

Sometimes, having three grandfathers seemed to be an impediment to Jake Henry. In this sequel to DEFLECTION!, Grandpa P.J. insisted on stepping in as hockey coach of The Roofers. Jake was less than thrilled. But sometimes a kid learns that adults can sometimes be much more than we thought they were.

Chapter 1

We were three weeks into the hockey season when Coach Rajah quit.

Well, not exactly quit. He gathered us into the dressing room after practice one day and told us all to shut up.

“Quiet, please,” he said, quietly.

Now coach Rajah wouldn’t say, “Shut up!” but you know he meant it. And I could tell from the look on his face that he was serious.

“Guys,” he said, and then the room fell silent.

I started to unbuckle the straps on my goalie pads. But then Rajah signalled with his little finger and I knew enough to stop.

Coach Rajah stood in the centre of the littered dressing room. Beside him stood Jamie Reisberry's father. Jamie last year had played for the Cougars. This year he played for us. More important, he father's business, Reisberry's Roofing, was the team sponsor. A tall man, he had thinning hair, and looked soft and blubbery.

"We've been together two years now," Rajah said. "I've seen you grow from snotty nose peewees to snotty nose Bantams."

He smiled.

We all smiled back. But right away Rajah wasn't smiling any more.

"This is the best you have been," he said.

"Yeah, right," said Willie Westewicz. But the rest of the team had sensed something Willie had not. They silenced him with their eyes.

"Sure, you've lost three of the first four games," said Rajah. "But you are now showing all the things we've been working on all this time. By the end of the season, you'll be at the top of the league.

When Coach Rajah said things like that you believe him. I don't know why. If he told us we could walk on water, we would likely do it. And I don't mean frozen water.

"You're showing hustle," said Rajah. "You're forcing the other teams to play your game: fast, quick changes, skilled."

He paused for effect. A hush wrapped the room.

Coach Rajah held up his hand. "I . . ." That's as far as he got.

Just then my Grandpa P.J. bullied his way into the dressing room. Some people can slip into a room and you never notice them. Some can't. Grandpa P.J. is the type who can't.

"Great practice," he said. "Except for you, Wee Willie. You spent most of the time asleep on the bench."

Grandpa P.J. is still taller than me, and maybe twice as wide. He has slicked back grey hair and a greying moustache. He's loud, always talking, and often embarrassing.

"And you, Jake Henry," he said, tossing a jar of Gatorade at me. "You looked you as though the net was a hammock the way your were resting. "

Rajah tried to get the focus back.

He turned to Grandpa P.J.

"We were just wrapping things up," he said. "Just the team," he added, after Grandpa P.J. gave him a funny look.

"Just Rajah and the team," Mr. Reisberry repeated.

Grandpa P.J. did a mock reaction of horror. He spread his arms out. He opened his mouth.

"And you?" P.J. asked.

"And the sponsor," Mr. Reisberry said.

An awkward silence fell.

Rajah pointed weakly to the door.

"I think this is better with just the team," he said. "We'll just be a few minutes."

"Me?" P.J. said.

With one finger he jabbed his finger toward the door.

“You mean you want me to. . .?” said Grandpa P.J., repeating the jabbing motion., “. . . to . . . to . . . to ”

“Yes,” said Rajah. “I want you to . . .” He, too, gestured with his finger at the door.

“Oh,” said Grandpa P.J., gesturing again.

He made an exaggerated sad clown’s face, hunched his shoulders and slouched toward the door.

He pulled open the door to let the arena sounds bounce into the room. He held the door just for an instant. Then, he half turned to Coach Rajah.

“You’re fly’s undone, Rajah,” he said.