Sorry

by Kyle G

On the surface, it is a simple word. Sorry. Regretful, remorseful, apologetic. But society has tampered with its denotation so much that it is almost incomprehensible without context. It can represent a feeling of remorse for the tiniest, most insignificant action, like the accidental bump of a stranger when standing in line. It can indicate a breakdown in communication, like when you did not catch the name of a new acquaintance. It can imply a regret for something that was not even the fault of the speaker, like when a friend apologizes for the fight you had with your boyfriend. And it can represent a plea for absolution for a life-changing, irreversible decision, like when you asked for forgiveness for fucking the guy you just met at the coffee shop.

"What are you thinking?" you interrupted.

"I was thinking about the sociolinguistics of the word sorry," I replied, without looking up.

"See, this is exactly what I mean. I tell you this huge thing, and all you can do is sit and analyze the words I used."

"Word."

"What?"

"You said 'the words' you used, plural. You only said one word. 'Sorry.' That's all you said to me."

You sat down. Even though I still was not looking at you, I could feel your face grow redder.

"Sorry."