

SPEAK UP

Written by

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INT. CLASSROOM - PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - DAY

SHYE, early 20s, quiet, severe stutter, watches class exit, trudges up to Professor P.

ERIK, mid-late 20s, urban, military, reserved, follows behind Shye.

PROFESSOR P, mid 40s-50s, Rastafarian, gathers her things. Looks at Shye.

PROFESSOR P
My office please.

Professor P peers over glasses at Erik.

PROFESSOR P (CONT'D)
I'll be with you in a moment.

INT. PROFESSOR P'S OFFICE - DAY

Professor P enters, closes door. Shye follows behind her.

PROFESSOR P
I won't keep you long...

Professor P places items on desk, leans against desk, crosses arms and legs.

PROFESSOR P (CONT'D)
...the only way I will give you those credits is if you tutor Erik.

SHYE
But --

PROFESSOR P
-- I don't want to hear it. I am the only one who knows how well spoken you really are. That ends today.

Shye looks down at her feet, sighs, and tugs at the end of her backpack strap.

SHYE
You know why I prefer to not talk in class.

PROFESSOR P
Which is why I am giving you this option. Take it or leave it.

Shye meets Professor P's pitying gaze.

SHYE
Are you sure there are no other
options?

Professor P firmly shakes her head.

PROFESSOR P
You want that A, you tutor Erik.
You can start today.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor P enters followed by Shye with shoulders slumped.

PROFESSOR P
This is Shye. She will be tutoring
you.

Erik nods.

Professor P grunts, exits.

SHYE
(murmurs)
I usually eat after this since I
start work at 8. You can meet me
there at 6.

ERIK
Where?

SHYE
Oh, right, the library.

Erik's inclines his head with a stony-face and walks out.

Shye, disconcerted, watches him leave.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - NIGHT (A FEW HOURS LATER)

Shye paces at front desk chewing her nails.

Erik strolls in with just a notebook.

Shye frowns.

ERIK
Lead the way.

Shye turns and leads him to a private study room.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - PRIVATE STUDY ROOM

Erik SLAMS the door behind him, sits. Shye jumps.

ERIK

Let's get something straight before
we start, little doe... I'm not
good at poetry because my life has
no room for those type of feelings.

Erik looks at Shye with intensity. Shye avoids his gaze.

SHYE

Good for you? Look, we're here now,
might as well try to access them.

Erik huffs and folds his arms. He indicates with his arm that
Shye should sit. She tentatively does so.

ERIK

What's your plan of attack?

SHYE

We find your inspiration?

Shye meets Erik's gaze expectantly.

Erik groans and pinches the bridge of his nose.

ERIK

I don't have any.

SHYE

What are you studying?

ERIK

Engineering.

SHYE

(mumbles)

I was not expecting that.

ERIK

(defensive)

What was that?

SHYE

Nothing...

Shye bites her lip.

SHYE (CONT'D)
I'm just going to need some time to
prepare. Do you have any early
classes tomorrow?

ERIK
No, but I start PT at 5. You need
me to swing by or something?

SHYE
Yes please.

Erik gets up to leave.

ERIK
I'll swing by at 6.

SHYE
Perfect. That's when I get off.

EXT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

Erik jogs up to Shye in just basketball shorts. Shye clutches
books, gulps, and stares at Erik's chest.

ERIK
My eyes are up here, little doe.

Shye meets his amused eyes, immediately looks away upon
contact.

SHYE
These texts should help you connect
science and math to your emotions.

Shye hands off the short pile of texts. Their hands brush.

SHYE (CONT'D)
(rushed)
And I wrote you a few example poems
to help you get a few more ideas.
Okay, see you tomorrow night.

Shye scurries away.

Erik smirks and jogs away slowly at first, looks back at Shye
once more and picks up the pace to a run.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - PRIVATE STUDY ROOM - NIGHT

Shye writes on her laptop with music blasting in her
headphones.

Erik stands in the doorway and observes her. He SLAMS his books on the table.

Shye's shoulders jump to her ears. She pulls out her headphones one at a time.

SHYE

You have got to stop doing that!

Erik shrugs, grabs and turns chair backward, sits next to Shye. Erik stares at Shye.

SHYE (CONT'D)

What? Did I get something on my shirt? I have something on my face?

Erik shakes his head no.

ERIK

(slowly)

Those poems you wrote for me... No one has ever made engineering sound so, emotional and relative.

Shye exhales.

SHYE

Thank you? I think. Are you ready to work on the next assignment?

ERIK

I doubt it'll be as good, but I guess we have to start somewhere.

SHYE

It can be.

ERIK

Listen, I think you should start talking in class instead of wasting your efforts on me.

SHYE

No.

ERIK

Any particular reason why?

Shye blinks away tears.

SHYE

None I'm willing to share. Let's get to work. Let me see your rough draft.

Erik quirks head at Shye, hands her his notebook, Erik lays hand on hers.

Shye pauses and looks at Erik.

ERIK
If you ever wanna talk about it,
I'm here. Okay?

SHYE
K. Thanks. Can we get back to work
now?

ERIK
(deflated)
Uh, yea. Sure.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Shye, headphones in, hurries past popular football players.

Football players tease and harass her.

Shye orders food and keeps head down as she waits.

Erik walks up to Shye, slings arm over her shoulders, takes out one of her headphones.

ERIK
What's up little doe. Want me to
deal with those douches?

SHYE
(startled)
Uh, hi Erik. No, it's fine.

FOOTBALL PLAYER
Aww, look at that. The stuttering
girl got enough sentences out to
get a boyfriend.

ERIK
Aye, yo. You need to back up and
shut up.

Erik attempts to approach, Shye tugs him back.

SHYE
Erik stop. I don't want to make a
scene.

ERIK
But--

Shye pulls Erik in and hugs his arm close.

SHYE
Please don't? You'll only make it worse.

ERIK
Fine, but only cause you got a death grip on me.

SHYE
Thank you.

Shye side hugs Erik.

SHYE (CONT'D)
Just ignore them like I do.

Erik grunts.

Shye grabs food as soon as it is placed on counter.

Shye sits at table in far corner. Erik follows.

ERIK
They always do that?

SHYE
Not always.

Shye starts to eat. Chews and swallows bite.

SHYE (CONT'D)
Sometimes they're preoccupied and they leave me alone.

Erik steals some fries. Holds them in his hand to eat from.

Shye swats at him, pulls food closer to herself and shields from Erik.

ERIK
Hmm. Well tell me if it continues.

SHYE
Maybe.

ERIK
I mean it.

SHYE
Mmhmm. You should be more worried about your writing. You ready?

ERIK
Going to grab my drafts now.

Erik grabs another hand full of fries and exits.

SHYE
Hey! Stop eating my food!

SERIES OF SHOTS - SHYE TUTORS ERIK THROUGHOUT SEMESTER
Clothes different in each shot to indicate change of seasons.

-- Shye leans over Erik and points to his screen. Erik leans closer and turns his head to look at her. She meets his gaze, lips nearly touching. She quickly sits in her seat.

-- Erik sits next to Shye, invades her personal space, sits container of fries in front of her. Shye smiles wide, hands him a new book, and eats fries.

-- Shye arrives after Erik and looks sickly. She sits as far away from him as possible. She lays her head down. Erik moves next to her and rubs her back.

-- Erik sits cup of tea and cookies in front of Shye, sits next to her. Shye pecks his cheek and holds out hand for his paper.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

MONTAGE - ERIK AND SHYE ENAMORED BY EACH OTHER

Nat King Cole's "When I Fall In Love" plays (fades into background [and stays in] after montage).

-- Erik recites poem.

-- Shye and Erik fight smiles.

-- Erik and Shye have a stare off as he finishes. Shye looks away first.

-- Girls crowd Erik. Football players act agitated.

-- Erik looks for Shye and quickly tries to leave.

-- Professor hands students grading rubrics as they exit the class. Erik gets his grade with an A- printed boldly in red. She pats his shoulder.

PROFESSOR P
I'm impressed. Your progress has
really shown. I hope to see you in
another of my classes.

Erik grins and backs away to meet up with Shye.

ERIK
No promises.

EXT. CAMPUS WALKWAY - DAY

Erik rubs the back of his neck.

ERIK
I wanna say sorry for being a bit
of an asshole when we started. You
didn't have to stick this out with
me, but I'm thankful you did.

Shye wrings her book-bag strap and glances at Erik's profile.

SHYE
No problem. You didn't have to
write that poem about me though.
Why did you?

Erik stops and turns to Shye.

ERIK
Probably the same reason you wrote
those poems for me.

Shye looks down and kicks at the ground, shrugs.

SHYE
I don't know. Just wanted you to
actually hear me out and see what I
do.

Shye sighs.

Erik hums, lifts Shye's head to look him in the eyes.

ERIK
I did. Did you?

SHYE
I think so? What were you trying to
say?

They stare at each other. Erik raises his eyebrow. Shye looks
back down.

ERIK

That I want to learn more about the
gorgeous woman that has opened my
eyes to more than one thing.

Shye gasps and snaps her head to look up at him.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Don't look so surprised.

SHYE

But... You... I...

ERIK

Close your mouth before a fly gets
in, little doe.

Shye closes mouth. Erik grins.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Anyway, I found a dope monthly
poetry slam thing I thought you'd
wanna go to sometime...

Erik hands Shye flier.

ERIK (CONT'D)

...if you're interested.

Shye nods and clears throat.

SHYE

Umm, sure.

Erik smiles and slowly backs away from Shye.

SHYE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

ERIK

I got class. You have my number.
Use it.

SHYE

I just might!

ERIK

You better!

Erik turns and saunters away. After staring after him for a
moment, Shye giggles, turns around and walks in the opposite
direction.