

# 14. Avalon

In Chapter 14, titled "Avalon," under hazy blue skies, the Cubs' coaching staff leads twenty-one players dressed in white jerseys aboard the **\*\*Starship Express\*\***, a ferry taking them from Long Beach to Santa Catalina Island for a pivotal semifinal game in the Southern California championship. The ferry ride, filled with excitement and noise, halts any meaningful conversation, yet the players communicate enthusiastically through sign language.

Onboard with the Cubs are news crews from various television networks, adding to the pressure as they are determined to showcase their skills and prove they are a strong team, despite feeling media fatigue due to repetitive interviews. The Cubs, who had a long travel and faced challenges, were met by the Avalon's coach, Nick Morones, who has seen success with his previously undefeated middle school team. He awaits the arrival of the deaf team with a plan to utilize Avalon's home-field advantage, which he attributes to the island's unique atmosphere and the physical nature of his players.

Avalon is bustling with enthusiasm, having heard about the Cubs, who are viewed as a remarkable team. The local community prepares for a fierce competition, invigorated by the Cubs' presence on the island. As game time approaches, the setting at the small stadium, surrounded by palm trees, is picturesque, with local supporters present, including mothers creating personal cheers for their sons.

The game begins with the Cubs struggling initially against Avalon's aggressive defense, yet they soon find their rhythm and overturn their fortunes. After a series of turnovers and self-inflicted mistakes by Avalon, the Cubs surge ahead. Despite a setback in the second quarter, the Avalon's determination leads to a revitalized performance following halftime, resulting in a surprising comeback.

However, despite Avalon's resilience, the game concludes with the Cubs triumphant at 62–51. Post-game, an emotional moment unfolds as Avalon's players acknowledge their defeat and show respect for their opponents. Felix Gonzales, one of the Cubs, expresses his pride in being deaf and reflects positively on the game, declaring it his favorite of high school. The chapter illustrates both the spirit of competition and the personal triumphs experienced throughout the match.