

One Thousand Snapshots

By Steve Heron

DASHING DIALOGUE SAMPLE

This sample of text from One Thousand Snapshots shows the use of a variety of dialogue tags, techniques, punctuation, and format.

It is to be used in conjunction with "WRITING DASHING DIALOGUE" by Steve Heron.

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 14: *Cross My Heart*

'WE NEED TO talk, Maddy,' Tiana stabs these words at me as I try to walk past.

'What about?' I stab back.

'Can I walk home with you and talk?' she asks. 'If you have to,' I mumble. Part of me wants to run, but I know she can outrun me. Part of me wants to crawl up in a ball and disappear. Part of me wants to punch her. The last part of me surrenders, knowing talking with her is the right thing to do.

As we walk away from the school, Tiana breaks the uncomfortable silence. 'It feels like you're avoiding me. Have I done something wrong?'

It's a courageous thing to ask. I pick at the strap of my backpack. I have a chance to let the hurt out, but as I shrug, all I can say is, 'No.'

'You sure?' Tiana says, as timid as a mouse.

'Sure,' I lie.

The unconvinced expression on her face tells me she doesn't believe me. 'Dad says I can come to your place for the sleepover on Saturday if it's still okay?' she says.

Now, what am I going to say? I have second thoughts about the sleepover. Why did those mean crows have to say anything this morning? I decide to come out with it. I stop and glare at her. 'Are you using me?'

She halts in her tracks, like a stun gun has hit her. 'What?'

'Crystal and Rachel said you are using me.' I fold my arms and press my lips tight.

Tiana plants her hands on her hips. 'Deadset? Those bitches.'

'Ouch!' I say.

Now Tiana fires up. 'They tried the same on me. They told me you are using me.'

'I'm sorry, it's just that ... doesn't matter.' This is awkward. My eyes lower.

'It's just what?' Tiana's hands are still on her hips.

'Well, I've never had a best, best friend who's a girl, and I'm not sure who to trust.'

'Maddy. I'm not using you. Look at me.'

My eyes lift.

She frowns. 'I AM NOT USING YOU.' She makes sure I hear.

'Truth?' I plead.

'Truth.' She waves her hands over her chest. 'Cross my heart, it ain't no lie.'

'Isn't it, cross my heart and hope to die?'

'I know, but I don't hope to die,' she says.

‘Yeah, what a strange thing to say.’ I want to get another thing off my chest. ‘Why did you post the picture of us at the markets dressed as hippies?’

‘Because I thought it’d be okay.’ She is as timid as a mouse again.

‘Well, it wasn’t okay,’ I shoot back.

‘I didn’t think it’d start rumours.’

‘Well, it did.’ It’s my turn to put my hands on my hips.

‘But I thought we were becoming best friends,’ she says. Her eyes are reddening, and tears are welling up.

‘What made you think that?’ I don’t know why I am talking with this madditude. I so much want a best friend, and here I am fighting with someone who can be a bestie.

She grabs my wrists and eyeballs me. ‘To start with, I’ve never had so much fun with someone as I have with you.’ That surprises me. ‘Really?’

‘Even though your jokes are corny, they make me laugh,’ she adds, ‘and you treat me with respect. When I’m with you, I’m a better person.’ Her eyes fill with tears.

No girl has ever spoken to me like that before. Now what do I say? I’m ashamed to have bad thoughts about her. I’m also a better person around her but don’t know how to say it.

I throw my arms around her. ‘That’s the best-damned speech I’ve ever heard,’ I splurt out. ‘I’m so sorry, Tiana.’

It makes me think about the willie wagtail and what Ryan said. It’s like Tiana is a human form of the willie wagtail. Is she a messenger of good news or am I afraid she will steal my secrets?

I stand back and eyeball her. ‘It’s just that I’m scared. Scared you won’t like me for who I am. Scared you’ll tell people my

secrets. Scared if you become my best friend and then I might lose you.’

She blinks five big blinks. ‘Maddy. I AM your friend. I’ve got fears too, but that’s what friends are for, hanging in there and sharing their secrets and helping each other through tough times.’

She’s right, but I have to clear something up. ‘What about the crows, Crystal and Rachel?’

‘They’re friends, but not like you. I’m mad at them for what they’ve done. I’ll give those two crows a piece of my mind when I see them.’ She shakes her fist.

‘Can I come with you when you do?’ ‘Those two have been even meaner since they’ve been hanging out with Keeliana.’

‘I heard about the stealing at the markets.’

‘You heard about that?’ Her eyebrows raise.

‘Yeah.’ I start walking again.

‘It was Keeliana’s idea. I told them it wasn’t right. That’s why I came and joined you.’

‘But I saw Basil after that, and he said nothing about someone stealing from him.’

‘They did it when they came back from town after we’d both left.’

‘Oh.’ It makes sense now.

‘I guess they were annoyed I wouldn’t join them. When they found out I took off with you, that’s when they started the rumours.’

‘How come you were talking with them at recess?’ I ask.

‘Well, I wasn’t actually talking with them. They were talking at me. It’s when they started being mean to me and told me you are using me. That’s why I called you over. I wanted to sort it out

with those crows right there and prove to them you aren't using me.'

'And I avoided you. Some friend I turned out to be.' I make a sorry puppy face.

'It's not your fault. I tried to join you at lunchtime, but you wouldn't let me.'

'Sorry.' I feel extra bad now. 'Who did you play with?'

'No one,' she sighs.

'Where were you then?'

'I was in the toilets crying.'

Now I feel worse. 'That was me at recess, in the toilets crying.'

'All because of those crows,' she says.

'Can we promise each other never to let anything like this happen again?' I ask.

'Promise?' She says as she sticks out her pinkie finger. I connect mine.

Out of nowhere, two crows swoop past us, being chased by a willie wagtail. We both look at each other, bewildered.

'Did you see that?' I ask.

'Bizarre,' Tiana replies. 'Like—a tiny bird is chasing two big crows. It could be a sign.'

'No—just a coincidence,' I say without repeating that I don't believe in superstition.

'Nobody likes crows,' Tiana says.

'Yeah, but they like each other.' I laugh.

