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Dance Academy

SERIES ONE

EPISODE 11
BLOCK 2

"One Perfect Day"

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INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 12

1

TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINE, FIRST YEAR GIRLS X 2, N/S STUDENTS (GIRLS), TARA (V.O)

Girls ballet class: Tara, Abigail and another two FIRST YEAR GIRLS are doing a pas de quarte. They are being watched over by Miss Raine who is focused completely on Tara.

Tara is concentrating so hard to get her feet right, that her shoulders are up and her neck is tense. She is dancing like a ballet bot, not like Tara.

TARA (V.O.)

On my sixth birthday I begged my parents to let me have a princess party.

MISS RAINE

(shouts)

Shoulders down, Tara!

TARA (V.O.)

For months I dreamt about my dress, the cake, all the presents I'd get.

MISS RAINE

Ribs, Tara. And get your head straight.

TARA (V.O.)

But when the day finally arrived I remember I spent most of it crying.

MISS RAINE

You're trying too hard. Don't dance apologetically.

TARA (V.O.)

It wasn't the party's fault - we'd borrowed the neighbour's pony and dad had decorated the backyard in pink streamers. The problem was me.

MISS RAINE

Tara!

TARA (V.O.)

No matter how good my party was, it couldn't match what I had in my head. That's the thing about expectations -- you're always going to be a little disappointed.

MISS RAINE

All right. Stop the music.

The music cuts and the girls stop dancing. Tara knows she's about to be demolished as Miss Raine stalks towards her.

MISS RAINE

I can't imagine why you'd think I'd want to watch that. Where's your artistry?

Tara tries to fight back tears. This is so unfair.

TARA

You keep on telling me to focus on my technique.

MISS RAINE

Surely it's possible to do more than one thing at a time?

A stray tear or two breaks free and rolls down Tara's face. Kat, lounging on the sidelines, stretches out a foot and with the tip of her pointe shoe nudges a box of tissues across the Tarkett towards Tara.

MISS RAINE

We've been here before. If you are going to cry you can leave the studio.

TARA

(stoic)
I'm not crying.

Miss Raine raises an eyebrow, then turns to the other girls.

MISS RAINE

I want you all to work to the mirror. Be critical. Expect the most from yourselves.

Tara wipes her tears away with the back of her hand and faces the mirror with the other girls. The girls prepare to lock arms again. Tara is grim faced. Miss Raine starts the music again.

The four dance facing the mirror. Abigail in particular seems to have a reaction. She catches sight of herself, forced into a position where two mirrors meet - splitting her reflection into two.

No-one else in the studio pays any attention to Abigail staring, staring, staring at her multiple reflections in the mirror.

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EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - DAY 12

2

ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S STUDENTS

Abigail and her ten-year-old sister, PAIGE stand on the kerb-side at the front of the school. Abigail waves at a departing car. Paige doesn't.

Abigail looks at Paige who makes a quotation marks sign.

PAIGE
Virtual hug.

ABIGAIL
Back at you.

Paige picks up her backpack and walks towards the entrance of the school. Abigail follows.

ABIGAIL
How come you're so late? I wanted you to watch Saturday class.

PAIGE
Mum's trying to miss her plane.

ABIGAIL
Dad would freak if she did.

PAIGE
Do you think?

Paige gives Abigail a don't-be-so-dumb look and keeps walking. Abigail has to speed up to catch her.

ABIGAIL
It's nice they're going away for the weekend. And we get to hang out.

She grins at her sister. Paige doesn't look quite so excited.

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EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - DAY 12

3

KAT, SAMMY, TARA, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S STUDENTS

Paige scans the faces of passing students as she walks. She seems to be looking for someone in particular.

ABIGAIL
So I've got permission for us to use the studio. It'll be good practice for when you audition.

PAIGE
I don't want to be a dancer anymore.

Abigail stops, surprised.

ABIGAIL

What? You've always wanted to - (be a dancer)

PAIGE

(distracted)

I'm going to be a gymnast instead.
Rhythmic.

Paige suddenly spots the person she has been looking for. Her face lights up with delight. She leaves Abigail's side without a thought and rushes towards the end of the wharf. Abigail has no choice but to follow.

Kat, Sammy and Tara stand on the end of the wharf. Sammy and Tara each hold a paper boat, decorated with paper flowers and incense sticks and containing one of Sammy's hated black pointe shoes. An MP3 player and speakers plays funeral music.

TARA

Any final words?

SAMMY

There is no curse too terrible.

Kat is almost knocked off her feet by Paige cannon-balling into her.

PAIGE

Kat!

Paige and Kat embrace. Abigail stands on the outer. This is the greeting she never got from Paige.

KAT

Podgey Paige you gorgeous thing.
Let me look at you.

Paige steps back for inspection.

PAIGE

No one calls me that anymore.

KAT

I can see why.

Paige grins, thrilled by the compliment. Sammy tries to include Abigail.

SAMMY

Your little sister?

PAIGE

Younger sister.

KAT

You're just in time for the
cremation of Samuel Lieberman's
hated pointe shoes.

ABIGAIL

We're actually on our way to the
boarding house.

Paige will tolerate no opposition.

PAIGE

Abigail, it's a funeral.

Sammy, Kat and Tara laugh and then can't quite believe it
when Abigail obeys. Sammy lowers his boat down onto the
water.

SAMMY

Okay. Farewell ye old enemy.
Unfortunately, I knew you well.

Tara hands her boat to Paige who lowers it into the water as
well. They all watch, almost a trifle sadly, as the pointe
shoes bob out towards the Harbour.

TARA

It's the end of an era.

KAT

You gotta hope they don't choke a
pelican.

EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 12

ETHAN, DANA, N/S STUDENTS

Ethan sits with Dana Strong, the dancer/choreographer who has
chosen Ethan to be part of her upcoming festival touring
piece.

ETHAN

So I don't know if you know but my
dad's a choreographer.

Ethan is deliberately underplaying it. Dana nods,
enthusiastically.

DANA

I did my Masters on him. I'm a fan.

ETHAN

Right. Well, see, his work - I want
to do the opposite.

Off Dana's look.

ETHAN

Don't get me wrong, he's a genius
but... his sensibility is about
emotion, I'm more into ideas.

Dana studies Ethan closely.

DANA

Great. Like what?

He leans forward, excitedly pitching what he wants to do.

ETHAN

I'm thinking a post-post modern
meditation on the nexus between
youth and technology.

Dana tries to be supportive but...

DANA

Okay...

ETHAN

I start with these kids who are
like obsessed with communication.
They're playing a video game but
they don't realise that the game is
actually -

DANA

Controlling them.

ETHAN

(stunned)
Wow. We're so on the same
wavelength.

DANA

No I saw something recently at a
festival.

Ethan looks momentarily set back. Dana considers how to
phrase her comments kindly.

DANA

Ethan, I don't want you to worry
about trying to impress me. I'm
already impressed, otherwise I
wouldn't be here.

ETHAN

So what is it you want -

DANA

(over)
Find some inspiration from life.
(MORE)

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CONTINUED:

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DANA (CONT'D)
Not what's clever. Something raw,
something stripped back. Real.

Ethan listens, transfixed. Dana taps Ethan's chest and holds his gaze.

DANA
Bring me what comes from in there.

Ethan can't work out whether Dana is challenging him or flirting with him, but he doesn't mind either way.

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EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - DAY 12

5

ABIGAIL, KAT, SAMMY, TARA, PAIGE, ETHAN, N/S STUDENTS

Tara, Kat and Sammy stand on the edge of the wharf. The funereal music is still playing, the shoes are long gone.

Abigail, obviously impatient with the whole thing, gestures for Paige to leave.

ABIGAIL
Paige, come on.

But Paige is too busy looking through her backpack. She pulls out a rhythmic gymnastic stick with a long red ribbon attached to the end.

PAIGE
I'm doing a ribbon dance, in
dedication to Sammy's shoes.

SAMMY
I'm honoured.

The others turn to look as Paige starts twirling her ribbon, she twists it up into simple shapes and loops.

KAT
Woo-hoo. Work it Paige.

ABIGAIL
Do you have to? We really need to
get going,

But Paige just grins and keep on swirling her long red ribbon. Tara's eyes light up in recognition.

TARA
I used to be the ribbon champion at
school.

PAIGE
You can have a go.

Tara jumps up and takes the ribbon from Paige. As she makes the ribbon jump and snake, Paige dances and twirls behind her, happy to let go of the ribbon but not quite ready to step out of the limelight.

KAT

(to Sammy)

Who do you reckon's older right now? Tara or Paige?

Sammy grins. Kat's right - as Tara dances in the sun she looks almost childlike, innocent. For her it's a relief to have some fun after the harrowing ordeal with Miss Raine that morning.

Ethan wanders by, pre-occupied by his conversation with Dana. Tara's ribbon catches his eye. He stops to watch. The ribbon dances against the brilliant blue of the harbour, Tara looks free and happy - real.

KAT

Ethan! You're up next.

Tara stops dancing, blushes bright red.

ETHAN

Another time.

Ethan takes one last look at Tara and continues on, now with a sense of purpose.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - NIGHT 12

TARA, ETHAN

In a series of jump cuts we see Tara struggling in the studio. It's late at night and only one or two of the lights are on. Moonlight streams through the window.

Tara faces up to the mirrors and makes attempt after attempt at the pas de quatre. She watches herself in the mirror, grim faced - her neck and shoulders are still stiff. Her bleak expression reflects the lack of joy she feels inside.

In exasperation, Tara swings her legs over the barre in the centre of the room and hangs upside down.

A pair of feet, appear between Tara and the mirror. They are attached to pair of legs, belonging to Ethan Karamakov. His face starts a long way up, then he squats down close to her.

ETHAN

Hey. Fruit bat.

Tara pretends this is the most natural situation in the world.

TARA

I've booked the studio until
nine...

ETHAN

I saw. I came to talk to you.

Tara's eyes widen - *he did?*

TARA

Oh. Right. Hang on.

Tara awkwardly struggles to extricate herself from the barre. Ethan steadies her as her feet come back to the floor. Her heart is beating out of control.

TARA

Hi.

ETHAN

Hi.

Ethan just studies her intently.

TARA

So...?

He gives her the Ethan Karamakov trademarked smile.

ETHAN

I need a dancer. For my mid-year
choreography assessment.

Tara's struggles to stay calm, tries to be sympathetic.

TARA

Oh did someone pull out? That's
terrible.

ETHAN

(grins)

No, no one pulled out. I'd be
creating it for you. It's a solo
piece.

Tara's most vivid fantasy is coming true. She stares.

ETHAN

I get it's a lot of work and late
notice. But I thought - any chance
you'd be interested?

TARA

Yes. I mean, I'm not un-interested.

Ethan grins again.

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CONTINUED:

6

ETHAN

Studio one. 10 am. Want me to help
you upside down again?

TARA

Upright's fine.

Tara waits until Ethan has left the studio before she remembers to breathe again. She does a little dance. Alive again - happy. As if a light has been turned on inside her.

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EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - DAY 13

7

NIL CAST

Establishing shot. The sun rises on the National Academy, announcing a new day.

8

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA'S ROOM - DAY 13

8

TARA, ABIGAIL, PAIGE

Abigail is on her pilates ball doing core exercises. Tara is tearing through her wardrobe, searching for something to wear.

ABIGAIL

A solo? For you? Is he going for
the raw amateur thing?

Tara looks up from her forage, holding a pile of leotards.

TARA

It's contemporary.

Paige enters, back from the bathroom.

TARA

And I am about to have the most
perfect day of my life and there is
nothing you can do to ruin it.

PAIGE

I think you'll be brilliant Tara.

TARA

Thanks Paige.

Abigail glances at her sister, still in her pyjamas.

ABIGAIL

You better get dressed. Today's
schedule is jam-packed. I've
organised us to watch the company
take class and then there's a tour
of the Opera House.

PAIGE
(sarcastic)
I can hardly wait.

Tara glances at Paige's reaction - she knows Abigail has invested a lot of time in organising this weekend. But Abigail doesn't notice her sister's nonplussed.

ABIGAIL
Want to come to the studio now and stretch with me?

PAIGE
I'm hungry.

Abigail admonishes her sister fondly.

ABIGAIL
You'll never make it as a gymnast if you don't stretch.

Paige flops back down onto her bed.

PAIGE
Did I say gymnast? I meant journalist. They don't stretch.

EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S STUDENTS

A substantial breakfast is laid out on a table in front of Kat, Sammy and Paige. Paige and Sammy play 'slaps'. Paige is winning.

Abigail arrives at the cafeteria. She looks almost nauseated when she looks at her sister's plate and sees pancakes covered in chocolate topping.

ABIGAIL
That's disgusting.

PAIGE
We're going to Luna Park.

KAT
You don't mind do you? Paige was crying child abuse that she's never been.

Abigail obviously does mind.

ABIGAIL
Actually, I've put a lot of work into organising this weekend and Luna Park wasn't -

Paige slaps Sammy's hand.

PAIGE
Too slow old man. Sammy's going to
come with us if I get him three
times in a row.

Sammy looks apologetically at Abigail.

SAMMY
No, I'm not. Exams are next week.
I've got a stack of study to - ow!

Paige has slapped him again.

PAIGE
That's twice.

Kat glances at Abigail.

KAT
I'm happy to Paige-sit if you want
to stay here.

Abigail observes Kat and Paige, sitting together.

ABIGAIL
I didn't say that.

Sammy glances up quickly.

SAMMY
Really. You're going?

Paige slaps him the third time and smiles.

PAIGE
Three times.

SAMMY
I guess someone better look after
you girls.

When the girls aren't watching he shakes his slapped hand in
pain.

Tara nervously slips into the studio.

She has dressed up in her ballet uniform. She has also put on
make-up and lip gloss.

She hovers for a moment, watching Ethan and Dana who are down the front, heads together, deep in conversation. He's talking her through a notebook of his ideas.

Both are in sloppy rehearsal gear and Tara is instantly self-conscious about her immaculate ballet uniform. She smooths the front of her leotard, feeling like a student.

Dana laughs at something Ethan says and glances over to the door, noticing Tara for the first time.

DANA
You must be Tara.

TARA
(nervous)
Hi.

ETHAN
All warmed up?

Tara isn't but doesn't want to tell them that.

TARA
Um... Yup. of course.

ETHAN
Great.

Ethan jumps down off the table and walks towards Tara.

ETHAN
Okay, I don't want get too literal but this piece is kind of about a girl who's caught between her two selves. Who she is now and who she's gonna be.

Tara fidgets. She's starting to feel like a piece of meat as they all look at her.

DANA
I like it. And, tell me, why did you cast Tara?

Tara thinks that's a very good question. Ethan studies her intently and smiles, charming.

ETHAN
Well she's only in first year so technically we're limiting what we can do. No offense.

Tara shakes her head - none taken.

ETHAN

But what she has is this quality.
Like the girl, when she's dancing
she's not self-conscious about
anything. She's free.

He looks up at Dana, completely confident in what he's doing. Beside him, Tara's face has paled, Ethan is saying what she's wanted to hear all semester but right now, when she's doubting her very ability to dance freely, this is the last thing she wants to hear. This is going to be tougher than she thought.

EXT. FERRY - DAY 13

KAT, ABIGAIL, SAMMY, PAIGE, N/S FERRY PASSENGERS

Kat, Abigail, Sammy and Paige are on the ferry to Luna Park.

Abigail is reading a map of the park.

ABIGAIL

Okay so after the Ranger, we go
over to the Dodgems. Then the
Flying Saucer, depending on how
we're doing for time.

She looks up. The others are not listening.

ABIGAIL

If we make a plan we'll be able to
maximise the day.

PAIGE

I want to stand in the middle, spin
around and go on whatever ride I
point at.

Abigail looks uncomfortable.

SAMMY

Fight the urge to control
everything. Be spontaneous.

ABIGAIL

(Cold)
It's overrated.

EXT. LUNA PARK/ENTRANCE - DAY 13

KAT, ABIGAIL, SAMMY, PAIGE, N/S PARK VISITORS

Sammy, Kat, Abigail and a very happy Paige walk into the park through the big mouth gate.

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EXT. LUNA PARK/SIDESHOWS - DAY 13

13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S SPRUIKER, N/S PARK VISITORS

Sammy and Kat have just come off a ride, Paige and Abigail are at the clowns. Abigail stands, holding her last ping-pong ball concentrating on the gaping mouth of the clown.

Kat pretends she can hear the clown speaking.

KAT

He's saying 'feed me'.

PAIGE

(clown voice)

Feed me.

Abigail moves the ball towards the clown's mouth, she wavers there as if she is unable to force it into the mouth.

KAT

It's totally random.

Abigail is irritated by Kat.

ABIGAIL

I know what I'm doing, alright.
It's just a matter of getting the
timing perfect.

She pops in the ball. It falls into the right slot. They all, including Abigail, jump and holler with excitement.

The CARNIVAL SPRUIKER gives Abigail a toy penguin. Abigail gives it to Paige who accepts it happily.

Abigail makes the quotation mark sign.

ABIGAIL

Virtual hug.

PAIGE

Right back at you.

For a moment, as they head off to the next activity, Abigail is one of the group, happy and easy.

Paige links her arm through Sammy's. He glances down startled. Paige gives him a look of big-eyed innocence.

PAIGE

I'm scared I might get lost.

Sammy looks momentarily uncomfortable but Paige just skips happily along beside him.

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EXT. LUNA PARK/BOARDWALK - DAY 13

14

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S EXTRAS

Sammy and Kat sit on the harbour wall. Abigail and Paige buy food in the distance.

SAMMY

Do you mind sitting next to Paige
on the next ride?

KAT

(sarcastic)
Why? You gonna declare your love to
Abigail, because my stomach's
already fragile after the Ranger.

SAMMY

(over)
It's not that it's... (*Paige*)

He subtly indicates Paige.

SAMMY

I think she might have a... crush
on me or something.

Kat bursts out laughing.

KAT

Get over yourself.

SAMMY

She's flirting with me.

KAT

She's ten.

Abigail and Paige arrive back. There is tension between them. Abigail has a mineral water. Paige has bought herself a stick of fairy-floss and a hot dog. She offers Sammy some fairy floss.

PAIGE

You want some?

SAMMY

No thanks. I'm good.

PAIGE

Go on.

He shoots Kat a look - see?

ABIGAIL

(snaps)
He doesn't want any Paige.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED:

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ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
It's full of processed sugar and if
you don't want to go back to being
Podge you shouldn't have any
either.

Paige's jaw tightens. Sammy and Kat exchange a look.

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OMITTED

15

16

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 13
TARA, ETHAN, DANA

16

Sweat is pouring off Tara as she executes a complicated series of steps. She's concentrating hard, keeping one eye on Ethan, who is keeping one eye on Dana.

She stops, struggling to catch her breath. But when she looks up to get Ethan's response - he's not even looking at her. Ethan speaks to Dana as if Tara is not even in the room.

ETHAN

What do you think? She could go
from a ronverse into a pas de
bouree and then back to the
attitude turns. Could make it more
fluid. (ADJUST)

DANA

I don't know. How does Tara feel
about that?

Ethan turns to Tara, his most charming self.

ETHAN

Sorry. My bad. Did you -

TARA

A ronverse into a pas de bouree
before the attitude turns. (ADJUST)

ETHAN

Perfect.

Tara concentrates and does the steps he's asked of her but there is nothing joyful about her dancing. Her teeth are gritted.

ETHAN

Wait.

Tara stops. Ethan walks up to her.

ETHAN

You're not really feeling it are
you?

TARA

Um. Well...

Ethan's aware Dana is watching him, tries to be kind to Tara.

ETHAN

Talk to me. This isn't class.

TARA

It's the attitude turns. Maybe...
Maybe I could do poses instead?

Ethan glances at his notebook.

ETHAN

Really? Not sure I can see that
working.

DANA

It might. Why doesn't Tara give it
a try?

Tara watches as Ethan flashes a smile in Dana's direction as if she's not even there.

ETHAN

You're brilliant. I'm so glad
you're here.

Tara can't believe it. Is he flirting with Dana?

EXT. LUNA PARK/MIRROR MAZE - DAY 13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S PARK PATRONS

Back in the park, Kat, Sammy and Paige play with the distorted mirrors. Sammy finds a mirror that extends him lengthways.

SAMMY

Apparently I'm due for a growth
spurt.

Paige is looking at a mirror made of ripples. She leans in and puckers her lips, slightly provocatively.

PAIGE

Hey Sammy.

Sammy is not sure what to think. He half smiles.

KAT (O.S.)

Check this out. Mr Penguin's eating
his own head.

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CONTINUED:

17

Abigail catches sight of herself in a fat mirror. She turns to face it front on. She is huge, but she finds it fascinating rather than repellent.

Sammy watches Abigail.

Abigail remains riveted to the spot - still staring at herself in the fat mirror.

SAMMY

What are you looking at?

Abigail comes out of her dream.

ABIGAIL

Nothing.

Sammy takes in the image of themselves in the fat mirrors. They're grotesque.

SAMMY

Imagine if we were actually like that.

ABIGAIL

Hmmmm.

She can't tell him that's exactly how she sees herself.

18

EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 13

18

TARA, ETHAN, DANA, N/S STUDENTS

Lunch break. Tara sits at a table with Ethan. As he talks, he is on he lookout for a sign of Dana.

ETHAN

Can you believe that we are working with Dana Strong? There she is.

Ethan stands up when he sights Dana arriving at the cafe. He waves to her.

ETHAN

Dana! Over here.

Dana waves at him, but she's on her mobile, preoccupied. She sits down at different table and takes out her laptop.

ETHAN

She's incredible, isn't she.

TARA

Uh-huh.

Tara studies Ethan, realising that he's fallen for Dana hard. She considers how she should tell Ethan she doesn't think Dana feels the same way.

TARA

You know with choreography, how you plan out everything in advance?

Ethan continues to watch Dana as he eats - not really hearing Tara.

ETHAN

Yeah?

TARA

I used to think that if I did that with my life, sort of visualised every moment, then I could make it happen the way I wanted it to.

Ethan forgets to look at Dana and starts properly listening to Tara.

ETHAN

Are we talking specifics or...

She stops for a moment and then takes the plunge.

TARA

I guess it's like... having a crush on someone. You imagine every moment - what you'll say, what they'll say - you even give it a soundtrack. And then you find yourself chasing some poor guy around because since it happens one way in your head, you can't understand it may not turn out like that in real life.

It took courage to say that. Ethan looks at her. Really looks at her.

ETHAN

At least it's honest. Putting how you feel out there. Can't say that about a lot of people.

TARA

Yeah. It's a personality winner.

Ethan laughs.

ETHAN

Sorry if my head's all messed up today.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

It's just so rare that you can
really talk to someone, you know?
Like you're on the same level.

Ethan looks into Tara's eyes, passionate. She blinks - is he talking about her?

TARA

Yeah. It is.

ETHAN

(about Dana)

She's incredible isn't she?

Tara follows his gaze and realises he still means Dana. He hasn't heard a thing she's said.

TARA

Yup. She's perfect.

EXT. FERRY - DAY 13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S FERRY PASSENGERS

Travelling back home on the ferry, Abigail is sitting on a bench seat by herself. Sitting across the aisle from her is Sammy, Kat and Paige. Paige points to an anonymous building on the shore line.

PAIGE

What's that building out there?

SAMMY

Well let me see. We call that the
short green building.

Paige laughs at everything Sammy says.

ABIGAIL

Paige, come over this side. You can
see the Harbour Bridge.

PAIGE

Boring. As if I haven't seen that a
zillion times.

Abigail is stung by Paige's rejection. She watches as Paige hits Sammy with the toy penguin.

ABIGAIL

Stop bugging Sammy.

SAMMY

It's fine.

ABIGAIL

Don't be polite. She's been acting inappropriately all day.

Paige is embarrassed by Abigail's criticism.

PAIGE

Oooh big word. You know, Dad used to call Abigail "Night Light". Because she's not too bright.

ABIGAIL

It's nauseating, watching a ten-year-old behave like that.

Without skipping a beat, Paige continues to entertain the others.

PAIGE

And then once she forged a note to get out of sport and signed it "Abigail's mother".

KAT

I remember. It was a work of pure genius!

Kat and Sammy chuckle - until they get a glimpse of Abigail's face. She's obviously hurt.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 13

TARA, ETHAN, DANA

Tara is struggling her way through Ethan's complicated series of steps. She looks exhausted, her shoulders are tense.

ETHAN

Stop showing me the steps.

Tara keeps trying, grimacing as she begins the attitude turns.

ETHAN

Relax your upper body. That's still too stiff. Tara!

He yells and she falls out of the turn, completely frustrated, near tears.

TARA

I'm sorry. I can't do what you're asking.

Ethan flicks off the stereo. Flashes Dana a smile.

ETHAN

Hang on a second.

He walks towards Tara, smile dying fast.

ETHAN

(under his breath)

What's with you? You're like a robot out there.

TARA

(under her breath)

I know. I'm trying.

ETHAN

(under his breath)

To what? Prove a point? I cast you for a reason. We can't just keep going over it.

Tara is becoming furious.

TARA

(under her breath)

I said I'm trying.

At that moment Dana comes up and touches Ethan on the arm. He stops at her touch and turns to her, smiles instantly.

DANA

Is there a problem?

ETHAN

No. No problem. Right Tara?

He eyeballs Tara, daring her to contradict him. Tara is seething but after a moment shakes her head.

ETHAN

Sorry about that. Going again.

Directed to Dana, not Tara. As Ethan flicks on the stereo, Tara takes her opening position yet again, struggling to keep her temper.

EXT. CIRCULAR QUAY - DAY 13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, PAIGE, N/S STATUE BUSKER,
N/S PEDESTRIANS

Abigail and Paige stand in the middle of the pedestrian concourse at Circular Quay in mid-argument, going head-to-head. Paige is holding the toy penguin. A STATUE BUSKER (a woman in flowing robes spray-painted to look like a statue) stands dead still behind them. Kat and Sammy awkwardly try not to get involved.

ABIGAIL

Why do you have to be so annoying?

PAIGE

Me? Am I annoying you Kat?

KAT

No but I love a good family drama.

PAIGE

Am I annoying you Sammy?

SAMMY

I'm fine.

ABIGAIL

Stay out of it.

Kat leads Sammy away by the arm.

KAT

We'll see you back at the Academy.

Neither Abigail nor Paige notice them make a hasty exit.

ABIGAIL

I put a lot of time I don't have into planning this weekend. You've ruined it.

PAIGE

Big deal. You've ruined my whole life. We can't go on holidays because Abigail has a concert. No chocolate ice-cream in the freezer because Abigail's on a diet.

ABIGAIL

Like you need chocolate ice-cream.

PAIGE

Mum moves us to Sydney to be near you, and you never even visit.

ABIGAIL

I am at the National Academy of Dance. I have classes every day.

PAIGE

Why is it always about you?

ABIGAIL

Because you're not special. You're just a little girl - over-tired, over-stimulated and chock full of preservatives.

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CONTINUED:

21

Abigail wanted her words to cut deeply and they do. Paige is hurt by Abigail's statement. She hisses at Abigail:

PAIGE

Just as long as I'm not like you.

Abigail spins around furious and walks away. After a few metres she slows down, then stops. She realises she is being stupid, sighs and turns around.

Abigail walks back to where she left Paige. There is no-one there.

ABIGAIL

Paige! Paige! Get back here right now.

No sign of Paige. She looks up at the STATUE BUSKER.

ABIGAIL

Did you see where my sister went?

The Statue Busker doesn't move. Abigail wants to smack her.

ABIGAIL

Look. I know you're not actually a statue.

Nothing. Abigail groans in frustration and moves on. She pauses beside a rubbish bin. Tossed into the bin is the toy penguin. Abigail fishes it out - where has Paige gone?

She looks around, but as far as she can see there is no sign of Paige. Is this a joke or time to get worried?

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EXT. CIRCULAR QUAY - DAY 13

22

ABIGAIL, N/S PEDESTRIANS

INTERCUT WITH:

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EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - DAY 13

23

KAT, SAMMY, N/S STUDENTS

Abigail emerges from the crowd at the far end of the Circular Quay concourse, she has clearly run the whole length. No Paige.

Abigail is struggling to contain her panic now. She takes out her phone and stares at it. Who should she call?

CUT TO:

Kat's phone rings. She looks at it.

KAT
 (to Sammy)
 Abigail?
 (to phone)
 Let me guess, you're on a quiz show
 and I'm your last lifeline?

CUT TO:

Abigail continues to walk along Circular Quay. She clutches the toy penguin in one hand and her phone in the other. She blurts into the phone.

ABIGAIL
 She's gone! I can't find her
 anywhere. I turned away and she -

CUT TO:

Kat takes charge.

KAT
 Okay. It's only a ten minute walk
 to school. I'm sure she'll come
 back here.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Anything could happen.

KAT
 We'll look around the Academy. I'll
 call you if we find her. Don't
 worry, Paige is smart.

CUT TO:

ABIGAIL
 Unlike me, you mean?

KAT (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Abigail.

Abigail just hangs up on Kat and keeps searching.

It has been a long day. Tara is tired. Ethan is growing impatient. Tara finishes another sequence of dance moves.

ETHAN
 Again.

Tara can't believe it.

DANA

Wait. Can I suggest something?

ETHAN

Please.

DANA

Tara's an instinctive dancer.
You've got the foundations of a
good piece. Stop micro-managing.

Ethan is mildly offended.

ETHAN

So it's my fault?

DANA

It doesn't always help being
dictatorial...

ETHAN

Dictatorial?

DANA

Tara, how are you feeling?

TARA

I could do with a break.

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 13

ETHAN, DANA

Ethan and Dana step outside. Ethan feels it's now or never
with stepping up the flirtation.

ETHAN

Dictatorial? That's a bit harsh.

DANA

Maybe. But whatever you're doing,
isn't working. That poor girl is
dancing her heart out for you.

Ethan brushes this off.

ETHAN

Tara? She's fine. And I'm sure it's
always tense like this before a
breakthrough.

DANA

Did you hear anything I just said?
You know, I can't work out if it's
confidence or arrogance you're
throwing at me.

ETHAN
(grins)
What do you want it to be?

DANA
I'm sorry?

ETHAN
Confidence or arrogance? Maybe we
should work it out over dinner?

Dana laughs - out of surprise not amusement.

DANA
What?

Ethan tries to retain his confidence but it's faltering.

ETHAN
Well there's obviously something
between us so...

DANA
Dude, you're seventeen.

ETHAN
Eighteen.

DANA
Which is why I'll overlook the fact
that you are out of line. And that
I've just given up my Sunday to be
your mentor.

Ethan begins to look worried for the first time.

ETHAN
And I appreciate that, I really do.
But...

DANA
(over)
But since you've obviously got it
all figured out, I'm very happy to
leave it to you.

Dana walks away. Ethan is left standing - stunned. Rejected
by a woman for the first time in his life.

Kat and Sammy rush down the stairs and down the corridor,
both anxiously looking for Paige.

SAMMY

Paige!

KAT

She used to be Abigail's shadow.
Big sister could do no wrong.

SAMMY

I keep thinking, if I was a ten-year-old girl where would I be?

KAT

Where do you come up with?

SAMMY

Somewhere pink? I don't know.

Kat looks at him - not helpful Sammy.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/SAMMY'S ROOM - DAY 13

KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, CHRISTIAN, PAIGE

Christian sits with his guitar. We see that Paige has made her way to Sammy's room and is sitting on the bed setting up a Snakes and Ladders game. Christian does his best to ignore her.

PAIGE

Is Sammy the best dancer at the school?

CHRISTIAN

In the known world.

PAIGE

Thought so. Does he have a girlfriend?

CHRISTIAN

Shouldn't you wait in Abigail's room?

PAIGE

Would you?

She looks up at Christian.

PAIGE

Do you want to roll first?

CHRISTIAN

I'm not playing.

Paige rolls the dice anyway. Just then Kat and Sammy arrive at the door.

SAMMY

Paige. What are you doing here?

PAIGE

Hi Sammy. Want to play?

KAT

You can't run off like that.
Abigail is out there, eating her
own hair.

PAIGE

No way. She's too worried about the
fat count.

SAMMY

You can't stay here.

Paige holds her ground.

PAIGE

One game. Or I'm going nowhere.

Kat gets out her phone.

KAT

I'm calling Abigail.

Sammy sits down on the end of the bed next to the board game.
At this precise moment Abigail turns up in the doorway. She
takes in the scene, it looks like they've been there for ages
and are happily playing board games, and a look of horror
fixes on her face.

ABIGAIL

Oh this is cosy. So sorry to
interrupt.

SAMMY

We just got here. Abigail!

Abigail turns and storms off. Paige stares down at the board
game, guilty.

ABIGAIL, PAIGE

Paige tentatively enters the room. Abigail sits on her bed.
She speaks to Paige without looking at her.

ABIGAIL

Did you and Kat plan that? Turn
Abigail into a screaming, freaked
out mess.

PAIGE
(contrite)
We didn't plan anything.

ABIGAIL
Yeah you did, and you know what?
You did me a favour. Now I know you
all hate me, no one has to waste
time pretending otherwise.

PAIGE
Nobody hates you.

ABIGAIL
Go barnacle yourself to Kat.

PAIGE
Sammy really likes you, and you
treat him like dirt. Mum and Dad
love you so much we're all split
between two cities.

ABIGAIL
Paige. Get out.

PAIGE
Even I don't. Only you hate you.

Abigail is shaken, deeply affected by her sister's words.

ABIGAIL
(quietly)
I normally hate weekends but I
really looked forward to this one.

Paige pulls out a card from her backpack and gives it to Abigail. Paige has obviously made it herself.

On the front of it is a love heart and a drawing of Abigail dancing. Inside is a drawing of them both, side by side, holding hands. Abigail in a tutu and dance shoes, Paige wearing gumboots and overalls. It's a Thank You card.

PAIGE
I made it for you.

She makes the quotation mark sign, hopefully.

PAIGE
Virtual hug?

Abigail looks at her sister - softening, but not yet ready to forgive. Paige goes in to hug Abigail properly. Stiff as a board, she awkwardly pats her on the back.

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INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 13

29

TARA, ETHAN, TARA (V.O)

Ethan returns to the studio. He is still smarting from the rejection. He drops down into a chair.

TARA

Do you want me to start? Or should I wait for Dana?

ETHAN

Dana and I had artistic differences.

(beat)

Look you don't seem to want to be here either. I can get another dancer.

Tara stares at him, furious at being dismissed like this.

TARA

Wow, has the brilliant Ethan Karamakov been rejected?

Off his look - it's obvious that's just what happened.

TARA

That's gotta hurt.

ETHAN

I never knew you were quite so sarcastic.

TARA

Like you ever took the time to get to know me.

(beat)

I don't understand - why did you pick me in the first place?

Ethan half grins as he remembers.

ETHAN

It was when you were doing that ribbon thing with Paige. You were like...

TARA

A kid. I got it.

ETHAN

No. You were inspiring.

Tara looks at him, surprised. Ethan shakes his head, fed up by the events of the day.

ETHAN

Go, stay. Do whatever you want to do.

Tara grabs her bag and goes to leave the studio.

She catches her reflection in the mirror and stops herself. Without pausing to think, Tara turns back around and then surprises Ethan by grabbing the remote control out of his hand. She hits play and turns the music up until it's ear-splittingly loud.

Tara storms back to the centre of the studio. She's missed the opening counts but that doesn't matter. She throws herself into the dance.

TARA (V.O.)

The best part about my sixth birthday was when it rained. Even though it ruined my new dress, even though it made the pony spook and bolt right into the cake...

As Tara dances - angrily, bashing everything she has into it - she stops being self-conscious. She lets go and is free, like she used to be.

TARA (V.O.)

I remember farmers crying, the whole town celebrating, all of us playing in the mud. And my party became famous after that as the one that broke the drought.

Watching, Ethan's expression slowly changes from annoyed, to interested, to spellbound. It is everything he wanted and more than he could have ever expected from Tara.

TARA (V.O.)

It wasn't what I'd imagined. It was better.

Tara is still dancing as Ethan runs across the room and picks her up in his arms. Over the blaring music.

ETHAN

That was perfect. Beyond perfect. I knew you could do it.

Before they know it, they're looking into each other's eyes. Time slows - the pressures of the day forgotten, now there is just the two of them - the only two people in the whole world.

Ethan pulls Tara closer and she allows it willingly. Their faces draw near and then - kiss.

CONTINUED:

Bang. They knock teeth and pull away - both embarrassed. The worst almost-pash ever.

END OF EPISODE.