

Dialogue Example I (third person)

“So, Adam,” she said, taking a sip of wine. “Who’s this new girl you’re going with?”

“Girl?” Jen asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Friday night, down by the lake.”

“It’s no one,” Adam said, focusing on his food. “We’re not together.”

Tracey let out a loud *hah*. “You looked pretty together when I left.”

“We’re not,” he said again, filling his mouth with pasta.

Tracey turned conspiratorially up the table towards Jen. “They were cuddling under a blanket.”

“Who is she?” Jen smiled.

Adam shook his head and reached for his wine.

“She’s very good looking,” Tracey said. “Blonde, fit. From her accent I think she’s Eastern European or something.”

Jen’s eyes latched onto Adam, but he refused to meet them.

“Really?” she said, all humour gone from her voice.

“Look, I gave her a lift back from Ashcourt, all right? She wanted to come to the party. It wasn’t fair leaving her out in the middle of nowhere on a Friday night.”

“I see.”

“Nothing happened, okay?” This time he did meet Jen’s eyes.

“Sorry, have I said something I shouldn’t have?” Tracey asked.

Dialogue Example II (third person)

“Why do you photograph dead things?”

“Why not?” The girl shrugged.

“Do you sell many?”

“Not many.”

“Do you display them to shock people?”

“Are you shocked?”

Zenobia couldn’t decide whether she was intrigued or irritated.

“Do you think it’s the material or your attitude that drives buyers away?”

The room was quiet enough for her voice to carry. The man in tweed turned to look.

“Probably both,” the girl admitted, closing the book in her lap. “Which one do you like?”

“All of them. But the feather is your best.”

“Why do you say that?”

“The contrast. Flight is freedom. Death is freedom. If you wanted to shock, you would have taken a picture of the entire mess. Laid it out in full view. But you haven’t. Not in any of these. You’ve looked for meaning in something meaningless, and you’ve found it.” The girl was staring now, her lips slightly parted as though waiting for words to fall out. “How much is it?”

“Two-hundred and fifty pounds.”

“How much is it really?”

“Sixty-eight.”

She had swung between two ends of ridiculous, which meant the girl had no idea of her worth.

Dialogue Example III (first person)

“His harem?” Ludovico frowned and then laughed. “Oh! You misunderstand me. My father was not sleeping with them, he merely allowed them to ply their trade with the soldiers. No, in the West there are no harems. Men take only one bride.”

“Only one?”

“Yes. It is a very different way of life.”

“Your father agreed to this?”

“In order to marry my mother, yes.”

“What would cause such a foolish union?”

He smiled at me in the way Shusha used to smile at me before informing me that I knew nothing of politics.

“That is simple, sweet lady. Love.”

He held my eyes until I felt myself blush.

“Have you ever been in love?” he asked me.

“Perhaps. Once.”

“What happened to your love?”

“I have a jealous friend.”

“Ah, the Comte de la Mort Rouge?”

“Indeed.”

“Then the Comte de la Mort Rouge was not your love?”

“Oh, I love him, but in a different way.”

He took a sliver of ginger on his thumb, sucking it between his lips.

“Tell me,” I asked, “how do men in Europe display their wealth if not through their wives?”

“The fewer wives a man has, the greater his wealth tends to be,” he smiled. “Take the Shah of Iran, for instance—”

“Yes, let’s.”

“He has more wives than he can count, and hardly anything left to show for it.”

“What do you mean?”

“He sells off his country’s wealth to foreign powers in order to fund his pursuit of pleasure.”

I took a sip of water to disguise the thoughts raging through my mind.

Dialogue Example IV (first person)

“How are you?” I asked.

He shrugged and sat back in his seat.

“Heartbroken. But what can I do?”

“Is he still seeing that woman?”

“He’s moving in with her.”

“I’m so sorry.”

“These things happen.” He took another swig of his drink. “You know,” he continued, “it might be the right thing. Could push me to do something different with my life.”

“Different like what?”

“Well, I don’t know. Maybe get involved in things more. Meet people. I was thinking about offering to help with the Mardi Gras committee this year. Usually all I do when I get home is curl up on the sofa with—” He paused and then skipped over the name. “Maybe that’s why he left. Maybe I’m a boring old fart already.”

“Don’t say that.”

“But I could help out more, maybe get involved in some campaigning. Might even try for a different job. I quite fancy Stonewall.”

The name jolted me.

“You know the manager of VAC used to work for Stonewall?” It was out before I even heard myself saying it.

“Who, Georgie boy? He’s worked there forever. Bit of a living legend.”

“You know George McCally?”

“Everyone knows George.” He was looking at me carefully, probably wondering why I’d leapt up like a rabbit at the mention of his name.