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THE OTHER SIDE OF CHARLIE FISH'S DEATH BY SCRABBLE
Gabrielle Reardon

It is mid-summer where my husband and I live. Inside the house, my husband is sweating. Oh, the way that he acts has annoyed me for years. That is not to say that we did not love each other at one time. Of course we did, or we would not be married right now. Yet tensions had begun to rise a few months ago as we began to notice more and more of each other's annoying habits.

Early that day I talked my husband into playing scrabble with me. We had been spending more time together recently, but nothing had helped the relationship. Today I had a plan and this was the main part. My husband must be playing scrabble for all of this to work.

You see, my husband has this nasty habit of chewing on the scrabble tiles. This has left all of them with bite marks on the edges and it makes it rather gross to play the game now. Never mind that, though, for this would be the last game of scrabble I would ever have to play with this pig. After twelve years, I would finally be rid of this lazy man who left all the work to me.

The game begins with us looking at our tiles. From the look on his face, I know his tiles are bad. It won't matter, though, because he follows a very predictable pattern. He seems to love words that denote some form of action. This exact quality is what gave me the idea for this plan in the first place. As I predicted, he plays an action word as the first word. He places the word "begin" on the board.

After he plays his brilliant word, I look down at my tiles. Slowly I begin to rearrange them, looking for the perfect combination. I don't want to leave him out in the cold when it comes to my brilliant plan. No, I think I shall give him some small hint. With that, I place down my tiles on the board to form the word "jinxed". That is just what this game is going to be.

It seems to me like he is taking this game seriously for once. No matter, that will not change the plan. He looks at his letters for quite a while before making up his mind. What could be going through that mind right now? I don't know, and to tell the truth, I no longer care. All I currently know is that he played the word warmer and is still chewing on one of the tiles. That irks me so much.

Outside the sun beats down even more. As I look down at my tiles, I see a word that will work perfectly. Sure, I can't be sure it happens, but there is a high possibility of it occurring. This is just perfect. Without another thought, I play the word "sweatier". He may begin to sweat more, but he also plays a perfect word for me to make real. He plays the word "humid". I try to keep his interest by saying I have lousy letters. It seems like it may have worked. To make it seem that way, I play the word "fan" and then get up to fill the kettle and turn on the air conditioning. The kettle would increase the humidity as the water became water vapor. Of course the air conditioning would serve as our fan. As I turn on the fan, I am zapped by static shock. Talk about luck, for I sit back down at the table to see he had played the word "zap". So far everything had come true. I think he had received more than enough hints to know what is going on.

Loudly, I rearrange the letters that I possess just to continue to make him think I have bad letters. Everything was going perfectly. He just sits there, staring at me with those hate filled eyes as I feign innocence. Looking at the letters, I finally find the perfect word. It seems to pose a question to him in my mind as I place the tiles to the word "ready" on the board. With that I stand up to get myself a cup of tea from the whistling kettle.

As I am getting my cup of tea, I hear a small clack on the table. That little cheater has changed out a tile. I return to the table giving a look of suspicion, because I now think he might be up to something, too. On the board is the word "cheating" when I return. Maybe I too am being affected by this horrid plan of mine.

Under my breath I mutter an obscenity before asking him, "Did you cheat?" He denies it, but I know he has. I shall ignore that fact and instead play the word "ignore" just to make it all the more true. I won't have to deal with him much longer.

He thinks he has some power over me. The next word he plays is "sleep." It is almost like he expects me to fall asleep right here and now. I don't think so. After all, I have more power over myself and my actions than he seems to have over his actions. Look at him, sitting there with anger pouring from his eyes. No, he does not hide his emotions well at all.

Now we have been playing for a while. None of us has come up with stellar words, but there is something brewing in his mind. When I see

the word “explodes” on the board, I wonder what is going to happen. After all, he played “zap” when I was zapped by the air conditioning unit. Then he played “cheating” when he himself had cheated. Was he making these things happen? No, for when the air conditioning unit exploded, he seemed just as shocked as I was. Something is going on here. What I need is a sign, so that is exactly the word I play.

My husband seems to have realized what is going on to. His next word is “fly”. Both of our words will tell us if something is going on. As he leans back in his chair and closes his eyes, though, I can barely keep myself from jumping over the table and killing him there. No, instead I must sit here and wait for an even better opportunity than for him waiting for something to happen that will never happen. This is when I spot the fly above my cup of tea.

Somehow I must warn him of what is going on. Yet I can see now that he will not believe anything that I tell him. He is too wrapped up in his own thoughts and plans. He is too busy thinking of how much he hates me. No, I will only play the word “caution” to try and warn him. Hopefully he will take the hint.

He is chewing on yet another tile while he plays the word “quake”. The ground slowly begins to shake beneath my feet. This is just amazing. How is everything that we play actually happening? What is making it happen? It is like something has been waiting a long time to help one of us.

As it is my turn, I look down at my tiles. The word is already spelled out for me in the pile. That word is “death”. Once the word is placed on the board, my husband gasps. That tile he has been chewing on goes into his throat and seems to get lodged there. I see him trying to cough, trying to get it out. His face begins to change colors and blood runs down his neck as he claws at it. All I do is sit there in shock, watching him die.

After many minutes, he falls to the floor, dead. Slowly my mind catches up. I get up from my chair. I kneel down next to him and check for his pulse. There is none. No, he is definitely dead now. Someone has destroyed my problem, but was it really this much of a problem? My mind races as I think of how we could have worked out all of our differences. Because of our hate and distrust for one another, I had not been able to warn him and now he is dead. It did not need to be this way. He did not need to die.