Chapter 14 Hockey Tryouts

I was up at 5:00am eager to get to the rink.  I was a little shocked when I was in the kitchen and dad had left me his keys with a note to take his Land Rover.  I hadn't heard them get back from the airport but guess it was early this morning.  I loaded up my duffle and sticks and headed over to the rink after stopping for a bagel and coffee.

I was at the rink at 6:06 and had to wait ten minutes for the coach to get there.  I knew hockey practice was usually in the morning from 5am to 7:30am before school.  That might have been a turn-off for some but I didn’t mind.  I laced and suited up and when I left the locker room the other guys trying out were starting to show up.  As I got on the ice the coach and his wife were there.  His wife was probably the assistant coach.  She had a Wisco Hockey sweatshirt on and I remembered that was where she played college hockey. I had only been to one game last year as it was their homecoming game and the school tried to fill the 1,200 seat arena.

She skated up to me with a clipboard. “Name?” She asked as I checked her out.  She was young, maybe 25.  I knew the other coach was a teacher at the school but not sure what his wife did for work.

“Caleb Silversmith.” She nodded and checked off my name.

“We have 13 guys trying out for 5 slots on the team this year.  If you don’t make it there are pick-up games Saturday night at the rink to hone your skills for next year.” She said as she was sizing me up.  She looked really fit.  She obviously still skated.  “Forward or defense?” She asked and I was caught slightly off guard.

“Probably a left winger I said. I am right-handed but have a decent left-handed shot.”  She nodded and looked around.  Her husband was in the walkway, not on the ice.  No other guys trying out were on the ice yet.

“Why don’t we see your shot from the wing then? I will feed you some pucks.” She tucked the clipboard in the back of her pants and retrieved a bucket of pucks and a stick.  She dumped the pucks and quickly used the stick to organize some pucks.  I skated to the left face-off circle and she fed me the first puck.  In my excitement to impress the puck sailed wide. I looked up to ask for another but it was already sliding across the ice.

By the fourth shot, I had gotten used to the new stick and was getting the pucks into the center net every time.  The coach noticed this and started to speed up delivery and force me to move a bit to shoot.  I still was dead center net every shot.  Having the coordination and reflexes of a demon was awesome.  The coach skated to the net and collected the pucks not saying anything but her face had a giddy look on it.

“Other wing,” she said and I skated over as she set up her feeding gallery again.  A few guys were now circling at the other end of the ice with the other coach.  She began to make the feeds much more difficult, getting the pucks on edge, far out of reach, reducing the time between feeds.  I still got 90% in the net.  She collected the pucks again and the other guys trying out lined up to watch me.

This round she started calling out corners of the net where she wanted the puck.  It took me a half dozen shots to switch up my mentality but I was soon placing the pucks where she wanted them with accuracy and velocity.  It was 7:12am now so she stopped and skated up to the group and I followed.  It looked like there were 15 guys here and a goalie.

The female coach spoke, “I’m coach Sam and that is coach Dave,” she indicated to her husband.  “We have one of our goalies from varsity here and the team captain James.” I looked and quickly flashed my aether eyes to confirm it was the cat man I saw in the hallways at school, yep.  No one else was hiding anything so I turned them off.  Coach Sam then explained the tryout process.  I half listened as James skated up next to me.

“What's your name?” He asked in a whisper.

“Caleb,” I said while trying to pay attention.

“If you can skate as well as you shoot you can bump Lyle off the left wing on the first line,” he said.

Sam had finished talking and we started doing the timed skating drills.  Not sure how hard I should push I tried to moderate my effort while still being the fastest among the guys trying out.  I might have been too successful as my times were also faster than most of the varsity.  Sam was super excited and I learned she was in fact the head coach and her husband was the assistant.  Good thing I had voiced my thought that she was the assistant.  We went to do drills on a goalie.  Iris had been right.  Playing with regular humans was like an adult playing with children.

James kept talking to me between drills.  He was excited about the prospect of playing with me.  He was a senior and had a hockey scholarship to BU already.  He also warned me about the coach, Sam.  Apparently, when she booked rooms for away games there was always a player who got their own room since we had 21 on the varsity team.  Sam would visit their room during the night.  So if she asked if I wanted the single room on a road trip I could say no or yes.  It was up to me he advised.

It wasn’t a surprise when it was announced that I made the team.  The group came together and listen to Sam announce the additions to the varsity. The varsity guys had started showing up as they had practice after the tryouts were done.  Sam and her husband stood next to each other as he read off things we needed to do to start practicing with the varsity next week.  I took the handed out packet and paged through it.  The cost was $2400, and included a home and away uniform and two practice uniforms. We still had to buy all the pads and gear ourselves but got a 15% discount at Moriarty’s. I looked at the schedule.

We had practice Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in the morning.  Games were Wednesday and Saturday.  If we didn’t have a game on Wednesday we had it completely off.  If we didn’t have a game on Saturday we would still have a practice in the morning.  Practices started November 14th, next Saturday for us new guys. That gave us a week to get the paperwork done and pay for the gear. The first game was Wednesday November 25th. We had five games before our schools winter break. No practices were listed from December 17th to December 27th. I asked James who was still next to me. He explained we had final exams in school so they didn’t schedule practices and the coaches gave the players a few days around Christmas as most traveled anyway.

James took the calendar from me and explained. We had 14 regular season games. We played every team in our conference twice. The top two teams then played for the conference championship on February 20th. The winner went to the state championships. There would be just four teams left from the other conferences in our division, so two games to win the state championships. I knew last year they had lost in conference championship.

“My parents wanted to go on vacation for New Year’s. Do you think I can miss a few practices…it looks like I would be back in time for our sixth game,” I asked James.

“Yeah shouldn’t be a problem. We generally only suit 19 guys up for games. If we get a lot of injuries then maybe it might be an issue,” he said. “Hey I am having a little party at my house next weekend to welcome the new guys. I hope you can make it. Most of the cheerleaders will be there,” he offered as enticement. Our cheerleaders usually just did football and basketball…so I had a confused look on my face. “My twin sister is the captain of the cheer squad so we are dual hosting the party.” I nodded as I didn’t know he had a twin. I would have to use my aether sight to see if she was also a cat woman.

“Yeah, Saturday or Friday night?” I asked. So not only did my new incubus body get me women but it was also brining me into the social mainstream of the high school crowd.

“Saturday,” he said and I told him I would plan on it and we exchanged phone numbers in the locker room. I decided to shower here as I was driving my dad’s car and didn’t want my sweaty BO to get in there. I had already been a little shocked that he had let me take it.

I was in the open shower room and finishing up when coach Sam peeked in. “Oh I thought all you guys had left,” she said. Her pause and stare made it clear she had known I was in here though. I didn’t make a move to cover up, just gave her the full Monty. She licked her lips before going back to practice. I moved to the door she had popped her head out of and it was locked. After I dried off I explored and found the door connected the visiting and home team locker rooms and showers. I guessed I wasn’t the first player she peeked on since she had the keys.

I wasn’t really upset though. James, the team captain, had warned me that coach was a bit of a nympho. She was young and attractive and I still needed to find participants to harvest life essence from.

I texted Rob that was going to be home soon so I would stop and pick up him and his sister. They were going to stay in my room tonight because of the large party happening at the Monroe’s. When I stopped Rob and his sister both had large backpacks filled with school books and clothes. It looked like they were not going to have much fun tonight. Sophia asked, “So what are you and Iris going to shop for in the city?”

The nosy girl would spread whatever I told her so I kept quiet and diverted the question, “Will stop at Vincent’s for pizza. Why don’t you call and place the order Sophia.” She happily did so. Even thought it was just noon they could make two pizzas last through dinner.

When I went inside to pay and get the two large pizzas I was shocked to find the bill was $48.20. She had ordered two pizzas, two sodas and a side of French fries. Give that girl an inch and she took a mile. I paid anyway and wasn’t happy at my dwindling bank account. I definitely needed to get some cash tonight.

It was just before noon when we got to my house. I put my hockey gear on the shelf in the garage. As we came through the side door dad asked, “How did it go?”

Rob and Sophia headed up to the third floor with the culinary spoils. “Pretty good dad. I made the varsity.” His eyes widened.

“Yeah here is the pamphlet. Practices start next Saturday for me. The cost is $2400 for uniforms and to help pay for the four overnight away games.” He took the packet and paged through it.

“We will get the parental stuff signed and dropped off this week at the school with the money. I am happy for you! Told you would grow into your athleticism!” He clapped me on my back. “Your mom is still sleeping but we should celebrate by going out to dinner tonight!” I panicked.

“Oh, we already got pizzas for a Call of Duty Marathon tonight. Plus Sophia isn’t feeling too great and she has a ton of homework.” He nodded as I escaped upstairs. Sophia gave me a side eye as I passed her on the stairs since she had been eavesdropping. I needed to be careful around this one.

We moved into my room and I grabbed a slice of pizza. Might as well get something out of my investment. “Sophia, Iris has your hush money. If you don’t get it tonight just catch her at school on Monday.” I went to change into my large clothes. I figured I would be in my adult human form when I met the escort at the hotel.

“A little big on you?” Rob asked. He had an amused look.

“New clothes I got for tonight,” I said defensively. He held up his hands not wanting to criticize further but clearly, he thought I was making a mistake. I sat and texted Iris. It was 1:00pm and she had already texted me twice asking if I was home yet.

It was just few seconds later that she texted back and said she could be over in ten minutes to pick me up. She was way too excited. I texted back and said I had to wait and talk to my mother before I left. If I didn’t she may come up to my room to see me and we couldn’t have that.

It was 3:03pm when my mother finally woke and I went downstairs to see her. She was really excited for me and asked if there was anything she could get me in terms of hockey gear. I told her my gear was fine. I then listened to her as she ranted about her trip for the next hour. She trained pharmaceutical salesmen. They were usually very attractive women without a wit of intellect…at least that was her point of view. Having fulfilled my duty as a son I retreated upstairs telling my parents we wished to not be disturbed. I said Sophia may hand out downstairs but we were going to be in a Call of Duty marathon tourney tonight.

Alibi completed I went upstairs and texted Iris who was very impatient to get going. She was actually parked around the corner down the street! I sent Sophia downstairs to distract my parents as I used the back firesteps to make my escape and meet up with Iris.