sorry is the hardest word to say

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sorry is the hardest word to say

by smackalicious

Summary

He looks around the rink at the Raiders players, mentally taking headcount. With every player he takes note of, he can feel the panic building, rising in his chest, threatening to choke him, because he knows, he just knows...

It's Ilya.

Notes

I'm back with another fic. :) This one is another canon divergence and takes place after Shane leaves Ilya in episode 4, before he meets Rose. Imagine there's a game in there somewhere. Some of the dialogue is loosely inspired by both that episode and episode 5. You'll see what I mean when you get there. Also, I am not autistic, so I tried my best to base Shane's behavior in this off the show and hopefully it works. Panic attacks are kinda tricky to write, too, though I do unfortunately have a bit of experience in that area. Also, please let me know if I got the head coach's name wrong. That's what came up in the fan wiki for the book; not sure if it's different for the show or not. Can't remember if he was mentioned on the show.

Anyway, hope you all enjoy. :)

Shane lets his gaze drift across the rink, searching the sea of players doing their warm-ups, looking for one Raider in particular. It doesn't take long to find him; after all this time, it's like they have a magnetic pull to each other.

But that was then. Before Shane freaked and ran out on Ilya, when he had been so... *nice* and fucking *normal*, not his usual asshole self. Well, maybe still a little bit of an asshole. But it *was* nice, that was the point.

And Shane had fucked it up.

He feels like he's staring so hard at Ilya that he's going to bore a hole right through the side of his helmet, but it's like he's completely invisible to Ilya. He doesn't look over at Shane once, despite the desperation Shane is sure he's emitting.

"Hey, you okay, dude?"

Shane manages to look away from Ilya and over to Hayden. "What?"

Hayden has a weird look on his face, like he's not sure whether he's concerned or amused. "You're, like, fucking staring off into space. Looked like you were really thinking hard about something."

"Guess I just zoned out." *At least he didn't realize I was staring at Ilya,* Shane thinks.

Hayden's eyebrows bounce. "Sure thing," he says, then prepares to skate off, adding, "Get it out of your system now, because we need you zoned *in* tonight."

Shane nods as Hayden skates away, but his attention goes right back to where it had been. Back in the locker room, he stared at his phone for what felt like hours, wanting to text Ilya, apologize, beg for his forgiveness. But none of the words he typed out felt appropriate, or *enough.* Ilya had probably blocked his number, anyway. Shane wouldn't blame him for that.

Maybe he can find him after the game, talk to him in person. Somehow, he wants to make things right.

He can't bear the thought of never talking to Ilya again.

The game starts and Shane, as Hayden suggested, zones in. This part is easy. When he's playing hockey, that's when Shane feels the most himself. It's everything else that's hard.

He's almost expecting to be knocked around a little by Ilya, shoved into the boards, body checked, anything that shows Ilya is mad at him. But time and time again, Ilya skates past him without so much as acknowledging his existence.

It hurts worse than physical pain.

They're over halfway through the game and Shane doesn't even care how it turns out anymore. He just wants to get out of here. Being on the ice with Ilya and having him

completely disregard him has ruined any self-esteem Shane had.

He tries his hardest to focus on the remainder of the game, wanting to be a good captain for his teammates, not give up even though every ounce of him is screaming to do just that. Someone on the Raiders has the puck at the other end of the rink and Shane doesn't even know who, he's that checked out. He lifts his arm to wipe the sweat from his face and a collective gasp from the crowd suddenly fills the arena. He immediately drops his arm, fearing for the worst for one of his teammates. But it's not a Metro that's down, it's a Raider.

Shane can't tell who it is at first, but from the way every noise in the arena died, he can tell it's bad. The medical team is already on their way out.

He looks around the rink at the Raiders players, mentally taking headcount. With every player he takes note of, he can feel the panic building, rising in his chest, threatening to choke him, because he knows, he just *knows*...

It's Ilya.

Sure enough, he hears one of the medical staff shouting, "Rozanov! Can you hear me?"

Suddenly, his heart is pounding so hard he can feel it in his ears, loud and fuzzy, blocking out any sound around him. He feels like he's going to pass out. He feels like he's going to throw up. He wants to scream.

Ilya's hurt. That's the only thing his brain is able to focus on. Ilya's hurt and he's not *fucking moving* and Shane is actually going to stop breathing if he doesn't open his eyes already.

He doesn't even remember skating over, but he's suddenly at Ilya's side, his voice shaking as he begs, "Ilya? Can you hear me? It's Shane. Please, open your eyes."

"Hollander, you need to back up," one of the medics says, and Shane just shakes his head, not moving from where he's standing, looking down at Ilya.

Someone pushes him backwards and he drifts away, eyes still focused on Ilya. He goes to skate back towards him, but an arm holds him back and he hears a voice in his ear.

"Shane, bud, I don't know what the hell has gotten into you, but you gotta let the medics do their jobs." It's Hayden.

Shane keeps shaking his head and now there are tears running down his face. He doesn't know when he started crying. "I didn't even get to say I'm sorry..." he says, and then Hayden is in front of him, grabbing his chin and forcing him to look at him.

"Shane! Dude, what the fuck is going on with you? I've never seen you like this before. And, no offense, but it's only Rozanov."

That gets Shane's full attention and he glares at Hayden. "Shut the fuck up," he says, his tone deadly. "You don't know anything about him."

Hayden puts his hands up in surrender. “Okay, okay. Fuck. Just thought you hated the guy, that’s all.”

If Shane were able to control his emotions a little better right now, if he wasn’t in the middle of a fucking *panic attack* because Ilya’s fucking *injured* and he doesn’t know if he’s going to be okay, then he thinks he would have thought of that before he said anything to Hayden. But he’s already in too deep and backing out now is only going to look more suspicious.

Movement from the medics catches his attention and he watches as they load Ilya onto a stretcher. He breaks free from Hayden and skates over to them, the desperation back in his voice as he asks, “Is he okay? Please, I need to know.”

A ref appears at Shane’s side. “Get back to your bench, Hollander,” he says, and if Shane could focus on anything besides Ilya, he would see two of the medics sharing a concerned look with each other, before they focus their attention back on Ilya.

Shane wants to rip off his helmet and throw it across the fucking rink. “Why won’t anybody tell me what’s going on?! Someone just fucking...” His words break off in a wheeze and Hayden is at his side again, an arm around his back.

“Hey, hey, you’re okay, buddy,” he says, taking the opportunity to guide him back to their bench, hoping he won’t notice they’re leaving Ilya.

“Can’t breathe, Hayd...” Shane gasps, grasping at Hayden’s jersey. “Oh my God, oh fuck, I’m gonna die.”

“No, no, no, you’re not gonna die, Shane,” Hayden assures him, trying to keep his tone calming, but his face is a picture of fear. As if it wasn’t enough to have a major injury on the ice, now their team captain is having a straight up panic attack. And Hayden still can’t figure out why. He just keeps rubbing his hand over Shane’s back, not sure if it’s helping at all, but having no clue what to do next.

They make it back to their bench and Shane immediately puts his head between his knees, still muttering to himself. Hayden can’t hear everything he’s saying, but he hears the name *Ilya* more than once. He feels his gut clench. Whatever is going on here, it’s not good.

Hayden doesn’t know what to do next. He doesn’t want to leave Shane, but he needs to talk to Theriault, to *somebody,* to let them know that Shane absolutely cannot play the rest of this game and might need to be looked at by the medical staff himself.

“Hey,” Hayden says, thinking maybe if he can get him to talk, he can get him out of this panicked state he’s in. “You wanna tell me what’s going on? What upset you so much?” He feels like he’s talking to one of his kids.

Shane’s head remains between his knees so Hayden has to really listen to hear him, but he hears him mutter, “What the fuck do you mean, what upset me? Are you stupid?”

Jesus, he’s being an asshole. He really must have been hanging around with Rozanov. Clearly there’s something going on if Shane is *this* upset over him getting injured.

Hayden lowers his face so he can speak quietly to Shane without anybody overhearing them. “I’m just confused, man. I didn’t realize you guys were friends.”

He hears a little choked off noise come from Shane. He’s squeezing his eyes shut, tight, like he’s trying not to cry. Okay, wrong thing to say.

“I’m sure he’ll be okay,” Hayden assures him, resting a hand on his back again. “He’s a pretty tough motherfucker. We'll be back to kicking his ass in no time.”

“Don’t care about that,” Shane moans, and Hayden’s hand pauses its travels over his back. “Need to say I’m sorry...”

Hayden can’t help but jostle him a little. “Sorry for what, bud? You didn’t injure him.”

But Shane doesn’t seem to hear him, continuing to mutter to himself. “I shouldn’t have left, I should have stayed, why didn’t I just stay?”

Hayden *really* doesn’t know what to do now. It's like Shane has dissociated and isn’t even registering anybody around him. He looks around and catches sight of Theriault, waving him over hurriedly. Once he gets close, he stands up, keeping one eye on Shane as he speaks to him.

“I don’t know what’s going on, but Shane’s not gonna be able to finish this game,” he informs him. “He’s really fucked up about what happened to Rozanov.”

Shane slides off the bench then, sitting on the floor with his knees bent and covering his face with his gloves. Hayden sees his shoulders shaking and isn’t sure if he’s crying or just freaking out.

“Shane,” Theriault says, his voice firm. He receives no acknowledgement. “Hollander,” he tries again.

Hayden chews his lip and looks back to Theriault. “They say how Rozanov is? I think that’s the only thing he cares about right now.”

Theriault shrugs. “They’re on the way to the hospital right now.”

Hayden looks back down at Shane, watching as he rocks himself back and forth. “You think someone can take him there? I have no fucking clue why he’s so worked up over this, but I don’t want him to hurt himself or something because of it.”

Theriault nods. “It’s not ideal, but he’s not gonna be able to play like this.”

Hayden suddenly looks up towards the crowd. They're playing in Montreal, which means... “I think his parents might be here. They come to a lot of the home games.”

“I’ll have someone find them.” Theriault heads out and Hayden continues to keep watch over Shane, placing one hand on his shoulder, while the game restarts, finally.

It takes several minutes, but eventually Theriault returns, announcing, “Take him back to the locker room. His parents are waiting.”

Hayden nods and turns his attention back to Shane. He hasn’t moved. He crouches down the best he can in his bulky gear. “Shane, you wanna go see Rozanov?” He hesitates, then clarifies. “Ilya?” The name feels wrong in his mouth, but he has a feeling it’s the only way he’ll get through to Shane right now. They're *clearly* on a first name basis.

Shane’s gaze snaps up to him and Hayden mentally lets out a breath. *Thank God.* “Ilya?” He sounds so young. He *is* young, Hayden has to remind himself of that sometimes. He's such an accomplished player that it’s easy to forget that in the things that matter, Shane doesn’t have that much experience.

Hayden nods. “Your parents are waiting to take you to the hospital.”

He's not expecting Shane to freeze up, for his panic to reappear the way it does. “No, I can’t, not them, fuck!” He shoves the heels of his hands into his eyes. “They don’t know, there’s no way I can...”

“Dude, it’s fine,” Hayden assures him, with far less confidence than his words convey. “Your mom might be pissed at first that you’re friends with Rozanov, but she’ll get over it.”

“We’re *not* friends,” Shane says, his voice hard.

Hayden feels like he’s losing his mind. He lets out a high-pitched laugh. “Because it’s totally normal to have a fucking panic attack about some guy you hate,” he says. He watches color rise to Shane’s cheeks as he turns his face away, embarrassed, ashamed. He immediately regrets his words.

“Sorry,” he mutters. “Theriault’s gonna have my ass if I don’t get you out of here, though.”

Shane nods. It seems like he’s calmed down, but Hayden feels like it’s mostly an act. Most of what Shane does feels like an act.

Hayden holds out a hand for Shane to take, to help him stand, and then they’re headed towards the locker room, the sound of the much less enthusiastic crowd fading behind them the further they get into the building. The silence, emptiness, of the hallway feels overbearing.

“You can go,” Shane speaks up. His voice echoes in the quiet.

Hayden side-eyes him. “You sure? You were pretty upset...”

Shane nods stiffly. “Yeah, I’m good now. Thanks.” What Hayden can’t see is the agitation simmering below the surface of his skin, threatening to burst free and overtake the mask he’s so carefully glued back in place. He's good at this part. He has a lot of experience.

Hayden studies him for a few long seconds – Shane feels like a specimen under a microscope. Finally, he claps Shane on the shoulder. “If you say so.” God, he’s so ignorant. Shane is especially glad for that right now.

Hayden turns to head back to the game, the only sounds in the hallway being his gear shushing together as he walks.

Shane waits until he's out of sight before straightening his shoulders, collecting himself, and finishing the walk to the locker room. His parents are waiting.

Yuna accosts him immediately upon seeing him. "Oh, Shane honey, are you okay? Someone said -" She's petting him, his chest, his face, concerned mother mode on full blast.

"I'm fine," Shane sighs, dodging her hands. "I just got... overwhelmed." His mom knows what that means.

She nods quickly, still smoothing out his jersey the best she can. "Of course," she says, then hesitates before adding, "Hopefully Rozanov's okay. I mean, even if it *is* just Rozanov -"

"Will you stop?" Shane can't help it. He's heard enough disparaging of Ilya tonight. "You don't really know him."

Yuna gives him a pointed look. "And you do?"

Shane looks to his dad for help, but he just gives him a look that says, *You're on your own, kid.* He sighs and looks away. "I just want to go see how he is." He feels like he's going to explode if he doesn't get out of his gear *right now;* he needs to get to the hospital to check on Ilya.

"Alright," Yuna says, doubt in her tone.

"I'll text you later." He absolutely *cannot* have them come with him to the hospital. He's not sure how much longer he can hide the worry he's carrying, the anxiety crawling along his spine, and he knows he won't be able to hold back once he sees Ilya again.

"Shane..."

"I'm an adult, Mom. I can take care of myself." The words feel harsh to say, but he needs this conversation to end.

"Fine. I'll talk to you later, honey."

Shane's dad reaches over to give his shoulder a squeeze and then they turn to leave, his mom tossing her hair back over her shoulder as they go. Shane recognizes it as a sign she's upset and trying to hide it. But he honestly doesn't really care. He can apologize later. All that matters right now is Ilya.

The panic he's been fighting returns full force, choking him, and he hurries into the locker room, ripping off his gear as quickly as he can. It's a testament to how out of control he feels that he doesn't take the time to properly put it away. It lies in a pile on the ground near his locker, while he strips off his compression shirt, then wipes the sweat from his body with a towel. Normally he wouldn't ever think of doing such a thing, but he could care less about a sweaty towel right now.

He scrambles around his locker for deodorant, putting some on before his vision grows blurry with tears. He has to sit down, blinking furiously. Ilya will be okay. He will. He *has* to be. Shane's not sure what he would do if he's not.

Once his vision clears, he turns back to his locker, finding a t-shirt and slipping it on, then covering that with a hoodie. It's only then that he remembers he has a phone and Ilya has his number.

He reaches for it so quickly it nearly slips out of his hand, but it's for naught – no missed calls, no new text messages. *Not that he'd text you, anyway. Not after how you left.*

Shane closes his eyes, forcing himself to breathe. That wasn't important right now. Well, it was, because who knew if Ilya even wanted to see him after everything, but *Shane* needed to see *him*.

It's better to ask forgiveness than seek permission, someone had once told him, or he read it somewhere, he doesn't remember. So that's what he's going to do.

He realizes he's wasting time, precious time that he doesn't know if he has, and makes sure he has his car keys and phone and heads out, his pace picking up until he's jogging out the door, one singular goal in mind, to get to Ilya.

Shane barely processes the drive to the hospital, an alarming thought, to be sure, but it's all a whir of blurred streetlights, neon signs, other cars, until he's pulling up to the emergency department. He's extra glad to be in Montreal tonight; he knows exactly what hospital they take injured players to.

He parks and opens the door, about to step out, when he remembers he can't just show up in a hospital in fucking *Montreal* asking about Ilya Rozanov, of all people, without drawing all sorts of interest. He curses under his breath and reaches for the glove department and the sunglasses he keeps in there. He's going to look ridiculous walking into a hospital late at night in sunglasses, but he just needs to avoid anybody seeing him, at least until he can find someone to tell him where Ilya is.

Thankfully, the waiting room is quiet and he tries to be as nonchalant as possible as he walk up to the front desk, but he can feel his heart pounding in his chest. He keeps his hood up, but removes his sunglasses as he approaches the nurse sitting there. He watches as her eyes widen in recognition and he shakes his head, a sign for her to keep quiet about his presence. "Um, I'm looking for an update on Ilya Rozanov?" He keeps his voice down, hoping he didn't draw attention to the fact he was there or that Ilya is also there.

The nurse gives him an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I'm not allowed to give out that information. League rules."

Shane fights the urge to roll his eyes. He knows the fucking rules. He's part of the league. He looks away, composing himself, then forces himself to make eye contact with the nurse again. "I'm not going to talk to the media. I just..." He's embarrassed to find his voice cracking. He clears his throat, hoping the nurse didn't notice. "I need to know if he's okay. Please."

There must be something in his expression (and God, he hopes this lady doesn't like to gossip because he does *not* need this to become front page news) that appeals to her compassionate side because she nods and stands, saying, "Follow me."

He eagerly trails behind her, feeling his heart picking up pace again, but this time it's a sense of nervous excitement, still mixed with dread that maybe Ilya's *not* okay and that's why she hasn't said anything about his condition.

It takes a few minutes to get to where they're going, but then they stop in front of a room, one with a closed door and a tiny window above the handle. Shane feels his mouth go dry. He turns to the nurse. "Is he okay?"

She must hear the tremble in his voice because the look she gives him is tender. "He has a concussion and he's on some pain meds, but he should be fine."

Shane nods, feeling the panic in his chest finally deflate. "Can I see him?"

She nods. There's a twinkle in her eye. "I'll make an exception for you, Mr. Hollander." She places her hand on the door handle, but before she opens it, adds, "He might not be super responsive."

"That's okay," Shane assures her quickly. He doesn't care about that. He just wants to see Ilya, touch him and fucking *apologize*. Maybe Ilya will forgive him. Maybe he won't. He just wants him to know he's sorry.

"His next check-in is scheduled for 45 minutes from now," she says. She opens the door.

Shane steps in, eyes immediately going to Ilya. He looks so pale against the stark white hospital sheets, bruises already forming under his eyes. Shane feels his eyes fill up with tears once again. He hates seeing him like this. "Ilya," he says, voice cracking. It sounds like a gunshot in the silence.

He watches as Ilya shifts, his head rolling back and forth on the pillow before he forces his eyes open. It looks painful. "Hollander?" he manages. His voice sounds tired. *Makes sense*, Shane thinks to himself. *He has a fucking concussion.*

"Yeah," Shane says. "I just, um, wanted to see how you were."

"Like I got hit by a fucking car," Ilya mumbles, still squinting.

"I'm sorry," Shane says automatically. He means for the concussion, but also...

Ilya lifts one hand and weakly waves Shane over. Shane hurries to his side, but hesitates before getting too close. Ilya lets out a frustrated huff. "I will not bite you, Hollander."

"No, I know that, I just..." He blinks, feeling the tears returning. "That scared the shit out of me." He's not just talking about Ilya's injury.

"Shh, shh," Ilya shushes him, reaching out a hand. Shane slowly reaches back until their hands are touching, then looks up at Ilya's face. "I will be okay."

“Really?” Shane asks. He feels about 10 seconds away from bursting into tears of relief.

Ilya nods, then closes his eyes, his face scrunching up in pain. “Ouch,” he says, and Shane can’t help but laugh, though it’s half sob. Ilya opens his eyes again at the sound. “I am injured one, Hollander. Why are you crying?”

He squeezes Ilya’s hand. “I’m just glad you’re going to be okay,” he says. And then, before he loses his chance, “And I’m sorry. For leaving. You didn’t deserve that.” He looks away, trying to stave off the tears to no avail.

“Hollander...” Ilya says, and when Shane doesn’t look back to him, amends it to, “Shane.”

That gets Shane’s attention and his gaze snaps back to meet Ilya’s. “I’m so sorry, Ilya. I got scared.”

“Of what?” Ilya asks. “Did I do something...”

Shane shakes his head so violently Ilya worries *he* might end up with a concussion. “No, never. You were... perfect.” The word comes out a whisper.

Ilya wants to ask him again, but he’s tired and in pain, and he knows Shane will eventually explain.

And he does.

“I think,” he starts, and Ilya can tell, even in his drugged out state, that Shane is trying to find the right words, “I like you.”

Ilya’s eyes narrow in confusion. “Clearly,” he says. “You would not have come to see me in hospital if you did not.”

Shane looks away, rolling his eyes. “Oh my God, fuck off,” he mutters.

Ilya squeezes his hand weakly and Shane looks back to him. He looks... nervous. “I think,” he says, cocking his head slightly, “I like you, too.” He pauses, then adds, “As person, not just your mouth.”

Shane can’t help but smile and Ilya echoes it, then lifts their connected hands to his mouth, kissing Shane’s knuckles. Shane’s smile falters as he’s overcome with emotion and he reaches up with his free hand to brush Ilya’s curls off his forehead, before leaning down and pressing a kiss to it, lingering far too long to be friendly.

“I’m tired,” Ilya says after a few moments, and Shane straightens, nodding his head.

“You should get some rest,” he says, like it’s his idea.

Ilya blinks slowly a few times, then says, “Come see me tomorrow?”

Shane thinks his heart might burst. “Yeah, ‘course.” A pause. “Good night, Ilya.”

“Good night, Shane.” He closes his eyes and lets his head loll to the side.

Shane watches him for a few more moments, content to just look at him, feeling his heart swell with an emotion that is certainly more than *like*. Then, he nods to himself and walks back to the door, looking back one last time before opening the door.

Thankfully, the nurse from earlier is nowhere to be seen. Shane puts up his hood, hunching his shoulders and turning his gaze to the floor. It takes him a few minutes, but he finds his way back to the emergency entrance and the nurse’s station.

The nurse from earlier – he sees her nametag says Patricia – is sitting there and makes eye contact with him, then mimes zipping her lips. Shane gives her a little smile, a nod of the head, and hurries out the door, into the dark Montreal night.

It’s not until he’s back in his car that he allows himself a real smile, knowing that Ilya will be okay, that *they* will be okay. His phone buzzes in his pocket and he takes it out, seeing he has a text from his mom.

Everything ok?

He quickly sends back a reply.

Yeah, all good. Nothing to worry about.

For the first time that night, he knows that’s the truth.

THE END

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