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Dance Academy

SERIES ONE

EPISODE 19
BLOCK 5

"Fairest and Best"

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1

INT. ACADEMY/BOYS DRESSING ROOM - DAY 7

1

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, SEAN, N/S STUDENTS (BOYS), TARA (V.O)

MUSIC UNDER:

Football-like masculinity...

TARA (V.O.)

*Back in Patche every boy played
football.*

A bandage wrapped tight around an anonymous male ankle.
Muscular arms stretched overhead. Taught hamstrings
extended on a bench.

TARA (V.O.)

*Even though the local team hadn't
won since colour TV was invented,
every Saturday people drove 500
ks to watch them lose.*

Feet jogging rapidly on the spot. Liniment rubbed into a
bare shoulder. Flexing back muscles as a T-shirt is slipped
on.

TARA (V.O.)

*Except me. I was too busy
dancing.*

A locker door slams shut, and the anonymous athletes beat a
path to the door...

2

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 7

2

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, SEAN, TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, OLLIE, JAI, N/S
STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS, TARA (V.O)

The dressing room door opens.

SLOW MOTION reveals Christian, Sammy, and Sean. Steely,
they head up the corridor toward Kat, Abigail, and Tara.

At the opposite end of the corridor, an equally intent
group approach in SLOW MOTION. In uniformed tracksuits,
big, imposing athletes Jai and Ollie lead the Australian
Institute of Sport AFL forward squad. Ollie carries a
football.

TARA (V.O.)

*It made no sense. Everyone
fighting over a ball...*

Both sets of boys stop, stare at each other. A showdown.

TARA (V.O.)

*Why didn't they just get their
own?*

2

CONTINUED:

2

Kat, Tara and Abigail are literally caught in the middle. And look pretty unimpressed about the testosterone in the air.

PATRICK (O.S.)

I know you'll make our guests
from the Institute of Sport feel
welcome this week...

3

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 7

3

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, SEAN, PATRICK, OLLIE,
JAI, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

Mixed Classical: Patricks walks along a line of footballers who are scattered among the ballet students at the barre. They are all doing rond de jamba a'terre and en 'lair...

PATRICK

The forward squad is here to work
on agility, flexibility and
balance, which is a good
opportunity for us to go back to
basics.

Abigail rolls her eyes, irritated, from the front of the middle barre as she slowly circles her leg around. Tara and Ollie are behind her. Sammy, Jai and Kat are lined up on the other side of the barre.

PATRICK

You'll all benefit from this
exchange if you keep an open
mind.

Sammy leans over to share a joke with Abigail.

SAMMY

(sotto)

An open mind or an empty one.

Abigail studiously ignores him.

PATRICK

(background)

"En dehors" means "out the door".
"En dedans" - "in they come".

JAI

This just feels wrong.

OLLIE

Mate that is one seriously
gruesome "in they come".

3

CONTINUED:

3

Kat can't help herself. She lets slip a momentary laugh. Ollie clocks her.

CUT TO:

LATER:

Dancers and footballers are gathered in the corner of the studio taking turns to chaine down the room. As Patrick demonstrates how it should be done, a couple of footballers slam into each other with a crash.

PATRICK

Stay aware of your position on the floor.

Abigail and Bonnie perform their chaines quickly and elegantly.

PATRICK

Good. Okay guys come and watch Abigail.

Abigail is conscious of the attention as she returns to the corner. Sammy is annoyed by how closely Jai and Ollie watch her.

PATRICK

(to Abigail)

This time take it super-slow.

Abigail performs the chaines slowly.

PATRICK

Look at that - absolute concentration on technique.

Abigail is pleased by the compliment but as Patrick continues to watch her turning he gets a surprise.

PATRICK

Interesting. You're quite turned in at the hips, aren't you? You're doing a lot with your lower leg.

Abigail finishes the chaines and looks at him sharply. Patrick turns back to address the rest of the class, he doesn't notice that Abigail is seething.

PATRICK

This is why it's good to slow it down. Helps you spot the flaws.

Ollie looks across to Kat as they start chaineing together.

3

CONTINUED:

3

OLLIE

I'm Ollie. What am I supposed to do with my hips?

KAT

Avoid using them as a weapon.

OLLIE

Easy for you to say...

KAT

Kat.

OLLIE

Easy for you to say Kat.

Ollie's high-wattage smile. It's charming, hard to resist. Kat smiles back.

4

INT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - DAY 7

4

TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINE, N/S STUDENTS

Kat and Tara walk onto the wharfside. They've changed into their civvies.

TARA

I saw teeth action.

KAT

No you didn't. I'm a guy-free zone these days.

Tara clearly doesn't believe her.

KAT

And sometimes a smile is just a smile.

TARA

Yes. That smile showed "absolute concentration on technique".

Miss Raine walks along with Abigail in her wake. She stops Tara for a word.

MISS RAINE

Tara.

Kat keeps walking, eager to escape.

MISS RAINE

You and Abigail are having private classes with me every night this week.

Tara fumes at the injustice. Abigail doesn't.

TARA

But I'm already doing extra classes.

Miss Raine makes a show of rethinking.

MISS RAINE

You're right. We wouldn't you to feel overworked.

TARA

(brightening)
Really?

Miss Raine is already striding away. Disgruntled Tara realises Abigail is smiling.

TARA

How can you be okay with this?

ABIGAIL

You still don't get it.

Abigail walks off, disdainful. Tara catches up.

TARA

What's to get about being yelled at every night?

Abigail sighs. It almost kills her to acknowledge Tara might be in the same league as her.

ABIGAIL

Only favourites get this kind of attention. If you didn't have potential you'd be ignored.

Tara's expression reveals just how shocked she is to hear this.

ABIGAIL

I know. I can't believe it either.

Abigail moves off, leaving Tara to wonder how it can be true.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO/CORRIDOR - DAY 7

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, SEAN, OLLIE, JAI, TIKKINOVA, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS), N/S FOOTBALLERS

Boys' character class: In the centre, the boys dance to boisterous gypsy music wearing puffy shirts. Christian, Sammy, and Sean are featured. It is a powerful, athletic dance, relying on the group staying in step.

5

CONTINUED:

5

TIKKINOVA

This is dance of manly men. Men
of the passion and the strength.
Let me see strong eyes, strong
jaws...

As the boys switch up the masculinity, the footballers stop at the corridor window and gawp, bemused by puffy-shirted 'masculinity'. Ollie and Jai nudge each other and laugh.

TIKKINOVA

Like men. Dance like men.

From the centre, Sammy and Christian look around, feeling watched. They see Ollie and Jai at the window, jumping around with their mates, hands in the air sending up the boys' moves.

TIKKINOVA

(clocking the boys'
distraction)

Where is manliness gone? More
with the focusing.

The boys are forced to dance on by strident Tikkinova - much to the amusement of Jai and Ollie.

6

INT. ACADEMY/BOYS' DRESSING ROOM - DAY 7

6

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, ETHAN, SEAN, TIM, PATRICK, OLLIE, JAI,
N/S STUDENTS (BOYS), N/S FOOTBALLERS

The footballers are changing from their uniforms into casual clothes. They laugh as shirtless Jai performs a send-up of the gypsy dance. Ollie imitates Tikkinova's Russian accent.

OLLIE

(Tikkinova accent)

Is zee dance for zee men.

Ethan and Tim come into the room. Their faces show barely disguised hostility towards childish antics in the change rooms. Jai dances around.

OLLIE

Like men. Like men.

Christian, Sammy and Sean enter with some other first years. They are self conscious about being made fun of. Jai shouts out to Sammy.

JAI

Hey ballet boy. Can I borrow your
puffy shirt?

SAMMY

Sorry. Missed that. I don't speak
meathead.

Ollie stands up to his full height, he loves a stoush.

OLLIE

Who you calling a meathead?

Ethan steps between them.

ETHAN

If you had brains you'd back off.

Ollie sizes him up. Two alpha males. Jai and the other
footballers stop fooling around and watch the brewing
stoush.

OLLIE

Yeah? What are you going do?
Sparkle fingers me to death?

SEAN

(correcting, weary)
It's *spirit* fingers.

Ballet guys glare at Sean, not quite a masculine
impression.

As Jai incorporates the spirit fingers into his balletic
dance, Ethan turns to Ollie.

ETHAN

Your little buddy seems to like
that dance. Girl part suits him.

Patrick enters to use the bathroom. Objecting to the use of
"little", the footballers are on their feet lining up
against the ballet boys who are rising to face them.

OLLIE

Watch yourself there pretty boy.

PATRICK

That's enough.

Neither Ethan nor Ollie backs down.

PATRICK

What's the issue?
(off seething silence)
Ethan...?

Ethan voices his long-held beef against the footballers.

6

CONTINUED:

6

ETHAN

They get all the funding, all the press. They wouldn't know real work if it smacked them in the face.

OLLIE

Mate. Two minutes on a footy field you'd be dead.

ETHAN

Yeah. Try dancing Onegin. (On-yay-gun)

OLLIE

Try dancing with a broken jaw.

The tension looks like igniting again.

PATRICK

Seems like you didn't hear me. These guys are our guests for the week - that's not going to change.

Patrick looks at the two distinct groups. He means business.

PATRICK

I don't care how you do it, but you're all going to find a way to sort it out.

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EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 7

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, SEAN, TIM, N/S STUDENTS (BOYS)

7

INTERCUT WITH:

8

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 7

OLLIE, JAI, N/S FOOTBALLERS

8

INTERCUT WITH:

9

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO (TELEVISION) - DAY 7

CHRISTIAN, SAMMY, SEAN, TIKKINOVA, N/S STUDENTS (BOYS)

9

FOOTBALL OVAL: Ethan stands in the middle of a group of ballet boys.

ETHAN

Toughest sport - footballers versus dancers.

(grins)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Except there's no competition.
We're fitter, faster...

CUT TO:

STUDIO: Ollie stands in the middle of a group of footballers.

OLLIE

... stronger. This Friday, gypsy dance. The whole way through. No mistakes.

CUT TO:

FOOTBALL OVAL:

Ethan has the dancers running a 'dodge and weave' drill along a set of witches hats. He runs alongside, coaching.

ETHAN

Friday here. Touch football.

Christian goes through the motions, unimpressed with having Ethan in charge.

ETHAN

We only have to score once to win.

CUT TO:

STUDIO: Confident Ollie is with Jai, gathered around a flat screen TV with their teammates. They're watching:

CUT TO:

STUDIO (TELEVISION): Christian, Sammy and Sean expertly perform the gypsy dance in their earlier character class.

OLLIE

It's just a dance. Any moron can dance. I've seen rugby players dance.

CUT TO:

STUDIO: The footballers start to learn the moves. Ollie smiles his winning smile.

OLLIE

We're gonna kill it.

10

EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE/NOOK - DAY 7

10

ABIGAIL, SAMMY, N/S STUDENTS

Smiling to herself, Abigail is heading back to class when Sammy pounces, hauling her into a private nook.

SAMMY

Hello you.

ABIGAIL

Don't have time.

SAMMY

Me either. Very busy.

He tries to kiss her. She pulls away.

ABIGAIL

I'm doing privates with Miss Raine.

Unlike Tara, Sammy immediately understands why it's good news.

SAMMY

Hey, that's awesome.

But kissing is more interesting. Abigail evades him again.

ABIGAIL

It feels like everything is finally coming together. Which is why there's not going to be any more sneaking around.

SAMMY

Brilliant. I'm not naturally stealth.

He takes her hand and goes to lead her out of the nook. Abigail looks down at it, unimpressed, and pulls it free.

ABIGAIL

Look, Sammy. Two types of girls are at the Academy. Girls who are serious about ballet and girls who have boyfriends.

The boyfriend word sticks in her throat.

SAMMY

I am not going to interfere with your dancing.

To Abigail this is about the furthest thing possible.

10

CONTINUED:

10

ABIGAIL

Obviously. That's my point.

She starts to walk off, but then suddenly turns back, kissing Sammy. Just as abruptly, she takes off again. Leaving Sammy with hope.

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EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - NIGHT 7

11

MISS RAINÉ (O.S.)

Establishing night.

MISS RAINÉ (O.S.)

And again. Chasé into arabesque... (ADJUST)

12

INT. ACADEMY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - NIGHT 7

12

TARA, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINÉ

Private class: Classical piano plays on the stereo in the background. In the centre, Tara and Abigail dance a challenging piece choreographed by Miss Rainé.

MISS RAINÉ

Extend up in the arabesque. Keep it moving. (ADJUST)

As they move across the room, Miss Rainé strides with them, intent, determined.

MISS RAINÉ

Glissade and jeté... (ADJUST)
(as Tara reacts)
Yes Tara.

Abigail watches every moment of praise offered to Tara and fumes. Tara is aware that Abigail is watching and she smiles as she executes the steps with technical perfection and artistry.

MISS RAINÉ

Focus Abigail... eyes off the mirror... That's it, Tara. Good.

Tara's confidence increases as Abigail falters. Miss Rainé watches with suppressed satisfaction as the two girls' dancing diverges.

MISS RAINÉ

Abigail you're moving like a slug. Keep pace with Tara.

Abigail tries, but Tara buoyed by the unaccustomed approval of Miss Rainé is dancing with much more verve and grace.

The music ends. Tara and Abigail stay in final pose. Abigail is panting, Tara with effort, keeps her breathing under control.

MISS RAINÉ

Thank you. That's all for today.

As Tara and Abigail step out of the pose and clap the teacher:

MISS RAINÉ

Tara, watch your line coming out of the grande jeté.

Tara nods, beaming.

ABIGAIL

What should I work on Miss Raine?

Abigail waits for Miss Raine to speak to her, but Miss Raine heads for the doorway. Abigail covers her disappointment as the girls collect their bags.

TARA

I find it's easier if I make it about my supporting leg.

Abigail can't bear being patronised by Tara.

ABIGAIL

It's obvious what she's doing. Creating competition for me, using you to make me work harder.

Tara's not buying Abigail's theory. She smiles to herself as she collects her bag, feigning innocence.

TARA

Really? What was it about favourites getting the attention and everyone else being ignored?

Tara leaves the studio, with the new-found petty pleasure of having the last word. She does not notice that Abigail looks like she's just been slapped in the face.

On a high, Tara enters in her dance gear. She spots Christian amongst the mill of other students. Tara makes the decision to start a conversation. It's awkward.

TARA

So, footy grudge match?

CHRISTIAN

Mmm.

TARA

Team sports are so not my thing.
The whole hand-eye-ball
coordination issue.

Tara's babbling. She can't help herself. Rebooting their
friendship is hard.

CHRISTIAN

Hey, I gotta go.

TARA

Yeah me too.

As Christian heads out, Tara flops down onto the couch
beside Sammy and Kat.

KAT

I think he's interesting.

TARA

Christian?

KAT

Ollie. Hot, kinda quirky...

SAMMY

Soft hands.

Sammy is reading a footy magazine.

KAT

I haven't got that far.

Sammy considers the advice in the magazine.

SAMMY

When passing the ball, keep your
hands soft.

KAT

Good to know.

(to Tara)

So was it love? You, Miss
Raine... special private time?

TARA

It was weird. I don't know how
I'm gonna cope with Abigail five
nights a week.

Sammy looks up.

13

CONTINUED:

13

SAMMY

You? You're doing privates with Abigail?

Tara nods and Sammy bolts from the common room, dropping the magazine. Kat picks it up.

KAT

Soft hands hey...

TARA

(grins)

Thought you were off guys?

14

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA'S ROOM/CORRIDOR - NIGHT 7

14

SAMMY, ABIGAIL, JAI, OLLIE, N/S FOOTBALLERS

Sammy finds Abigail stretching in her room. She's using a thick elastic to extend her leg above her head in attitude.

SAMMY

Enough with the stealth.

Surprised Abigail eyes the open door.

ABIGAIL

(hushed)

Could you maybe keep your voice down?

SAMMY

(lower)

Tara just told me she's doing privates with you.

ABIGAIL

So?

SAMMY

So... love her as I do, that girl is a relationship train wreck. And Miss Raine's still taking her seriously as a dancer.

This is not Abigail's favourite topic of conversation right now.

ABIGAIL

You know, apparently when Miss Raine was in the Company she used to eat dirt, so that she'd get worms and stay thin. I almost bet one of them has burrowed into her brain...

SAMMY

(over)

You love Miss Raine. And if Tara can be a favourite with her, going out with me is not going to ruin your reputation.

He's got Abigail there. She's forced to try a different tack.

ABIGAIL

But don't you think all this secrecy is kind of... hot?

SAMMY

Really? Hot?

Sammy almost get sucked back under until he realises what she's doing.

SAMMY

No. Not hot. I feel used and... violated. You can't kiss someone and pretend it's irrelevant. It means something.

ABIGAIL

It's just lips. On other lips.

Noise in the hall. Jai and Ollie and their mates passing the open door.

SAMMY

I know you don't believe that.

Abigail seizes the moment:

ABIGAIL

(to Jai)

Hey you. Sport person.

Jai grins and points at himself questioning.

JAI

Me?

His mates laugh.

ABIGAIL

Come here a second.

Jai comes into the room. Abigail crosses, grabs Jai, kisses him ardently.

Jai's mates whoop it up. Sammy can't believe what he sees and Abigail walks off, leaving them all staring.

17

CONTINUED:

17

JAI

Okay... well, I should get going.
My rond de jamb is crying out for
attention.

Jai heads off, catches up his mates. He looks back over as
they go. Sammy can't hold his tongue:

SAMMY

See. You kissed him and now he's
fallen for you. I'm right, it
means something.

Evasive, Abigail packs up her stuff to go. Sammy pushes.

SAMMY

You might hide it, but you
actually have feelings for me.

ABIGAIL

Not for you, not for anyone.
Haven't you figured it out? I
don't do feelings.

Seemingly unaffected, Abigail walks away, but as she goes,
the cost of hurting Sammy shows. Abigail stuffs it back
down.

18

INT. ACADEMY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY 8

18

TARA, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINE

Private class: After school. Tara and Abigail continue to
battle it out for Miss Raine.

Tara executes a complicated sequence, leaping high in the
air.

Abigail executes the same sequence, turning the final jump
into something more spectacular.

Abigail completes a series of turns en pointe, dynamically
whizzing across the room at breakneck speed.

Tara slows it down by performing a beautiful port de bras
into adage. The carriage of her arms and neck is exquisite
to behold.

CUT TO:

LATER

Without music, Abigail and Tara dance for Miss Raine.

MISS RAINE

... and posé into arabesque...
No, stop. Do it again.

Abigail works hard, trying to regain favourite status. It's not working. Miss Raine criticises her.

MISS RAINÉ

Straighten your head, Abigail.
You look brittle. And what's
happened to your line? Again.

Tara and Abigail repeat the sequence of steps culminating in the arabesque. Miss Raine directs her remarks to Abigail.

MISS RAINÉ

Don't bash it out. I don't want
to look at that.

The girls repeat the steps. Miss Raine sighs at Abigail.

MISS RAINÉ

Are you trying to make it look
ugly?

Under pressure, Abigail grits her teeth.

MISS RAINÉ

Tara, show her.

Abigail's sneer helps motivate Tara to perform a flawless, effortless sequence ending in a beautiful arabesque.

MISS RAINÉ

This is what it should look like.
Clean technique.

Abigail watches, gutted by Tara's natural talent. Tara steps out of the arabesque. She looks up at Miss Raine determined and professional - not trying to show Abigail up, but not *not* trying either.

TARA

I can do it better.

As Tara repeats the sequence, once again flawless, Abigail boils.

EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 8

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SEAN, SAMMY, TIM, N/S STUDENTS (BOYS)

A huddle before practice. Nervous Ethan in captain mode. Not buying in, Christian broods at the back of the pack.

ETHAN

You're dancers. You've learnt
thousands of complicated steps.
Touch football has three.

19

CONTINUED:

19

SAMMY
(nervously reminding
himself)
Run, dodge, catch.

CHRISTIAN
And pass.

Ethan grits his teeth.

ETHAN
Okay, four. We can do this,
right?

Not a lot of confidence among the team.

ETHAN
Right?

Sean and Sammy, in contrast to Christian, muster
enthusiasm.

ALL
(except Christian)
Right.

20

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 8
KAT, OLLIE, JAI, N/S FOOTBALLERS

20

The footballers are still watching the TV screen, trying to
learn the dance. They're having trouble reversing the image
from the screen. Ollie's confidence is ebbing as the
players crash into each other, horribly wooden and
uncoordinated.

JAI
Is it left on three?

OLLIE
Maybe think of it like going up
for a mark...

Jai replicates a mark, trying to nail the jump.

JAI
Maybe not.

A snigger draws Jai's attention to the doorway. He
indicates to Ollie who looks around and sees Kat stifling
amusement.

OLLIE
(crossing to her)
Help.

20

CONTINUED:

20

KAT

Can't. You guys are the enemy.

OLLIE

We're also terrible. Please.

He falls to his knees, dramatic, and smiles that smile. Kat smiles back.

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EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 8

21

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, SEAN, TIM, N/S STUDENTS

The dancers are now divided into two training teams. Sean passes to Sammy, who disposes as fast as he can to Ethan. Christian is open and the logical person to pass to. Ethan decides to score himself, but Tim tags him well before the scoreline.

As Tim and his team pass the ball between them, angry Christian fronts Ethan.

CHRISTIAN

What was that?

ETHAN

The scoreline was open.

CHRISTIAN

You were hogging the ball.

Ethan squares his shoulders challenging Christian.

ETHAN

So you didn't get to be the hero.

CHRISTIAN

You've always held on too long.

Ethan walks aggressively towards Christian.

SAMMY

Tim! To me.

Tim kicks the ball. Sammy successfully inserts himself between Ethan and Christian but completely fails to catch the ball.

22

INT. ACADEMY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY 8

22

TARA, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINE

Private class continues. Abigail and Tara are exhausted, but Miss Raine keeps pushing.

MISS RAINE

And posé arabesque. Hips,
Abigail. Turn out from them.

As she and Tara repeat the steps, Miss Raine studies Abigail close up.

MISS RAINE

Abigail this is ballet, not
gymnastics. Square your hips. Do
you even know where they're
facing? Again.

Abigail repeats once more, looking at herself in the mirror, struggling to get her hips into the correct alignment. Shocked by Miss Raine's venom, Tara is starting to feel feels for Abigail.

MISS RAINE

Will you stop looking in the
mirror. Turn out your legs. How
long have you been dancing?

Abigail repeats.

MISS RAINE

Stop.

Both Abigail and Tara pull out of the arabesque.

MISS RAINE

Abigail, can you not hear me? Am
I not speaking clearly enough?

Abigail looks crushed. Tara sees her struggling to keep her emotions in check. Her sense of justice kicks in:

TARA

(quietly)
It makes it harder.

MISS RAINE

Excuse me?

TARA

(faltering)
What you're doing. When you do it
to me... it doesn't help.

MISS RAINE

(surprised)
Really? You were quite happy to
show her up earlier.

TARA

I didn't...

MISS RAINE

Don't look so shocked. To be a professional, you must be a competitor. I'm relieved you've finally figured that out.

Mortified Tara looks to Abigail, who refuses her gaze.

MISS RAINE

If you object to my teaching you are free to leave.

Tara nods and grabs her bag, guilty and ashamed. Miss Raine's jaw tightens and she turns back to Abigail.

MISS RAINE

Again Abigail.

As Tara exits the studio, Abigail steps out into yet another arabesque.

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR/PIGEONHOLES - DAY 8

TARA, CHRISTIAN, N/S STUDENTS

Tara checks her pigeon hole, finds a letter from home. She tears it open, a family photo among its pages.

CLOSE on the photo, a happy snap of smiling Tara with a cat.

The reminder of 'old' Tara pains the newer, more competitive model. Tara is startled when Christian appears at her shoulder.

CHRISTIAN

Can I? (*get to my pigeonhole*)

The photo slips out, falls to the floor. Christian picks it up, checks it out as he hands it back.

TARA

Starlight. She's my cat.

CHRISTIAN

Does she scratch?

Tara is feeling sensitive.

TARA

What are you saying?

Christian isn't buying in.

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CONTINUED:

23

CHRISTIAN

I had a cat. It scratched. Making conversation.

He grabs a graded essay from his pigeonhole and walks away.

Tara looks back at the innocent girl in the photo. How has she changed so much?

24

EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE/STAIRS - DAY 8

24

ABIGAIL, JAI, N/S STUDENTS

Devastated Abigail wipes away tears as Jai approaches.

JAI

Company?

Abigail fires him an icy look. Jai sits anyway, undaunted.

ABIGAIL

That thing yesterday - social experiment. Just so you know.

JAI

And I picked out a ring and everything.

He almost makes her laugh. Almost.

JAI

Rough day?

ABIGAIL

You wouldn't get it.

JAI

Cause I'm a 'meathead'?

ABIGAIL

Because you're not a dancer. You don't have physical limitations that can't be overcome.

But Jai nods, he gets it too well.

JAI

Someone taller, faster. Someone who hits a bit harder, jumps a bit higher.

Like Tara.

ABIGAIL

(bitter)

The naturals.

JAI

(dry)

Is it wrong to hate them?

ABIGAIL

Not if you ask me. What I want to know is how you compete with them?

JAI

(shrugs)

I work harder, train longer, and I don't beat myself up when I can't do what they do.

Abigail takes this in. Should she stop comparing herself to Tara?

JAI

I figure I'm never gonna be a star, but I earn my place in the team. No one can say that I don't. That's enough.

ABIGAIL

For you maybe.

Abigail's not sure she'd be okay with that but it has given her something to think about. They look out to sea.

JAI

So... You and that Sammy guy?

ABIGAIL

There is no me and Sammy.

Jai smiles at her.

EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - NIGHT 8

NIL CAST

Establishing night. The lights of North Sydney glow to life and throw their dappled reflection on the black water surrounding the Academy wharf.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - NIGHT 8

KAT, ETHAN, OLLIE, JAI, N/S FOOTBALLERS

As the footballers file out, Kat ejects the CD from the player. Ollie doubles back, strikes a gypsy pose.

OLLIE

How am I doing?

Kat studies his form.

KAT

Keep the arms strong.

(impersonating
Tikkinova)

Gypsy dance is manly dance. For
manly men.

Ollie strikes a bolder pose, makes Kat laugh.

OLLIE

What would happen if I were to
manly ask you out?
Hypothetically?

KAT

On a date thing?

OLLIE

On a date thing.

KAT

Hypothetically?

Time for Ollie to put money where his hypothetical is.

OLLIE

Rooftop Cinema has a Three
Stooges marathon tonight. Could
be fun.

That smile again. Kat makes the decision.

KAT

I might say yes. Hypo...
(...*thetically*).

ETHAN (O.S.)

(over)

No... Way...

Kat and Ollie have been too distracted to see that Ethan
has entered.

ETHAN

You've been helping them?

Sprung Kat looks from Ethan to the CD in her hand.

KAT

Relax, they're still terrible.

ETHAN

Good to know where your loyalties
lie, Kat. Nice.

She watches Ethan walk out. Ollie clocks her concern.

26

CONTINUED:

26

OLLIE
Boyfriend? Ex?

KAT
(shudders)
Ew, brother. And I have to go
after him so...

Kat musters up a bit of courage and gets her boy mojo back.

KAT
Stooge's raincheck?

Ollie smiles and bows for her to pass.

27

EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - DAY 9
NIL CAST

27

Time lapse: a day passes on the Academy wharf. Boats go by, people arrive then leave from the wharf, the sun passes overhead.

28

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 9
CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, SEAN, TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, OLLIE,
JAI, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

28

A reprise of the SLOW MOTION standoff from earlier. Steely, Christian, Sammy, and Sean now joined by Ethan and Tim. They head down the corridor.

Up ahead, the equally determined footballers approach. When they're about to meet in the middle...

NORMAL SPEED. Wary dancers toe to toe with the footballers.

Ollie and Ethan pause in front of each other. They all head into the studio. When Tara, in street clothes, follows...

ABIGAIL
Oh, you're so good, you can
afford to be late to class now?

Abigail is in rehearsal clothes. Unseen by the girls, Sammy props in the doorway to listen.

TARA
I'm quitting. You win. You get to
be the favourite.

Abigail burns at having to admit Tara's superiority.

28

CONTINUED:

28

ABIGAIL

(scornful)

You can't even compete with nature on your side? You don't deserve to have what you have.

Abigail turns and walks off. Sammy slips away into the studio as Tara processes that thought.

29

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 9

29

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, KAT, SEAN, OLLIE, JAI, PATRICK, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

The footballers take positions in the centre. They are grinning, feeling foolish in the puffy gypsy shirts.

PATRICK

Okay, to win their part of the challenge the guys have to get through the whole dance, every step. Start and finish together. Are we ready?

Ollie earns a laugh from the crowd when he makes a so/so gesture with his hand. Patrick indicates for the music to begin. Kat gives Ollie an encouraging look, and the players plunge into the dance.

It's wonky and inelegant, but they give it a red-hot go, enthusiasm compensating for grace and style, Ollie and Jai trying not to laugh when some of their steps falter. Kat, a proud coach, whoops her enthusiasm.

Ethan, sitting amongst his own team, is dismissive of their attempt.

ETHAN

Their technique sucks. They've got zero rhythm.

CHRISTIAN

They did all the steps.

Ethan's eyes flick to Christian, clocking this challenge to his leadership, as the boys continue to dance before them.

30

INT. ACADEMY/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY 9

30

TARA, ABIGAIL, MISS RAINE

Tara rushes in, dressed. Cheering from the next studio drifts in after her. Miss Raine fires arctic disapproval Tara's way.

30

CONTINUED:

30

Tara and Abigail face each other at the barre. Tara meets Abigail's eye, challenging. Tara puts her head down, gets to work.

Tara looks up. Determination crystallising.

Abigail focuses too. They warm up in unison, both using their thick elastics to stretch their legs above their heads in attitude. True competitors.

31

EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 9

31

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, KAT, SEAN, OLLIE, JAI, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

Before the game, Ethan rallies his team.

ETHAN

This is what we've trained for.
Now is when the sweat and dirt
and pain pay off. We are elite
athletes in a tough, competitive,
physical ...

Ethan sees nobody's listening, attention taken by...

The footballers, further along the boundary, expertly using the side railing as a barre, and exercises they've learned in class as a pregame warm-up.

SAMMY

We're toast.

32

EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 9

32

TARA, ABIGAIL, KAT, CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, SEAN, OLLIE, JAI, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

Ethan runs with the ball. He has Christian on one side, Tim on the other.

CHRISTIAN

Ethan.

He passes to Tim who is immediately tagged by Jai.

Christian shakes his head at Ethan.

CUT TO:

Ollie jogs over the scoreline. Plants the ball. Chest bumps Jai, victorious.

CUT TO:

Jai crosses the scoreline. Touches down.

CUT TO:

Ollie ambles to the line, plants again.

CUT TO:

And another for Jai. It's a walkover. Even Patrick, refereeing, looks uncomfortable. Ethan curses under his breath, frustrated.

ETHAN

(calling)

Time out. *Time out.*

(to the sidelines)

Kat. Kat!

The ballet team jog in, Kat crossing to the huddle.

ETHAN

You know them. We only need to touch once to win.

KAT

I'm not your spy. And you guys are beyond help.

CHRISTIAN

If you'd pass the ball...

ETHAN

If you'd provide a lead...

SAMMY

(to Kat)

Help. Please. Cheating is all we've got left.

KAT

It's not rocket science. They work together, help each other. You know, like an actual team.

Ethan and Christian don't return her gaze.

Sammy looks over, sees Tara and Abigail arrive, not speaking but not at war either.

Abigail and Jai share a smile. Sammy's jealousy simmers.

33

EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 9

33

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, KAT, TARA, ABIGAIL, SEAN, OLLIE,
JAI, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS

Tim has the ball. He dodges around one player but two close in and he is tagged.

ETHAN

Last touch. It's almost time.

Play begins. Tim rolls the ball between his legs to Christian who passes to Sean. Sean draws a defender and passes to Ethan, who runs forward looking for someone to pass on to. Christian is the only player open.

CHRISTIAN

Ethan.

Opposition players bear down Ethan. Still no pass.

CHRISTIAN

Ethan.

The moment before being tagged, Ethan re-thinks, launches the ball. Christian marks it, runs hard, but Ollie and Jai close in. Cornered, Christian sends a high pass toward the boundary. The only scoring opportunity looks lost, until...

Sammy leaps, takes a spectacular AFL-style mark. He lands, crosses into touch for a thrilling touchdown.

Kat looks her surprise to Tara and Abigail.

Ethan and Christian hoist stunned Sammy, their unlikely hero, onto their shoulders, and chair him off.

34

EXT. FOOTBALL OVAL - DAY 9

34

CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SAMMY, KAT, TARA, ABIGAIL, SEAN, OLLIE,
JAI, PATRICK, TIM, N/S STUDENTS, N/S FOOTBALLERS, TARA
(V.O)

Footy players line up to shake hands with victorious dancers.

Kat commiserates with Ollie.

KAT

Who knew they had it in them?

OLLIE

Must've been the inspiring rev
up.

KAT

So I saw that the Stooges thing
is on tonight too.

OLLIE

Is that right?

Their shared smile. Tara crosses past, watching from a distance as Christian approaches Ethan.

TARA (V.O.)

*What I didn't like about sport
was all the stupid sayings.
There's no I in team.*

CHRISTIAN

Nice pass.

ETHAN

Pretty good, wasn't it?

Tara brightens, a load off.

TARA (V.O.)

*It's not whether you win or lose,
it's how you play the game.*

Jai, like the others, hauls off his training jumper to swap for a Dance Academy T-shirt. He offers his to Sammy, smiles when Sammy finally relents, shrugs it off, hands his to Jai.

JAI

Can I get your phone number too?

SAMMY

Why?

Sammy's looking over at Abigail. Longing.

JAI

Thought we could hang out. See a movie, or something.

Realising what Jai's offering focuses Sammy's attention.

SAMMY

Ohhhhhh... Right.

JAI

You're not interested?

SAMMY

Not available. Sorry.

Sammy crosses purposely toward Abigail.

TARA (V.O.)

*People may pretend sport is just
about the game, the reality is
one team always loses.*

Sammy scoops Abigail up, kisses her passionately. Publicly. Unapologetically.

TARA (V.O.)

*Ballet is more honest. It doesn't
give out best and fairest awards.*

After catching her breath, Abigail kisses him back. Tara and Kat trade a mystified looks as bystanders whoop and laugh.

TARA (V.O.)

There is only best.

END OF EPISODE.