

Dreamcatcher by Jen McVeity

SCENE: The dinner table. It's roast lamb and tense conversation. For once, MICHAEL the politician is home, no ships to launch, not babies to pat on the head. From habit and years of hurt, TESS his daughter from his first marriage is antagonistic. Tess spends weekdays with her father and KATE (his second wife) and weekends with her mother. Kate, a university lecturer is the peacemaker of the family. LAURA, Tess' half sister, is a trampolining champion, striving for perfection and more and more championships in order to win their father's attention. It doesn't work.

LAURA I'm having trouble with my double back somersault.

MICHAEL I see. Pass the potatoes please Kate.

KATE I'm sure you'll get it right soon.

LAURA Coach says I need more height. *(She hasn't even looked at her food.)*

MICHAEL Try and get fitter. *(He is spooning mint sauce over roast potatoes.)* That will help.

LAURA I might just make it a single 'sault.

MICHAEL You can do it. You just have to try harder.

TESS I think the single 'sault looks fine. Your form's better. It gives the routine more elegance.

MICHAEL She'll get the double. She won't quit. *(He looks at Tess - not like you, the look seems to add.)*

KATE *(Changing subject)* How's that proposal for the new speed bumps going?

MICHAEL I think we have an agreement in principal from the local councils. Many of their objections are not particularly relevant... *(He keeps talking, very softly as Tess and Laura talk over him.)*

TESS Want to come to Mum's place with me this weekend? It'll be great down on the beach.

LAURA Thanks. But I've got training on Sunday.

TESS Maybe Mum will drive you to it. I could ask.

LAURA And I've got an extra session on Saturday too. With the National titles so close.

TESS *(Sighs)* Oh, I forgot.

LAURA *(Eagerly)* You could stay here. We could go to a movie Saturday night...

TESS *(Despairing)* Oh Laura! I can't. You know I can't.

LAURA Sorry. *(She pushes food around her plate, not looking at Tess.)* I shouldn't have asked.

TESS You know Mum wants me there. She's been asking me to spend more time with her. Not less.

LAURA *(Looks up in sudden panic)* You wouldn't!

TESS *(Teasing)* Not without you. There's only so much peace and quiet I can take.

MICHAEL Of course, the noise level is a problem...

KATE What about the people who live there? What are they saying?

MICHAEL The general feeling from the constituents is really very positive. We'll need to monitor the situation closely though. I might do a quick constituency tour around the end of the month.

LAURA Not the 27th! The Nationals on then. You have to be there!

MICHAEL Of course, I'll try to be there.

TESS *(Mutters to Laura)* He'll try. But don't count on it.

MICHAEL Behave yourself Tess. You don't seem to realise that other people too call on my time.

TESS Other people always want your time! What about us?

MICHAEL I said I'll try.

TESS Like you tried for my parent / teacher night?

MICHAEL I didn't need to talk to your teachers. Your report card said it all! Maybe if it had been different, I would have been there.

TESS Different - like last year? Last year I had an 'A' in every single subject. And you went and spoke at a ship launching. The year before it was some nursing mothers society!

LAURA *(Pleading.)* You will come, won't you? To the trials?

MICHAEL *(Throws hand up in frustration. But is totally unable to commit)*
I'll try! Darn it. I'll try!