

TANTRA
"Episode 3"
"Emergency Stewardship"

Written by
Tan Dhingra

Tan.D

HALF-HOUR PREMIUM DRAMEDY
TV-MA
MONTREAL • PRESENT DAY

empire@tan.wiki

COLD OPEN

INT. NATREL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MORNING

A table that has hosted birthdays, silences, and now war with croissants.

Beatrice has arranged: coffee service, printed packets, a lawyer (SIMONE DUBEAU, 50s, immaculate, the human form of a non-disclosure agreement). Penelope in a blazer that still thinks it's going to a thesis defense. Walt. Zoe. Leo (hoodie, already lost). Cody is at school – small mercy.

Packets titled:

TANTRA HOLDINGS – EMERGENCY STEWARDSHIP PROPOSAL

PENELOPE

(to camera, before anyone
speaks)

She printed an agenda.

(beat)

People who print agendas for family
have already decided you are the
agenda.

BEATRICE

Thank you for coming. Simone is
here as counsel. This is not an
ambush. It's a structure.

PENELOPE

Ambush with pastry is still ambush.

SIMONE

Mrs. Natrel is entitled, as
surviving spouse with household
interest and under Quebec
succession dynamics we can debate
later, to seek interim professional
management of a closely held
enterprise engaged in high-risk
adult content, AI exposure, and now
uncapped residual remediation.

ZOE

You said "uncapped" like it's a sex
act.

SIMONE

In finance, everything is a sex
act. Some just file quarterly.

WALT

Fabian left controlling interest to Penelope. That's not a vibe. That's a document.

BEATRICE

Fabian also left a company that makes money from penetration and has a CEO who still says "intercourse" in her head like a Victorian. I am proposing a temporary managing director – industry-experienced – while Penelope finishes her degree and stops writing moral blank checks to the 2000s.

PENELOPE

You mean while you sell it.

BEATRICE

I mean while it survives you.

A beat. The croissant is sexual in its irrelevance.

LEO

(quiet, surprising even himself)

If this were actually about survival, the packet would lead with cash flow and talent retention. It leads with adjectives. Adjectives are how people dress up a mugging.

Everyone looks at Leo.

LEO (CONT'D)

What. I listen to podcasts. Sometimes they know things.

BEATRICE

We vote Friday. Family meeting. Formal. Bring whatever purity makes you feel tall.

PENELOPE

(to camera)

Friday.

(beat)

I have three days to become someone who can win a knife fight in a dining room.

(beat)
I studied yeast. Yeast would never
do this to family.

END OF COLD OPEN.

ACT ONE

INT. TANTRA HOLDINGS - PENELOPE'S OFFICE - DAY

War room energy. Marguerite, Walt, Zoe, Barnabé, River
(performer rep energy, invited), Denise with coffee like
munitions.

Whiteboard: VOTES / ALLIES / WHAT SHE'LL SAY / WHAT IS TRUE

MARGUERITE

Beatrice doesn't need to be right.
She needs you to look unstable.
Paying Celeste was correct and also
excellent ammunition: "See? She
hemorrhages."

PENELOPE

So I shouldn't have paid.

MARGUERITE

You should have paid with a
framework already announced. Optics
are not morality. Optics are
weather. We dress for weather.

ZOE

Which is why we rebrand. Not "hide
the porn." Own the house. Visual
identity, talent-forward language,
AI ethics as the point of the
company, not the apology. If
Beatrice wants "professional
management," we look more
professional than her lawyer's
haircut.

BARNABÉ

If you put a logo on my lighting I
will commit an art crime.

ZOE

Your lighting will make the logo
look expensive. Calm down.

RIVER

If this becomes a rebrand that turns us into "intimacy content creators" in soft fonts, I'm out. We fuck on camera. Say it. Just don't say it like you're ashamed and asking for a round of applause.

PENELOPE

Hard agree. No euphemism laundry.

WALT

Friday's vote is family theater. Real power is operational. If talent and department heads back you publicly, Beatrice's "emergency" looks like a coup.

PENELOPE

Then we get them. Honestly. Not with bagels and betrayal.

DENISE

Bagels help. Don't be ideological about carbs.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE A - DAY

A scene in progress that is frankly hot: Amara and a new performer, NOLAN, 30s, chemistry that is uncomfortably real. Barnabé whispering adjustments. The crew bored and precise.

Penelope watches playback with Walt — learning to look. She's getting better. Still swallows hard once.

AMARA

(between takes, robe half-open, zero shame)
You look like you're about to ask for consent to make eye contact.

PENELOPE

I need five minutes with the roster. Beatrice is trying to install a babysitter with a valuation fetish.

AMARA

Oh, a coup. Cute.

(louder, to the room)
Hey. Family drama in the big office later. If you like getting paid by someone who doesn't call your cervix a "content vertical," show

up and look loyal.

NOLAN
Is there catering for the coup?

DENISE
(from doorway)
Obviously.

BARNABÉ
Do not politicize my set—

AMARA
Your set is already political. It's
just wet.

Laughter. Reset. Bodies back to work. Penelope almost smiles. The workplace is filthy and functional. Home is worse.

INT. ZOE'S MAKESHIFT STUDIO - TANTRA LOADING DOCK - DAY

Zoe has built a mood board on the concrete wall: stills from Tantra's best work (explicit, beautiful), color palette, type, a line:

TANTRA — DESIRE WITH A PAPER TRAIL.
Leo holds a ladder. Questionable competence. Good heart.

LEO
Is "paper trail" sexy?

ZOE
Consent is sexy. Contracts are
sexy. People are tired of being
raw-dogged by platforms. We're
selling the adult version of a
seatbelt: still go fast, less
death.

LEO
That sentence should be illegal and
also on a billboard.

Penelope arrives. Stares at a huge print of a
tasteful-but-explicit still — two bodies, artful,
undeniable.

PENELOPE
If Beatrice sees this—

ZOE
She'll call it vulgar. Vulgar is
her word for "I can't monetize this
without looking like I want to." We

present Friday. Soft launch to staff today. You need a spine people can photograph.

PENELOPE

I need votes, not a Pinterest board.

ZOE

Same war, better outfit.

Hector from wardrobe passes with a rack of harnesses.

HECTOR

If you're doing a brand thing, do not put a logo on the ball gag. We tried in 2011. It chafed. Morally and literally.

INT. BEATRICE'S CAR - DAY

Beatrice and Simone parked across from Tantra. Watching people enter. A quiet surveillance that is almost intimate.

SIMONE

The temporary MD I sourced – Marcus Elling – ran a mainstream-adjacent studio in LA, cleaned it for private equity, flipped it. He speaks "responsibility." Investors cream for responsibility.

BEATRICE

Does he know anything about actual sex?

SIMONE

He knows margins. Sex is a margin with moaning.

Beatrice watches Penelope through the glass doors – small figure, big building.

BEATRICE

She thinks this is about ethics.

(beat)

It's about who gets to be the adult in a story full of naked people.

SIMONE

And you want to be the adult.

BEATRICE

I want to not be the woman who
married a secret and got a
thank-you note written to someone
else.

ACT TWO

INT. TANTRA - ALL-HANDS (SOUNDSTAGE CLEARED) - LATE DAY

Folding chairs. Crew, talent, office. Sexy industry looking
like a union hall. Craft table: fruit, condoms, coffee,
pastries. Democracy with lube in the vicinity.

Penelope stands. No TED Talk. Notes trembling once, then
not.

PENELOPE

I'm not going to pretend I know how
to light a threeway. I don't. I
know chain of custody, consent
language, and how to read a
contract until it confesses.

(beat)

My stepmother wants emergency
stewardship. Translation: replace
me with someone who will make this
place easier to sell and harder to
work in.

(beat)

I paid Celeste Marchand because we
owed her. We are auditing the back
catalog because bodies are not free
content libraries. We are drafting
likeness policy with teeth because
AI doesn't get to fuck you without
asking.

(to camera, quick,
private)

If I faint, cut away.

(back to room)

If you want a boss who understands
your job better than me, fair. If
you want a boss who won't sell your
face to the highest euphemism, I'm
asking you to back me Friday —
publicly. Not because I'm pure.
Because I'm listening. And because
I am so tired of secrets running
this family like a second payroll.

Silence. Then Amara stands.

AMARA

She's awkward. She's learning. She paid Celeste. That's more than most fluent assholes do. I'm in.

RIVER

Same. If the new guy says "intimacy coordinators" while cutting residuals, I'll start a OnlyFans called Fuck Your Stewardship.

PRIYA

I'll back her. She sat through dailies without calling them disgusting. That's my bar. It's low and I like it that way.

BARNABÉ

I reserve the right to scream at her about aesthetics. I do not reserve the right to be managed by a flipper from Los Angeles. I have principles. They are horny and specific.

Walt raises a hand — old school.

WALT

Fabian hid you from this room because he thought love was a clean kitchen. He was wrong. This room is the truest thing he built. She gets my vote. She gets my throat if the lawyer plays dirty. Metaphorically. Mostly.

Laughter. Soft. Real. Penelope's eyes shine — she kills it fast.

ZOE

(whispers)

Now we show the board. Soft. Soft!

Zoe unveils the mood board on a rolling stand. Desire. Type. The line: DESIRE WITH A PAPER TRAIL.

A murmur. Some love. Some wince.

JULES

It's hot. It's clean. It doesn't say "sorry we exist."

NOLAN
It's a little consultant. But I
fuck consultants. I'll allow it.

CELESTE
(in the back — she came —
arms folded)
Don't let the paper trail become
the product. The product is still
people coming. Remember the order.

PENELOPE
Order noted.

INT. NATREL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Penelope tries to prep Cody without recruiting him.

CODY
Is Beatrice the villain?

PENELOPE
She's scared and armed. That's
worse than a villain.

CODY
Do you want me to say something at
the vote?

PENELOPE
I want you to do homework and not
become a chess piece.

CODY
Dad made us chess pieces by dying.
I'm already on the board.

(beat)
If I talk, I'll say the truth. You
suck at lying and you're trying not
to suck at people. That should
count.

PENELOPE
(soft)
It counts. Stay twelve a little
longer.

CODY
No. But I'll pretend for your
nerves.

INT. SEXY PROBLEM - INT. PROPS / TOY ROOM - NIGHT

Penelope looking for Walt – wrong door. She steps into
 PROPS: shelves of toys, toys, toys. Silicone. Glass.
 Leather. A wall of dildos like a wine cellar. A sign: TAG
 AFTER USE OR DIE (OF AWKWARDNESS).

She freezes. Leo is already inside, holding a ridiculous
 rainbow toy like a man at a museum.

LEO

I was looking for the bathroom.

PENELOPE

This is not the bathroom.

LEO

I know that now. Intellectually.
 Spiritually I'm still lost.

A props PA, MINA, 20s, enters, casual.

MINA

Don't power that on. It has modes.
 Modes are a lifestyle.

(sees their faces)

First time in the library? Everyone
 thinks it's funny until they need a
 specific curve on a Tuesday. Then
 it's infrastructure.

PENELOPE

Infrastructure. Right.

MINA

You two need something for Friday?
 We don't stock spines.
 Metaphorically. Though we do stock—

PENELOPE

We're good.

They leave. Hallway. Leo whispering:

LEO

I think I felt something.

PENELOPE

Please be specific in a way that is
 not.

LEO

Not the toy. The building. Like it
 knows what people want before they
 do. That's either holy or evil.

PENELOPE

It's a business. Holy and evil are branding.

LEO

Zoe's line is good. Beatrice is going to hate that it's good. That's how you know.

ACT THREE

INT. NATREL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - FRIDAY

Same table. Less croissant. More blood in the atmosphere.

Present: Beatrice, Simone, Penelope, Walt, Zoe, Leo.

On speaker / video: MARCUS ELLING, 48, LA smooth, face of a man who has sold three souls and a studio.

Also present, standing room – not "family only" anymore because Penelope brought witnesses: Amara, River, Marguerite, Denise. Beatrice's jaw ticks. Good.

SIMONE

This is irregular.

PENELOPE

So is installing a stranger over a will.

BEATRICE

Marcus, go ahead.

MARCUS

(video smile)

I've helmed transitions in adult-adjacent spaces with sensitivity and strong EBITDA. My plan: pause residual expansion, centralize IP, explore strategic partners, professionalize brand away from legacy risk—

RIVER

He means fire the past and sell the faces.

MARCUS

I mean sustainability.

AMARA

My ass is sustainable. Your plan sounds like a diet.

BEATRICE

Enough cabaret. The proposal is interim MD authority for six months, Penelope as "creative-ethics advisor," board observer seat for me—

PENELOPE

No.

BEATRICE

You don't get to no a structure into oblivion.

PENELOPE

I get to read the will out loud like a grown-up.

(Marguerite slides
copies)

Controlling interest: me.
Operational authority: me unless I appoint. I am not appointing a flipper who says "adult-adjacent" like the word porn might stain his teeth.

SIMONE

We can challenge fitness to manage—

MARGUERITE

Try. I'll enjoy the discovery process into your valuation emails. "Quiet appraisal" is a phrase judges find spicy.

Beatrice's eyes flash — Marguerite scored.

ZOE

Also, staff statement.

(unrolls — signed page)

Department leads and talent representatives opposing emergency stewardship. Desire with a paper trail. Not for sale as a euphemism.

MARCUS

Cute branding. Doesn't pay debt.

WALT

We're not in debt. We're in grief. Different ledger. You wouldn't understand — you flip, you don't stay.

LEO

(standing, sweaty, clear)
I sat in the first meeting. The
packet led with fear adjectives.
Fear is a sales tool. If Beatrice
wants a vote, vote on facts: cash
is fine, talent is backing
Penelope, Celeste is handled, AI
policy is drafting. The emergency
is that Beatrice feels erased.
That's real. It's not a management
plan.

(beat)

Also Marcus looks like he
moisturizes with private equity.

Silence. Then Denise snorts. Fatal for pretension.

BEATRICE

(quiet, lethal)

You think this is jealousy.

PENELOPE

I think it's grief in a blazer. I
have that too. Mine doesn't get to
fire people.

BEATRICE

He left you the dirty thing because
he thought you were clean enough to
wash it. He left me the house and
the silence. Don't you dare win and
call it ethics.

PENELOPE

Then take the silence up with a
ghost. I'm taking the company to
work.

A long beat. Simone whispers to Beatrice. Beatrice closes
her eyes. Opens them. A retreat that is not surrender.

BEATRICE

We table the stewardship vote. For
now.

(to Penelope)

You get ninety days. If you sink
this place in principle, I come
back with teeth that aren't
borrowed.

PENELOPE
Ninety days.

MARCUS
(on screen)
I'll send my rate for consulting—

EVERYONE
No.

Screen off. Air returns.

Amara squeezes Penelope's shoulder — skin, heat, solidarity,
a little charge.

AMARA
Not bad, software girl. Next time
say "porn" in the speech. It makes
the room wet with honesty.

PENELOPE
Baby steps. I'm still unlearning
spreadsheet as personality.

INT. TANTRA - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aftermath. Zoe buzzing. Leo shaking. Walt tired-smiling.

ZOE
We won a round. Not the war. Wars
have merch. I'll make the merch.

LEO
I think I blacked out during my
sentence.

PENELOPE
You were good. Disgustingly good.

LEO
Don't sexualize my competence. I'm
fragile.

Barnabé passes with a hard drive.

BARNABÉ
When you're done playing Succession
with better sex, approve the
impact-play addendum. Also I cut a
thank-you montage for Celeste from
archive — tasteful, explicit,
earned. She should see she wasn't
only a lawsuit. She was grammar.

PENELOPE

Show me tomorrow. I'll look.
Properly.

He goes. Penelope to camera:

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Ninety days.

(beat)

To prove a liar's daughter can run
a sex company without becoming a
different kind of coward.

(beat)

Easy.

(beat)

God, I need a drink. Or a lab. Or
someone to touch me like I'm not a
spreadsheet.

(beat)

Not you. The camera doesn't get
consent either. Goodnight.

TAG

INT. BEATRICE'S STUDY - NIGHT

Beatrice alone. Packet torn. Wine. She opens a drawer: a
photo of Fabian and her on a vacation — real smile, rare.
Behind it: a copy of an old email she shouldn't have
printed.

SUBJECT: IF I GO FIRST

TO: WALT

...Penelope gets Tantra. Beatrice
gets security. Do not let either of
them turn this into a referendum on
who I loved more. I loved badly.
Distribute the pieces accordingly.

Beatrice stares. Folding the page slow.

BEATRICE

You loved badly.

(beat)

I'm still a better student than her
at that subject.

She opens her laptop. New email draft to Simone:

Send. SUBJECT: NINETY DAYS. DOCUMENT EVERYTHING. IF SH

CUT TO:

INT. PENELOPE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Penelope pins Zoe's line above the desk: DESIRE WITH A PAPER TRAIL.

Below it, she tapes a sticky note in her own hand:

SAY THE WORD. PAY THE PEOPLE. DON'T BECOME HIM.
She turns off the light. Down the hall, a late shoot:
laughter, a moan that is work and pleasure, the building
alive.

Penelope listens. Doesn't flinch.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE 3.