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Jessie  
Miller

# The Scrabble Tile

It all started one Saturday night. Ashley Spurlock, my college roommate, and I sat on our dorm floor, playing Scrabble. She was a self-described “petite” girl. With golden blonde hair and precisely medium B-cup breasts, she was the good looking roomie, while I was the awkward one—standing at 5’11”, with frizzy red curls and cat-eyed glasses.

Normally, she went out, but the eighteen-degree weather kept us in, finding warmth in flannel, fleece, and mugs of hot chocolate. Lying on our rug, with the board between us, Ashley picked her head up.

“What do you think would happen if I swallowed a Scrabble tile?”

Now, Ashley isn’t one to just ask a question and then forget about it later.

“I don’t know, Ashley,” I said. “Why do you want to know?” I just wanted to finish the game as soon as possible.

“Because it’s small. It’ll fit in my mouth.”

Oh God.

“If you do anything, I’m not cleaning it up,” I paused. “No way.”

“Oh, Emily. It’ll be fine,” she said. “I promise. Besides, what’s the worst that can happen?”

I glared at her. All I could think was, **THOSE ARE THE WORST WORDS YOU COULD POSSIBLY SAY TO ME RIGHT NOW.** I didn’t want to have anything to do with her swallowing a Scrabble tile.

“C’m on,” she said, getting up, “It’ll be quick. Quick and painless.”

“You can’t be that sure.”

Before leaving, she took her time, looking over all of the pieces, deciding which would be the best. “What letter should I choose? Z? A? T?” She fumbled through the stack with frustration. “Oh man, I just can’t choose!”

I quickly grabbed a tile flipped over, so I couldn’t see the letter, and gave it to her. “Here’s your tile. Let’s go.”

She took hold of my hand, dragged me out of our second floor room and we headed to the community bathroom. Smelling of dirty feet and semi-clean shower curtains, the co-ed community shower wasn’t the ideal place for cleaning your body. In fact, one could call it a hazardous place. The tiles were tinted yellow

and sickly green. The shower curtains were originally baby blue, but now had spots that were faded to white, looking like aged polka dots in the clouds. I was never quite sure why we chose to live in the dorm, but I always felt like each year we survived, we were true warriors.

"So," she rolled up her sleeves, fixing her collar. "How should we do this?"

"Why are you saying 'we'? I'm not encouraging this!" I said . . . a lot like my mother.

"You're here, aren't you?" She got me with a verbal bullet. I nodded and she continued to mentally prepare. "Let's see. We have plenty of water—if I should need it," she held up her bottle of water, and pointed at the sinks. "You know . . . gagging."

"Really?"

"Really," she said. "And we have the paper towels for spit rags."

"Just swallow the damn thing already."

She placed the tile on her tongue, dramatically, like her daily birth control pill, and looked at me hesitantly. I shrugged. "No turning back now," I said.

She made a whimpering noise. Then, she closed her mouth, took a swig of water, and swallowed the loudest swallow I have ever heard. Her eyes tensed up as the tile went down her throat.

She drank more water. I wasn't sure if she was in pain, as her face remained neutral throughout the entire process. Going back was not an option. Whimpering wasn't going to help her case.

She coughed a little, looked at me, and stuck out her tongue, as far as it would go. "Look. All gone." She wasn't twenty. She was ten. And suddenly, I was a lot older.

"I see," I said, making sure she wasn't going to hurl on me at any moment. "How do you feel?"

"Smarter."