

THE UNITED STATES OF TARA

“Pilot”

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Dreamworks/Showtime

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

We're seeing TARA GREGOR from the perspective of a amateur video camera as she switches it on. Tara is an attractive, well-dressed woman in her early 40s, but right now she looks flushed and anxious, like she's ready to jump out of her skin.

Tara backs away from the camera lens, smoothing her hair, her skirt. She sits down on an overstuffed chair that's been ideally placed for the purpose.

TARA

(to camera)

This is Tara, obviously. It's November 12. A Thursday. Looks like I've got about...

(she checks her watch)

...four minutes or so. So I just want to explain where I'm at right now. While I'm still lucid.

She sighs, looking increasingly uncomfortable.

TARA (CONT'D)

See, I'm under a lot of pressure lately. I've been hired by the mayor's wife to do a 17th century rococo nursery for her unborn son. She wants a gold Diaper Genie and a giant wall fresco depicting herself as a pregnant saint.

CUT TO:

INT. ROCOCO NURSERY - FLASHBACK

We see Tara on her knees, diligently painting a diaper pail gold. Pan to reveal a lavish Botticelli-style mural of a tacky-looking pregnant blonde wearing flowing robes and a halo.

TARA (V.O.)

This is what I do. I create opulent environments for women who hemorrhage money.

We see the MAYOR'S WIFE nodding her approval in the doorway. She sips a chocolate martini and rests it contentedly on her pregnant belly.

BACK ON TARA (HOME OFFICE):

TARA (CONT'D)

(to camera)

And I'm good at it, too. I rule. I have no problem keeping track of a million things for my clients. But unfortunately, I can't micromanage my daughter's vagina.

She reaches into the pocket of her coat and pulls out a piece of paper. She waves it at the camera in disgust.

TARA (CONT'D)

See this? It's a prescription for morning-after pills. As in: "the morning after skanky, sweaty teen sex." I found this in Kate's backpack last night. Now, part of me wants to play "hip mom" and applaud my daughter for being responsible. The other part of me wants to *sew her up*.

She flings the prescription to the floor.

TARA (CONT'D)

I mean, Kate's always been a very affectionate kid. Very huggy, got a lot of Valentines in grade school. Maybe I should have seen this coming...

She rubs her forehead, clearly on the verge of collapse.

TARA (CONT'D)

I just-- I can't deal with this. I'm not going to be myself for a while. I'm sorry.

She stands up shakily and turns off the camera.

Tara removes a tape from the camera, hastily labels it "TARA" with a marker and tosses it aside.

She pulls down her jeans and begins hopping awkwardly down the hallway. Where she's heading, we don't yet know...

INT. GREGOR HOUSE (FRONT ENTRYWAY) - DAY

We track through the house, revealing signs of life in the Gregor family. The house is nice enough, but definitely a bit messy. Clean laundry is strewn over the couch and paperwork is scattered across the kitchen island.

The front door swings open and KATE GREGOR, 16, enters. She's wearing a highly stylized Japanese schoolgirl outfit and a *Sailor Moon* hairstyle. She also has an obvious hicky on her neck.

KATE
Yo! Anybody home? Marshall?
Estonian cleaning lady?

She takes a few steps forward, noting Tara's design binders and carpet samples sitting on the kitchen table.

KATE (CONT'D)
Mommy?

We see a look cross her face-- is it anxiety or just curiosity?

Kate's cell phone rings. The ringtone is someone shouting in Japanese. She flips the phone open eagerly.

KATE (CONT'D)
(in an exaggerated baby
voice)
Hi, *kioshii!* I miss you too!

She hops enthusiastically, clearly smitten with the caller.

KATE (CONT'D)
Hey, I have the best news. You know my ballet recital? Well, the girl who's playing Swanilde got hospitalized for anorexia! I'm dancing her role tomorrow night! Isn't that great?

BLAM! A loud noise from upstairs. Kate jumps and her voice suddenly matures.

KATE (CONT'D)
Shit, I'd better go. *Ja nei!*

She hangs up the phone and hurries upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kate walks down the hallway uneasily. From Kate's POV, we see Tara's discarded pants, blouse, and matronly underwear scattered in her path. Kate squeamishly kicks the underwear aside with the toe of her shoe.

KATE
 (under her breath)
 Ew. Mom briefs.

There's a light coming from Kate's room. As she approaches the doorway, she smiles, surprised and delighted.

KATE (CONT'D)
 T? How'd you get out?

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tara is crouched on the floor, raiding Kate's closet. She throws a shoe at the wall in mock disgust. Trendy clothes are flung all over the room. Tara herself is barely recognizable. She's wearing loads of glittery eye shadow and lip gloss, has her hair pulled into a high side ponytail, and wears ill-fitting, overly youthful clothes.

Our protagonist isn't Tara anymore. She's Tara's teenage alter ego, T.

T turns to face the girl she no longer recognizes as a daughter.

T
 Dude, I've been digging around in your closet for an hour and I can't fucking get to Narnia.

Kate snickers.

T bends over and sifts through the clothes. A very noticeable fuschia G-string sticks out of the back of her jeans.

KATE
 Nice whale tail!

T wiggles her butt and pulls the jeans down lower.

T
 Quit hatin'. You wish you had all this!

Kate walks in and sits on the bed, watching T with amusement.

KATE
 What's going on, T? Why are you here instead of Mom?

T

Well, your mom's in a bad place,
mentally. Yeah.

KATE

Is it my fault?

T

Kind of. Remember those kill-pills
I helped you get at the free
clinic? Your mom found the evidence
and she's tweakin'.

KATE

Oh, God. No! How did she find it?

T

She probably went *CSI* on that public
thatch you call a backpack.

Kate clutches her furry plush monkey backpack, horrified.

KATE

That bitch!

T

(sniffing one of Kate's
shoes)

I know! Can you imagine being so
disrespectful of someone's personal
space?

KATE

Hey, are you wearing my new skinny
jeans?

T

Don't they make my ass look fine?

KATE

Sure, fine for 40.

T

Don't remind me. Do you know how
much it sucks being a teenager
stuck in this elderly body. Look--I
have a muffin top!

She pulls up the hem of her shirt to reveal a small roll of
flesh over the waistband of the too-small jeans.

KATE

Hey, I think Mom looks pretty good for her age.

T

Yeah, maybe. But her clothes look like shit. So do yours, actually. Let's go to Fern Fountain Mall and buy a bunch of new stuff.

KATE

But we don't have any money.

T pulls out Tara's wallet and flashes some credit cards, a mischievous gleam in her eye.

T

Tara forgot to lock her purse today. We're fully laminated.

KATE

(thrilled)

Oh, T! I love you the best of all the alters!

She lunges to hug T, who flinches in disgust.

T

Drugs, not hugs.

Kate backs off, chastised. The two of them head out of the bedroom. Kate surreptitiously grabs a tube of lip gloss and applies it hastily.

INT. STAIRWAY - DAY

T and Kate boisterously head down the stairs, chatting.

T

Anyway, you have to drive because I just smoked a fatty...Hey, Marshall!

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Tara's son MARSHALL, 14, is sitting at the kitchen island typing on a laptop. He's a well-groomed, extremely organized boy with an aura of Zen benevolence about him.

T skips into the kitchen and gives Marshall an affectionate noogie.

T
Long time, no see!

MARSHALL
(startled)
Mom?

KATE
No, you idiot. Mom does not dress
like a ho. It's T.

MARSHALL
I can see that now.

T is already rooting through the refrigerator, pulling out a six-pack of pudding cups.

T
(in Bill Cosby voice)
Jell-o pudding is for the children!

KATE
The vanilla ones are mine,
beeyotch.

T
Hey Marshall, can you take us to
the mall? I'm stoned and your
sister drives like Billy Joel.

Kate looks mortified.

MARSHALL
I have to write a paper about
George Cukor for Intro to Film.

T is transfixed by the pudding. She peels back the lid and stares at it. She sticks a finger in and licks it.

T
Pudding is *good...ing!*

She giggles maniacally at the inane rhyme.

MARSHALL
(gently tolerant)
It sure is, T.

KATE
Come on, let's get out of here
before Dad gets home.

MARSHALL
 (looking out the window)
 Too late.

A shiny pickup truck emblazoned with FOUR WINDS LANDSCAPING has appeared in the driveway. A ruggedly handsome man of about 50 gets out of the driver's seat, struggling with a folder full of paperwork and a big bucket of fried chicken. This is MAX GREGOR, Tara's husband. As he heads up the front walk, his sagging shoulders bear witness to a stressful day.

KATE
 Crap.

T
 Ugh, here comes Maxi Pad. Look, he has a bucket of fried death!

Max enters through the back door.

MAX
 (cheerful)
 Hey guys. Who wants trans fats?

The kids (and T) pause, waiting for Max to notice the unexpected guest. Max's face falls when he sees T, but he attempts to maintain his composure.

MAX (CONT'D)
 T. Good to see you!

T
 Get fucked.

MAX
 Ha! That's probably the nicest thing I've heard all day. I've got this subcontractor right now who's a real shithead...

MARSHALL
 (sucking up)
 I like your shirt, Dad.

Max, who's wearing a T-shirt under a flannel with rolled-up sleeves, looks confused. He pops open the lid of the chicken bucket and places it on the kitchen table before reaching for a stack of plates.

T
 Oh by the way, I'm a vegetarian now, Max.

(MORE)

T (CONT'D)

I don't eat meat, or anything that looks meaty, or anything that's cute. Besides, I read that that place breeds, like, mutant chickens that have four legs and three wings and multiple breasts. And they have no heads, so they can't even eat or cluck.

Kate and Marshall look at her incredulously.

T (CONT'D)

It's true, you guys. I read it in a MySpace bulletin.

Max is busily getting out plates and silverware, ignoring T's complaints with the air of someone who's seen a lot worse. The family gathers at the kitchen table.

MARSHALL

You can have all my coleslaw, T.

MAX

Don't coddle her! If she wants to eat with us, she has to cooperate. Remember, we talked about this.

T sticks her tongue out at Max and wiggles it between two fingers tauntingly.

T

You're a pussy.

MAX

(deadpan)
I'm totally offended.

T glowers and picks up a biscuit. They eat in silence for a few beats before Kate remembers her big news.

KATE

So Dad, I'm going to be dancing one of the leads in the recital tomorrow! It's Swanilde. The part I always wanted.

MAX

What happened to Darcy?

KATE

All she ate was bananas and gum for like, two months. They sent her to St. Marks and put a tube in her stomach.

T
That's hilarious!

MAX
Actually, it's a real shame.

KATE
But Dad, I get to be Swanilde now!
God *wanted* Darcy to lose thirty
pounds and get nasty breath and
grow little downy fetus hairs all
over her torso.

MARSHALL
When did you get so mean?

KATE
It's like a free bonus gift with
puberty. You grow boobs *and* claws.

MAX
Well, I'm excited for you, honey.
I'm sure you'll be amazing.

T
Ballet is boring. I don't know why
you even hang out with those
leotards.

She sarcastically pronounces the "d" in leotards.

KATE
You're just jealous of me 'cause
you can't even dance.

T
I can freak!

There's a perfunctory knock on the front door before it
swings open. CHARMAINE CRAINE, Tara's older sister, enters
without being invited. Her hair and makeup are impeccable,
almost overdone, but her clothes are bad, low-cut business
casual. There's something desperate about her.

CHARMAINE
Knock-knock!

KATE
Hi, Aunt Charmaine.

MARSHALL
Hey.

T doesn't even acknowledge Charmaine. She slumps down in her seat defiantly and wrinkles her nose.

T
Cougar crossing!

As Charmaine looks at T and realizes what's up, she frowns. Max appears oddly nervous.

MAX
Charmaine. To what do we owe this drop-in?

CHARMAINE
(tense)
Tara and I were supposed to go to a Pampered Chef party in Richfield, but something tells me my sister isn't home tonight.

T
You're so smart! I can't believe you never finished massage school.

Kate struggles to stifle her laughter.

CHARMAINE
(to Max)
Who is *this*? I can't even remember what this one is called.

MAX
That's T. Like the letter T, not the hot beverage.

T
(without looking up)
You've only met me a million times, Leatherchest.

Charmaine ignores T and looks at Max, exasperated.

CHARMAINE
Well, I've obviously walked into the middle of a family crisis. I'll just-- I'll check in later...

MARSHALL
It's not a crisis. We like it when T comes to visit.

T winks at him gratefully.

CHARMAINE
 (her voice breaking)
 Max, may I speak to you for a
 minute? In private?

MAX
 'Course.

Max gets up and Charmaine hurries behind him, casting a pained glance back at T.

INT. GARAGE - EVENING

Max walks into the dimly lit garage. It's one of those classic suburban garages with an old fridge full of beer, a work bench, and bicycles the kids have long since outgrown.

There's also a dramatically mangled Harley chopper parked near the side of the garage.

Charmaine click-clacks after Max into the garage, clearly emotional. She pulls a colorful designer Kleenex out of her blazer and begins dabbing at her eyes.

CHARMAINE
 Jesus...

MAX
 Hey, it's all right, Charmaine. I bet Marshall will go with you tonight. He's been wanting a new deviled egg carrier...

Charmaine is growing increasingly upset.

CHARMAINE
 It's not about that. It's about her. Max, it's just really hard to see my sister that way. I never thought that she would still be like this.

MAX
 Tara's really not doing so bad. Dr. Coffee says we need to like, focus on the positive so...

CHARMAINE
 (interrupting)
 Dr. Coffee's her shrink?

MAX

Oh no, Dr. Coffee's *my* shrink.
Tara's still seeing Dr. Bangs. But
they've made some strides with the
cognitive therapy and...

CHARMAINE

(histrionic)

Why can't she just stop?! It's not
even a real disease. I've been
doing a lot of reading, on the
Internet and it's all just
preposterous...

MAX

Charmie, you know I don't agree.

CHARMAINE

I'm sorry. I'm just so upset.

MAX

Look, I'm not trying to imply that
you don't have a right to be angry.
You do. We all do. But I've been
living with this for seventeen
years, OK? I'm married to it. You
just take it to Pampered Chef
parties.

CHARMAINE

You're right. God, I'm sorry you
have to live this way, honey. You
really deserve so much better.

She licks her lips. Is she flirting?

MAX

No, I don't.

Charmaine sighs and goes back into the house. Max watches her
with a mixture of longing and pity. He takes a beer out of
the refrigerator, cracks it open, and wanders onto the
driveway.

KEN FISHMAN, the Gregors' next-door neighbor, is outside
walking his wife's Chihuahua in the twilight. He waves to
Max.

FISHMAN

Yo!

MAX

Look who's back! How was Disney World?

Fishman heads over, smiling broadly.

FISHMAN

It was sort of like being mugged. Repeatedly. By a fairy. But we're loving the condo-- well, we love the 1/27th of it that we actually own.

MAX

Oh right, you got the timeshare.

FISHMAN

Tomorrow's vacations at today's prices...Holy bartender! What happened to the bike?

Fishman hot-foots it into Max's garage, shocked by the sight of the mangled Harley.

MAX

Our pal Buck had a little accident a couple of weeks ago. Right after you left.

FISHMAN

You let *Buck* take your chopper out?

MAX

I didn't "let" Buck anything.

FISHMAN

That guy's becoming a problem. I even told him when we were at the Wet Pony that he needs to cool it...

MAX

(taken aback)

When were you at Wet Pony with Buck?

FISHMAN

Aww man, you were working late.

Max looks appalled.

FISHMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry?

MAX

It's all right. It's just weird.

FISHMAN

God, they love Buck at the Pony. We got comped drinks all night.

(beat)

Don't tell Maddy, okay? She thinks I was having my floor-mats shampooed.

Max glares at Fishman, clearly annoyed by the Wet Pony anecdote.

INT. DEN - EVENING

T is sacked out on the couch in her PJs watching *One Tree Hill* and giving herself a pedicure. Max enters the room and watches while T luxuriantly extends one leg into the air, admiring her freshly-polished tootsies.

MAX

Want help?

T

Want sex?

MAX

(startled)

Why?

T

It's obvious that's what you want. You have such a boner for me.

MAX

Well, I do happen to be married to the woman who usually occupies your body.

T

Tara would get super pissed if we did it.

MAX

Yeah, that's about right.

T

She thinks I'm too young. Which pretty much makes you one of those *Dateline* predators.

T caps the bottle of black nail polish, rolls onto her belly and bats her lashes at Max.

MAX

(gulping)

T, how long you planning to stay with us this time?

T

Long. I hardly ever get to come out.

MAX

Yeah right! You come out just as often as the other alters.

T

That's not true. Alice gets way more airtime. You guys like her better because she bakes.

MAX

We like you, too. Heck, things around here wouldn't be the same without you. But we have a lot going on this week and the kids need their mom.

T rolls her eyes, resigned.

T

You're killing my horny.

MAX

T, I need you to go to the shed. Now. It's nothing personal.

T

I hate you.

She gets up and stalks out of the room.

MAX

Take your coat! It's chilly.

T's departing form gives him the finger.

Kate and T cross paths in the den entrance. T rudely bodychecks Kate into the door as she exits. Kate rubs her shoulder, confused. She's wearing her jacket and a scarf.

KATE

Ow. Where's T going?

MAX

Where are you going?

KATE

Madison's house. We have a civics project due tomorrow.

MAX

Are you kidding? It's almost 9.

KATE

Pretty-please? With rainbow sprinkles and a baby rhino on top? It's worth 20% of our grade.

MAX

Fine. One hour, no negotiating.

KATE

Where's T going?

MAX

To the shed.

KATE

(with disappointment)

Already? Why?

MAX

Because she shouldn't have been out in the first place. Katie, I know what Mom found in your bag, and I'm not real happy with you right now.

KATE

(interrupting)

Oh, I'm sorry! I guess I should have let that fertilized egg implant itself in my uterus.

Max looks briefly gobsmacked, then regains his composure.

MAX

You're too young to be having *it*, responsibly or not.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

And you know bad surprises like that are a trigger for Mom.

KATE

Everything's a trigger lately. I mean, why can't she just take Zoloft like the other moms? I can't be the perfect child all the time just because Mom acts like a bunch of different people when she's stressed out!

MAX

She's not acting, Katie.

KATE

Aunt Charmaine says she is.

MARSHALL

Aunt Charmaine is a hosebeast.

Kate and Max turn around. Marshall is standing in the doorway, looking forlorn.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I saw T going out to the shed. It's like 30 degrees outside. Why can't she just transition in the-- the closet or something?

MAX

I don't know...The shed works?

MARSHALL

Brace yourselves for Thelonius Monk.

He walks over to the den stereo and cues up a CD.

KATE

Why do you always do that?

MARSHALL

So they can't hear her. Or judge her.

Kate rolls her eyes and plugs her ears.

EXT. GREGOR FAMILY BACK PORCH - SAME

A set of SPEAKERS strategically positioned on the screened-in porch begin to blare extremely loud JAZZ MUSIC.

INT. DEN - SAME

MARSHALL
(shouting)
I hope Mom's okay.

Max cracks open his third beer of the night.

MAX
She's fine.
(beat)
She says it's painless.

EXT. SHED (TO ESTABLISH) - NIGHT

We see a small TOOLSHED illuminated by moonlight in the Gregors' back yard.

Faint, hysterical SCREAMING can be heard coming from the shed. A DOG in a nearby yard begins to bark.

As we pull back further from the shed, Marshall's loud jazz music drowns out the screaming.

INT. MAX AND TARA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Max is showering, lathering himself up with a Soap-on-a-Rope that he wears around his neck. He squirts some Rogaine into his palm and shampoos his head vigorously, almost obsessively.

Suddenly, the shower door slides open and a disheveled TARA steps in. Her nose is red from the cold, her hair is matted and her makeup--T's makeup--is running.

For a second, Max isn't sure who he's dealing with.

MAX
(startled)
Tara?...

Tara nods mutely. She splashes some hot water on her face, then leans against Max, exhausted. He folds her into his embrace with a concerned expression.

MAX (CONT'D)
Welcome back.

INT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Kate shivers on a street corner, checking her watch. She pops a breath mint and huddles into her down vest.

A pair of headlights illuminate her face and she smiles. It's her boyfriend, BENJAMIN LAMBERT, pulling up in a souped-up Honda. He wears Goth clothes and looks a little too old for Kate. He rolls down the window.

KATE

You're a little late, babe.

BENJAMIN

Me and Trevor were working on our Rurouni Kenshin costumes for TokyoCon.

(sizing her up)

You're looking very *kawaii* tonight, Katie-chan.

KATE

Thanks.

She climbs into the front seat. Benjamin puts the car in park and drapes his arm around Kate, practically suffocating her.

BENJAMIN

So why didn't you text me back earlier?

KATE

Oh. Um, things were kind of freaky at home. You know how I was telling you about my mom, and how she has multiple personalities?

Benjamin nods, dubious.

KATE (CONT'D)

Well, she transitioned. One of her alters--her personalities--is like my age. She's calls herself T. She's a total burnout, but we get to do whatever we want.

BENJAMIN

(disgusted)

So your mom actually goes around acting like she's a teenager?

KATE

Well, she doesn't really "go around." We try to keep her inside when it happens. And she's not always a teenager. Sometimes she's other people.

BENJAMIN

That is so messed up.

KATE

It's not that big of a deal. It's just like when we pretend to be Sailor Moon and Tuxedo Mask!

BENJAMIN

No, it's not.

KATE

Well...your mom has implants.

BENJAMIN

That's different.

KATE

It's kind of slutty.

BENJAMIN

(defensive)

She got them for her.

KATE

Anyway, you don't have to worry about me. Everything's fine.

BENJAMIN

Just don't ignore a text from me again, okay?

He looks pissed and slightly aggressive.

KATE

I won't.

BENJAMIN

Arigato.

Benjamin turns on the car stereo. It's loud, obnoxious Japanese pop. The car roars off into the night.

INT. MARSHALL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marshall is lying on his bed, reading a well-worn copy of *Sibyl* and drinking a cup of tea. He wears a robe over matching pajamas and looks very tidy and debonair. "Kind of Blue" plays softly on the stereo.

There's a knock on the door, and a freshly-showered Tara enters, looking contrite. Marshall discreetly pushes the book off the opposite side of his bed, as if hiding porn.

TARA
Hey, Marshmallow.

MARSHALL
(relieved)
Hi, Mom.

Tara walks in and sits down on the bed in the grand tradition of concerned mothers everywhere.

TARA
Listen, I'm sorry about tonight.
That was wacky, huh?

MAX
It was no big whoop.

TARA
How bad was she? T, I mean.

MAX
She wasn't that bad. She was only
here for a few hours. Did you know
she's a vegetarian now?

Tara shakes her head and begins coughing suddenly. It's a dry, hacking smoker's cough.

TARA
Am I high?

MAX
Maybe a little bit.

TARA
Where does she even get that crap?
Who deals pot in the suburbs?

Max shrugs.

TARA (CONT'D)

Listen, I want to thank you for being such a strong, supportive kid. I'm lucky.

MARSHALL

We're lucky, Mom. Because of you, we get to be interesting.

TARA

Do you like being interesting?

MARSHALL

(whispering)
I love it!

Tara smiles.

TARA

Well, I'm bushed. I'd better hit the sack.

She gets up and starts to head toward the door.

MARSHALL

Hey Mom? Why do you-- I mean, why do *they* have to go to the shed to bring you back?

TARA

I'll tell you when you're old enough to not be traumatized.

MARSHALL

Oh. Okay.

TARA

(cheerfully)
'Nighty-night, Marsh.

She walks out of the room. Marshall still looks comically traumatized despite her effort to put him at ease.

INT. MAX AND TARA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tara enters, kicking off her slippers. Max is already in bed, watching *The Tonight Show*.

TARA

(climbing into bed)
Who's on tonight?

MAX
(wearily)
I have no idea.

TARA
Hey honey?

MAX
Mm-hm?

TARA
I can't do this anymore.

MAX
I know he's not funny, but the
"Headlines" are still good.

TARA
No, not Leno. Me.
(beat)
I'm tapped out. It didn't used to
drain me like this. And now it
seems like it's happening more and
more. I can't even imagine what you
guys are going through...

MAX
(stilted)
It's fine. It's just part of who
you are, and we embrace it.

Tara turns to look at him in disbelief.

TARA
Dr. Coffee's really been blowing
sunshine up your ass, huh?

MAX
Actually, I take my sunshine
orally. Point-five milligrams,
twice a day. And also I drink a lot
of beer.

Tara laughs wryly.

MAX (CONT'D)
Seriously, though. I want you to be
happy.

TARA
I know. That's why I love you.

Max moves closer to her, stroking her arm as if to make a romantic overture.

MAX
Hey, you should put that little pink thong thing back on.

TARA
(abruptly)
T's g-string?

MAX
Yeah...I'm kidding.

TARA
No, you're not.

MAX
It looked good on you.

TARA
It looked good on *her*.

Max looks pained and confused. Tara rolls over and fusses with her pillow.

TARA (CONT'D)
I'd better get to sleep. I've got a consultation at 8:00 tomorrow.

MAX
Oh, that's right. Peg wants you to turn that money-pit into a "woman-positive" B&B.

TARA
I don't like to take on friends as clients, but at least she's paying me. Plus, her taste is so wretched that I consider this a public service.

Max touches her arm affectionately.

MAX
She's lucky she's getting the best.

TARA
Thanks. I'm excited.

She gives him a perfunctory kiss, rolls over and closes her eyes. Max stares at her lustfully.

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We see the bedroom from Tara's perspective as she opens her eyes. The first thing we/she sees are her feet, which are sticking out from the blankets. The toenails are painted jet black-- T's doing.

Tara sighs and examines her fingernails. Also black. She gets out of bed, resigned.

INT. TARA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Tara drives to a client's house. On the radio, two shock jocks are having a conversation.

DJ #1

I don't know about you, but personally, I love crazy girls.

DJ #2

Oh yeah. The crazy ones are absolute freaks in bed.

DJ #1

I dated a compulsive handwasher once. She wore gloves during sex.

DJ #2

Did you fantasize it was Minnie Mouse? I would have fantasized it was Minnie Mouse grabbing my ass.

DJ #1

You're sick...

Tara shuts off the radio and continues to drive, calmly stoic.

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST - AFTERNOON

Tara is walking through a Victorian mansion, taking copious notes as she trails PEG RILEY, a friendly acquaintance of hers. Peg is also in her 40s but looks more eccentric and quirky than Tara-- the hippie/divorcee type.

TARA

(scribbling)

So, you want the front parlor to be full of...Victorian teddy bears, correct?

PEG

Right. Teddies, dollies, bunnies-- if it shits fluff, I want it. OK, this is the solarium. I'm thinking about doing a day-spa thing in here. Maybe I'll even offer Botox injections.

TARA

I think you need to be licensed to do that, Peg.

PEG

God, this country is so regimented! Why can't we be more fun-positive, like the Mexicans? I went down to Nogales last winter. Went to the market, got Xanax, Wellbutrin, and a darling purse for Tiffany.

Tara smiles stiffly.

PEG (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, Tiff told me that your Katie is dancing one of the leads at the recital tonight.

TARA

Oh yeah. She's really excited...

PEG

Tiffany's not that psyched, but then again she's playing a tree. Anyway, you've seen the whole house now. Do you think you can make it look like a destination?

TARA

Sure. It's a great space. Lots of good light. It's got gingerbread appeal.

PEG

Look, Tara I've been meaning to ask you this all day. I hope I'm not too forward...

TARA

What?

PEG

Well, I'm hoping to do a little feminist lecture series here.

(MORE)

PEG (CONT'D)

You know, get some of Fern Fountain's most fascinating women to come and talk about what makes them tick.

TARA

You want me to talk about decorating?

PEG

Oh no, honey. I want you to talk about your condition.

TARA

My condition.

PEG

Absolutely! I think your disease is fabulous. It's a gift. If you want to know the truth, I think everyone's a little schizoid. You just manifest it in this incredibly creative and wild way!

TARA

Look, this isn't something I want to trumpet to the world. I've spent two years in this town passing for normal and I'm not ready to make the "Yep! I'm Plural" announcement.

PEG

Eh, the whole town's gonna find out eventually.

TARA

What makes you think that?

PEG

People in Fern Fountain make an effort to get to know their neighbors. Even if several of their neighbors reside in one woman's cerebral cortex. Besides-- chicks talk. Chicks talk a *lot*. You might as well own it, Tar.

TARA

How can I own it if I can't control it? It's not like I can duck into a phone booth and come out acting like some fun new character. It's more like puking or something.

(MORE)

TARA (CONT'D)

It sneaks up on me...I'm sorry, Peg, but my disorder is something I prefer-- try-- to keep private.

PEG

I say let your freak flag fly. Embrace your quirks! Look, I even embroidered it on a pillow.

She grabs a pillow from the sofa and holds it up. In small, intricate embroidery, it reads "LET YOUR FREAK FLAG FLY. EMBRACE YOUR QUIRKS."

TARA

(amazed)

You sure did...

PEG

So think about it.

TARA

Look, I gotta run. I have to drop off Kate's costume.

PEG

It's not the same one the little anorexic wore, is it? Did you see that poor girl? Tiff says they called her "Howard K. Sternum" behind her back.

TARA

(gathering up her samples)

Totally different costume. I'll see you later, okay?

EXT. TARA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Tara heads toward her car, having completed Peg's consultation. We see her using a small combination lock to get into her purse. She uses this lock to ensure that that none of the alters can get at her car keys or wallet. She unlocks her car, gets in and starts the ignition.

INT. TARA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Tara approaches the local high school, Fern Fountain High. Classes have just been dismissed, and disaffected teens are milling about the small campus.

Near the street, under a bare oak, Kate and her boyfriend Benjamin are engaged in what appears to be a heated discussion. Benjamin wears his hair in a bizarre anime-inspired style.

Tara slows down the car discreetly and cranes her neck to watch them. Benjamin is sniping at Kate about something, and Kate looks as though she's defending herself.

Benjamin puts his hands on Kate's shoulders and pins her firmly against the tree, shouting at her.

Something snaps in Tara at this instant. Her eyes narrow, her nostrils flare-- like any mother, she can't stand to see that punk putting his hands on Kate. She screeches to a halt and pulls over, rolling down the window.

TARA

Kate Michelle Gregor, I did not raise you to let boys who wear *pigtails* push you around.

BENJAMIN

These are samurai knots!

TARA

Shut up.

KATE

(through tears)
Mom, we're fine.

She walks over to the car, opens the back door and snatches up the garment bag containing her costume.

TARA

We? Honey, this Power Puff Boy does not warrant a collective pronoun. Get in the car now.

KATE

No.

TARA

Now, Kate!

BENJAMIN

(to Kate)
Is this the bitch character or something? Make her turn it off.

KATE
(tearful)
Ben...

Tara gazes at her daughter with a mixture of pity and sadness. She's obviously coming unhinged. Kate starts toward the car almost imperceptibly, but Tara's Nine West-shod foot slams on the gas, almost against her will. She speeds off.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Tara's car goes careening down the street at a decidedly non-suburban speed...

INT. CAR - DAY

Tara reaches, fumbling, into the glove compartment as the car veers and weaves down the street toward her house. She manages to retrieve a pair of black "shop teacher" glasses and a pack of unfiltered smokes.

She puts the glasses on, squinting, and gropes for a cigarette. Meanwhile, the car is going 40 in a 25.

EXT. TARA'S HOUSE - DAY

The car squeals into the driveway. Tara gets out and swaggers into the house. Her whole gait has changed. Her shoulders are squared, her legs are bowed, and she puffs the cigarette hands-free like a rock star.

She slams the door behind her, disappearing into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Marshall is standing in the kitchen, grating some orange zest into a mixing bowl. Two muffin tins are sitting out. Tara storms into the house and blows past Marshall.

MARSHALL
Mom? I'm making some Muffins of
Triumph for Kate.

Tara grunts, already on her way upstairs.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
(feebly)
Want to lick the bowl?
(MORE)

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Oh shit.

INT. DANCE THEATER - AFTERNOON

A stressed-out Kate navigates the serpentine backstage corridors of an old theater. She carries her costume. The backstage area is bustling with dancers. A beautiful, prim-looking girl in a tutu and ballet slippers trots past Kate and waves. Kate smiles in recognition.

BALLERINA
 Hey, bitch!

KATE
 What's up, slutwaffle?

They grin at each other cheerfully and wave. We follow Kate into a dressing room as she opens her dance bag and begins to get ready...

CROSS CUT:

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Tara is in her room, buttoning up a man's lumberjack-style flannel shirt. Her glasses slide down the sweaty bridge of her nose. Occasionally, she stops and clutches her temples. The act of transformation--whether or not we believe it--is obviously physically grueling for her.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SAME

Kate pulls up the shoulders of her leotard, discreetly tucking in her bra straps.

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Tara ties her hair into a ponytail and smooshes it under a foam trucker cap that says "LADY KILLER."

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SAME

Kate skims her hair back into a bun and begins fastening it with bobby pins.

INT. TARA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Tara puts on a pair of men's battered work boots, the soles caked with schmutz.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SAME

Kate laces up her immaculate satin ballet slippers.

INT. TARA'S HOUSE - SAME

Max enters, holding a bouquet of roses and baby's breath wrapped in green florist's paper. Marshall is taking the muffins out of the oven to cool. Max acknowledges his son proudly.

MAX
(pleased)
Muffins of Triumph for Kate.

MARSHALL
(nodding)
Flowers for Kate.

MAX
She's a good kid. Right?

MARSHALL
Sure. She's awesome.

Max sits down comfortably at the kitchen table.

MAX
You know, it's too bad Alice couldn't be here for Kate's recital. She loves crap like this. In fact, I don't think she's been to anything extracurricular since you made Eagle Scout.

MARSHALL
Alice hardly comes out anymore.

MAX
I know. I miss her corn bread. Speaking of which, where's Mom?

MARSHALL

Well, I'm not sure if Mom's here. I mean, Mom's here, but I don't know if *Mom's* here. If you get my meaning.

MAX

What, did T come back?

MARSHALL

I don't think so.

MAX

You're not talking about...

BUCK

Buck?

Tara has appeared at the top of the stairs in her manly-dirtball regalia and glasses. Lighting another cigarette, she sneers at Marshall and Max. She's become **BUCK**, her troubled, contentious, shit-kicking macho male alter-ego.

MAX

(startled)

Buck, don't smoke in here.

BUCK

(in a low, gravelly drawl)

I only smoke when I party.

MAX

This isn't a party.

BUCK

Says you.

Buck stomps into the kitchen and looks disdainfully at Marshall's muffins cooling on the counter. Marshall looks away, dreading Buck's reaction.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Hm. Looks like *Femeril* here's been bakin' up a storm.

MAX

(sternly)

Those are for Kate's recital. And it's very important to her and to us that it goes smoothly, so you're staying right here.

BUCK
 Ballet, huh? I wanna see what
 Katie's friends look like in
 tights.

MAX
 You could go bowling. Hey, maybe
 there's a cockfight downtown!

BUCK
 I bet some of those girls got asses
 like little nectarines.

MARSHALL
 (sullenly)
 Shut up, Buck.

BUCK
 Hey, Twinkie the Kid, there might
 be some boys for you to look at
 too!

Max pulls out his cell phone and pushes a speed-dial button,
 never taking his eyes off Buck.

BUCK (CONT'D)
 Who you calling?

MAX
 Dr. Bangs.

MARSHALL
 Dr. Bangs is at a self-mutilation
 conference in Tampa.

MAX
 He- he is?

BUCK
 Dumbass teenagers cutting
 themselves up. They want pain so
 damn much, they oughta call me!

Max hangs up the phone, reaches into his pocket and pulls out
 his wallet, desperate to thwart Buck's plan.

MAX
 Here. Fifty bucks. Go to the dog
 track in Billings.
 (quietly)
 Put five on Gigolo Foxtrot for me.

Buck snatches up the bill.

BUCK
No doggies tonight. It's colder
than a witch's tit.

MAX
(desperate)
I'll give you \$50 more to go to the
shed. And don't think I'm afraid of
you. This is for Katie.

BUCK
Hell no! You know I get a 48-hour
furlough, standard. I'm not going
to that shed until I get my ya-yas
out.

Max opens his wallet and fans out some cash.

MAX
Two bills to skip the recital. I
don't care what you do with it.

Buck considers the deal, then snatches up the money. He
mashes his cigarette out on the table and saunters out of the
room.

MARSHALL
Kate's gonna be mad that Mom's not
there tonight.

Max is clearly dejected.

MAX
(gesturing to muffins)
Just wrap up those M.O.Ts and we'll
go. Okay?

Marshall obligingly unfurls a roll of pink Saran Wrap.

INT. DANCE THEATER - NIGHT

Marshall and Max have found their seats in the small but
ornate old theatre, which is nearly packed with family
members and spectators. Max has the expectant look of a proud
parent. Marshall rifles through the program.

The lights flicker, indicating that the program is about to
start. As the house lights begin to dim, a general ruckus can
be heard a few rows back: "Move over, ya prick!" "Let me in!"

Max and Marshall instinctively turn around. Buck is trying to elbow his way into one of the back rows.

MAX

Buck, what are you doing here?

BUCK

Can't a dude change his goddamned mind? Anyway this bitch won't let me in.

WOMAN

I'm in a wheelchair!

BUCK

You wanna get rowdy? You wanna get buck-wild? I'll Chuck Heston your ass into an *electric* wheelchair!

Max has already sprung out of his seat. He ushers Buck down to their row, apologizing. People in the audience titter and whisper. Marshall looks around, sadly aware that people are making fun of his mom.

MAX

Sorry, everyone. He...she's not feeling well. It's hormonal.

FISHMAN is sitting two rows back with his tarty wife MADDY. He notices Buck and brightens.

FISHMAN

Hey, Buck! Buck! Where you been?

BUCK

Prison, man! Gimme a ring one of these days. We'll go to the strippers again.

FISHMAN

(happily)

Okay!

Fishman's wife looks pissed.

Max finagles a seat for Buck in their row. Buck settles in, spreads his legs and scratches himself. Marshall protectively clutches the Muffins of Triumph, scooting away from Buck.

The orchestra begins to play. Kate tiptoes onto the stage and begins to dance. Her stage makeup is grotesquely overdone and her moves are overdramatic and awkward. Still, she looks thrilled to be in the spotlight.

Buck snorts and lights a cigarette, which is quickly snatched away by Max.

Time passes...

INT. DANCE THEATER - FIVE MINUTES LATER

The ballet continues. Kate is twirling all over the stage, wearing a cheesy open-mouthed grin. Suddenly, Buck looks captivated, almost misty-eyed. Marshall notices.

MARSHALL
(whispering)
You're enjoying this.

BUCK
Shut up, faggot!

He whacks Marshall upside the head. Nearby audience members murmur in disapproval. Max simmers.

The number ends and a glowing Kate does a ballet curtsy. Buck stands up, clapping heartily and whistling. Kate sees him and freezes briefly, but her expression of alarm quickly turns into a smile.

Two rows in front of the Buck, Kate's jerky boyfriend BENJAMIN turns around to see who Kate's looking at. Benjamin and Buck lock eyes. Buck's face darkens with recognition. He makes a menacing throat-slitting gesture at Benjamin as the crowd rises to its feet.

INT. DANCE THEATER (BACKSTAGE) - AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Buck, Marshall, and Max are backstage greeting Kate. Kate's arms are full of flowers and she's ecstatic.

KATE
Did you see my grand jete? It was huge! And I've never done a quad pirouette in front of *real people* before! Just you guys.

MAX
We saw everything. You looked amazing.

PEG RILEY and her daughter TIFFANY (who is dressed like a tree) walk past, chatting excitedly.

PEG
 (waving)
 Hello, Gregors! Sorry we're in a
 rush...

TIFFANY
 Hey Kate, great job.

Buck reaches out and casually grabs Tiffany's butt as they
 pass by. She lets out a little shriek of surprise.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)
 (to Kate)
 Your mom is so funny!

Marshall ceremoniously hands Kate the tray of muffins.

MARSHALL
 These Muffins of Triumph have never
 been more well-deserved.

KATE
 Ooh, I gotta share these. Buck, you
 want a muffin? Buck? Dad, where's
 Buck?

Max's expression is one of quiet, weary panic.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Outside in the theater parking lot a ring of people has
 gathered around BUCK and BENJAMIN. Buck is pounding the shit
 out of Benjamin--not because he's stronger, but because
 Benjamin is terrified to fight back.

BUCK
 (slugging wildly)
 If you ever touch Kate again, I'm
 gonna feed your manhood to a husky
 dog and then throw the dog poop
 into a volcano!

BENJAMIN
 (shielding himself)
 Ow! Mrs. Gregor, stop! I can't hit
 you!

BUCK
 What's this "Mrs. Gregor" bullshit?
 I'm Buck and I will fuck you
 sideways!

Benjamin hauls off and punches Buck in the face. The crowd gasps. Buck tries wildly to fight back, but FISHMAN restrains him. Buck is dazed and has a bloody nose.

FISHMAN
Cool down, buddy.

MAX, MARSHALL and KATE rush onto the scene.

MAX
Buck, what are you doing?

BUCK
(furious)
Not only did this little wannabe-Jap pop Katie's cherry, he roughed her up today!

MAX
(to Kate)
Did he lay a hand on you? Tell me the truth.

Kate looks down and says nothing, but her eyes speak volumes.

Marshall rushes forward, screaming shrilly, and begins kicking Benjamin. The crowd goes wild. For the first time, Buck seems to gaze upon Marshall with admiration rather than scorn. Even Max doesn't interfere. He reaches up and tries to touch his wife's battered face, but Buck slaps his hand away.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

A monogrammed "Buck" ball rolls down a lane and knocks out the center pins.

BUCK
(shaking his head)
Snake eyes!

The Gregor family sits at the end of the lane, eating Muffins of Triumph and sharing pitchers of beer (Max) and soda (the kids). Kate hasn't washed off her stage makeup and looks ghoulish. Buck has a spectacular black eye, but otherwise appears to be in good spirits. He wears a bowling glove and flexes his hand.

BUCK (CONT'D)
It's been too long. I'm rusty.

Fishman is in the next lane, gearing up for a roll. His wife and young daughter linger near him, bored.

FISHMAN

Excuses, excuses. Prepare to be schooled.

Fishman rolls a lousy frame.

BUCK

That school got a short bus?

Kate watches, amused, from the sidelines. Buck gets up to bowl again, but Kate grabs him by the elbow and stops him.

KATE

Hey, thanks for coming to my recital. But next time I want Mom. Or Alice. No offense, Buck.

BUCK

None taken. I get bored by that bunhead shit anyhow.

KATE

And thanks for defending my honor. Benjamin's such a freak. I can't believe he hit you.

BUCK

Why? I'm able-bodied. Besides, you should thank Marsha. He got right in there and kicked like a Pussycat Doll.

Marshall shrugs, embarrassed. He's holding a bag of frozen peas to his shin.

MAX

We're all looking out for you, Kate. All us guys.

KATE

Believe me, I know.

BUCK

And keep it in your pants from now on, hear? You don't wanna be making any babies until you're 16 and can support 'em.

Max grimaces slightly at this "advice."

Buck rises and picks up his signature ball, tapping the ball-return for good luck.

BUCK (CONT'D)
 Get over here, Marshall. I'll show
 you how to pick up a 7-9 split.

Marshall gets up to share a rare bonding moment with Buck.

KATE
 (to Max)
 It's weird how Buck is a lefty. You
 know, 'cause none of the other
 alters are?

MAX
 (distant)
 That's one weird thing, yes.

Kate and Max exchange wry smiles.

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

We pan across the office to reveal a shelving unit full of TAPES. Some are labeled "TARA," some are labeled "T," some are labeled "BUCK," some are labeled "ALICE" (in flowery cursive) and a much-smaller portion are labeled with entirely unfamiliar names.

Tara enters, turns on the video camera we recall from the first scene and settles into the "confessional chair." Her black eye has faded somewhat, implying that a few days have passed.

TARA
 It's me, Tara. November 15th. Buck
 was apparently here for a couple of
 days. Luckily it was a weekend, but
 Max said it was pretty rough.

The sound of a door opening. Kate enters the frame wearing fox ears and a furry tail with her Japanese-inspired outfit.

TARA (CONT'D)
 I'm taping, honey.

KATE
 I need my laptop to do a report.

She passes in front of the camera briefly.

TARA
 Need a ride to the library?

KATE
 (off camera)
 Nah, I'll just make shit up.

Tara waits a few beats. Kate steps into frame again, makes a face at the camera and leaves.

TARA
 Anyway, right now I'm feeling massive amount of guilt. Fear, even. Two transitions in two days-- I mean, the last time that happened was when Marshall broke his tailbone figure skating. I had an excuse then. Now anything can set me off. Like, the Fishman's are having their Solstice Pig Roast next week and I'm already afraid that something will happen. I'm setting myself up for a freak-out.

She leans in, serious.

TARA (CONT'D)
 I honestly thought life would be easier when the kids got older and Max and I had been married forever. But it's not. The more time passes, the more I forget who I am. And then it's easier to be *them*.

There's another knock at the door.

MAX
 (from behind the door)
 Tara? We need you for a second.

TARA
 (to camera)
 Here's looking at you.

She winks with her bruised eye and shuts off the camera.