.

Dahlia catches her breath before processing what her professor just said.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)

Really? Another one of Carlos' half-naked women is winning again?

PROFESSOR 2

Hopefully not now.

The professor goes to the mic while Dahlia fixes her hair a bit and stands over by the canvas.

PROFESSOR 2 (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, if you'll keep moving along the exhibition, we now have Dahlia Wilkins presenting *Their World*.

None of the crowd react, staying by Carlos' canvas. The artists in line behind Dahlia begin to pack up, defeated.

Dahlia stubbornly ignores the lack of interest. She takes the mic.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Kiss-asses and wannabe journalists, there's half an exhibition left. You'll get plenty of chances to gaze at Sera's softcore when you hand him the win.

Some journalists in the crowd take notice and reluctantly move away. Some of the artists behind Dahlia snicker. Most of the students stand by Carlos. One particular DUDEBRO STUDENT turns around and yells loud enough for the crowd to hear.

DUDEBRO STUDENT

What, like your feminist scholarship isn't enough, you need to take the *man's* win away too!

A not-insignificant amount of the students laugh, though Carlos shakes his head.

CARLOS SERA

Excuse me, sir, you in the back?
None of that. Everyone in this
program worked hard to get here,
alright. We should give her the
attention and respect she deserves.
I'm sorry miss, go ahead and
present. I'd be more than happy for
you to come out on top.

His last line reeks of sleaze, simultaneously hitting on her and acting as though he's accomplishing something by speaking for her. Still, Dahlia takes in the influx of attention and uncovers her portrait.

It is beyond anything we've seen so far. It depicts a garden with a lone young woman, who looks very much like Dahlia, surrounded by terrifying, masculine trees. The work seems too advanced for a student. All but the most dudebro of the men in the crowd flock to her.

Some of the women stand by Carlos, offering him their numbers and propositioning him. But suddenly, he has no interest. His eyes lock onto Dahlia's painting, taken by it. Carlos ignores the women crowding him and strolls over to Dahlia's painting.

Dahlia takes questions of her own, some constantly mentioning her being one of the few women in the program. Carlos begins to walk a bit too close to Wilkins and the podium. Dahlia takes notice.

DAHLIA WILKINS

I'm sorry, Mister Sera, do you have
something to say.

She glares at him. He's looking at her as though he'd never seen her before, despite being in the same art program. He's caught off guard by her sharpness as well, stumbling through his words until a simple truth pops out.

CARLOS SERA

It's... it's better than mine.

She rolls her eyes a bit, but a brief sincere smile pops out. Carlos steps back, no longer staring at the painting, but at her.

INT. SERA'S APARTMENT AND ART VENUES - MONTAGE OF SHOTS

WE SEE alternating shots, depicting roughly a year and a half of time between the two characters while a sentimental piece of music plays (I would venture "Human" by Killers or something of the sort). Notably:

A) A second art presentation where they present next to each other, with Carlos moving over to Dahlia and talking (inaudible).

B) Carlos and Dahlia dining at Sera's old apartment (Not the house from the opening), laughing.

C) Carlos and Dahlia once again presenting art separately, trying to hide their obvious relationship.

D) Carlos and Dahlia kissing on the balcony, entranced in each other.

E) Carlos and Dahlia presenting art, this time acknowledging the relationship and fueling a competition for attention with the reporters. Despite the obvious quality of Dahlia's work, Carlos' still receives more attention.

F) Dahlia moving things into the Sera house, indicating her living with him.

G) Carlos and Dahlia receiving invitations to present pieces at an important art event.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

PRESS gathers and fills the glistening white halls of an art gallery. Many ARTISTS present their works across the hall, yet the press consistently moves forwards to the end.

We pan over to see Carlos and Dahlia at the end of the hall, two canvases still covered in sheets. In the wings, JUDGES sit with a large, game show-like check at their table.

DAHLIA WILKINS

(Whispering)

Hey, good luck.

CARLOS SERA

You too, not that you need it.

Sera looks over at the check. For a brief moment the confident artist is gone and the poor teenage boy is glimpsed in his eyes.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

Besides, it's not like anyone else is gonna win, and it's just gonna go to us anyways no matter if it's you or me.

DAHLIA WILKINS

True, we got this.

WE ZOOM OUT as the two unveil their paintings.

Dahlia's is stunning. The style of her original portraits and all that followed advanced to the next level. A blisteringly beautiful portrait of a young girl in an empty home, pictures of her parents foregrounded on a desk.

Carlos' is a nice-looking work... but nowhere near Dahlia's or even much of his previous work. Nothing more than a nice landscape with another mythological figure. Nothing eye-catching about it. And the press *notices*.

Reporters, for the first time, dismiss Carlos' work. The judges look upon his portrait with apathy, while showing amazement at Dahlia's. The press flocks to her as well, declaring it her best work and one that easily eclipses Sera's.

As Carlos' expression becomes colder, that teenage boy showing through once more, the judges hand the check to Dahlia, who is ecstatic and beaming with pride.

She turns to Carlos. His expression changes swiftly to faux happiness. But as he turns away, her expression breaks. *She saw his face*. And he was *not* happy for her.

INT. TALK SHOW - NIGHT

Time passes, and WE SEE a television talk show. Dahlia, now dressed in new, fancier clothes than she's ever had and more made-up than ever, is sat talking to the HOST.

HOST

Your work really is remarkable. What it says about young women in the field, in our modern world in general, it's simply amazing.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Thank you. Truthfully I think I was only ever saying that much about myself.

HOST

A microcosm I'm sure. We're almost out of time here Dahlia, but I wanted to briefly address just how much you've managed to outshine your...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

HOST (V.O.)

Husband? Carlos Sera, whose work has begun to absolutely pale in comparison to yours.

The talk show is playing out on a smartphone screen. Carlos, looking considerably less lively than the last we saw him, watches and downs drink after drink.

INT. TALK SHOW - NIGHT

Dahlia gulps, clearly uncomfortable with the statement.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Well he's not my husband-

HOST

(Interrupting)

Sorry-

DAHLIA WILKINS

And I don't see it that way. Carlos is a wonderful artist who inspires me to constantly better my own work.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

HOST (V.O.)

Lately it seems like maybe you should be inspiring him more. You've outclassed him. What, does he not want to learn from a woman?

The sounds of a crowd chuckling come from Carlos' screen. Dahlia, uncomfortable, ever so briefly chuckles as well. Carlos clenches his fist, taking another drink from the bartender.

INT. TALK SHOW - NIGHT

DAHLIA WILKINS

No, it's really not like that.
Carlos has no problem with-

HOST

With his wi- sorry, girlfriend
making more money than him? I mean,
if I'm correct you recently bought
him a house. Sounds like you're the
one buying pretty things to impress
your partner.

DAHLIA WILKINS

No, that's not- I bought us a
house. Ours, both of us. And no,
he's fine with it.

HOST

I'm sure he is.

More chuckles. Dahlia becomes visibly upset and angry.

DAHLIA WILKINS

No-listen-it's just-. Look, yes
things are looking better for me
right now, and yeah, maybe he's in
a bit of a rut with his work but
he's not the kind of person you
think he is. He's not jealous that
I'm the better artist.

Dahlia almost catches herself on the last comment, but fails.
The host, showing his own sleaze, smirks.

HOST

Well it's a good thing he isn't.
Because you are.

CARLOS SERA (V.O.)

(Angry)

Yeah, such a 'rut' I'm in.

INT. SERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Carlos stumbles, drunk, in the couple's new home. Dahlia,
still unpacking from her interview, just sighs exhausted.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Yeah, and such an un-jealous
partner to listen in on the whole
show.

CARLOS SERA

God forbid I want to support my girlfriend and listen to her interviews.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Cut it Carlos, you listened in to hear what they had to say about you. Not anything they were saying about me.

Carlos is taken aback, but recovers as they move into the next room.

CARLOS SERA

Alright yeah, I listened because I wanted to hear what pretentious tools like him were gonna say about me, about us. And because I wanted to hear how you would defend me. Laughing at me and mocking my "rut" of art wasn't exactly what I imagined.

Dahlia sets down her last bag, and snaps back.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Well you are in a rut Carlos! The judges were right, you lost all originality after, what, the fifth Greek goddess with her breasts out?

CARLOS SERA

And there it is! You said it there, you're acknowledging it here. You didn't defend me because you think you're a better artist than me.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Well I AM A BETTER ARTIST THAN YOU, *MISTER SERA!*

Carlos steps back. That frail teenage boy is there again, shaking with rage and insecurity.

CARLOS SERA

You only have all this because of me. I helped you get here-

DAHLIA WILKINS

I was a better artist than you when we met too. You even said it.

(MORE)

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
Maybe you forgot that part, where I
painted something really good and
you pandered to pervy guys?

CARLOS SERA
You never got into any exhibitions
not guaranteed by a professor
before we were together.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Well thanks for explaining exactly
the problem with this world. You
know, that host was a jackass. But
he's right about you. And if you
have such a problem with all of
this-

She gestures to the house around them.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
Then you can leave.

She points to the door. Carlos storms out.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Dahlia laughs, presenting a new stunning piece of art to a crowd. Carlos isn't there. Instead several artists, some handsome MALE ARTISTS included, crowd her and chat with her. Some are a little touchy, though she doesn't encourage their advances.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Carlos drinks once more, even more disheveled.

FEMALE VOICE
Ohmygod, are you Carlos Sera?

Carlos turns to a FANGIRL, excited and bubbly.

FANGIRL
You are! I am such a fan. Those
idiots in the news, they don't know
what they're talking about. What's
the problem with you wanting to
draw sexy women? So much better
than those frizzy-haired frumpy
tomboys your ex painted.

CARLOS SERA
Thanks, but she's not-

Carlos looks at her a moment.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)
Ah never mind. Just, thanks.

He tries to turn back towards his drink but she grabs his arm.

FANGIRL
Look, my friends would kill me if I didn't like, try to get your number, or give you mine. Just, if you ever want to show off to some people who really appreciate you, or just *me*, give me a call, okay?

She seductively slides a note with her number on it into his pocket, and leaves.

Carlos stares at his drink for a bit, looks at his phone to see several missed messages from Dahlia. He leaves the bar clutching the note.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

He steps out of the bar turning left before stopping. Suddenly WE SEE their first meeting again. Carlos crumples the note up, tosses it away, and turns the other way.

INT. SERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Carlos comes home, no cars in the driveway.

CARLOS SERA
Dahl? Dahlia?

Silence.

On the counter, a note. Carlos picks it up, and reads.

DAHLIA WILKINS (V.O.)
Dear Carlos. When you read this, I will have moved my stuff out of the house. While you've been staying away, I've tried to sleep here. I can't. I said I bought this house for us, but you were the one who cared about feeling richer. I liked our old apartment. You were the one who kept looking at other places. So I'm leaving you the house.
(MORE)

DAHLIA WILKINS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Maybe one day I'll be back there,
but that's up to you. I've tried to
handle the jealousy, the drinking,
everything. But all my presence
does is enable it. On the back of
this, I have the contact
information for the local
Alcoholics Anonymous. If you go, if
you try to get sober, then we'll
talk. But right now... I need a
break Carlos. And if you can't
accept that, or you don't go...
we're done.

Carlos clenches the note up in this fist. Angry, but tears
streaming down his face. He yells, and throws the note across
the room. He just starts breaking stuff in the house. Until,
panting and sweating, he falls unconscious upon the couch.

EXT. THE SLUMS - NIGHT (DREAM)

Carlos stares at a visage of Dahlia with a MALE ARTIST
friend, wedding rings on their fingers. They kiss in the rain
before they vanish. And all that's left around Carlos is the
slums.

INT. SERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Carlos' eyes open, just barely.

CARLOS SERA

I have to stop...

INT. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETING - EVENING

Time passes again, and we see Carlos, now fairly cleaned up,
in a room surrounded by RECOVERING ADDICTS, chatting with
each other. The SPONSOR moves to Carlos, and pats him on the
shoulder as he hands him something.

SPONSOR

Congrats man. And good luck.

He winks and we see what he handed Carlos: A token that
indicates that by now, Carlos has been sober for six months.
Carlos nods, and breathes in anxiously.

EXT. SERA HOUSE - EVENING

Carlos pulls into his driveway, and sees a car much more expensive than his own. He steps out of the car and goes inside.

INT. SERA HOUSE - EVENING

Dahlia jolts up from the living room couch as she hears the door open. She's dressed eloquently. The room around her has been cleaned up considerably.

Carlos enters the living room. He looks at Dahlia like it's the first time he's ever looked at her. His lips quiver.

CARLOS SERA

I uh... Hi.

Dahlia, holding back some emotion herself restrains a smile.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Hi.

Carlos blinks, clearing some moisture from his eyes.

CARLOS SERA

I... I've thought about this moment for six months. I just... I don't know if I was ready.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Well maybe we don't have to talk tonight, I could come back to-

CARLOS SERA

Please, no.

His rushed response startles her. She steps back.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

DAHLIA WILKINS

It's alright, I'm just jumpy.

CARLOS SERA

No, I mean...

Carlos steps back, composing himself a little.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

He emphasizes the last word. Dahlia's anxiety fades, replaced by something equal parts longing and hurt.

DAHLIA WILKINS

I'm gonna need more than that.

Carlos moves over to a chair and sits down. He gathers his thoughts.

CARLOS SERA

I grew up with nothing. My dad couldn't hold a job. Only thing he could hold was a bottle. My mom... she worked for us for everything. But... she said she wouldn't have a deadbeat son. I was gonna get a 'real' job. I... I was no good with numbers. Or history. Or anything she expected. She told me I'd end up just like him.

Dahlia moves closer to Carlos, but still keeps her distance. Carlos takes out his six month token.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

When I got into an art class I had to hide it from her. She found out anyway, kicked me out. I had to stay with one of my teachers for most of my last year. When I got my scholarship... It was the most money I'd ever seen. Nobody other than the teachers really cared about my art before then, when I was poor. When I had the money, when I cleaned up, when I looked like I fit in... everyone saw me.

Dahlia sits on the arm of the couch, across from Carlos' chair.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

All the guys looked up to me. The girls loved me... I felt rich. And then I met you. And as soon as I met you, I felt poor again. For the first time since I got that scholarship, I wanted something.

He stops to breathe a little.

DAHLIA WILKINS

There was a time when I would've killed for that scholarship.

(MORE)

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)

You're not the only one who grew up poor. At least you had someone who got you an 'in'. I didn't have a teacher like that. All I had were people telling me that the only thing I needed to be good at was 'finding a good man'.

CARLOS SERA

Which you're aware you failed at.

They chuckle a bit, the air lightened a bit.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

I don't know when. But at some point I stopped drawing, stopped painting, for me. I started doing it for the scholarship money. I started doing it to impress people. I started doing it to impress you. Because even that day in the lecture hall, I knew you were better than me. Because you weren't doing it for anyone else. I think... I think I forgot how to draw something from the heart. The only thing I've painted since you left...

He looks over at a canvas at the edge of the room. The very canvas we opened on. Dahlia looks over at it before holding her head down.

DAHLIA WILKINS

I uh... I saw.

CARLOS SERA

It's not even that good.

Dahlia looks up.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

It's honest to how I felt but... somewhere along the way I only got good at drawing the same thing. Because it's what people liked. And I think I lost that part of myself, because I lost you. I am a deadbeat. Just like my mom said.

Tears well in both of their eyes. Dahlia rubs some tears away.

DAHLIA WILKINS
I love you.

Carlos' head perks up.

CARLOS SERA
Dahlia I-

DAHLIA WILKINS
I'm not there yet.

Carlos restrains himself a bit.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
Not a drop, okay?

CARLOS SERA
Of course, I'm sober now.

DAHLIA WILKINS
I don't just mean alcohol.

She motions over to the canvas.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
You say your art is driven by
attention, that you stopped being
able to do it just for you? Then
don't do it at all. You ever regain
that spark, and I'll be there for
you. But you start just to start?
Then nothing's really changed.

CARLOS SERA
Yeah, I can do that.

They both lean back a bit.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)
What now?

DAHLIA WILKINS
You hungry?

Carlos smiles.

PRESENTER (O.S.)
Now presenting, Mister and Missus
Carlos Sera!

INT. WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

More time has passed, and the couple steps out into a packed dance floor. Dahlia in a beautiful wedding dress, Carlos in a dashing tuxedo. The two spin onto the dance floor.

Some of the male artists Dahlia worked with look on with clear envy. Some other GUESTS, in suits, toast to Carlos. His coworkers. The happy couple stare into each other's eyes as they dance, filled with joy.

INT. SERA HOUSE - NIGHT

We cut to Dahlia asleep in their bed. A shadow moves in the background. We see Carlos getting up and going into the kitchen for a glass of water. He turns back towards the bedroom, but then turns towards the living room, where a blank canvas sits in the corner.

Carlos sets down the glass and moves to the canvas, sitting down and grabbing a brush. But he only hovers it above the canvas. He stares at it, as if waiting for something to appear. But nothing does. He squints his eyes...

INT. SERA HOUSE - DAY

And jolts back away at a touch on the shoulder.

DAHLIA WILKINS

I missed you this morning.

CARLOS SERA

Sorry, I came out here last night for some water and I just...

He looks back at the canvas. Still blank, though paint has dripped off of the brush to his shirt. Carlos rubs his eyes.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)

I wanted to paint you something. I just... I couldn't think of anything and-

DAHLIA WILKINS

You're not supposed to start just to start.

CARLOS SERA

Exactly.

Dahlia rubs his shoulders.

DAHLIA WILKINS
It'll happen when it happens. When
it does, I'll be here.

Dahlia moves away and Carlos begins staring at the canvas.

INT. SERA HOUSE - MONTAGE OF SHOTS

We see Carlos at the canvas in a montage, days and nights, across a couple months. Sometimes in casual wear, sometimes in office clothes, sometimes with Dahlia painting next to him, sometimes with Dahlia rubbing his shoulders. Dahlia looks increasingly concerned.

INT. SERA HOUSE - MORNING

Carlos is once again staring at the canvas, when he hears a retching sound. Carlos puts down the brush and bolts over to the bathroom. He knocks softly on the door.

CARLOS SERA
Dahl? You alright.

Another retching sound, followed by coughing and wheezing, Carlos opens the door worried.

He sees Dahlia on the ground clutching the toilet.

CARLOS SERA (CONT'D)
Dahl...

He kneels next to her.

DAHLIA WILKINS
I'm alright. Must've just gotten
some food poisoning from leftovers.
I'll be fi-

She starts coughing again, sending her into more vomiting. Carlos gently strokes her back and holds her hair out of her face.

CARLOS SERA
I think we should go see a doctor.

Dahlia whips her head up.

DAHLIA WILKINS
No, I'm okay really. Besides, I've
got a gallery.

She stands up and walks over Carlos.

CARLOS SERA

Dahlia-

INT. GALLERY - DAY

Dahlia stands next to a covered canvas, and once again begins coughing. Carlos, worried, stands next to her.

CARLOS SERA

Dahlia, I really think we need to get this checked out.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Fine, we'll go after this. Alright?

CARLOS SERA

Okay.

Carlos stands back and lets Dahlia walk up to present. She's handed a microphone.

DAHLIA WILKINS

Thank you all for coming. For tonight's piece I... I...

Her vision blurs and she begins to fall down. Carlos rushes to catch her as the mic hits the ground and blares into the PA system. A PRESENTER grabs it off the ground.

CARLOS SERA

Okay no, we're-

DAHLIA WILKINS

Take me to the hospital.

CARLOS SERA

Yeah.

Carlos rushes Dahlia out as the presenter makes excuses.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Carlos paces back and forth while Dahlia looks at him from the hospital bed. A DOCTOR comes in.

DOCTOR

Well, we got some results.

CARLOS SERA

What's going on, is she alright?
What's-

DAHLIA WILKINS
Carlos, honey. Calm down.

Carlos sits down.

DOCTOR
Missus Sera... you're pregnant.

Carlos' entire expression changes. Anxiety become surprise,
become joy, become worry.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Pregnant?

Dahlia laughs.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
Oh that explains so much.

She looks over at Carlos, both equal parts worried and happy.
The Doctor's expression though is still quite serious. Carlos
clocks it.

CARLOS SERA
Is there... there's something else?

The Doctor clears their throat.

DOCTOR
You have a medical condition Missus
Sera. Your uterus... it's not...

The Doctor breathes in.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
There's a very big risk to you if
you go through with it. There's a
not insignificant chance you
wouldn't survive childbirth. And
not just for this child, but for
any.

The Doctor sits down and explains the condition as we zoom
out.

INT. CAR - EVENING

DOCTOR (O.S.)
If I were you... I wouldn't risk
it.

Carlos drives with Dahlia solemnly, in silence.

DAHLIA WILKINS
What do you think?

CARLOS SERA
It's your choice.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Carlos...

CARLOS SERA
Look, I always wanted children. But
I can't lose you...

She looks over to Carlos. He wipes his eyes.

INT. SERA HOUSE - MORNING

Dahlia wakes up, noticing an empty spot next to her on the bed. She goes into the living room and finds Carlos asleep in the chair by the canvas. She goes to kiss his forehead, but then sees the canvas.

For the first time in years, there's something on it. A painting, different than anything Carlos has ever painted. A simple, pastel painting of Carlos and Dahlia holding a radiant baby girl.

Dahlia smiles and begins tearing up, before looking down at her stomach. We hear a faint heart-beat. And then, a heart monitor as we zoom in on the canvas.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

We zoom in to see it's real. Carlos holding their beautiful baby girl in his arms. He's happy, but strained as well. He hears a cough from behind and suddenly all joy fades.

He turns towards Dahlia, frail and zombie-like in the bed. The heart monitor keeps beeping faster. Nurses crowd around her. Carlos brings the baby over to her, and she holds her in her arms, tears streaming down her face.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Hi there precious. It's so good to
finally see you.

She darts her eyes to Carlos, who feigns a smile. She refocuses on her daughter.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
I love you so much Bailey. We are
always gonna be there for you. And
no matter what my love, you-

She starts coughing again. The machine beeps louder. More
nurses come over and the Doctor comes back in, frantic.

DAHLIA WILKINS (CONT'D)
You were worth it-

Dahlia starts wheezing uncontrollably, handing BAILEY back to
her father. Carlos takes her as the nurses rush him out of
the room. The baby begins to wail.

Carlos holds her and paces outside, not looking in as sounds
get worse. Trying to comfort her with soothing whispers, but
she keeps wailing. At the sound of a flatline, so is Carlos.

BLACK

"FOUR YEARS LATER"

EXT. PRE-SCHOOL - DAY

Carlos, noticeably older arrives at a pre-school in the
afternoon. Dressed in office clothes, both the poor kid and
eccentric artist are gone. For a brief moment, it seems as
though life is gone from his eyes. And then-

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
DADDY!

BAILEY SERA, now four years-old, runs up into her father's
arms, and the life is back.

CARLOS SERA
Oh hi Baby Girl. Did you have fun
at school today?

BAILEY SERA
Yeah!

He begins carrying her back to the car and opens the door,
and buckles her into her car seat.

BAILEY SERA (CONT'D)
I made you something!

Carlos looks up at her, smiling and puzzled.

CARLOS SERA
You did?

BAILEY SERA
Yeah, is in my ba-pack.

Carlos opens her backpack and finds a crumpled up piece of paper. On it are the words "my daddy" and a picture of him. It's certainly the work of a pre-schooler, but it's not dissimilar from Dahlia's art style. Carlos chokes up.

BAILEY SERA (CONT'D)
Why are you crying?

Carlos smiles.

CARLOS SERA
Your Mommy and I used to draw together.

BAILEY SERA
You draw? Mommy too?

CARLOS SERA
Yeah.

BAILEY SERA
I wanna see.

CARLOS SERA
You do?

BAILEY SERA
Yeah! I wanna draw like Mommy an you!

Carlos rubs his eyes and kisses his daughter on the forehead before closing the car door.

INT. SERA HOUSE - DAY

Carlos shows Bailey several of his and Dahlia's paintings, including the painting from the opening.

CARLOS SERA
I used to draw your Mommy all the time.

DAHLIA WILKINS
You don't draw anymore?

CARLOS SERA
No. I could only draw your Mommy,
and that made me sad.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Can I see Mommy?

Carlos looks at his daughter. There's a slight sad expression on her face. Carlos hugs her, wiping tears from his eyes.

CARLOS SERA
I'll draw the three of us, okay.

DAHLIA WILKINS
Yeah!

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

We skip forwards yet another two years. Carlos, showing his age, leads Bailey, now a six year-old, through a makeshift gallery made for all the art kids.

A TEACHER presents a few other kids' pieces before getting to Carlos and Bailey. Bailey looks up at her father, nervous. Carlos kneels down and puts a hand on his daughter's shoulder.

CARLOS SERA
You're gonna do great Baby Girl.

He kisses her forehead and she goes forwards to present.

BAILEY SERA
I painted me, and my daddy, and my
mommy. This is my family.

She uncovers the canvas, a painting not entirely unlike the one we opened on. Only there is only one canvas in the painting, shared by representations of Carlos and Bailey. On that canvas is Dahlia. Bailey's skill, even at six years-old, is astounding, and taking very much after her mother.

We see Carlos, beaming with pride and tears in his eyes.

We zoom in on the painting, into Dahlia's face as we...

FADE TO BLACK.