

Spelling It Out

by Misha

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Rating: K+

Disclaimer: I wish they were mine, but really, they're not.

Author's Note: Thanks to **Fangirl** for beta-ing for me! You certainly make me want to be a better writer :D This story won the Official Challenge "divorce" at bluetights.net :D

The war is on.

For all the things we've gone together, all the near deaths, all the narrow escapes, all the silent nights watching each other sleep and all the little details daily routine makes us share, it's never "the game is on" with Lois. Nothing that spells out a winner at the end is ever a game with her. The minute the pieces are in place, and we face each other, there's a silent declaration of war.

And I can swear tonight that woman is hunting for blood.

Kryptonian blood, to be exact.

So why on Earth does she pick *Scrabble*? It's not only the fact that she has certifiably atrocious spelling, but the very obvious reality that I can practically speak every single language on this planet, making my vocabulary well...extensive. She puzzles me.

Always has.

I suddenly think it has something to do with Jason's spelling bee contest next week and that she might be a bit annoyed with everyone making fun of said atrocious spelling.

It is a running joke in the family by now, after all.

But open war or cold war, I generally try to make her have a good time, make the most of our time together, especially when Jason is not around. It's sort of a compromise, I guess, that I *will* make all the responsibilities of my life work: Father, superhero, husband and friend.

Besides, it's not like this is a torture. I do love to see her stare in concentration at her next move -or her next word- practically hearing her thoughts coming to life.

I love her so much.

The outstanding thing is that, what Lois lacks in vocabulary, she more than compensates with strategy. So what if she's spelling it "wierd" instead of "weird"? As I point it out, she happily corrects it, earning a triple word score and being 37 points ahead of me. Besides, her spelling *is* improving. Has been since the fourth game.

Believe me, I can tell. I can *definitely* tell. Years of proof reading and all.

So tonight I'm competing against a very tenacious wife who is staring at her letters as if she could burn holes into them, while I'm lazily arranging mine to fit all 7 tiles down, aiming for that bonus score. It's so nice when I can actually sit down and relax, the world falling quiet a couple of hours to allow me a moment in time with my family, doing such normal things. And not for the first time, I *know* I can get used to this for the rest of my life...

Her heartbeat goes skyrocketing as a grin spreads across her face, and she hurriedly arranges letter after letter on the board.

D I V O R C E

I make nothing of it - it's just a word, after all - until her next sentence absently leaves her lips: "I would so definitely get the house."

It's just an afterthought for her. She happily bends down to scribble her score, a 50 point bonus added for getting down all her tiles at once. It's my heart that goes skyrocketing this time as I stare at her for a full minute before she finishes counting her score and starts fishing 7 new tiles from the bag.

My mind is invaded with scenes of empty rooms and lost moments. Of lonely holidays and awkward, longing looks... Why can she so casually and naturally imagine our life falling apart? Has she been thinking-

"What?" she asks me once she notices the game is not moving forward. I hardly ever take more than a minute to figure out my next move.

"Do you mean it?" I quietly ask, frowning a little. She frowns in return, clearly not following what I'm saying. Then she frowns even deeper.

"About getting the house?"

It sounds kind of stupid when she says it a second time. That uneasiness that sprung so fast into life seems kind of... paranoid now. I lower my eyes and start forming "N O S E" on the board.

"Well, of course," she continues in typical Lane fashion, once she's reading through me and what I had meant. "Think about it," she says in a more practical tone. "You and me, getting a divorce. How bad do you think it would have to get for us to be there?"

Bad. Actually, make that "bad" all in capitals and bold, please. This brings a whole new set of mental pictures to my mind, none of them pleasant. I can so vividly see myself in the middle of a 183 pile-up car accident while a furious Lois is *still* yelling at me about an argument I have had to leave unfinished. It wouldn't be fair for me, of course, since I wouldn't be able to argue back.

Granted, we hardly argue, but when we do, I like to have a saying on the matter.

I had bailed on her on so many occasions in our first year of marriage that she had to sit me down once and say that I needed to stop for a minute and think if that was the life that I wanted. She never made the argument about her. Or about Jason for that matter. Somehow, through the whole thing, it was implied that whatever choice I made she would stick to it, but for all the considerations I was making, all the people and their lives I was balancing, had I truly considered what I needed in my life?

I stare at the word again as Lois prepares for her next turn, noticing at the back of my mind that out of "divorce" I can form the words drive, dire, diver, cero, drove, voice, dice-

"And the Fortress," Lois says nonchalantly as she starts rearranging her tiles in front of her, not a trace of a smile on her face. There's something inheritably wicked about that statement, and she knows it. What's worse: she knows that I know that she knows it.

I cringe as it finally dawns on me what she's really saying: "Divorce" would become just another game where she wouldn't lose. Forgetting the fact that Lois could ultimately declare my true identity to the world, Lois Mad Dog Lane would just make my life a living Hell in every single way she could find. I'm the first to state that I'm dreading dealing with a soon-to-be teenage Jason, with his mood swings and the oh so not niceties of being a teenager's father, but Lois has just put all that in perspective.

Suddenly, and with no real reason, I think that maybe she never outgrows her teenage years.

The realization that a divorce would be some sort of hellish game is so sudden and so hard

that I faintly notice that I could have written "N O I S E S" on my last turn, earning a double word score.

"You wouldn't," I say, a little bit more stern than what I had intended. But the thing is, in this new view of how we would play the divorce game, I realize one fundamental thing about myself and games: I might not be an "out-for-blood" competitor, but I'm sure as hell not just playing for the thrill of it.

Besides, it's *the* Fortress what we're talking about here.

She smiles at her tiles as if she finds them amusing. Maybe it *is* amusing.

"You wouldn't be able to get it since the Fortress is not Clark Kent's property," I rationalize, as if there was any logic in this argument to begin with, and if it wasn't creepy enough that I'm referring to myself in the third person.

It really *is* creepy.

"You think it would stop me, since *technically* I'm also married to Superman?"

Well, *technically* speaking, I don't own the land where the Fortress is built. No country owns it, really, since it's too far into the Arctic Ocean region. For that matter, since I'm not a citizen of the world while I claim to be from Krypton, I would legally have no right to it either. It's all a very confusing mess that came out in one of those Father-Son conversations that ended with me wondering what would I do if someone indeed says that I have no claim to my Fortress...

"What would you want the Fortress for?" I ask her, changing the fact that she is, in fact, married to me and me. It just happens that the entire world knows me only by my alias.

She shakes her head barely suppressing a smile, as she forms "T H E O R Y" on the board. "Would it really matter..." she says as she studies her letters one last time, contemplating her work, "what I do with it?" She has earned 42 points with that move alone.

I think her point is that, as long as she wins it over me, there are no other reasons why she should care about it. Somehow, that is just sad.

Coincidentally, that's exactly the word I play: S A D.

"It would actually get nasty," she says as a matter of fact, as she surveys the board in search for one free letter she can use to her advantage. I add three points to my score as I contemplate it, a cartoonish version of her and me playing in my mind, sitting in opposite sides of the table, while we argue to death and our lawyers try to calm us down and have a civilized divorce.

Is there such a thing? Not a civilized divorce, but a Lois that wouldn't argue to death?

I absently bite my lower lip as I truly contemplate the implications in a wide range. Jason would redefine the term 'Teen Angst', for once, and--

"You're so easy to sabotage..." Lois quietly says, as she forgets the game and looks at me with half a smile and such warmth in her eyes.

Have I mentioned, that she's a brilliant strategist? Or that she's 84 points ahead of me, as my last three turns have been absurdly poor choices with my letters?

That her evil plan to distract me has actually won her the game?

"Don't you realize," she slowly says as she moves forward in the couch, the board beginning to move and the tiles starting to disarrange, "that after all we've gone together, all the near deaths, all the narrow escapes, all the silent nights watching each other sleep and all the little details daily routine makes us share..." barely inches from me, she closes her eyes as the board all but falls to the floor, the game utterly forgotten by now, "that you are stuck with me forever and ever?"

And as she kisses me, making the world truly and completely disappear, I can't help but swell in pride at her words. At the reassurance that long forgotten fears and past mistakes have no place in our marriage or our future together.

"Though I *would* get the Fortress," she murmurs one last time, making me laugh.

Somehow, I have no doubt that she would.

The End.