Worst nightmare

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Worst nightmare

by Felxia

Summary

When his parents asked him what was wrong, he simply replied that he was tired, because how could he tell the men who gave him life that he didn't want it anymore?

In other words, Ilya's worst nightmare is coming true. Sometimes he wished that depression wasn't hereditary.

Notes

Read tags carefully and do not read if you are not in a good mental state. I shared some of my struggles with depression on Misha. Maybe someday I will write it down in more detail, but I doubt my little boy will suffer so much.

See the end of the work for more notes

Misha was fourteen years old and living proof that genes can be ruthlessly precise. When he stepped onto the ice, people often fell silent for a split second, as if trying to comprehend who they were seeing.

The same dark blond curls that always seemed to escape from beneath his helmet. The same hazel blue eyes, in which a glint of concentration mingled with something warm, almost gentle. Freckles scattered across his nose and cheeks, just like Shane's, and his mouth set in that characteristic grimace of concentration Ilya always wore before a big play.

He was the perfect blend of both.

Not a copy. Not a shadow. Someone of his own, but of them.

On the ice, he moved with a natural confidence, as if he'd been born with skates on his feet. His skating was fluid, technical, almost elegant, definitely a touch of Ilya, but his decisions were lightning-fast, instinctive, with a cool precision Shane had learned over the years.

He read the game as if he saw it seconds ahead. He knew when to accelerate, when to let go, when to pass, and when to take charge.

"He plays like he has both of you in his head at once," Shane once heard one of the coaches say.

Ilya just nodded, with that calm, proud smile of his.

Misha was good. Not "for his age."

Simply good.

But what mattered most was what happened off the ice.

After the game, he would take off his helmet, sit next to them on the bench, and talk about the stress, the doubts, the fear of letting the team down. About how he sometimes felt too much. That he sometimes felt overwhelmed. And no one silenced him. No one told him to be tougher.

Ilya listened. Shane asked questions. And Misha knew his emotions had a place. As they should, in any healthy home.

Now, as he glided across the ice during practice, sweat pouring from his temples and his breathing quickening, Ilya watched him from the stands, his arms crossed over his chest. Shane stood nearby, a mug of coffee in his hand, carefully following his son's every move.

"He's good," Shane said quietly.

"I know," Ilya replied. "But more importantly, he's happy."

On the ice, Misha stopped at the boards, looked up, and saw them both. He smiled broadly, raised his stick in greeting, and moved on, with the same confidence he always brought to life.

And Ilya, looking at him, thought once again that the promise he'd made so long ago, that night when he'd held a newborn in a blue onesie, had truly been kept.*

Over time, however, something began to shift. At first, almost imperceptibly, like a tiny crack in the ice that appears after a sharp turn and disappears under another layer of snow.

Misha still trained. He still arrived at the rink on time, laced his skates with the same precision, answered the coaches with "yes" and "sure," nodded when necessary. He still scored goals, was still one of the best on the ice. In photos with the team, he smiled, properly, politely, exactly as he should have.

Except that smile no longer reached his eyes.

The spark that once ignited naturally within him began to fade. His laughter became less frequent, shorter, as if cut off halfway through. He increasingly locked himself in his room, under the pretext of studying or being tired. More and more often, he'd answer "it's okay" before anyone could ask further.

Shane noticed it first, though he hadn't called it out for a long time. He noticed that Misha had stopped spontaneously sitting next to him on the couch. That he'd stopped asking the questions that used to pour out endlessly. That his arms were more often crossed, as if protecting something.

Ilya saw it in his son's eyes. In that familiar tiredness he knew all too well, the kind that didn't come from training or lack of sleep. The kind that burrowed deeper.

At first, though, they both decided to give him space.

"It's age," Shane said quietly one evening, when Misha had locked himself in his room without a word. "Hormones. Pressure. School."

Ilya nodded, though something inside him rebelled.

"I felt the same way," he replied. "I wanted to be alone. I didn't say everything right away."

And Shane knew exactly what his husband was talking about.

So they agreed not to push. Be there, but keep their shoes off. Give signals, invite them to breakfast together, ask questions casually, be present without pressure. They wanted Misha to know the door was open, even if he didn't want to go through it yet.

The problem was, Misha was very good at it.

Very good at pretending everything was fine. So good, it was like he'd learned it from someone who'd done the exact same thing his whole life.

Ilya sometimes caught himself watching his son too closely, analyzing every gesture, every shadow under his eyes, every moment of silence at the table. And when Misha looked up and said calmly,

"Really, Papa. It's okay."

Ilya felt an old, familiar fear stir in his chest. One he promised himself he'd never ignore.

And though they hadn't said anything out loud yet, both he and Shane had begun to understand that this wasn't just a "phase."

Misha himself couldn't quite put a name to it either.

Some evenings, he'd lie on his bed, staring at the ceiling, trying to make a mental list of things that would be enough. The house was warm. Safe. There was always someone waiting in the kitchen. There was always someone asking how his day was and listening to the answers.

Shane could detect the slightest change in his voice, and Ilya had that attentive, quiet way of looking at him, as if he saw more than Misha wanted to show.

He had parents who loved him. Grandparents who called too often, but out of concern. A best friend with whom he laughed during recess and shared a bench in the locker room. Ice cream he knew by heart. A school where he did well.

Nothing was "wrong."

And that was the worst.

Because that emptiness appeared without warning. First, like a slight feeling of detachment, as if he were a step away from his own life. As if laughter came with a delay, and joy was more of a memory than a real feeling. Then it began to spread wider, quieter, slipping into training days and school mornings.

It didn't hurt. Not yet.

It was more like a feeling of heaviness that appeared for no reason. As if someone had placed something invisible on his chest. He breathed normally, functioned normally, and yet each day demanded more effort from him than the last.

Sometimes he'd stand on the ice, his stick resting on his hip, and suddenly he'd find himself unable to remember the last time he'd felt the pure joy of skating. He was still good. He was still fast. But the spark… the spark seemed to be fading beneath a layer of something heavy and shapeless.

"Get a grip," he told himself. "You have everything."

And that phrase came back to him most often.

You have everything. You have no right to feel bad.

So he kept smiling. He replied, "Okay." He kept doing his job. He studied, trained, joked, hugged his parents goodnight. He was exactly the son he had always been.

Except that inside, he was starting to feel like someone slowly disappearing and didn't know why.

The most terrifying thing was that he couldn't pinpoint anyone to blame. There was no single event, no single moment to blame. The emptiness didn't scream. It didn't demand attention.

It simply was. And with each passing week, it weighed more and more.

And Misha, a fourteen-year-old boy from a perfect home, was beginning to fear that if he tried to name it out loud...it would become too real to undo.

Sometimes, even that thought came faster than he'd like to admit. Misha almost wished his parents hadn't raised their voices at him.

That there had never been any slamming doors. Screaming. A silence meant to punish. Instead, there was always conversation. Even when they argued, and they argued, as everyone did, they never left anything unfinished.

Afterward, they would sit in the living room, often still in their jackets, with tea cooling on the table, and pick apart the problem. No accusations. No winners or losers. They searched for a solution together.

Misha grew up witnessing all this. He knew that conflict didn't mean the end of love. That emotions weren't a threat. That you could disagree and still be safe.

He never had any siblings, but he never felt lonely because of it either. Shane and Ilya made sure of that almost instinctively. There was always someone to play with him, someone to listen, someone to remember his tests and first tournaments.

Friends were part of the home, not just the school. The silence, when it came, was peaceful, not empty.

And that's precisely why none of this made sense.

Because if there was no harm, where did this emptiness come from?
If there was no neglect, where did these thoughts come from that kept returning at night?
If he had everything, why did he feel like something fundamental was missing?

Sometimes he sat on the bed and tried to go through them in his head, one by one. Those intrusive thoughts that said nothing specific, yet they wouldn't let him rest. They didn't scream, they didn't threaten. They simply raised unanswerable questions.

What if this doesn't go away?
What if it stays like this?
What if something's wrong with me?

The worst part was that he couldn't dismiss them with arguments. Logic didn't help. He knew he was loved. He knew he was safe. He knew his home was good.

And yet his own mind seemed to be going in the opposite direction.

He felt guilty. For every bad day. For every moment he couldn't be happy. As if he were failing those who had given him everything. As if he were ungrateful for the love surrounding him.

So he remained silent.

He smiled a little wider than he felt.

He said "fine" a little more often than he truly did. He put on his hood, his headphones, his armor from the routine.

Because how do you explain to someone that something hurts that you can't put your finger on?

And somewhere deep inside, Misha was starting to fear that this emptiness hadn't come despite a good home, but rather had come without a reason.

And that made it even more terrifying. But over time, it was no longer possible to pretend nothing was happening.

Misha's condition began to deteriorate quietly, insidiously. There wasn't one breakdown, one day that changed everything. Instead, there was an accumulation of small things: mornings that made it increasingly difficult to get out of bed, workouts that left him feeling not pride but only emptiness, evenings when the exhaustion wouldn't disappear even after sleep.

When Shane or Ilya asked what was wrong, Misha would automatically answer:

"I'm just tired."

And in a way, that was true. Except that this exhaustion had nothing to do with physical exertion.

How could he tell them? How could he look into the eyes of two men who had given him everything—security, love, stability, life—and say that somewhere deep inside, he didn't want that anymore?

He couldn't do that to them.

He couldn't even hurt himself. The mere thought of pain provoked reflexive resistance within him. Not because he felt so good, but because he was terrified. Too terrified to cross that line. Too aware of what it would do to them. Too attached.

He wasn't drawn to drugs. He didn't seek refuge in alcohol. The smell of cigarettes made him nauseous, and the prospect of numbness, instead of relief, seemed even worse. He didn't want to destroy himself.

He simply didn't know how to live when each day seemed harder than the last.

Sometimes he sat in his room, leaning against the door, trying to calm his breathing when his thoughts began to wander. He thought of Ilya, who always looked at him with that quiet pride. About Shane, who could detect a change in his voice faster than anyone else. About their home, which was good. Safe. Full of love.

And that just made him feel even worse.

Because even if that wasn't enough, what was wrong with him?

He was starting to believe he was the problem. That something inside him was broken, ungrateful, wrong. That he didn't deserve what he got if he couldn't enjoy it.

So he said "tired." He went to training. He played his part.

And inside, he was slowly fading away, not dramatically, not loudly, but in that most dangerous way, silently, hoping no one would notice.

But in the end, Misha was just... too tired.

Tired of pretending everything was okay. Tired of wearing a mask that weighed more with each passing day. Tired of being "the strong one," "the talented one," "the one who can handle it."

The burden he carried inside was too much for his fourteen-year-old body, even if from the outside he looked like a boy who could handle the pressures of the rink with ease.

He wanted to be strong. He really did.

He wanted to be like Ilya, composed, confident, able to stand tall even when the world tried to break him. He wanted to be like Shane, consistent, calm, logical, always knowing what to do next. In his mind, "being a man" meant endurance. Control. The ability to handle himself without asking for help.

And he couldn't do that.

He was sitting on his bed one evening, in the dim light of the room, his hockey helmet propped against a chair and his stick propped against the wall, and he felt something inside him crack, not violently, not with a bang. Rather, quietly, like thin ice that can't support its weight, though it looked solid on the surface.

He felt like a failure.

Because that's not how a future hockey star behaves. That's not how someone who has "everything," someone with talent, support, a name that alone raises expectations thinks. How could he be worthy of the same titles as his parents if he couldn't keep his head in check?

On the ice, he knew what to do.

In life, not anymore.

He clenched his fists in the fabric of his sweatshirt, breathing shallowly, as if afraid that if he allowed himself to do more, something would spill out. Shame. Regret. Anger at himself. That belief that he was letting everyone down, even if no one told him so.

"Get a grip," he whispered to himself, almost pleadingly. "You have to be better."

But the more he tried to force himself, the more everything fell apart.

He didn't want to be weak. He didn't want to be a burden. He didn't want to disappoint the two men who had done everything to keep his world safe.

And yet, there he sat, a fourteen-year-old boy, his heart beating too fast and his thoughts racing, and for the first time, he truly allowed himself to entertain a single, terrifying thought: that maybe it wasn't possible to be strong alone.

The turning point came suddenly, and not at all dramatically, like in the movies. No major accident, no blood on the ice. It came in silence, in exhaustion, and in that one moment when everything simply fell apart.

Misha's mind was elsewhere throughout the entire training session. As if he were floating a few meters above the ice, cut off from his body, which mechanically obeyed his coach's commands. The puck was slipping away from his stick, his reactions were a fraction of a second late, and every mistake hit him like further evidence that something was wrong with him.

He knew his parents were in the stands. They were always there. Always watching. Always supporting. And that was why he couldn't look at them today.

He was playing terribly. Not "worse than usual," just badly. He fell over and over, sometimes for no apparent reason, as if his legs were giving up on him. Someone handed him the puck, he lost it. Someone shouted a tip, he ignored it. The coach pointed it out, nodded, but the words flew through him, leaving no trace.

Fatigue throbbed in his skull.

When one of the teammates growled something under his breath, completely innocent, more to himself than to him, Misha exploded. He turned abruptly, throwing out a sharp retort that he didn't quite understand. The tone was too aggressive, the reaction completely inappropriate.

"What's wrong with you?!" came the other end.

And that was enough.

His heart began to pound, his hands trembled, and that familiar, oppressive feeling settled in his chest, as if someone were slowly squeezing him from the inside. Someone else said something, someone shouldered him a little too hard. Sticks clattered against the ice. The coach blew his whistle, trying to break the tension before it escalated into a fight.

"Rozanov, get on the bench!" he shouted sharply.

Misha slid to the sidelines, breathing heavily, his gaze glued to the ice. He felt the eyes on him—his teammates, his coach… and his parents. The eyes he'd always sought, and now he wanted to hide from.

Ilya was the first to notice that this wasn't just another bad day.

There was no anger, no sports frustration. There was something familiar. Something Rozanov knew all too well: that empty, distant gaze, that irritability, that tiredness that didn't fade with sleep.

Shane sat beside him, tense as a string, his hands clasped too tightly. Neither of them clapped. Neither of them spoke. They simply stared, their silence filled with more anxiety than any words.

Misha finally looked up—and for a second, he saw them.

And then something inside him truly broke. Not on the ice. Not in front of the others.

Only inside, silently, painfully, with a sudden, terrifying clarity that there was no longer any way to pretend. That this wouldn't go away on its own. That this time, it wouldn't be enough to just "pull yourself together."

The whistle signaled the end of practice. And for Misha, the beginning of something he could no longer ignore.

Silence followed him like a shadow.

The walk to the locker room passed without a word. Misha walked a few steps ahead of his parents, his shoulders slightly slumped, his helmet tucked under his arm as if it suddenly weighed a ton. The locker room was filled with the usual noise: laughter, jokes, the sound of equipment being thrown, but for him, everything was muffled, as if he were underwater.

He pulled on his pads mechanically. Velcro by Velcro. No rush, no anger. Just… empty.

The shower was warm, the water running down his neck and back, but it brought no relief. He stood under the spray longer than he should have, resting his forehead against the cold tiles, counting his breaths to keep his mind off things.

He dressed in silence. He packed his gear in silence.

Ilya and Shane didn't push. That was perhaps the most painful thing, their caution, their attentiveness, the way they knew something was wrong and yet gave him space. Just like they always did.

The drive home was long, yet familiar. Misha sat in the backseat, his forehead against the window, staring out at the blurry city lights. Shane drove, both hands gripping the steering wheel tightly. Ilya glanced in the rearview mirror every so often, but said nothing. Neither of them.

The silence was thick, heavy, full of words no one knew how to say yet.

When they parked, Misha got out first. He entered the house, dropped his bag by the door, and didn't even take off his jacket. He passed the living room, the kitchen, and took the stairs two at a time. In his room, he closed the door quietly, almost cautiously, as if afraid the slam might break something.

He leaned his back against the door.

The room was exactly as it always was: hockey posters on the walls, shelves filled with medals and trophies from his younger years, a desk with notebooks scattered about. Evidence that he was "good," "talented," "promising."

He slid slowly to the floor.

Only then did he allow himself to close his eyes.

Downstairs, Ilya and Shane stood still for a long moment. They didn't call out to him. Not yet. They knew this silence wasn't an escape from them, it was an attempt to survive.

And both, each in their own way, felt the same icy stab of fear.

Because for the first time, they didn't know how to protect their child from something they couldn't see or hold back.

Misha didn't go downstairs for dinner. No one forced him.

He lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, listening to the sounds of the house, the soft clatter of dishes, footsteps on the stairs, the muffled voices of his parents. Time passed strangely, as if it stretched and collapsed simultaneously. Only when the house was enveloped in evening silence and the hallway light dimmed did Misha finally rise.

He descended almost silently.

Only a single lamp was on in the living room. Shane lay on the couch, leaning against the armrest, and Ilya sat beside him, his arms crossed, his gaze fixed on the screen. A movie played in the background, something calm, without any sudden sounds. A scene Misha knew by heart. Safe. Steady.

At the sight, something tightened in his chest so suddenly that he lost his breath.

He hesitated only a moment.

Then he stepped closer, slowly, as if afraid that if he moved too quickly, the spell would break. He didn't say a word. He simply slid onto Ilya's lap, sideways, awkwardly, too big for this, too heavy, too tall, even though he barely reached Papa's shoulders. And yet.

Like when he was three, five, seven. Like when the world was simpler.

For a moment, no one moved.

The movie continued, silently. Breaths mingled. Misha sat stiffly, ready to withdraw, to apologize, to leave at any moment.

And then he felt his father's strong arms tighten around him.

Surely. Firmly. Without hesitation.

Ilya embraced him, pulling him closer with one hand, placing the other on his back. Shane immediately stood up, moving closer, placing a hand on his son's knee, then on his shoulder.

No one said anything.

Ilya bowed his head and rested his forehead against Misha's hair, just as he had before. His voice, when he finally spoke, was low and calm.

"Моё солнышко (My sunshine)." was all he said.

That was enough.

Something inside Misha snapped, not suddenly, not with a bang. More like ice in spring. Tears welled in his eyes, though he wasn't sure when they had begun. He pressed his face into his father's sweatshirt, his fingers clenching tightly in the material.

Ilya held him still. He didn't let go. Shane was right there.

And for the first time in a long time, Misha didn't have to pretend everything was okay.

"I think... I think I have a problem," he finally managed, his voice breaking so much that the words almost fell apart. "I... I can't... stop."

That was enough.

Shane's hands immediately began to slowly, rhythmically massage his back, just like they used to when he was a child, waking up from nightmares. The movements were calm, confident, unhurried. Ilya, in turn, pulled him even closer, as if to shield his son from the world with his entire body.

"Shh…" he whispered, low, warm. "It's okay. You're here. We're here."

Misha continued sobbing.

He didn't know how much time passed. Minutes, dozens of minutes, time ceased to matter. His shoulders ached with tension, his head throbbed, but he didn't stop crying. No one rushed him. No one said, "Calm down," "Take a breath," "Everything's going to be okay."

They simply held him.

For Shane, it was a reflex, an instinct that always kicked in when he saw someone he loved suffering. He couldn't count the number of times he'd sat like this with his husband while he broke down. For Ilya… it was something much deeper.

The worst nightmare he'd never spoken aloud had just taken shape in his arms.

For a split second, he felt his heart clench with icy fear. The memory of his mother, the quiet house, the words no one had spoken in time. Memories of his own state, when he'd fought to stop this rollercoaster of pain and suffering. Prayers whispered at night, when Misha was still an infant, that this wouldn't happen. That this burden would rest on him. That depression wouldn't be hereditary.

He clenched his jaw, but he didn't let any of it seep through.

His son needed a father now, not a man with a past.

"Thank you for telling us this," he finally said softly, emphatically, as if each word were a promise. "This isn't weakness, Misha. This is courage."

Shane nodded, leaning closer.

"You're not alone. Not for a moment," he added. "And you don't have to understand that right away. We'll help. Together."

Misha drew in a shuddering breath. Another. Then another. The burden didn't disappear. The emptiness was still there. But for the first time in a long time, he wasn't alone with it.

End Notes

This is quite detached from my own canon timeline. Misha's depression in my timeline wasn't as severe as described here, so consider it an alternate fanfiction.

Everything ended well for Misha. He'll get lots of cuddles, sickeningly sweet hot chocolate, and a new pair of skates in the therapy package. Sometimes I wish I had parents like him (they're okay as long as you don't have to talk about mental health).

That's it for now, let me know if there's anything else you'd like to see in the comments!

The fragment marked with "*" refers to my other one-shot with Misha titled "Mockingbird"

Btw Misha's full name is Mikhail (Michael). → Mikhail Ilyich Rozanov.

Ilyich → Ilya.

Thanks again for reading and see you next time!

You can support me on X if you want, all the information and updates will appear there ^^

My profil on X

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!