



orca sports

# REBEL GLORY

SIGMUND BROUWER

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Sigmund  
Brouwer

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Orca Book Publishers

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## chapter one

With the referee dropping the puck at center ice to start the game, my defense partner, Jason Mulridge, decided to lose not only his mind but also much of his hockey equipment.

Only two months had passed since I had been traded to play defense for the Red Deer Rebels. In that time I had learned to expect great hockey moves from Jason. I had watched him stickhandle while sliding on his knees. I had admired the way he hip-checked

guys from out of nowhere. And I had been dazzled once to see him score with two guys wrapped around his shoulders. In my twenty-five games since joining this team in January, I had learned to expect nearly anything from number 33.

But nothing in those twenty-five games had prepared me for the hockey move Jason was now making on the blue line beside me.

The ref had his back to Jason and had just dropped the puck. As I glanced sideways to see if my defense partner was ready, Jason threw his gloves and stick high into the air.

“Are you nuts?” I yelled to be heard above the screaming of five thousand unfriendly fans. Was he pulling off his gloves to fight? But who did he want to fight with?

Jason didn’t reply. His glove did though. It landed on my helmet and bounced to the ice. The other glove thunked down beside Jason. His stick slid across the ice toward me.

“Are you nuts?” I yelled again. The fans roared louder at Jason’s actions. We were in Lethbridge to play the Hurricanes, and their crowd was always tough on us. We didn’t need

## Rebel Glory

this to make it worse. Not when it was one of the most important games left in the season.

Jason ignored me. He threw his helmet off and yanked his sweater over his head. It exposed his shoulder pads, the white skin of his thick arms and a torn black T-shirt.

Ahead of us, the two center-ice men were fighting for control. The Hurricane center managed to kick the puck ahead, and it slid toward Jason.

Jason? He was still dancing at the blue line.

It all seemed to happen at once. Jason threw his sweater toward me. It flew into my face like a blanket in the wind. I pulled it away from my eyes just in time to see the Hurricane right winger move in on the puck and sweep past Jason. The Hurricane center was close behind and skating around me. I took a step forward to stop them, but my skate landed on Jason's stick, and I skidded to my knees. The rest of our guys were too far away to catch up.

Jason was still on the blue line, grabbing at the nylon belt that held up his hockey pants.

Sigmund Brouwer

Great. Two guys around us and swooping down on our goalie, and Jason is still undressing.

The crowd's roar thundered. Maybe at the breakaway on our goalie. Maybe at Jason. Probably at both.

On my knees, I was too stunned to stand, too stunned to yell at Jason again. A couple of our guys had stopped. The referee's whistle had fallen from his mouth, and he stared at Jason.

Jason had finally gotten the belt strap undone and pulled his belt loose.

At the same time, the Hurricane winger went left to pull our goalie out of position and slid the puck across to the center. He snapped a shot into the open right side of our net.

Jason rammed his pants down to his ankles.

I couldn't believe it. We were down 1-0 less than ten seconds into the game. In the same time, my partner was down to his red long johns and his hockey socks.

Jason didn't stop there either.

He leaned over and pulled at the garters of his right sock. He tugged until the garters

## Rebel Glory

finally slipped loose. He peeled his sock down and pulled his plastic shin pad from the sock.

By then, no one on the ice was moving. The fans were so loud I wondered if the fillings in my teeth would shake loose. And Coach Blair was standing on top of the boards at our bench, shaking his fist at Jason.

Jason had the right shin pad loose and in his hands. He straightened and threw the shin pad as far as he could.

We all watched that pad sail through the air. It sailed so long that everyone at the ice rink had time to stare and wonder. It sailed so long that the crowd's roar became silence.

What seemed like minutes later, the shin pad fell to the ice, almost at the other blue line. And when it landed, we understood why Jason had gone crazy.

Four or five cockroaches exploded from the inside of his shin pad, scurrying in all directions on the ice. Cockroaches. Those big, black, ugly bugs so gross they make beetles look cuddly. Cockroaches. Trying to find someplace to hide on the ice around them.



## Sigmund Brouwer

One of the Hurricane defensemen slammed his stick down and nailed two of them. With the crowd still silent, we heard the crunch as the stick broke the hard shells. Bug guts sprayed like tobacco juice.

Jason struggled to roll his other sock down. When he did, same result: a high-flying shin pad, and cockroaches scattering in all directions when it hit the ice.

As if someone had punched the play button on a CD player, the crowd's roar returned, louder than before.

I noticed a few cockroaches crawling near Jason's skates. These must have spilled out from inside his hockey pants. As Jason tore at his shoulder pads, he stepped on one of the cockroaches, popping it like a cherry tomato. More bug juice sprayed.

The crowd kept roaring, and Jason now had his shoulder pads off. A single cockroach dropped from the shoulder pads and landed between his skates.

Jason threw the shoulder pads and, without waiting for them to land, peeled off his torn black T-shirt.

## Rebel Glory

I nearly lost the hamburgers I had eaten a couple of hours earlier. At least three cockroaches were crawling on Jason's belly, their antennae quivering in all directions.

Jason looked down, saw the cockroaches on him, screamed and fainted. It put him flat on his back on the ice. He lay there as the trainer came running from the players' bench.

Those of us on the ice leaned on our sticks as we watched the trainer prop Jason into a sitting position. The trainer waved smelling salts beneath Jason's nose.

"McElhaney," I heard a voice say beside me. I turned my head to look into the eyes of the Hurricane center who had just scored on us.

"Yeah?" I shouted above the crowd.

"Bad scene with these cockroaches, McElhaney," he said. He shook his head sadly from side to side. "Don't you guys ever shower?"

## Rebel Glory

Within seconds I was part of the mob around Shertzer and Mancini. The crowd was so loud I couldn't hear a word, not even my own shouts.

The rest of the team flooded out of the players' bench to join us in our celebration. Coach Blair and Assistant Coach Kimball trotted across the ice to where we were jumping and screaming and pounding each other's backs.

Coach Blair waded into our celebration. He managed to get close enough to me to grab my hand and shake it.

"Thanks, Mac," he said.

I just grinned. He didn't owe me anything.

I knew I owed someone, though. I owed her for support and help. She was up in the stands somewhere, and I'd be looking for her smile as we skated off the ice.

I'd have to tell her how I had learned what she meant about the importance of hockey. How I had lost the fear and found the fun. And how I'd try to be less afraid of other things too. Like my mom. Or like