

Double Word Score

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FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The decor of transition: boy-idol posters, American Girl dolls, laptop, gymnastics photos, stuffed animals.

Push pins above a dresser display foot-tall blue letters outlined in glitter -- V A L.

VALERIE (11) and CAYE (12) sit on the bed.

Caye, blonde shag hair, pink lipstick, tugs on her tank top and glances at her cleavage. She taps her phone, frowns.

CAYE

He doesn't want to, I guess.

VALERIE

My grandparents aren't gonna let him anyway.

CAYE

He can't answer? He had time to like that ho's profile picture.

Valerie, slim, brown ponytail, bounces to the dresser, changes into a Hello Kitty tee-shirt.

Caye's look says "Really?"

VALERIE

They gave it to me, okay?

CAYE

How do you know they won't let him?

VALERIE

They're grandparents. Duh.

CAYE

What are we gonna do there? Do they have Showtime?

VALERIE

Yeah, right. Like they watch Ray Donovan all the time. Listen, it was either go there or stay here with a babysitter.

CAYE

At least the babysitter might let him. Oh, wait, Mrs. Whatshername. Never mind.

Caye checks her phone again.

CAYE

This sucks.

INT. GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE - TV ROOM - NIGHT

The girls sit on a couch covered on the back with a multi-colored afghan throw. A discount-store landscape hangs high on the wall behind.

GRAMMY (70), wiry, hands clasped, sits in an upholstered chair angled toward a bulky TV. Behind her, a card table stands by shelves of knick-knacks and World Books.

VALERIE

I like your hair, Grammy.

GRAMMY

Oh, I guess it's all right.

She pats the blonde streaks in her poofy page-boy.

GRAMMY

It's so special to have you here, sweetie. And your friend.

Caye glances at her phone. Grammy turns toward a doorway.

GRAMMY

Granddaddy, are you coming?

A clock in an ornate mahogany frame ticks on a mantle, flanked by family photographs.

Granddaddy (74), gray flat-top, lumpy face, enters. He wears voluminous trousers and a sleeveless tee-shirt.

He grins broadly at Valerie and extends his arms. One bicep has an USN Anchor tattoo.

GRAMMY

Turn right around and put on a shirt. Honestly.

Valerie stands for the hug.

VALERIE

This is Caye. Caye, my granddaddy.

CAYE

Hi. I like your Beater.

Valerie looks away, rolls her eyes

CAYE

Ooh, and cool tat. I got one, too.

Granddaddy looks her up and down.

CAYE

You can't really see it.

GRAMMY

What would you girls like to do?

VALERIE

Anything. Watch TV?

GRANDDADDY

Diagnosis Murder. That's always good.

Caye catches Valerie's eye.

GRAMMY

Oh, we can watch TV anytime. I thought we'd all play a game. We'll have some ice cream later.

VALERIE

Okay.

GRAMMY

We have Parcheesi, we have--

GRANDDADDY

Nix on Parcheesi.

GRAMMY

Careers. Clue. Scrabble?

CAYE

Scrabble.

VALERIE

She makes A's in Language Arts.

CAYE

I do not.

Caye's phone trills. She reads the message, smiles, bobs her head. Granddaddy looks quizzical.

VALERIE

Her boyfriend.

GRAMMY

You two take your things to the guest room while I set up.

(to Granddaddy)

You go put a shirt on.

GRANDDADDY

Well, turn down the thermostat.

CAYE

(to Grammy)

Do you think he could come over?

GRAMMY

I don't really think so, hon.

CAYE

He's real good at games. Ask Val.

GRAMMY

Maybe another time.

Caye tilts her head and squints, as if stifling a whine.

LATER

The four sit at the table. Granddaddy, now in a proper shirt, takes a dictionary from the shelf.

GRANDDADDY

I'll do challenges.

Caye taps on the phone.

GRAMMY

Honey, why don't you put that away while we play.

CAYE

I have to--

Valerie gives Caye a look. She puts the phone on the table.

VALERIE

You're first, Granddaddy.

He shifts tiles around on his tray, purses his lips, places the letters A-N-T on the board.

GRANDDADDY

I'm giving you geniuses a headstart. Six points.

Grammy writes his score on a note pad. Caye is next. She arranges the letters H-R-D above and below the A.

Grammy adds W-E-L to the D. Valerie, C-A-U-G-H to the T.

GRAMMY

Good one! Thirteen.

Granddaddy puts A-M-E-L below the C, straightens the tiles.

GRANDDADDY

(to Caye)

How did you two get to be friends?

Caye arches her back so that her top stretches tight.

CAYE

In our grade.

GRAMMY

I assumed you were in high school.

CAYE

I wish.

VALERIE

She is older than me, though. Until my birthday!

Caye places a P on the A-N-T.

GRANDDADDY

Gotta challenge you there, little lady. Needs an S at the end.

GRAMMY

I think it's okay. Like Pant Suit.

CAYE

I'm not done!

She adds I-E-S to the end.

Grammy and Granddaddy exchange glances. Valerie fidgets.

LATER

GRANDDADDY

(to Caye)

You have a boyfriend, huh.

CAYE

Uh-huh. We've been going out for three weeks almost.

GRAMMY

Your parents let you go on dates?

VALERIE

Going out is just what we call it.
Boyfriend-girlfriend, I mean.

Caye places the letters E and T below a W. She touches Granddaddy's tattoo with a forefinger.

CAYE

This is so cool. Where'd you have it done?

GRANDDADDY

In the service.

CAYE

I got mine at Barry's Body Art.

Valerie and Grammy take their turns.

GRAMMY

(to Valerie)

You're in the lead, sweetie.

Granddaddy quickly adds C-O-M to an E.

GRANDDADDY

Ta-da, the new leader

CAYE

Go for it, Mr. U-S-N.

Caye's phone trills. She reaches but stops at Grammy's disapproving look.

Caye sighs, ponders her letters. She places an S atop Granddaddy's E. Below it, M-E-N.

GRANDDADDY

Challenge! You know I can't let that one pass.

He points to his tattoo, opens the dictionary.

CAYE

Why? It's a word.

He points to the entry for seaman.

GRANDDADDY

You're missing an A after the E.

CAYE

That's not it! Look mine up.

Granddaddy scans the definitions. Valerie looks panicked.

He finds it. His facial muscles twitch. Grammy places her hand on the back of his neck.

CAYE

Gimme fourteen. Double Word Score.

GRAMMY

Why don't we stop here and have some ice cream.

VALERIE

What kind?

GRAMMY

Neopolitan. Granddaddy, will you help me?

Granddaddy pulls Grammy's chair back. She smiles, and they go to the kitchen.

VALERIE

(to Caye)

I'm gonna kill you.

Caye grins as she taps a message.

VALERIE

They'll tell my parents! They'll probably call yours, too.

CAYE

Duh, they're grandparents. They got nothing else to do.

Valerie dumps her tiles back in the box. Caye scrolls through her Facebook feed. The clock ticks, interrupted only by the sound of a door closing somewhere.

VALERIE

What's taking them so long?

INT. GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Valerie and Caye stand in a doorway to the kitchen.

VALERIE

They're not even in there.

CAYE

I know how to make my own ice cream, Val.

Valerie looks down the dark hall. The guest-room door is open, a light on. Farther on, another door is closed.

VALERIE

I guess they went to bed.

CAYE

Nine-thirty, way past the old-folks' bedtime. But not mine!

She taps on the phone, but Valerie grabs her wrist.

VALERIE

Listen.

A thumping sound rises from the bedroom, louder, softer, steady, accompanied by periodic yelps and delicate squeals.

CAYE

Oh. My. God.

FADE OUT.