

My Hockey Alpha

Chapter 4: The Hockey Game

We entered the arena, which was already packed full with excited students. Half of the arena was reserved for our university, while the other half was reserved for the other university. Our school colors were burgundy and gold — the other university was blue and black.

“Let’s find a good seat,” Jessica said. I followed her up the stairs, then we shimmied between rows of seats toward a couple of empty spots. Once we had our seats, I could hear the conversation between other girls around me; their talking points mostly centered around Enzo.

“Do you think he’ll make us win again?”

“Of course! Enzo always plays perfectly.”

“I feel so lucky just to be attending the same university as him!”

I cringed a bit at the conversation and scrolled on my phone while I waited for the game to start. Beside me, Jessica pulled out a pair of binoculars and started scouring the ice rink. I can see the cheerleaders performing an energetic opening dance on ice skates before the game, with Lisa in the lead. She looked dazzling in her skimpy uniform, with her perfectly tanned legs and platinum blonde hair pulled up into a high ponytail with a bow. She waved her pom poms around to hype the crowd up. Looking at the girl who stole my boyfriend made me sick.

I had never been much of a sports fan, but the way the crowd was getting excited made me excited, too. As the hockey players skated out onto the rink, some of them skated up to certain cheerleaders who were their girlfriends and kissed them publicly. I could see Justin and Lisa exchange glances.

Justin had never brought me to his games, even though we had been dating for a couple of months. When I did go to his games, he never paid any attention to me until after. I thought that he was just shy at the time, but now I knew that he just didn’t want Lisa seeing us together.

“Don’t pay any attention to Justin,” Jessica said, handing me the binoculars so I could see better. “He’s not worth your time.”

I took the binoculars and peered through them. For some reason, I searched for Enzo. I didn't know why I wanted to see him so badly, but I did.

And he saw me.

Somehow, despite the thousands of students in this massive arena, Enzo looked directly at me. It was as though he had a sixth sense, like he knew exactly where I was without even having to think. Even from here, I could see the hint of wildness in his eyes from the night before; like I was his prey.

I quickly gave the binoculars back to Jessica as my face turned red. Enzo turned away and skated out to the middle of the rink, skating around in circles and pumping his hockey stick in the air while the crowd cheered. All around me, girls screamed and swooned while guys whooped and hollered.

The game started. I lost sight of the puck quickly, but was able to follow the game by watching Enzo, who skated as fast as lightning and moved nimbly around the rink as though he was born with ice skates on his feet. He would perform quick moves with his hockey stick to fake out the opponents, hitting the puck between their legs to one of his teammates before zooming away. He moved so quickly that he was almost like a flash. For some reason, it seemed almost supernatural to me... but no one else seemed to notice, so I figured that it was just in my head.

Soon, the opponents became frustrated and aggressive. One player in particular — I think he was the captain of the other team — started following Enzo closely and trying to trip him up.

"C'mon, Enzo!" Jessica shouted.

"I hope he doesn't get hurt," another girl said from beside me, sitting up in her seat to see over someone in front of us.

Enzo scored a goal, and suddenly, the other team's captain threw his stick and his helmet down on the ice and tackled Enzo. The crowd gasped as they tussled on the ice. The other player threw punches at Enzo while Enzo only blocked and dodged, clearly not wanting to hurt the other player.

It was now that I finally realized how much pressure was on Enzo as the star hockey player. I held my breath as I watched the fight, images of us in bed flashing in my mind. For some reason, I cared enough about Enzo to not want him to get hurt. I didn't care to look at Justin for even a second.

The referee blew his whistle and broke up the fight. The crowd cheered as Enzo stood and put his helmet back on, covering his curly brown hair. The other player was put on the bench for his behavior and the game continued with a penalty for the other team.

During halftime, the cheerleaders returned to the rink and began their halftime show.

“You hungry?” I said to Jessica. She looked at me and shrugged, too involved in her conversation with another girl about how hot Enzo looked dodging the unsportsmanlike competitor during the fight. As long as I had known her, Jessica always had an easy time making friends. I didn’t mind it, because I was more introverted and appreciated the fact that she usually took control of all of the socializing at things like this.

I stood and shimmied out of our row, then went down the bleachers toward the food stands. My stomach was growling and the smell of soft pretzels was making me even more hungry.

“One soft pretzel, please,” I said to the vendor. “And a water, too.”

I handed my money to the vendor and waited for my pretzel. Just then, I felt someone watching me and turned around to see none other than Enzo.

He was standing with his teammates by the side of the rink as they rested and drank water, but he was staring right at me. His brown eyes almost glowed. My heart started to race as I found myself unable to break away from his strong gaze.

Something about him made me want to walk over to him as if I was in a trance...

“Miss? Hello?”

The vendor broke me out of my trance. He was holding out my pretzel and my water.

“Oh... Sorry,” I said. “Thank you.”

I took my pretzel. When I turned back, Enzo was no longer looking at me and was instead entrenched in a conversation with a teammate as though he hadn’t just been staring into my soul.

I considered going back to Jessica, but after the encounter with Enzo finding me in the massive crowd and staring at me just now, I only wanted to leave. I decided to make up an excuse later and just go home; Jessica had made some friends already and probably wouldn't even notice my absence. She could fill me in on the results of the game later.

I left the arena, tossing my uneaten pretzel in the trash on the way out as my stomach suddenly felt too sick to eat. The cool autumn air was a bit of a relief as I walked back to the dorms, although I still felt stifled like I was being watched... or hunted.

How was Enzo able to spot me in the crowd like that? And why did he always look so animalistic and hungry when he looked at me? I had never heard any of his many other flings complain of such a thing, so maybe it was all in my head. It had to be.

Why else would Enzo seem like such a predator?