

it is lightning that does the work

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/40696446) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/40696446>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Dear Evan Hansen - Pasek & Paul/Levenson
Relationships:	The Murphy Family , Connor Murphy & Zoe Murphy , Connor Murphy & Cynthia Murphy , Connor Murphy & Larry Murphy (Dear Evan Hansen) , Larry Murphy & Zoe Murphy , Cynthia Murphy/Larry Murphy , Cynthia Murphy & Zoe Murphy
Characters:	Larry Murphy (Dear Evan Hansen) , Cynthia Murphy , Connor Murphy (Dear Evan Hansen) , Zoe Murphy , Evan Hansen (mentioned) , Alana Beck (mentioned)
Additional Tags:	Murphy Family Bonding , Sincerely Us: Gift Exchange (Dear Evan Hansen) , just some cute family moments! , Board Games , specifically Risk , thunder storms , Irish catholic Larry is superstitious , the author is drawing on personal experience here! , Canon Divergent , (aka happy and cute)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-31 Words: 1,577 Chapters: 1/1

it is lightning that does the work

by [heardmelodies](#)

Summary

It only took two disgruntled beeps of flooding alerts, one half-distressed viewing of the weather channel on TV, and three thunderclaps and preceding faint flashes of lightning for Larry to succumb to his baser instincts: he strode to the closest light switch and raised his voice to a non-neutral level, calling “Electronics unplugged and to the basement!”

If he strained his ears, he could hear two distinct groans filtering from upstairs as his teenagers grumbled about being removed from their rooms.

(or: Irish-Catholic Larry is superstitious of thunderstorms. Family bonding ensues. For the Sincerely, Us summer gift exchange!)

Notes

Happy belated deh day to everyone! I had some internet troubles that delayed me in getting this posted, but I'm still so glad to get it up now. This is a gift for @someone-online on tumblr, who requested Murphy family bonding. I also mixed a couple of their other prompts in. Hope you enjoy, friend, and happy summer! (And to everyone else -- check out the other sincerely, us works. They're absolutely wonderful.)

It only took two disgruntled beeps of flooding alerts, one half-distressed viewing of the weather channel on TV, and three thunderclaps and preceding faint flashes of lightning for Larry to succumb to his baser instincts: he strode to the closest light switch and raised his voice to a non-neutral level, calling “Electronics unplugged and to the basement!”

If he strained his ears, he could hear two distinct groans filtering from upstairs as his teenagers grumbled about being removed from their rooms. Cynthia appeared at his side, holding some self-help book or other.

“The storm’s not gonna be that bad, hon,” she said, plaintively as possible. When he simply raised an eyebrow and looked back through the window at the increasingly violent conditions, she did her best to hide her grimace. “I’ll set up the candles, then.”

Zoe was the first down the stairs, with Connor not long behind at her heels. She still boldly held her laptop in her hands, while Connor had brought nothing, clearly resigned to his father’s superstitions. Larry reached a hand for the laptop.

“That’s not how electricity *works*,” she argued before he could so much as open his mouth, already poised to disarm the arguments he hadn’t yet made. “If it’s not plugged in, it doesn’t matter if there’s a surge in the house, because it’s not connected to anything that would—”

“It absolutely is how electricity works, Zoe. That happened to my—”

“Cousin Robert while we were at our grandmother’s in 1967,” Connor deadpanned at the same time as Larry.

“When you were like, three?” Zoe demanded.

“I was *five*, Zoe, thank you,” Larry said, successfully grabbing the laptop and pulling it away. He placed it down gently on the kitchen counter, then gestured again toward the basement where Cynthia could already be heard lighting candles everywhere. “Go on, then. I don’t want any windows blowing out while we’re up here.”

Another thunder crack rippled overhead. Connor muttered “like that’s ever happened the entire time we’ve lived here,” while Zoe led the way down the stairs with slightly more force than could be considered necessary.

“I have an arrangement due tomorrow, you know,” she calls down to her mother.

“It’s the summer, darling, are you sure it’s on that tight a schedule?”

“*Yes!* I’m section leader for orchestra and there’s bound to be too much crossover for Jazz Band so it has to be done before we set foot at school again. Mrs. P wants it tomorrow at the latest.”

“She’ll have to understand the extenuating circumstances, then,” Cynthia said, settling on one end of the couch. “I’ll send her an email to explain.”

“Please don’t,” Zoe begged. She sat down on the other end of the couch and pulled her legs up to hug them to her chest. “I’ll figure something out.”

“This is tame,” Larry said as the rest of his family got relatively settled on the couches and chairs available in their finished basement. “My grandmother would—”

“Put us all on the stairs and throw holy water at us while we said the Hail Mary,” Connor and Zoe said in unison.

“You’re getting predictable,” Connor added.

“How did your cousin Robert get electrocuted, then?” Zoe tagged on, the loss of her laptop clearly not out of her mind.

“He was being *stupid*,” Larry said, settling himself on an uncomfortable-looking wooden President’s chair. “He had decided to try and phone his da, who was on a business trip—”

Cynthia leaned over to her kids conspiratorily. “We’re not sure he even existed, really. There don’t seem to be many Robert updates recently.”

“*Because of the electrocution!*”

“He *died*?” Cynthia said, raising an eyebrow.

Larry faltered, sitting back in his seat and peeking nervously overhead as another peel of thunder rolled over them. “Well, no. But he was never quite himself, after...”

Connor leaned over to Zoe silently while she had her eyes trained on Larry and Cynthia’s minor argument, making her jump when he whispered not-so-quietly, “That attached to your arranging?”

She rolled one shoulder back, then the other. “Yes,” she said finally, her lisp curling around it. Connor smirked.

“Lots of hesitation there. You’re sure this arrangement doesn’t start with an E, and with a ‘Hansen,’ and involve frequent trips to Ellison Park?”

She shoved him back into the cushions of his chair without even looking at him, though that plus her darkening cheeks were as good as a confession. “And what you’re typing away at on your phone, it’s not you and Alana swapping... *notes*, or whatever, on your art accounts?”

“It’s *magic*, for her,” Connor corrected, then righted himself to how he’d been sitting before she shoved him. “And I *don’t* deny it. Unlike you.”

Cynthia claps her hands together, disrupting both streams of conversation. “How about we play a game?”

“Not Monopoly,” Larry says quickly, standing up to scan the rickety shelf of games they keep prepped for moments like this. “Anything else.”

“Uno,” Connor suggests.

“Risk,” Zoe counters.

“Isn’t Risk basically Monopoly? But with war?”

Zoe gasps in faux-affront. “*No*, Connor. Risk is a sacred game of strategy.”

“Like Monopoly.”

“How about we play it and find out?” Cynthia suggests. “I don’t think I’ve ever played.”

Larry grabs it down from the shelf. “Fine by me. Let’s try it.”

Zoe helps him set up the game on the coffee table, doling out colored pieces as she sees fit for the rest of her family, until she’s blue, Larry is red, Cynthia is green, and Connor is yellow.

“I don’t see why *I* have to be piss yellow,” he mutters.

“To match your sunshiney personality,” Zoe says, letting a sunshiney smile take over her face. Connor throws a single troop at her.

“I’ll keep that, then. Good luck with world domination when you’re starting at a disadvantage.”

“Okay,” Larry says, cutting them off. “So we start in one country?”

From there they all attempt to play Risk, at undeniably varying levels of understanding about how the game works and what the rules even are. Larry begins significantly involved, likely hoping to use the audiobook on World Wars he’d been listening to to his advantage, but he’s conquered almost immediately by Zoe’s troops. Cynthia seems to understand the least, but neither of her children finishes her off completely; she ends up sequestered in Australia for most of the game, holding on by a small margin. Connor and Zoe fight over the rest of the board, never quite reaching a stalemate, never quite winning either.

They’re about to break into a fight – for the second time – over Greenland, when Cynthia hurriedly places her cards down on the coffee table, letting everyone see her less-than-ideal hand. Her children start to point out that fact, but she raises a hand. “Has anyone heard thunder for the past fifteen minutes? Or even rain?”

No one says anything.

“If you let us have our phones, we could check,” Zoe grumbles.

“That’s ridiculous,” Larry says. “One of us can just go upstairs-”

“Not it,” Connor proclaims, putting a finger to his nose. He’s followed quickly by both Zoe and Cynthia.

--and check,” Larry finishes. “And I was going to volunteer *anyway*, thank you, Connor.”

“No, he wasn’t,” Zoe says under her breath, making Cynthia laugh and Connor roll his eyes.

As Larry disappears up the stairs, Cynthia says, in the same low tone, “Thank you for doing this.”

“It’s only...every thunderstorm that it happens?” Connor says, finally dropping his hand and picking at the black nail polish on his fingers.

“Still. It’s important to him.”

“Do you want me to redo those, Con?” Zoe offers, coming out of whatever reverie she’d been in, staring up at the door to the cellar. “I have some black polish in my room.”

“Oh,” he says, chipping off most of his left thumbnail. “Yeah. That would be great, Zo. I thought you had the arrangement to focus on?”

“It won’t take too long,” she says instead, reaching for his hand to assess the damage. “I could acetone the rest of this off for you.”

“Nah,” Connor says instead, and continues chipping it off.

“But your natural nails--”

Cynthia smiles at them, and begins making quick work of getting the game put away. She’s about done when Larry calls from above, “All clear! Looks like the storm’s passed us.”

“Hallelujah,” Zoe says, grabbing Connor’s hand and pulling him towards the stairs. She pauses at the last moment, pivoting to face her mother. “Need any help with that before we go?”

Cynthia waves a hand dismissively. “I’ve got it. You two go have fun gossiping about your crushes.”

It’s Connor’s turn to blush this time, but Zoe drags him along, finally mounting the stairs. “I *do* have to finish that arrangement, asshole. I don’t have all night.”

“Language!” Cynthia calls.

Not a minute later, she hears footsteps one more time on their creaky basement staircase, the slightly-uneven pace she’s used to from Larry.

“That didn’t go too badly,” she says.

“It’s certainly gone worse in the past,” he agrees, sitting down tiredly on the couch. “Not nearly as much playing referee for one of them cheating.”

“We *could* just let them do what they want during the storm,” she says lightly, sitting down next to him.

Larry turns to her with an incredulous expression. "I'm serious about my cousin, Cynthia. Thunderstorms are no joke."

"Yeah, alright," she says, as Zoe's laugh comes from above. "If you say so."

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