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# Dance Academy

SERIES ONE

EPISODE 13  
BLOCK 4

"Family"

Written by Samantha Strauss

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**RELEASE SCRIPT**  
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**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - NIGHT (FANTASY)**

TARA, TARA (V.O.)

The studio is enveloped in darkness. A spotlight falls and Tara's image slowly appears in the mirror, flicking in and out, until it settles.

TARA (V.O.)

*Lately all I see in the mirror is a collage of different body parts.*

We see close-ups of all the details Tara has to focus on in order to perfect her technique - her ankles, knees, hands, shoulders, rib cage. Nothing can escape criticism.

TARA (V.O.)

*I'm not a person. I'm a hip that needs to be turned out. An arm which could be better supported.*

We whiz through these images until they blur into each other, finally crashing back to Tara as a whole.

TARA (V.O.)

*And so I've started playing this game where I try to catch my reflection by surprise.*

Tara's reflection suddenly turns and looks directly at the camera, just for a split-second.

TARA (V.O.)

*To see if I recognise the girl staring back at me.*

**EXT. ACADEMY/CARPARK - DAY 14**

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, SEAN, NATASHA, NEIL WEBSTER, N/S SEAN'S MOTHER, N/S PARENTS, N/S STUDENTS, TARA (V.O.)

Tara looks out over the parking lot where cars are starting to pour in. Sammy is beside her, politely arguing their case with someone on the phone.

SAMMY

(into phone)

... are you sure Mrs Armstrong?  
It's just that it's almost the end of semester and we're all worried about Abigail and... Thanks.

(he hits end)

For nothing.

Kat approaches, polishing off a chocolate bar.

KAT

She still won't put you through?

2

CONTINUED:

2

Sammy shakes his head.

SAMMY

I just feel -

KAT

Helpless.

SAMMY

And -

TARA

Guilty. Us too.

SAMMY

I'm going to send her another email.

He walks off, head bowed as he types into his phone. Tara looks back to the carpark. It's now filled with cars and a sea of different reunions as parents greet their children.

TARA (V.O.)

*I think family is probably the best mirror. Because they know you better than anyone.*

Tara watches as Sean is hugged by a nice, conservative-looking woman.

TARA (V.O.)

*And you can always count on them to stay the same.*

A shiny, expensive sportscar has pulled up to the kerb. People notice as Natasha emerges.

NATASHA

Kat, darling!

Natasha hugs her daughter in a cloud of perfume.

NATASHA

(sniffs)

Is that chocolate?

KAT

Good to see you mum.

Struggling to maintain her (albeit pained) smile, Kat lets Natasha lead her away.

TARA (V.O.)

*This is the longest I've been away from my parents. I wonder what they'll see...*

2 CONTINUED:

2

Tara notices an old UTE, covered in dust, has pulled up beside Natasha's sportscar. Neil Webster stands outside it, squinting in the sunlight.

TARA (V.O.)  
*I wonder how they'll think I've  
changed...*

A smile breaks over Tara's face.

TARA  
Dad.

3 **EXT. ACADEMY/WHARFSIDE - DAY 14**

3

TARA, ETHAN, NEIL WEBSTER, JAN WEBSTER, N/S STUDENTS, N/S PARENTS

Tara is excitedly leading her parents down the wharf towards the Academy. They talk over each other, effortlessly slipping back into the family routine.

TARA  
I can't believe you guys are here.

JAN WEBSTER  
Your father's been beside himself.

NEIL WEBSTER  
I might've mentioned it once or  
twice.

TARA  
You know it's just classes, right?  
Not a performance.

Ethan approaches during this. Tara is nervous but can't contain her pride about introducing her brand new boyfriend.

TARA  
Mum, Dad this is... Ethan.

Ethan flashes his most parent-friendly charm as he glances between Tara and Jan.

ETHAN  
Crazy. You two have the exact same  
smile.

JAN WEBSTER  
Delighted to meet you Ethan.

Jan shoots Tara an approving look. Ethan shakes Neil's hand.

ETHAN  
Neil - heard so much about you.

3

CONTINUED:

3

Tara's dad doesn't share his enthusiasm as he firmly shakes Ethan's hand.

NEIL

Mr. Webster. Funny, I only heard about you this morning.

Neil shoots his wife a pointed look. Ethan grins, pretending to miss the jibe.

ETHAN

Well I don't want to interrupt the reunion.

Neil stares - he's right about that. Ethan turns to Tara.

ETHAN

See you at lunch?

Neil's jaw tightens further as Ethan kisses Tara on the cheek. As Ethan walks away, Jan and Tara turn to Neil and fix him with a withering look.

NEIL WEBSTER

(innocent)  
What?

TARA

I'm almost sixteen Dad.

NEIL WEBSTER

How old is he?

They both ignore his overly protective grumble.

JAN WEBSTER

She's allowed to have boyfriends.

NEIL WEBSTER

I don't recall giving her permission.

He flashes Tara a sheepish smile. In that moment she notices that he's missing a tooth.

TARA

Dad, what happened to your tooth?

She gestures to her mouth. Neil looks sheepish.

NEIL WEBSTER

Tractor belt.

JAN WEBSTER

For weeks I've been telling him to get it fixed but...

3 CONTINUED:

3

NEIL WEBSTER

I'm not entering any beauty pageants  
am I? It can wait until we finish  
cropping.

Tara is still staring at him in horror.

TARA

I love you but you can't open your  
mouth while you're here.

He goes to object.

TARA

I'm serious. People will think  
we're hicks.

4

**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO/CORRIDOR - DAY 14**

4

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, MISS RAINE, SEAN, NEIL WEBSTER,  
JAN WEBSTER, NATASHA, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN, N/S  
SEAN'S MOTHER, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS AND GIRLS), N/S PARENTS

Parents and other family members are starting to fill the row  
of chairs that have been set up at the front of the studio.  
Sammy is showing his mother, Jackie Lieberman, and his  
brother, Ari, to their seats.

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

There's some seats over there. I  
wonder if we can move closer?

SAMMY

Did you give dad a schedule?

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

Ari, watch what you're... (doing)

Focused on his portable game player, Ari bumps into Natasha.

ARI LIEBERMAN

Lady, you cost me a life.

Sammy flashes Natasha an apologetic smile.

SAMMY

My solo tomorrow is probably the  
one... (he should see)

But Jackie isn't listening, distracted by the possibility of  
better seats as they sit down.

SAMMY

Mum?

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

Yes?

4

CONTINUED:

4

SAMMY

Dad. Is he coming?

Ari's eyes freeze on the game and Jackie maintains her bright smile.

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

Well he's definitely going to try  
but you know how the surgery can  
be.

SAMMY

You got out of court.

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

Trust me, defendants are a lot less  
demanding than patients.

Sammy nods, seeing through this lie. His dad still hasn't forgiven him yet and they all know it.

5

**INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 14**

5

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, MISS RAINE, SEAN, NEIL WEBSTER,  
JAN WEBSTER, NATASHA, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN, N/S  
SEAN'S MOTHER, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS AND GIRLS), N/S PARENTS

Pas de deux demonstration: A group of couples are performing the dance they did in their pas de deux exam.

Miss Raine is taking the session, aware she's performing a little as well. She raises an eyebrow as Kat, partnered by Sean, steps into a lovely arabesque.

MISS RAINE

Katrina. Interesting what happens  
when you try.

Kat sneaks a peek at her mother in the audience. Behind Natasha's careful smile is a look of critical appraisal.

Miss Raine looks beyond them to Sammy who's dancing by himself.

MISS RAINE

I'm afraid even without a partner,  
that still looks sloppy.

Ari snickers in the audience. Sammy glares at him. He feels like an idiot as it is, pretending to lift an absent Abigail.

Nearby, Tara and Christian are dancing beautifully together, moving as one. Miss Raine watches, searching for criticism.

MISS RAINE

Yes. You're actually starting to  
work together.

5 CONTINUED: 5

Tara beams - this is unprecedented praise. The dance ends and the audience politely applauds. All except Neil Webster who is on his feet, clapping enthusiastically.

NEIL WEBSTER  
Gooooooooo Tara Banana!

Everyone laughs. Tara is beetroot red as she runs to the side, letting another group take the floor.

CHRISTIAN  
Fan of yours?

They watch as Jan tugs Neil's arm and he reluctantly sits back down. Tara is dying a thousand deaths of embarrassment as the next group begins.

6 **INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 14** 6

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, MISS RAINE, SEAN, NEIL WEBSTER, JAN WEBSTER, NATASHA, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN, N/S SEAN'S MOTHER, N/S FIRST YEARS (BOYS AND GIRLS), N/S PARENTS

The first demonstration class is over and the students are serving morning tea to their families.

Kat is carrying a tray of sandwiches and Tara is on cakes as they move between guests. Kat is keeping an eye on Natasha as she schmoozes the room.

KAT  
It was meant to be a simple trade.  
Decent exam marks for a non-dancing  
holiday. My choice.

Tara watches Jan cross the room.

KAT  
And now she's arranged for us to do  
some creepy mother-daughter interview.

Caught up in her rant, Kat starts plonking sandwiches on Sean's mother's plate.

KAT  
All this good behaviour is giving  
me a rash. Curried egg?

Sean's mother blinks and waves - no thanks. As the girls move on, they spot Tara's mother approaching Natasha.

KAT  
(pulling a face)  
Look they're bonding.

TARA  
That's not necessarily a bad thing  
is it?

6

CONTINUED:

6

Kat gives her a look - what do you think? She scurries away, leaving Tara to face the mums alone.

JAN WEBSTER

And insisted for an entire summer that...

Jan spots Tara walking towards them with the cakes.

JAN WEBSTER

Sweetheart I was just telling Kat's mum about the movie of her we used to watch. Remember?

Tara glances at Natasha, aloof and sophisticated in contrast to Jan in her best outfit.

TARA

Not completely. Lamington anyone?

Tara endeavours to foist one on her mother.

JAN WEBSTER

Of course you do.  
(turns back to Natasha)  
She would scream if I put on anything else and demanded we all call her Natasha.

NATASHA

How flattering.

As Tara squirms, Kat passes with an empty tray.

KAT

T, sugar fix at the barre. Stat.

Tara whirls around to see her father squatting by the barre. He seems to be examining the structure.

TARA

(to her mother)  
Don't... (go anywhere)

Tara hurries over to her father. He is on his hands and knees, using a swiss army knife to tighten a screw.

TARA

(urgent, whispered)  
Dad, what are you doing?

NEIL WEBSTER

Noticed before it wasn't stable.

He shakes the barre, pleased with his handiwork. Tara braces herself as Miss Raine arrives.

6

CONTINUED:

6

TARA

But...

MISS RAINE

I've been trying to get the maintenance man to look at that for months. Thank you.

Neil drags himself up and takes in Miss Raine.

NEIL WEBSTER

So I take it you're not the dragon who's been giving my daughter a hard time?

TARA

(horrified)

Dad. He's kidding. It's a dad joke.

MISS RAINE

(ignores her)

No. I imagine the dragon would be me.

They eyeball each other for a moment. Neil eventually cracks a smile.

NEIL WEBSTER

Guess I'm a bit of a yeller too. When the mood takes me.

Tara can't believe it as Miss Raine smiles as well. For a second she doesn't know what to make of the unlikely scenario of her father bonding with her teacher, but then notices his missing tooth.

TARA

Dad.

She gestures for Neil to close his mouth. He laughs and slings his arm around Tara.

NEIL WEBSTER

Teenagers. Anyone would think they were embarrassed by their parents.

Tara squirms, uncomfortable as she discovers this one hits too close to the bone.

7

**EXT. SYDNEY CBD - DAY 14**

7

N/S CORPORATE TYPES, N/S OFFICE WORKERS

Corporate types cross the street in swarms, arguing into their mobile phones. Office workers eat their lunch on park benches by the side of the road. The monorail shuttles overhead. It's chaotic, city-living... and a long way from where Tara's family comes from.

8

**EXT. ACADEMY/CAFE - DAY 14**

8

SAMMY, KAT, TARA, ETHAN, JAN WEBSTER, NEIL WEBSTER, N/S STUDENTS, N/S PARENTS

Kat is at the coffee cart, stocking up on chocolate, while keeping an eye out for Natasha. Sammy is on the phone with Mrs. Armstrong yet again, still not making any progress.

SAMMY

(into phone)

Well do you think she'll be sleeping long?

(listens)

Of course you don't have a crystal ball but on the off chance she does want to be disturbed... Hello? Hello?

Sammy turns to Kat in disbelief.

SAMMY

She hung up on me.

Kat looks sympathetic as she tosses him a chocolate and leads him away from the coffee cart.

CROSS TO:

Tara, who is having lunch with her parents and Ethan. She bites her tongue as her mother unwraps the sandwiches from the esky they've brought from home.

JAN WEBSTER

We've got an appointment in town so we'll miss your afternoon classes.

TARA

Uh-huh.

JAN WEBSTER

Your father wants to take you and your friends out to tea tonight. Do you think that will be -

TARA

Yeah, great.

Tara is distracted, busy monitoring the conversation - or lack thereof - happening at the other end of the table between her father and Ethan.

ETHAN

I'm glad Sydney's pulled out the weather for you.

NEIL WEBSTER

Hmmm.

8

CONTINUED:

8

Neil is monosyllabic as he eats his sandwich, Ethan is starting to grasp at straws.

ETHAN

You wouldn't believe it today, but it's been horrible lately. Just raining non-stop...

NEIL WEBSTER

Interesting to hear rain described as "horrible".

His tone is mild but Tara is alarmed, predicting where this is going.

TARA

Dad I don't think he meant... (it like that)

NEIL WEBSTER

That bread roll you're eating Evan? Where do you reckon the wheat comes from if it doesn't rain?

Ethan pauses, mid-bite.

ETHAN

I haven't given it a lot of thought sir.

NEIL WEBSTER

So it just magically appears in the supermarket?

Tara shoots her mother a pleading look. Jan steps in.

JAN WEBSTER

I think we left the thermos in the car.

TARA

We can always order drinks here. Since we're sitting at their tables...

Jan looks at her daughter, surprised by this attitude.

JAN WEBSTER

I'm sure no one minds sweetheart.

Neil is already on his feet, heading out.

NEIL WEBSTER

We know all about your city prices.

Tara is mortally embarrassed. She tries to salvage the situation by making a joke of it to Ethan.

8 CONTINUED:

8

TARA  
(under her breath)  
Imagine what you can do with that  
extra six dollars.

Ethan laughs. Jan studies her daughter, not liking what she sees.

9 **EXT. ACADEMY/CARPARK - DAY 14**

9

CHRISTIAN, NEIL WEBSTER

Christian has changed out of his dance gear and is back to his usual torn jeans and hoodie. He's crouching beside the Webster's old, vintage ute.

NEIL WEBSTER (O.S.)  
Oi! Get out of it.

Christian looks up and sees Neil approaching. Christian starts walking away.

NEIL WEBSTER  
I'm talking to you son.

Christian stops, turns around.

CHRISTIAN  
You've got a leak.

NEIL WEBSTER  
That right?

Neil flicks a look at his beloved ute. Christian doesn't want to ask the question but can't help himself.

CHRISTIAN  
302 or the 351?

NEIL WEBSTER  
351.

CHRISTIAN  
Rebuilt?

NEIL WEBSTER  
Original.

Both men nod - nice. Neil realises he's seen this kid before.

NEIL WEBSTER  
Weren't you dancing with my  
daughter?

CHRISTIAN  
So?

9 CONTINUED:

9

NEIL WEBSTER

Didn't think a ballet boy would be interested in cars.

CHRISTIAN

Didn't think a ballet girl's father would own something decent.

Neil laughs out loud, liking this kid. He grabs the thermos from the back of the ute.

NEIL WEBSTER

We're having lunch. Plenty of spare sandwiches?

Christian shakes his head - pass. Neil nods and walks away.

10 **INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 14**

10

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, NEIL WEBSTER, JAN WEBSTER, NATASHA, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN, N/S FIRST YEARS (GIRLS AND BOYS), N/S PARENTS

Hip Hop demonstration: We see snatches of the First Years throwing themselves into a Hip Hop dance.

Their families are obviously enjoying this demonstration. Ethan is sitting beside Neil, who stoically ignores him, even though it's clear they are both watching Tara, grinning when she aces a particular move.

Pretty soon, Neil is on his feet again. He whistles and cheers his appreciation.

11 **INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 14**

11

TARA, KAT, ETHAN, NATASHA, N/S STUDENTS

Tara and Kat are still in their Hip Hop gear, walking back to the dressing room. Ethan, wearing civvies, is holding Tara's hand as they trudge down the corridor. She is complaining about her parents.

TARA

I bet it's possible to die of parental embarrassment.

ETHAN

Your folks are great. I mean, your dad would obviously like to disembowel me but... (minor details aside)

TARA

Open Week is a disaster.

KAT

You think you have problems?

11

CONTINUED:

11

Kat whirls around to complain to the two of them.

KAT

If I didn't relish the image of  
Natasha in a caravan, I would tell  
her to stuff the holiday right up  
her -

Ethan gestures that Natasha is approaching behind Kat. She smiles sweetly with gritted teeth.

KAT

Hey Mum. Good to see you.

NATASHA

Tara, I wanted to invite you and  
your parents to dinner tonight. Bon  
Cafard.

KAT

Wow. Fancy.

Tara has frozen, caught on the spot.

TARA

Oh... Thank you but...

ETHAN

I think they wanted to take us out.  
But we could always combine, right?

Everyone turns to Tara. She covers.

TARA

Yeah, they did want to but then  
something came up. They're busy.

NATASHA

Shame. Still you must come.

Tara just nods, stuck in the lie. Ethan notices.

NATASHA

(to Kat)

Darling, let's run a comb through  
your hair. It'd be great to be  
presentable for the stylist.

Kat glances over her shoulder, obviously wanting rescuing, as Natasha leads her down the corridor. Left alone, Ethan takes Tara's hand.

ETHAN

Hey you didn't have to ditch your  
parents on my behalf.

11 CONTINUED: 11

TARA

I have all holidays to spend with them.

(beat)

Trust me, dad would complain about the small portions and mum would go on about how much it costs. It's just easier if I do something with them...

12 **EXT. SYDNEY HARBOURSIDE/WATER TAXI - SUNSET 14** 12  
TARA, NEIL WEBSTER (O.S.), ETHAN, KAT,

TARA

(into phone)

... tomorrow. You guys don't mind do you? That I'm cancelling?

Tara is walking along the Harbour towards a WATER TAXI. She's wearing a beautiful dress and high heels.

NEIL (O.S.)

(on other end of phone)

No princess. I had my heart set on the steakhouse but if you're all too tired...

Ethan and Kat are sitting in the water taxi, also dressed up for dinner. They wave to Tara to hurry.

TARA

We really are. Thanks Dad.

Tara hangs up the phone and, squashing down any feelings of guilt, climbs on board to join her friends.

As the taxi jets off along the spectacular Harbour, Tara shares a grin with Ethan and Kat, leaving every thought of her family behind.

13 **EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT 14** 13  
NIL CAST

Establish the Boarding House at night. The city sparkles across the glistening blackness of the water.

14 **INT. BOARDING HOUSE/CORRIDOR/TARA'S ROOM - NIGHT 14** 14  
TARA, JAN WEBSTER

Tara is letting herself into the dorm room when she notices a stream of light spilling out from under the door.

TARA

Abigail?

14

CONTINUED:

14

Tara enters and is startled to find her mum sitting on her bed.

JAN WEBSTER  
You look nice darling.

A knot of guilt twists in Tara's stomach. She knows she's been caught in the lie.

TARA  
We decided to go out after all. It was a spur of the moment thing...

Jan nods. She has been folding Tara's washing and continues to sort it into piles.

TARA  
I can do that.

Tara takes the pile of stockings. She glances at her mother, wondering if she's in trouble, but Jan has more important things on her mind.

JAN WEBSTER  
Sit beside me for a moment.

Tara obeys. Jan keeps folding the laundry.

JAN WEBSTER  
Our meeting today was at the bank. We've been trying to re-finance one of the loans but they're... They're just not taking risks at the moment.

Tara's face has filled with horror.

TARA  
So what...? Are we losing the farm?

Jan smiles to reassure her.

JAN WEBSTER  
No. If the crop goes well we should be okay. But we are going to have to sell the Valley Run. The Griggs are putting in an offer.

TARA  
(shudders)  
Grandpa would... Poor dad. What can I do to help?

A strange look crosses Jan's face.

JAN WEBSTER  
It's cash flow that's the issue so every cent is tight.

14

CONTINUED:

14

TARA

I can get a job. I think. On  
Sundays or -

JAN WEBSTER

I'm not sure that's going to cover  
it sweetie.

TARA

Then what can I... (do to help)?

Tara knows the answer before she can even say it. Jan chooses  
her next words carefully.

JAN WEBSTER

I'd be lying if I said having you  
here wasn't expensive. Boarding  
fees, even shoes and leotards. It  
all... (adds up)

The sound of blood rushing to Tara's head. She panics.

TARA

No.

JAN WEBSTER

Let me finish.

TARA

No. It's... it's me. It's my dream.

JAN WEBSTER

And I want you to have it  
sweetheart. I'm just trying to  
juggle a few dreams here.

Jan searches her daughter's face.

JAN WEBSTER

Tell me, would it honestly be the  
end of the world if you deferred  
until next year? When we might be  
under a little less pressure.

Tara can't believe her mother would even suggest it.

TARA

What does dad say?

JAN WEBSTER

He doesn't want you to know. He's  
so proud you're here. It's all he  
talks about.

This is the part that opens Tara's heart.

14 CONTINUED: 14

TARA  
(quietly)  
You can't ask me to do this mum.

Jan sighs, exhausted.

JAN WEBSTER  
I'm not asking you to do anything  
except consider it.

15 **EXT. SYDNEY - DAY 15** 15  
NIL CAST

It's a new day in Sydney. Birds are flying over water that's  
as still as glass.

16 **EXT. OBSERVATORY HILL - DAY 15** 16  
KAT, NATASHA, PIP, N/S MALE PHOTOGRAPHER

Kat and Natasha are wearing nearly identical outfits and  
posing for a PHOTOGRAPHER underneath the rotunda. PIP, a  
journalist for a women's lifestyle magazine, is conducting  
the interview.

KAT  
(about the outfits)  
You don't think this might be  
overkill?

Natasha shoots her a look and Kat forces some enthusiasm.

KAT  
Hey we look like sisters. Why fight  
it?

Kat blinks, irritated, as the flash goes off in her eyes.

PIP  
I know right. Natasha when I saw  
you dance Aurora I couldn't believe  
you had a fifteen-year-old at home.

NATASHA  
Make up. And lighting.

Pip laughs, self-deprecating. A master at making her  
interview subjects feel like they're talking to a friend.

PIP  
If only that was all I needed. Did  
you watch your mum in that role Kat?

Kat expertly toes the party line.

16

CONTINUED:

16

KAT

I always watch her. I can't get enough of watching her.

The photographer sets the flash off in her eyes again. Kat shoots him a dirty look.

PIP

It just amazes me Natasha how you juggle everything. Lars Pedersen told me you're booked for the European Gala?

A look of unease crosses Natasha's face. It goes unnoticed by Kat who has tuned out, bored.

PIP

That's performing to royalty. You can't tell me you can come home after that and clean the bathrooms?

NATASHA

(uncomfortable)

No, that's not confirmed yet.

Kat clocks the look on Natasha's face. She puts two and two together.

KAT

(loaded)

Sorry, silly me. When is the Gala again?

Pip flicks through her notes.

PIP

It's in the next few weeks isn't it? Will you be going Kat?

Kat stares at her mother, betrayed. Regardless of marks or how well she's behaved, Natasha was never intending on spending time with her.

KAT

Yeah. Luckily it's right at the same time as my school holidays.

Kat plasters on a bright smile.

KAT

Mum always makes sure I have the best ones. I remember in Singapore once, when I was ten, she got so caught up in the tour she was doing...

16 CONTINUED:

16

NATASHA  
(warning)  
Katrina.

KAT  
...that she flew out of the  
country, completely forgetting I  
was back in the hotel room.

Kat laughs as if this is the most hilarious story ever. Pip's expression has turned from friend to journalist, aware she's hit on a much more interesting story.

NATASHA  
It wasn't quite like... (that)

KAT  
Come on, Tash. It was hysterical. I  
mean sure I had to fly as an  
unaccompanied minor, but the flight  
attendant gave me these awesome  
colouring pencils.

Kat smiles, hard and defiant. Out on Natasha's face as the photographer whizzes off a series of shots.

17 **INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 15**

17

SAMMY, TARA, MISS RAINE, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN,  
NEIL WEBSTER, JAN WEBSTER, N/S FIRST YEAR STUDENTS (BOYS AND  
GIRLS)

Solo demonstration: Sammy is alone on the floor, half-way through performing a lyrical contemporary piece that he's choreographed. We've never seen him dance with so much passion and then at the end he undercuts it all by turning it into a Hip Hop routine, that showcases his own self-deprecating comic flair.

The performance is uniquely Sammy and soon he has everyone in stitches of laughter. As the dance finishes, Sammy looks up grinning and scans the faces in the audience.

His mother and even Ari are applauding, but there's a conspicuously empty seat beside them where his dad is supposed to be.

MISS RAINE  
Thank you Sammy.

Crushed, despite the success, Sammy leaves the centre of studio. He reaches Tara on the sidelines, sweat pouring down his face.

TARA  
His loss. You were amazing.

Sammy just nods, trying to catch his breath.

17 CONTINUED:

17

MISS RAINE

We have Tara Webster now.  
Performing a variation from *The Ugly Duckling*.

Sammy looks Tara in the eye. Despite his own disappointment, he's able to be supportive of his friend.

SAMMY

(quietly)  
Kill it. Roast the duck.

Tara nods and moves into the centre to take her opening position. As before, Neil goes to stand and cheer but Jan keeps him in the seat. Polite applause only. Tara meets her mother's gaze for a moment and then looks away as the music begins.

Tara lets the music wash over her. She blocks the world out and starts to dance.

We've seen this variation before, when Tara first auditioned for the school, but now she's a markedly different dancer. Still in flats, rather than pointe shoes, but strong and assured in her technique. This might be her last dance and it's beautiful.

Miss Raine watches. Not moving. Moved despite herself.

18 **INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 15**

18

TARA, KAT, N/S STUDENTS

Tara makes her way down the corridor having changed out of her ballet clothes. Her head is reeling, a mess of jumbled thoughts, as she passes Kat who is dressed in civvies and going in the opposite direction.

KAT

Was it gruesome?

TARA

(distracted)  
What?

Kat grins, full of bravado.

KAT

I blew off my solo. Just suddenly could not be bothered.

TARA

No one said anything.

KAT

Well I need retail therapy and Natasha needs to see the bill.

(MORE)

18

CONTINUED:

18

KAT (CONT'D)

Feel like giving this little guy a work out?

Kat waves her credit card. Tara stares at her friend.

TARA

You know, a lot of people would give anything to be here and have what you have. It's getting old how you just take it for granted.

Tara storms away, leaving Kat to look after her dumbfounded. Hurting for her own reasons.

19

**EXT. ACADEMY/CARPARK - DAY 15**

19

TARA, CHRISTIAN, NEIL WEBSTER

Fighting back tears, Tara emerges from the Academy. She takes a deep breath, desperate for air and trying to keep a hold of herself when she hears -

NEIL WEBSTER (O.S.)

Tara Banana. Come demonstrate something for your old dad.

Tara looks over. Her father has the bonnet up on the ute. Christian is hovering beside him. In the whole entire world, this is the last situation Tara wants to be in right now, but she has no choice but to go over.

NEIL WEBSTER

Show me where the alternator is.

Tara reaches in and locates it immediately. Neil glances at Christian.

NEIL WEBSTER

See that city kid? I'm going to get the coolant now. That's the wet stuff.

Christian takes the teasing. Tara can't believe it - her dad and Christian are hanging out? Neil heads away, leaving Christian and Tara in awkward silence.

CHRISTIAN

Your dad was telling me about the property. It sounds...

TARA

It is.

Tara tries to hide her face from Christian but he spots that she's upset.

CHRISTIAN

What?

19 CONTINUED: 19

TARA

Tell him I've gone for a walk okay?

Christian watches as she races off away from the Academy.

20 **EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - SUNSET 15** 20  
TARA, CHRISTIAN

Tara is sitting on her park bench by the lake in the middle of the Gardens. She's obviously been crying but is now just numb.

Tara looks up as Christian sits down beside her. She wipes her nose on her sleeve and Christian wordlessly passes her handkerchief.

CHRISTIAN

It's clean.

Tara blows her nose, grateful. Christian doesn't try to ask what's wrong. They sit in silence for a moment, watching the SWANS swim by on the lake.

TARA

I was just thinking - they're actually ugly, aren't they? All those ballets go on about them being beautiful but up close...

Christian contemplates the swans.

CHRISTIAN

Weird necks.

21 **EXT. ACADEMY/CARPARK - SUNSET 15** 21  
SAMMY, JACKIE LIEBERMAN, ARI LIEBERMAN

Sammy is walking his mum and brother to the family station wagon. Her enthusiasm still trying to make up for her husband's absence.

JACKIE LIEBERMAN

That was sensational. Wasn't it Ari?

ARI LIEBERMAN

The last bit didn't suck as much.

Ari scampers into the back seat. Sammy turns to his mum.

SAMMY

He wasn't ever going to come was he?

21 CONTINUED:

21

JACKIE LIEBERMAN  
Who? Your father? I told you, he  
was absolutely going to try -

But Sammy clearly knows this isn't true. Jackie stops  
covering for her husband and looks sadly at her son.

JACKIE LIEBERMAN  
It's just going to take some time.

SAMMY  
Ballpark guesstimate?

Jackie doesn't have an answer. Instead, she kisses Sammy on  
the cheek and gets into the car.

Sammy closes the door for her and watches as they drive away,  
finally giving up on the idea that his father is going to  
want to see him dance.

22 **EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - NIGHT 15**  
SAMMY, ABIGAIL

22

On a suburban street of identical tacky tacky houses, Sammy  
stands on the footpath, now knowing where he should be  
investing his energy. He starts throwing pebbles up at the  
window on the second floor but his aim is off. Eventually,  
one hits the pane of glass.

Abigail appears at the window. Her face is pale and she looks  
like a ghost.

23 **INT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE/ABIGAIL'S ROOM - NIGHT 15**  
SAMMY, ABIGAIL

23

Abigail is sitting curled up in bed. She's clearly sick, like  
she hasn't washed her hair or been outside in days. Her eyes  
seem dead. She watches as Sammy stumbles through the window.  
He has leaves in his hair.

SAMMY  
Hi.

Abigail can't even muster a smile. Even though Sammy's  
privately shocked by her appearance, he doesn't let on. He  
glances at the television that's been set up in front of her.

SAMMY  
What are you watching?

Abigail shrugs, she doesn't even know. But then ever-so-  
slightly shuffles over to make room for Sammy on the bed. He  
sits down.

SAMMY  
Nice choice.

23

CONTINUED:

23

ABIGAIL

You don't have to...

SAMMY

Shhh. This is the good bit.

Sammy takes her hand firmly in his. She looks at him, a flicker of light coming into her eyes. Sammy pretends not to notice and just keeps his eyes on the movie.

24

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/Common Room - Night 15**

24

TARA, JAN WEBSTER, NEIL WEBSTER

Tara is eating pizza with her parents in the empty common room. Everyone else is out to dinner with their families. Neil is in determinedly high spirits but Tara is now trying to read his face for signs of strain.

NEIL WEBSTER

It's not a steakhouse but with this tooth that may not be a bad thing.

TARA

This is fine, dad. Do you know how much they charge at those places?

NEIL WEBSTER

Not like home, is it?

TARA

Not at all.

A moment passes. Tara takes a deep breath and avoids Jan's gaze.

TARA

Actually, that's something I want to talk to you guys about. Having you here has kinda made me realise how much I'm missing everything.

NEIL WEBSTER

What? You love it here.

Tara doesn't respond. Neil looks at his daughter, concerned. She's obviously upset.

NEIL WEBSTER

What's going on princess? Is someone giving you a hard time? That Evan character -

Tara flinches at the mention of his name.

JAN WEBSTER

No Neil I'm sure -

24

CONTINUED:

24

TARA

It's nothing like that.

Tara calls on everything she has to give the acting performance of her life.

TARA

I think I just loved the idea of this place. But being here, all the time... it isn't me.

Tara forces a smile, even though she's dying on the inside.

TARA

And if I go home it's not like I have to give up dancing altogether. I can still do it. A couple of times a week.

NEIL WEBSTER

I don't know what I think about this. Jan?

Jan tries to search out Tara's gaze, devastated she's had to ask this of her daughter.

JAN WEBSTER

I don't know either.

Tara is unable to look at her mother.

TARA

Tough. Because I've made up my mind.

Tara feels like she's going to be sick but forces herself to bite into the pizza. It tastes like sawdust.

25

**INT. BOARDING HOUSE/TARA'S ROOM - NIGHT 15**

25

TARA, KAT

Tara is pulling photographs off her corkboard. She removes a pin and stares down at a shot of herself, Kat and Sammy - all laughing and screwing up their faces.

Kat bursts into Tara's room, under a mountain of shopping. She starts pulling clothes out of the bags and throws a couple of tops at Tara. It's her version of an ice-breaker.

KAT

So the so-called mother daughter family holiday is off but on the upside shopkeepers are going to erect a statue in my honour.

Kat looks around, finally noticing that Tara's side of the room has been packed up.

25 CONTINUED: 25

KAT

What's with the packing? We're allowed to keep things here over the break.

Tara looks up at her friend, wondering how to tell her.

26 **EXT. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DANCE - DAY 16** 26  
NIL CAST

We're rushing along the water and up towards the Academy. It towers, still as impressive as when Tara first saw it but now familiar. Home.

27 **INT. ACADEMY/STUDIO - DAY 16** 27  
TARA, MISS RAINE

Tara's hair is loose and she's wearing her civvies as she enters the studio. Miss Raine is sorting CDs and generally packing up for the holidays. As always, she looks immaculate, a nun to the ballet.

Miss Raine spots Tara in the mirror and turns around.

MISS RAINE

Tara, I was going to look for you today. I have something you might like.

Miss Raine smiles ever-so-slightly as she reaches down to the box by her feet and pulls out a pair of pointe shoes; the ones she confiscated at the start of term.

MISS RAINE

I said I'd give them back when you were ready.

Tara can't believe it as Miss Raine hands her the shoes.

TARA

Thank you.  
(beat)  
For everything.

This is the moment Tara has been longing for. Only...

TARA

But I came to let you know that I'm not going to be here next semester. I'm going home.

As Tara says it, she's realises it's the right decision. Miss Raine's face has hardened, appalled by this statement.

27

CONTINUED:

27

MISS RAINÉ

Can you indulge me as to why?  
You've made some improvement but  
every day is vital if you're going  
to be a dancer.

TARA

Some things are more important.

MISS RAINÉ

I don't know any.

Miss Raine turns away and continues packing.

MISS RAINÉ

But if that's what you believe then  
you certainly don't belong here.

TARA

I know I need this place to become  
a professional. But I don't need it  
to dance. And if I truly love it,  
that should be enough.

To this, Miss Raine can't say anything.

TARA

Besides, I don't think I'd be a  
very good dancer if I didn't like  
myself as a person.

Miss Raine still won't look at Tara. With a final nod of  
thanks to her teacher's back, Tara takes the pointe shoes and  
leaves the studio forever.

Miss Raine stops what she's doing, unhappy by the turn of  
events.

28

**EXT. BOARDING HOUSE/ROOFTOP - DAY 16**

28

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, SEAN, N/S STUDENTS

An end of semester party is in full swing on the roof.  
Students are raucously celebrating, dancing together, all  
having a brilliant time.

Except Tara and her friends (Kat, Sammy, Ethan and  
Christian). They've slumped on the couches that have been  
dragged onto the roof. The vibe is more like a funeral than a  
party.

TARA

You can come and stay over the  
holidays.

28

CONTINUED:

28

KAT

I wish. Natasha freaked over the credit card meltdown. I have to follow her on tour.

ETHAN

It's like grounding on a global scale.

Tara tries to look on the bright side.

TARA

But still there's always email and I'll get a web cam. It's not like we won't ever...

ETHAN

Yeah. No of course.

Tara and Ethan nod at each other, both knowing their brand-new relationship is almost certainly doomed.

Sammy is sitting beside Christian who is, as usual, just observing everything.

SAMMY

Well I think it's a load of crap.

KAT

Newsflash. We all do.

SAMMY

Correction - I think Tara's crap. Worse, she's a hypocrite.

TARA

What?

SAMMY

You told me to stand up to my dad and now he's probably never going to talk to me again. But that's okay 'cause you were right - this is where I should be. Why is it different for you?

TARA

Because it is.

Sammy pushes back his chair and stalks away.

KAT

Sammy, get back here.

TARA

Leave him.

28

CONTINUED:

28

They belatedly realise that the music has stopped and no one is dancing anymore. The party is emptying. Sean passes.

SEAN

Results just got posted.

Our gang look between each other. Kat shrugs, trying to play it cool.

KAT

It's not like we're doing anything.

Ethan stands up and drags his sister to her feet. They head towards the door, leaving Tara and Christian on the couches by themselves for a long moment.

CHRISTIAN

You did good.

TARA

Yeah?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah. I'd give up this place to have your family. No contest.

Tara looks at him, grateful that someone understands.

29

**INT. ACADEMY/CORRIDOR - DAY 16**

29

TARA, KAT, SAMMY, CHRISTIAN, ETHAN, MISS RAINE, N/S STUDENTS

Tara is making her way through the crowded corridor. Her friends have been swallowed up in mayhem as students everywhere receive their results - crying, laughing, worrying, complaining.

Tara is in no hurry. She looks around, trying to photograph it with her mind. Last looks. Kat emerges, a stunned expression on her face.

KAT

Come with me.

She starts dragging Tara through the scrum towards the noticeboard.

TARA

How did you go?

KAT

Who cares? Look.

She has placed Tara in front of the noticeboard. Right in the center of a piece of paper is Tara's name.

KAT

You got it.

29

CONTINUED:

29

Sammy comes up on her other side, also stunned.

SAMMY

The First Year Scholarship.

MISS RAINÉ (O.S.)

Full fees, boarding expenses.

Tara is trying to wrap her head around this as she turns and sees Miss Rainé walking towards her.

MISS RAINÉ

(quietly)

It's not a gift, you're going to earn every cent. Each week, you'll do private classes with me, working harder than you ever thought possible.

But Tara hears none of this. She finally finds her voice.

TARA

But you're telling me I can stay?

MISS RAINÉ

It would seem so.

Tara turns to her friends, unable to speak.

TARA

I can...

Before she can finish, Sammy and Kat crash tackle her and the world suddenly gets a bit crazy as Tara is caught up in the euphoria.

Then Ethan's there. He picks her up and kisses her in full view of everyone. Students whistle. But Tara is on top of the world and couldn't care less who knows it.

30

**EXT. ACADEMY/CARPARK - DAY 16**

30

TARA, NEIL WEBSTER, JAN WEBSTER, SEAN

Tara and her parents are loading her suitcases into the ute.

NEIL WEBSTER

All this for three weeks?

TARA

You guys don't mind it's not permanent do you? I know you miss me...

NEIL WEBSTER

Mind? I'm putting a billiards table in your bedroom. Don't ruin it.

30

CONTINUED:

30

He takes the suitcases around to the back, leaving Tara and her mother alone. It's the first time they've made eye contact since Jan told Tara about the financial troubles.

JAN WEBSTER

I never wanted you to... (give up your dream)

Tara shakes her head, no longer blaming her.

TARA

First grown up thing I've ever had to do.

Both have tears in their eyes as Jan hugs her daughter, proud. At that moment, Neil returns.

NEIL WEBSTER

Help. The women are blubbering.

They pull away, both smiling. Tara looks up, noticing Sean walking past.

TARA

Hey Sean. Can you take a photo of us?

She reaches into her bag for a camera and passes it to Sean. Tara stands in between her parents, arms wrapped around each other.

SEAN

Okay, you're styling. Big smiles everyone.

They all smile, except Neil who dutifully keeps his mouth firmly shut as Sean snaps the photo. Tara glances at her father.

TARA

One more.

Tara reaches up and tugs her dad's bottom lip down and with the entire Webster family flashing toothy/toothless grins, their photo is snapped again.

TARA

Thanks.

SEAN

See you next semester.

Sean passes her back the camera and saunters away. With one final look up to the building, Tara follows her parents towards the car. At that moment, Kat and Sammy bolt towards them, both panting out of breath.

30 CONTINUED:

30

KAT

Can we borrow her for just a couple more hours? It's an emergency.

31 **EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE/BRIDGE CLIMB - DAY 16** 31  
TARA, KAT, SAMMY, N/S BRIDGE CLIMBING INSTRUCTOR, TARA (V.O)

Tara, Sammy and Kat are all wearing grey jumpsuits and harnessed to a safety cable. It's hard to work out where they are but we can see they're climbing stairs. Tara looks around, out-of-her-skin with excitement.

TARA

I have always wanted to do this.

KAT

It was going to be your goodbye present.

SAMMY

I was thinking a card but...

Sammy looks upwards and shudders.

SAMMY

This cannot be safe.

KAT

The trick is not to look down.

Kat shoots a sideways glance at Tara, remembering the jump that made them friends.

KAT

Everyone knows that.

As Tara smiles at her two best friends, we realise that they've just begun to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

TARA (V.O.)

*Families are different now to when my parents grew up - it's like there are no set rules anymore.*

The Instructor leads them up the first flight of stairs.

TARA (V.O.)

*It doesn't matter what your DNA says, when someone's family you just know.*

