

JANINE &amp; THOMAS

**TRIPLE WORD SCORE**

When Janine gets home from work Thomas is waiting for her, sitting out on her porch, reading a book.

She leans in to kiss him. —It's good to see you, she says.

The two of them stay out there for a while, doing stretches. This is a thing they've been doing lately, while they can, while the weather is still nice. They've talked about maybe taking a class together at a studio when it gets to be winter. She can probably afford it.

The pain in her wrist seems to be going away.

He likes doing this, too. Even though he's only been practicing with her for a few weeks, he has already begun to come across areas in his body that surprise him, packets of tension that he never noticed before. He stretches and he feels himself coming uncompressed. It is like he is only now beginning to learn his actual size.

Janine says —No. She puts her hands on his hips, turns him slightly. —More like this. You see? Feel the way your weight hangs more naturally?

—Yes, he says.

They both end up lying on their backs, breathing, watching the sky shift from orange to deep blue. Then they go inside and eat leftover stir-fry with ravenous zeal.

She has been thinking lately about something she said once, about play, so after dinner she digs her Scrabble board out of the closet, and they begin a game. She watches him over the board while he plays. She likes to see him think.

It's his turn. They're maybe two-thirds of the way through all the tiles. —Don't go in my spot, Janine says.

—I'll go where I please, Thomas says. He looks at his rack and frowns. He moves some letters around, puzzling something out in secret. —OK, he says. He lays four tiles on the board. —Hotel. Seven points.

Janine cackles and makes her move, attaching seven letters to a stray AN that Thomas played in desperation a few rounds back.

—Quotidian, she says. —Seventeen points, on the Triple Word is fifty-one, plus fifty for using all my tiles, is—one hundred and one.

—Quotidian? Thomas says. He stares at the board in horror. —Fuck me.

—Wait till the end of the game, she says, —and maybe I will.

He looks up at her and she grins madly. He can't resist grinning back. They hold these expressions for a second and then they fall into the experience of looking, and they let their faces soften. They let themselves be seen.

They watch one another. A kind of private information, a knowledge, passes between them. They both feel it. Thomas blinks, and the current flickers for a second, as though it might be lost. It flickers, flickers, and then it holds.