

# Eddie, The Sophomore Year

## Chapter Six The Spring Season

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The Spring season begins, and Kathy is very happy. She made the Spring track team, which was to be expected after her awesome indoor track season. She won her own gold medal at the State invitational meet this past Winter. As best as anyone can determine, she is the fastest girl in high school in the State in a short sprint. She's had more beach time than one could imagine. And she has Eddie, who says it best when he says nothing at all. Well, as her new song goes anyway.

Today marks the opening of the Spring track season. There was not a lot of time for the team to practice before today's meet. Mr. Frazier has been blessed with an awesome team that is ready to compete, so he is not worried. Riverdale is the opposition today. With Brady gone and off to college, Riverdale may not be as competitive this year.

There is a rumor, however, about some transfer student from another state who runs like a rabbit. His name is Jay Draper, a blank per se, because nothing is known about him. And, since it's the Spring track season, a few wrestlers and basketball players find themselves on the track team. Some of them present formidable competition. One is Mack Clark, a wrestler who runs track in the Spring for Northside High.

The day starts off with Braden entering the school lobby, telling everyone, "come to the track meet today! We're gonna kick ass this afternoon! This is gonna be the biggest ass kicking of the year!" Braden exclaims to everyone, "I've already won the 440! Bobby B. has already won the shot-put! And our relay team is going to deliver the ass kicking of the century!" Now, who wouldn't want to stop by and watch that? Braden attracts a lot of attention, motivating several students to come by this afternoon and watch. And, with the team bringing home so many gold medals from the indoor State invitational meet, track and field is

gaining a lot of interest and attention. Braden, wearing all of his medals around his neck today, attests to his confidence.

Eddie and Mark are not concerned about today's meet. Mark spends the day in class thinking about new ways to distract the competition. It's not that Mark really needs to distract anyone, mind you. He is now number one in the State in his event, the 220-yard dash. To Mark, winning the game of psychological warfare is just as important as winning the race. Eddie and Mark have all the confidence in the world that they will both win their events today. Their only hope is that Kathy and Paula do well in their events too.

When the end of the day comes, Braden heads to the locker room. As he walks down the halls, he rants, "track meet in a half hour! Be there! Come and watch us kick ass!" Braden is a one-man cheerleader for the team. If a vote were held, he would clearly be the winner of the "most popular man on campus" award. And deservedly so, for Braden is a well-liked guy.

Well, with the exception of Mr. Crum, who wins no favor with athletes. Mr. Crum, who just overheard Braden's comment, "come and watch us kick ass," has a problem with Braden's language. Mr. Crum will have to get to the bottom of this. After all, the pencil pushing administrator cannot have any profanity used in his school, especially if it involves an athlete.

But, nevertheless, the team meets in the locker room, and gets dressed for the meet. Mr. Frazier has the team assemble in the auxiliary gym, where he will go over some last minute details. Mr. Frazier informs the team, "Riverdale's transfer student, a guy by the name of Jay Draper, is running the 220-yard dash, and probably in a relay. The rumor is that he is fast, but Mark will beat him anyway!" The team cheers. Mr. Frazier continues, announcing, "and, their high jumper can also run, but we don't know in which event he'll be in." As Mr. Frazier is addressing the team, Mr. Crum walks into the gym, and is promptly intercepted by Mr. Zunde.

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, "I need to speak with Axel Braden immediately." Mr. Zunde asks, "about what? Does he have an overdue library book?" Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, "cut the funny stuff. Axel Braden was using profanity in the hallway after school today. I need to speak with him right now." Mr. Zunde replies, "oh, shit! Axel Braden was using profanity? So, what are you going to do about it?" Mr. Crum explains, "I need to talk to him." Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum to have a seat, but Mr. Crum chooses to stand.

Mr. Zunde approaches Mr. Frazier, and informs him of what the issue is. Mr. Zunde addresses the team, telling everyone, "Mr. Crum alleges

Axel Braden has used profanity in the hallway after school.” Mr. Zunde asks everyone present, “has anyone here ever heard Braden use profanity?” No one immediately pipes up, but after a few seconds, one of the students answers, “no! We haven’t heard any of that shit out of him!”

Mr. Zunde, in the presence of the entire team, tells Mr. Crum, “well, Mr. Crum, no one here seems to have heard anything. But, even if they did, after the bell rang, school is over, and Braden was on the way to the locker room for athletics. That makes it my problem, not yours. I will take care of this issue myself.” Mr. Crum argues, “until he is in the locker room, it’s my jurisdiction.” The whole team boos at Mr. Crum. A chant begins in the gym, which seems to have originated from where the tribe is sitting. The words, “we’re kicking ass, we’re kicking ass, we’re kicking ass,” echo throughout the gym.

Mr. Frazier instructs the team to calm down. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “I see what you mean. The team seems to have a small problem with the use of profanity. I can’t believe I haven’t seen this before. I will take care of this immediately myself.”

Mr. Zunde then focuses his attention to the team. He tells the team, “this time I heard the word ‘ass’ from all of you. Everyone here in this gym will remain after school for detention today. Detention will be held out on the track, where you will be required to run. And, I don’t want to see anyone slacking off.” The team claps and cheers in support of Braden. Mr. Crum, knowing he is getting absolutely nowhere with Mr. Zunde today, decides to leave. There is not much he can do. The team is more fired up now, after Mr. Crum paid them a surprise visit. On the way out of the gym, Mr. Zunde privately tells Braden not to worry about Mr. Crum.

The team heads out to the track, but one last piece of equipment must be delivered to the field. Wendy drives the Cushman out to the field, carrying the shot-put in the rear bed. The shot-put could have been brought out earlier with the rest of the equipment, but Bobby B. somehow convinced Wendy and Erika that the shot-put is very special, and must be transported separately. Bobby B. has also convinced them that he must personally oversee its delivery to the track. On the seat, sitting next to Wendy, is Bobby B., with Erika on his lap, demonstrating the real reason the shot-put requires so much special attention.

When the team arrives at the track, much to everyone’s surprise, the bleachers are nearly full. Drawing a bigger crowd than a football game, this is quite unusual for a track meet. Apparently, Braden’s effort to invite the entire school to the meet has paid off. With this many spectators in the stands, the team will undoubtably deliver a better performance. So many spectators are a concern for Riverdale, who has just arrived. As

their team exits the bus, they can't help but to notice the number of fans on the bleachers.

As the Riverdale team gets situated at their bench area, the coach, Mr. Lyons, points out a few of the better Northside runners to his team. There is no doubt who he is singling out, as the indoor track State invitational meet is still very fresh in his mind. So is the Amazon rumor, along with the chants it brings with it during a meet.

Meanwhile, back on the track, Wendy has driven the Cushman to the shot-put pad. Bobby B. takes the shot-put out of the bed himself. Standing in the middle of the shot-put pad, he has Wendy and Erika place their hands on the shot-put as if it is some sort of special implement. The Riverdale team watches as Wendy, Erika, and Bobby B. treat the shot-put as if it is made of solid gold. Bobby B. then raises the shot-put over his head, then lowers it and places it in the middle of the circle. They all then drive away in the Cushman, leaving the Riverdale team wondering what in the world was going on.

The meet begins, and after the hurdles event is the 100-yard dash. Eddie, Kathy, and Hoffer, who are running in this event, are hanging around at the bench, waiting for the hurdles event to finish. Mr. Frazier tells the sprinters, "we're stronger than they are, but don't let your guard down. You all have to qualify for State. It would be good to get that under your belt as soon as possible."

Mr. Zunde unexpectedly walks over from the field events area, and tells Mr. Frazier, "Mr. Crum is in the bleachers. For some reason, he's watching the meet." Mr. Frazier replies, "I wonder what that's all about." Mr. Frazier turns his attention back to Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer, telling them, "show Mr. Crum what we do out here." Mr. Zunde tells them, "and spread the word."

Mark, who was thinking about distraction techniques all day, tells Eddie and Kathy, "when you're at the blocks, argue about whose turn it is to win." Kathy grins, and looks at Eddie, telling him, "yeah! This could get good." Mark tells them, "if you argue about whose turn it is to win, they'll get distracted. They'll be too amused at the argument, and lose their focus on the race." Eddie asks Mark, "how do you come up with this stuff?" Mark replies, "I don't know. It seems to just keep coming to me."

The call is made for the 100-yard dash. Eddie, Kathy, and Hoffer head to the starting line. Kathy waves to the crowd, and receives cheers in return. The Riverdale sprinters, who are already waiting at the blocks, notice that they are running against a girl. Eddie will be running next to Kathy this time.

As they set their blocks, Kathy asks Eddie, “is it my turn to win, or yours?” Eddie replies, “it’s mine.” Kathy argues, “no, wait. I distinctly remember letting you go to State, so it’s my turn to win!” Eddie reasons, “State was not a regular season meet, so it’s my turn to win.” Kathy, putting her hands on her hips, replies, “I could have won that race, but you got my gold medal!”

The Riverdale sprinters are dumbfounded by the argument between Eddie and Kathy. One of the Riverdale sprinters tells Eddie, “let her win.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! Everybody should let me win! It’s my turn anyway.” Hoffer tells Kathy, “okay. I’ll let you beat me in this race, but not next time. You guys can fight it out for first and second. I’ll just take third today.”

The Starter, who is amused at the argument, announces, “on your marks.” Kathy, still not relenting, tells Eddie, “it’s my turn to win, you know.” The Starter announces, “set.” The gun goes off, and the runners are all out of the blocks.

Kathy lets out a loud primal scream, silencing everyone on the bleachers, and scaring the crap out of the Riverdale runners. After 20 yards, Eddie is in first place, Kathy is in second place, and Hoffer is in third place. At 50 yards, Eddie and Kathy have a decent lead, with Hoffer still in third place. The Riverdale team seems to be trailing significantly. As they approach the finish line, Eddie slows his pace a bit, allowing Kathy to take first place. Eddie finishes in second place, and Hoffer in third place. The crowd wildly cheers for Kathy, who just took first place.

Concerned about Eddie’s performance, Mr. Frazier asks Eddie, “what happened? Are you okay?” Eddie replies, “yeah. I let her win. It’s good for team morale.” Mr. Frazier doesn’t seem to care. Points are only awarded for first, second, and third place. It doesn’t matter whether Eddie or Kathy won. The points awarded will be the same.

The Riverdale team, however, is still wondering what just happened. It’s not every day that you see two runners arguing about whose turn it is to win. To even make such a determination before the race without regard to the opposition would require an unbelievable level of skill. And Hoffer, calling the race before it even began, left some Riverdale runners wondering.

After a few more events, the call is made for the 220-yard dash. On the way to the starting line, Mark tells Paula, “I’m not sure how I’m going to distract them today.” Paula replies, “yeah. We’re running against that Draper guy.” When they arrive at the starting line, it is obvious who Jay Draper is. He appears very focused, not aware of anyone around him. Mark, hitting a brick wall, cannot seem to get Draper’s attention. Paula

tells Mark, "hey. Let me take care of this one." Mark replies, "okay. Go for it."

Paula gets very outgoing, telling everyone, "hey, this is my boyfriend Mark. We're both running in this race with you guys." Paula asks everyone their name, being sure to introduce them to Mark, her boyfriend. Paula is easily able to get Draper's attention, introducing him to Mark. The Starter then tells the runners to get ready. Paula whispers to Mark, "ignore me. Do not laugh, and stay focused."

The Starter announces, "on your marks." As the runners are getting positioned in the blocks, Paula announces, "I'd love to, but it will have to wait until after the race." As Paula finishes her comment, the words, "set," are heard, with several of the runners laughing at Paula's innuendo. Draper is certainly distracted, and is still laughing. Draper is having trouble maintaining the set position. The gun is fired anyway, and everyone is off.

At 50 yards, Mark and Paula are tied for first place. Draper, who was severely distracted by Paula's comment, is in the back of the field. At 100 yards, Mark is in the lead, with Paula right behind him. For the remainder of the race, Mark and Paula's lead widens over most of the field. Toward the end of the race, Draper, however, gains a little ground. As they cross the finish line, Mark takes first place, Paula takes second place, and Bell takes third place. Draper delivers a fourth place finish, and was not able to recover from Paula's pre-race distraction.

As they cool down together, Mark tells Paula, "hey! That was a really good one!" Paula replies, "yeah! And, it worked!" Paula jumps up onto Mark, with her legs around his hips and her arms around his neck. Paula tells Mark, "you heard him. He said, 'on you marks.'" Draper looks over at Mark and Paula, and is somewhat disgusted because he just got beat by a girl. Paula beat Draper not once, but twice. Once before the race, and again during the race. Worst of all, Draper knows it. Since this is Draper's debut race in this region, needless to say, he is not too happy.

Mark and Paula return to the bench. Mark explains to Eddie and Kathy how Paula distracted the other runners. Everyone agrees that Paula pulled a really good one. A few teammates overhear the conversation, laughing when they hear what happened. Mr. Frazier momentarily returns to the bench, and hears the story first hand. Mr. Frazier laughs, and tells Paula, "that's the best one yet. Keep them coming." Mr. Frazier tells Braden to warm up for the 440-yard dash, and then he goes back to the track to watch as Barbara and Mitchell are preparing for the mile.

While the mile is underway, Braden walks along the outside of the track in front of the bleachers, firing up the crowd. Remembering what

happened during the State invitational meet, Braden gets the crowd cheering, "Amazon, Amazon, Amazon!" Mr. Crum, sitting on the bleachers, does not know what to think of what he is seeing. The entire crowd starts cheering as Barbara takes an early lead. When Barbara passes in front of the crowd, the cheering gets louder. Mitchell, who has really stepped up his game since Barbara joined the team, is right behind her. Braden returns to the bench, leaving the crowd cheering on their own.

Mr. Lyons, the Riverdale coach, is standing in the middle of the oval track, in the red zone<sup>1</sup>. With his hands on his hips, he watches as his milers all take a beating. The crowd cheering, "Amazon, Amazon, Amazon!" echoes in his head. Mr. Lyons is quickly reminded of the State invitational meet where he heard the same cheer. He is also reminded of the first indoor track meet from this past Winter, when he and his team walked away with a devastating loss. And, he is also reminded by a Field Judge that he is standing in the red zone, and that he had better move.

After a few more events, the call for the last event, the 4 by 440 relay, is made. Braden, who won the 440-yard dash and mile medley relay earlier today, is still fired up. Braden exclaims, "here we go! The last ass kicking of the afternoon!" This is not what Riverdale wanted to hear, for they have not taken first place in an event all day. It's not likely that Riverdale will win this event either. Braden walks toward the bleachers to fire up the crowd, as the teams head to the starting line.

At the starting line, Draper tells Mark, "this time, we're getting you! No funny stuff." Draper is totally unaware that his team is up against the State gold medalists in this event. Mark asks Draper, "are you guys really good at this event?" Draper, laughing, replies, "yeah! We're the best, and you have two girls." Draper missed the 100-yard dash that Kathy won earlier today. He also thinks Paula beat him in the 220-yard dash because of her "funny stuff".

Mark tells Eddie, "he said, 'we have girls.'" Eddie, looking at the four guys on the Riverdale 4 by 440 relay team, replies, "well, it looks like they have girly looking boys. So, we're even." A thin, wiry guy from Riverdale tells Eddie, "hey, shut up. We're kicking your ass!" Mark tells Eddie, "hey, now look at what you did! You made them really mad!" Kathy and Paula are doing their best not to laugh.

The Starter, who seems to be enjoying all of the pre-race entertainment today, tells the runners to get ready. Paula hands Mark the

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<sup>1</sup> Red Zone: That part of the field into where the airborne implements are thrown.

baton, and Mark gets ready in the blocks. The Starter announces, “on your marks.” Paula looks at Draper, and starts laughing hysterically. The Starter, trying to ignore the sideline events, announces, “set.” The Starter fires the gun. When Mark is 20 yards away, Paula tells Kathy, “on your Eddie.” Kathy is laughing hysterically, but Draper is not amused. Mr. Frazier, standing a few feet away with Wendy, is wondering what could possibly be so funny. He will find out later. Right now, he, Wendy, and Erika are too busy timing the event.

Mark, who is approaching the transition zone first, hands off to Paula. Draper tells a team member, “now watch what happens. They’ll fall behind.” Kathy, pretending to cry, tells Eddie, “he said we’re going to fall behind. I don’t want us to fall behind.” Eddie puts his hand around Kathy’s shoulder, and replies, “don’t worry. I’m running last. I guess I’ll have to make it up.”

Draper, looking across the track, exclaims, “shit! Look what’s happening!” Paula has not fallen behind, but has enhanced the lead by a significant margin. Eddie tells Kathy, “it looks like you’re up next.” Kathy enters the track, and is up against the thin, wiry guy who told Eddie to shut up a little earlier. On the track, the thin guy tells Kathy, “I’ll be ahead in about a minute.” Kathy, extremely confident, replies, “yeah, right. I want to see that, junior. I’ll only be running for 55 seconds, so you can’t possibly be ahead in one minute.” Kathy’s hint that she will run a sub-60 quarter mile now has her opposition concerned.

Paula approaches the transition zone, and the wiry guy is watching intently. After Kathy receives the baton, she takes off, letting out her primal scream. Halfway through the race, Riverdale has a lot of ground to make up. If the thin, wiry guy is to catch Kathy, he is going to have to run a 35-second quarter mile. That is not happening. Kathy is long gone by the time the Riverdale guy receives his baton. Draper looks over at Eddie, who has just entered the track. Draper has nothing to say, as he watches Kathy increase the lead.

As Kathy approaches the transition zone, Eddie takes the baton, fully inclined to end the meet with a bang. Kathy, meanwhile, walks off the track and lies on the grass, catching her breath. Draper now has more than 40 seconds to make up, and knows that he can’t win. Mark casually mentions to Paula, “I thought they said they were good.” Paula replies, “they are. At bragging and losing.”

Kathy, who is still laying on the ground, turns her head to the side to watch Eddie as he rounds the track. While Eddie approaches the finish line, Kathy stands up so she can be there when he finishes. Eddie crosses the finish line, with Mr. Frazier looking at his stopwatch. Realistically beating the opposition by more than 45 seconds, the relay team

celebrates their victory. The actual differential between the two teams, however, was more like a minute because Draper significantly slowed his pace during the last 220 yards. The bad news after this meet is that no one really knows Draper's performance potential.

Having an awesome afternoon, the team walks away with a victory in every event. Mr. Lyons congratulates Mr. Frazier, not only for the victory, but for developing such a great team. Draper tells Kathy, "hey, sorry about the 'girls' comment earlier." Kathy replies, "hey, no problem. I thought you meant it as a compliment."

Many of the spectators in the bleachers come down and meet the team. Mr. Crum, however, walks back to the school alone. No one knows why he even showed up. Perhaps it will remain a mystery, or perhaps he is contemplating suspending the entire team.

Kathy and Paula watch as Bobby B. is talking with Erika at the shot-put pad. Wendy drives up in the Cushman, and Bobby B. personally loads the shot-put into the rear bed. Wendy drives the Cushman back to the school, with Erika on Bobby B.'s. lap, repeating the same procedure they used earlier to carefully deliver the shot-put to the track.

Seeing Erika ride away on Bobby B.'s. lap, Paula asks Kathy, "what's up with that?" Kathy asks, "with what?" Paula, explaining the not so obvious, tells Kathy, "they just loaded the shot-put into the Cushman, and they are taking it back to the school. They could have carried a lot more, but they're just carrying the shot-put." Kathy replies, "oh, really? I really want to hear about this one! This is going to be funny." Kathy is the world's best bullshit detector. She knows there is a good story behind this one and that something is up, and she can't wait to hear it.

After the meet, the tribe decides to get pizza. When they arrive at the pizzeria, Kathy makes it a point to sit near Bobby B. and Erika. Kathy wants to hear the story about the shot-put getting its very special treatment. Or, perhaps, it is Bobby B., and not the shot-put, that is getting the special treatment. Mark and Paula also sit nearby, also wanting to hear the story. Once everyone has decided what they want to eat, the guys go up to the counter and place the order.

While the guys are away at the counter, Kathy asks Erika, "what's all this about carrying the shot-put all by itself in the Cushman?" Erika tells her, "oh, I thought you guys knew." Paula interjects, "no, tell us." Erika tells them, "the shot-put is special. It can't be moved with any of the other equipment."

Bobby B., standing in line with Eddie and the others, overhears Erika telling the others that the shot-put is special. Fortunately, for Bobby B.,

Erika's back is to him, so he motions to Kathy and Paula to stop the conversation. He shakes his head "no," and, without using any words, but instead using hand signals, he tries to get Kathy and Paula to stop their line of questioning.

Kathy, seeing what Bobby B. is up to, grins, and asks Erika, "so, tell us more about the shot-put, and how special it is." Erika tells them, "Bobby says he must personally oversee moving the shot-put to the field and back, so that nothing happens to it." Paula smiles and says, "oh, I see." Acting quite serious, Kathy remarks, "yeah, I can see that. After all, the shot-put is very special." Paula looks at Kathy, telling her, "I think I remember that. Yeah. The shot-put is special." Kathy then mentions, "yeah, we saw you guys unloading it before the meet."

Listening carefully to every word is Bobby B., who is still in line. He motions to Kathy and Paula again, almost going to his knees with his hands in the prayer position, begging them to not bust him. They know what Bobby B. is up to, and Bobby B. knows that they know what he is up to. Kathy gives Bobby B. a special smile, letting him know that he has been found out.

Bobby B. is about to panic. He has been busted, and he knows it. Bobby B. has Wendy and Erika convinced that the shot-put is very special. He told them that great care must be taken when moving it on and off the field. There is nothing really special about the shot-put, except to Bobby B., since it is his event. He just wanted Erika to ride on his lap in the Cushman. Kathy and Paula have him figured out.

Eddie and Mark return to the table, while Bobby B. is placing his and Erika's order. Continuing her earlier conversation with Paula and Erika, Kathy mentions, "yeah, the discus is very special too." Eddie tries to say something, but Kathy kicks his foot under the table. Paula replies, "yeah, the discus. Seriously." Erika asks, "does that have to be moved separately too?" Eddie and Mark have figured out that Kathy and Paula are up to something, so they keep quiet. Kathy replies, "no, not really. It's only the shot-put that needs to be moved separately." Paula asks Kathy, "what was it that's so special about the discus? I forgot." With a serious tone, Kathy replies, "the discus has to be scrubbed after each use." Paula comments, "oh, yeah. I forgot about that."

Bobby B. returns to the table and, trying to change the subject, exclaims, "so, how about the meet today!" Kathy replies, "yeah! It was awesome! All the way down to the final event of moving the shot-put off the field." Bobby B., again trying to shift the topic of conversation, says, "I took first place. How did you guys do?" Paula replies, "we did really well too, but we may have done better if we didn't have to walk out to the field and expend all that energy before the meet." Kathy remarks, "yeah. I

agree. A ride in the Cushman would have been nice.” Kathy’s and Paula’s comments fly over Erika’s head, but Bobby B. knows that he is so busted. Kathy and Paula show him a little mercy, and allow the conversation to move on.

After dinner, when they are all outside, Kathy whispers to Bobby B., “that’s really a good one. The shot-put is special and you have to personally oversee it being moved. You are so busted!” Bobby B. tells Kathy, “please, please, please don’t tell Erika.” Kathy smiles, and replies, “oh, don’t worry about that. We’re going to get some mileage out of this one.” Bobby B. is safe for now. It’s more fun for Kathy and Paula to watch the shot-put scandal go on rather than bust him.

Eddie and Kathy walk home with Mark and Paula. On the way home, Eddie asks Kathy, “what was all that about the shot-put back there?” Kathy answers, “the shot-put is special, and it must be moved all by itself, and not with any other equipment. Bobby B., himself, must oversee moving it to the field.” Eddie laughs, and exclaims, “what? Are you serious?”

Paula, clearing up the issue, tells Eddie and Mark, “truth is that Bobby B. wants to ride in the Cushman with Erika on his lap, so he made up this story that the shot-put gets special treatment.” Kathy mentions, “he is so busted.” Mark exclaims, “that’s a good one! He should get a medal for thinking of that one!” Kathy tells Eddie and Mark, “yeah, but don’t say anything. Just let it go on. It’s more fun to see where this goes.” They all agree to lay low and let the shot-put saga continue.

A few days later, at practice, Wendy and Erika move the equipment to the track as the team gets dressed. Today, the shot-put team will not be working with weights, but rather throwing the shot-put out on the field. Bobby B. is the first one out of the locker room, since he must personally oversee the transportation of the shot-put to the field. Sure enough, the shot-put receives its very special treatment today. Wendy and Erika meet him in the hallway, and Bobby B. removes the shot-put from the equipment room. The shot-put is loaded into the Cushman, and Bobby B. gets a ride to the track with Erika on his lap. Bobby B. then gets another ride, with Erika again on his lap, back to the school. He’ll then walk out with the rest of the team.

During practice, Mr. Zunde works with the field athletes, and Mr. Frazier, Wendy, and Erika work with the track athletes. While taking a short break from practicing relay drills, Mark, as he his looking over at Bobby B., comments to Eddie, “just look at that! He’s throwing that special shot-put into the dirt.” Eddie replies, “wow! We’ve got to do something about that.” Mark rhetorically asks, “is that any way to treat that special shot-put? We never let our batons hit the dirt.” Eddie

comments, "except for when Mahoney was around." For some reason, Mahoney fumbled the baton quite often in competition. Eddie then suggests, "hey, let's tell Erika that the shot-put has to be cleaned before it's put away, and that Bobby B. is the only person qualified to clean it." Mark replies, "yeah! That's great! And, we'll take Paula and Kathy with us. They'll back us up!" Eddie and Mark now have a plan.

After practice, Eddie and Mark walk over to talk with Erika and Bobby B. Eddie and Mark have let Kathy and Paula in on their plan, and take them along for credibility. Kathy and Paula are all in, and have been waiting for a situation like this. On the way to watch the special shot-put being loaded into the Cushman, Kathy remarks, "I hope I can keep a straight face." Paula suggests, "well, let's all just act serious." Mark, the master of psychological warfare, tells Kathy, "if you feel like you're going to start laughing, just bend down and turn away and tie your shoelace. They won't bother looking down at you."

When they arrive at the shot-put pad, Eddie asks Bobby B., "did you have a good day?" Bobby B. replies, "yeah, really good. We all had a lot of fun." Eddie turns to Erika, and tells her, "he had fun, but with a big price." Erika asks, "with a big price? What do you mean?" Eddie tells Erika, "well, just take a look. He's been throwing the shot-put into the dirt all afternoon. It's getting filthy." Mark adds, "it doesn't get dirty during indoor track, because it gets thrown into the sand." Eddie remarks, "that shot-put is definitely due for a cleaning. In fact, it really should be cleaned and inspected after every use."

Kathy reassures Erika, telling her, "don't worry, though. You won't have to clean it. Bobby B. is the only one on the team qualified to clean it." Paula recommends, "don't even think about putting it away when it's that dirty. It's disgusting." Mark comments, "yeah, I've never seen it that dirty in my entire life." Erika, seeing the filthy steel ball, comments, "yeah, I see what you guys mean. It's like really, really dirty."

Kathy, showing off the clean baton, remarks, "that's one of the reasons the shot-put has to be transported separately. You wouldn't want it to contaminate our nice clean baton." Paula adds, "that's because we clean our special, high-tech, lightweight, high-performance carbon fiber baton every time we use it." Bobby B. knows exactly where this is going. He dares not contradict Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula. If he does, they will bust him in no time.

Bobby B. loads the shot-put into the Cushman. Wendy drives back to the school, with Erika on Bobby B.'s lap. When they get back to the school, Erika tells Bobby B., "you go and clean the shot-put, and we'll go back for the rest of the equipment." Bobby B. takes the shot-put into the locker room and reluctantly cleans it. While he is cleaning off the filthy

shot-put, he is thinking how to pay back Mark and Eddie. That will be difficult. Getting Eddie and Mark back is likely to backfire. When he is finished cleaning the shot-put, he notices how much better it looks.

When Wendy and Erika return to the track to retrieve the rest of the equipment, they approach Eddie and the tribe on their way back to the locker room. Kathy waves them down. Kathy tells Erika, "hey, don't let him put the shot-put away dirty anymore." Erika replies, "I saw how dirty it gets. I'll make sure he cleans it every time he uses it." Kathy replies, "good. You wouldn't want to spread any diseases or anything like that. You've seen how close he has that shot-put to his face when he throws it." Erika comments, "yeah. You do have a point." Wendy and Erika then drive back out to the track to get the rest of the equipment.

Once Wendy and Erika have driven away, Paula remarks to Kathy, "diseases? Really? You've got to be kidding!" Kathy replies, "Erika fell for that one hook, line, and sinker. Poor girl." Mark adds, "yeah, well she fell for Bobby B's. story about the shot-put being special." Paula stops, and tells Eddie, Mark, and Kathy, "hey, we should tell Erika, and let her in on what Bobby B. is up to. We can get her to play along." Kathy laughs, and replies, "yeah! This is getting better all the time!"

With the Centerville meet coming up soon, the team is in top shape. Centerville is Northside's arch rival in every sport. It's not a question whether Northside is going to win or not. It is a question of by how much they will win. But, with the State invitational meet coming up, winning is not the only issue. For some of the runners, this will be their last chance to deliver superior times that will get them a ticket into the State invitational meet. And, along with Centerville, comes some entertainment for Mark. Todd McCutchen, Centerville's sprinter, and Mark have been rivals since middle school. As sure as the sun will rise on the day of the meet, there will be some amusing altercation between Mark and McCutchen.

The day of the Centerville meet arrives, which is on a Friday afternoon this year. The entire team is looking forward to the final victory of the year, and then it is off to the State invitational meet for a select few. With the weather being perfect outside, the turnout at the event is expected to be the best this year. There will also be a game on the baseball field during today's meet. It will be interesting to see which event will draw the bigger crowd.

Since it is a beautiful day, the tribe congregates outside before the school day begins. Kathy is wearing the necklace that Eddie gave her for Christmas, which she always wears during a race. Braden walks up, exclaiming and asking everyone, "is everybody ready to kick ass today?"

Mark replies, “we’re ready, bro! Are you?” Braden replies, “their asses are already kicked! They’re just showing up for the ceremony.”

Tessa walks up, telling the tribe, “I really missed you guys.” Kathy tells her, “come join us and watch the meet this afternoon.” Since the swimming season is over, Tessa’s schedule is free. Tessa tells Kathy, “I’ll be there! I was planning on coming.” Paula asks Tessa, “hey, do you want to come get pizza with us after the meet?” Tessa replies, “sure! I’d love to! The swimming team never does anything together. They all just go home after practice.” Kathy asks Paula, “so, we’re getting pizza after the meet?” Paula replies, “yeah. When do we not?” Since school is just starting for the day, everyone has to now head to their classrooms.

After the morning announcements, the school secretary announces over the loudspeaker, “Axel Braden, please report to the principal’s office.” Mr. Cruz tells Braden, “well, Mr. Braden, it looks like you get out of my boring lecture today.” Mr. Cruz’s lectures are anything but boring. But, nevertheless, Braden leaves class in order to go to Mr. Crum’s office, wondering what he has done this time.

On Braden’s way out, Chuckie sarcastically comments, “he’s being inducted into the National Honor Society.” Braden responds, telling Chuckie, “hey, junior! Anything’s better than drug rehab, which is where your ass is going to end up.” The whole class laughs at Chuckie. No one makes a comment like that to Braden and gets away with it. Braden is always quick with a great comeback.

While in the gym, preparing for class, Mr. Zunde hears the announcement calling Braden to the principal’s office. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, “it looks like that Crum is back to his old antics again. I’m going to go check it out and see what’s up.” Mr. Frazier responds, “this had better not interfere with the meet this afternoon.” Mr. Zunde assures Mr. Frazier, “not if I can help it.” Mr. Zunde heads to the principal’s office to find out what is going on.

When Mr. Zunde arrives at the administrative office, Braden is sitting on a chair in the administration area, waiting to see the principal. Mr. Zunde asks Braden, “what’s up? Did you get in some kind of trouble?” Braden replies, “I don’t know. I didn’t do anything.” Mr. Zunde tells Braden, “I’m going to wait here and find out for myself.” While they are waiting, Mr. Zunde asks Mrs. Marlowe, the secretary, “do you know what the issue is with Axel Braden?” She replies, “no, sir. Mr. Crum just asked me to call him to his office.”

Mr. Crum opens his door, finding one more visitor than he expected. He tells Braden to enter his office, and Mr. Zunde follows. Mr. Crum asks Mr. Zunde, “Mr. Zunde, why do I have the pleasure of you attending this

meeting today?" Mr. Zunde replies, "now, Mr. Crum, we've been over this again and again. Your action or potential action involves an athlete, so I will be present today. And, just to clarify things, my presence here today will bring you absolutely no pleasure." Mr. Crum replies, "okay, let's get on with this." Mr. Zunde replies, "yes, let's get on with this. I can't wait."

Mr. Zunde then asks Mr. Crum, "what seems to be the problem? Does Axel have an overdue library book?" Mr. Crum replies, "no. This has to do with Axel's use of profanity." Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "oh, I see. I thought it was something much more serious, like an overdue library book or using the restroom without permission." Mr. Crum replies, "okay, enough with the funny stuff. This is my meeting." Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "don't let me hold you up. The ball is in your court, and it's the only one you have. You can start any time you'd like." Mr. Crum shuffles a few papers, not daring to respond to Mr. Zunde. No one wins a verbal chess match with Mr. Zunde.

Mr. Crum notifies Braden, "Axel, it has come to my attention that you have a serious and ongoing problem with the use of profanity." Braden replies, "that's a bunch of bullshit. I ain't been saying any of that shit." Mr. Crum replies, "I can clearly see your point. You've expressed it so eloquently."

Braden answers Mr. Crum's sarcasm by changing the subject. Braden points out to Mr. Crum, "it looks to me like somebody really kicked the shit out of your desk." Mr. Crum's desk, which was destroyed by Eddie's father a few months ago, has not yet been replaced. Braden, who has heard about the incident many times, finally gets to see the damage first hand.

While Mr. Crum and Braden exchange words, Mr. Zunde looks through Mr. Crum's bookcase and finds the school policy manual. He removes the book from the shelf, and peruses it as Mr. Crum continues to lecture Braden. Mr. Zunde searches for, and finds, the school's official policy on profanity and abusive language. Mr. Zunde then takes the copy of the Dr. Seuss book, *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, and displays it openly on the shelf for all to see. Mr. Crum totally misses the fact that Mr. Zunde has rearranged his bookshelf.

As Mr. Crum tries to explain to Braden why the use of profanity is inappropriate while in school, Braden runs his hand over the rough surface of Mr. Crum's desk where the wood broke off. Braden comments, "wow! This is really impressive. Eddie's father did this with his fist!" Braden is mesmerized at the damage caused to the desk by Mr. Bogenskaya.

Not paying any attention to Mr. Crum, Braden tells Mr. Crum, “you must have really ticked him off.” Mr. Crum replies, “that’s not the issue today! You are.” Braden, ignoring Mr. Crum, replies, “yeah, it’s a good thing for you that Eddie’s father busted up your desk and not your ass. You would have been on the business end of the ass kicking of the century.” Mr. Zunde, thumbing through the school policy manual, gets free entertainment from meetings such as this.

Mr. Crum sums it all up, telling Braden, “I’m going to have to give you detention for your use of profanity in this school. Your detention will start today, right after school.” Braden replies, “I’m sorry, boss. I can’t go today. I have a track meet this afternoon.” Mr. Crum smugly informs Braden, “well, it looks like you are going to miss the track meet.” Mr. Zunde interjects, “no, he won’t.” Mr. Crum sarcastically asks, “and, may I ask why, Mr. Zunde?”

Mr. Zunde hands the school policy manual to Braden, which is open to a page addressing the use of profanity in the school. Mr. Zunde tells Braden, “will you please read the third paragraph on the right-hand page to Mr. Crum. I would let Mr. Crum read it for himself, but he couldn’t read and understand the State’s policy manual regarding women participating in sports earlier this year.” Braden reads the paragraph out loud, which states,

#### 4.3. Profanity and Abusive Language.

The use of profanity and abusive language is discouraged in the classroom and while school is in session. Repeated offenses shall initially result in a parent-teacher conference. If so arranged, the goal of this conference will be to identify the problem and formulate a solution. If the problem persists, detention will be the preferred remedial action. If the profanity or abusive language is determined to instigate a physical altercation, the rules regarding *Physical Altercations While School is in Session* shall take precedence over this paragraph and anything else in this section.

Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “if you don’t understand this rule, perhaps you should get one of the English teachers to explain this rule to you. I’m not seeing any grounds for detention at this time.”

Mr. Crum hastily responds, “let me see that!” Mr. Crum attempts to grab the manual out of Braden’s hands, but Braden pulls it back, and tells Mr. Crum, “say ‘please’.” Mr. Crum then firmly grabs the policy manual, and yanks it out of Braden’s hands. Reading the paragraph over himself, Mr. Crum is turning a deep shade of red. Mr. Crum frantically flips through the pages, hoping to find another reason to send Braden to detention today.

While Mr. Crum is looking through the manual, Mr. Zunde, pointing out the obvious, says to Mr. Crum, "so, I see you haven't gotten a new desk yet. Perhaps they can fix your desk over in the wood shop. You might want to have them repair it with two-part epoxy so that it does not break as easily next time." Mr. Zunde only made this comment to annoy Mr. Crum. Worse yet, Mr. Zunde inferred that there will likely be another instance of his desk being damaged in the future. And, everyone in the school knows that Mr. Crum's desk has not yet been replaced.

Getting down to business, Mr. Zunde then tells Mr. Crum in an unmistakably firm tone, "the way I see this is that, unless you've had a conference with Axel's parents, you cannot issue detention at this time. The way I also see this is that, since this is the first documented offense, you have to wait until you have multiple documented offenses before you can call Axel's parent's in for a conference. And let me remind you of this. What happens out on that track is none of your business." Braden is watching as Mr. Crum is getting his ass kicked by Mr. Zunde. And finally, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "Axel will be running in the meet this afternoon. If you choose to attend, please stay clear of the discus or the javelin while it is in the air. I would hate for you to get injured." Mr. Zunde leaves Mr. Crum's office, as Braden is warned by Mr. Crum to curb his use of profanity while in school.

Mr. Crum, having absolutely no grounds to give Braden detention at this time, has no choice but to let him return to class. What had transpired in the last fifteen minutes led to Mr. Zunde throwing Mr. Crum's own book at him. It is very clear to Mr. Zunde that Mr. Crum is beginning to interfere with sports again, as he did many years ago. Mr. Crum has been given a stern warning by Mr. Zunde to stay out of the way.

Braden walks out of the administration offices, and sees Mr. Zunde standing outside the administration area. Mr. Zunde tells Braden, "he's obviously after you for one reason or another. Be careful of what you say while you're in school. Just hang low for a while." Braden tells Mr. Zunde, "hey, thanks for getting me out of that." Mr. Zunde tells Braden, "well, I didn't really get you out of anything. I'm just making the principal follow the school rules, just like you have to." Mr. Zunde then tells Braden, "don't let him worry you. We'll see you on the track later today." Mr. Zunde goes back to the gym, and Braden goes back to his social studies class.

When Braden walks back to his classroom, he is in an uplifted mood. Braden got to watch first hand as Mr. Zunde verbally kicked Mr. Crum's ass. Braden has only heard of this type of engagement between Mr. Zunde and Mr. Crum before. Until today, he has never seen it.

Braden enters the classroom, and everyone is quite surprised to see him return so soon. When he walks in, he looks and points right at Chuckie. Braden tells Chuckie, "I got inducted into the National Ass Kicking Society." The whole class laughs, including the teacher. Braden takes his seat, and gives Eddie a fist bump.

After class, and on the way to the next class, Braden tells the tribe what happened. Braden tells Eddie, "I saw what your father did to Mr. Crum's desk! Mr. Crum's desk wasn't looking too good! Mr. Crum must have really ticked off your father." Eddie replies, "yeah, he did. That was really something, watching that when it happened." Braden adds, "Mr. Crum wasn't looking too good either."

Braden tells everyone, "Mr. Zunde gave Mr. Crum a real ass kicking. And, Mr. Zunde was telling Mr. Crum that his desk ain't been replaced yet. That really ticked off Mr. Crum." Mark replies, "as if Mr. Crum doesn't know that already." Wendy tells everyone, "it sounds like our principal is the Great Oz." Bobby B. remarks, "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!" They all are laughing as they walk into the second class of the day.

By the end of the day, the whole school has found out that Mr. Crum tried to give Braden detention for using profanity. Word travels fast around the school regarding issues such as this. While the team is in the locker room getting dressed for the meet, Braden gives the play by play of this morning's meeting with Mr. Crum. Although he didn't specifically mention it, Braden's favorite part of the meeting was reading Mr. Crum's own policy manual to him.

The team then moves into the auxiliary gym before the meet, where Mr. Frazier goes over the events. Bobby B. is nowhere to be found, as he is delivering the shot-put to the field with Wendy and Erika. Since there are no changes to the events, Mr. Frazier lets the team wait inside for a while, in the air conditioning, before they head out to the field.

Bobby B. walks in late, prompting Mr. Frazier to tell him, "we're glad you can join us today. There's been a change in the events. You're running the mile today." Everyone, knowing exactly where Bobby B. has been, laughs, including Mr. Frazier. Bobby B. was in the Cushman, with Erika on his lap, as the special shot-put was being carefully delivered to the field.

The team heads out to the track. When they arrive, Centerville is ready to go. Mark spies McCutchen, which is no surprise. John McNamara, Centerville's miler, is also present. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde look at the bleachers, which are packed today. Looking over at the baseball field, they see only a few spectators standing around.

Mr. Zunde tells the team, "if anyone sees Mr. Crum up in the stands, please let me know. I heard he might show up for the meet." Pointing to the bleachers, Wendy tells Mr. Zunde, "he's up there, all the way on the right. We saw him walk out earlier when we were bringing out the equipment."

Mr. Zunde heads over to the field area, and tells Riley Springer, the discus man, "let me see the two-kilogram discus." As Springer hands Mr. Zunde the discus, Mr. Zunde tells Springer, "Mr. Crum is on the third row from the top in the bleachers, all the way on the right side." Mr. Zunde then asks Springer, "can you see him?" Springer replies, "yeah. He's looking right at us." Mr. Zunde replies, "good." Mr. Zunde takes the discus, and looks up at the bleachers, seeing Mr. Crum staring right at him.

Getting onto the discus pad, Mr. Zunde, as he prepares to throw the two-kilogram discus, asks Springer, "is he still watching?" Springer replies, "yeah. He's looking right at you." Mr. Zunde goes into the wind up, then into the spin, and releases the discus, letting out a primal scream that rivals Kathy's. The discus travels just past the 210-foot<sup>2</sup> mark before landing. The crowd cheers, having never seen a discus thrown that far before. Springer tells Mr. Zunde, "Mr. Crum looked kind of scared after your throw." Mr. Zunde replies, "good." Mr. Zunde's throw attracted a lot of attention, especially from the Centerville discus man, who thinks Mr. Zunde's throw was done by a student.

The meet gets underway, with Eddie and Kathy waiting for the hurdlers to finish their event. The call is made for the 100-yard dash and, much to Eddie's surprise, McCutchen shows up at the starting line. Eddie pays McCutchen no attention, until McCutchen comments, asking, "girls again?" Kathy firmly tells McCutchen, "not girls. Amazon women! Got it?" McCutchen tells Kathy, "they cleared that up. You're not from the Amazon." Eddie interjects, "yeah right. Just keep believing that. Enough money can clear anything up."

Kathy, who is now five feet, ten inches tall, appears to have much more muscle mass than McCutchen. Kathy walks past McCutchen, and her sheer size again raises the Amazon rumor in McCutchen's mind. The only one taller than Kathy at the blocks is Eddie. Eddie tells McCutchen, "she beat me twice this year. Oh, and she's going to State." McCutchen is not going to State in this event. Eddie just informed McCutchen that he is going to lose this race, and that Kathy is going to beat him. By now, McCutchen wishes he was up against Mark rather than Eddie and Kathy.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of Mr. Zunde's throw, the world record for the discus was 224' 4 3/4".

The Starter is amused by the pre-race discussion. He often officiates at Northside, and is used to the psychological warfare at the starting blocks by now. He tells the runners to get ready. The Starter announces, "on your marks," followed by, "set." The gun is fired, and Eddie, anticipating the gun, is out of the blocks first.

Upon leaving the blocks, Kathy lets out her primal scream, distracting McCutchen. Kathy is in second place after 25 yards, with Hoffer in third place. McCutchen has a lot of work to do, and very little time to do it, if he expects to place<sup>3</sup> in this race. At 75 yards, Eddie is in first place, Kathy is in second place, and it is clear that no one will pass Hoffer. In retrospect, this race was clearly over in the first 25 yards. Eddie crosses the finish line first, Kathy second, and Hoffer third. McCutchen crosses fifth, which is a poor performance even for him.

Eddie and Kathy wait around to find out their times. They know the times are good, but the question is how good. Past the finish line, McCutchen looks at Kathy, and comments, "Amazon. Yeah, I can believe it." Eddie tells McCutchen, "even the Amazon war cry gives it away. I can't believe that you guys totally can't see it."

From McCutchen's vantage point, which was in the back of the pack, Kathy and Eddie ran about the same time in this race. McCutchen knows that Eddie is the fastest sprinter in the State and, if Kathy can keep up with him, something must be up. As McCutchen heads to his bench, Kathy tells Eddie, "Amazon war cry? That's a good one!" Eddie replies, "that just popped into my head. It looks like he actually believes it."

When Kathy returns to the bench, she tells Paula, "hey, let out a loud Amazon war cry when you leave the blocks." Paula, somewhat amused, replies, asking, "Amazon war cry? Who thought this up?" Kathy replies, "that's what Eddie told McCutchen my primal scream was. They're thinking again that we're from the Amazon." Paula smiles, and says, "perfect!" Kathy tells Paula, "I'll tell you more about it later." Mark tells Paula, "Amazon war cry. Now, that is really, really good."

McCutchen returns to his bench, and tells his coach, Mr. Ruff, "I know this is beating a dead horse, but the girl told me she is from the Amazon. Then Eddie said, 'enough money can clear anything up.' And then, Eddie said the scream she lets out is an 'Amazon war cry.'" Coach Ruff replies, "Northside is up to something. A dozen athletes going to the State meet is unheard of. I'll get to the bottom of this one way or another. Thanks for the info." McCutchen's timing in informing his coach what he heard

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<sup>3</sup> Place: Taking first, second, or third place in an event.

couldn't have been better. Mr. Ruff is very upset, primarily because his team hasn't yet placed in a single event today.

So, the Amazon rumor is rekindled, not that it ever really went away. Mr. Ruff walks over to the starting line, as the call for the 220-yard dash is made. He wants to watch one of these Amazon women in action himself. As of yet, Mr. Ruff has not seen one of Mr. Frazier's Amazon women up close.

Mark and Paula arrive at the starting line, as Mr. Ruff gets a good look at Paula. The first thing Mr. Ruff notices is that Paula, at five feet, eleven inches, is very tall, and is well built. In fact, the only one of the six runners that is better built than Paula is Mark. Mr. Ruff also notices that her skin is very dark for the Spring, as is Kathy's. All of that time at the beach would explain the dark skin, especially the trips made to the beach through the portal. And finally, Mr. Ruff also realizes that Paula could probably physically kick his ass if need be. This all seems odd to Mr. Ruff, as he jogs to the finish line while the runners prepare to run.

Mark tells Paula, "their coach was looking you over." Paula replies, "yeah, to see if I'm really from the Amazon, as if it's written all over my body or something." Mark whispers to Paula, "don't forget to scream when you leave the blocks." Mark then mentions to a Centerville runner, "hey, what does your coach have against Amazon women anyway?" Paula adds, "yeah! I feel like, since I'm not from here, that I'm always being scrutinized or something. It just sucks." The Centerville runner asks Paula, "you're from the Amazon?" Paula, breaking into the bodybuilding crab pose, screams, "yes!" That certainly attracted a lot of attention, and with perfect timing.

The Starter tells the runners, "on your marks." Paula, glancing over at Mark, comments, "I'd love to, but I can't leave my lane right now." Well, that worked earlier this season, so why not try it again. Fear has come over the Centerville runners, who all have been intimidated by Paula. The Starter announces, "set." The gun is fired, and Paula lets out the loudest Amazon war cry she can.

Paula actually takes an early lead in this race, with Mark right behind her. Mark runs side by side with Paula, as no one is approaching them. Paula, thinking she can beat Mark, runs even faster, causing Mark to also speed up. With 50 yards remaining, Paula is not going to let Mark win this one. This is now a two-person race. No one else matters. As they approach the finish line, Paula actually beats out Mark by one step, or about a yard.

Mr. Frazier looks at his stopwatch, seeing a time that represents Paula's best run of the season. Mr. Ruff, who is also at the finish line, has

seen enough. Mr. Ruff knows that Mark was the gold medalist in the 220-yard dash during the indoor season. This is not normal. This is the second time today the Amazon women have beat the entire Centerville team in an event. Mr. Frazier tells Paula, "that was your best run of the year! And, it's a qualifying time for State!" He gives both Paula and Mark a high-five. Mark gives Paula a hug, as they celebrate that Paula is going to the State invitational meet in the 220-yard dash.

After winning the race, Paula takes this opportunity to ask Mr. Frazier for a favor. Seeing Mr. Ruff a few feet away, Paula asks Mr. Frazier, "hey, do you still think you can get my sister into the country this Summer?" Mark whispers to Mr. Frazier, "play along." Paula then adds some fuel to the fire, adding, "she runs almost as fast as I can." Mr. Frazier replies, "I'm making another trip down there this Summer. I promise you. I'll bring her back." Paula jumps up and down and screams, "yes!"

Mr. Frazier whispers to Mark, "what's up? Fill me in." Mark whispers back to Mr. Frazier, "their coach was looking over Paula at the starting line. They think she's from the Amazon again." Mr. Frazier whispers to Mark, "when a coach starts losing, like Mr. Ruff is doing here today, sometimes they get a little crazy. Right now, Mr. Ruff is very vulnerable. They're all paranoid, and will believe just about anything." Over the indoor track season, Mr. Frazier started the rumor that he was returning to the Amazon. He is quite surprised the rumor has gone this far and taken this seriously.

Mr. Ruff is now quite annoyed, seeing the Amazon women in action first hand. Prior to today, he only had glimpses of Kathy, Paula, and Barbara while they were running. Even Tessa, a freshman, medaled in the State invitational meet over the Winter. Eddie's comment, "enough money can clear anything up," and hearing Paula ask Mr. Frazier to bring her sister back from the Amazon is all Mr. Ruff needed to hear. Mr. Ruff now thinks Dr. Karakova, and some of the other State officials, are being paid off. After all, there must be a lot of money around this school to be able to afford the awesome indoor track arena in the basement of Northside High. And, the outdoor stadium is very impressive as well. While Mr. Ruff is analyzing all of this in his head, Barbara is beating John McNamara, the Centerville miler, by a wide margin.

Barbara wins the mile, adding even more fuel to the fire. Mitchell takes second place, followed by Davis taking third place, sweeping the event. The mile medley relay is no different. An Amazon woman is in the race, and there is yet another victory. History seems to be repeating itself. Mr. Ruff, for the first time, notices that there are only two or three men on the Northside team who are consistently faster than Frazier's Amazon women. Worse yet, is the fact that the three Amazon women can beat all of Mr. Ruff's runners in any event.

The final event of the day, the 4 by 440 relay, is about to begin. When the call is made, Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula head to the starting line. McCutchen is in this race as well. He is probably glad to see Mark after what Eddie and Kathy put him through earlier. As they are waiting, Paula asks, "who has the baton?" Kathy replies, "oops." Kathy yells over to the bench, "Wendy! Erika! Bring us the baton!" Erika gets the baton and Wendy drives the Cushman and Erika to the starting line. Erika hands the baton to Kathy, as Wendy drives off to park the Cushman.

Mark, referring to Erika, comments to McCutchen, "you'll see her next year." McCutchen, taking the bait, asks, "why next year?" Mark replies, "she's not documented yet. Mr. Frazier hasn't had her birth certificate printed. He just picked her up over Easter break." McCutchen asks, "is she from the Amazon too?" Mark, in a very serious tone, replies, "no. Can't you tell? She's from the islands." McCutchen looks at Erika, seeing another very well built woman who is undoubtably just as fast as the others.

The Starter is totally amused by the Northside team. He laughs as Mark and Eddie make this stuff up meet after meet, and is astonished that anyone actually believes it. The Starter, knowing that Kathy is Dr. Karakova's daughter, asks Kathy, "they have no clue who your dad is, do they?" Kathy replies, "yeah, they do. He introduced me at the State meet, telling everyone that I'm his daughter. But, they still think we're from the Amazon, so we let them believe it." The Starter laughs, and tells Kathy, "good luck in the race." The Starter tells everyone to get ready. Mr. Ruff sees Kathy talking with the Starter, deepening the conspiracy theory even further.

The Starter tells the runners, "on your marks." He then gives the command, "set." The Starter fires the gun, and the two runners are off. While Mark is running, McCutchen takes a look at Kathy and Paula side by side. He remembers from last year that Braden, who he remembers as the very vocal guy, used to run in this race. The 440-yard dash is Braden's event. McCutchen reasons to himself how odd it is that they replaced Braden, the 440-yard dash star, with a girl, unless, of course, she is faster than he is. Logic is apparently not McCutchen's strong point but, then again, neither is running when Mark is around.

Mark hands off to Paula, who takes off with the baton, letting out her Amazon war cry. Mark returns to the starting line as he watches Paula demonstrate how Amazon women run. During Paula's leg, Mr. Ruff tells Mr. Frazier, "they tell me you have another one." Mr. Frazier, who is busy timing Paula, asks, "another one?" Mr. Ruff replies, "the one that rides around in the cart with the blonde girl. They say you just picked her up from the islands or something." Mr. Frazier is not stupid. He knows that Mark and the rest are up to something, primarily by Mark asking him

earlier to “play along” with Paula. Repeating the information that Mr. Ruff already volunteered, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Ruff, “yeah, she’s new. I just picked her up.” Mr. Frazier walks away, ready to catch Paula’s time.

Paula hands off to Kathy, who also lets out an Amazon war cry, which her primal scream is now known as. During Kathy’s leg, Mr. Frazier asks Mark, “what was all of that a while ago about Paula’s sister?” Mark explains, “they think the girls are from the Amazon again, so we let them believe it. Paula actually told one of their guys that she is from the Amazon. I told McCutchen that Erika is from the islands and you’re getting her a birth certificate.” Mr. Frazier replies, “word of that seems to have traveled around faster than you or Eddie.” Mr. Ruff has also moved fast, specifically to find a meet official to lodge a complaint. Eddie, meanwhile, waits on the track as Kathy comes around the turn.

Kathy hands off to Eddie, and finds her place in the grass to catch her breath. She watches from the ground as Eddie runs his leg. When Eddie is about to cross the finish line, Kathy stands up and joins the rest of the relay team. Eddie crosses the finish line, winning the race, ending today’s meet, and bringing an end to the regular season. The relay team exchanges high-fives, and Mr. Frazier congratulates them for yet another victory.

Mr. Ruff, and the official who is designated as the Meet Clerk, approaches Mr. Frazier. The Meet Clerk tells Mr. Frazier, “Mr. Ruff has a concern. He believes some of your team members are not eligible to run.” Mr. Frazier, already knowing what this is about, asks, “which ones?” The Meet Clerk tells him, “the three women, who are allegedly from the Amazon or something.” Mr. Frazier tells the Meet Clerk, “we’ve been over this before, at the State meet. I can assure you that they are eligible to run.” Mr. Ruff exclaims, “the tall brunette one admitted she was from the Amazon!”

The Starter, hearing the commotion, comes over and joins the conversation. Mr. Zunde always enjoys this type of entertainment, so he wanders over to see what is going on. Mr. Frazier calls Paula over, asking her, “are you from the Amazon?” Paula, who cannot even believe what is going on, replies, “yeah. You picked me up last year yourself.” Mr. Frazier whispers to Paula, albeit intentionally loud enough for Mr. Ruff to hear, “you were supposed to say ‘no.’” Mr. Ruff, in a heated rage, exclaims, “see? She admitted it!”

Not wanting to be left out of the action, Mr. Crum comes down from the stands to see if he can help. Mr. Crum is not likely to help in this situation, and it’s a sure bet that he’ll actually make things worse. Mr. Crum’s only possible contribution would be to throw a monkey wrench into the works, which he usually does quite well.

The Starter pulls the Meet Clerk aside for a private conversation, telling him, "the blonde girl is Dr. Karakova's daughter. They're not from the Amazon. This crap has been going on all year and, quite frankly, it's kind of entertaining. It started over the Winter season." The Meet Clerk asks the Starter, "how did all of this blow up to this extent?" The Starter replies, "well, if you want my opinion, Northside knows what a bunch of suckers Centerville and some of the other teams are. They keep making this shit up, and the other teams keep believing it. To Northside, it's all fun and games. You've got to hand it to them. In another hour, they'll have Centerville believing in the Easter Bunny. I see this stuff at the starting line during every one of their meets." The Meet Clerk laughs, and tells the Starter, "well, since there is no rule against telling someone they are from the Amazon, and there are no infractions, there's nothing that I'm going to do. I'll tell Ruff to file a complaint with the State."

The Meet Clerk and the Starter return to the heated discussion between Mr. Frazier, Mr. Ruff, and now Mr. Crum. Mr. Ruff asks Mr. Crum, "you're the principal! Don't you know where these women are from?" Mr. Crum, adding fuel to the fire, tells Mr. Ruff, "I have no direct knowledge of where the women are from." Mr. Frazier laughs, and tells Mr. Crum, "me neither. I wasn't present when they were born." Mr. Zunde stands back and watches, and enjoys the free entertainment.

The Meet Clerk interrupts, and tells Mr. Ruff, "if there is a problem with eligibility, I suggest that you contact the State or the regional director. There's absolutely nothing that I can do about this right now." Mr. Ruff walks away and is sadly disappointed, kicking the turf on his way out.

Mr. Crum heads to his car, walking alone across the field. Mr. Zunde quickly asks Springer for the discus. Mr. Zunde tells Wendy to drive the Cushman to the other side of the track, about 250 feet out. He tells Wendy and Erika, "I'm going to throw the discus. Pick it up and bring it back to me. If Crum tries to pick it up, fight him for it." Wendy and Erika drive out and get into position. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "watch this, George." Mr. Zunde gets onto the discus pad, waiting for the appropriate moment. When Mr. Crum is about 170 feet away, Mr. Zunde hurls the discus over Mr. Crum's head, which lands about 30 feet past him. Mr. Frazier laughs, and exclaims, "good shot!"

Throwing the discus over Mr. Crum's head was Mr. Zunde's way of reminding Mr. Crum not to interfere with athletics. Mr. Crum turns back to see who threw the discus, yelling something as he walks back to where Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are standing. Mr. Zunde, talking with Mr. Frazier, ignores Mr. Crum. Only one person on the field can throw the discus that far and that accurate. Even Mr. Crum can probably figure out who threw it.

Wendy and Erika retrieve the discus. Mr. Frazier, watching as Erika runs 50 feet from the Cushman to pick up the discus, is impressed by her speed. He asks the Starter for a favor, and requests that he time Erika in the 100-yard dash. The Starter gladly agrees. When they return with the discus, Wendy goes with the Starter and Erika to the starting line.

Mr. Crum approaches Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, who both have just finished talking with the Starter. Mr. Crum brashly asks, "who threw the discus at me? Tell me! Who threw the discus at me?" Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "nobody threw the discus at you, Crum. You were standing in the red zone. No one should be standing in the red zone until the discus, the hammer, the javelin, and the shot-put have all been removed from the field. You also should not be in the red zone unless you are trained, which you are not." Mr. Crum responds, telling Mr. Zunde, "it didn't have to be thrown! The meet is over!" Mr. Zunde replies, "sure it does. I was testing the discus to make sure it flies straight, just like I did before the meet." Mr. Crum brazenly asks, "and, if it hit me?" Mr. Zunde replies, "you were in the red zone. That would be your problem, not mine."

Mr. Zunde then instructs Mr. Crum, "leave the field on the other side, along with everyone else. And, don't walk through the red zone again." Mr. Crum, the arrogant jerk he is, tells Mr. Zunde, "I'll leave any way I want." Mr. Zunde replies, "go ahead. I'm going to test the javelin next. Be sure to stay out of its way." Mr. Crum has just received his first lesson in track and field, which is to stay out of the red zone. He decides, this time, to leave the field in the prescribed location.

After Mr. Crum is far enough away, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "I can't wait until Monday. This is going to go down good." Mr. Zunde replies, "he'll be too busy fumbling through the school records trying to find out where the girls were born." Mr. Frazier mentions, "or tracking down overdue library books."

Eddie was quite impressed at how Mr. Zunde threw the discus at Mr. Crum. Eddie asks Mr. Zunde, "hey, can I give that a try?" Mr. Zunde replies, "sure. But, first let me show you the technique." Mr. Zunde demonstrates how to properly hold the discus and the technique to Eddie. He tells Eddie, "for a good throw, you need to keep the discus far away from your body." He also instructs Eddie, "and, after you release it, don't stop spinning. Let your momentum slow down naturally." He then tells Eddie, "give it a try, but don't throw it yet. We want to make sure you're in the proper position for the release. Otherwise, you might actually hit Mr. Crum." Not that anyone would care. There are quite a few students who would like to see an airborne discus meet Mr. Crum in the region between his low back and thighs.

Eddie gives it a try, and Mr. Zunde makes a few adjustments in Eddie's starting position. Confident that Eddie is ready for a throw, Mr. Zunde gives him the green light. Mr. Frazier and the other officials watch, as Eddie prepares to hurl the discus for the first time. Eddie gets into the starting position, springs back once or twice, and goes into the spin. He then releases the discus, letting out a primal scream that rivals Kathy's. Mr. Zunde watches carefully, as the discus flies across the field. After the discus lands, Mr. Zunde runs out to the field to mark the location. Mr. Frazier, reading Mr. Zunde's mind, asks one of the Field Judges to get a measurement.

Eddie, meanwhile, is wondering if his throw was any good. He walks up to Kathy, who tells him, "that was disappointing. Mr. Crum was in the other direction. You totally missed him." Eddie replies, "maybe after the State meet. I'd hate to miss the State meet because he suspended me." Kathy replies, "well, you do have a point." Eddie then mentions to Kathy, "I wonder if my throw was any good." Kathy replies, "it went pretty far. It looked good to me."

Out on the field, Mr. Zunde watches as the measurement is made. The Field Judge, looking at the tape, tells Mr. Zunde, "187 feet, 8 inches." The Field Judge looks at Mr. Zunde, and asks, "how come he wasn't competing?" Mr. Zunde tells the Field Judge, "that's the first time he's ever thrown the discus." The Field Judge replies, "you've got to be kidding me! That throw could probably take State this year!" Mr. Zunde replies, "no, I'm not kidding. Maybe I'll give him the javelin next."

Mr. Frazier cannot wait to hear the result. He runs up to Mr. Zunde and the Field Judge and asks, "how far was the throw? What was on the tape?" The Field Judge repeating the distance to Mr. Frazier, exclaims, "187 feet, 8 inches! That's really good, really good!" Mr. Frazier is at a loss for words. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "we should see what Mark can do sometime." Mr. Frazier replies, "let's save that until after the State meet."

Mr. Zunde tells Eddie, "you threw the discus 187 feet, 8 inches. That is very impressive." Eddie asks, "really? What's a good throw?" Mr. Zunde replies, "187 feet, 8 inches is a good throw. Springer won today with a throw of about 130 feet." Kathy tells Mr. Zunde, "I want to try sometime!" Mr. Zunde replies, "we'll do that soon, maybe next week when we're practicing for State."

The Starter and Timekeeper report to Mr. Frazier with Erika's time. The Starter tells Mr. Frazier, "we timed her at a 10.7." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "a 10.7! How come she never told us she can run?" The Starter replies, "well, perhaps it's because no one ever asked her." Mr. Frazier remarks, "I should have known better. Just look at how she's built." The

Starter tells Mr. Frazier, "come on, George. You knew she can run. That's why you brought her back from the islands. Word travels fast around here, coach." Mr. Frazier and the officials have a good laugh, and the officials call it a day.

Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier walk back to the locker room along with the team. On the way, Mr. Frazier asks Mr. Zunde, "what are we going to do now?" Mr. Frazier explains, "we have a five-man track team, unstoppable relay teams, three women who kick all the other teams' asses, and a shot-put guy whose going to State." Mr. Zunde suggests, "I don't know. Maybe make a few more trips to the Amazon?" Mr. Frazier replies, "exactly. Amazon women. That's the funniest thing I've heard during my entire career." Mr. Zunde suggests, "maybe we should make a few changes next year during tryouts. We should have some cross competition between the track and the field athletes. Who knows? Maybe Springer can run."

Back in the locker room, Bobby B. is giving the shot-put the last cleaning of the season. Riley Springer, seeing Bobby B. clean the shot-put earlier this season, now also cleans the discus after every meet. Bobby B. tells Springer, "you should inspect it too, to make sure that it's not damaged." Springer replies, "yeah, that's a good point." Springer inspects the discus, noticing a few dings, but nothing that can cause an injury.

While cleaning the shot-put after each use started out as a joke played on Bobby B., cleaning the shot-put is actually standard procedure. The airborne implements used in the field events should be kept clean and frequently inspected for damage. Should the equipment fail, particularly the hammer, someone can be severely injured. The danger in the shot-put and discus, however, is potential injury to the athlete. A sharp nick in the equipment can cause a cut or laceration. If the equipment is found to be damaged, it should be taken out of service. If it cannot be properly repaired, it should be discarded.

Mr. Zunde enters the locker room, and sees Bobby B. and Springer cleaning their equipment. Mr. Zunde tells them, "I'm really glad to see both of you taking such good care of the equipment." Bobby B. replies, asking, "really?" Mr. Zunde replies, "yes. The field equipment should be cleaned and inspected before and after every use. You are the first two field athletes I've seen to take proper care of their equipment."

Bobby B. now feels vindicated. Despite what anyone else may say, he will continue to clean and inspect the shot-put after every practice and meet. He is now justified in making the claim that the shot-put is special, and that he must personally oversee its transportation and care. In fact, the shot-put has now moved up a few rungs on the ladder, and is even more special now than it was before. And now, everyone will be seeing a lot more of Erika riding in the Cushman on Bobby B.'s lap. If anyone has

any questions about the special care given to the shot-put, Bobby B. will redirect them to Mr. Zunde.

Back in the locker room, everyone is getting dressed and looking forward to pizza. The locker room conversation centers around Mr. Zunde throwing the discus in the direction of Mr. Crum. Johnson mentions, "I can't believe Mr. Zunde threw the discus at Mr. Crum. That was fun to watch." Braden replies, "Mr. Crum shouldn't have had his ass out on the field anyway." Mitchell replies, "that guy is dangerous. He could have got himself injured." Mark replies, "I think that was Mr. Zunde's point. Keep him away from the track." The guys head out, and the girls are already waiting in front of the school.

Arriving at the pizzeria, the team takes a seat in their usual place near the window. Joe yells out from behind the counter, "hey, did you guys win?" Eddie replies, "yeah! It was the last meet of the season. Now it's off to State." Everyone looks through the menu, even though they have already decided what they are going to have.

Over dinner, Mark asks Bobby B., "so, how's the shot-put?" Bobby B. explains, "it's good. I won." Mark asks, "really? Is it clean?" Making sure Erika hears this too, Bobby B. replies, "Mr. Zunde wants it kept clean and inspected before and after every use. And the discus, hammer, and javelin too. He said that me and Springer are the only two field athletes that he's ever seen who take proper care of the equipment." That put an end to this Spring's shot-put saga. But, next year it's sure to be something else.

Eddie and Kathy walk home together after dinner. Mark, Paula, Hoffer, and Tessa join them. Paula mentions, "we really worked Centerville over today." Eddie replies, "yeah. We won every event." Paula, clarifying what she meant, says, "yeah, I know. But, we really distracted the whole team without even trying." Mark adds, "I used to have to think about how to distract them, but now it just comes naturally." Kathy remarks, "they really must be suckers to believe all that Amazon stuff." Paula adds, "it's their coach that's the sucker. That guy will believe anything. He's seriously paranoid." Mark and Paula tell the rest good night, and they turn off to go to Paula's house.

Eddie, Kathy, Hoffer, and Tessa continue on their way. Tessa tells her friends, "I can't wait until the indoor track season next year. Track was a lot of fun this year. I really, really miss you guys." Kathy reminds her, "hey, we'll see you at the pool this Summer. I suspect you'll be there every day." Tessa replies, "oh yeah! That would be so nice!" Kathy asks, "so, how did you do in swimming this year?" Tessa explains, "really good for a freshman, I suppose. I won a few races. Some of the seniors around the area are really good." Kathy tells Tessa, "and, you'll be that good, if

not better, when you're a senior." Hoffer and Tessa then head to Tessa's house, as Kathy and Eddie go inside Kathy's house.

Kathy's parents ask, "so, how did the meet go?" Kathy responds, "it went good. We won everything. And, Mr. Zunde even threw the discus at Mr. Crum. That was the best part of the whole meet." Kathy's father asks, exclaiming, "he did what?" Kathy, all wired, explains, "Mr. Crum came to the meet only to cause trouble. So, when he was leaving, he walked through the red zone. So, then Mr. Zunde took the discus and threw it over his head. Then Mr. Crum yelled at Mr. Zunde. Mr. Zunde told Mr. Crum he was testing the discus to make sure it flies straight, and that he shouldn't have been in the red zone. Mr. Crum said he'll leave the field wherever he wants to. So, Mr. Zunde told him, 'go ahead,' and that he's going to test the javelin next." Eddie mentions, "he must have thrown the discus 200 feet." Kathy's father starts laughing hysterically, and says, "I wish I could have been there to see that!"

Kathy then tells her parents, "oh, and we're from the Amazon again! That rumor started up again." Kathy's mother asks, "did you have anything to do with that?" Kathy replies, "well, yeah. But, that team is so stupid, they'll believe anything. Oh, and Eddie, Paula, and Mark helped too. And then, Mr. Frazier promised Paula that he was going to the Amazon this Summer to pick up her sister. And their stupid coach even believed it." Kathy's father says, "I've never in my life seen this much drama around a track meet." Kathy's mother tells Kathy, "well, at least you're having a lot of fun!" Kathy's father mentions, "the State meet is in a week. At least I have fair warning of what I'm walking into."

Eddie tells Kathy's father, "I can stop the rumor." Kathy's father asks, "how would you do that?" Eddie replies, "I'll just start another rumor that I'm from the Ukraine, and Mark is from Czechoslovakia, and Mr. Frazier went there to get us." Kathy exclaims, "hey! That's a great idea! And, Hoffer can be from Germany!" Kathy's father replies, "at least, I have fair warning on that one too."

Kathy's mother tells her, "wow, you're really wired tonight." Kathy says, "yeah. Maybe I should run around the block, like you made me do when I was six or seven." Kathy thinks for a second, and tells her mother, "yeah, I'm going to go run around the block, go for a walk, or something else." Eddie says to her, "I'll come with you, but I don't know if I'll be able to keep up."

Eddie and Kathy walk outside, and jog a few hundred feet. They then walk into the schoolyard behind Kathy's house. Kathy says, "okay, we ran, we walked, and now it's time for the something else." Kathy puts her arms around Eddie's neck, kissing him with all the energy she hasn't expended today. With all of Kathy's excess energy, she hugs and

squeezes Eddie, as he wonders where she suddenly found all of this energy. Kathy passionately embraces Eddie, with her legs around his waist and arms around his neck. And, Eddie holds his sweetie in a way that she knows she is very loved.

A while later, they eventually find their way back to Kathy's house. When they come back inside, Kathy's mother notices that Kathy is no longer wired. Kathy's mother mentions, "it looks like you had a good run. Maybe you'll sleep better tonight." Eddie remarks, "she certainly expended a lot of energy. I don't even know where it came from."

Kathy and Eddie then go to the back yard, where they sit by the pool for a while. Kathy tells Eddie, "I wish the pool was a little warmer. Then, we could go in it." Eddie mentions, "in a few weeks we can go in. Or, we can go to the county pool through the portal." Kathy replies, "yeah, but this pool is here right now, and so are we. And, it's too cold." A bit on the impulsive side, Kathy really wants to go in the pool right now.

Kathy looks at the sky, points to a star, and tells Eddie, "you know, there's more than a billion stars in the sky, but that one's my favorite." Eddie asks, "which one?" She points to the star, describing to Eddie exactly where it is. Seeing the star, Eddie says, "yeah, I see it." He asks, "why is that one your favorite?" Kathy explains, "because that star is the first one to shine overhead at night. It comes out first. You can even see it before the sun fully sets."

Eddie mentions, "I wonder if it has a name." Kathy tells him, "it does. Its name is 'Katarina's star'. My mother named it when I was a kid. I would always come out here in the Summer, and lay here and wait for the star to appear." Eddie tells her, "we're going to do that sometime. We're going to lay here and wait for Katarina's star to appear." Kathy and Eddie lie by the pool and, after a while, they both fall asleep.

Not seeing or hearing from Kathy for a while, Kathy's mother, Chloë, comes outside and finds Kathy and Eddie sleeping near the pool. She really doesn't want to wake them, since they've both had a long day. Chloë calls Eddie's mom, Nina, telling her, "Eddie and Kathy have fallen asleep on the chaise lounges by the pool. I just want to let you know where Eddie is, since it is getting late." Nina tells her, "I bet they're really tired. You can just send him home when you want. He has a key." Chloë tells Nina, "I'd really hate to wake them up. They're safe back there anyway." Nina replies, "they've been working out hard and getting all ready for the State meet. Once that's over, life will get back to normal for them." Chloë and Nina have a long conversation, as Eddie and Kathy sleep by the pool.

Kathy finally wakes up, not even knowing what time it is. She looks up at her house, which is mostly dark inside. Kathy finds that Eddie is asleep in the chaise next to her. She leans over and kisses him, telling him, "wake up sweetie." Eddie is slow to wake up. Once he is partially awake, Eddie asks, "wow! How long have we been asleep?" Kathy replies, "I don't know." Kathy stands up, and falls back onto the chaise, saying, "I guess I'm not up yet." Eddie stands up, and comments, "wow! It's really dark out." Kathy replies, "yeah, like 3:00 a.m. dark."

Kathy stands up, and is successful this time. She walks over to the door, and finds that it is unlocked. Kathy comments, "well, at least I'm not locked out." Eddie mentions, "your key is right here." Still half asleep, Kathy replies, "oh, yeah. I forgot about that."

They go inside, and upstairs to the kitchen, where the light is on. Kathy finds a note on the table. She reads the note to Eddie, which reads, "I saw you two sleeping. I didn't have the heart to wake you. I called Nina, and told her where Eddie is. She said to let him sleep and that he has his key. Good night. Love, Mom."

Kathy looks at the clock. She says, "wow! It's only 2:00 a.m. I thought it was more like 3:00 a.m." It's not that there is much difference. She then asks, "well, now what?" Eddie replies, "I guess I go home and you go to bed." Kathy replies, "or, we just go back to sleep." Kathy tells Eddie, "I can't send you home in the dark. The boogie man might be out there."

Kathy looks around, and asks, "are we going to sleep inside or outside?" Kathy answers her own question, saying, "hmm. Let's sleep outside. It's kind of nice out there." She gets two pillows from the sofa, and takes the throw off the back of the sofa. They go back outside, and Kathy pulls the chaise lounges together. She places the pillows on the chaises, as she and Eddie lay down. They share the blanket, which is just enough to keep them warm. They kiss each other good night, and both fall asleep again.

When daybreak comes, Kathy wakes up, seeing Eddie next to her. She looks up at the sky, noticing that a few stars are still shining. The stars fade away one by one. Kathy abruptly wakes Eddie, telling him, "Eddie, Eddie! We're going to find your star!" Eddie wakes up slowly, and asks, "my star?" Kathy tells him, "yeah! The last star to fade away will be 'Eddie's star.'"

They both lay face up, and watch the sky, as the stars fade away one by one. Kathy and Eddie scan the sky, waiting for the last star to make itself known. Kathy exclaims, "there it is! Eddie's star! I found it!" Kathy points the star out to Eddie. Neither of them can see any other star in the

sky. The one lone star fades out as the morning sun rises. Kathy tells Eddie, "that's your star!" Eddie and Kathy each now have their own star. Kathy's is the first star to appear in the evening, and Eddie's is the last star to fade away in the morning.

Kathy and Eddie go inside, and find everyone is still asleep. Kathy hunts through the refrigerator and pantry and finds some food for breakfast. They sit down to eat, and Eddie tells Kathy, "you're a really good cook." Kathy replies, "how do you mean? All I did was take food out of the refrigerator and put it on a plate. It's not even hot." Eddie replies, "yeah, but you made it. That makes all the difference in the world." Kathy replies, "aw, you're so sweet." They finish breakfast, and clean up. Kathy tells Eddie, "this has been an awesome day! We got to spend it together." Eddie tells Kathy, "I've never slept in anyone's back yard before." Kathy tells Eddie, "me either. I've never slept outside all night. It's kind of nice."

Coming downstairs, Kathy's mom says, "hey! It's the sleepy heads." Kathy tells her, "we slept outside last night." Kathy's mom tells her, "you could have slept inside. Eddie could have slept in the guest room." Kathy replies, "oh yeah. It was 2:00 a.m. I guess I wasn't thinking." Eddie mentions, "outside was fine. It was kind of nice." Kathy mentions, "what is today? Saturday. That's right." Kathy's mom tells her, "I knew you were really tired last night after the meet. You were talking so fast and saying a lot. You used to do that when you were a kid, trying to stay awake." Kathy replies, "and it worked. But, then I crashed."

Eddie tells Kathy, "well, I guess I should get on home so my parents know I'm still alive. We can do something later." Kathy replies, "yeah. And, for now, I need a shower and that sort of thing." Eddie heads on home, and Kathy heads to the shower.

After Eddie leaves, Chloë calls Nina, telling her, "Eddie is on his way home. They finally woke up at 2:00 a.m., and Kathy didn't want him to walk home that late at night. They slept out on the patio." Nina tells her, "I figured he was there. I guess he was really tired." Chloë asks Nina, "today's Saturday. Are we still on for dinner tonight?" Nina replies, "that sure sounds good to me." After a well deserved relaxing day for Eddie and Kathy, everyone will meet again tonight for dinner.

The two families meet for dinner, and somehow Kathy convinces everyone that Italian food is in everyone's best interest. Kathy's argument is that pizza contains all the food groups and, when eaten with a salad, it constitutes the healthiest meal on the planet. She also argues that she's a growing girl, and, at five feet, ten inches, and weighing 170 pounds, she needs another pizza. No one really believes her, but they all decide to get Italian food anyway.

During dinner, Kathy and Eddie give their parents a complete run down of the track meet yesterday. The conversation centers around the discus, and Eddie's throw of 187 feet, 8 inches. Dr. Karakova, Kathy's father, tells Eddie, "that is certainly a significant accomplishment. Brad Sheffield, who throws for Columbia, is probably going to take the gold medal in the State meet next week. He throws 180 to 190 feet." Kathy tells Eddie, "see? You're good at the discus and you didn't even know it!" Eddie replies, "yeah, well, we're good at football too, but we took out half the team in one practice session." Kathy replies, "yeah, I remember that. That was kind of funny."

Kathy's father asks Eddie, "what happened during football?" Eddie replies, "a bunch of us from the track team tried out for football and, after the first practice session, we destroyed the whole team. I felt sorry for Nick Franz, the quarterback. Bobby B. sacked him, and he could barely get up. And, Braden knocked out Ambrosini when he tackled him. They took Ambrosini away in an ambulance."

Thinking for a moment, Kathy mentions, "and, Nick Franz is actually pretty good. He got a scholarship to some ACC school." Eddie adds, "but, by the end of that game, Franz was looking like a rag doll, Beck didn't want to get off the bench, and Ambrosini was carted away. They were all really glad to see us leave."

Kathy mentions, "and, No Neck Beck got a scholarship too. It's not like these guys are wimps." Eddie's father asks, "No Neck Beck?" Kathy explains, "yeah. They call him 'No Neck Beck' because his neck is so thick, and he's like the strongest guy in the school." Eddie adds, "except for Bobby B., who took that title away from him." Kathy's father says, "well, with two football scholarships, it sounds like Dr. Zunde is doing his job well."

After dinner, Eddie and Kathy go home with their respective parents. They both have had a long day and a long week. Next weekend is the State invitational meet, and everyone has to be well rested and ready to go. Unfortunately, between now and then, school will be in the way. Being close to the end of the school year, there are projects due, homework that needs attention, and final exams right around the corner. But, the end of the school year also brings good news. Summer break is right on the horizon.

On Monday before the State invitational meet, Mr. Frazier calls a team meeting after school. Everyone knows before hand what this meeting is about. During the last meet of the season against Centerville, a few more athletes have qualified for the State invitational meet. Mr. Frazier will introduce those who have qualified for which events in the State invitational meet, and discuss the competition.

Mr. Frazier starts the meeting, telling the group, “this is, by far, the best track team this school has ever produced. I am proud of every single one of you.” Mr. Frazier then gets down to business, and announces, “I have the final invitee list for this year’s State competition. None of this is going to be too much of a surprise, but here’s this year’s list. Eddie and Kathy will be running in the 100-yard dash. Mark and Paula will be running in the 220-yard dash. Braden will be running in the 440-yard dash. In the mile, it will be Barbara and Mitchell. In the 4 by 440 relay, Mark, Paula, Kathy, and Eddie will be taking home the gold again!” The team cheers as they hear Mr. Frazier’s prediction. Mr. Frazier continues, “in the mile medley relay, Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, and Barbara will also be bringing home the gold!” Everyone cheers again. Braden exclaims, “we’re going to kick ass again! The final ass kicking of the year!” Mr. Frazier then announces, “and in the final track event, the 4 by 220 relay team, Hoffer, Zaino, Bell, and Clark, will be taking home the gold!”

The cheering continues, which Mr. Frazier interrupts, telling the team, “but, I’m not done. Bobby B. will be throwing the shot-put this year at State! And, if I knew any better earlier this year, Eddie would have been throwing the discus.” One team member utters, “at who? Mr. Crum?” The team, including Mr. Frazier, all laugh, remembering from last week that Mr. Zunde threw the discus in the direction of Mr. Crum. Mr. Frazier then mentions, “and, if Tessa was here, I’m sure she would be joining us in some event.”

Mr. Frazier then goes over the practice schedule, which is not overly aggressive. The beginning of the week will bring a strenuous schedule but, on Thursday and Friday, Mr. Frazier wants the team to rest. Two days of rest will allow everyone’s carbohydrate reserves to completely replenish, giving them the best possible competitive advantage during the meet. He makes it a point to tell the team to forgo the pizza until Saturday after the meet. Mr. Frazier then invites the rest of the team to the meet, which will be at the University stadium as it was last year.

While Mr. Frazier is talking, Mr. Crum is seen by Mr. Zunde in the hallway outside the gym door eavesdropping on Mr. Frazier’s meeting. Mr. Zunde asks Mr. Crum, “is there something I can help you with?” Mr. Crum, who is startled by Mr. Zunde, replies, “no. I’m just locking up.” Mr. Zunde replies, “no, you weren’t. Move over.” Mr. Crum moves aside, and Mr. Zunde enters the gym. Mr. Zunde knows Mr. Crum is up to something but, at this time, he does not care. Whatever Mr. Crum is up to is insignificant as far as Mr. Zunde is concerned.

The invitees to the State meet head out to the track, along with a few other team members who just want to get another training session in. On the way out, Eddie asks Mr. Frazier, “can I throw the discus a few times?” Mr. Frazier tells him, “sure, no problem.” Mr. Frazier knows that the vast

majority of Eddie's training is done outside scheduled practices, so a few throws of the discus are not a problem.

Mr. Frazier tells Wendy and Erika, "go back and get the discs, and give them the same special treatment that you give the shot-put." This is Mr. Frazier's way of letting Bobby B. know that he knows what has been going on. But, if Bobby B. brings home a medal in the shot-put as he did this past Winter, he can have the shot-put driven to the track in a limousine for all Mr. Frazier cares. Kathy and Paula also want to give the discus a try, and again, Mr. Frazier agrees.

On the track, the mile medley relay team and the 4 by 220 relay team run practice drills. Over in the field area, Bobby B. is throwing the shot-put. The 4 by 440 relay team, however, is throwing the discus. Mr. Zunde teaches them the technique, showing them first how to hold the discus. He then demonstrates the starting position, and the warm-up before initiating the spin. Doing the spin in slow motion, Mr. Zunde tells the group, "watch my feet, and pay particular attention to the fact that I'm holding the discus far away from my body."

Mr. Zunde then demonstrates the proper time and angle to release the discus, telling them, "the optimum angle for releasing the discus is theoretically 45 degrees. Due to air resistance, however, the optimal angle for its release is 35 to 44 degrees." He then adds, "you will learn more about that in physics class in twelfth grade when you take it. At least Miss Amherst teaches something useful in her classes, unlike that Mr. O'Brien."

Mr. Zunde then tells them, "I'm now going to demonstrate how it's thrown." Mr. Zunde gets into the starting position, goes into the spin, and throws the discus. The discus travels more than 200 feet. Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula are amazed at Mr. Zunde's throw. Wendy drives the Cushman out to the field, and retrieves the discus. Erika, however, is very busy helping Bobby B. with the shot-put.

Eddie is the first to give it a try. This time, however, Eddie views his discus throw as vying for a place on the team in this event. Eddie first tries the technique in slow motion. He then gets into the starting position, goes into the spin, and releases the discus. The discus flies quite far, rivaling Mr. Zunde's throw.

Mr. Zunde asks Wendy, "did you see where it landed?" Wendy answers, "yeah. I think so." Mr. Zunde tells her to get a measurement when she retrieves the discus. Wendy reads the tape, which is already laying on the field. She then retrieves the discus. When she returns, Wendy tells Mr. Zunde, "it was about 190 feet." "About" is good enough for now. Mr. Zunde has seen all he needs to see.

Now it is Mark's turn. Mark and Eddie have been competing with each other since kindergarten. They are both competitive on the track, in the weight room, and the competition is not about to stop with the discus. Mark makes a few practice attempts while Mr. Zunde makes a few adjustments to his form and technique. Kathy and Paula watch carefully, as they are up next.

Mark gets into the starting position, goes into the spin, but does not release the discus. Mark tells Mr. Zunde, "I just want to get it right." Mr. Zunde replies, "it's better to get it right than to take out Braden," who is on the track passing the baton to Johnson. Mark gets into the starting position again, goes into the spin, and releases the discus. The discus again flies with a distance that could take first place in any regular season meet. Mr. Zunde is smiling, and laughing, expressing that he is quite impressed. Wendy retrieves the discus, and tells Mr. Zunde, "it was a little over 185 feet." Mr. Zunde asks Eddie and Mark, "and you guys have never done this before?" Mark replies, "no." Eddie replies, "yeah. Last week."

Now it's Kathy's turn. Mr. Zunde tells her, "it looks like 190 feet is your goal." Mr. Zunde goes over the technique with Kathy, who learns fast and is ready to go. Mr. Frazier is watching, as Kathy prepares to throw the discus. She makes a few practice moves, and confidently tells Mr. Zunde, "okay, I'm ready." When Kathy says she's ready, she is ready. Kathy is all fired up. She gets into position, and exclaims, "Amazon! I'll show them what Amazon is!" Kathy goes into the spin and, as she releases the discus, lets out a loud Amazon war cry.

Mr. Frazier, after seeing Kathy's throw, walks over to the discus pad from the relay transition zone. While Wendy retrieves the discus, Mr. Zunde gives Mr. Frazier the good news, telling him, "Eddie threw 190 feet and Mark just over 185." Wendy returns with the discus and the measurement. Wendy tells Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, "it was 145 feet." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "that's better than Springer!" Mr. Frazier then says to himself, "this can't be happening." Kathy, proud of her throw, smiles and says, "well, I played Frisbee a lot when I was a kid."

Paula wants her turn, and she is not about to be shown up by Kathy. After all, this is competition. With Mr. Zunde's guidance, Paula practices a few times. Paula, an inch taller than Kathy, might have a slight advantage. Paula gets ready for her throw and, with everyone now watching, is all fired up. On a mission, Paula springs back and forth a few times, winding up before she goes into the spin. Paula lets loose and, going into the spin, releases the discus with a primal scream that perhaps pushed the discus a few extra inches. Paula's throw goes off to the side just a bit, but is nevertheless an excellent throw.

Mr. Frazier rides with Wendy to retrieve the discus and take the measurement. Mr. Frazier finds the divot, and shows Wendy how to properly measure the throw. He tells Wendy, "you measure at the impact mark nearest to the discus pad." He also tells her, "Paula's throw was a little off center, but within range. Mr. Zunde is holding the other end of the tape at the inside of the circle, in line with the center of the circle." Wendy now has it down. She is now an expert at measuring discus throws. While they are riding back, Mr. Frazier tells Wendy, "you measure the shot-put, hammer, and javelin in the same way, at the impact point closest to the launch pad."

Returning to the discus pad, Mr. Frazier tells them the good news, "the throw was 143 feet, 7 inches." Paula asks, "is that good?" Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde both assure her that her throw was a very good throw. Paula, a little disappointed, remarks, "I came in last." Mr. Zunde tells her, "with a little work, your last place throw may just be able to take every regular season meet next year." Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "I showed Wendy how to get a proper measurement. Now you'll get some real numbers."

Eddie gives it another try. While Eddie is on the discus pad, Mark asks, "where do you buy a discus?" Kathy replies, "in a discus store. There's one on every corner. I can't believe you haven't seen them." Mr. Zunde is amused by Kathy's response. Kathy often gets a little silly after delivering a good performance, probably because her endorphin levels are high. Mr. Zunde tells Mark, "if you want, either I or Kathy's father can order one for you." Kathy replies, "yeah! My dad has his own discus store. It's called Acme. Wile E. Coyote, on Road Runner, orders stuff from there all the time. It will be delivered just a few minutes after you order it." Paula remarks, "or, you can order a discus at the pizzeria. They have shot-puts and javelins there too." Mr. Zunde is glad to see them all having a good time.

Eddie's second throw was on par with his first throw. Mark takes another shot at it, and also does reasonably well. Kathy and Paula take a few more throws, both delivering a decent performance. Mr. Zunde comments to Mr. Frazier, "Springer is going to have a tough time of it next year." Mr. Frazier replies, "maybe we should see what Bobby B. can do." Mr. Zunde remarks, "probably not anywhere near Eddie. He'll have to improve his agility. But, with some practice, I'm sure he could be very competitive." With enough on his plate this week, Mr. Frazier replies, "let's table that until next year."

All of the fun and games involving the discus are now over. The 4 by 440 relay team joins the rest of the team, who are running relay drills. During today's practice, the athletes polish their handoff skills and stretch. The team's performance going into the State invitational meet is

at this year's peak. The team's distraction of the opponents also seems to be at its peak, courtesy of Mark. In fact, Mr. Frazier tells the team to think of new ways to distract the competition. He has seen how distraction techniques have worked so well for Mark. Mr. Frazier can clearly see how the rest of the team can also benefit using a little psychological warfare.

On the Saturday of the State invitational meet, the team meets at the school early, dresses, and gets on the bus. Many of the other team members, who did not qualify for the meet this year, also board the bus, and will give their support. One of the students, Eric Blankenship, even had a banner printed, which he is keeping as a surprise until the meet. This time around, Kathy will get to run on her father's track. Well, it's not exactly her father's track, but the track is at the University where he is an Exercise Science professor. Last year, as a team assistant, Kathy was more or less a spectator.

When the bus arrives at the State University, the team unloads the equipment. The team members not participating in the meet are nice enough to carry the equipment, which amounts to towels, Gatorade, a few cases of water, and a large electric fan. Bobby B. left his shot-put back at the school. One will be provided for him at the meet, although it is not quite as special as the one Bobby B. and Erika have been caring for all year. While the team gets settled at their bench, Blankenship, a freshman, heads up to the stands to display his banner.

While the stands fill with spectators, the athletes are on the track and on the field, doing some warm-up exercises. Eddie meanders over to the discus pad, where the discus athletes are taking a few practice throws. Since there are a few discs laying around, Eddie decides to make his grand entrance into the event, foreshadowing what may be to come next year. It is not too difficult to pick out Brad Sheffield, who is the favorite to take the gold medal in this event. Sheffield takes a warm-up throw, which is what Eddie was hoping to see. As Sheffield leaves the discus pad, Eddie can now take his turn. Sheffield watches carefully, having never seen the six foot, two inch, 210-pound plus field athlete before.

Eddie gets onto the discus pad, noticing that he is being carefully watched by Sheffield. Eddie goes into the spin and, as he releases the discus, lets out his own Amazon war cry. Eddie watches as the discus flies several feet beyond Sheffield's throw. Satisfied with his throw, Eddie begins to walk away.

Sheffield stops him, and asks, "hey! Who are you?" Eddie replies, "Eddie. Don't worry. I'm a sprinter. I'm not competing against you today." Sheffield, who is a senior, is relieved. Eddie tells him, "hey, it's nice to meet you. I have to go." Eddie, again, has just been noticed by a

few college scouts. A novice at the discus, Eddie just delivered a throw that had Sheffield shaking in his boots.

When Eddie gets back to the bench, Kathy tells him, "hey! Check it out," as she points to the banner in the stands. The banner, which Blankenship had made, reads "AMAZON!" Eddie replies, "awesome!" Kathy, Paula, and Barbara are all excited. They really enjoyed hearing the Amazon cheers at the State invitational meet during the indoor track season. Not everyone, however, is pleased to see the banner. Some of the coaches have had enough of the Amazon controversy. Although they complain, their complaints get nowhere with the officials. A banner in the stands does not violate any rules, so they are completely out of luck.

The meet gets underway, and the hurdlers get on the track. The 100-yard dash preliminaries are next, so Eddie and Kathy warm up. Eddie, not surprisingly, is the number one seed. Kathy is the number four seed, and will be running in the same heat as Eddie. The six fastest times of the morning will make it to the final.

The call is made for the 100-yard dash. Eddie and Kathy head straight for the starting line. When the other sprinters arrive, Kathy tells Eddie, "hey, look! They made me a banner!" Some of the guys look up at the banner, and take a second look at Kathy. One of the runners comments to Kathy, "oh, so you're that Amazon girl we've been hearing about?" Kathy replies, "it's Amazon woman, thank you very much. And yes, that's me."

All of a sudden, the focus shifts to Kathy. Another runner asks her, "are you really from the Amazon?" Kathy replies, "all of us are. We're all from the same tribe. Can't you tell?" Eddie and Kathy continue to warm up, as the rest of the runners in the heat discuss among themselves whether Kathy should be in the race at all. While she is stretching, Kathy mentions, "our biggest problem is that none of us had birth certificates, but Mr. Frazier fixed that." During their discussions, the other runners are cooling down and losing their focus on the meet.

The Starter tells the runners in the first heat to get ready. The Starter's request comes as a surprise to everyone except Eddie and Kathy. Everyone else at the starting line was too busy discussing among themselves whether Kathy should be allowed to run. The Starter announces, "on your marks." Before moving to his lane, Eddie whispers to Kathy, "I'm going to do the Amazon scream thing too." Kathy whispers back, "it's the Amazon war cry, hon." Hearing Eddie and Kathy whisper to each other throws one of the runners off, who is paranoid and thinks that they are talking about him. The Starter announces, "set." The gun is fired, and both Eddie and Kathy let out a primal scream, now known as

the Amazon war cry. No one was expecting to hear that, which certainly distracted the already distracted runners.

Eddie and Kathy are out of the blocks first, but this is part of the reason they both made it to State. Eddie is in first place and Kathy in second place after the first 25 yards. Unless a runner is really strong in the last half of the race, it is very difficult, but not impossible, to make up for a bad start. With the distractions, there were three bad starts out of the top six seeds. Halfway through the race, Kathy is holding her own. No one has caught her yet. The sound of footsteps right behind her, however, is forcing her to run her best. Eddie, still out in front, has the race wrapped up at 75 yards. Kathy is still fighting to keep her position. During the last 25 yards of the race, there is no positional change between Kathy and the runner behind her. She has maintained a two-yard lead over the runner since mid race, suggesting that they are about the same speed. Eddie crosses first, and Kathy second. Coming in third place is a guy named Larry Block, a senior from Union High School, which is out in the middle of nowhere.

Following the race, Eddie, Kathy, and Mr. Frazier all walk back to the bench together. Eddie tells Kathy, "you did really good!" Kathy replies, "the guy behind me sounded like he was catching me." Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, "you beat him because you were out of the blocks faster. Trust me. He was doing his best and couldn't catch you. That's good news." Based on their times, Mr. Frazier reassures Eddie and Kathy that they will both make it to the final.

After the race, Eddie and Kathy both rest on the bench. Hoffer, Zaino, Bell, and Clark hear the call for the 4 by 220 relay. They head to the starting line with Mr. Frazier. Up in the stands is Tessa, who ran in this event over the indoor track season. Tessa is curious to see how this relay team does.

Kathy, now realizing that a medal is within reach, tells Eddie, "I want so much to win a medal now. I didn't think I could make it to the final but, now that I did, I want to win something." Eddie tells her, "you've done everything you can to get here. You can win. The rest of the heats were slower than anyone you've already ran against." Kathy replies, "yeah, I know that up here," pointing to her head, "but I don't know that right here," pointing to her heart. Eddie reminds her, "just remember what you did with the discus earlier this week. You can do this." Eddie thinks for a while, and says, "and, we'll get Braden to start the Amazon chant during the final."

Kathy gazes over at the track, and says to Eddie, "wow! Look at Hoffer go!" Eddie replies, "Hoffer. Yeah. That's it! Tessa is up in the stands. We'll get her and the rest of the team to do the Amazon chant." Eddie

and Kathy scan the stands, trying to find Tessa and the rest of the track team. Kathy sees Mr. Crum in the stands, sitting alone. No one knows why he showed up, since he hates athletics. They finally find Tessa and a few of the other team members, sitting right near the banner that Blankenship hung earlier.

They motion for Tessa to come down to the fence. Tessa comes down from the stands, meeting them at the fence, along with a few others. Eddie and Kathy ask them to start the Amazon chant when any of the women run. They are all glad to do it. Kathy reminds them that the 100-yard dash final follows the mile, and to start the chant before the race begins.

Eddie and Kathy return to the team bench. Kathy tells Paula and Barbara, "our Amazon chants will begin when we run." Barbara responds by saying, "that will take a few seconds off my time!" Just hearing the crowd cheer for them energizes Kathy, Paula, and Barbara. Kathy mentions, "maybe the chant will catch on, like it did during the indoor season." Kathy, who is now more confident, is getting all fired up. They hear the first call for the one-mile run, which means that the 100-yard dash final is imminent.

Mr. Frazier officially informs Eddie and Kathy that they both have made the final. Eddie is the number one seed, and Kathy is now the number two seed. Larry Block is the number three seed. Mr. Frazier also informs them that he has not heard anything about the other three runners. Kathy is feeling even more confident. Now the number two seed, Kathy has moved up two notches after the preliminaries.

As Barbara and Mitchell head to the starting line, the team wishes them luck. Right before the mile begins, Tessa and the rest begin the Amazon chant. The words, "Amazon, Amazon, Amazon!" can be heard throughout the stands and on the field. Barbara waves to the crowd, and the cheering becomes more widespread and louder. As she enters the track, reality has set in that there is a woman running in this race, and the crowd cheers louder and louder. When all of the runners are in position, the Starter tells the runners to get set, and fires the gun. Listening to the cheer, one would think the entire crowd was rooting for Barbara.

Halfway through the race, the spectators have moved beyond the novelty of seeing a woman in the race. They have realized that Barbara, who is leading the pack, did not show up just to look pretty. During the third lap, the crowd realizes that Barbara might actually win the race. The chanting gets louder, and Barbara runs faster. Barbara widens her lead, with Mitchell fighting it out with Zak Ward from Henderson High for second place. Ward has a score to settle with Barbara and Mitchell from this past indoor track season.

During the last lap, Barbara is far enough separated from the pack that no one can catch her. Ward takes a slight lead over Mitchell, with Mitchell right on Ward's heels. With about 220 yards to go, Mitchell is calculating when he will attempt to pass Ward. With 150 yards remaining, Mitchell makes his move, and puts the pressure on Ward. Ward speeds up, but Mitchell tracks Ward's progress. Ward, appearing to be at his limit, cannot keep up with the pressure Mitchell delivers. Mitchell passes Ward with 60 yards remaining as Barbara crosses the finish line. The crowd cheers, "Amazon, Amazon, Amazon!" even louder as they watch Barbara cross the finish line and win the race. Mitchell takes second place, and Ward has to settle for third place.

While the mile was underway, Eddie and Kathy have made their way to the starting line for the 100-yard dash final. As Barbara walks by the spectators, she waves to the crowd. Once she has their attention, she points to Kathy, who is behind the starting blocks for the 100-yard dash final. Barbara raises her arms, encouraging the crowd to cheer louder for Kathy. The crowd, now focused on Kathy, starts cheering, "Amazon, Amazon, Amazon!" again. Kathy waves to the crowd, who are now her fan club.

While they are waiting, Eddie asks Kathy in a voice loud enough for the other runners to hear, "how much do you get paid if you win this race?" Kathy, knowing exactly what Eddie is up to, answers, "I think I get three thousand for first place, two thousand for second place, and only a thousand for third place. The 4 by 440 relay pays a little better." Eddie replies, "wow! That's really good for your first year!"

Kathy's comment almost incites a riot among the other finalists. One finalist argues that getting paid to run is strictly against the rules. Another finalist is looking around for a meet official to report the violation. But, they have little time to complain, for the Starter announces, "on your marks." The Starter announces, "set," and the crowd cheers even louder. When the gun is fired, Eddie and Kathy are out of the blocks, both in search of a medal.

It does not take long to figure out that Kathy's pre-race comments really irritated the other runners. Kathy is primarily concerned with Block, who she now leads by only a few feet after 35 yards. Eddie is in first place, and knows by the sound of the feet right behind him that they are Kathy's. Kathy is focused on chasing Eddie, not caring who is behind her. With 50 yards remaining, it does not look like Block will catch Kathy if she can keep up her speed. With 25 yards remaining, no one is within reach of Eddie. Kathy still maintains her lead over Block, while Block and another runner fight it out for third place. Eddie crosses the finish line first, with Kathy a few yards behind him. Kathy takes second place, wondering how she even ran that fast. Taking third place is Duane Harris,

wearing a uniform with the school name *Central* on it. Block settles for fourth place, not that it's worth anything. Fourth place is worse than a participation trophy.

Eddie and Kathy congratulate each other with a victory hug. The crowd abruptly stops the Amazon cheer, replacing it with words like "aw, how sweet," in response to them hugging each other. Eddie and Kathy give each other a kiss, and the crowd goes wild, with more clapping and cheering. Kathy's father, who was standing at the finish line, gives Kathy a hug and congratulates her on winning second place. Mr. Frazier is ecstatic, bringing home two medals in one event. The four of them have a victory celebration at the finish line. Mr. Frazier talks with Dr. Karakova for a few minutes, telling him how badly Kathy wanted to medal in this event. Dr. Karakova assures Mr. Frazier that he has first hand knowledge of how much Kathy wanted to win something today.

The race, in the eyes of some, is not over. Some of the finalists report to their coaches that the girl gets paid if she places in the race. Among the complainants is Larry Block, who thinks he deserves third place. Block talks to the Union coach, Woody Hayes, and reports what he heard. Block and Hayes go to speak directly to the Meet Director, none other than Dr. Alexander Karakova himself.

Hayes approaches Dr. Karakova, telling him, "sir, one of my runners overheard a violation of the rules before the 100-yard dash final that I think you should know about." Dr. Karakova replies, "oh really? What violation is that?" Hayes reports the violation, telling Dr. Karakova, "one of my runners, Larry Block, heard the girl in the final tell her teammate that she gets paid for running. She actually quoted the dollar amounts for first, second, and third place." Block adds, "she said she gets three thousand dollars for first place, two thousand for second place, and one thousand for third place."

Dr. Karakova, who has really had enough of this petty nonsense, responds by telling them both, "that's really good. Northside pays more than most teams in their division. Mr. Frazier must be well funded in order to go to the Amazon to get these women." Mr. Hayes arrogantly responds, "so, you're not going to take this seriously?" Dr. Karakova replies, "no. Actually, I'm not. The girl that took second place is my daughter Katarina. I can assure you that she is neither getting paid nor is she from the Amazon. And, if you haven't noticed, Karakova isn't exactly the most popular name in this country. Statistically, it's very likely that we're related."

Block asks his coach, "then, why would she say that?" Before Mr. Hayes can respond, Dr. Karakova explains, "they tell the opponents that their shoe laces are untied before a race. They pretend to fight at the

starting line over whose turn it is to win. One of the guys on that team even convinced a finalist that a girl on the sidelines is interested in him. He turned and looked at her during the race, causing him to leave his lane. Anyone who believes any of these pre-race distraction techniques, quite frankly, does not deserve to win.” Dr. Karakova then mentions, “falling for this kind of nonsense is not compatible with the path to college competition.” Dr. Karakova tells Block, “stay focused on your own race. Pay absolutely no attention to what anyone else is doing or saying.” Mr. Hayes, realizing his runner fell for the oldest trick in the book, walks away disappointed and embarrassed. Block had learned his lesson today, albeit the hard way.

Back at the team bench, Eddie and Kathy sit and relax as Braden is getting ready to run the 440-yard dash. With their morning over, Eddie and Kathy ask Mr. Frazier if they can go to the cafeteria and get something to eat. Their next race is at the end of the meet, so they have quite a lot of time. Mr. Frazier tells them it is okay, and asks them to bring something back for him since he is very busy at the moment. Mr. Frazier then heads off with Braden to the 440-yard dash. Barbara, Johnson, Mitchell, and the 4 by 220 relay team, join Kathy and Eddie for lunch. Mark and Paula, who will be in the 220-yard dash shortly, have already eaten.

After lunch, Kathy tells Eddie, “now, I really want a nap. This getting up early really sucks.” Eddie replies, “yeah, we can do that. There’s a student lounge here somewhere if I remember from last year.” Kathy reminds Eddie, “we won the gold medal in the relay in indoor track. That’s because I got a nap before the race.” That is probably not the reason, but if Kathy wants a nap, any excuse will do. They go to the student lounge, find a sofa, and take a nap. The 4 by 220 relay team all head back to the bench, and bring Mr. Frazier his lunch.

After Kathy’s nap, Eddie and Kathy return to the bench, finding the mile medley team heading to the starting line. They sit with Mark and Paula, who finished the 220-yard dash a little earlier. Kathy asks, “so, what did we miss?” Paula replies, “nothing. They stopped the meet until you returned.” Kathy, also quick on her feet, replies, “I told them they didn’t have to do that!”

Paula tells Kathy, “I got second place in the 220! Mark won, but I let him win.” Mark interjects, “yeah, right.” Paula also tells them, “and Braden won the 440.” Mark responds, “yeah, with a lot of hot air and ranting. You should have seen it. Braden finished the race before one guy got out of the blocks. Just ask him. He’ll tell you.” Well, not quite, but Braden did do what he set out to do, which is to win the gold medal.

Paula asks Kathy and Eddie, “oh, and by the way, what was that thing you guys supposedly said about getting paid?” Eddie replies, “I asked Kathy how much she gets paid if she wins.” Kathy adds, “yeah. I knew what he was up to. So, I said, ‘I think I get three thousand to win this race, or two thousand for second place, and only a thousand for third place.’” Eddie explains, “that really started an argument at the starting line and, before you knew it, the Starter told everyone, ‘on your marks.’ They really got blind sided by that one.” Paula informs them, “word of that has really gotten around.” Eddie remarks, “wow! That worked better than I thought it would.” Paula tells Kathy, “your dad came over and told Mr. Frazier about that one.” Kathy asks, “uh oh. Am I in trouble?” Paula replies, “I doubt it. They were both laughing.”

Mark asks, “is McCutchen here?” Eddie replies, “I hadn’t seen him.” Mark calls out to Wendy, and asks, “hey, Wendy! Is Centerville here for the 4 by 440?” Wendy looks through the list, and replies, “yeah. They’re in your heat.” Mark tells Eddie, “I’ll bet you a pizza that if I tell McCutchen before the race that his diaper is leaking, he’ll look.” Eddie quickly replies, “you’re on!” Kathy remarks, “McCutchen can’t really be that stupid.” Mark replies, “but, he’ll look anyway.” Hearing what Mark said, Eddie is now not so sure about his bet. But, it doesn’t matter. It’s only a pizza and, if Mark is right, it would be worth it.

The call for the final event of the day is made, and the 4 by 440 relay team heads to the starting line. On the way, Mark informs Mr. Frazier, “I bet Eddie a pizza that, if I tell McCutchen his diaper is leaking, he’ll look.” Eddie mentions, “I shouldn’t have made that bet.” Mr. Frazier laughs, and says, “I’m buying dinner tonight for everyone if he looks!” Kathy tells Paula, “hey! Mr. Frazier just said he’s buying us pizza before the awards ceremony tonight!” Paula replies, “awesome!” Mr. Frazier replies, “now, I didn’t exactly say that.” Mark tells Mr. Frazier, “oh yeah, you did, because he’s going to look.” Kathy looks at Paula, and says, “superpowers. He’ll look.”

The 4 by 440 relay team arrives at the starting line. The other teams arrive one by one. Mark spots McCutchen among the Centerville relay team that they’ve beaten many times in the past. An official announces the lane assignments, which were already known to the teams in advance. Northside is in lane one, and Centerville is in lane four. Mr. Frazier hands Mark the baton. Kathy and Paula wave to the crowd, and the Amazon chant again begins.

Mark tells Mr. Frazier and everyone else, “okay, watch this. I can taste my pizza already.” Mark walks over to McCutchen, and shakes his hand, telling him, “hey, good luck.” He then whispers to McCutchen, “oh, and by the way, your teammates are probably not going to tell you this, but,” pointing to McCutchen’s shorts, tells him, “your diaper is leaking.”

McCutchen looks down, and laughter breaks out among the Northside relay team. Mark walks away, and stands behind his blocks waiting for the Starter's command. Mark looks over at Mr. Frazier, who yells out to Mark, "it looks like I'm buying dinner tonight!" Kathy whispers to Eddie, "see? Superpowers."

The command, "on your marks," is given by the Starter, quickly followed by, "set." Everyone gets set, and the gun is fired. Mark, who now easily runs a quarter mile in the lower 50-second range, takes an early lead. Once Mark is gone, Eddie asks Kathy again, "how much do you get paid for this race if you win?" Kathy replies, "four thousand because it's a 440. It's much harder than the 100!" Eddie replies, "I wonder why they pay you girls more than us." Kathy tells Eddie, "we're pretty. And, we attract a lot more attention than you guys do."

Mr. Frazier, wanting to get in on the action, tells Kathy and Eddie, "I've told you both that I don't want you discussing your bonuses on the track. Someone might hear you and get us in trouble." Paula, getting ready to get on the track, reminds Mr. Frazier, "remember? You said that if we win this race, you're bringing my sister back from the Amazon the week after school is over!" Mr. Frazier assures her, "I already have my plane ticket." Mr. Frazier is catching on well, participating in the psychological warfare. Mark hands off to Paula, and Paula takes off on a mission.

Eddie whispers to Mr. Frazier, "I think we had an audience." Mr. Frazier replies, "we do. And, whoever comes in fourth place is going to file a complaint." Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, "fourth place is the worst possible outcome in a meet like this, especially if it's close. And, if there is any possibility of an infraction, a complaint will be filed by whoever took fourth place." Eddie and Mr. Frazier watch Paula, as she maintains first place. Kathy waves to the crowd as she gets onto the track.

Paula hands off to Kathy, who announces the start of her leg with a loud Amazon war cry. The crowd cheers louder and louder as Kathy runs her last race of the season. Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, "well, I'd better let you get to work." Eddie gets onto the track, waiting for Kathy as she comes around the curve. McCutchen, in lane four, looks over at Mark. Mark points to McCutchen's shorts, getting a little more mileage out of his earlier joke.

Kathy hands off to Eddie, and quickly leaves the track. Kathy finds a place to lie down, as she watches Eddie run his leg. Mr. Frazier is not even timing the legs of this race. This is the last race of the season, and he already knows within a few seconds what everyone's individual times will be. Mr. Frazier notices that McCutchen receives his baton 20 seconds after Eddie received his. McCutchen, however, is not the concern. The team in lane two is in second place, receiving their baton eight seconds

after Eddie received his. But, in order to beat Eddie, the runner in lane two will have to run a 45-second quarter mile. That is not likely to happen. Halfway through the leg, it appears the runner in lane two has actually lost some ground, but not much. As Eddie approaches the finish line, Kathy stands up and waits to meet him. Eddie crosses the finish line first and the team cheers wildly.

Mr. Frazier gives the team members a high-five, and exclaims, "there are more heats, but it looks like you guys took it!" Eddie and Kathy hug each other, and Kathy says, "wow! My first year is over. I can't believe it! It was so much fun!" The 4 by 440 relay team will likely take the gold medal, but there are other heats to be run. They head back to the bench to sit back and relax until the final results are in.

At the bench, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier that Bobby B. took the gold medal in the shot-put. This is good news, since Bobby B. was the number two seed. The team decides to get dinner before the awards ceremony. Mark reminds Mr. Frazier that he is buying dinner for everyone tonight. Mr. Frazier, after today's performance, is glad to buy everyone dinner. They all head to the cafeteria, where pizza is waiting for them.

After dinner, they all rush back to the track, which has been set up for the awards ceremony. The team had some pizza left over, so they put the slices in a box, and take it back with them. Barely making it back in time, they return to the bench during the awards for the hurdles. Since everyone has won something, the team heads to the shot-put pad, waiting for their name to be called. Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, Wendy, and Erika return to the empty bench, indulging on the leftover slices of pizza. In this case, an empty bench is a good thing, for all the athletes have placed in this meet.

The program moves on to the 100-yard dash, and Kathy is all excited. The Meet Announcer announces, "first place in the 100-yard dash, running for Northside High School, goes to Edward Bogenskaya." As Eddie walks up and stands on the first place tier, the crowd cheers. The Meet Announcer then announces, "in second place, also running for Northside High School, Katarina Karakova." Kathy walks up, and the crowd goes wild, reviving the Amazon cheer that has dominated the day. The Meet Announcer announces, "in third place, running for Central High School, Duane Harris."

Once the medalists are on their tiers, the meet officials drape the medals around the winners' necks. The Amazon cheer continues, and intensifies when Eddie gives Kathy a kiss. Photographs of the winners are taken, but most of the photography centers on Kathy. The ceremony then moves on to the next event. Eddie and Kathy return to the shot-put area, wearing their medals, waiting to be called for the 4 by 440 relay.

The ceremony moves along quickly. Hoffer, Zaino, Bell, and Clark take first place in the mile medley event. This is the pinnacle of Zaino's, Bell's, and Clark's track career. They are seniors, and will not return next year. They have finally received a gold medal at the Spring invitational meet, something that has been elusive until their buddy, Mahoney, left.

The awards ceremony comes to the one-mile run. The Amazon cheer begins again, as Barbara is called to the stage along with Mitchell. After the medals are distributed for the mile, the announcement is made that Barbara will be attending the State University next year, right here, where the meet is being held.

Braden is called to the stage for the 440-yard dash, where he won the gold medal. While on stage, Braden appears as if he has enough energy to run every event in the meet and win. Braden has kicked ass in the 440-yard dash this year, breaking the 50-second barrier many times. Today, he had the best run of his life. Braden now has his sites set on breaking the State record in a future meet.

In the 220-yard dash, Mark and Paula are called to the stage. Mark won the gold medal, and Paula won the silver medal. Paula might argue that she let Mark win, just so he wouldn't be embarrassed. But, after all, Paula did beat Mark once this year, fair and square. Paula's presence on the stage stimulates the crowd again to begin the Amazon cheer.

Braden, Mitchell, and Barbara return to the stage with Johnson, who won the gold medal in the mile medley relay. Johnson almost made State in the 880-yard run, but he has been plagued by a few highly competent seniors in this event. Next year, Johnson is sure to qualify. With Barbara back on the stage, the Amazon cheer begins again.

The last track award to be distributed is for the 4 by 440 relay. The Meet Announcer begins by introducing the winner, "first place in the 4 by 440 relay goes to Northside High School. Running for Northside are Mark Svoboda, Paula Giovani, Katarina Karakova, and Edward Bogenskaya." The team comes up and takes their place on the first place tier. The Meet Announcer announces the teams taking second and third place, but no one hears who they are because the Amazon cheer is quite loud. This time Kathy is on the stage with Eddie, and Mark with Paula. They all get to celebrate this victory together. The medalists receive their awards and, after the photos, return to their teams.

The ceremony moves on to the field events. Bobby B. is called to the stage, as Mr. Zunde stands and claps. Mr. Zunde is impressed that Bobby B. has come this far so quickly. There is, however, no Amazon cheer for Bobby B. Anyone else wanting a gold medal in the shot-put is probably

out of luck for the next two years. Bobby B. returns to the team bench, and the team celebrates their victory.

Eddie, however, is off to the side where he is watching the awards for the discus. Brad Sheffield is called to the stage, winning the gold medal. Eddie, wanting to find out what the winning throw was in the discus, walks over to a table where the Meet Clerk and some other officials are filling out papers. Eddie asks one of the officials, "can you tell me what the winning throw was in the discus?" The official asks the Head Field Judge, "what was the distance that took the gold in the discus?" The Head Field Judge, looking through his papers, replies, "Brad Sheffield threw 182 feet, 9 inches. Not bad." Eddie tells them, "hey, thanks. I appreciate it." Eddie recalls he threw somewhere between 185 and 190 feet.

When Eddie returns to the team bench, Kathy asks him, "hey! Where were you?" Eddie replies, "I wanted to find out what the winning throw was in the discus. It was 182 feet, 9 inches." Kathy exclaims, "wow! You could beat that!" Eddie replies, "yeah, I know. I'm thinking about trying out for the discus next year." Kathy informs Eddie, "what do you mean, try out? You're already in!"

While Eddie was away, Tessa, the rest of the track team, and the parents came down from the bleachers, and join the medalists. Eddie's parents congratulate him and the other team members. College scouts, reporters, and photographers make their way to the Northside bench, and attempt to talk with anyone they can. Unfortunately, the scouts find out that most of the winners are not seniors or juniors. At this point in the season, a college scout must present an outstanding offer to any senior, as most athletes going to college have already committed to a school. But, the scouts give it their best shot anyway.

Mr. Crum, who was in the stands during the meet, makes his way to the team bench. Why he showed up at the meet is anyone's guess. Mr. Crum introduces himself to a few reporters, letting them know that he is the principal at Northside High School. The reporters want a picture of Mr. Crum with the coaches and the team, and they encourage him to come to the bench and join the team. When he does arrive at the bench, Mr. Crum sees Eddie's father, and becomes somewhat nervous.

One photographer wants a photograph of the entire group. Braden tells the photographer, "I ain't getting my picture made with the principal. He tried to give me detention to keep me out of a meet." The team decides that, if Braden is not in the picture, then no one will be in the picture. One reporter questions Braden further about the events surrounding his potential detention, which Braden is glad to give him.

Mr. Crum gets the message, and decides to stand aside. The team, with everyone wearing their medals, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, Wendy, and Erika all pose for the photograph. During the photograph, Eddie's, Mark's, and Paula's parents, along with Kathy's mother, are discussing the meet. Dr. Karakova joins them, telling them, "today has made track and field history in the State." Eddie's father asks, "how so?" Dr. Karakova explains, "first, a woman has never placed in an event at the State level before. Second, no team has ever taken first place in so many events before."

Mr. Crum, hearing this, walks up and attempts to join the conversation. After all, Dr. Karakova is the Meet Director, and this is a great chance for Mr. Crum to get some good publicity. Dr. Karakova continues, saying as he points to Mr. Crum, "and third, we've never had a principal, like Mr. Crum here, to interfere with a sports team with such voracity before." Mr. Crum finally gets the message, and leaves the field. Mr. Zunde, watching as Mr. Crum leaves, asks with a loud voice, "hey! Has anyone seen the discus?" A few students, who knew the story behind Mr. Zunde's comment, laugh hysterically.

The team heads to the bus, as yet another track season comes to a close. But, this year was special. The women stole the show, both during the indoor track season and during the Spring season. But, in retrospect, everyone ran better than they would have if the women were not on the team. Mitchell stepped up his game in the mile. Eddie and Mark are faster than ever. When the opponents see Braden on the track, they are ready to throw in the towel before the race even begins. And, Johnson is the most versatile of anyone, being a top notch sprinter and distance man. On the field, Bobby B. looks like he will be unstoppable for the next two years. Hoffer and Tessa, both freshmen this year, will become part of the backbone of the indoor team next year.

On Monday morning, Eddie, Kathy, and the tribe, hang around in the school lobby, with their medals draped around their necks. The group celebrates again, which is attracting a lot of attention. The medalists get a lot of high-fives from their friends, and even from those they don't know. Mr. Crum, who was put out on Saturday, sees the celebration, and decides to break it up. He tells them to go to class, even though there is fifteen minutes before class starts. The group decides to go outside, and spend the time there.

As the busses unload, everyone notices the women wearing their medals around their necks. One of Kathy's classmates, Tiffany, asks her, "you actually won? You beat the guys?" Kathy replies, "yeah! Well, except for Eddie." Tiffany looks at Kathy's two medals, and says, "wow! This one's gold! You won first place!" Kathy tells her, "that was in our relay race. It's me, Eddie, Paula, and Mark." Tiffany asks what a relay race is,

and Kathy explains it to her. She tells Kathy, "I am definitely coming to watch you next year. I want to see this!"

Many of the students were totally unaware that women were on the track team. The debacle earlier this year with Mr. Crum did not make it too much further than the athletic circle. The rules won, and Mr. Crum has been put on notice that he must also abide by them. But, now the word is out that women are allowed on the sports teams. Next year will present an opportunity to find new and undiscovered talent in track and field, and perhaps other sports as well. And, while the coaches are searching for new talent, Mr. Crum is still searching for a new desk. It is the last week of the school year, and his desk has not yet been replaced.

The final bell of the school year rings, and Summer begins. Eddie and Kathy meet at the front of the school. Eddie tells Kathy, "I got an A!" Kathy asks, "how do you know?" Eddie tells her, "Mr. Malik told me." Kathy replies, "oh, auto shop. Of course you got an A!" Eddie mentions, "next year, I get to take advanced auto shop, and also woodworking and metal shop." Kathy replies, "well, when I get to buy a car, you can keep it running for me." Eddie asks, "you're not trading in your bicycle, are you?" Kathy replies, "no way! That ain't happening!" Eddie tells Kathy, "you don't even have a driver's license yet." Kathy informs Eddie, "yeah, well, I have my learners permit, and I'm going to pass Driver's Ed. And, I think I take my road test in like two weeks." Eddie replies, "great! You can drive me to the beach!" Kathy tells him, "that's in the plan, hon."

After a while, the whole tribe is together. It is no big secret what today's agenda is. The only question is what will be on the pizza. They all head to the pizzeria, and are all as happy as they can be now that Summer vacation has begun. Everyone talks about their plans for the Summer, which includes working out and getting faster and stronger for next year. The sad part is that Barbara will be in college next year. But, the good news is that the University is only a few miles away, and she will be back to work with the team.

The group overheard earlier that Kathy said that she wants to buy a car. While they are waiting for their pizza, Paula suggests, "make sure you get something that will seat four of us." There is no big secret there. Paula and Mark want to ride to the beach with Kathy and Eddie. Braden tells Kathy, "forget that. Get something that is going to kick ass!" Braden's comment comes as a surprise to no one.

Eddie has his own suggestion, telling Kathy, "get something that I won't be spending my weekends fixing." Kathy tells him, "darn! I was going to buy three junk cars that didn't run, and tell you to make one good car out of them." Eddie replies, "I'd rather carry you around town." Kathy tells everyone, "hey! Everyone heard that, right? Eddie's going to

carry me around town!" Mark replies, "yeah, the Eddiemobile. Top speed of five miles per hour when fully loaded. He gets eight miles to the pizza." The conversation quiets down when Joe brings them their pizzas. They all dig in, and the conversation again shifts to what everyone will be doing this Summer.

After lunch, everyone tells each other to have a great Summer. They all plan to meet at the pool a few times, and maybe go to the Fourth of July fireworks at the park together. For certain, they will meet to work out a few times. Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula will probably spend a lot of time together at the beach. The girls give each other hugs, and the guys give each other fist bumps, as they all go their way.

On the walk home, Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, so now I feel really bad." Eddie asks, "why?" Kathy replies, "Paula wanted me to get a car that seats four, but the one I really want only seats two." Eddie tells her, "I wouldn't feel bad about that. She's going to buy her own car someday soon, so that will only be an issue for a few months. We can all still ride our bicycles to the beach together." Kathy replies, "yeah, you're right! It's only for this Summer that it will matter."

Eddie asks Kathy, "so, what did you have picked out?" Kathy tells him, "a German sports car." Eddie asks, "really? Which one?" Kathy tells him, "I'll tell you, but you have to promise not to laugh." Eddie tells her, "okay, I promise." Kathy tells him, "I want a Porsche 914." Eddie informs Kathy, "that's nothing to laugh about. It's a really good car. It's the best British roadster ever made." Kathy informs Eddie, "it's made in Germany." Eddie replies, "I know. That was a joke." Kathy tells him, "I like it because it's cute." The Porsche 914 is anything but cute, but it is to Kathy, and that's all that matters.

Eddie tells her, "as long as we make a few repairs, it should be good." Kathy asks, "repairs? I haven't even gotten it yet!" Eddie tells her, "the fuel line near the battery needs to be moved, and the water drainage in the engine compartment needs to be modified, and the sills need to be rust proofed. Other than that, it's a really good car." Kathy asks him, "how do you know all that?" Eddie replies, "because I'm Eddie, the mechanic."

Now curious, Kathy asks, "why does the fuel line need to be moved?" Eddie explains, "because it's too close to the battery, and battery corrosion could get on the fuel line, and it could lead to an engine fire." Kathy tells him, "yeah. That definitely sounds like it needs to be fixed." Eddie assures her, "it will only take an hour, and we'll replace the fuel line with a metal braided one."

Kathy asks Eddie, "so, are you going to help me pick it out?" Eddie replies, "sure. I'll pick the color. Get green, but don't get the yellow. And, if you get a white one, you'll be washing it forever." Kathy exclaims, "I like the green! That's my favorite!" Kathy then asks, "but, why not the yellow?" Eddie tells her, "because it comes with black trim, and it looks like a school bus." Kathy replies, "that's a good point. I don't want to drive around in something that looks like a school bus."

Eddie asks Kathy, "so, are you going to buy a new one or a used one?" Kathy replies, "I don't know. I don't have a lot of money. But, I have my job again this Summer, so I can save up some money." Eddie suggests, "well, we can stop by Angelo's sometime and see what he has to say." Kathy replies, "yeah, Angelo! He's the mechanic on the corner. You guys built your squat rack." Kathy, who is kind of impulsive at times, tells Eddie, "hey, let's go see Angelo now." Kathy drops her stuff off at her house, and she walks her bicycle to Eddie's house. Eddie gets his bicycle, and they head to Angelo's Service Station.

When they arrive, Angelo is eating dinner at his desk. He is done early for the day because it is Friday. Eddie and Kathy walk in, and Angelo asks, "hey, Eddie, how have you been?" Eddie replies, "good! Track is over, school is out, and Summer begins today!" Angelo tells Eddie, "I bet you're happy about that!"

Eddie tells Angelo, "this is my girlfriend, Kathy." Angelo tells Kathy, "it's really nice to meet you." Angelo then asks, "so, what brings you guys to a garage on a Friday evening?" Eddie replies, "Kathy had some questions." Angelo tells Kathy, "Eddie's a great guy. Keep him. That should answer all your questions." Kathy replies, "aw, that is so sweet."

Getting down to business, Angelo then asks, "okay, so what's up?" Kathy tells him, "I want to buy a car, so Eddie said I should ask you about it, since you're the expert." Eddie mentions, "Kathy wants a Porsche 914." Angelo tells Kathy, "that's a nice choice, but be sure to reroute the fuel line." Kathy looks at Eddie, realizing that Eddie actually knew what he was talking about. Kathy asks Angelo, "so, are they good?" Angelo replies, "they're a lot of fun to drive, and they're easy to keep running."

Kathy asks, "how much do they cost?" Angelo replies, "a lot. Somewhere around six thousand for a new one. If you build one, you can drive away for less than two thousand." Kathy mentions, "wow! The new ones are really expensive." Kathy is a little disappointed at the cost of a new Porsche 914. She thought the price would be a lot less than that, especially since the Porsche 914 is a lot smaller than an average sized car. And, she really had her heart set on that car.

Kathy asks, "how do you mean, like by 'build one'?" Angelo explains, "well, for example, Malea has a 914 sitting around, and the engine is blown. The body, and everything else, is in perfect condition. If you find an engine in a junkyard, just drop it in. You'll be driving around for less than fifteen hundred bucks. That's assuming your mechanic, Eddie, gives you a break on the labor."

Eddie asks, "who's Malea?" Angelo replies, "John Malea. He builds autos just like I explained. But, he hates working on foreign cars. He only works on the domestic stuff." Kathy mentions, "wow! I thought I'd have to work all Summer and wait until next year to buy one." Angelo explains to Kathy, "just stay out of the retail market. You'll pay top dollar there." Angelo tells Kathy, "if you build one, you can probably have it up and running in less than a week." Eddie tells Angelo, "well, maybe you can. You're a mechanic." Angelo confidently tells Eddie, "trust me. You can do it."

Angelo asks Kathy, "do you want me to call Malea?" Kathy asks, "like right now?" Angelo replies, "yeah, right now." Eddie tells Kathy, "it doesn't hurt to ask." Kathy tells Angelo, "sure. Go ahead and call him."

Angelo looks through his book, and calls Mr. Malea. Mr. Malea answers, and Angelo says, "hey John, what are you doing working on Friday night?" Eddie and Kathy can only hear one side of the conversation, so they have to fill in the blanks in their minds. Angelo gets around to asking, "hey. Do you still have that 914 with the blown engine sitting around?" Mr. Malea talks for a while, and Angelo replies, "really?" Kathy looks at Eddie, wondering what Angelo and Mr. Malea are talking about. Angelo then says to Mr. Malea, "a girl in high school wants one built. Her name is Kathy, and she's looking for parts." Kathy looks at Eddie, and whispers to him, "I'm looking for parts." Angelo asks Mr. Malea, "are you sure?" After a long pause, Angelo tells Mr. Malea, "okay, I'll let her know. And, take the weekend off, John. You work too much."

Angelo hangs up the phone, and tells Kathy, "you're in luck. He said you can have it." Kathy asks, "how much is he selling it for?" Angelo tells Kathy, "you don't understand. He said you can have it." Kathy asks, "how do you mean? Like for free?" Angelo replies, "yeah. He said he is sick of looking at it, and it's taking up space. He said, 'tell her to come and get it.'" Eddie tells Kathy, "wow! Now all we have to do is find a motor for you." Angelo warns Kathy, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but a running motor is probably not going to be free." Kathy replies, "somehow, I didn't think so."

Kathy is so happy that she starts crying. Kathy asks Eddie and Angelo, "so, I might have a car this Summer?" Angelo tells Kathy, "yes. But you have a little work to do. Have the car towed here first. Then,

you'll have to find a motor. Unless, of course, you're really lucky, and the motor can be rebuilt. You can't just sit around and wait for it to happen. You have to make it happen." Kathy, on a mission, tells Angelo, "I'm going to find a motor for it." Angelo tells him, "you got Eddie to help you. It shouldn't be too hard."

Angelo then tells Eddie, "and, the green '69 MGB over there," pointing to the lot in the front, "is yours, if you want it." Eddie asks, "really? Are you serious?" Angelo replies, "yes. It's yours. It's been sitting there for a few years, and it's taking up valuable space. And, I don't have the time to fix it and sell it. I'm way too busy with other stuff." Eddie exclaims, "thanks! Thank you so much!" But, Eddie knew that Angelo would give him the 1969 MGB someday, for he found out from the mechanic.

Angelo informs Eddie, "it does have a few problems." Eddie asks, "what's wrong with it?" Angelo explains, "it's a perfect illustration of the first law of auto mechanics." Eddie asks, "the first law of auto mechanics', what's that?" Angelo replies, "the first law of auto mechanics is the defective component will eventually identify itself by complete failure." Angelo continues, telling Eddie, "it needs an overdrive box, a valve job, a few bushings in the suspension, and some other minor work." Eddie asks Angelo, "so I can have it?" Angelo tells him, "yeah, it's yours." Eddie cordially replies, "wow! Thank you so much!"

Eddie asks, "where did it come from?" Angelo replies, "a customer had it towed in one day. Actually, he had it towed in a few times. I took a look at it, and he never wanted it back after hearing how much it would cost to fix." Eddie tells Angelo, "wow, thanks!" Angelo tells Eddie, "if you want, you can leave it here for a while, or you can take it to your house and work on it there. It would be better if you take it home sometime, so you can work on it whenever you want."

Eddie begins to think about when he went through the portal a long time ago. The mechanic told him that Angelo would give him the MGB someday. Someday is apparently today. Eddie and Kathy thank Angelo immensely for his help, and then ride back to Kathy's house.

Kathy is surprised something that is so difficult can be made so easy when the right person is involved. Kathy tells Eddie, "wow! Angelo made that sound so easy! Almost too easy!" Eddie tells Kathy, "well, Mr. Zunde does the same thing." Kathy asks, "how do you mean?" Eddie explains, "well, just look at all the trouble Mr. Crum caused with the track team in the last year. You tried to get on the team. Mr. Crum tried to stop it, and Mr. Zunde fixed it. He tried to suspend me, and Mr. Zunde fixed it. He tried to give Braden detention, and Mr. Zunde fixed it. And Mr. Zunde probably had something to do with replacing Mr. O'Brien with Mr. Cruz. And who knows what else Mr. Zunde has done for us that we don't know

about." Kathy exclaims, "yeah, you're right!" Eddie tells Kathy, "well then, Angelo is the Mr. Zunde of automobiles." Kathy, now a bit more confident, tells Eddie, "this is going to work out! I know it!"