

Eddie, The Sophomore Year

Chapter Three The Big Confrontation

Copyright © 2018 by Dr. Robert E. Zee

With the first four-way meet sooner than a week away, the team practices every day. The relay teams have the handoff down to a science. The sprinters, with Kathy and Paula's help, have all discovered their optimal block settings. This year, the team is much more synergistic. With Mahoney gone, the pleasant atmosphere is very apparent and appealing to everyone. Even Mahoney's buddy, Ambrosini, is much more cordial to everyone. This could be, perhaps, because Braden leveled him during football practice in the Autumn, and knocked some fear into him. Or, it also could be that Braden knocked some sense into Ambrosini.

The first meet of the year will be a four-way meet between Northside, Riverdale, Centerville, and Madison. The meet will be held in the arena at home this coming Saturday. These four teams seem to meet every year, ushering in the track and field season. With Centerville also comes Todd McCutchen, who always provides Mark with a bit of amusement. Brady, the star from Riverdale, is gone, and off to college somewhere. Madison, if history repeats itself, will have nothing to show. It is quite possible that Mr. Frazier's team will claim the gold medal in every event at the meet.

On Tuesday, before the first meet, Eddie and Kathy walk to school together. Kathy, who kept statistics on all the teams for the last two years, is feeling very confident. As they approach the school, they see Chuckie smoking pot with a few of his buddies under a tree. Smoking pot has become Chuckie's new recreational activity. Eddie yells out to Chuckie, "hey Chuckie! Are you studying for your pilot's license?" Eddie's innuendo probably flew 10,000 feet overhead, which is about as high as Chuckie is right now. Chuckie flips Eddie a bird, which is ignored by both Kathy and Eddie. Eddie and Kathy talk for a while in the lobby, and then they head to class.

When Eddie gets to class, Braden and Johnson are trying to recall how well the opposing teams ran the mile medley relay last year. Knowing their individual and composite performance, Braden and Johnson are trying to see where they stand. Eddie takes his seat and joins in the conversation, suggesting that they ask one of the girls later. Eddie also mentions that the other teams don't stand a chance against Braden and the rest of the mile medley relay team anyway. Eddie tells them not to worry about it.

As Eddie and the tribe are discussing the upcoming meet, Chuckie walks into the classroom, and heads toward the window where the tribe is seated. Chuckie, as high as Mount Everest, suddenly hurls a brick at Eddie, hitting him on the side of his face. Eddie starts bleeding around his eye, wiping the blood from his face with his shirt.

Braden exclaims, "oh shit," and tells Chuckie, "you shouldn't have done that!" Bobby B. all of a sudden sits up in his seat, and has a look of grave concern on his face. Johnson comments, "that was the mistake of a lifetime! Chuckie's days are numbered." Eddie stands up, and heads toward Chuckie. The class falls dead silent, knowing what is about to come.

Eddie places Chuckie in an arm lock, and escorts the little jerk out of the classroom. Guiding the crying little brat out of the school through one of the back doors, Eddie drags him out into the schoolyard. The class has a good view of what is about to occur, and everyone moves to the window to watch. Chuckie is no longer in an arm lock, but is being carried over Eddie's shoulder, crying like a little baby. Eddie firmly shoves Chuckie's back against the chain link fence near the South gate, and undoes Chuckie's belt buckle. After routing Chuckie's belt through the fence, Eddie moves the buckle behind Chuckie's back, on the other side of the fence. Eddie tightens the belt and Chuckie, now belted to the fence, has no way of escape.

Eddie returns to the classroom, and all the students cheer. Walking over toward the window, Eddie takes his seat. Mr. O'Brien, who watched the tail end of the event, is not quite as amused as the class. Mr. O'Brien tells the class, "I'll be right back," and leaves the classroom. It is no secret where the social studies teacher is headed.

Eddie uses his shirt to finish cleaning the blood off his face. Mark takes a look at Eddie's eye, telling him, "that looks kind of bad." Eddie rubs it again with his shirt, and says, "well, at least it's not bleeding anymore." Braden looks out the window, and mentions, "his ass is still belted to the fence. Ain't no one come to rescue him yet." Mark replies, "maybe no one will." Braden exclaims, "look at him! He's still crying like a baby!"

Mr. O'Brien returns to the classroom, and instructs Eddie, "Edward, please report to the principal's office. Mr. Crum is awaiting your arrival." Eddie gets out of his seat very slowly. The fastest guy in the school walks to the door slower than a turtle, giving Mr. O'Brien a cold, hard stare the whole way. Sweat begins to fall from Mr. O'Brien's face as Eddie walks by the scrawny little social studies teacher. While in front of Mr. O'Brien, Eddie raises his hand very quickly, as if he is going to slap Mr. O'Brien. Eddie, however, does not hit Mr. O'Brien, but instead scratches his head. The whole class laughs at Eddie's gesture, as Mr. O'Brien is shaking like a leaf in the wind. Eddie walks out of the classroom, being sure to slam the door hard on his way out.

Eddie arrives at the administrative office, and the school secretary, Mrs. Marlowe, tells him to have a seat. Mrs. Marlowe tells Eddie that Mr. Crum had to step out for a moment, and will return shortly. Mr. Crum stepped out of his office to peek out of one of the doors to get a first hand look at Chuckie belted to the fence. Not surprisingly, Mr. Crum assigned the task of unbelted Chuckie from the fence to the assistant principal, Mr. Shapiro. Eddie takes a seat, and waits for quite a while.

Chuckie is next to arrive at the administrative office, still high as a kite. Mrs. Marlowe tells Chuckie to have a seat, telling them both that Mr. Crum will see them in a moment. Instead of having a seat, Chuckie takes the chair, raises it over his head, and attempts to hit Eddie with it. Eddie grabs the chair as it descends toward his head, and hurls it across the room, breaking a window. Eddie then picks up Chuckie, and tosses the little brat over the counter, landing him on one of the desks. Sliding across the desk, Chuckie, along with everything on the desk, lands on the floor. There were a few teachers standing around, including the assistant principal, Mr. Shapiro, watching what happened. None of them dare interfere with Eddie. Eddie can take any three or four of them out at once if he so desired.

Mrs. Marlowe, wasting no time, announces over the loudspeaker, "Mr. Crum, please report to your office immediately. Mr. Zunde, please report to the principal's office immediately." Mr. Zunde is always paged when a fight is in progress. No one would dare mess with Mr. Zunde. His presence alone is usually enough to stop the fight. Chuckie lies on the ground for a few minutes, not even realizing what just happened. When Chuckie finally stands up, Eddie tells him, "it looks like you crash landed this time, you little piece of shit."

Mr. Crum walks into the administrative office, which looks like a tornado recently passed through. Mr. Crum, who is very alarmed, asks Mrs. Marlowe, "what happened here?" Mrs. Marlowe explains, "Charles was attempting to hit Eddie with a chair, and Eddie threw him over the counter. Mr. O'Brien sent them to your office for fighting." Mr. Crum

replies, “well, well, well, this is not really what I wanted to walk into first thing in the morning.” Mr. Crum opens his office, telling the two students, “come in, and please have a seat.” This is exactly the kind of situation Mr. Crum loves, the chance to discipline an athlete. Mr. Zunde walks in, and seeing the mass destruction in the office, thinks to himself, “this one is going to be good.”

Mr. Zunde walks into Mr. Crum’s office, seeing Eddie and someone with whom he is not familiar. Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “you can leave, Mr. Zunde. I’ll take care of this.” Mr. Zunde replies, “I must inform you that, for your safety, it would be better if I stay. But, if you wish, I’ll leave.” Mr. Zunde, who has no intention of leaving, is really yanking Mr. Crum’s chain today. Mr. Crum, recalling the destruction in the adjacent room, quickly reconsiders. He tells Mr. Zunde, “okay, you can stay. But, I’m running this meeting.” Mr. Zunde replies, “go ahead. You can begin whenever you want. I’m sure this is going to be quite entertaining.”

Mr. Crum begins the meeting, telling Eddie and Chuckie, “Mr. O’Brien, and now Mrs. Marlowe, tells me you were both in a fight. As you both are aware, we do not allow fighting in school. But, nevertheless, I want to know what happened. I am going to listen to both sides of the story, and then I’m going to decide what to do.” Mr. Crum already knows what he is going to do. He likely plans to discipline Eddie in one way or another, preferably suspension.

Mr. Crum asks Eddie for his side of the story, telling him, “okay, Edward, please tell me what happened.” Eddie explains, “I was sitting in class talking to Braden and Johnson, and the Chuckie threw a brick at me.” Mr. Crum asks, “and then what?” Eddie replies, “my head started bleeding.” Mr. Crum, prying for more information, asks again, “and?” Eddie replies, “I took him out to the schoolyard and belted his ass to the fence.” Mr. Crum, repeating what Eddie said, says, “his ass?” Eddie authoritatively tells Mr. Crum, “yeah. That’s what I said, ‘his ass’. That’s the part of the body between the legs and the low back.” Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “don’t start getting smart with me.” Eddie replies, “this is a school. You teach us to be smart. Would you rather me be dumb or stupid instead, like the little Chuckie here?”

Eddie is no match for anyone on the track or off, as Mr. Crum just found out. Eddie is just as fast with a sarcastic answer as he is out of the blocks.

Mr. Crum asks Eddie, “okay, why did you do that?” Eddie, sick of Mr. Crum’s interrogation, replies, “the Chuckie was smoking pot before school and, since he was high, I wanted to make sure he stayed on the ground. So, I belted his ass to the fence.” Hearing this, Mr. Zunde turns and looks out the window, concealing the fact he is trying not to laugh.

Finished with Eddie at the moment, Mr. Crum asks Chuckie, “okay, Charles, let me hear your side of the story.” Chuckie starts to explain what happened, telling Mr. Crum, “I was taking flying lessons, and Eddie started moving in slow motion and I thought he might take off. So, I had to throw the boat anchor at him so that he would stay on the ground, and not make me crash. He was going to make me crash! I know it! But, I stopped him.” Mr. Zunde laughs, and tells Chuckie, “please continue. I’m very interested in the rest of this story.”

Mr. Crum is not happy that Mr. Zunde participated in the meeting but, nevertheless, Mr. Crum allows Chuckie to continue. Chuckie explains further, “when I got into the classroom, they were all there. There were lots of them! They were coming to get me, so I had to do something. All of their engines were started, and they were buzzing. The big one started flying again and then they were all coming after me. They were going to make me crash land.” Chuckie then starts babbling, making no sense to anyone.

Eddie, who is now disgusted, exclaims, “see? He’s high! That’s why I belted is ass to the fence. Someone has to keep that piece of shit on the ground.” Chuckie turns his chair around, facing the wall, so he does not have to look at Eddie. Chuckie blurts out, “see? He’s after me again! Stop him! He’s going to start flying again!” Mr. Zunde laughs, and comments, “really? I can’t wait to see this. It will certainly be interesting.” Eddie then tells Chuckie, “yeah, Chuckie. I’m going to start flying. So are Mark, Braden, and Johnson. We’re all coming after you.” Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “that’s enough out of you, Edward!” Eddie replies, “no, it’s not! I was just getting started.”

Mr. Crum, who has heard enough from Eddie and Chuckie, tells them, “you two have left me no other choice. I am going to have to suspend both of you for one week. And, I want to meet with both of your parents before either of you will be allowed to set foot in this school again.”

Mr. Crum just threw the book at Eddie, not because of what happened today, but because he is an athlete. Mr. Crum, by suspending Eddie for one week, will make Eddie ineligible to participate in the track meet this coming weekend. Mr. Crum tells Mrs. Marlowe to call Eddie’s and Chuckie’s parents, as he fills out some administrative paperwork.

On his way out, Mr. Zunde tells Mrs. Marlowe to inform him immediately when the meeting is arranged with Eddie’s parents. Mr. Zunde heads back to the gym since today’s entertainment has come to an end. Eddie waits for his mother to pick him up from school. Since he is incoherent, Chuckie is sent to the nurse’s office to wait for his mother to pick him up.

Eddie's mother arrives at the school to bring Eddie home. Eddie explains to his mother what happened. Mrs. Marlowe, the school secretary, tells Mrs. Bogenskaya that the principal will need to meet with her or Eddie's father sometime this week. Eddie's mother tells Mrs. Marlowe that she will call later today to make the appointment. For now, taking care of the cut on Eddie's face is much more important.

As Eddie and his mother are about to leave, Mrs. Black waddles into the school to bring Chuckie home. Mrs. Black, without even knowing what is going on, tells Mrs. Bogenskaya, "well, Nina, it looks like your Eddie has really done it this time." Nina informs Kathryn, "well, if your little Chuckie wasn't such a dope head, none of this would have happened." Nina and Eddie leave, not allowing Mrs. Black to return any further comment.

Back in the gym, between classes, Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Frazier of what happened. Mr. Frazier, to say the least, gets quite angry. He is not angry with Eddie, mind you, but at Mr. Crum. Mr. Frazier mulls about the situation for a moment, and exclaims, "I wonder who I'm going to get to run in Eddie's place on Saturday!" Mr. Zunde assures Mr. Frazier, "we'll figure it out." Mr. Frazier, throwing a folder onto the desk, exclaims, "this just sucks!" Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "I'll work on this problem. Let me see what I can figure out." Mr. Frazier is not too hopeful that anything can be done, but anything is worth a try.

The news gets around school that Eddie got suspended. At lunchtime, Mark, Braden, Johnson, and the others fill Kathy in on what happened earlier that morning. Kathy is more concerned about the injury to Eddie's head than anything else.

During the conversation, Wendy mentions, "it took sixteen minutes for someone to get Chuckie off the fence. I guess they liked seeing him belted to the fence." Kathy asks Wendy, "sixteen minutes?" Wendy replies, "yeah. Maybe a little more, if you count the time Mr. Shapiro and the other teacher spent undoing the belt." Kathy tells Wendy, "Mr. Frazier needs helpers on the team. Since you thought to time that, how would you like the job?" Braden tells Wendy, "go for it." Wendy replies, "okay, I'll give it a try." Braden points out to Wendy, "you're at all the meets and most of the practices anyway."

During practice later that afternoon, Mr. Frazier explains to the team that Eddie has been suspended, and may not be running this weekend. This is no news to the team. The details of Eddie's suspension spread around the school like wildfire, and were known to all by lunchtime. Practice continues, but Kathy and Paula do not have the same excitement as in the previous few days. Even Mark and Braden are running poorly today. The lack of energy and motivation is noticed by both Mr. Frazier

and Mr. Zunde. As practice ends, Mr. Frazier is hoping tomorrow will be a lot better.

Later that evening, Kathy rides her bicycle to Eddie's house so she can see him. She heard all about how he got injured from Eddie's classmates. When she arrives, Kathy looks at the cut on Eddie's face, which doesn't look too good. Kathy gives Eddie a big hug, telling him, "somehow, this is all going to work out." Eddie fills Kathy in with the details of what happened. Kathy exclaims, "I can't believe they suspended you over that!" Eddie replies, "I don't really care. I'll just work out at home for a few days."

Kathy informs Eddie, "you know, practice really sucked today. No one had any energy, and no one seemed to care. Even Braden and Johnson messed up a few handoffs. The whole team was ticked off at Mr. Crum for suspending you." Eddie asks, "how about Mr. Frazier?" Kathy tells Eddie, "Mr. Frazier? Well, he was a little down during practice too. Well, not a little down, maybe a lot down."

Eddie tells Kathy, "my father is meeting with the principal tomorrow morning, and I have to be there." Kathy mentions, "I wonder what that is going to be about. You know, Mr. Crum just hates athletes." Kathy's superpower is at work, and she knows Mr. Crum is full of shit. Eddie replies, "so, he's just going to give me another ass whooping, I suppose." Kathy, trying to cheer Eddie up, suggests, "hey! Take Braden with you! He'll kick Mr. Crum's ass!" They both laugh, but Eddie is still somewhat upset. Eddie is not upset at getting suspended. He is upset because he will not be allowed to run in the meet on Saturday if he is under suspension. And, Eddie was looking forward to Kathy earning her own medal at the meet.

Kathy mentions to Eddie, "you know, we can just go through the portal, and go back in time and somehow fix this." Eddie replies, "yeah. I guess we could, like we did that time with Mahoney." Kathy responds, "yeah! Like that!" Eddie suggests, "let's just wait and see how this plays out first. We can always go back at any time." Kathy agrees, telling Eddie, "I guess you're right. I'll think up a plan in case we have to do that." Kathy and Eddie talk for a while longer, but then Kathy has to go home since it is getting late.

The next morning, Mr. Bogenskaya arrives at the school with Eddie to meet with the principal. Eddie warns his father that the principal, Mr. Crum, hates athletes, and is not to be trusted. As they are waiting, Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde walk into the administrative office. Eddie wonders why Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde have walked in at that moment, since they should be teaching class right now. Mr. Frazier greets Eddie and his father, Dominik. Mr. Frazier introduces Mr. Zunde to Eddie's father.

Mr. Zunde explains to Eddie and his father, “whenever there is disciplinary action against an athlete, the school board allows me to be present, along with the coach if I deem it necessary. Unless anyone objects, I choose to be present today.” No one objects. They sit for a while and talk, as Mr. Crum intentionally makes them wait much longer than is necessary.

Mr. Crum finally calls Eddie and his father into his office. Eddie and his father walk in, followed by Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier. Mr. Crum informs Mr. Zunde, “you were not invited to this meeting, so I am going to have to ask you to leave.” Mr. Zunde replies, “Mr. Crum, we have been over this before, in the past. Your action involves an athlete. So, Mr. Frazier and I will be present today.” Mr. Crum, knowing he cannot refute Mr. Zunde, responds, telling Mr. Zunde, “okay, then. This time I’ll allow it.” Mr. Zunde replies, “you’re damn straight you will. Now, get started.” Mr. Zunde just put Mr. Crum on notice that his bullshit will not be tolerated today. Mr. Zunde also informed Mr. Crum who has the upper hand in this meeting.

Mr. Crum opens by saying, “okay, let’s get on with this meeting.” Mr. Zunde removes a pencil from the pen holder on Mr. Crum’s desk, and pushes it around on top of a filing cabinet as Mr. Crum begins to speak. This is Mr. Zunde’s way of insinuating that Mr. Crum is nothing more than a pencil pusher. Mr. Zunde is certain to make sure Mr. Crum acknowledges his innuendo. Mr. Crum knows exactly what Mr. Zunde is doing, and does his best to ignore it.

Mr. Crum informs Eddie’s father, “Eddie was suspended because he was fighting in school, not once, but twice. The first time, he took a student to the field and belted the student to the fence. The second time, Eddie destroyed the administrative office, right out there, and threw the student over the counter, making a complete mess of the office.” Eddie’s father responds, telling Mr. Crum, “it is my understanding that Chuckie was smoking marijuana and was high when the incident occurred. I’ll be quite frank with you, Mr. Crum. Throwing a brick at my son and then trying to hit him with a chair is justifiable cause for self defense.” Mr. Crum replies, “I’m not arguing that, Mr. Bogenskaya. I just cannot tolerate any fighting in my school. We have rules and I must enforce them as I see fit.”

Eddie’s father asks Mr. Crum, “what do you suggest a student do when confronted with an incident like the one that happened yesterday?” Mr. Crum replies, “they should immediately find a teacher.” Eddie’s father calmly replies, “find a teacher. Oh, I see. They should find a teacher. That’s just brilliant. I should have thought of that myself. No wonder you’re the principal. You think up these brilliant solutions to difficult problems.” After a pause, Eddie’s father tells Mr. Crum, “it is my

understanding that there were a few teachers around, right out there in the administration office. They did nothing, except to be entertained by what happened yesterday. And, when the entertainment was over, they all went and hid in a corner.” Mr. Crum replies, “that is no excuse. Eddie should not have started a fight.”

Mr. Bogenskaya summarizes, “so, let me get this straight. The Chuckie throws a brick at Eddie. Eddie responds by belting the Chuckie’s ass to the fence. The Chuckie then attempts to hit Eddie over the head with a chair, and Eddie disposes of the Chuckie by throwing him over the counter. And, you say that Eddie should have done absolutely nothing?” Mr. Crum replies, “Let me make myself clear. Eddie should not have started a fight.” Mr. Bogenskaya again summarizes, “so, Eddie should have done absolutely nothing. Is that your position?” Mr. Crum replies, “yes. I simply cannot allow fighting in school.”

Mr. Crum’s accusation that Eddie started the fight irritated Eddie’s father. Hearing this, Mr. Bogenskaya has had enough bullshit. Eddie did not start the fight. Chuckie started the fight. Mr. Bogenskaya hammers his fist onto Mr. Crum’s desk, and yells out, “what kind of pussy factory are you running here?” The force of Mr. Bogenskaya’s fist hitting the desk was enough to break the wood, causing the eight-inch overhang, and what was on the desk, to all fall to the floor. Mr. Crum, now filled with fright, suddenly turns an eerie shade of white. Mr. Zunde, who is calm as can be, whispers to Mr. Frazier, “I like this guy.” Mr. Frazier whispers back, “I don’t think he’s done yet.” Mr. Zunde replies, “this is going to get good.”

Mr. Bogenskaya picks up the piece of wood off the floor and stands up. Slamming the piece of wood onto the desk with great force, Mr. Bogenskaya breaks Mr. Crum’s name plate, pencil holder, and clock. Mr. Bogenskaya raises his voice, and tells Mr. Crum, “I am not putting up with your bullshit anymore! My son, Eddie, will defend himself if he feels threatened! Period! If you don’t like it, that’s just tough shit. Deal with it!” Mr. Crum replies, “now wait a minute, Mr. Bogenskaya.” Mr. Bogenskaya slams the wood on the desk again, and interrupts Mr. Crum, telling him, “shut up! I’m not finished!” Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier stand with their arms crossed, both enjoying the entertainment as Mr. Bogenskaya verbally beats Mr. Crum to a bloody pulp.

Mr. Bogenskaya continues, telling Mr. Crum, “now, I’m telling you what is going to happen. Start taking notes, you pencil pushing moron.” Mr. Zunde, who always thought of Mr. Crum as a pencil pusher, is finding it very hard not to laugh. He is not very successful, but Mr. Crum is too distracted to notice Mr. Zunde at the moment. Mr. Frazier, who is also quite entertained, turns around and peruses the bookcase to conceal his laughter. Mr. Frazier is amused to find a copy of the Dr. Seuss book, *One*

Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish, sitting in the high school principal's bookcase.

Mr. Crum, fearfully afraid of disobeying the six foot, five inch, two-hundred-seventy-pound jobber, finds a pad, but cannot find a pen. After Mr. Bogenskaya slammed the piece of wood onto Mr. Crum's desk, everything on it was scattered around the room. Mr. Zunde hands Mr. Crum the pencil he has been pushing around on the filing cabinet. Mr. Crum's hand is shaking as he takes the pencil from Mr. Zunde.

Mr. Bogenskaya begins his lecture, telling the principal, "start writing. First, you are not going to suspend Eddie. If you go against my advice, and you do suspend Eddie, I will withdraw him from this school, and enroll him at St. Pius down the road. He will run track at that school. They will be glad to have him. Second, if Eddie remains in this school, I want him transferred to another social studies class. I don't want him in that pussy O'Brien's class any longer. Third, if you ever prevent Eddie from defending himself, you had better be prepared to defend Eddie yourself. And, if you or your teachers can't defend him, then you'd better be prepared to defend yourself against Eddie. And, just from the looks of you, it appears that you are not even remotely prepared for that. And finally, if you suspend Eddie, I will press charges against Chuckie, Mr. O'Brien, and you."

Hearing Mr. Bogenskaya's mention of pressing charges, Mr. Crum, in a quivering voice, asks, "me and Mr. O'Brien? Why?" Mr. Bogenskaya firmly replies, "yes. You and Mr. O'Brien. Both you and that pussy O'Brien saw Eddie bleeding, so you should have sent him to the nurse's office, not to your office. It's called 'failure to render aid'. As a result, the cut is now infected. You and that pussy O'Brien were apparently more concerned about suspending Eddie than Eddie's health. And O'Brien's wimp of a son gets his ass kicked on the track every year, so that moron has an axe to grind. And he's not grinding it on my son. Do you understand me?"

Mr. Zunde looks at Mr. Frazier, both not believing what they have just heard. The hard and fast truth finally comes out, and is laid out in front of everyone in a way analogous to a nuclear weapon being detonated. Mr. Crum has never been so frightened in all of his administrative career. Just seeing Mr. Bogenskaya destroy his desk with his fist was enough, but it didn't end there. Mr. Bogenskaya destroyed Mr. Crum's ego, confidence, and his authority as an administrator, and justifiably so. Not to mention, everyone has the right to self defense, especially against an irrational idiot high on drugs.

Mr. Bogenskaya informs Mr. Crum, "Eddie and I are going to step out of your office and wait in the lobby for exactly fifteen minutes. During that time, you will discuss this issue among yourselves. I will then listen

to your decision. Oh, and by the way, I'm sorry about your desk. You should have bought a better one. It's built like a piece of shit. And, clean up your office. It's a mess." Mr. Bogenskaya tosses the piece of wood that broke off the desk to the other side of the room, knocking over Mr. Crum's coat tree.

Leaving the carnage behind in Mr. Crum's office, Eddie and his father walk out to wait in the lobby. On the way, Eddie tells his father, "I don't want to go to St. Pius." Eddie's father tells Eddie, "don't worry. You won't be going there. And, they won't be suspending you either." Eddie asks, "how do you know?" Eddie's father explains to his son, "I'm behind you. Your coaches are behind you. And, the law is behind you. Your principal has no solid ground for his actions. If they suspend you, the principal will have bigger problems than me to deal with."

Eddie and his father take a seat in the lobby, awaiting the principal's decision. Class change is in session, so they do not say too much while everyone else is around. A few students were standing outside the administration office, eavesdropping on Mr. Bogenskaya's lecture to Mr. Crum a little earlier. They were hoping to hear more, although they heard quite a lot. Seeing Eddie sitting with his father in the lobby, the rumor mill will certainly be stirred up later today.

Meanwhile, back in the principal's office, Mr. Frazier explains to Mr. Crum, "you can't suspend Eddie. He's the best guy I have. And, we have a big meet coming up." Now that Mr. Bogenskaya is out of the room, Mr. Crum gets just a little tougher. "Rules are rules," Mr. Crum dictates to Mr. Frazier. Mr. Zunde stands back and watches, as he allows Mr. Frazier and Mr. Crum to discuss the issue.

Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Crum, "you heard what he said. He's going to press charges against Charles, Mr. O'Brien, and you." Mr. Crum replies, "those threats don't bother me. He's not likely to follow through with them." Well, that's certainly a bunch of bullshit. Mr. Crum was shaking in his boots when Mr. Bogenskaya was speaking. Mr. Zunde, who is quite amused at the whole situation, watches as they continue to discuss the issue.

Mr. Frazier persists making his case, pointing out, "every one of Mr. Bogenskaya's points were valid. He saw right through you." Mr. Crum thinks for a moment about all that Mr. Bogenskaya said, knowing that Mr. Frazier is right. Mr. Frazier then mentions, "besides, I've restrained myself from saying this but, since that situation with John Davies many years ago, you have clearly been biased against athletes." Mr. Crum reminds Mr. Frazier, "that was years ago. That has nothing to do with today." Well, it certainly does. The incident regarding John Davies is exactly why Mr. Zunde was hired.

Recalling his meeting with Dr. Brooks at the end of last year, Mr. Frazier recalls how the superintendent commended him on his performance. Feeling empowered, Mr. Frazier, who has finally had enough, sternly warns Mr. Crum, “and, if he does have you charged with failure to render aid, your ass might just go to jail. And since you’re an administrator that makes you the responsible party. You’ll be looking at a felony, not a misdemeanor. If that’s what you want, go for it. Good luck.” The verbal ping pong match between Mr. Frazier and Mr. Crum, which was going nowhere, suddenly gets very quiet. Mr. Crum was struck with fear when Mr. Frazier mentioned the words “jail” and “felony”.

Mr. Zunde has also had enough of Mr. Crum. Taking advantage of the brief pause in the action, Mr. Zunde interrupts and announces, “Crum, you are not suspending Eddie.” Mr. Crum replies brazenly, asking, “and, just how are you going to stop me?” Mr. Zunde holds up the roster that was altered by Mr. Crum, and asks him, “does this look familiar?” Mr. Crum admits, “yes. I crossed those names off.” Mr. Zunde responds, telling Mr. Crum, “oh, really?” Mr. Zunde smiles, and asks Mr. Frazier, “you heard what he just said, right?” Mr. Frazier replies, “yes. I suspected it might have been him.”

Mr. Zunde explains to Mr. Crum, “when the school board hired me as the athletic director, as a condition for me taking the job and your continued employment, you were not to interfere with athletics in any way. This is clear evidence of interference. Not only this, but when you came into the arena during tryouts and pulled the girls aside, you interfered then as well. If you suspend Eddie, I will take these issues to the school board. Now, is there any part of what I said that you do not understand?”

Mr. Crum again turns an interesting shade of white after Mr. Zunde laid the truth out in front of him. Mr. Crum, reasoning to himself, has quickly figured out that, if he suspends Eddie, felony charges, which often incur jail time, might be on his horizon. And, after he gets out of jail, he may no longer have a job or, at best, get demoted. Mr. Crum, after a moment of silence, tells Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde, “okay. I will not suspend Eddie this time. Have them come back in.”

Eddie’s father, however, decided to leave the school, taking Eddie with him. Mr. Crum took sixteen minutes, one more minute than the fifteen minutes allotted to him by Mr. Bogenskaya. As they are walking toward the door, Eddie’s father tells him, “in a few seconds, someone will be running down the lobby, telling us to wait.” Eddie asks, “how do you know?” Eddie’s father replies, “they think I’m stupid because I’m a jobber. But, I know Human nature better than any of them.”

Mr. Frazier walks out of Mr. Crum's office, and runs to catch up with Eddie and his father. Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Bogenskaya, "Mr. Crum has made a decision, and he wants to see you again." Eddie looks at his father, and grins, as he sees the events unfold just as his father predicted. Eddie and his father walk back to the office with Mr. Frazier.

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Bogenskaya and Eddie, "please have a seat." Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde proudly stand off to the side, with their arms crossed. They already know what Mr. Crum is going to say. They are, however, quite interested in how he is going to say it.

Mr. Crum pronounces his edict, "I have thought about this situation in detail, and I have decided not to suspend Eddie." Mr. Zunde interjects, "Crum, you haven't thought about anything. We've done your thinking for you." Mr. Crum replies, "that's neither here nor there. It's my decision." Mr. Zunde interjects again, "Crum, you didn't decide shit. I told you what you were going to do, and that you weren't going to suspend Eddie." Eddie is greatly relieved, not because his suspension has been overturned, but because he can now run in the track meet this coming Saturday.

Mr. Zunde commands Mr. Crum, "finish up. I'm sure Mr. Bogenskaya has work to do." Mr. Crum tells Eddie that he should report to class immediately. Mr. Bogenskaya reminds Mr. Crum, "and, don't you forget. As of right now, Eddie is no longer in Mr. O'Brien's class. I suggest you work hard at solving that problem by pushing your pencil around on your broken desk. And, as a final note, don't you ever dare to bother me with bullshit like this again." Mr. Crum then dismisses everyone so he can move on to cleaning up the carnage left in his office.

Walking through the lobby, Eddie tells his father, "wow! That went over a whole lot better than I expected! I get to run on Saturday!" Eddie's father tells his son, "don't be afraid to defend yourself against this kind of crap. If someone throws a brick at you, and you defend yourself, there's really nothing they can do to you." Eddie tells his father, "Mr. Crum looked kind of scared in there." Eddie's father replies, "he should be. If he suspended you, he'd be in really deep trouble."

Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier come out of the principal's office, and run to catch up with Mr. Bogenskaya and Eddie. Eddie's father tells Eddie, "okay. I guess you'd better get to class, or that moron might just give you detention for being late." Eddie then heads to class, as Mr. Bogenskaya meets up with Eddie's coaches.

Mr. Bogenskaya, Mr. Zunde, and Mr. Frazier step outside and have a conversation together. During the conversation, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Bogenskaya, "Eddie is the best track athlete to ever attend this school."

Mr. Bogenskaya tells Mr. Frazier, "Eddie has a high regard for both of you." Mr. Zunde mentions to Mr. Bogenskaya, "well, I can certainly see where Eddie gets a lot of his strength."

Mr. Bogenskaya asks, "so, when is the first meet? On Saturday, I hear?" Mr. Frazier replies, "yes. Right here in our arena." Mr. Bogenskaya tells them, "well, if I'm not working, I'll come and watch." Mr. Bogenskaya then asks, "how about that pussy, Crum? Does he ever come to the meets?" Mr. Zunde laughs, and replies, "absolutely not. I won't let him anywhere near my arena. He can contribute nothing constructive, as you have witnessed first hand." After a nice conversation, Mr. Bogenskaya heads off to work, as Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde head back inside to class.

On the way to class, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "he certainly took care of Crum a whole lot better than I expected." Mr. Frazier responds, "I don't think Crum will be getting in our way anytime soon." Mr. Zunde replies, "well, he's got to get back to running his pussy factory." They both laugh, as Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "that was a good one, his 'pussy factory.'" Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "and that was another good one, telling Crum, 'you haven't thought about anything. We've done your thinking for you.'" Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "well, they have seeing eye dogs for the blind, and they have hearing ear dogs for the deaf. Perhaps they need to invent a thinking brain dog for Crum." Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde laugh hysterically as they head down the hall to the gym. Mr. Frazier's and Mr. Zunde's day got off to a wonderful start.

Eddie's day also just got off to a better start. At lunchtime, Eddie will get to eat with Kathy and his friends. He will be back at practice this afternoon. The best news Eddie has to deliver is that he will be able to run in the meet this Saturday. After Kathy hears the news, she will probably want to go for pizza after practice. Her last pizza was on Christmas eve, so she is long overdue.

The word quickly got around school of how Mr. Bogenskaya broke Mr. Crum's desk. But, only Eddie, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and the secretary have actually seen it. Mr. Crum has been hiding out in his office since the morning, probably trying to procure a new desk. Some of the administrators overheard Mr. Bogenskaya ask Mr. Crum, "what kind of pussy factory are you running here?" Mr. Bogenskaya's rhetorical question quickly made its way around the teacher's lounge. What has transpired has made Mr. Crum the laughingstock of the school once again. Mr. Crum has been there before, but this one really takes first prize.

At lunch, Kathy is surprised to see Eddie. She had not yet heard the news that Eddie has not been suspended. Kathy runs up to Eddie and gives him a big hug. Eddie tells her, "they didn't suspend me. I can run

in the meet on Saturday!” Kathy yells out, “awesome! You can run!” Eddie has to buy a school lunch, since he didn’t expect to be in school today. Kathy, who is so sweet, offers to share the lunch she brought today with Eddie. They go through the lunch line together, and pick a few reasonably healthy items to complement what Kathy brought. They go and eat lunch together, with the rest of the group joining them.

While they are eating, Braden is quick to point out to Eddie, “I heard your father kicked Mr. Crum’s ass big time. I wish I was there to see that!” If an ass kicking happens anywhere, Braden is on top of the story. Eddie humorously replies, “yeah, bro. You might have some competition when it comes to kicking ass now.” Braden replies, “oh no, I don’t.” Eddie tells Braden, “you should have seen what my father did to Mr. Crum’s desk.” Braden replies, “I heard he broke it.” Eddie explains to Braden, “he hammered his fist down onto the desk, and the wood broke off. Mr. Crum was looking a little pale after that.” Mark exclaims, “wow! I really wish I was there to see that!”

Johnson asks, “what’s this rumor going around about a pussy factory?” Eddie replies, “Mr. Crum told my dad that I shouldn’t have defended myself against the Chuckie, and I should have done nothing. So, my dad got ticked off. So, my dad asked Mr. Crum, ‘what kind of pussy factory are you running here?’ And, that’s when his fist came down on Mr. Crum’s desk.” Everyone starts laughing hysterically, as Eddie mentions, “I caught Mr. Zunde laughing and whispering to Mr. Frazier when my dad said that.” So, all of the rumors are confirmed. As usual, the rumor mill will be proven to be more accurate than the official position of the administration.

The end of the day arrives, again marking the beginning of track practice. The team is excited that Eddie is with the team again. When the team enters the arena, the energy level is quite high compared with the previous day. Mr. Frazier has the team sit on the bleachers, and tells the team that Mr. Zunde has something to say before practice starts. Many of the students have already guessed what Mr. Zunde is going to discuss.

Mr. Zunde takes the microphone, and explains to the team the details surrounding what happened with Eddie. Mr. Zunde specifically tells the team that he does not want any misinformation out there that could be damaging to the team. Mr. Zunde assures the team that Kathy, Paula, Barbara, and Tessa will be with the team all season, and that Eddie has not been suspended. Mr. Zunde also announces that the official position of the administration regarding the confrontation between Eddie and Charles Black is that, “the details surrounding the incident are unclear, therefore no action will be taken at this time.” The details, however, could have not been clearer. Most of the team members have already heard the details from Eddie.

Mr. Frazier then addresses the team, and introduces his two new assistants, Wendy and Erika. Mr. Frazier informs the team that they will be assisting him as Kathy, Paula, and Barbara did last year. The team cheers, making the two girls feel very welcome. Most everyone knows Wendy, who has been at all the meets and at many of the practice sessions. In the past, while the team practiced, Wendy usually did her homework and read mythology books. Erika is Tessa and Hoffer's friend. Erika physically looks like she should be on a sports team, a cheerleader, or something. But, she is not. Since Erika is a freshman, she'll be around for a few years.

With all of the announcements out of the way, practice begins. Having only three days before the meet, the team will run a few events for time. Eddie and Kathy fight it out in the 40-yard dash, while Mark and Paula fight it out in the 220-yard dash. Johnson, Barbara, and Mitchell all push each other hard in the distance races. This is exactly what Mr. Frazier hoped for, better internal competition leading to better external competition. Wendy and Erika, learning how to time the runners properly, catch on quickly.

Later, during practice, Mr. Frazier has the relay teams run their events for time. He wants to know exactly what the team's performance level is before the meet on Saturday. The 4 by 440 relay team is up first. This will be the first time this year that the 4 by 440 relay team runs the relay for time. Nobody, not even Mr. Frazier, knows exactly what to expect. Mark, holding the baton, will be the lead off man. Mr. Frazier announces to the team, Wendy, and Erika, "I will call the play by play during this run. I will be using the microphone. I want everyone to pay close attention. You will all learn what goes on behind the scenes during a relay race."

Once Mark is ready, Mr. Frazier tells him, "on your marks." Mr. Frazier points out to the runners on the bleachers, "notice which leg is forward, which hand the baton is in, and how Mark is holding it." Mr. Frazier announces, "set." Mr. Frazier now points out, "notice that Mark is looking forward, not checking his blocks, shoelaces, or distracted by anything else." Mr. Frazier instructs Wendy, "Wendy, you will start your stopwatch when I sound the buzzer."

Mr. Frazier sounds the buzzer, and Mark leaves the blocks. Paula removes the blocks from the track, which would normally be done by a Lane Judge or other official. While Mark is running, Mr. Frazier tells everyone, "in a relay race, all things being equal, the first runner usually has the slowest split time. This is because they start from a standstill. The other three runners have the advantage that they are already moving when the clock starts timing their leg."

After Mark completes his first lap, Paula enters the transition zone. Mr. Frazier tells the runners on the bleachers, “notice when Paula entered the transition zone. When you enter the track, be very careful not to interfere with any other runner. If you do, your relay team will be immediately disqualified.” Mr. Frazier tells Wendy and Erika, “when Mark hands the baton to Paula, Wendy, you will stop your stopwatch, and Erika, you will start yours. And Wendy, write down Mark’s split time on your clipboard.” Mark approaches the transition zone, and hands off the baton to Paula, which goes well. Mark instinctively looks behind him before he leaves the track. Mr. Frazier tells the team, “notice Mark looked behind him before he left the track. This is so he doesn’t potentially cause a collision on the track.”

Kathy enters the transition zone once Paula is on her second lap. Mr. Frazier tells Erika and Wendy, “Erika, you will stop your stopwatch when Kathy receives the baton, and Wendy, you will start yours. And Wendy, please make sure you zeroed out the time on your watch.” Mr. Frazier reminds everyone, “and, when Kathy screams, don’t let it distract you.”

Paula passes the baton to Kathy and, upon receiving it, Kathy takes off, letting out her primal scream. The primal scream has become her trademark. Mr. Frazier is quite interested to see how Kathy’s primal scream will distract the competition this year.

Mr. Frazier instructs Erika, “Erika, write down Paula’s time on your clipboard.” Mr. Frazier mentions, “Eddie is the anchor. If this were an actual race, he would likely be up against the fastest members of the opposing teams. Even if we are in first place, he will run his leg as if we are in last place.” Eddie enters the track now that Kathy is on her second lap. Mr. Frazier instructs Wendy to stop her stopwatch and Erika to start hers during the handoff.

Kathy hands off to Eddie. Eddie, full of energy, sprints as if he is running a 40-yard dash. Mr. Frazier looks at his stopwatch and grins. He knows the relay team is about to deliver an outstanding time. As Eddie enters his second lap, Mr. Frazier tells Erika to stop her stopwatch when Eddie’s chest crosses the finish line. Eddie sprints to the finish after coming out of the final curve. Mr. Frazier and Erika stop their stopwatches as Eddie crosses the finish line.

Mr. Frazier announces to Wendy, Erika, and the team, “on my watch, I have that they ran a 3:42.2.” Mr. Frazier, not realizing what he had just said, thinks for a moment, then exclaims, “a 3:42.2! They ran a 3:42.2! Can you believe that? These guys were clocking!” Erika asks, “is that good?” Mr. Frazier exclaims, “that is awesome!” After he calms down, Mr. Frazier tells Wendy and Erika, “the individual times should add up to 3:42.2. Don’t worry if your times are a little off.” Wendy and Erika add up

the times, and record both the individual and overall team performance for this relay event.

Mr. Frazier announces to the team, “that is what my team assistants and I do while you are running a relay. The information they have gathered will be used in the future, helping me determine who will run each event. This is why you should always be running at your best.” The team understands what Mr. Frazier told them, which is not to slack off. Mr. Frazier then announces, “the next event will be the mile medley relay. Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, and Barbara, get warmed up.” The mile medley relay team gets ready, as the 4 by 440 relay sits and relaxes.

While Johnson is running, Kathy asks Eddie, “did I run fast enough to get a discus for dinner? Hey, wait! Maybe we can order one and have it delivered here!” Eddie tells Kathy, “you’re so cute after you run a race.” Kathy, sitting next to Eddie on the bleachers, puts her head on his shoulder, and sighs. Eddie tells her, “sure, we can get a pizza later.” Kathy, who is getting very quiet, tells Eddie, “I ran the best I can. I really wanted us to get a good time.” Eddie whispers to Kathy, “did you hear Mr. Frazier? He said we ran like a 3:42 or something.” Kathy yawns, and replies, “yeah, I heard that.” Kathy is ready for a nap, and dozes off on Eddie’s shoulder, as the rest of the relay teams run their events.

When practice is over, Eddie wakes Kathy up, telling her, “wake up, sweetie. It’s time to go.” Kathy wakes up and yawns. She asks Eddie, “how long have I been sleeping?” Eddie breaks the news to her, whispering, “the whole rest of practice.” Kathy replies, “wow! I must have been really tired.” Paula reminds Kathy, “remember? You didn’t sleep well last night worrying about Eddie.” Kathy responds, “oh, yeah. That’s right. No wonder I’m so sleepy.” Kathy spent every last ounce of energy that she had running her leg in the relay race. She definitely needs a good night’s rest. Eddie asks, “do you still want to get pizza?” Kathy answers, “no. I think I just want to go home, eat something, and go to bed.” Eddie replies, “yeah. You need sleep.” Kathy and Eddie walk with the team to the lockers, and will meet after they change.

Eddie walks Kathy home. On the way, he gives her the good news, telling her, “you ran a 57 quarter mile.” Kathy replies, “wow! That’s really good. Saturday, after the meet, I’m getting an extra slice of pizza. Then, Edward Bogenskaya, we are dancing to my song.” Eddie mentions, “it sounds like you have the whole day planned.” Kathy, who is still half asleep, replies, “no, sweetie. I’m just dreaming.” When they get to Kathy’s house, they kiss each other goodnight. Eddie tells her, “sleep well. And, don’t worry about anything.” Kathy whispers to Eddie, “I’m going to wear the necklace you gave me for Christmas and hold it in my hand while I go to sleep.” Kathy goes inside, and Eddie walks home.

The next day, Kathy and Eddie walk to school together. As they enter the school grounds, they see the pot head club conducting their early morning meeting under the usual tree. Conspicuously missing is Chuckie, who has been suspended until Monday. Kathy has a lot more energy today. When they walk into the school, Kathy tells Eddie, "I slept for eleven hours last night." Eddie mentions, "well, Mr. Frazier won't wear us out too much today, since the meet is on Saturday." Kathy and Eddie, running a bit late, go to their classes, and will see each other again at lunch.

Eddie walks into social studies class, and sits with the regular group near the window. Many in the class are surprised to see him. Eddie is a little late for class, but Mr. O'Brien appears to be even later. This is good news, since Eddie doesn't need to get in any additional trouble anytime soon.

While they are waiting, Wendy makes it well known that she likes working with the team. She mentions how she was totally unaware of what really goes on behind the scenes when the runners are running. Eddie and Mark are discussing how badly Kathy and Paula want their own medal this weekend. And, Braden is assuring everyone that the team will win every event.

The door to the classroom finally opens, and Mr. Cruz, another social studies teacher, walks in. Mr. Cruz, who is also the soccer coach, is a very well liked teacher. He announces, "good morning. I am Mr. Cruz. Some of you may know me already. There has been an administrative change and I will be teaching this class for the remainder of the school year." Upon hearing the news, Mark immediately gives Eddie a high-five. Braden exclaims, "hot dog!" Mr. Cruz laughs, looks at Braden, and tells him, "I'm sorry. But, I'm not taking orders for lunch." The class laughs, getting off to a good start.

Mr. Cruz tells the class, "I hope you all do well for the remainder of the school year, and I'm going to do my best to make that happen." The class claps and cheers, giving him a warm welcome. Mr. Cruz is one of the most liked teachers in the school, quite the opposite of Mr. O'Brien. The class is very happy to see Mr. Cruz and to get rid of Mr. O'Brien. Best of all, Mr. Cruz has no axe to grind with athletes.

After class, Eddie is quick to realize that Mr. Zunde must have had something to do with the reassignment. Mr. Crum could have just moved Eddie to another class, such as a history class, but that did not happen. Instead, Mr. O'Brien was shipped off to another classroom, and Mr. Cruz, who also happens to be the soccer coach, was reassigned to Eddie's class. Barbara was right all along. Mr. Zunde's job is to develop a successful athletic program, leading to scholarships for the athletes. Apparently,

when it comes to athletes, Mr. Crum is their nemesis and Mr. Zunde is their advocate.

At lunch, the rumor around the school is that Mr. O'Brien has been reassigned to teach a history class. Teaching history really irritates Mr. O'Brien, simply because he must teach out of a textbook. Mr. O'Brien would prefer to subject his students to his own opinion, representing his opinion as fact. In teaching history, he will no longer have the liberty to hand select the subject matter that pushes his far left liberal agenda. When teaching from a textbook, the textbook is the final authority, not the teacher. This will be a very long year for Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. Cruz, on the other hand, enjoys working with students. A former professional soccer player, Mr. Cruz is the coach of the soccer team. In the Summer, he runs a Soccer camp for students who are serious about the sport. Mr. Cruz has no axe to grind with athletes. He does, however, have an axe to grind with Mr. Crum. Mr. Crum has suspended a few star soccer players in the past. The untimely suspensions always seem to be handed down right before the divisional championship matches. And, last year, just like Mr. Frazier, Mr. Cruz got an unfavorable performance review from Mr. Crum. Dr. Brooks, the superintendent of schools, was quick to overturn Mr. Cruz's annual review, issuing a more favorable evaluation of his performance.