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# Dance Academy

SERIES ONE

EPISODE 6  
BLOCK 5

## "Perfection"

Written by Samantha Strauss

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INT. ACADEMY/GIRLS' DRESSING ROOM - DAY 1

1

TARA, ABIGAIL, KAT, THIRD YEAR (GIRL), N/S STUDENTS (GIRLS),  
TARA (V.O)

It's morning in the girls' dressing room and light-hearted, upbeat music plays on a stereo. The confined space is chaotic with activity as girls prepare for class. A third year waddles past, wearing baggy tracksuit pants under a tutu. Another uses all her strength to rip the sole out of her pointe shoes, converting them into demi-pointes.

TARA (V.O.)

*My enemy in primary school was  
Stephanie Maxwell. She had this  
long, shiny ponytail...*

At the mirror, Abigail relentlessly wields a can of hairspray. Kat, nearby, cops a mouthful and pulls a face.

TARA (V.O.)

*... and would tease me because all  
I had was tangles.*

By the lockers, Tara is wriggling into her leotard without removing her t-shirt. As in primary school, her hair is a mess. She's cradling her mobile phone against her neck, multi-tasking as she talks to her mum.

TARA

(into phone)

Uh huh. Auntie Bev... Really?

As Tara's mother continues a long and complicated story, Tara takes the phone away from her ear and pulls her t-shirt up and over her head. Through the phone's speaker we can still hear Mrs. Webster but Tara's no longer listening. She shoves the t-shirt and some other belongings into her locker.

TARA (V.O.)

*I cried about it to Mum who said  
true beauty is in the  
imperfections.*

Taped to the inside of the locker is a poster of a beautiful black-haired ballerina. As always, Tara takes a moment to admire the dancer's perfect form.

TARA (V.O.)

*She'd obviously never spent time at  
the Academy.*

Tara realises her mum is still talking and brings the phone back to her mouth.

TARA

(into phone)

Mum? I'm going to have to call you  
back.

1 CONTINUED: 1

Tara hits end and shuts the locker door.

2 INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDORS - DAY 1 2

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, N/S STUDENTS, TARA (V.O)

INTERCUT WITH:

3 INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY (FANTASY) 3

TARA, KAT, ABIGAIL, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS), TARA (V.O)

INTERCUT WITH:

4 INT. OPERA HOUSE/STAGE - NIGHT (FANTASY) 4

TARA, TARA (V.O)

CORRIDOR: Slow Motion... Tara and Kat are walking through the crowded hallway. Kat is chatting animatedly as she wolfs down a packet of chips. Tara isn't paying attention.

TARA (V.O.)

*To be accepted here you have to be  
in the top five percent of dance  
students everywhere.*

CUT TO:

STUDIO: Immaculate first year girls are dancing in the centre, wearing their purple leotards and practice tutus. Tara is amongst them.

TARA (V.O.)

*Over the next three years some will  
leave because of injury. Others  
because they're not good enough...*

In a SERIES OF CUTS we see the class decrease in numbers while they perform the same enchainment.

TARA (V.O.)

*A few will get tired of working so  
hard and want to be normal.*

Tara completes a turn and looks around. Kat - who has been beside her - is now gone.

TARA (V.O.)

*Only two girls can expect contracts  
with the Company...*

MORE CUTS until Tara and Abigail are the only two girls left in the studio. Competitors to the bitter end.

CUT TO:

4

CONTINUED:

4

STAGE: We are behind a dancer as she performs a solo, wearing a white Swan Lake tutu. The floodlights are blinding.

TARA (V.O.)

*And it's once in a generation that  
someone will become a prima  
ballerina. Which if you work it out  
is like 0.001% of all girls who do  
ballet.*

We realise the dancer is Tara. She's giving it her all, better than we've ever seen her. We freeze on Tara, one leg high in the air, arms outstretched like a bird.

TARA (V.O.)

*So it's statistically impossible.*

CUT TO:

CORRIDOR: Back to real time and Tara and Kat are approaching a crowd that has formed outside one of the studios.

TARA (V.O.)

*Yet all of us are convinced we're  
the exception.*

Tara can't make out what everyone's looking at. Sammy sticks his head out of the pack.

SAMMY

The Company's back.

Tara's eyes light up. Beside her, Kat's smile falters.

5

**INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR/REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY 1**

5

TARA, SAMMY, KAT, N/S MALE DANCER, N/S COMPANY DANCERS, MISS RAINE (O.S)

STUDIO: The Company Dancers are rehearsing Swan Lake. Their colourful dance wear is a far cry from the immaculate appearances of the students. The guys are in sloppy tracksuit pants, the women in loose jumpers.

Some are barefoot, some have their hair loose from a bun. All seem totally fabulous.

CUT TO:

CORRIDOR: The crowd has dwindled and Tara and Sammy have made it to the window. Their noses are pressed against the glass, riveted as a MALE DANCER stops near the window and dashes off multiple pirouettes.

TARA

Six, seven, eight...

5

CONTINUED:

5

SAMMY

I'm sorry, that's not even possible.

Kat sticks her head in between them. She's been much more interested in getting the remaining chips out the packet than the dancing.

KAT

You know it's after nine? I personally don't have a problem with that but... *(you guys stress about being late for class)*

Tara and Sammy freak. Together, they all tear off down the corridor as fast as they can, stripping out of their warm-up clothes and hop out of their ugg boots and thongs.

MISS RAINE (O.S.)

First years I'd like you to make welcome a special guest teacher....

6

**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 1**

6

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, CHRISTIAN, MISS RAINE, NATASHA, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS)

The first years are gathered in front of Miss Raine, paying rapt attention as she introduces the glamorous, black-haired (*adjust*) woman standing beside her. It's the dancer from Tara's poster.

MISS RAINE

Who over the next few days has generously agreed to give up what spare time she has.

Tara, Kat and Sammy crash noisily into the studio. Sammy shrugs apologetically at Miss Raine who ignores them all.

MISS RAINE

Principal of the National Ballet and world-acclaimed ballerina...

Tara has been staring, dumbstruck, ever since she spotted the woman beside Miss Raine.

TARA

Natasha Willis.

There's an amused rustle but Tara doesn't even notice she's said it out loud - she's too amazed.

MISS RAINE

I expect you all to make the most of it.

6

CONTINUED:

6

Miss Raine leads the students in welcoming applause. Natasha accepts it gracefully and then walks straight over to Kat, the one student who has yet to put her hands together.

NATASHA

Darling, I've been looking for you  
all morning.

To Tara's shock, Natasha embraces Kat. She squirms, uncomfortable yet resigned.

KAT

Hi mum.

Tara's mouth falls open in astonishment.

7

**EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 1**

7

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, N/S STUDENTS

Tara is staring blankly into the distance, lunch untouched. A conversation is happening around her but she's not taking any of it in. On the other side of the table, Sammy is scrolling through his phone, perturbed.

SAMMY

So I got this weird message from  
Mia and then nothing. It's not like  
her to go AWOL.

KAT

Who?

(beat)

Your "girlfriend". Right.

Kat has been eating her feelings with chocolate bars but now takes Sammy's hand, as if breaking bad news.

KAT

Sammy, there comes a time when our  
imaginary friends don't want to  
play with us anymore.

Sammy drops her hand, withering.

SAMMY

She's on exchange. You saw a photo.  
Tara, tell her.

A beat. Tara's daze is clearing. She realises they're both staring.

TARA

Your mother is Natasha Willis.

SAMMY

Interesting non-sequitur. We were actually talking about my girlfriend who... (*very much exists*)

TARA

Your mother... is Natasha Willis.

KAT

Did someone put her on repeat?

They both continue eating. Tara is becoming overwhelmingly excited. She turns on Kat, accusingly.

TARA

Why've you kept it a secret?

KAT

I haven't. Lots of people know.

Sammy agrees, mouthful of sandwich.

SAMMY

Just sensed you didn't love talking about it.

He glances sideways at Kat, who registers this and appreciates it. Tara is too excited to notice.

TARA

But she's a ballet legend. Mum once recorded her on TV and I watched it every day until the tape broke. You know I have her poster in my locker.

KAT

I thought you were being ironic.

Kat stares at Tara, a horrible sinking feeling setting in.

KAT

Seriously, you didn't... (*know?*)  
Wow. I could've sworn you were being cool.

TARA

I'm never cool. You know that.

The girls stare at each other, coming from very different places.

8

INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 1

8

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

Clutching books, Tara, Kat and Sammy are heading to class. They cross paths with Ethan.

ETHAN

Hey.

TARA

(instantly awkward)

Hi. Hey.

Everyone ignores her. Ethan looks to Kat, concerned.

ETHAN

I've been summoned tonight, I assume it's...

KAT

Shared pain.

Kat keeps smiling.

ETHAN

See you over there. Try to play nice.

Kat rolls her eyes. Tara can't help but watch Ethan as he heads away.

KAT

We have this opening night thing. You guys wouldn't want to come?

Kat looks hopefully at Tara and Sammy.

KAT

It could be brutal. Stuffy VIPs, hours of hanging around backstage. I totally understand if you...  
(*want to pass*)

Tara and Sammy exchange a glance.

TARA

I love you!

SAMMY

(playing it down)  
Since we're not doing anything.

Excited, Tara picks Kat up from around the waist. Laughing, they overbalance onto Sammy and together all crash to the floor right in front of the door to the studio. Abigail is walking past and forced to step over them.

ABIGAIL

This is supposed to be a walkway.



8

CONTINUED:

8

Sammy stands up quickly and watches her disappear down the corridor.

SAMMY

We should invite Abigail. I'm sure she'd want to go.

Tara and Kat exchange a look as they hoist each other up and enter the corridor.

KAT

Did you hit your head when you went down?

Sammy goes to protest, but is interrupted by the sound of a girl yelling his name.

MIA (O.S.)

Sammy!

They all turn around to the sight of a gorgeous girl racing down the corridor. She launches herself at Sammy and they immediately start kissing.

Kat and Tara lean their heads to the side, hypnotised and more than a little grossed out by this unlikely sight. Sammy and the Mystery Girl eventually break apart.

SAMMY

Guys, meet Mia.

KAT

You're real.

As Kat pokes her to make sure, Tara shakes her head.

TARA

Today is officially weird.

9

**EXT. OBSERVATORY HILL - DAY 1**

9

N/S STUDENTS

Classes are over for the day and Academy students laze about on the lawn underneath the Harbour Bridge, soaking up the last rays of sun.

10

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/SAMMY'S ROOM - DAY 1**

10

TARA, KAT, MIA, SAMMY

Tara is standing in front of a mirror, agonising over her wardrobe decision.

TARA

Jacket or no jacket? What do you wear to a premiere?

Kat is lying on Sammy's bed, engrossed in a story Mia is telling.

KAT

Ignore her. Hot Swedish guy in the kibbutz...

She gestures for Mia to continue the story.

MIA

Right. So we immediately had this connection. We'd talk for hours and sneak out in the middle of the night and pick pomelos. They're like grapefruits.

KAT

(entranced)

Loving it. Juice running down his Viking arms.

Tara joins them on the bed.

MIA

But I couldn't stop thinking about Sammy for one single second. So I had to come home early. Crazy huh?

Both Tara and Kat smile - romantic, but weird. The door opens and Sammy arrives back from the showers. He's thrown to find the girls in his room. Oestrogen overload.

SAMMY

Hi. You guys just... hanging out?  
In my room.

Kat climbs off the bed.

KAT

No, we're off to the theatre.  
You're excused for catch-up time.

Sammy isn't as excited about this as he probably should be.

SAMMY

Great.

He turns to Mia, almost as an afterthought.

SAMMY

Unless, you think we should postpone? It is backstage.

KAT

She's just flown all the way from Israel, Romeo.

Sammy clutches this straw.

10

CONTINUED:

10

SAMMY

Exactly. You're probably jet-lagged.

The girls ignore him. Tara follows Kat out of the dorm.

TARA

See you later Mia.

MIA

So good to meet you guys.

Mia smiles up at Sammy. He smiles back, not feeling quite as happy as he should.

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**EXT. SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE - SUNSET 1**

11

TARA, KAT, N/S EXTRAS, N/S OPERA HOUSE PATRONS

It's sunset and the sky above the famous Opera House is swirls of pink and red.

Tara and Kat have made it to the foot of the stairs. Tara is carrying a small bunch of supermarket-bought flowers. Kat takes the first step but Tara can't move.

TARA

Wait. This is a life-changing moment.

Kat fidgets as Tara continues to stare up at the building.

KAT

Is it over?

Tara finally nods and together the girls climb the stairs.

12

**INT. OPERA HOUSE/WINGS/STAGE - NIGHT 1**

12

TARA, KAT, NATASHA, CAROLINE, N/S COMPANY DANCERS

WINGS: A performance is underway on-stage as Kat and Tara enter the wings. Kat looks relaxed, she's been here a million times before, but Tara is freaking out.

KAT

Breathe.

The Stage Manager, CAROLINE, meets them at the entrance and gives Kat a big hug.

CAROLINE

Missed you kid. Come on through.

Tara's eyes are as wide as saucers as Caroline leads them into the wings. Company Dancers are waiting to go on. They're sweating and breathing hard, real people beneath the costumes and heavy make-up.

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CONTINUED:

12

While Kat talks Caroline, a flock of young women in white swan costumes waddle past Tara. They're chatting amongst themselves. Tara watches as one of the swans pulls a wedgy out of her bum, totally un-glamorous.

The music changes and the dancers run onto stage. Amidst a flurry of white feathers and pointe shoes, Tara flattens herself against the black curtain, trying to keep out of their way. As soon as she's in the clear, Tara looks out at the stage.

STAGE: The dancers have immediately transformed from real people into graceful, effortless beings, all moving together.

WINGS: Kat approaches, making a face at the white tutu action.

KAT

(stage whispered)

The dude falls in love with a swan.  
Tell me that's not creepy.

Tara's eyes are glued to the dancing.

KAT

(stage whispered)

I'm bailing to the green room. Are  
you coming?

Tara's clearly not going anywhere. Kat heads off.

STAGE: A sense of calm has descended over the stage. The flock of swans part and Natasha finally steps forward, dressed as Odette.

WINGS: She's so astonishingly beautiful that Tara stares spellbound, not moving one inch.

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**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/Common Room - Night 1**

13

SAMMY, ABIGAIL, CHRISTIAN, MIA, N/S STUDENTS

Back on earth, Academy students mill around the common room. Sammy and Mia are sitting together on the couch. They're scrolling through Mia's photographs of her trip, a half-eaten box of pizza sits in front of them.

MIA

Okay that's the kibbutz where I  
lived. You can't really see it but  
it's actually on the Jordanian  
border so all that separated us was  
this barbed wire fence...

She notices that Sammy is staring at her.

MIA

What?

SAMMY

I've been here, obsessing about  
pirouettes and you've really been  
doing stuff.

Mia shrugs, smiling at Sammy.

SAMMY

I missed you.

Sammy studies his girlfriend, knowing this is at least partly  
true. Mia pushes him away playfully.

MIA

What, with all these ballet girls  
around? I bet they kept you  
company.

She's teasing but at that moment Abigail enters the common  
room carrying a plate of salad. A flicker of guilt crosses  
Sammy's face.

SAMMY

Do you want the couch Abigail? We  
can move.

Abigail sits down on Sammy's other side, not bothering to  
respond. She looks Mia up and down.

ABIGAIL

Who are you? You don't go here.

MIA

How can you tell?

Mia is holding a slice of cheesy pizza up to her mouth. She  
laughs, self-deprecating.

MIA

No I leave anything dance-related  
to this one. He's amazing, don't  
you think?

Mia links her arm through Sammy's. He jumps at the contact  
and takes a big gulp of his drink. Then starts coughing as he  
chokes on it.

SAMMY

Wrong pipeway.



Tara has followed Ethan inside and looks around, nervous as he moves off to flirt with a PRETTY YOUNG DANCER.

Kat approaches from behind, smiling at the expression of wonder on Tara's face.

KAT

Let's go meet the legend up close.

TARA

We don't want to disturb her.

KAT

She's my mother.

Kat grabs Tara's arm and leads her through the room full of adults, towards the crowd that is encircling Natasha. They're all hanging off her every word.

Tara is still carrying her flowers but they're now wilting badly. She looks from them to the elaborate bouquets around the dressing room and tries to conceal her bunch by her side.

NATASHA

I'm a cliché - Odette's always been my favourite role. The first time I danced it was twelve weeks after Kat was born. What we could do in our youth.

Natasha notices Kat for the first time and puts her arm around her.

NATASHA

Hello darling. I didn't see you there.

KAT

Mum, this is my friend Tara.

But Natasha has already been distracted. She bursts out laughing at something another woman has said, turning her back on Tara.

NATASHA

Exactly. There I was breast-feeding in the dressing room right before the Act 3 fouettes.

Everyone laughs. Kat bristles.

NATASHA

What? I'm allowed to say "breast-feeding" aren't I?

With a blinding smile, Natasha launches into another story. Tara watches as Kat's own smile freezes.

17

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/Common Room - Night 1**

17

SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ABIGAIL, MIA, N/S STUDENTS

Sammy looks enviously at the Academy students lounging about the Common Room. They're relaxed and having fun. He's sitting between Mia and Abigail, uncomfortable by the girls being in such close proximity.

MIA

Would you like some pizza Abigail?

Abigail stares at the pizza box, scornful.

ABIGAIL

I really wouldn't.

MIA

Come on. Help us out before we explode.

SAMMY

She doesn't do carbs after three.

Both girls look at him.

SAMMY

Apparently.

Trying to get a hold of himself, Sammy stands up and walks over to Christian who is playing pool by himself.

SAMMY

Can I...? *(play)*

Christian nods and Sammy picks up a pool cue, glancing anxiously back at the girls.

CHRISTIAN

If you want to talk... *(I'm here)*

Sammy brightens - that sounds like a top idea.

SAMMY

Really?

CHRISTIAN

No.

Christian sinks the ball into the pocket.

18

**INT. OPERA HOUSE/NATASHA'S Dressing Room - Night 1**

18

TARA, KAT, NATASHA, N/S OLD BALLET CRITIC

The dressing room has emptied and Natasha is saying goodbye to an OLD BALLET CRITIC who is the last person to leave.



NATASHA

Go easy okay? You know reviews  
terrify me. Bye darling.

Kat and Tara are sitting together on the couch. Bored, Kat is ploughing into a massive box of chocolates.

KAT

Truffle?

TARA

No thanks.

NATASHA

(overhearing)  
Smart girl.

Natasha closes the door and collapses down beside them, exhausted.

NATASHA

She must be the famous Tara I've  
been hearing all about.

Tara laughs, nervous beneath the full force of Natasha's gaze.

TARA

It's an honour to meet you Mrs...  
Ms. Willis. Tonight was incredible.

NATASHA

Really? Did you think?

She studies Tara intently and then gestures to Kat.

NATASHA

Darling, can you pass me... (*my  
cleanser over there?*)

Kat instinctively knows to hand her mother a bottle of cleanser and a bag of cotton buds. She's done this a million times before.

NATASHA

Thanks.

Tara watches fascinated as Natasha starts to remove her make-up. Every move she makes is deliberate and compelling.

NATASHA

I love meeting Kat's friends. You  
didn't want to bring Abigail too?

KAT

(sarcastic)

I would've if it was four years ago  
and we were friends. But bonus  
points for name recall.

Natasha laughs, ignoring the dig. She turns to Tara,  
conspiratorial.

NATASHA

I'm always in so much trouble with  
her.

TARA

Me too.

They share a smile. Kat is unamused.

NATASHA

Now tomorrow - I know you're too  
busy to spend time with your  
decrepit mother but it's been ages.

KAT

Yeah?

Natasha seems genuine and Kat thaws slightly.

KAT

My wardrobe could handle some  
credit card action. Maybe if you  
increased my limit we could...  
*(play nicely all afternoon)*

NATASHA

I was more thinking - early dinner?  
I have a matinee in the afternoon  
which you could... *(come and watch)*

KAT

Just remembered, we have that  
thing?

She looks to Tara for back-up. Tara doesn't come through  
straight away. Natasha doesn't notice as she continues to  
remove her false eyelashes.

NATASHA

Well if you get an opening I'll  
leave your names at the door.

TARA

That would be fantastic.

Kat looks between her mother and best friend. Tara is wearing  
a gooey, lovesick expression. Kat doesn't like it one bit.



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CONTINUED:

21

SAMMY

Maybe you need to take a risk?

He holds a forkful up to Kat's mouth. She takes back the perfect side of her breakfast and barricades it protectively.

KAT

You don't mess with perfection.

Sammy takes a bite of his creation, wincing as he swallows.

SAMMY

Right.

CROSS TO:

Christian is approaching their table, with Mia by his side. He's clearly enjoying the opportunity to show her around.

CHRISTIAN

You sure you want Lieberman?  
Because I can show you around.

Mia grins as she spots Sammy.

MIA

Positive.

Christian shakes his head as Mia plants a big kiss on Sammy. He looks slightly uncomfortable but returns it. As Christian heads off, Mia turns to Kat.

MIA

How was the ballet? I feel bad  
Sammy missed out because of me.

Kat withdraws two tickets from her bag.

KAT

Don't. As a present to the reunited  
lovebirds, I got you matinee  
tickets.

She hands them over.

MIA

Thanks Kat. That's so sweet.

Mia squeezes Sammy's hand, excited. He tries hard to look pleased.

22

**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO/CORRIDOR - DAY 2**

22

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ABIGAIL, NATASHA, N/S FIRST  
YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS)

Mixed Classical Warm Up: Boys and girls are preparing for class.

Abigail is breaking in a pair of pointe shoes in front of the mirror as she practises throwing her leg back in a high attitude.

Sammy is standing at the barre, patiently rising up and down in his own hated black pointe shoes. He looks enviously at Kat who is lying with one leg on the barre, her super-flexible feet pointed as far as they can go.

SAMMY

When you die I'm having your feet.

KAT

Genetic gift. Mum and I are both double-jointed.

Grinning mischievously, Kat shows him how her arms can swivel 360 degrees around without her hands moving.

SAMMY

Bones aren't meant to go that way.

Tara enters the studio - her hair is now dyed jet black (*adjust*). It's a strikingly different look and, while Tara is trying to appear nonchalant, she's obviously excited about the change.

CHRISTIAN

Something's different. Did you get a new training bra?

Tara shoots him a withering look, as she reaches her friends.

SAMMY

You look like someone.

He can't work out who... but Kat can and she isn't impressed. Abigail glances up from her stretching and gets it immediately as well.

ABIGAIL

I think it's sweet you're trying to copy Natasha. Pity it doesn't do much for your bone structure.

Tara blushes, caught out.

TARA

I'm not trying to look like anyone. Is it illegal to want a change?

Tara walks to the other side of the studio to the barre to start stretching. Abigail glances at Kat whose face has darkened.

22

CONTINUED:

22

ABIGAIL

First Ethan, now your mother. Isn't it adorable your best friend has a crush on your entire family?

Kat looks at Abigail sharply. She just read her mind.

CUT TO:

**LATER:**

Mixed Classical: Class is underway and a mixture of girls and boys (including Tara, Abigail and Sammy) are dancing in the centre. It's allegro and Tara is endeavouring to keep up with Abigail who soars high beside her.

NATASHA

Ballon everyone. Light and shade.

Natasha is teaching, her own black hair swept back into a messy, glamorous ponytail.

NATASHA

Imagine yourselves more bird than human. Energy connecting you up to the sky.

Christian snorts. He's standing next to Kat on the sidelines. She grins.

NATASHA

(irritated)

Something funny darling?

Kat shakes her head. Natasha turns her attention to Tara who is struggling to keep up.

NATASHA

That's right Tara. Lovely... lightness. Excellent.

Tara soaks up the compliment and beams wide as the exercise ends. Kat watches her starstruck friend, gazing after Natasha, knowing she's lost under her spell.

23

**EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE/STAIRS - DAY 2**

23

SAMMY, ABIGAIL

Sammy is hiding out on the stairs outside the Academy. He looks down at his ringing phone. The caller I.D. says it's Mia. Feeling guilty, Sammy silences the call.

The door opens and Abigail appears on the stairs.

SAMMY

Sorry. I'll get out of your way.

Sammy stands up to let her through, too depressed to even be excited about being in her presence.

ABIGAIL

Actually, I was looking for you.

SAMMY

You were?

ABIGAIL

I heard you had some tickets to this afternoon's performance.

Sammy nods, not knowing where this is going. Abigail grits her teeth, hating to have to ask for a favour.

ABIGAIL

I wouldn't, you know, ask but for some reason I haven't been able to source any. Which is irritating because it's Swan Lake and that's... *(something I've obviously got to see)*

As she continues to babble, Sammy tunes out. He stares at her in amazement having dreamt of this moment.

ABIGAIL

So?

Sammy comes to with a start.

SAMMY

Yes. We can absolutely go to the ballet together.

Abigail wrinkles her nose at his weird, glazed expression.

ABIGAIL

Great. I'll meet you in the common room at three.

She walks away down the wharf. Sammy looks down at his phone - Mia is ringing again.

Sammy hits answer and takes a deep breath, swallowing his guilt as he pretends to be disappointed

SAMMY

*(into phone)*

Sorry... didn't hear it. Listen the tickets have fallen through... I know, it sucks... Yeah. What can you do...

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**EXT. SYDNEY - DAY 2**

24

NIL CAST

The monorail shuttles it's way through the tall city buildings. Below, people and traffic battle it out in the heart of the CBD. The world is chaotic, confusing, overwhelming.

25

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/SAMMY'S ROOM/CORRIDOR - DAY 2**

25

SAMMY, KAT, TARA

Sammy is nervously studying his reflection in the mirror. Kat is lying on Christian's bed, trying to play his guitar.

SAMMY

Jacket or no jacket?

KAT

Can nobody dress themselves around here?

She gets up and helps him with his skinny tie.

SAMMY

Sorry, I'm just...

Sammy indicates that he's jittery about the date.

KAT

Awww, you and Mia still get nervous around each other.

Sammy blanches at the mention of her name.

SAMMY

Yeah...

KAT

If I wasn't girl-crushing on her I'd be jealous.

He's about to confess what he's done when Tara bounds into the room, a big smile on her face.

TARA

(out of breath)

Kat! Where have you been?

KAT

Was I meant to give you my coordinates?

Her tone is casual but she doesn't look all that happy to see Tara. Once again, Tara is too caught up to notice.



TARA

Do you mind if I go over to the  
Opera House?

Sammy glances at Kat as her face hardens.

TARA

We don't actually have a thing, do  
we? And Natasha said our names were  
at the door so...

KAT

You thought you'd go and what - see  
if she'll adopt you?

Kat forces a laugh.

KAT

Maybe you can rub her a few times  
and some of the magic will come  
off.

TARA

What?

Kat mimics her, fake innocent.

KAT

What? It's fine. But don't ask my  
permission, because you're going to  
go anyway.

Tara does want to but genuinely can't see why Kat is so mad.

TARA

I don't get what the problem is.  
Natasha just wants to spend time  
with you.

KAT

Is that a fact?

TARA

Yes. And if I was lucky enough to  
have a mother like yours I would  
make the most of it.

KAT

Stop, you're embarrassing yourself.  
Wear the jacket Sammy.

Kat leaves the room. Tara watches her go, dumbfounded.

TARA

What's with her?

SAMMY

You seriously can't see it?

25

CONTINUED:

25

Sammy turns back to the mirror and straightens his tie, guilty as he thinks about his own problems.

26

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/Common Room - Day 2**

26

SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ABIGAIL, MIA, N/S STUDENTS

Christian is playing pool by himself again in the common room. Sammy enters holding his jacket and clutching the tickets, nervous as he pops a breath mint.

He stops in his tracks as he sees Abigail. She looks beautiful in a dress and has obviously gone to some effort which makes him ramble.

SAMMY

Sorry - wardrobe issue. Obviously not for you 'cause you look... We ready?

ABIGAIL

Where's Mia?

Sammy doesn't have an answer for that and so just smiles.

SAMMY

Hmmm?

ABIGAIL

Your girlfriend.

Sammy bites down hard on the mint.

SAMMY

Oh. Right, no it's just us today. I think she's coming down with something.

Sammy coughs, choking on a bit of mint.

SAMMY

Nothing contagious. I'm not sick. Mint blockage.

Sammy coughs it up into his hand and covers it quickly. He misinterprets the look of horror that's spreading over Abigail's face as concern.

SAMMY

But it's great of you to be concerned.

Sammy gazes at her, enchanted. Abigail is becoming more freaked out by the moment. Mia bounds into the common room.

MIA

Sammy! You are seriously going to love me.

At the pool table, Christian raises an eyebrow.

MIA

There wasn't a ticket left on the planet but Dad has this guy who pulls strings and...

Mia finally clocks Abigail standing beside Sammy.

MIA

You look nice Abigail. Are you going to the ballet as well?

Abigail nods. Mia looks between her and Sammy and clocks the two tickets in his hand. She suddenly realises what he meant by them "falling through".

MIA

Together?

She looks at Sammy, he can't meet her eye.

MIA

(quietly)  
Silly me.

Sammy's stomach lurches as her face kind of crumples.

SAMMY

Mia...

She puts the tickets in Sammy's hand and races out of the common room. Sammy watches her go, feeling like the worst person on earth.

Abigail fidgets beside him and glances at her watch.

ABIGAIL

If they're going to waste...

Sammy silently offers her the ticket. Abigail grabs the whole handful and scurries out of the room.

Sammy looks over to Christian. He just shakes his head at the expression on his roommate's face and sinks the shot.

Backstage, it's interval before the second act of Swan Lake. Tara walks through the corridor, with her new hair tied up in a Natasha-style ponytail. She's trying to look confident, like she knows where she's going, as Company Dancers rush past in full costume.

Tara turns into Natasha's dressing room and pauses for a moment as she watches the great dancer fix her make-up.

27

CONTINUED:

27

She's wearing the dressing gown again, every move she makes is exquisite and precise.

TARA

Hi Natasha. You look incredible

Natasha barely glances at Tara as she scrutinises her make-up with practised eyes.

TARA

Thanks so much for what you said in class today. About feeling like a bird?

Natasha stands and takes her tutu off the rack. No longer gracious and charming, she's one hundred percent focused on her upcoming performance, but Tara doesn't get it.

TARA

Is that something you often picture because I know when I'm dancing...  
(*I really feel like I'm flying*)

The Stage Manager, Caroline, enters at that moment.

CAROLINE

Five minutes?

Natasha looks to Caroline, still completely ignoring Tara.

NATASHA

I can't deal with this right now.  
Can you... (*take care of this?*)

Tara is thrown - she's obviously the "this". Without waiting for a response, Natasha takes the tutu behind the modesty screen and starts getting dressed.

CAROLINE

Come with me love.

Caroline takes Tara's arm and leads her out of the dressing room.

28

**INT. OPERA HOUSE/SIDE-STAGE WINGS - DAY 2**

28

TARA, NATASHA, CAROLINE, N/S COMPANY DANCERS

Caroline and Tara step into the wings. The stage manager glances at Tara who is still reeling a little, shocked by Natasha's cold tone.

CAROLINE

Don't worry. The principals just get a bit twitchy.

Tara tries not to be offended.

28

CONTINUED:

28

TARA

Of course. They have to focus on themselves before a performance.

Caroline winks, conspiratorially.

CAROLINE

Before a performance, after a performance... I've not met one who isn't self-absorbed.

Caroline muses on this as they watch the dancers on stage prepare for the performance - stretching and practising various bits of the choreography.

CAROLINE

Probably have to be. But Kat would have told you that. She knows firsthand.

Tara nods, a knot twisting in her stomach as she begins to realise that Natasha might not be as perfect as she seems.

TARA

She mentioned something.

29

**EXT. ACADEMY/STREET/BUS-STOP - DAY 2**

29

SAMMY, MIA, N/S EXTRAS

Sammy rounds the corner outside the Academy and stops as he sees Mia sitting at the bus-stop. She's been crying.

SAMMY

What's worse than dog poo?

A beat. Mia doesn't turn around.

MIA

Maggots in the dog poo.

He approaches tentatively.

SAMMY

So they're squelched between my toes....

MIA

Burrowing into your skin.  
(beat, thinking)  
Which causes some parasitic disease that you makes you vomit incessantly.

Sammy flinches, ouch.

SAMMY

Then that's what I am.

29

CONTINUED:

29

MIA

Worse.

Mia shuffles over so that Sammy can sit beside her.

MIA

You know, before I went away everyone said we were... (*perfect together*)

SAMMY

Perfect together. I know.

Mia takes a breath being brave.

MIA

So is Abigail more perfect for you than me now?

SAMMY

No she's kind of the opposite.

Mia processes this, sadly.

MIA

But...

SAMMY

(just as sad)  
But...

There you have it. They sit side-by-side, breaking up.

30

**INT. OPERA HOUSE/STAGE/SIDE-STAGE WINGS - DAY 2**

30

TARA, NATASHA, N/S NATASHA'S FRIEND, N/S COMPANY DANCERS

The curtain is up and Act 2 is underway. Side-stage, Tara is being careful to keep out of the path of the dancers.

Breathing hard from her last solo, Natasha approaches the wings. She's complaining to a friend and doesn't notice Tara standing nearby.

NATASHA

I don't know what to do with Kat. She has potential but such a bad attitude about her dancing.

The women take their positions, preparing to go on.

NATASHA

Did you see that girl before? The new "best friend" and the worst trained dancer at the Academy.

Tara's face flushes scarlet realising they're talking about her.

30

CONTINUED:

30

NATASHA

It's like she's trying to annoy me.  
I just wish she'd appreciate how  
lucky she is.

A fresh flock of corps de ballet dancers run past and the rest of Natasha's words are swallowed up. Through them, Tara watches the great dancer. In the cold blue light she no longer looks quite so beautiful.

As Natasha steps out onto stage:

31

**EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR - DAY 2**

31

TARA

Tara sits down on a bench overlooking the Harbour. Shaken and confused, she dials a familiar number into her phone.

TARA

(into phone)

Hey mum. Do you have time to talk?

Despite herself, Tara smiles faintly at the answer, appreciating what she's got.

TARA

(into phone)

Not much... I dyed my hair.

32

**EXT. SYDNEY - TIME LAPSE**

32

NIL CAST

The clouds travel over water until it's a new day in Sydney.

33

**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 3**

33

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, ABIGAIL, CHRISTIAN, NATASHA, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS), TARA (V.O)

Warm Up: The first years are getting ready for mixed classical class when Tara enters. Her hair is wrapped up in a scarf.

Kat is devastated by what Sammy has just told her.

KAT

How could you do that? You should  
know I'm going with Mia in the  
divorce.

She abruptly stops talking as Tara approaches.

TARA

Hey.

Sammy smiles weakly, caught between them. Tara looks to Kat, who is obviously giving her the cold shoulder.

TARA

I'm sorry Kat. Yesterday I was being insensitive and...

KAT

Self-absorbed?

TARA

That too.

KAT

Thanks for clearing it up.

Kat turns her back on Tara, not forgiving her so easily. Natasha enters the studio.

NATASHA

Tara darling, where did you run off to? I was looking forward to showing you around.

Natasha pauses to make sure Kat is listening. This time Tara notices.

NATASHA

I'd like to give someone the benefit of my experience.

KAT

Okay leaving you guys to the lovefest.

Kat heads towards the barre but as she's walking away she hears:

TARA

Sorry Natasha. I had things to do.

NATASHA

Things?

TARA

Yeah. Hair appointment.

Tara removes her scarf. Her hair is now strange shade of green, from a dye job gone wrong. Everyone looks shocked. Tara smiles at the expression on Natasha's face.

TARA

It's going to take forever to come out but I guess I have time.

Natasha blinks, stunned, as Tara goes to join Kat by the barre.



It's an obvious snub to the great dancer but exactly the right move for Kat. She shakes her head in disbelief as Tara approaches.

KAT

Mermaid chic. Maybe with some highlights...

Kat musses Tara's hair and the girls share a smile, becoming friends again.

TARA (V.O.)

*Around here we worship perfection.  
It's what we chase every moment, of  
every class.*

On the other side of the studio, Sammy stares adoringly at Abigail while she warms up.

TARA (V.O.)

*But sometimes perfect isn't what we  
want.*

Abigail catches him staring and Sammy looks away quickly.

CUT TO:

Mixed Classical: Class is now underway. Kat and Tara are now having fun up the back of the studio.

TARA (V.O.)

*And sometimes it can make us  
selfish and let other people down.*

They roll their eyes as they watch Abigail who is shadowing Natasha, copying her every move. Natasha's found her perfect protégé.

TARA (V.O.)

*Sure, I want to be in the top  
0.001% but there's got to be  
another way.*

We pull out on the first years dancing together. Tara turns around and grins as she sees Kat dancing right there beside her.

TARA (V.O.)

*Because that's not my idea of  
perfection. Not even close.*