

ACT 1

BLACK SCREEN.

MARA (V.O.):
They say an artist dies twice.

Beat.

1. INT. STAGE - DAY

Mara, 17, steps into the stage's spotlight, dressed in black and looking wistfully out to empty rows of chairs where an audience should be. Despite her young age, she has a distinctly fatigued look in her eyes, with slightly unkempt hair tussling down her shoulders.

Everything in sight, including Mara, is monochrome in a 4:3 aspect ratio.

MARA (CONT'D):
I didn't realise the first time would
be so painful.

Title up:

IN COLOUR

2. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

A younger, more spritely Mara, weaves through scattered dancers in the studio, bringing her arms into second and posing almost triumphantly.

MARA (V.O.):
Dance used to be my entire world,
entire universe, even.

3. INT. CORNER OF THE DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara bends over in the corner, meticulously tying up her pointe shoes. Clearly, this is a familiar routine, one that she draws great comfort from, even.

MARA (CONT'D):
Day in,

4. INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT. FLASHBACK.

Mara is alone in the darkened studio, improvising in the

centre. Initially, her arms flail aimlessly, abandoning balletic grace with movements more similar to that of a duck out of water. However, she soon settles into the rises and falls of the music, brimming with passionate elegance.

MARA (CONT'D):

Day out.

5. INT. DANCE STUDIO - VARIOUS TIMES. FLASHBACK.

We see the clock in the dance studio, jumping from 8am, to 12pm, to 8pm.

MARA (CONT'D):

morning, noon and night,

6. INT. CHANGING ROOMS - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara winces at bruises and blisters on her feet as she begins to put on toe pads.

MARA (CONT'D):

Come pain,

7. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Squealing with joy, Mara runs towards her dance friends, hugging them and jumping around, almost as if they were children rather than young adults.

MARA (CONT'D):

Or jubilation, I was there, in that studio.

Beat.

8. INT. STAGE - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara dances with a group of dancers on stage; it is clear that there is no passion behind her eyes, almost as if the jubilation of girlhood had been snatched from her grasp. Aerial "Don't Worry Darling" shot as dancers turn.

MARA (CONT'D):

But now my heart no longer races when the music starts to play.

Beat.

9. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT. FLASHBACK.

Scrolling mindlessly through pictures of poised ballerinas on her camera roll, Mara's eyes sink.

MARA (CONT'D):

The suffocating pressure of perfection
makes my heart ache,

10. INT. MEDICAL EXAMINING ROOM - DAY. FLASHBACK.

A physiotherapist stretches Mara's legs out as she lies on an examining table, wincing softly.

MARA (CONT'D):

The extent of the physical exertion
transformed my limbs into lifeless
nothings,

11. INT. STAGE - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara stands at the side of a stage in full costume, looking towards the dance being performed. Her hands tremble slightly, prompting a sharp inhale of breath.

MARA (CONT'D):

The shadow of self doubt watches over
me like an old friend. And I can't
remember the last time a dance truly
moved me.

Beat.

12. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT. FLASHBACK.

Mara sits in her desk's dim light, writing unintelligibly across pieces of paper until her places her head in her hands. Her eyes instantaneously slip shut as her mind begins to surrender itself.

MARA (CONT'D):

My lack of focus,

13. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara engages in a yelling match with a dance teacher, although is soon overpowered by his authority. Although it isn't clear how the argument came into fruition, the arrogance of her teacher's gestures suggest this isn't an unfamiliar battle.

MARA (CONT'D):
Tears behind the barre

14. INT. DANCE STUDIO - EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Curled up in the corner of the studio beneath the barre, Mara sobs into her knees, shoulders heaving with the exertion.

MARA (CONT'D):
in a darkened studio,

15. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara turns rapidly in the studio, perfectly spotting until suddenly, something catches her eye. She falls out of her turn, panting and disheartened.

MARA (CONT'D):
Trembling in the spotlight with my
heart beat pulsing slowly in my ears,
until suddenly...

Beat.

BLACK SCREEN.

MARA (CONT'D):
...I snapped. I had to accept that all
things eventually come to an end

Beat.

ACT 2

16. INT. STAGE - DAY

We return to Mara in the spotlight. An overbearing shadow appears behind her, projected on to the stage wall. It appears almost as if it is a monster reaching for her, childhood fear epitomised.

MARA (CONT'D):

I didn't realise it would be this
painful.

Mara gradually turns her head towards the side of the stage, until a pointe shoe piques her interest: it is in colour against the monochrome setting.

Intrigued, yet confused, Mara creeps towards the shoes to put them away.

MARA

(tutting as she strolls over, to
herself)

God, who has left these here?
Honestly, always bloody picking up
other people's s-

She is interrupted by the sight of a blue leotard, draped over a chair side of stage.

MARA

(to herself)

What on Earth...

Mara walks back on to the stage, squinting in the harsh glare of the spotlight.

MARA

(holding her hand over her eyes)

Bridge? Bridge!

Bridge, a close friend of Mara's, turns her head. Although she is a similar age to Mara, she appears to be younger, have more youthful argor behind her eyes. A silver raven necklace adorns her chest.

BRIDGE

(from beneath the stage)

Yeah?

MARA

Can you come over here a minute?

Bridge jogs up the side-of-stage stairs.

BRIDGE

What is it?

Mara walks towards the shoes and the leotard, pointing almost violently towards them. Her eyes lock with Bridge's, trying to communicate her thoughts almost telepathically as friends often do.

MARA

Look.

BRIDGE

What am I looking at?

MARA

(gesturing towards the coloured
objects)

The shoes, the leotard.

Bridge pulls a confused face.

MARA

Can't you see it?

BRIDGE

Of course I can see them.

MARA

No, no, that's not- can you see it?

BRIDGE

What do you mean by it? What exactly
am I supposed to be seeing again?

MARA

Oh for- don't worry.

Mara storms off down the side-of-stage stairs and towards the door, agitated and confused.

BRIDGE

(calling after Mara)

Wait, Mara, please wait a minute. Just
tell me what I'm supposed to be
looking at?

MARA
(voice fading)
Don't worry about it.

17. INT. CHANGING ROOMS - DAY

Mara bursts in the changing room, frenetically darting her gaze around for any glimpses of colour...

...her eyes suddenly locate a trophy, golden against the monochrome background.

More disturbed than ever, Mara dashes back out of the changing room, breath hitching and heart pounding.

18. INT. CHANGING ROOM CORRIDOR - DAY

(Intense, frantic music here)

Gradually, Mara's jog accelerates into a sprint, racing frantically down the hallway. The light begin to flicker in a horror esque manner, a visible manifestation of her own internal turmoil. (Inspired by: Kate Bush's "The Red Shoes")

19. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Throwing open the doors, Mara looks on the brink of tears. Her eyes dart around the studio, quickly catching on a stray black bowler hat tossed in the corner. Abruptly and involuntarily, her mind is cast back...

20. INT. STAGE - EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Tap dancing jubilantly, Mara places the same hat on her head. It is slightly slanted, casting ominous shadows across her grin. The apparent confidence of this Mara is incredibly far away from the acute fear she has now been reduced to. (Inspired by: Kate Bush's "The Red Shoes")

21. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Mara's eyes dart away from the hat and towards a green polaroid camera left on a studio table.

22. INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Grinning, giggling. Mara hugs Bridge as they pose for a picture with an identical polaroid camera. We hear slightly muffled voices, as if trying to recall a hazy memory.

DANCE TEACHER
 (squinting behind the polaroid)
 Say cheese!

MARA
 Cheese!

23. INT. DANCE STUDIO- DAY

Beneath the polaroid camera, Mara catches sight of a pair of ballet shoes.

24. INT. STAGE- EVENING. FLASHBACK.

We track Mara's feet, wearing the same ballet shoes. She poses, arms elegantly placed in en couronne, gazing out into the audience as the sound of claps begins to escalate.

25. INT. DANCE STUDIO- DAY

Mara sinks to the floor, overwhelmed by the extensive flashbacks filling her mind. Heads in hands, her mind is cast back to memories we have seen in Act 1. Each flashback is crosscut with increasingly tight shots of Mara's face, crumpled up in fear.

26. INT. DANCE STUDIO - EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Curled up in the corner of the studio beneath the barre, Mara sobs into her knees, shoulders heaving with the exertion.

MARA (V.O.):
 (slightly muffled)
 Tears behind the barre in a darkened studio.

27. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT. FLASHBACK.

Scrolling mindlessly through pictures of poised ballerinas on her camera roll, Mara's eyes sink.

28. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara turns rapidly in the studio, perfectly spotting until suddenly, something catches her eye. She falls out of her turn, panting and disheartened.

MARA (V.O.):
 (slightly muffled)
 The suffocating pressure of perfection makes my heart ache.

29. INT. STAGE - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara dances with a group of dancers on stage; it is clear that there is no passion behind her eyes, almost as if the jubilation of girlhood had been snatched from her grasp. Aerial "Don't Worry Darling" shot as dancers turn.

MARA (V.O.):
(slightly muffled)
I had to accept that all things
eventually come to an end.

30. INT. STAGE - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara stands at the side of a stage in full costume, looking towards the dance being performed. Her hands tremble slightly, prompting a sharp inhale of breath.

31. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Clearly, Mara is at breaking point, her mind swimming with chaotically overlapping visions and voices...

...suddenly, a moment of catharsis. The muscles in her face relax as a weight appears to physically lift off of her shoulders.

32. INT. HALLWAY - DAY. FLASHBACK.

Mara runs towards Bridge, dressed in dance wear, and flings herself into Bridge's arms; their embrace oozes unadulterated love.

33. INT. STAGE - EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Applause erupts as Mara dances towards the front of the stage, pridefully bowing. This, is her time.

34. INT. SIDE OF STAGE - EVENING. FLASHBACK.

Mara and Bridge hold the trophy seen in an earlier scene together, cheering as they hoist it above their heads. Abandoning any semblance of prior balletic primness,

35. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Mara's eyes remain closed, struggling to comprehend the intensity of her visions.

MARA (V.O.):
Maybe it doesn't have to be so
painful.

Suddenly, her eyes open: tear-stained, yet softened.

ACT 3

36. INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Silence. Mara still sits, crumpled in the corner of the studio.

Gradually, gently, her limbs unfold as she hoists herself to her feet. Making her way to the door, the slight spring in her step we had only seen in flashbacks begins to return.

37. INT. STAGE - DAY

Side of stage, Mara slips on dirt-stained ballet shoes; any prior hand trembles have now dissipated. She types something into a laptop, presses play, and steps on to the empty stage.

Moving classical music begins to play. Mara positions herself to begin, and sways her arms in conjunction with tentative leg movements. As much as she tries to unshackle herself from her mind's insecurities, she can't quite let go, melt into the melody as she once could...

... however, as the music swells, chords crescendo, every step Mara takes gradually becomes more fluid as muscle memory overtakes self doubt. Her movements become more expressive, natural, begin to ooze passion as they once did.

As the melody builds to its climax and Mara's dance intensifies, the cramped 4:3 aspect ratio expands into wide screen and the monochrome mise-en-scene fades into colour: finally, her passion has been reignited.

By now, Mara has been completely overtaken by this childlike passion. For a moment, she is at peace, self doubt silenced.

As the music comes to a close, Mara dances gracefully towards the front of the stage. She places her arms triumphantly in second as a grin plays across her face; this is starkly reminiscent of an earlier flashback.

The melody fades, as Mara looks out beyond the camera.

MARA (V.O.):

They say an artist dies twice.

Beat.

MARA (CONT'D):

Nobody ever mentioned that you can be reborn.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF FILM.