

DEATH BY SCRABBLE

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based on a story by
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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

FRANK, overweight and hairy, sits at a too-small table across from his wife, EDNA. He wears shorts and a tank top, sweat beads off his forehead. She's stout and rock-like with firey red hair.

FRANK (V.O.)
It's hot. And I hate my wife.

Frank wipes sweat from his forehead. It returns immediately. Edna lays out the Scrabble board.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Look at us. We're playing Scrabble.
That's how bad it's got. I'm 42
years old. I'm blistering in my
skin. And all I could think to do
today is play Scrabble.

Frank and Edna set up their racks and grab seven tiles each.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I should be out exercising,
spending money I don't have,
meeting people I don't know. I
don't think I've spoken to anyone
'cept my wife since Thursday
morning.

FLASH TO:

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Frank stands by the door too eager as the PAPER BOY hands him the morning's news.

FRANK
Hi.

PAPER BOY
Hi.

A severely awkward pause as the Paper Boy stares up at Frank. Then, he scurries away.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank fiddles with his letter tiles, placing the corner of one in his mouth, and begins to chew.

FRANK (V.O.)
My letters are crap.

He finds the word BEGIN, and lays it down.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Begin. Twenty-two points.

Edna clacks her letters. Frank gives her the evil-eye.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She's so smug. Clack, clack, clack.
I hate her. If she wasn't around,
I'd be doing something interesting
right now. I'd be climbing Mount
Kilimanjaro.

FLASH TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

A mountain. On its side is what looks like an ant ascending to its peak. It's Frank.

FRANK (V.O.)
I'd be starring in the latest
Hollywood Blockbuster.

FLASH TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Frank fires two silver pistols straight ahead, screaming wildly in a bloodstained tank top.

FRANK (V.O.)
I'd be sailing the Vendee Globe on
a 60 foot clipper called the *New
Horizons*.

FLASH TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Frank, alone on deck, wearing full sailors attire, commands the *New Horizons*.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank remains at the table.

FRANK (V.O.)
I don't know what. But I'd be doing something.

Edna lays out the word JINXED.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Jinxed. 30 points. She's beating me already. Maybe I should kill her.

Frank ponders the thought.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If only I had a D, then I could do murder. That would be a sign.
No...that would be permission.

Frank picks up his letter U and begins chewing on it.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's a bad habit, I know. All the letters are frayed.

Frank plays WARMER across the board.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's 22 points. And I didn't have to give up this U. I like it.

Frank reaches for more letters out of the bag as he speaks for the bag's benefit.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Tell me what to do. Spell out kill, or stab, or her name, or anything, I'll do it right now. Right here I'll finish her off.

FLASH TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - ALTERNATE REALITY

Frank leaps across the table, as the scrabble board crashes around Edna and him. He's wielding a knife made of Scrabble tiles and begins plunging it mercilessly into her chest.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

From his hand, Frank lays out the tiles from the back on his rack. They spell MIHZPA.

FRANK (V.O.)
MIHZPA. Nothing.

As he says 'nothing' he spells out ZIP on the rack.

Frank looks over to the window, he can hear insects buzzing. The heat waves distort his vision through the window.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I hear bugs. Bees or wasps? I hope they're not bees. My cousin Harold swallowed a bee when he was nine, his throat swelled up. He's dead.

FLASH TO:

EXT. YARD - DAY

A young HAROLD frantically runs around. Suddenly he grasps his throat, swallows, and falls over.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank is glaring at Edna.

FRANK (V.O.)
If they are bees, I hope they fly into her throat.

Edna plays the word SWEATIER using all of her letters. She is obviously pleased with herself.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Great. 24 points plus a 50 point
bonus. If I didn't have to move, I
would strangle her right now.

FLASH TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - ALTERNATE REALITY

Frank's hands are poised for strangulation. Edna leans her
neck into them. Frank clamps down, vice-like and powerful.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank wipes away a thick layer of sweat from his brow. The
mere thought has exhausted him. He lets out a heavy sigh and
coughs.

FRANK (V.O.)
It needs to rain. To clear the air.

He rearranges his letters on the rack to spell HUMID. He lays
it down on the double word score marker.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
HUMID. Now that's a fine word to be
doubled.
(beat)
I hope she has lousy letters.

EDNA
I have lousy letters.

FRANK (V.O.)
For some reason, I hate her more.

Edna plays the word FAN. Immediately she gets up, clicks on
the fan, and walks into the kitchen.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She's probably going to make tea.
Hot tea.

Frank can hear Edna clanking mugs and placing one in the
microwave.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's the hottest day for ten years
and my wife is making hot tea. I
hate her.

Edna moves to the kitchen and puts water in the microwave. She pokes her head from the kitchen.

EDNA
You want some tea?

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK (V.O.)
Of course I don't want tea.

Frank lays down ZAPS. As he does, Edna reaches for the microwave and is mildly shocked. Frank giggles.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That was more satisfying than it should have been.

Frank, grinning wide, eyes Edna as she sits back down.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Clack clack. Clack clack. This rage inside me. Some inner poison slowly spreading through my limbs, and when it gets to my fingertips I am going to lift up this table and crash it where it belongs.

FLASH TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - - ALTERNATE REALITY

Frank lifts the table above his head and slams it down on top of Edna.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frank leans back and lets out a muted cough, he again wipes sweat from his forehead.

Edna plays RANG on a double-word. The phone rings, and Edna goes to the kitchen to answer it.

Frank eyes his wife as she turn his back to him. His hand slides into the tile bag and fishes around.

FRANK (V.O.)
I'm stealing a blank tile. So what.

Edna shoots a suspicious look toward Frank as she sits back down with her cup of tea, making a cup-ring on the table.

Frank plays CHEATING, using all of his letters for a bonus.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Thank look. She's suspicious.
(beat)
And she can't use a coaster.

EDNA
Did you cheat?

FRANK
No.

Edna turns her attention to her tiles.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I really, really hate her.

Edna lays out her next word, IGNORE.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That makes the score 153 for her,
155 for me.

Frank looks over his tiles.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I want to spell murder. Maim.
Massacre. But that's the best I can
do.

Frank spells out SLEEP onto the board.

Edna yawns.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If only there was some way for me
to get rid of her.

Excitedly, Frank rearranges his tiles to spell EXPLODES.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That'll show her.

As Frank lays down the last letter... Bang. The fan comes to a grinding halt.

Franks heart races.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 That can't be coincidence. It can't
 be the heat. The letters. I played
 the word EXPLODES, and it happened -
 the fan exploded. And before -
 cheating - and zap - and this game.
 This game is - JINXED.

As Frank comes to this realization, we see flashes of the
 spelled words on the Scrabble board as they correspond to the
 actions around Edna and him.

Edna lays out the word SIGN.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I have to test this. I have to play
 something and see if it happens.
 Something unlikely, to prove that
 the letters are making it happen.

Frank looks at his rack. It spells ABQYFWE. He picks up the B
 and begins to chew fervently.

Rearranging the tiles, Frank plays the word FLY.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Now I'll just wait. I'll just fly
 up and out of here.

A fly buzzes by Frank's head.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Stupid. That proves nothing.

Frank leans back in and carefully examines his letters.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I need to play something
 unambiguous. Something absolute and
 final. Something terminal.

Edna lays out her next word, CAUTION

Frank continues to chew on the B as he lays new letters on
 the rack spelling AQWEUK.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 All this power. Give me something.
 Maybe I should cheat again, and
 pick out the letters I need to
 spell SLASH or SLAY.

Frank looks painstakingly over his tiles, then his demeanor
 changes.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There. The perfect word. It's
powerful, dangerous, terrible. And
mine.

Franks lays it out on the board.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Quake, 19 points. I wonder if the
strength of the quake will be
proportionate to how many points it
scored. Or how much I hate her. I
am commanding fate.

Frank grins menacingly, the 'B' he has been chewing shows
between his teeth. Edna lays out her tiles as the room begins
to shudder. Plates rattle, her mug wobbles, and the tiles
shake from their place on the board.

Edna plays DEATH on the shaking board.

A sudden jolt shakes the room and Frank swallows the tile in
his mouth. His throat swells as he clutches at it with his
wet hands.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Damned B.

Frank drops to his knees, then collapses. From the floor he
reaches toward Edna, his hand falling and pulling the
scrabble board from the table. Tiles rain on him.

Frank lands face-up on the ground, blue and dead.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm dead. My wife just sitting
there. I hate her.

Edna stares without compassion, taking a sip from her tea.

FADE OUT.