# The Hockey Bros: Emergency Practice

*by andlat*

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The Costume Box
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*Chapter 1*

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“Alright, kiddo. Clean up your toys. It's bedtime.” Austin looked up from the floor.

“But Daddy and Jaxon aren't home.”

“Remember? Daddy’s got hockey and Jaxon made the team. We had cake.”

“Yeah, but”

“So they get home late.” She checked her watch. “Maybe if we get your jammies on quick, we can call them. Clean up your toys and upstairs for pajamas.”

Austin obeyed and soon, they were upstairs in the room the boys shared. Austin undressed as Mom grabbed pajamas from the dresser. She paused as she saw her son's underwear.

“Austin? Are those the underpants I set out for you today?” She saw the still folded pair on his pillow, but wanted to give him a chance to fess up.

“No.” He said guiltily. “But I didn't want to wear those!” The pair he wore, the same pair he had worn yesterday, were gray with black stripes. Mom had set out a pair of Jaxon's old undies and they were Toy Story! A clear downgrade.

“It's not a matter of want to, Austin. You need to change your

underwear every day." She sighed. "Change 'em right now and get your pajamas on." Gone was any chance of calling Daddy and Jaxon. Once he was properly dressed, she tucked Austin in and gave him a good night kiss, glad he had not raised as much of a fuss as she had expected about being put to bed before his younger brother was even home from hockey. Just before she turned out the light, she plucked his beloved gray briefs from his hamper to throw them out. The real reason she had noticed that he had worn them two days in a row was the hole. It was no real concern. Thanks to Jaxon just getting new boxer briefs – his dad claimed he was worried about getting bullied – Austin could just wear his brother's old underwear.

Jaxon had always been more athletic than Austin. Sure, they had both played in peewee hockey, but once Jaxon moved into 7U, Austin seemed to lose interest. He was content sitting with Mom in the stands, playing with the other hockey siblings, though the cold arenas were a frequent cause of complaints for him. It was a system that worked, though both she and Pat had been a little worried when Jaxon announced his desire to try out for the team Pat coached, a team full of boys Austin's age, if not older. All the same, Jaxon fairly earned his place on the team and so, the family adapted.

For the most part, Austin's life remained unchanged. His bedtime stayed the same, he still supported his brother, but all the same, he seemed to have inherited Jaxon's role as the younger brother. He was old enough to say something if he didn't like it. He was so passive and accepting of everything,

she had even caught herself a couple times mixing up which boy was older.

“He does still need me to remind him to change his underwear.” She mused, but realized she saw Austin's undies a lot more frequently than Jaxon's. Maybe they both needed a reminder every now and again.

When Mom got downstairs, she saw a missed call on her phone. Even her husband texted her, so before she checked the number, she knew it was work. She sighed and listened to the voicemail. They needed her in an hour.

“So much for a quiet night at home.” She mused. She shot a text to Pat. Work wants me, I'll swing by with A. “Time enough to shower quick.”

Once she was showered and dressed, she gently opened Austin's door. He was fast asleep, hugging his stuffed seal to his chest. It almost felt like a crime to disrupt the beautiful sleeping boy.

“Shh, shh.” She cooed as she picked him up, blanket and all. He murmured in his sleep, but he was such a heavy sleeper, he only woke up when they were almost to the door.

“Mommy?”

“I gotta go to work, so I'm gonna drop you off with Daddy.” He tried to nod, but his head drooped onto Mom's shoulder, dozing off again even as the cold night air hit them.

Austin stirred again as Mom buckled him into his booster

seat and arranged the blanket over him.

“Go back to sleep, sweetie. It's late.”

“Where are we going?”

“To Daddy and Jaxon's hockey practice.”

“Oh.” He remembered her telling him that now. She smiled and kissed his forehead.

“Here. We'll put these on you now so you can go back to sleep.” She slid his noise canceling headphones onto his head. They were baby blue and had brightly colored dinosaurs on them thanks to a misunderstanding from one of the other hockey moms who must've thought he was the same age as her littlest, who wore the same headphones to most games. Not that Austin's mom blamed her. He spent most every hockey tournament, which seemed to be every weekend, in diapers and footies.

The footies were a natural consequence of Austin insisting he was getting hypothermia from the hockey arenas. Rather than buy him long johns, he had gotten Jaxon's old footie pajamas, which was for the best. Despite his recent growth spurt, Jaxon still tried to wear his footies, even if they no longer could zip up. Mom had left him a few of the bigger sets, but most now went to Austin as hockey tournament wear. With his boots and coat, it was hard to tell he was even wearing footies. He had fussed a bit about wearing Jaxon's old pajamas, but that paled in comparison to the diapers.

“I'm too old for diapers!” He had insisted, staring at the

plastic package as if it might attack him.

“Your age is why we need to do diapers.” Mom explained. “You're too old for me to take you into the ladies’ room, but I don't want you going to the bathroom unaccompanied.”

“I'm not gonna use them!” Austin protested.

“Good. They're just for emergencies.” Austin had pouted for the first period of the tournament, but he was soon playing around on the bleachers with the other hockey siblings, apparently having forgotten how obvious his diaper butt was in his footies. When it came time to undress him back at home, she never commented on the state of his diaper. Even Jaxon had seemed to sense that this was not something to mention to his brother. She smiled and tapped the steering wheel, pleased that her boys seemed to be growing up, in their own ways.

The drive to the arena never took very long. Before she knew it, she was once again standing over her son. She could not tell if he was asleep or not, but he murmured as she unbuckled him and set him once again against her shoulder. It was a little awkward carrying him, but she had forgotten to grab his shoes, so his bare feet had to stay off of the cold ground.

“Sorry about this.” She said as a greeting to her husband, laying Austin down on the players’ bench. She knew she had to get to work, but she still took the time to arrange his blanket over him, shushing him as he murmured sleepily.

“Not a problem.” He smiled down at his sleeping son and then turned back to his players. Practice was nearly over.

With the bright lights, Austin gave up on trying to fall back asleep. He sat up, blanket wrapped around himself as he yawned and watched the hockey players practice. They all seemed so big. He couldn't tell which one Jaxon was with their helmets on, but it didn't make sense that his little brother was one of these giants. He hugged his blanket a little closer to him, suddenly self-conscious of his Mario pajamas, even though his blanket was just as brightly colored and Mario themed.

Daddy came over and Austin felt like he was in trouble for still being awake. He did not say anything though, instead picking Austin up and setting him against his shoulder. Practice was over, Austin realized as he saw everyone heading to the locker room. Including me, he realized as Dad carried him along. It was only then that he realized he did not have shoes.

With the headphones on, most everything happening around him was muffled. He remained against Daddy's shoulder, a hand supporting his butt. He knew he could fall back asleep in Daddy's arms – he had done it plenty of times before – but something kept him awake, even as he felt Daddy stroke his hair.

As the players stripped out of their practice gear, he saw Jaxon, as well as a few guys from school. He felt more and more self-conscious that he was in pajamas, hugging his seal,

held by Daddy. Daddy's chest rumbled as he said something to the assembled players and their cheer was loud enough, Austin could hear it even with his headphones on. He shifted slightly and Daddy gave him a little backrub and a kiss on the cheek. Austin yawned and began to feel sleep start to take him again as the players filtered out into the night.

The next thing he knew, he sat in the back of Daddy's car, once again in a booster seat, though a different one. Had he fallen asleep? He didn't think so. He remembered closing his eyes in the locker room, but could not remember the walk back to the car. He looked to his left and realized the seat next to him was empty. Where was Jaxon? He shifted as much as the securing straps let him and saw Jaxon sitting in the front seat, his shaggy hair forming a halo around his head as they passed each streetlight.

Austin realized he still had his headphones on. Extracting a hand from the blanket, he pushed it off his ear.

“-your little brother.”

“Sure, dad.” Austin's eyes widened. There was no way he heard Dad right. Jaxon was younger than him, he was the little brother. Maybe he just meant that Jaxon needed to act like a teammate was his little brother? Did that make sense?

They arrived home and Jaxon hurried inside while Dad got Austin out of the car. There was a brief blast of cold air as the blanket slid off of him. Why had Mommy taken him outside in just his pajamas? Daddy fixed the blanket and Austin snuggled into his chest a bit more.

“Did you have fun at hockey practice?”

“I guess.” Austin shrugged.

“You slept for most of it, I suppose.” He kissed Austin's cheek. “It's late late late for Austin, isn't it?”

“Daddy.” Austin's whine was cut short by a yawn.

“Well, let's get you out of the chilly night and back to bed.” Austin nodded sleepily. He was definitely ready for bed. What time was it even?

Jaxon stood at the microwave. Was he making dinner for himself? What time even was his bedtime? Maybe this was all a dream because nothing was making any sense!

“Say good night, Austin.”

“Good night, Jaxon.” He said, trying to hide his confusion.

“Night, dude.” Jaxon said. He seemed like the same dorky little kid, so why was he still wide awake while Austin was yawning and being carried to bed, hours after his bedtime?

“Do you need to go potty?” Dad asked.

“No” another yawn as his eyelids drooped. “Daddy.” With that, Austin was tucked back in bed and Dad gave him a kiss on the forehead.

“Night, kiddo.” He whispered, leaving Austin to wonder if he really was the little brother. When had that happened?