



## Step 4: Dynamic Dialogue

# Dinner Table Fight – Dreamcatcher

### From *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, no 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's 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 *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 the subject) How's that proposal for the new speed bumps going?*
- MICHAEL *I think we have an agreement in principle 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 are 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!*