Dance Academy

SERIES ONE

EPISODE 2
BLOCK 4

"Week Zero"

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EXT. WEBSTER’S PROPERTY/PADDOCK – DAY 1
TARA, NEIL WEBSTER, TARA (V.O), JOEY

It is the height of summer and the air ripples like a mirage. Sheep congregate at the near-empty feeding trough and pink cockatoos squawk noisily in the gum trees.

Fifteen-year-old Tara Webster is kneeling on the edge of her family’s property. She is talking to a KANGAROO JOEY.

TARA
Go on. I know you don’t think you’re ready but you are.

The joey looks at Tara, reproachfully.

TARA
Don’t look at me like that. I can’t take care of you forever.

The joey doesn’t want to leave and nuzzles against Tara. She pushes him away and raises her voice, trying to ignore the guilt.

TARA
Go! I mean it. Get out of here!

Frightened, the joey hops away into the bush scrub. Tara watches as he disappears from view. Her dad approaches from behind.

NEIL WEBSTER
It’s time.

Tara looks out over her beautiful, rugged home.

TARA (V.O.)
So I got in. To Dance Academy.

Tara breaks into a stunning, wide smile.

TARA (V.O.)
And life is about to become spectacular.

EXT. WEBSTER’S PROPERTY/FARMHOUSE – DAY 1
TARA, JAN WEBSTER, NEIL WEBSTER, TARA (V.O)

Tara stands on the doorstep of her family’s farmhouse. Her mum is hugging her so tight she can barely breathe.

TARA (V.O.)
The only downside is leaving home. Mine is pretty special.

Tara breaks free and walks over to the ute where her dad is loading her belongings.
INT/EXT. WEBSTER’S UTE, PATCHEWOLLOCK MAIN STREET - DAY 1
TARA, NEIL WEBSTER, LOCAL BOY, N/S FOOTBALLERS, N/S LOCAL KIDS, TARA (V.O)

Tara sits beside her father as they drive through the main street of town. They pass the post office and the corner store. Last looks.

TARA (V.O.)
In a town as small as ours, everyone has an identity.

Tara stares out the window as they approach her old school. It’s lunchtime and the students are eating outside.

TARA (V.O.)
You might be a footballer, or a farm kid or -

LOCAL BOY
Yo Ballerina!

He gestures to the other kids. As one, they launch into a comical rendition of Swan Lake. The footballers flap their arms balletically.

TARA (V.O.)
Me.

Tara grins. Her dad honks the horn as they drive past. Tara cranes her head until the familiar faces disappear from view.

INT/EXT. WEBSTER’S UTE, SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE - DAY 1
TARA, NEIL WEBSTER, TARA (V.O)

The ute is careening across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

TARA (V.O.)
I've never been the new kid before and suddenly it's like the slate has been wiped clean.

It’s a gorgeous day and Tara leans out the window, soaking up the city. The wind whips her face.

TARA (V.O.)
And I've no longer got a history. Just a future.

Tara spots the Sydney Opera House, gleaming like a beacon. She takes a deep breath. That’s her destiny.
EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY 1
TARA, N/S TAXI DRIVER, N/S STUDENTS, TARA (V.O)

Tara drags her suitcase up the last step and begins to cross the road towards the Boarding House. Her eyes are shining with excitement.

TARA (V.O.)
It’s official. From this moment on, I’m living my dream.

A TAXI misses her by inches.

TARA
Sorry!

Tara hurries across the road.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA’S ROOM - DAY 1
TARA, ABIGAIL, TARA (V.O)

Tara closes the door behind her and takes in the room where she will be living for the next year. One side is decorated with ballet paraphernalia and a dresser that heaves with trophies. The other side, Tara’s side, is bare and impersonal. Blank with possibilities.

TARA (V.O.)
And I can be whoever I want to be.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
Ahhhh! You made it!

Tara starts as Abigail runs into the room and flings her arms around her.

ABIGAIL
I was literally doing cartwheels when I heard they let you in - I mean, of course you belong here - so straight away I got us assigned as roommates...

She breaks off. Notices Tara isn’t completely sharing her excitement.

ABIGAIL
What’s wrong? Do you want to live with someone else?

Tara wonders how to phrase this.

TARA
No. I kind of got a message from Kat about... (sharing with her)
Tara stops herself from finishing. It seems very important to
Abigail that she doesn’t switch rooms. Her face has turned to
glass.

TARA
But sure. This is great.

Tara smiles. Abigail returns it.

ABIGAIL
Better than great. It’s going to be
the most brilliant year ever.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/CORRIDOR/KAT’S ROOM – DAY 1
SAMMY, KAT, N/S STUDENTS

Sammy Lieberman staggers down the corridor, under the weight
of a backpack that’s as big as him. He’s carrying a suitcase,
a casserole dish and holding a piece of paper in his mouth.

Sammy stops out the front of one of the dorm rooms. Obnoxiously loud rock music is playing. He glances at the
piece of paper and uses his elbow to open the door.

Inside, Kat is wearing a green face mask and waxing her legs, ripping the hair away with an impressive SCHWACK!

The paper drops from Sammy’s mouth.

SAMMY
Sorry. I thought... But obviously
not...

Kat watches him curiously.

SAMMY
Administrative error. Sorry.

Sammy bends to retrieve the paper and his backpack hits him
in the head. Kat laughs as he stumbles out the door.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/COMMON ROOM – DAY 1
SAMMY, MS HISTEAD, BONNIE, SEAN, N/S STUDENTS

The common room is swamped with suitcases. MS HISTEAD, the
Boarding House Mistress, is frazzled as she answers a million
questions and sorts kids into rooms.

MS HISTEAD
Who’s next?

Sammy steps forward, knocking the person behind him with his
backpack.

MS HISTEAD
Last name?
SAMMY Lieberman.

Ms Histead scrolls down her list.

MS HISTEAD I’ve already put you in a room.

SAMMY I know, but...

MS HISTEAD You want to be with someone else.

SAMMY It’s not that. I’m... (not being difficult)

BONNIE Ms Histead, one of the toilets is clogged.

MS HISTEAD Thank you Bonnie. Look, pet, this isn’t a hotel. If I switch rooms for you, I have to do it for everyone.

SAMMY And I wouldn’t want to put you out only...

SEAN Someone’s stolen my suitcase Miss!

MS HISTEAD (flustered) Do me a favour and go back and give them another chance.

SAMMY But...

Ms Histead has already turned to the next person vying for her attention. Sammy is forced to step aside. Now what?

EXT. SYDNEY - TIME LAPSE

NIL CAST

Night rushes into day over the shimmering water.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/KAT’S ROOM - DAY 2

SAMMY, KAT

Sammy is wearing pyjamas bottoms and a T-shirt. He’s squinting as he begins to insert a contact lens into one eye.
Kat enters the dorm, just back from the showers, wearing a bathrobe. Her hair is wrapped in a towel, turban-style.

KAT
You can't see without those can you?

Sammy shakes his head.

KAT
Great.

From Sammy’s out-of-focus POV through the mirror, Kat suddenly drops the robe to the floor and starts to change. She’s wearing a sports bra and briefs beneath the robe and it’s so blurry that Sammy doesn’t see anything... but it still makes him jump, startled.

At which point his contact lens slips through his fingers.

SAMMY
No.

Face getting paler by the second, Sammy scrambles to fish out the lens as it disappears down the sink.

SAMMY
(to himself)
You’ve got to be... (kidding)

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA’S ROOM – DAY 2
TARA, ABIGAIL

ABIGAIL
I’m not kidding – I danced every day of the holidays.

As Abigail packs up her dance bag, Tara stands staring at her reflection in the mirror. She’s wearing her uniform for the very first time.

ABIGAIL
There’s no way I wanted to start the year off stiff and...

EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE – DAY 2
TARA, ABIGAIL, N/S STUDENTS

Tara and Abigail are walking towards the Academy.

ABIGAIL
... besides, you’ve got to figure it’s only a hundred and eight days until exams which means every second’s vital...
Abigail keeps prattling but Tara tunes out as she looks around at teenage dance students, of all nationalities, enjoying the morning sun. It’s the first day of school and they look fit and vibrant. The water sparkles beside them.

Tara breathes it all in. She’s arrived!

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR/STUDIO - DAY 2
SAMMY, KAT, SEAN, N/S SEAN’S MATES, N/S STUDENTS

Now wearing an unfashionable pair of specs, Sammy is trailing behind a group of boys as they make their way through the corridor. SEAN, the leader, brims with teenage male bravado.

SEAN
So my cousin, his mate, said he ran into her over New Years.

The boys follow Sean’s gaze to check out Kat. She’s approaching the dance studio, listening to her mp3 player.

SEAN
Word is she’s got a couple of tattoos in some very interesting places.

The boys stare as Kat leans forward - there’s a hint of a tattoo at the small of her lower back, poking out of her leotard.

SAMMY
Really? Like what places?

SEAN
Use your imagination, man. Or is that affected by your eyesight?

The other boys laugh and Sammy is embarrassed. They walk on ahead. Sammy takes a deep breath and hurries to catch up, trying to fit in.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 2
TARA, ABIGAIL, KAT, SAMMY, SEAN, N/S SEAN’S MATES, N/S LI CHEN, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS AND GIRLS)

Tara and Abigail are warming up at the barre. Abigail is studying the girl who is standing at the very front.

ABIGAIL
Li Chen is deluded if she thinks she’s taking my spot at the barre.

Tara notices Kat entering the studio.

TARA
There’s Kat. I want to say hi.
ABIGAIL
I told you, she’s anthrax to your reputation.

Kat pinky waves from across the room. Tara is clearly torn.

ABIGAIL
Suit yourself.

Abigail strides down to Li Chen to claim her rightful position.

CROSS TO:

Kat is sitting on the floor, cutting a hole into a black pair of tights. She smiles as Tara approaches.

KAT
How you doing Tara-tiara? And what are you doing hanging out with Abigail? After audition week any sane person... (would be staying far, far away)

TARA
Hold it. I don’t know what the story is with you two...

Kat goes to tell her but Tara stops her.

TARA
... but it’s the first day of a brand new year. I just want to be friends with everyone.

Kat stares, astonished by this naivete. She laughs.

KAT
And I want a unicorn but they keep telling me it’s not possible.

Kat slips the tights over her head, it’s now converted into a cool top. Tara notices the tattoo on her back.

TARA
Didn’t that hurt?

KAT
Surprisingly little.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO – DAY 2
TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, SAMMY, MISS RAIN, PATRICK, SEAN, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS AND GIRLS)

The first years students have shed their warm-up clothes and now congregate in front of Miss Raine and Patrick who tag team the introductory speech.
MISS RAINE
Welcome to first year.
(beat)
While your friends at home are
being ordinary teenagers, you all
have a chosen a different path. An
extraordinary one.

PATRICK
This will be your home for the next
two years.

He looks out at the sea of eager, young faces.

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 2
TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, SAMMY, SEAN, MISS RAINE, N/S FIRST YEARS
(BOYS AND GIRLS), MISS RAINE (O.S.), PATRICK (O.S.)

Mixed Classical: The first year girls and boys are lined up
along the barre, legs moving at lightning speed.

First we focus on Tara whose eyes are shining; utterly
thrilled to be here.

PATRICK (O.S.)
Where you will train six days a
week, working harder than many
people work in a lifetime.

Then we see Sammy flinching as Sean’s leg comes dangerously
close to his nose and glasses in the grande battements.

MISS RAINE (O.S.)
I realise the goal for most of you
is a place in the National Ballet
Company.

Kat grimaces as she kicks her leg up around her ears.

MISS RAINE (O.S.)
However, there are always more
talented students than positions to
go around.

Abigail stares straight ahead, eyes on the prize.

PATRICK (O.S.)
Which is why this year we have
decided to broaden the curriculum
and introduce you to more styles of
dance.
Jazz Class: Tara arrives wearing her ballet uniform. Abigail smirks – everyone else is dressed in funky jazz clothes. Tara is too excited to notice she looks different.

Patrick (O.S.)
Over the coming days you will be assessed in Jazz...

The music begins and they all move in sync, like something out of a music video. Except Tara, who is still stuck on the first step.

Contemporary Class: The students are working on the floor, contracting their bodies into disjointed positions.

Tara’s face is screwed up in agony as she tries to hold the pose.

Character Class: Tikkinova thumps a stick on the ground as she counts out the beat.

Tara attempts to Mazurka around the room, performing a traditional polka dance. The teacher yells at her in Russian. She’s standing so close, her spit flies in Tara’s face.

And Hip Hop.
Hip Hop: While another group performs, Kat takes wardrobe matters into her own hands and passes Tara a Kat-fashioned black stockinged top.

CUT TO:

Tara is wearing her new outfit and dancing beside Kat. She’s even managing to keep up... almost.

MISS RAINÉ (O.S.)
These results will be posted at the end of the week. How you place may as well be your identity while at the Academy.

Kat and Tara share a grin. Abigail looks unamused.

BACK TO:

INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO/CORRIDORS – DAY 2

Mixed Classical: Class is ending and as is customary they all perform the classical reverence (curtsy and bow) and then clap Miss Raine. Tara is exhausted but radiant.

TARA
I can’t believe we do this every day now.

KAT (grimacing)
Get used to it.

ABIGAIL (supercilious)
Get used to it.

Kat and Abigail glance at each other and quickly look away. Miss Raine calls for quiet.

MISS RAINÉ
Girls, this afternoon you’re to get fitted for your pointe shoes. I want you to come into repertoire tomorrow already knowing the Kitri solo from Don Quixote.

TARA
Fantastic! I know that dance.

Everyone starts filing out of the studio.

MISS RAINÉ
Samuel? Tara? Please see me before you go.

LATER:
The studio has emptied. Tara and Sammy stand before Miss Raine.

**SAMMY**
What do you mean I have to do pointe? Boys don’t do pointe.

He gapes in utter horror.

**MISS RAINE**
They do when their ankles are weak and yours are from all those years of tap.

**SAMMY**
(horrified)
But I’ll be a laughing-stock.
More of a one.

**MISS RAINE**
A laughing-stock with stronger ankles. There’s always a silver lining.

Completely dejected and bracing himself for ridicule, Sammy leaves the studio. Miss Raine turns to Tara.

**MISS RAINE**
Now...

**TARA**
Miss Raine, thank you for assigning us the Kitri solo. I know I’ve been a bit shaky but I really think in repertoire... *(I’ll make up for it)*

**MISS RAINE**
(interrupting)
That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. We don’t feel your technique is ready for pointe work.

Tara looks like she’s been slapped.

**TARA**
But I’ve been en pointe for years.
At my old studio... *(I was the best)*

**MISS RAINE**
(over)
At your old studio they trained you poorly.

Miss Raine gathers her belongings.
MISS RAINE
So tomorrow, and until I say otherwise, you’re to work at the barre. I want you to focus on controlling turn out at all times.

Miss Raine goes to leave the studio. Tara trails behind.

TARA
But Miss Raine, please. I’m sure I can... (prove to you)

MISS RAINE
It’s not up for discussion, Tara.

The door slams behind her, leaving Tara alone in the studio.

EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 2
TARA, ABIGAIL, ETHAN, N/S GLORIA, CHICKENS ON ROLLERBLADES, N/S STUDENTS, TARA (V.O)

Tara and Abigail are waiting for their drinks at the coffee cart. Tara is holding a lunch tray, while Abigail surveys the muffins suspiciously. Tara is still reeling from her conversation with Miss Raine. She stares at her reflection in the stainless steel counter top.

TARA (V.O.)
You know those moments when you see yourself, like accidentally, and go - wow that’s me. It’s not some movie you’re watching. Or happening to someone else.

The world slows down as Ethan Karamakov joins the queue beside her.

TARA (V.O.)
This is, like... your life.

Ethan smiles at GLORIA, the coffee cart lady.

ETHAN
Hey Gloria. The usual?

Gloria flashes Ethan a flirtatious smile and hurries towards the coffee machine. While he waits, Ethan drums his fingers on the counter-top and Tara is acutely conscious that his sleeve is now touching her elbow.

ABIGAIL
Gloria is it? This muffin is labelled as 97% fat free. But were you there when it was made? Do you personally know... (that saturated fat wasn’t “accidentally” slipped in)
Tara summons up her courage to say something to Ethan.

TARA
So... How was your holida -

Out of nowhere, someone bumps into Tara. She stumbles to the ground, struggling not to completely spill her lunch.

Tara looks up as TWO BOYS, dressed in chicken costumes, speed past on rollerblades. Ethan squats down beside her.

ETHAN
(concerned)
Are you okay?

Tara nods but is a little stunned.

TARA
Chickens? On rollerblades?

Ethan grins as he helps her put the fruit and bread roll back onto the tray.

ETHAN
It’s Orientation Week. People are crazy, pulling pranks.

He helps her to her feet.

TARA
Thanks.

Ethan’s still smiling – oh so cute. Tara smiles slowly back. It’s a perfect moment until...

ETHAN
I’m Ethan.

Tara stops smiling. Cold water all over.

TARA
I know. We met.

Off his blank expression.

TARA
During Audition Week? The dressing room, and then the party? I’m...

TARA (V.O.)
The one who’s thought about you a hundred fifty six times a day since.

TARA
(over)
I’m Tara.
Ethan clearly doesn’t remember. He pays Gloria for the coffee.

ETHAN
Right. Well, hey, enjoy your lunch.

Ethan takes the coffee and leaves the cafe. Tara gapes in disbelief as Abigail comes up beside her, unwrapping a bunch of carrot sticks.

TARA
(stunned)
We shared definite moments. They can’t have just happened in my head. Can they?

She turns to Abigail, horrified. Abigail doesn’t even bother to respond.

INT. SHOEMAKER’S STUDIO - DAY 2
TARA, KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, N/S SHOEMAKER, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS)

The Shoemaker’s studio is lit up like Santa’s Workshop. Girls everywhere are excitedly trying on the satin pointe shoes. Ribbons fly. Tissue boxes are torn open.

Abigail stands in the entrance, eyes glinting as she surveys the scene. Tara is beside her, becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

ABIGAIL
He’s the Company’s shoemaker. Personally fits all their pointe shoes and now ours.

Abigail gestures to the wizened old SHOEMAKER who is helping a girl into a pair of shoes.

ABIGAIL
This is a major honour.

KAT
What? Planks of reinforced cardboard, with blocks to stand your toes on? So obvious a man invented them.

Kat snaps the pointes she’s holding at Sammy, crocodile style. He blinks, taken aback.

SAMMY
What...? Ow!

Sammy flinches as she snaps his arm with the heavy blocks.
KAT
See? Pointe shoes are barbaric.

Tara stares at the girl who’s being fitted for the pointe shoes. Her feet gleam in the pink satin.

TARA
(entranced)
I think they’re beautiful.

ABIGAIL
Come on. Let’s get you fitted.

She starts to drag Tara over to the Shoemaker. Tara comes to with a start.

TARA
(alarmed)
No, no. That’s okay. I can go later.

Abigail glances at her sharply.

ABIGAIL
Why? You’re here now.

Everyone seems to look at Tara. She doesn’t come clean. Abigail clocks this, a curious expression spreading over her face.

EXT. SYDNEY - DAY 2

The sun is setting as a ferry crosses the Harbour.

INT. ACADEMY/BOYS’ DRESSING ROOM - DAY 2

In the crowded locker room, Sammy emerges from the shower. He has a towel wrapped around his waist and his glasses are fogged up.

Sammy carries his stuff over to one of the lockers but as he opens the door it’s slammed shut again.

SEAN
That’s mine Twinkletoes. You can put your pointe shoes in the bottom.

The surrounding boys laugh. Sammy struggles a smile, trying to be a good sport.

SAMMY
Twinkletoes. Good call Sean.
There’s a rustle of activity at the other end of the dressing room as Kat and a pretty third year girl, ISABELLE, appear at the door. Boys improv “Woo-hoo”, “Come on in” etc.

   KAT
   Yo Sam-boy.

She gestures for him to come over. Sammy looks confused but pads to the door.

   SAMMY
   Hi?

   KAT
   There he is. Ain’t he lovely?

Isabelle looks Sammy up and down. He hastily fastens his towel.

   SAMMY
   Can I help you?

They both ignore him.

   ISABELLE
   I told you, it’s got to be a girl.

   KAT
   (selling it)
   Just think of him as “Samantha”.

   SAMMY
   (flinching)
   No. Don’t. Really.

   ISABELLE
   Sorry Kat, O Week requirement. You’re going to have to come up with someone else.

Isabelle walks away. Kat sighs, bummed out.

   KAT
   Well we tried. I’ll see you back at the dorm. Actually, do you mind picking up some chocolate? I have this craving...

Sammy is desperate for her to get her out of there, before it gets any worse.

   SAMMY
   Yup. Fine. No problem.

   KAT
   Probably PMS.
Sammy closes the door on her. Bracing himself, he turns back to the dressing room full of boys who have been watching the whole thing.

SEAN
Maybe afterwards you can paint your toenails and talk about your feelings?

Everyone guffaws and Sammy nods, resigned. He deserved that.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA’S ROOM - NIGHT 2
TARA, ABIGAIL, KAT

Tara is studying her unauthorised pointe shoes, feeling like a fraud.

ABIGAIL
Oh my goodness. Adorable.

Tara looks up and sees that Abigail is holding one of Tara’s ballet trophies. It’s smaller and tackier than Abigail’s selection.

ABIGAIL
(hiding a smirk)
You didn’t tell me you were Patchewalling’s Best Ballerina.

TARA
(smiles weakly)
Three years running.

There’s a knock and Kat sticks her head in the door.

KAT
Hey T. Got a minute?

She looks pointedly at Abigail – indicating “in private”. Tara gingerly peels herself off the bed.

TARA
Ow. Who knew you could have muscles between your toes?

ABIGAIL
Plantar flexors.

TARA
Right.

Abigail’s eyes narrow as Tara hobbles out of the room, ditching her in favour of Kat.
EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - NIGHT 2

TARA, KAT, ISABELLE, N/S THIRD YEAR GIRLS

Tara follows Kat along the moonlit wharf.

TARA
I don’t want to get in trouble for being out of the dorms.

KAT
Relax. It’s not even after curfew. And this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

They reach one of the darkest corners and Tara sees a coven of older girls hovering in the shadows. Their leader, ISABELLE, shines a torch in Kat’s face.

ISABELLE
You’ve come. But have you chosen wisely?

The torch swings to Tara, who squints. Kat glances at her.

KAT
I think so.

TARA
Chosen what?

The girls smile. Isabelle puts the torch underneath her own chin. It makes her face glow red and eerily.

ISABELLE
During O Week, there is one sacred tradition. Beyond the childish pranks. Each year, two first year girls are asked to display great courage.

Isabelle smiles wickedly.

ISABELLE
We dare you to jump off there, into there.

Tara and Kat follow her gaze as she points her torch to a towering balcony and then to the Harbour, which ripples beneath the torchlight.

ISABELLE
Tonight.

KAT
Awesome.

Kat grins. Tara looks horrified.
Kat and Tara are huddled in the shadows of the Balcony. Tara tries to reason with Kat while she hurriedly strips down to her bra and undies.

**TARA**
Kat, no way. We could break our necks.

**KAT**
Details.
(off Tara’s look)
Seriously, this happens every year. The water’s deep, we’re totally fine.

Kat’s jeans get stuck on her sneakers. She tugs them free.

**TARA**
But what do we get for doing it? And why do we have to be naked?

**KAT**
Infamy and for the last time underwear is not naked. Stop making excuses and start stripping.

Tara reluctantly removes her summer dress. She sighs.

**TARA**
(almost to herself)
I wish I’d worn better undies.

Hugging her arms to her chest, Tara turns around and walks to the edge of the Balcony. She contemplates the drop.

**TARA**
Okay. Let’s get this over with.

Kat looks impressed as Tara easily climbs onto the other side of the railing. The girls below slowly clap.

Kat clambers up beside her. They look down at the Harbour. The water is dark and murky. Kat shivers, suddenly nervous.

**KAT**
Wow. It’s higher than you think, isn’t it?

Tara soaks up the moonlight, suddenly exhilarated.

**KAT**
There wouldn’t be sharks in this part of the Harbour, would there?
Girls, if you’re going to do it, do it quick.

The girls below start quietly chanting - Jump! Jump! Jump! A couple of other people join the group.

I have this phobia about sharks... and heights. Actually, I’m not feeling so good.

Kat looks dizzy. She glances back at the roof. Tara grabs Kat’s hand as the girls keep chanting.

Hey, you’re fine. Just think of it as like leaping into the unknown. (beat) Only don’t look down.

(panicking) We’re about to jump down.

Tara grins, wickedly.

But first we get to fly.

Kat tries to smile back, but she’s clearly terrified.

(firm) Together. On three.

Kat nods shakily. Tara maintains eye contact.

One, two...

Tara grins and pulls them both off the balcony before she gets to three. Kat screams at the top of her lungs.

Holding hands, Tara and Kat fall in slow motion through the air. Exhilarated, they hit the black water with an almighty splash!

The water of the harbour is broken as Tara and Kat surface, spluttering. They grin at each other.

Let’s do it again.
The spectators have gathered at the wharf. They’re clapping, impressed. Tara’s eyes widen as she sees that Ethan has arrived and is waiting with some towels.

The girls swim over and Ethan pulls Kat out of the water. He plays the serious big brother as he passes her a towel to put on.

**ETHAN**
Do you have a desire to become a quadriplegic?

**KAT**
Guess it’d get me out of class.

Off his look. She rolls her eyes.

**KAT**
I’m joking.

**ETHAN**
There could have been rocks, you just don’t know what’s... *(under there)*

**KAT** *(over)*
Whoa tiger. I got dragged off that balcony.

Kat shrugs an apology at Tara for dropping her in it. Ethan turns to her.

**ETHAN**
Really? So I’ve got you to thank for leading my sister astray?

He takes her hand and pulls her out of the water as well. His tone is stern but there’s a glint of admiration which Tara doesn’t see.

**ETHAN**
I should have known.

**TARA**
It was probably pretty stupid.

Ethan passes Tara the other towel. He finally drops the big brother act and cracks a gorgeous smile.

**ETHAN**
I’m going to have to keep an eye on you... Tara.

Ethan holds her gaze. Tara squeals imperceptibly as goose bumps spread all over. He knows her name!
It’s a beautiful new day in Sydney. Birds fly over the Harbour Bridge.

Filled with new-found confidence, Tara catches up with Miss Raine as she exits the Academy Cafe. She’s carrying a load of files and a coffee.

TARA
Need a hand?

Miss Raine barely glances at Tara as she offloads some of the files. She strides down the wharf, Tara struggles to keep up.

TARA
You wouldn’t think a ballet teacher would have so much paperwork.

Miss Raine doesn’t respond to Tara’s attempt at charm as they reach the building. Tara takes a deep breath.

TARA
Miss Raine, I know you think I’m behind the other girls here.

Miss Raine doesn’t contradict her.

TARA
And you’re right – first to admit I’m not crash hot in technique class or contemporary or hip hop or... but when I’m really dancing I’m good.
(beat)
And if you let me show you what I can do in repertoire class, en pointe then... (I’m sure you’ll change your mind)

MISS RAINE
(interrupts)
I told you that wasn’t an option.

It’s like the wind has knocked out of Tara.

TARA
So that’s it? That’s... all?

Miss Raine gestures to the files she’s holding. Tara passes them over, clearly frustrated. Miss Raine relents ever-so-slightly.
MISS Raine
Tara, if you want to start the year off on the right foot, I’d suggest examining who your friends are. Girls like Abigail will keep you focused. Katrina... you’ll be lucky to make it through the semester.

Miss Raine closes the door, leaving Tara to process this.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOURSIDE JOGGING TRACK – DAY 3

Tara is trailing behind Abigail on her routine morning jog beside the Harbour. She’s breathing hard.

TARA
Can we stop for a second? I have to tell you something.

Tara doubles over, working out how to spill her secret, as Abigail jogs to a standstill.

TARA
It’s pretty humiliating...

Abigail smiles, as she stretches out her hamstring.

ABIGAIL
It’s okay, I figured it out.

Off Tara’s look, Abigail shrugs not unkindly.

ABIGAIL
Saw your face when we were getting fitted. You know, I’ve occasionally seen them hold pointe shoes hostage at the Junior School but I never thought they’d do it here. I mean, it’s really going backwards.

TARA
And it’s so unfair. I know I can do it.

ABIGAIL
(hiding a smile)
Of course you can.

Tara looks at Abigail, not wanting to give up.

TARA
Abi, you know how everything works in this place. What would you do?

The tiniest flicker crosses Abigail’s face.
Repertoire Class: Class is about to begin. Tara is nervous as she takes her position in the centre of the room beside Abigail and amongst the other girls. They’re all holding Spanish fans and wearing pointe shoes, including Tara.

Kat tries to catch Tara’s eye but she blocks her out, struggling to focus on what she’s about to do.

**TARA**
Are you positive this is a good idea? She was pretty clear.

Abigail nods, confident.

**ABIGAIL**
Trust me. If she’s written you off as the worst dancer in the year, it’s up to you to prove she’s wrong.

Miss Raine enters the studio. She doesn’t see Tara.

**MISS RAINE**
Good morning ladies. Let me see what you’ve been working on. First Group.

Miss Raine flicks on the stereo and the girls begin to dance the Kitri solo. Tara takes a deep breath and gives it everything she has.

The crowd parts slightly and Miss Raine spots Tara dancing in the forbidden shoes. Her expression could cut glass.

But Tara doesn’t notice. She’s smiling wide as she springs high into the air. Tara steps into a beautiful arabesque...

The music cuts out. Tara pulls out of the arabesque, startled. Miss Raine is storming down the room towards her. She’s white with rage.

**MISS RAINE**
What do you think you’re doing?

Everyone holds their breath. Tara is terrified but stands her ground.

**TARA**
Dancing.

Tara looks to Abigail for support. She nods.

**TARA**
As well as anyone.
MISS RAINE
If you believe that you must be
delusional.

Abigail smiles to herself, victorious, as Tara shakily tries
to defend herself.

TARA
I know there are things I can do to
improve but...

MISS RAINE
Your feet were sloppy. You lost
your turn out and almost dislocated
your knee, not to mention your
ankle. There was a complete lack of
coordination between your upper
body and your arms. Shall I
continue?

Tara is fighting back tears. She shakes her head.

TARA
But I...

MISS RAINE
If you’re going to stand there and
argue with me, or worse still cry,
then you can get out of my
classroom. Right now.

Tara struggles to control herself but her eyes overflow with
tears. Miss Raine turns away from her in disgust.

The first year girls watch wide-eyed as Tara curtseys and
walks out of the studio. On her way out, Kat moves to comfort
Tara but she shakes her head and keeps on walking.

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 3
TARA, ETHAN, ISABELLE

Tara strides through the corridors, no longer trying to hide
her tears as the world crashes down around her. She rounds
the corner and sees -

Ethan and Isabelle locked in a kiss. Tara stares. Could today
get any worse?

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT 3
NIL CAST

It’s now night outside the Boarding House. The city lights
shine behind the row of Federation terraces.
INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA’S ROOM – NIGHT 3
TARA, ABIGAIL

Tara’s tears have faded and she’s sitting with Abigail on one of the dorm beds, having a heart-to-heart. Abigail is giving an Oscar-worthy performance to show she’s on Tara’s side.

ABIGAIL
She was out of line, no question. I had no idea she’d react like that...

Tara shakes her head, as if to say it doesn’t matter.

TARA
It’s not just Miss Raine. It’s me. I don’t make sense here. At home I’m...

Tara trails off, trying to explain.

ABIGAIL
Special?

Tara follows Abigail’s gaze to the Patchewalling trophy on the dresser.

TARA
I’m the dancer. But here I’m not even ordinary, I’m worse.

ABIGAIL
Don’t beat yourself up too much. Not everyone makes it here.

EXT. SYDNEY – DAY 4
NIL CAST

It’s the next day in Sydney. This time the sun doesn’t shine quite so brightly. It’s raining as commuters push past each other in the CBD and taxis honk their abuse.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/KAT’S ROOM/CORRIDOR – DAY 4
SAMMY, KAT, SEAN, N/S SEAN’S MATES

Once again Sammy is back in his pyjamas, contact lens poised to eye, as Kat enters wearing only a towel.

SAMMY
Don’t even think about it.

KAT
What?
SAMMY
(wound up)
I’m a guy. You can’t get undressed in front of me, or talk about your feelings. And I’m never, ever going to buy you tampons.

KAT
(grinning)
Good to know.

SAMMY
In fact as soon as this room situation is cleared up we probably won’t be spending much time together. So you should –

KAT
Oh.

SAMMY
- get some other friends.

Kat’s smile has gone and she even looks a wee bit upset. Sammy is instantly contrite.

SAMMY
Not that I don’t want to hang out with you. You’re great.
(tries to explain)
It’s just I’ve done so much dancing I’ve always been one of the girls and I thought here there could be... you know... there could be guys I can have things in common with. It’s like possible.

At that moment, Sean and his posse walk past. They spot Sammy in the room but can’t see Kat, who’s standing behind the door.

SEAN
Nice threads Twinkletoes. You going to do the girl part or the boy part today?

His mates guffaw at his wit. As Sean starts mimicking Sammy in the pointe shoes, Kat looks to her unlikely roommate.

KAT
(under her breath)
Really? You want to be friends with these people?

Sammy watches them horsing around with each other, generally behaving like pituitary cases. He sighs. She’s right, it’s not his scene. Kat takes matters into her own hands and sticks her head out the door.
Hey Sean.

Sean’s jaw drops at the sight of her in a towel, standing beside Sammy.

Things is - even if Sammy here does do the girl part, he’s more man than all of you put together.

As the boys gape, Kat closes the door in their faces.

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR/STUDIO - DAY 4

TARA, ISABELLE, ETHAN, N/S THIRD YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS)

Tara walks through the Academy corridor. Her hair is loose of its dancer’s bun and she’s holding the pair of pointe shoes in her hand. Tara pauses at the window of one of the studios.

Inside, the third year students are midway through pas de deux class. Tara looks beyond Ethan to the girls, including Isabelle, who are wearing half-tutus. In their black leotards, they seem so much older than the first years. The difference a couple of years makes...

Tara keeps walking and comes to the dressing room. The door is ajar and she’s about to push it open when she hears...

ABIGAIL (O.S.)
And Tara’s such a sweetheart. I really do feel sorry for her.

Tara edges open the door and sees Abigail holding court with the first year girls. On the other side of the room, Sammy and Kat are in the process of spraying his pointe shoes black.

KAT
Can’t wait for you to tell us why.

Abigail ignores Kat’s sarcastic tone. No one sees Tara.

ABIGAIL
Well obviously they had a quota of country kids to fill, which was the only reason they accepted her in the first place. But when they realised how behind she actually is they had to ask her to leave.

(MORE)
It wouldn’t be fair to the rest of us, being dragged down like that.

Tara’s cheeks are bright red with indignation. In that moment she realises Abigail has never been her friend.

SAMMY
I wouldn’t say she was dragging anyone down. I thought she danced that solo really well.

Sammy’s intimidated, but determined to do the right thing. Abigail shoots him a death stare.

ABIGAIL
What would you know? And do you have to hang out in the girls dressing room? How much of a freak do you want to be?

Kat is about to go on the attack but Tara gets in first. She pushes open the door.

TARA
Abigail, my mum taught me if you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.

Abigail’s head whips around as she sees Tara in the doorway. Her composure slips, but only for a moment.

ABIGAIL
Tara! I thought you’d be packing?

TARA
Why? I’m not going anywhere. One bad class... You don’t honestly think that would be enough to make me quit?

Abigail stares at Tara, realising she’s not going to get out of this one. Tara stares back defiant. Abigail finally looks away. She flicks her hair and turns back to the other girls. All bets are off.

ABIGAIL
Well if you’re not going, I’m sorry but I’ll have to make an official complaint.

As she goes on, Tara looks down at her hand that’s holding the pointe shoes. It’s shaking with rage.
I don’t see why my training needs to be compromised because some talentless nobody, who smells like a sheep, thinks she... (actually has what it takes to belong here)

Tara looks back up at Abigail, clenching the pointe shoe.

Abigail walks into the studio, stone-faced, a wad of tissue plugging up one bleeding nostril.

Kat follows behind, clutching Sammy’s shoulder, desperately trying not to laugh.

Kat
Pointe shoe fight. Greatest thing I’ve ever seen.

Tara is last into the studio, carrying her pointe shoes. Her hair is a mess, but she seems calm on the inside. Tara approaches Miss Raine, who is still clearly furious.

Tara
I’m sorry. You’re my teacher and I need to trust you.

Even if it hurts her pride. Tara passes over the pointe shoes. She goes to walk to the barre but Miss Raine stops her.

Miss Raine
Tara. You have unusually good feet. They’re just not ready yet.

Tara looks astonished. Miss Raine even smiles... slightly.

Miss Raine
I’ll give these back when they are.

Tara walks over to the barre. The music begins and all the first year girls perform the Kitri solo.

Except Tara. She stands at the barre, slogging away at the boring, but essential exercises. Sammy is beside her, working in his black pointe shoes. They share a look.

Tara (V.O.)
So this is O Week. Week Zero. And I’ve figured out my place.
INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR – DAY 4
TARA, ABIGAIL, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS), TARA (V.O)

The first years crowd around the notice board where the results of their weekly assessment have been posted.

TARA (V.O.)
The thing about being at the bottom is there's nowhere else to go but up.

Tara trails her finger along the lists. She's not surprised to see she's bottom of Ballet, Contemporary, Jazz and Character. She reaches Hip Hop and smiles, she's second from the bottom. Abigail is below her.

ABIGAIL
(into phone)
Mum, I topped everything. Except Hip Hop but like that counts anyway...

INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA’S ROOM – DAY 4
TARA, ABIGAIL, TARA (V.O)

Tara is decorating her side of the room. Abigail sits on the other side in frosty silence. The battle lines are clearly drawn.

TARA
It was you wasn’t it? You tried to sabotage me in audition week.

Abigail snorts as she flicks through dance images on her laptop. Her lack of response is all the answer Tara needs.

TARA
I don’t get it. You’re the best dancer here. Why do you hate me so much?

Abigail looks over at Tara and we see a crack in her armour for the briefest second. Then it’s gone. Abigail stands up and leaves the room.

Tara positions a photograph of herself and the joey on the dresser. It proudly sits beside her Patchewolling trophy.

TARA (V.O.)
So I don’t think I’ll get an answer to that anytime soon.
Tara arrives at the roof on top of the Boarding House where Kat and Sammy are already lounging on deck chairs, eating pizzas, and generally being fabulous in the sunshine. Kat is wearing a hat and big vintage sunnies.

TARA (V.O.)
And in the meantime I’m going to listen to Miss Raine about dancing but pick my own friends.

Tara sits down beside Sammy and accepts a slice.

TARA
So are you’re staying with Kat?

SAMMY
Turns out someone registered me as Samantha.

KAT
O Week prank.

SAMMY
Just to add to my sense of masculinity.

Kat leans forward to grab a slice of pizza and Tara notices that the tattoo on her back has smudged.

TARA
Kat, I hate to break it to you but your tattoo’s gone wrinkly.

Sprung, Kat glances at her behind. She shrugs sheepish.

KAT
Yeah. I’m not really a fan of pain.

SAMMY
You faker. I am deeply appalled.

Kat shoves a piece of pizza in Sammy’s mouth to shut him up. He splutters, protesting, and watching her new friends Tara breaks into another stunning, wide smile. We pull out on them, laughing together, as the sun sets over the harbour.

END OF EPISODE.