

Eddie, The Junior Year

Chapter One Autumn Semester

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With the Summer now behind everyone, it's back to school again. Eddie and Kathy wish that they could extend the Summer for a few more weeks, but that is not going to happen. What makes it worse is that, this year, the weather is still warm outside, and it feels more like Summer than Autumn when school starts. The good side of having warmer weather this Autumn is that they can spend more time in the pool. And, since the track season does not start until Winter, they will have more free time during the Autumn semester.

This year, Eddie and the tribe are all upperclassmen. They made it through their sophomore year, but not without going over a few hurdles set in place by Mr. Crum, the principal. Mr. Crum has tried everything he could to interfere with the track team. Mr. Zunde, the athletic director, answered Mr. Crum's hurdles with an airborne discus. Air superiority won, and Mr. Zunde walked away last year with the upper hand. After the dust cleared, it was obvious that Mr. Crum's ground war never stood a chance. But, the war is not over. Given the chance, Mr. Crum will likely antagonize any athlete he can.

On the track, Eddie and the tribe set the performance standard that others must strive to meet if they want to be stars on the track team. Also setting the standard for the State, the tribe has raised the bar a few notches. Kathy and Paula will return to the team as seniors, also raising the level of competition statewide. They are all expected to return to the State invitational meets this year, raising the standard for anyone who dares to make the challenge.

To complicate matters, Eddie has found out that he could have taken the gold medal in the discus this past Spring at the State invitational meet. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde have discovered that Mark, Kathy, Paula, and Erika are also excellent at the discus. The uncovering of this

previously unknown talent will cause Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde to make a few changes during tryouts this coming Spring.

The first day of school arrives, and it is anything but business as usual for the seniors. Kathy, who now owns a Porsche 914, will occasionally drive to school. Kathy's and Paula's new wardrobes will certainly turn a few heads. While the seniors are concerned about applying to colleges and universities, the freshmen will be trying to figure out where their classrooms are. Then, there are the sports teams. The returning students will move up the ladder, while the freshmen will be vying for a place on a team. The teachers and coaches see it as the same old situation, but with a new group this year.

Like last year, Eddie walks to Kathy's house before school. He arrives earlier than usual today, only because his mother wanted to make sure he got to school on time. Last year, Eddie and Kathy walked to school. This year, even though the school is a mere half mile away, Kathy is driving, only because she can. She and Eddie could just as easily walk to school, but not today.

Kathy and Eddie get into the Porsche 914, and Kathy starts the engine. Eddie mentions to her, "the engine sounds really good." Kathy replies, "yeah, I know. I have a very special mechanic who keeps it running perfectly for me." Eddie suggests, "you should have him change the oil sometime. There's been almost a thousand miles put on the engine since it was worked on." Kathy remarks, "yeah. We should do that sometime." Kathy backs out of the driveway, and drives down the street.

It does not take Kathy very long to get to the high school. Eddie and Kathy could have run to the school faster than she took to drive there. Kathy finds a parking place right up in front, in the end space, minimizing the risk that anyone will ding her doors. They get out of her car, and walk to the lawn in front of the school. Since they are early, there is no need to go inside. They'll just wait outside until the rest of the tribe arrives, and then they'll all go in together. From where they are sitting, they see a few of the students walking to school checking out Kathy's new Porsche.

Bobby B. is next to arrive. He lives in the same neighborhood as Kathy, and walks to school. Seeing Eddie and Kathy, Bobby B. asks, "have you seen Erika yet?" Eddie replies, "yeah. She ran inside as fast as she can to make sure the shot-put is still in good condition." Bobby B. replies, "yeah, right. And, I want to see those stopwatches sparkly bright all year." Kathy replies, "no, we haven't seen her yet. But, none of the busses have arrived." A few more students drive up, along with a few more walkers.

The busses start to arrive, and the tribe is reunited one by one. Johnson gets off the bus, and meets up with the group. It is odd to see

Johnson arrive alone. Barbara has graduated, and is now at the University. Barbara will certainly be missed. Mitchell and Amber get off another bus. Amber is a freshman this year, and is glad to again be in the same school as Mitchell.

Walking up, Amber tells Kathy, “nice outfit.” Kathy replies, “thank you!” Kathy’s first compliment on her drawstring shorts and her cutoff shirt, as expected, comes from the only other female around.

Tessa, who lives within walking distance of the school, walked to Hoffer’s house instead so they can take the bus together. Tessa arrives next with Hoffer. Braden and Wendy arrive shortly after Hoffer and Tessa. As predicted, Tessa and Wendy also compliment Kathy on her new outfit.

While everyone is talking, Bobby B. watches for Erika as each bus pulls in. Erika finally arrives, and Bobby B. runs up to greet her. They walk back to the tribe as Mark and Paula arrive. Erika checks out Kathy’s and Paula’s outfits, but doesn’t say anything. She is seriously wondering where Kathy and Paula got their outfits, and it’s a good thing for Kathy and Paula that she doesn’t ask. An unquestionably vague answer would be waiting for her. With the whole tribe reunited, they all head inside.

Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, Bobby B., and Wendy all compare their schedules. Again, they are all in the same section, which means they have all their core classes together. Likewise, Kathy and Paula are in the same sections, as is Hoffer, Tessa, and Erika. There is no longer any doubt that Mr. Zunde has something to do with the scheduling process. It seems that Mr. Zunde is the principal for the athletes, and Mr. Crum is the principal for everyone else.

The bell finally rings, telling everyone they need to get to class. Kathy and Paula head down the hall, and everyone they pass checks out their outfits. Either of them could have easily won the award for best dressed after this morning’s reactions to their new wardrobes. Eddie, and the rest of the juniors, head to their first class, except for Mitchell. Mitchell takes a detour to show Amber where her classroom is.

For Eddie, this year, the first class is again English. They get to the classroom, and take their usual seat near the window. They sit and wait for the teacher to arrive, who is a bit late. Braden points out to the group, “wow! We lucked out this year. Chuckie and O’Brien are both in our section.” Mark asks, “how is that lucking out?” Braden replies, “two asses to conveniently kick at once. Think gym class, bro. Think gym class.” Mark replies, “yeah. I can see how gym class could get interesting.” Eddie grins, and remarks, “they must have let the little Chuckie out of jail.” Mark comments, “gym class won’t be too much better than jail for Chuckie.”

The teacher, Miss Starr, finally walks in. They are all glad to see Miss Starr as their English teacher again. Miss Starr receives a standing ovation before she even says a word. She wipes the tear rolling down her face, and is at a loss for words. It's not every teacher in the school that receives that sort of welcome from her class. After she composes herself, Miss Starr calls the roll.

When Miss Starr gets to Eddie's name, she tells him, "congratulations on a great performance last year." Eddie replies, "thank you." Miss Starr announces to the class, "for those of you who do not know, Eddie, Mark, Axel, Eric, Gary, and Robert all took home several medals in last year's State track meet." The class claps, except for Chuckie, who pouts like a four year old. Miss Starr's announcement is all Jimmy O'Brien needed to hear to convince him to try out for track again. Miss Starr continues calling the roll, seeing many familiar faces. When she is finished, class gets underway.

The tribe again has lunch together. This gives them the middle of the day to spend with each other, and is their time to sit and relax. While they are eating lunch, Kathy's and Paula's outfits are attracting a lot of attention. With shirts cut somewhere between their bra and belly button, and drawstring shorts, it is difficult for anyone not to notice, including Mr. Crum and some of the other administrators.

Eddie, and most of the tribe, bring their own lunch. They prefer healthier meals more conducive to building muscle and increasing athletic performance as opposed to cafeteria food. Eddie still takes his vitamins and other supplements, and has made great physical gains over the last few years. And, Bobby B. brings what would be considered a few lunches to anyone else.

After lunch, they go outside on the lawn to relax. Not surprisingly, the Amazon rumor has made its way through the school. What is surprising, however, is that it took so long for that to happen. The rumor has made its way to the other side of the State faster than it made its way through the school. The tribe, as it was named by Anthony Ambrosini two years ago, is now known throughout the State as "Mr. Frazier's Amazon tribe," or simply, "the Amazon tribe." While they are sitting on the lawn, some of the students point out the tribe to some of the freshmen. Some of the freshmen wonder why Amber, who is sitting along with the tribe, is so special and gets to sit with them.

At the end of the day, the final bell rings and everyone heads home. Kathy heads to her car to wait for Eddie. While she is waiting for him, quite a few of her friends check out her Porsche 914, and ask her all about it. Kathy must have told the story about a dozen times today. She

is glad when Eddie walks up. Now they can leave, and she can get some peace.

But, it's not that simple. Eddie is now fielded with questions about the car. Eddie, knowing Kathy wants to leave, tells the three people standing around, "it's a gymkhana car. It's been heavily modified for agility racing. It will kick the crap out of anything in this parking lot, and out maneuver any police car in this State." No one dares to ask any further questions, so Kathy and Eddie get to drive away. Eddie, however, by using the word 'racing,' just accidentally seeded a rumor about Kathy's 914.

Kathy and Eddie drive to Kathy's house, where they take advantage of the warmer weather and go for a swim in the pool. They stay in the pool for a while, but Kathy has to get out because her eyes are burning from the water. Eddie asks her, "are you okay?" Kathy tells him, "yeah. My eyes have been burning from the water in the last few days. The pool guy said the chlorine was too high, so he lowered it." Eddie tells Kathy, "well, if you want, I can check the water sometime." Eddie cleans and maintains a few pools in his neighborhood, so he is quite familiar with pool chemistry. Kathy replies, "my parents said the pool guy says he almost has it under control." Kathy and Eddie dry off, and go inside.

Kathy gets her recording of the Céline Dion version of *The Power of Love*, and plays it on the stereo. Kathy tells Eddie, "please dance with me. I'd rather dance right now to my song." Kathy and Eddie dance to Kathy's song. When the song is over, she plays it a second and third time. While they are dancing, Kathy sings the song to Eddie, which she has learned after hearing it more than 100 times.

Kathy whispers to Eddie, "do you remember when we first heard that song? And, the girl was nice enough to play it again for us?" Eddie replies, "yeah. We were on the beach. They were sitting next to us." Kathy replies, "that was so nice of them to play it for us again." They dance to the song one more time. But then, the garage door opens, and Kathy has to put away her recording. Since the song is from the future, she can't risk anyone else hearing it.

Eddie asks Kathy, "hey. Do you want to go for a bicycle ride?" Kathy suggests, "I think I'd rather go for a walk." Kathy and Eddie go for a walk, and find themselves in a park a half mile away from Kathy's house. The park, which is hardly big at all, is rarely used. It is a very long and narrow buffer zone between the businesses along the highway and the residential area behind it. The county turned it into a park, which has a few benches and a swing set.

Walking around the park, Kathy tells Eddie, “this is where I want to be. Right here.” Kathy and Eddie sit on one of the benches. Kathy ends up on Eddie’s lap, whispering to him, “I love you, Edward Bogenskaya.” She puts his arms around his neck, telling him, “we’re taking the long way home today.”

After their time in the park, Kathy eventually has to return home for dinner. On the way home, she tells Eddie, “I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I just don’t feel like going to school this year. It’s like going back to school is the ‘B’ side of a 45 or something.” Eddie suggests, “nobody really wants to go back to school.” Kathy tells Eddie, “you just spoiled me rotten. That’s what it is.” Kathy stops, puts her hands on her hips, and asks Eddie, “now, just how am I supposed to go back to school after that awesome Summer?” Eddie suggests, “well, maybe we can just make it a really good school year too.” Kathy asks, “how are we going to do that?” Eddie tells her, “we can throw the discus at Mr. Crum.” Kathy starts laughing, and is suddenly in a better mood. Kathy is still on Summer vacation, perhaps more so than anyone else.

Kathy asks Eddie, “remember when I told you my secret a long time ago?” Eddie asks, “which one?” Kathy replies, “the one that I break down sometimes, and get emotional. Well, this is one of those times. But, I’m glad you’re here with me because everything is a whole lot better. I’d be crying in my room right now if I wasn’t with you.” Eddie gives Kathy a hug, and tells her, “hey! We’re going to make this your best school year yet. You’re a senior. You should be having fun!” Kathy tells Eddie, “yeah! You’re right! We are going to have fun, Edward Bogenskaya! We are definitely going to have fun!”

When they return to Kathy’s house, she goes inside for dinner. Eddie walks home, where dinner is waiting for him too. Kathy and Eddie had such a good Summer together, which suddenly came to an end. There are a few months before indoor track begins, so it is a long stretch of academics before Kathy and Eddie can get back to what they really like doing. But, in the mean time, Kathy and Eddie are going to plan to have fun.

The next week, at school, Kathy again dresses in her new wardrobe. She wears her drawstring shorts and a cutoff shirt, attracting a lot of attention. Paula is also dressed in a similar way this morning. Some of the other girls in the school have made their own cutoffs, which have been cut off and sewn, and look really nice. It seems like many of them have been modifying their wardrobe to conform to the new fashion craze. Everyone seems to be getting compliments on the new fashion style that has hit the school. It appears that Kathy and Paula are the trendsetters this year.

Lunchtime arrives, which seems to be everyone's favorite subject this year. This is, perhaps, because it is not the track season, and this is the only time they get to spend time with each other during the day. The tribe meets in the lunchroom, taking their usual seat by the window. A teacher is always present in the lunchroom in the event a fight breaks out. Today, the lunchroom monitor is Miss Starr, who sits at the end of a table getting ahead on her lesson planning.

Now that they are almost finished with lunch, the tribe plans to head outside. Mr. Crum, for some reason, walks into the lunchroom, and talks with Miss Starr. Eddie, seeing Mr. Crum, mentions to the group, "someone must have an overdue library book." Kathy laughs, and tells Eddie, "you're beginning to sound a little like Mr. Zunde." Everyone who remembers the connotation from last year also begins laughing. For anyone in the group who does not know, Kathy explains, "last year, when they took Paul Mahoney back to the sanitarium, a police officer told Mr. Crum, 'you just keep sending late students to detention and looking for overdue library books.'" Mr. Zunde has since capitalized on that phrase.

Mr. Crum and Miss Starr stand up and walk toward the tribe's table. Braden asks, "okay, which one of you has the overdue library book?" Mark comically replies, "you mean, this school has a library? I've never seen it." Eddie answers, telling Mark, "that's the rumor, bro."

Mr. Crum and Miss Starr arrive at the table where the tribe is seated. Mr. Crum announces to the tribe, "Miss Starr is here as my witness." Miss Starr, standing to the side behind Mr. Crum, is silently mimicking his announcement. She then shakes her head, indicating some verbal nonsense is about to be upchucked by Mr. Crum.

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "you can't wear those shirts to school. I believe they are indecent." Eddie remarks, "really? I think they are very decent." Hearing Eddie's comment, Miss Starr tries to conceal her laughter. Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "this does not concern you. So, please keep your mouth shut." Mr. Crum's brash comment does not sit well with Kathy, or anyone else seated at the table. The whole tribe is now awaiting Mr. Crum's next move.

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "now, let's get back to what I was saying. You two can't wear shirts like those to this school." Kathy questions Mr. Crum, and asks, "so, you're saying that I am not allowed to wear this shirt in this school?" Mr. Crum replies, "exactly." Kathy stands up, and takes her shirt off. She places her shirt in her purse, and sits back down. Paula, seeing what Kathy just did, also stands up and removes her shirt, and sits back down. Everyone in the lunchroom turns around to watch, as Kathy and Paula act as if nothing unusual just

happened. Everyone in the lunchroom cheers, seeing what the girls just did.

Under their shirts, Kathy and Paula are wearing their gym tops, which look like a very fashionable sports bra. Miss Starr can no longer conceal her laughter. Mr. Crum turns about as red as a ripe tomato. Raising his voice, Mr. Crum abruptly tells Kathy and Paula, "I want to see you two in my office right now!" Paula begins to stand up, but Kathy kicks Paula's foot under the table, and Paula sits back down. Paula figures Kathy is up to something, for they know each other well.

Mr. Crum, seemingly being ignored by Kathy and Paula, exclaims, "what are you waiting for?" Kathy tells Mr. Crum, "your sentence structure is incorrect. You said 'you two.' But, you did not qualify to whom or what 'two' refers, and secondly, you implied that you wanted to see us in your office. You never commanded us to go there. This is a school, Mr. Crum. You are expected to use proper English when addressing students. Otherwise, how do you expect us to understand you?" Miss Starr, the English teacher, mentions to Mr. Crum, "she does have a point. You never told them to go to your office."

Mr. Crum yells out, telling Kathy and Paula, "go to my office right now!" Kathy asks Eddie, "you wouldn't happen to have your discus on you, would you?" Eddie replies, "it might be in your car. Do you want me to get it for you?" Kathy whispers to Eddie, "no. But, go tell Mr. Zunde what's happening pronto."

Kathy and Paula follow Mr. Crum to his office. Mr. Crum tells Miss Starr, "I want you there too, as my witness." Miss Starr replies to Mr. Crum's brashness, telling him, "I'll be there in a sec. I need to pick up my stuff." Once Mr. Crum is far enough away, Miss Starr tells Eddie and the rest of the group, "I'll try to get them out of this one. Kathy and Paula did exactly what he asked. Mr. Crum told them, 'you can't wear those shirts to school.' That sounded pretty clear to me."

Miss Starr walks to Mr. Crum's office, as Eddie and Mark head to the gym to find Mr. Zunde. Eddie and Mark find Mr. Zunde, and explain to him what just happened in the lunchroom. Eddie then tells Mr. Zunde, "Kathy told us to come and tell you."

Mr. Zunde asks, "so, let me get this straight. They were wearing their gym clothes under their shirts, and they took their shirts off?" Eddie replies, "yeah. They have gym later, so they just wore their gym tops instead of a bra." Mr. Zunde asks, "so, what's the problem?" Mark replies, "Mr. Crum." Mr. Zunde responds, "yeah, stupid question on my part. I can't argue with that." Mr. Zunde tells Eddie and Mark, "this should be entertaining to say the least. Let me go and see what's going on." Mr.

Zunde makes his way to Mr. Crum's office to get his daily dose of comedy. Eddie and Mark go outside on the lawn, joining the rest of the tribe.

When Mr. Zunde arrives at Mr. Crum's office, Mr. Crum politely tells Mr. Zunde, "Mr. Zunde, this does not concern you." Mr. Crum then brashly asks, "so, why are you here?" Mr. Zunde reminds Mr. Crum, "now, Mr. Crum. We have been over this again and again. Whenever there is a disciplinary action or potential disciplinary action taken against an athlete, the school board gives me the right to be present. Today, I'm exercising my right to be present. Am I clear?" Mr. Crum replies, "all right, all right. But this is my meeting." Mr. Zunde replies, "don't let me hold you up. Go ahead and get on with it." Kathy tells Mr. Crum, "waiting," which is a highly sarcastic innuendo invented by the tribe.

Mr. Crum tells Kathy, "explain to me why you removed your shirt." Kathy replies, "because you told me to." Mr. Crum tells Kathy, "no, I didn't!" Kathy reminds Mr. Crum, "you said, and I quote, 'you can't wear those shirts to school,' so I took it off. I was just doing what you told me to do." Mr. Crum tells Kathy, "that's not what I intended, and you know that." Kathy replies, "actually, I don't know what you intended. All I know is what you said. If you said what you meant, we wouldn't have this problem right now." Miss Starr, standing next to Mr. Zunde, whispers to him, "she should be an attorney."

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "well, I'm going to have to do something about this. And, put your shirts back on." Paula asks Mr. Crum, "so, we can wear our shirts in this school?" Mr. Crum replies, "no! I didn't say that!" Paula asks Mr. Crum, "well, then what do you mean? Seriously, make up your mind already!" Mr. Crum tells Paula, "you can't talk to me that way." Kathy tells Mr. Crum, "she just did, so apparently she is perfectly capable of talking to you that way. If you meant, 'you are not permitted to talk to me in that manner,' you might have gotten your point across. But, no! You're confusing the issue again. How did you ever pass your SAT test?" Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "I've had enough of the both of you two." Kathy tells Mr. Crum, "that sentence was also poorly structured but, at this point, who's counting. Geesh!"

Miss Starr whispers to Mr. Zunde, "I've heard about these meetings. I can't believe the amount of nonsense going on right now." Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Starr, "this is what I put up with all the time. In the long run, it's going to go nowhere, but it certainly is entertaining." Mr. Zunde then whispers to Miss Starr, "the next thing will be his edict, which will be more nonsense."

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "you have left me no other choice. I am going to suspend both of you." Kathy replies, "so what. See if I care." Paula tells Kathy, "well, at least he finally said something using proper

English.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “that’s enough out of you two!” Kathy tells Paula, “he’s back to using unclear English again. That didn’t last too long.” Mr. Crum, having enough backtalk, asks Kathy, “and, just what is so wrong with what I said?” Kathy explains, “you said, ‘that’s enough out of you two.’ Enough what? Breathing? Talking? Logic? Yeah, that’s it! That’s enough logic out of us.”

Mr. Zunde interjects and asks Mr. Crum, “what exactly are your grounds for suspending them?” Mr. Crum replies, “for one, wearing indecent clothing.” Mr. Zunde, thumbing through the school’s policy manual, tells Mr. Crum, “this school has no written dress code. If you’re challenged, you’ll lose.”

Bringing up more trumped up charges, Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “well, they can’t talk to me that way! I’m the principal!” Mr. Zunde explains to Mr. Crum, “I’ve been listening to this entire conversation, and they have not spoken to you in any unacceptable manner. They have, however, commented quite appropriately on your inability to communicate using proper English. I’m sure that Miss Starr will attest to that fact.” Mr. Crum brashly replies, “that’s not the point, Mr. Zunde!” Kathy responds by telling Mr. Crum, “oh yeah, it is! That’s what started this whole shit show!”

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “well, I could always suspend them for having overlapping body parts with their boyfriends.” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Crum, “that rule was thrown out a long time ago, probably sometime during the medieval period.” All bent out of shape, Mr. Crum asks, “when? I don’t remember that!” Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “Crum, the school board threw that rule out long ago. If the rule were enforced, you’d have to suspend all the wrestlers, football players, basketball players, volleyball players, and no one would be able to touch anyone else. You couldn’t even have a school play the way that rule was written. The school would be empty, because you’d have to suspend everyone and send them home.”

Mr. Crum sits back in his chair and thinks for a second. Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “nevertheless, stripping in the lunchroom is totally unacceptable behavior. They walked through the school with just their bras on.” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Crum, “what they are wearing are not bras. What they are wearing are their gym tops. They wear them in gym class. If you suspend Kathy and Paula, you’ll have to suspend every girl who has gym class today.” Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “well, they look like bras to me.”

Looking at Mr. Crum, Kathy exclaims, “what are you? Some kind of idiot or something? You don’t even know what a bra is?” Kathy pulls her bra out of her purse that she was going to put on after gym class, and

holds it up for everyone to see. Kathy exclaims, “this is a bra! What I am wearing now is not a bra! Any questions?” After listening to Kathy’s lecture, Mr. Crum turns red from embarrassment, and has no clue how to respond. Mr. Zunde and Miss Starr, however, do know how to respond, and laugh hysterically at Mr. Crum.

Kathy does not seem to care if she gets suspended. She seems to be intentionally pushing Mr. Crum to his limit, and doing a fine job of it. Since she is in a lose-lose situation, Kathy figures she might as well go for broke. After all, Mr. Crum has never demonstrated any sense of logic, especially when it comes to athletes. And, since it’s not the track season, getting suspended can’t interfere with a track meet. Besides, it’s warm outside, so a day or two off from school is not necessarily a bad thing.

Mr. Crum continues his rant, asking Kathy, “did you just call me an idiot?” Kathy replies, telling Mr. Crum, “no. I asked you if you are an idiot. There you go again with your poor command of the English language. And, by the way, you never answered that question. And, for the record, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate you calling me a stripper.” Mr. Crum smugly tells Kathy, “now, now, I didn’t call you a stripper.” Kathy exclaims, “like hell you didn’t! You said, and I quote, ‘stripping in the lunchroom is totally unacceptable behavior.’ If I was stripping, as you claim, that makes me a stripper. By definition, strippers strip.”

Raising his voice, Mr. Crum tells Kathy, “that’s not what I meant, and you know it!” Kathy replies, “here we go again! No! I don’t know what you meant! I only know what you said! And, that’s exactly my point! You can’t even communicate! How is anyone supposed to know what you mean? And, how did you ever get to be principal of this school? You don’t even understand seventh grade English!”

Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Starr, “Kathy is definitely winning every argument.” Miss Starr whispers back, “well, she did get an A in English last year. She’s certainly picking his English apart really well. I’m glad to see they actually learned something in my class.” Mr. Zunde replies, “and, she got an A in gym class too. If a real fight breaks out, she will surely win.”

Mr. Crum and Kathy continue to argue, with Mr. Crum backed into a corner with every point he tries to make. Mr. Crum gets nowhere with Kathy and Paula, who do not care in the least if they get suspended.

Moving on to a different topic, Mr. Crum asks Kathy, “and, what about that comment you made about Eddie having a discus? Is the school’s discus in Eddie’s possession?” Kathy bluntly tells him, “no.” Mr. Crum is obviously on a fishing expedition, looking for more ways to cause trouble. If there is a discus in Eddie’s possession, Mr. Crum’s logic is that he must

have stolen it from the school. Mr. Crum asks, “then, how did Eddie get hold of a discus?” Kathy replies, “I ordered it from Acme. They sell discuses, along with anvils, rocket sleds, bombs, jet motors, and tornado seeds. Wile E. Coyote on Road Runner orders shit from there all the time. It got delivered just a few minutes after I ordered it, just like on TV.” Miss Starr has to turn around to conceal laughing, not quite believing what she is hearing.

Mr. Crum raises his voice, and tells Kathy, “I’m going to give you one more chance to answer my question, young lady!” Kathy explains, “I bought it for him. It was a present. What’s the matter with you?” Mr. Crum asks, “and just where did you get a discus?” Kathy exclaims, “my father ordered it for me so I can give it to Eddie! Seriously, what is your problem? There’s no law against owning a discus. And besides, Eddie’s discus is none of your business.”

Purely for entertainment purposes, Mr. Zunde allows Mr. Crum’s line of questioning to go to completion. Mr. Zunde then informs Mr. Crum, “all six of the school’s discuses are safely locked up in the equipment room. None of them have been stolen.” Mr. Zunde’s comment ended that discussion rather quickly.

Mr. Crum, who is treading on thin ice, tells Kathy and Paula, “I’m not exactly sure how I am going to deal with this yet. But, I will be calling both of your parents.” Kathy tells Mr. Crum, “go ahead. See if I care. My dad will probably finish the job that Eddie’s father started on your desk.” Kathy’s comment caused an unpleasant flashback in Mr. Crum’s mind. Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, “okay, get out of here for now! Go! Get out of here!” Kathy and Paula leave Mr. Crum’s office, slamming the door very hard as they leave.

Through the door, Kathy and Paula hear Mr. Zunde say, “Crum, you’re not even qualified to get out of bed in the morning. You’ve done nothing but embarrass yourself today. If you want to go ahead and embarrass yourself further, be my guest. I am not going to stop you.” They hear Miss Starr laugh, taking away a little stress from the situation. Mr. Zunde and Miss Starr walk out of Mr. Crum’s office, as Kathy and Paula head outside to join the rest of the group.

Mr. Zunde and Miss Starr walk to the lunchroom, since Miss Starr still has lunch duty. Mr. Zunde asks Miss Starr, “so, what actually happened in the lunchroom earlier?” Miss Starr explains, “Mr. Crum told Kathy and Paula that they can’t wear their shirts to school, calling them ‘indecent.’ Kathy verified what he said, by asking, ‘so, you’re saying that I am not allowed to wear this shirt in this school?’ Mr. Crum then told her, ‘exactly,’ so Kathy took her shirt off.” Mr. Zunde tells Miss Starr, “I’m sorry I missed that. That must have been quite funny.” Miss Starr replies,

“honestly, it was so funny that I couldn’t keep from laughing.” Mr. Zunde says, “well, I certainly couldn’t see anything that warrants suspension.” Miss Starr replies, “actually, neither can I.” Mr. Zunde returns to the gym, and Miss Starr finishes her lesson plans.

Kathy and Paula walk outside, and find the rest of the tribe sitting on the lawn. They fill the others in on what happened in Mr. Crum’s office, down to the very last detail. After Kathy and Paula have finished explaining, Kathy tells Eddie, “Mr. Crum said to us, ‘get out of here,’ so I’m going home. Oh, and by the way, he thinks you stole the school’s discus. But, did Mr. Zunde ever set him straight.” Eddie asks Kathy, “so, you’re going home like right now?” Kathy replies, “yeah. I’m not in the mood for his shit today. He was really vague, so I’m taking what he said to mean that I should go home. And, he’s going to try to bust me for cutting class tomorrow. And, I don’t care.” Paula tells Kathy, “I’m coming with you.”

Eddie tells Kathy, “I’ll come by after school.” Kathy tells him, “we’ll probably be out back by the pool.” Since lunchtime is over, Kathy and Paula walk to Kathy’s car, and head out. The rest of the tribe goes inside, and heads to class.

The tribe’s next class after lunch is chemistry class, which is a class that no one really wants to take. Sitting near the window with the tribe, Eddie sees Kathy and Paula drive through the parking lot, wishing that he had left with them. But, in walks Mr. Madre, the chemistry teacher, ready to make everyone’s life a lot more fun.

Eddie stares out the window as Mr. Madre begins today’s chemistry lesson. Since this is the beginning of the school year, today’s lesson is on the fundamentals, which are protons, neutrons, and electrons. Eddie catches a few words here and there, but is more focused on Kathy at the moment.

As he is drawing on the board, Mr. Madre lectures, “a valence electron is an outer shell electron that is associated with an atom. If the outer shell is open, a valence electron can participate in the formation of a chemical bond. In a single covalent bond, both atoms in the bond contribute one valence electron in order to form a shared pair. Isn’t that right, Eddie?” Eddie replies, “yeah, of course!” Everyone in the class suspects that Eddie wasn’t paying one bit of attention to Mr. Madre. Even Mr. Madre clearly knows that Eddie was thinking about something else. Mr. Madre would be correct.

Mr. Madre asks Eddie, “Eddie, were you even listening to what I was saying?” Eddie replies, “yes. But, I got distracted, and I was contemplating something.” Mr. Madre asks Eddie, “please tell the class

and myself what you were contemplating.” Mr. Madre clearly believes Eddie was not paying attention, and decided to make an example out of him.

Clarifying a few things from Mr. Madre’s last lecture, Eddie asks Mr. Madre, “during the last class, you said opposite charges attract, and like charges repel, right?” Mr. Madre replies, “yes, I did. I’m glad someone was paying attention to what I was saying.” The class giggles a bit, knowing that Eddie is about to offer some unconventional wisdom. When Eddie participates in class, everyone knows by now that something interesting is coming.

After setting up Mr. Madre, Eddie expresses his wisdom, “if like charges repel, I’m just trying to understand why the nucleus of an atom with, say, seventy or eighty positive charges in it, doesn’t just fly apart.” Braden quickly adds, “yeah! Now, I’m wondering about that myself!” The class reacts by asking questions such as, “yeah, how can it stay together?” Mark mentions, “no wonder none of this makes any sense!” It takes a few minutes for the chatter to die down, which is good for Mr. Madre. He spends the time trying to think of an answer to Eddie’s question, because he really doesn’t have one.

Mr. Madre finally gets the class under control, and explains, “actually, Eddie’s question is a very good one. But, in order to understand the answer to Eddie’s question, we would need to have a discussion of nuclear physics and quarks¹.” Wendy comments, “waiting.” Mr. Madre tells Wendy, “unfortunately, Wendy, the subject matter is way beyond the scope of this class. Scientists are just now trying to understand what holds the nucleus of an atom together.” The truth is that not even Mr. Madre understands quarks and the physics necessary to fully explain why the nucleus of an atom doesn’t just fly apart.

Braden comments loud enough for everyone to hear, “you shouldn’t have avoided that question.” Mr. Madre asks Braden, “what do you mean?” Braden replies, “because now you have to answer the next question.” Mr. Madre asks Braden, “and, just what is the next question?” Braden asks, “if there are positive and negative forces in an atom, and the like forces don’t repel, how are we supposed to believe the opposite forces attract?” The chatter rises again, with students demanding answers that the teacher simply cannot provide. But, Mr. Madre moves on, telling the class that certain concepts must be taken at face value.

¹ The understanding of nuclear physics and quarks was in its infancy during Eddie’s high school years.

As Eddie and the tribe disrupt the chemistry class, Kathy drives to Paula's house. When they arrive, Paula goes inside to pick up her swimsuit and towel. They then drive to Kathy's house, and go into the back yard and sit by the pool. They swim for a while, then lay in the sun.

The subject of conversation eventually returns to what happened at school. Paula asks Kathy, "so, do you think we'll get in trouble?" Kathy replies, "I doubt it. Did you see Mr. Zunde and Miss Starr when we were in Mr. Crum's office? They were laughing so hard at Mr. Crum." Paula says, "yeah. I did see that." Kathy adds, "and Mr. Zunde said the school has no dress code." Paula replies, "they will now." Kathy replies, "well, I bet the school board will have to approve it, just like they have to approve everything else. That will probably take forever."

Kathy's mother comes home, seeing Kathy's car in the driveway. She looks around for Kathy, and finds her and Paula in the back yard by the pool. Kathy's mother asks Kathy, "you're home early. What's up?" Kathy tells her mom, "I'm not sure, but I think Mr. Crum suspended us." Kathy's mom asks, "for what?" Kathy replies, "for wearing my cutoff shirt to school." Kathy's mom exclaims, "you've got to be kidding me!" Paula tells her, "no. He said he was going to call our parents." Kathy's mom tells them, "I can't wait for that call."

Wanting to hear the full story, Kathy's mom tells Kathy, "okay, give it to me, top to bottom." Kathy explains, "Mr. Crum told us we can't wear our shirts to school and that they are indecent. So, I asked him, 'so, you're saying that I am not allowed to wear this shirt in this school?' And, he said 'exactly.' So, I took my shirt off, but my gym clothes were underneath. And then, Paula took her shirt off too. Then he told us to go to his office. So, then I told Eddie to get Mr. Zunde, and he came to Mr. Crum's office. Then, Mr. Crum asked me why I took off my shirt, and I told him that he told me to. And then, he tried to twist his words around to say that he didn't say that. Then, he told us to put our shirts back on, which he told us we can't wear in school. Oh, and he said that stripping in the lunchroom is unacceptable behavior, so he basically called me a stripper. And, then he said he was going to suspend us. And, so I told him I didn't care. Then he said, 'get out of here,' so we came home."

Paula mentions, "Miss Starr and Mr. Zunde saw the whole thing. And they were laughing at Mr. Crum." Kathy's mom tells her, "well, don't worry about it. I'm sure that Mr. Zunde will fill your father in on the details." Kathy tells her mother, "and, that's another thing. Mr. Crum tried to say that Eddie stole the school's discus. But, I told him that I gave Eddie the discus, and he didn't believe me. So Mr. Zunde basically told Mr. Crum to shut up." Kathy's mother tells her, "well, enjoy your afternoon off. After what Mr. Crum put you through, you both deserve it."

Kathy and Paula go back into the pool. Paula tells Kathy, “well, your mom took that really well.” Kathy tells Paula, “my father doesn’t like Mr. Crum. Last year, after the State invitational meet, he said something like, ‘we’ve never had a principal like Mr. Crum interfere with a sports team this much before.’” Paula mentions, “yeah! I remember him saying that when the reporters and photographers were around! So, I bet Mr. Crum is just trying to get back at you for what your dad said.” Kathy replies, “yeah! You might be right about that!” Kathy tells Paula, “I’ll just let my dad, and Mr. Zunde, beat up on Mr. Crum.” Paula tells Kathy, “you did a pretty good job yourself, girl.”

Taking advantage of the beautiful weather, Kathy and Paula swim all afternoon. After school, Eddie and Mark walk into Kathy’s back yard, finding the girls in the pool. Eddie exclaims, “wow! I didn’t know suspension can be so good!” Kathy asks, “so, what happened after we left?” Eddie replies, “you don’t want to know.” Paula looks at Kathy, and says, “uh oh.” Eddie tells Kathy and Paula, “everyone in the school found out what happened. Tomorrow, every girl in the school is going to wear a cutoff.” Kathy and Paula both smile, and exchange high-fives. Kathy exclaims, “awesome! Now, I want to go to school tomorrow! I want to get there early and watch when everyone walks in.” Kathy asks, “what about Mr. Crum?” Mark tells her, “we didn’t hear anything about him.” Kathy mentions, “he’s probably hiding under his broken desk.”

Kathy gets out of the pool and dries off. She tells Eddie, “they still don’t have the chemicals in the pool right. My eyes are burning again. Ugh. I spent most of my time above water.” Kathy dries off, and gives Eddie a hug. Paula also gets out of the pool, but Mark gives her a hug while she is soaking wet. As Mark is drying Paula off, Eddie tells them, “you know, one day you’re going to look back at all of this and laugh.” Paula says, “that day might just be tomorrow.” Kathy mentions to Paula, “I hope that’s your superpower at work.” Paula replies, “it might be. I can just see Mr. Crum being defeated this time. But, he’ll be back again with something else.” Mark comments, “and, next time, it will be just as funny.” Kathy adds, “or just as stupid.”

Eddie and Mark hang around for a while but, since it is a school night, they eventually have to go home. Kathy tells Eddie, “I’m going to go to school tomorrow. Who knows if they’ll let me stay.” Eddie tells Kathy, “well, if they send you home, they’ll have to send half the school home with you.” Kathy replies, “yeah! You’re right! And besides, if they send me home, then me and Paula can go swimming or go to the beach.” Eddie, Mark, and Paula head home, with everyone anxiously waiting to see what tomorrow will bring.

When Kathy’s father gets home, he greets Kathy, telling her, “well, if it isn’t my juvenile delinquent daughter.” Kathy responds by telling him, “I

can explain the whole thing.” Kathy’s dad tells her, “you don’t have to. I heard it all from Dr. Zunde. He said you did quite a good job of putting Mr. Crum in his place.” Kathy is now totally relieved. Everyone is on her side. It is now the whole world versus Mr. Crum.

Kathy’s dad tells her, “but, I would like to hear your side of the story.” Kathy explains all of today’s excitement to her father in her own words, down to every minute detail. Kathy even included how Mr. Zunde and Miss Starr were laughing at Mr. Crum. Kathy also mentions Paula’s thought that Mr. Crum is trying to get back at Kathy because of Kathy’s father’s comment during last year’s State invitational meet. During that meet, Dr. Karakova made the comment, “we’ve never had a principal, like Mr. Crum here, to interfere with a sports team with such voracity before.” That comment did not sit well with Mr. Crum, who was utterly embarrassed. Kathy’s dad reassures her, “just wear what you want to school. I will take care of Mr. Crum myself if need be. That is, if Dr. Zunde hasn’t already done that.”

The long awaited day arrives, and Kathy cannot wait to get to school. She and Eddie drive to school, and get there very early. Kathy drives past the garage door to the auto shop, which happens to be open. Mr. Malik, the auto shop teacher, hears the 911 engine of the Porsche 914, and walks outside to see what exactly drove by. Mr. Malik sees Eddie and Kathy get out of the Porsche 914. Being a little curious, he walks over and wants to take a look at the car.

Mr. Malik opens by mentioning, “that doesn’t sound like a normal 914 to me.” Kathy, who is now well versed regarding the modifications that were made to her car, tells Mr. Malik, “it was modified for agility racing. It has a six-cylinder engine, not a four. And, it has better suspension so it goes around curves really well. And, the battery is now in the rear trunk.” Mr. Malik asks Kathy, “how come you didn’t sign up for auto shop?” Kathy smiles, and replies, “because I have Eddie.” Mr. Malik asks Kathy, “if you don’t mind, I’d like to put it up on the rack sometime and take a look.” Kathy replies, “we’re way early for school. How about now?” Mr. Malik replies, “sure. We’ve got 20 or 30 minutes before the bell rings.”

Kathy drives the 914 to the garage door, and Mr. Malik guides her in, getting her centered over the lift. Kathy gets out, and Mr. Malik lifts the car. Eddie, Kathy, and Mr. Malik take a look underneath. Mr. Malik is amazed, to say the least, of the engineering masterpiece that he sees underneath the vehicle. Mr. Malik tells Eddie and Kathy, “I cannot even begin to explain the genius that it took to make these modifications.” But, Kathy and Eddie already know that, already hearing it from Angelo.

Looking around underneath the 914, Mr. Malik points out, “and, take a look at this. There’s an active front and rear suspension. Here are the

hydraulic links. The active front suspension, in combination with the small front anti-sway bar, must respond really fast.” Looking around a little closer, Mr. Malik comments, “and, take a look at this. Girling brakes. This model is often found on racing cars.” Mr. Malik examines every little detail underneath the 914. Mr. Malik mentions, “they’ve even stiffened the body. These structural components are not original equipment. They’ve been welded in. And, apparently, after the work was done, they’ve powder coated the entire underside. This took a lot of time, effort, and money.”

Mr. Malik lowers the 914, and tells Kathy, “Mr. Zunde will definitely be interested in seeing this sometime. He’s a Porsche fanatic.” Kathy informs Mr. Malik, “Angelo, at the service station, said he heard all about this car, but he’s never seen it until I got it. He said that an engineer from Georgia Tech made all the modifications.” Mr. Malik tells Kathy, “that would certainly explain everything we see here. No one does this type of work without some kind of extensive engineering background. To be honest, what was done to this car is far beyond me. I’d like to meet the guy who modified this car someday.” Kathy drives the car out of the garage, and parks it in her favorite space on the end.

Kathy and Eddie then walk toward the school entrance. When they walk in, every girl they see is wearing a cutoff. Kathy tells Eddie, “check it out! Super awesome!” Eddie replies, “Mr. Crum is going to shit a brick.” Kathy tells him, “good. He started the whole thing anyway.” As they walk through the lobby, many girls give Kathy a high-five. Eddie tells Kathy, “if they send you and Paula home again, slide a note in my locker.” Kathy replies, “you’ll know they sent us home if all the girls in the school are gone.” Eddie and Kathy head to their classes, each wondering what this day will bring.

Eddie takes a seat with the tribe near the window. Wendy asks Eddie, “are Kathy and Paula here today?” Eddie replies, “yeah. But, who knows for how long.” They talk for a while, and then Miss Starr walks in.

Miss Starr, who can easily win an award for the best-dressed teacher, is wearing an outfit that likely came from Saks Fifth Avenue. She takes off her blazer, draping it over her chair. Underneath, Miss Starr is wearing a cutoff, which is immediately noticed by the entire class.

The reaction of the class to Miss Starr’s outfit is priceless. Most of the students clap, some give her a cat call, and others cheer. She allows the students to continue as she takes the roll. Braden whispers, “I wish all our teachers would dress like that.” Wendy kicks Braden’s foot under the desk, and gives him a dirty look. After calling the roll, Miss Starr tells the class, “I understand that you can get a day off if you wear a cutoff. But,

until I get sent home, it's down to business." Miss Starr then begins her lesson for today.

During class change, it is hard to find a girl not wearing a cutoff. There is no word around school of Mr. Crum's reaction. In fact, no one has even seen or heard from him all morning. Eddie checks his locker between each class, and finds no note from Kathy. This is good news, telling him Kathy has not been sent home.

After third period, the feared announcement finally comes. The school secretary announces over the loudspeaker, "Kathy Karakova and Paula Giovani, please report to the administration office immediately." Since it is class change, Eddie and Mark go to their next class by way of the administration area. When Eddie and Mark get to the administration office, Kathy and Paula come around the corner.

Kathy tells Eddie, "I was hoping this wouldn't happen." Eddie gives Kathy a hug, and a kiss, telling her, "if he gives you any trouble, tell him you want Mr. Zunde here." Paula tells Mark and Eddie, "wish us luck!" Mark tells Paula, "hey! Take that shirt off. You can't wear that in school!" The girls smile, and walk into the administration office. Eddie and Mark have little choice but to go to class.

Kathy and Paula walk into the office, and Mrs. Marlowe, the school secretary, tells them to have a seat. Kathy asks Mrs. Marlowe, "how are we here?" The secretary replies, "Mr. Crum wants to see you girls." Paula replies, "oh, wonderful. I can't wait." Kathy and Paula sit and wait, wondering what is next. Kathy breathes a sigh of relief, telling Paula, "I think I hear Mr. Zunde in there." Paula replies, "let's hope so." After five minutes, Mr. Crum's door opens, and he tells the girls, "please come into my office and have a seat."

Kathy and Paula walk in, and are not surprised to see Mr. Zunde. They are very surprised to see Kathy's father and Mr. Frazier standing on the other side of Mr. Zunde. Mr. Crum again tells the girls, "please, have a seat." Kathy and Paula sit in the two chairs across from Mr. Crum's desk, with a perfect view of the rough edge that was modified by Eddie's father last year. Mr. Zunde, Dr. Karakova, and Mr. Frazier all stand to the side with their arms crossed. They have the unmistakable appearance that they are ready to take someone apart limb by limb in a back alley somewhere.

Mr. Crum tells the girls, "well, I suppose you're wondering why you're here." Kathy, who has really had enough of Mr. Crum's shit over the last year, replies, "hopefully, for you to give us another afternoon off." Mr. Crum chuckles unexpectedly and replies, "no, not today. You'll have to suffer through the remainder of the day here with the rest of us."

Mr. Crum tells the girls, "I'd like to apologize for my behavior yesterday. I'm sorry that I caused such a commotion over what you wore to school. And, since I was unaware that there is no dress code, you are free to wear whatever you feel is appropriate." The room is silent for a few seconds, which seems like minutes to the girls. Breaking the silence, Kathy asks, "that's it?" Mr. Crum replies, "no. One more thing. You weren't suspended yesterday, so technically you cut class. But, I am willing to overlook this instance, so there will be no detention."

Kathy looks at Paula, in shock, wondering whether it is her father, Mr. Zunde, or Mr. Frazier that has the gun pointed at Mr. Crum's head. Mr. Crum doesn't talk this way. The girls know there's got to be a story behind Mr. Crum's sudden change in attitude. They will eventually find out the real story. Mr. Crum, however, is naive, and believes that Kathy and Paula won't be privileged to that information. He thinks the adults will all keep the students in the dark. No one in the room, however, is dumb enough to believe that Mr. Crum is truly being sincere.

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Paula, "okay, unless there are any other questions, you are free to go to class. Mrs. Marlowe will give you your late passes." Kathy asks, "so, we're done? That's it?" Mr. Crum tells them, "yes. Go to class, and keep up the school spirit!" Kathy's father smiles as the girls get up and leave. Mr. Zunde, Mr. Frazier, and Dr. Karakova were completely silent during the short meeting. That is quite a difference from the meeting that was held with Eddie's father last year. Perhaps Mr. Crum has learned something, but it's doubtful.

The girls leave Mr. Crum's office, and pick up their late passes from Mrs. Marlowe, who already had them prepared. They walk out of the administration office in shock. Kathy asks Paula, "okay, now. What's up with that?" Paula replies, "and, what was all that shit about 'school spirit'?" Kathy tells Paula, "I can't wait to get home tonight and hear about this one." Paula replies, "I'm coming. I've got to hear this too." Kathy tells Paula, "Mr. Crum is so full of shit. They have something over his head. They have to." Paula reminds her, "well, you are the bullshit detector." Kathy laughingly replies, "yeah! You're right!" Kathy adds, "and, did you see them? My dad, Mr. Zunde, and Mr. Frazier looked like the Gestapo!" Kathy and Paula walk into their classroom, wondering what in the world just happened back there in Mr. Crum's office.

At lunchtime, the tribe hears this morning's story top to bottom from Kathy and Paula. No one believes for a moment that Mr. Crum is sincere. What is of concern, however, is that Mr. Crum thinks that the girls think he is sincere. There is a lot of speculation around what happened, but no one really knows. Everyone wants to hear from Kathy's father what actually happened. But, they will have to wait until tomorrow. That is unless, of course, Mr. Zunde or Mr. Frazier says something later today.

The end of the school day arrives, and Kathy is happy again. She drives Eddie to her house, where they do homework for a while as they sit out by the pool. Mark and Paula join them, also doing homework. It's not really doing homework, though, that is on their mind. What they really want to know is what happened to Mr. Crum between yesterday and today.

After a while, Mark asks, "when does your dad get home?" Kathy replies, "any minute now. It's only the first week of classes at the University, so he gets home early. Classes at the University get into high gear next week." Paula replies, "then Barbara must be getting settled in this week."

Kathy's father walks out of the house into the back yard. No one heard him come home because they were too busy talking and doing their homework. Kathy's father opens the conversation, telling her, "that Mr. Crum is certainly a piece of work." Kathy asks, "so, what really happened?" Kathy's father tells her, "I went by the school today to talk to Dr. Zunde on my way to work, and to see Mr. Crum if I could. Dr. Zunde said we'll just go and see him now. Mr. Frazier joined us. He knew what was going to happen, and wanted to see it first hand."

Kathy asks, "what happened to Mr. Crum? Did lightning strike him or something? Or, does he like have a brain tumor?" Kathy's father laughs, and says, "no, not quite. Dr. Zunde presented extensive documentation that he's been keeping over the years, itemizing every instance of when Mr. Crum interfered with athletics. The list is quite impressive. To be frank, Dr. Zunde has had enough of Mr. Crum. Dr. Zunde told Mr. Crum that, if he pursues this issue, he will go to the school board and request to have him demoted."

Kathy asks, "why not just have him fired?" Kathy's dad replies, "Dr. Zunde doesn't really want to have Mr. Crum fired. Dr. Zunde is playing a game of chess with Mr. Crum. It's been going on for years. Mr. Crum cannot win. Actually, in a way, Dr. Zunde enjoys it." Paula remarks, "wow! That makes a lot of sense." Eddie comments, "no wonder Mr. Zunde threw the discus at Mr. Crum last year."

Kathy's father tells Kathy and the rest of the group, "Dr. Zunde tells me that Mr. Crum has been subdued for a while, but he'll be back to his normal self in a few weeks. So, don't worry about Mr. Crum." Kathy tells her dad, "you know, I really tried to get suspended yesterday." Kathy's father replies, "yeah, I know. Dr. Zunde tells me you and Paula pretty much pulverized Mr. Crum. Mr. Frazier mentioned that he wished he was there to see it. At least you and Paula got a nice afternoon off out of it." Kathy's father then goes inside, happy to see that Kathy is well able to deal with the absurdity of an out of control principal.

The next few days at school go more smoothly. Mr. Crum has gotten out of the way, at least for a while. And, this is Kathy and Paula's senior year. It is not supposed to be filled with strife, as offered up by Mr. Crum. Fortunately, a few people put an end to Mr. Crum's antagonism rather quickly. And, until the weather gets cooler, everyone has a wardrobe more appropriate for the unusually warm weather. Cutoffs have been the craze throughout the school since Kathy and Paula debuted them on the first day of school.

The weekend comes, so Eddie and Kathy spend some time working out. Finally getting back into their own routine of things, life is back to normal. They spend the morning working out in Eddie's gym. Eddie and Kathy have made some decent gains since last Spring. While they haven't timed themselves in a while, they both know that they are faster than they were when they medaled at the State invitational meet last year. After they work out today, they go out to eat and get pizza.

After lunch, they head to Kathy's house, and go in her pool. They float around in the water for a while, relaxing after a strenuous morning workout. Kathy tells Eddie, "hey, I sink. I don't float anymore. I haven't noticed that before." Eddie tells her, "you have all those muscles now." Kathy mentions, "yeah. I don't have much fat anymore." Kathy tries to see how fast it takes to sink to the bottom of the pool. She tries a few times. Kathy and Eddie race to the bottom to see who sinks faster, and they find out that Eddie sinks a little faster.

After a while, Kathy tells Eddie, "my eyes are burning again, and now I have an earache. I need to get out of the pool." They get out of the pool, and dry off. Eddie tells Kathy, "let's go to my house and get my water test kit. There's definitely something wrong with the water if you're constantly having this problem." Kathy finally agrees, losing all faith in the pool guy who has been trying to fix the problem for the last two months. They drive to Eddie's house and pick up his test kit.

When they return, Eddie and Kathy test the water. Eddie finds the chlorine level to be less than 0.25 parts per million. Eddie explains to Kathy, "the chlorine level should be between 1.0 and 3.0 parts per million. The level in your pool barely even registers. It's less than 0.25 parts per million. That's nothing." Kathy asks, "so, is that why my eyes burn?" Eddie replies, "no. If the chlorine level was over 3.0, your eyes might get red. Let's check the pH." Eddie checks the pH, and tells Kathy, "here's the problem. The pH of your pool is off the scale. It's way over 9.0. That would definitely cause your eyes to burn." Kathy tells Eddie, "I'm getting my dad. I'll be right back."

Kathy returns with her father, finding Eddie rechecking the pool chemistry. Kathy tells her father, "my eyes are really burning after being

in the pool, and now I have a bad earache.” Kathy’s father replies, “I’ve noticed my eyes burning recently as well.”

Kathy asks Eddie, “can you tell my dad what you just found?” Eddie explains his findings to Kathy’s father. Kathy’s father asks, “how do you fix it?” Eddie explains, “we need to bring the chlorine level up. That should be easy enough. To bring the pH down, we need to put at least a gallon or two of muriatic acid in the pool. The pH should ideally be 7.35 or close to that.” Kathy’s father asks Eddie, “how long will it take to get the pool back to normal?” Eddie replies, “a day, maybe two if the pH is higher than I think it is. It’s off the scale right now.”

Kathy’s father asks Eddie, “does her earache have anything to do with this?” Eddie replies, “with a chlorine level that barely registers, it’s anyone’s guess what could be growing in the pool.” Kathy tells her dad, “my ear has been hurting for a week, and it’s been getting worse.” Kathy’s dad tells her, “we’ll get you to the doctor and see what’s going on.”

Kathy asks, “can me and Eddie fix the pool?” Kathy’s dad replies, “sure. Give it a try. The pool guy has had well over a month, and it’s not any better now than it was.” Eddie asks, “how many gallons are in the pool?” Kathy’s father replies, “20,000 gallons.” Eddie tells Kathy, “let’s go to the store and get the acid, chlorine, and some algaecide.”

Eddie and Kathy return with the muriatic acid, which is 31 percent, the chlorine, and algaecide. The first thing Eddie does is to backwash the filter, since he has lost all trust in the pool guy. He shows Kathy and her father how to backwash the system, which is actually very simple. With the filter now clean, they move on to correcting the pool chemistry.

After doing a few calculations, Eddie explains that, if the pH is currently at 9.5 and there are 20,000 gallons in the pool, one gallon of the 31 percent muriatic acid should get the pH down to 7.4. Eddie spends quite a long time adding the acid to the water. Eddie explains to Kathy and her father, “you have to add it slowly, otherwise it will sink to the bottom, and etch the pool’s finish. Where the jets are is a good place to add the acid because it disperses it.”

After Eddie is finished adding a gallon of acid, he then adds a considerable amount of chlorine. When he is done, he dumps the whole bottle of algaecide into the water, which treats 20,000 gallons. Eddie tells Kathy’s father, “let the pump run overnight, and I’ll check the water again tomorrow.” Kathy tells Eddie, “I hope this will fix it.” Eddie replies, “it will stop your eyes from burning. I’m not sure what’s up with your ear though.”

They then clean the skimmers, which were surprisingly full of debris. When one of the skimmer baskets is emptied, a dead and badly decaying frog is found in the bottom. Kathy exclaims, "yuk! I wonder how long that's been there?" Eddie's father replies, "from the looks of it, too long." Eddie tells Kathy, "the skimmers need to be checked daily. I'll check the skimmers every morning before we go to school."

Since Kathy's ear is hurting and she doesn't feel well, she goes inside to lie down for a while. Eddie heads home, and works out in his home gym. He also spends a little time working on his MGB, which is coming along quite well. Later that night, Eddie calls Kathy, finding out the nap did her some good.

Eddie returns the next day to check the pool. Eddie, Kathy, and Kathy's father go into the back yard and check the water again. Testing the chlorine, Eddie now finds the level is now 2.2 to 2.4. He explains that the chlorine is now at a normal level. Eddie then tests the pH, which is now 7.4. Eddie tells Kathy's father, "it looks like the pool is back to normal." Kathy asks, "is it okay to go in the water?" Eddie replies, "sure." Kathy's father exclaims, "I've never seen the pool water this clear in a while!" Eddie replies, "maybe that's because the water is clean now."

Kathy puts on her swimsuit and goes for a swim. Kathy's parents also go in the pool, and Eddie joins everyone. Kathy goes underwater a lot and opens her eyes. After an hour in the water, Kathy tells Eddie, "my eyes don't burn at all, and I even opened them a lot underwater!" Eddie replies, "it was the pH. It was way off."

Kathy's father says, "I wonder how the pH got so far off." Eddie replies, "it's a concrete pool. The pH naturally goes up over time, especially in the first year." Kathy's father asks, "how often should the pH be checked?" Eddie replies, "I would check it once a week." Kathy mentions, "my ear still hurts though." Kathy's mother tells her, "I made an appointment for you to see the doctor tomorrow." Kathy asks, "hey! Can I drive?" Her mom replies, "sure. I've been waiting for my ride in your car."

Kathy's father fired the pool guy that afternoon. He decided to take care of the pool himself. Kathy offers to help, and wants to learn how to maintain the pool herself. Kathy wants a pool of her own someday, so there's no better time than now to learn how to take care of it. After watching Eddie, they realized that it wasn't that difficult at all. And, if they have any questions, they could always ask Eddie.

Monday arrives, and since Kathy has to go to the doctor, Eddie walks to school by himself. He could take the bus, but he'd rather walk. When he walks by Kathy's house, he goes into the back yard and cleans the pool skimmers. Eddie does not find any dead frogs in the skimmers today.

Since Kathy's car is still in the driveway, he figures she's still sleeping, and he heads to school.

When Eddie gets to school, everyone asks where Kathy is. Eddie tells them she's at the doctor this morning because she has an earache. Mark mentions that Kathy could possibly have a Crum ache. Braden mentions that everyone has a Crum ache. It's no secret that Mr. Crum is not exactly anyone's favorite administrator.

Later that morning, Kathy and her mother drive to the doctor's office. On the way, Kathy's mother tells Kathy, "I'm finally getting my ride in your car." Kathy asks, "so, what do you think?" Kathy's mother replies, "it seems to run really well." Kathy drives conservatively with her mother in her car. Taking corners at high speeds is not exactly on today's agenda.

They arrive at the doctor's office. Kathy's mother explains to the doctor that they suspect Kathy's ear hurting has something to do with the pool. They also explain that the pool chemistry was way off, and that there was a dead frog found in the skimmer. The doctor examines Kathy, diagnoses her with an ear infection, and prescribes an antibiotic. The doctor informs Kathy's mother that ear infections are common when going in the water.

Kathy and her mother then arrive home, and they go inside. Kathy's mother tells Kathy that she has a few errands to run, and that she will fill the prescription while she is out. She also tells Kathy to wait home until she returns, so she can take her medication before she goes to school.

By lunchtime, Kathy is back in school, and sits with the tribe as everyone eats lunch. Kathy already ate lunch at home, since her antibiotic had to be taken with food. Everyone is expressing their concern about her, so she tells everyone, "my ear hurt, so my mom took me to the doctor. He said it was an ear infection, so he gave me antibiotics." Paula asks, "what did they give you?" Kathy replies, "penicillin." Paula mentions, "at least they know what it is. That's good news."

Mark asks, "how did you get an ear infection?" Kathy replies, "the doctor said I most likely got it from swimming in my pool." Mark asks, "how did that happen?" Kathy explains to Mark, and everyone else, "the pool guy wasn't doing his job. There was no chlorine in the pool. The pH was way off. And, I was swimming with dead frogs." Paula exclaims, "what? Dead frogs? Yuk!" Kathy replies, "yeah. There was a dead frog in the skimmer! But, it's all fixed now. Eddie fixed the pool water. And, my dad fired the pool guy. So, we're going to take care of the pool ourselves now." They go outside after lunch, and enjoy the nice weather. The conversation then moves beyond dead frogs and Mr. Crum.

After school, Kathy tells Eddie, “hey, let’s go to your house to work out after school.” Eddie replies, “sure. I was going to ask you if you wanted to work out.” Kathy replies, “okay, then! It’s a date!” Eddie asks, “don’t normal people go to the movies for a date?” Kathy replies, “yeah. But, we’re not normal. Our idea of a date is working out, and getting pizza. It’s not dinner and a movie like everyone else.”

They get to Eddie’s house and hit the weights. They begin today’s workout with squats. Eddie is surprised at the energy Kathy is putting into her workout. Eddie mentions, “you are working out really hard.” Kathy replies, “yeah. The track season is coming up. I have to get in better shape.” Eddie tells her, “you’re in the best shape of your life!” Kathy replies, “yeah, I know. But, I need to make it to State.” Kathy then does another set of squats.

After her set, she tells him, “so, there’s this guy who’s a good sprinter. I need to get in better shape so I can beat him this year.” While Eddie is doing his set, he asks, “who’s that?” Kathy replies, “some guy named Edward Bogenskaya. He’s the fastest guy in the State, and I’m going to beat him this year.” After his set, Eddie replies, “well, I hear that there are these Amazon women who are taking over track and field. And, more are coming this year. I need to get in better shape, or they’ll all beat me.” Kathy tells Eddie, “watch out, buddy. Here we come!”

During Kathy’s next set, Eddie remarks, “you know, Mark and Paula, and Johnson, and Braden, and everyone else are all working out too. Maybe even harder than we are.” After hearing that, Kathy, who just finished her last rep, keeps going. After her set, Kathy tells Eddie, “they may be working out, but definitely not harder than me!”

During Eddie’s set, Kathy is doing squats with dumbbells, waiting for her turn on the squat rack. Kathy tells Eddie, “you know, McCrutchen could be working out too.” After his set, Eddie replies, “if he was the fastest guy around, I’d still beat him. I’ll just tell him his lane is not level, and he’ll lose.” Kathy replies, “yeah, you’re right about that.”

After Eddie and Kathy’s great workout, Eddie’s mom asks Kathy if she wants to stay for dinner. Kathy calls her mom to make sure it’s okay. Kathy and Eddie are happy because Kathy can stay for dinner. Eddie’s brother tells Kathy, “hey, you’re getting big!” Kathy flexes her biceps, telling him, “yeah! Take a look, buddy! But, I got a whole lot more work to do.” Eddie’s mother asks, “more work?” Kathy replies, “everyone’s working out and I can’t lose any ground.”

Eddie then mentions, “the competition is going to be a lot more savage next year.” Eddie’s mother asks, “savage? How is track savage?” Eddie replies, “it’s all the Amazon women that are trying out for the team.”

Kathy replies, “not only women, but Amazon men too.” Eddie asks “like who?” Kathy replies, “the javelin guy, what’s his name? Johnny Spears?” Getting the giggles again, Kathy mentions, “okay, we got to stop this now. I know where this is going.” Eddie replies, “okay. But, you know it’s not over. Just wait until Spring.”

While they are waiting for dinner, Eddie asks Kathy, “hey, do you want to see something?” Kathy replies, “sure.” Eddie tells her, “come with me.” Eddie goes into the garage, and shows Kathy the engine to his MGB. He tells her, “I got the engine finished the other day. The next thing to do is to put the engine back in the car. And, I got a new clutch, and a new overdrive box.” Kathy exclaims, “wow! The engine looks brand new.” Eddie tells her, “I completely rebuilt it.” Kathy asks, “when did you have time to do that?” Eddie replies, “I work on it a half hour a day on average, mostly after dinner when it’s not a good time to work out. The time all adds up.” Kathy mentions, “yeah, like working out. It all adds up.” They hear Eddie’s mom tell them that dinner is ready, and they go inside to eat.

After dinner, Kathy and Eddie hang around for a while. Kathy asks Eddie, “so, what are we doing for our after dinner workout?” Eddie replies, “nothing. We worked out enough today.” Kathy asks, “so, when do we work out next?” Eddie replies, “well, you can swim laps in your pool before school. Or, we can go for a bicycle ride.” Kathy tells him, “yeah! Maybe I’ll swim some laps. I’ll do the breast stroke, and work my upper body.” Eddie tells her, “check the skimmers for dead frogs before you swim.” Kathy tells him, “yeah! I’m keeping on top of that now. No worries there.” Since it’s a school night, Kathy has to head home. They kiss each other good night, and Kathy drives home.

Over the next few days, Kathy works out with a vengeance. Eddie, quite surprised at Kathy’s energy level, keeps up with her. Mark and Paula occasionally join them. Kathy’s ear infection has cleared up, which is good news. She still, however, has a few more days of antibiotics left to take. Kathy and her father are keeping the pool in tip top shape. They are both convinced that firing the pool guy was a good decision. And, the icing on the cake is that Mr. Crum has not shown his ugly head recently. Since it’s Autumn, Eddie and Kathy assume Mr. Crum is too busy harassing Mr. Moreno and the football team.

Eddie and Kathy work out again together on the following Saturday, but Kathy is taking it a little easy. Eddie asks her, “what happened to all the fire you had last week?” Kathy replies, “my stomach has been feeling like hammered shit. My mother called the doctor, and he said it was from the antibiotic. He said that it was common. In four more days, I’m done with that stupid pill. I can’t wait.” Eddie asks, “is there anything that helps?” Kathy replies, “not that I’ve found. Well, that’s not true. Sleeping helps because, when I’m asleep, I don’t know I feel like crap.” Eddie

mentions, “we can do something else if you want.” Kathy tells him, “no. That’s okay. I’m doing this, even though I’m not a ten today.” They continue their workout, but Kathy is obviously not herself today.

After the workout, Eddie asks, “is there anything special that you want to do this afternoon?” Kathy replies, “yeah. Let’s get pizza, and then go float around in my pool. Now that the water is fixed, I really want to go in the pool. It’s going to be cold someday soon, so we won’t be able to.”

Kathy and Eddie drive to the pizzeria where they get pizza. Kathy eats slowly, not knowing how her stomach is going to react. She makes it through lunch today without any problem, which is good news. They then head to Kathy’s house, so they can go in the pool for a swim.

When they arrive, they sit by the pool for a while. Kathy asks Eddie, “can we check the pool water before we go in?” Kathy is not taking any chances. She already got one ear infection from the pool. She certainly doesn’t want to get another one. Eddie and Kathy check the skimmers for dead frogs, not really expecting to find any. Kathy proudly announces, “awesome! No dead frogs today!”

Today, Eddie lets Kathy check the pool water. Kathy checks the water, and tells Eddie, “the pH is 7.3 and the chlorine is 2.2 to 2.4. It looks good to me.” Eddie tells her, “hey! You’re getting good at this.” Eddie tells Kathy, “it’s also a good thing to look at the walls and the bottom of the pool. If there’s any algae growing on it, it needs to be brushed and algaecide needs to be put in.” Since everything looks good, they get in the water.

Eddie and Kathy float in the water for a few minutes. After a while, Kathy assumes her favorite position while in the pool, putting her legs around Eddie’s waist and her arms around his neck. Kathy looks at Eddie, and sings her song to him, *The Power of Love*. When she is done, Kathy lays her head on Eddie’s shoulder, telling him, “everything is going to be okay now.” Eddie tells her, “every time you sing your song, it gets more beautiful.” Kathy embraces her sweetie, as they hug each other tightly.

Kathy then whispers to Eddie, “please don’t ever let me go.” Eddie replies, “I won’t.” Kathy and Eddie float around the pool for quite a while. With her head on Eddie’s shoulder, Kathy starts crying. Before Eddie could say anything, Kathy tells him, “I just love you so much. I really, really do.” Eddie embraces Kathy, and tells her, “oh, sweetie! I love you, I love you, I love you!” They hug each other tightly, both feeling something very special that day.

When they get out of the pool, they sit and relax, sharing a chaise lounge meant for one person. With her head on Eddie’s shoulder, Kathy

tells him, "I remember the first time I saw you run. I knew you were special, even back then." Eddie mentions, "that was during indoor track, almost two years ago." Kathy tells him, "no, actually it wasn't." Surprised, Eddie asks, "no? Then when was it? In gym class?" Kathy replies with a long drawn out, "nooooo." Eddie asks, "on the road somewhere?" Kathy again replies, "nooooo." Eddie tells Kathy, "okay, Katarina Karakova. I can tell that you're up to something. I give up." Kathy asks, "well, aren't you going to ask me when it was?" Eddie replies, "okay, when was it?"

Kathy explains to Eddie, "it was when you were in middle school. You guys were running against Centerville. You ran like a ten-second 100-yard dash that day. Mr. Frazier was really impressed. You and Mark were faster than the high school's best sprinter." Eddie exclaims, asking, "you were there?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I was there for the whole meet." Eddie asks, "what were you doing there?" Kathy tells him, "I was working with Mr. Frazier. I was taking names and times for him. I remember that, after the 100-yard dash, you just walked away and talked to the shot-put guy." Eddie remarks, "yeah, Bobby B." Kathy tells Eddie, "you guys looked like you were having so much fun that day."

Kathy goes on, saying, "and then, there was your 4 by 440 relay team. You guys ran a better time than the high school's 4 by 440 relay team. Mr. Frazier couldn't believe it. Every one of you guys broke 60 seconds in the quarter mile." Eddie replies, "wow! We were wondering if we'd even make the team when we got to high school." Kathy tells Eddie, "you guys made the team after that meet with Centerville." Kathy then mentions, "when we drove back to the high school after the meet, Mr. Frazier kept asking me if he was dreaming."

Kathy tells Eddie, "I tried to find the time to say 'hi' to you back then, but either you were busy, or I was busy working. Then, when you got to high school, our path's never really crossed until track. Well, and your gym class." Eddie asks, "my gym class?" Kathy, who is almost giggling, replies, "yeah! You guys played football just like a game of Kill the Man with the Ball. I had a bird's eye view. It was the last period of the day, and we were in Mr. O'Brien's social studies class. That class was so boring. Watching your gym class kept a lot of us sane."

Surprised at Kathy's recollection of his gym class, Eddie comments, "I didn't know we had an audience." Kathy replies, "oh yeah! Your gym class had an audience whenever you guys were out there. Oh, and the funniest thing ever was when someone asked, 'if we finish the test early, can we go stand by the window and watch the football game?' And, oh boy, was Mr. O'Brien ever ticked off about that." Eddie tells Kathy, "wow! If we knew we had an audience, we would have waved."

Eddie then remarks, “wow! That was more than two years ago when that happened.” Kathy sighs, and whispers, “and, here we are. I’m a senior, and you’re a junior. We’re on the same track team, running side by side with each other in the same races.” Eddie asks, “does that make you happy?” Kathy whispers to Eddie, “yes, it does. I am very happy, Edward Bogenskaya. I am very happy.” Eddie and Kathy enjoy the rest of the day together out by the pool. Since their families are eating dinner together tonight, Kathy and Eddie will get to spend the whole day together.

By mid week, Kathy no longer has to take her antibiotic. Her ear infection is cleared up, but she gets word that another problem is brewing. The rumor around school is that Kathy’s car is not street legal, and that the Porsche 914 she drives is a racing car. This is all Mr. Crum needs to hear to begin an investigation. He gathers as much information as he can during the week, puts it together and, as usual, comes to the wrong conclusion.

On Monday, after the announcements, the school secretary announces over the loudspeaker, “will Edward Bogenskaya and Kathy Karakova please report to the administration office immediately.” Miss Starr tells Eddie, “you two must have got caught holding hands in the hallway.” Eddie replies, telling Miss Starr, “or, maybe my socks are too short.” The class cracks up, as Eddie stands up to leave. Miss Starr tells Eddie, “good luck.” On his way out, Eddie points to Chuckie, telling him, “shut up, junior,” before Chuckie even has the chance to say anything.

Eddie and Kathy meet in the administration office. Kathy asks Eddie, “what did we do?” Eddie replies, telling her, “I don’t know. Miss Starr thinks we got caught holding hands.” Kathy asks Mrs. Marlowe, the secretary, “how is it that we’re here this time?” Mrs. Marlowe replies, “Mr. Crum wants to see both of you.” Eddie asks, “about what?” Mrs. Marlowe replies, “I’m really not allowed to say.” Kathy tells Eddie, “wow! It must be really, really bad.” Eddie comments, “it can’t be an overdue library book. I’ve never checked one out.”

Mr. Crum opens the door to his office, and says, “both of you. Get in here right now!” The first thing Eddie and Kathy notice is that Mr. Shapiro, the assistant principal, is sitting in Mr. Crum’s office. Kathy looks at Eddie, and says, “wow! Isn’t he grumpy today. Somebody must have pissed in his cornflakes.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “don’t think I didn’t hear that, Miss Karakova!”

Mr. Crum tells Kathy and Eddie, “have a seat.” As he sits down, Eddie mentions, “wow! You haven’t gotten a new desk yet. It’s been what, almost a year now?” Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “I’ve had enough out of you already, and I haven’t even started.” Eddie asks Mr. Crum, “does that

mean we can go back to class now?" Mr. Crum tells Eddie and Kathy, "you two just keep quiet, and listen." Kathy comments, "here we go again with your poor command of the English language."

Mr. Shapiro, the assistant principal sits back and listens to the heated introductory conversation between Mr. Crum and the two students. Mr. Shapiro appears to be taking a few notes, and is pretending to support Mr. Crum. What is written on Mr. Shapiro's pad, however, is his grocery shopping list, having absolutely nothing to do with Mr. Crum's meeting. Mr. Shapiro is perfectly happy to let Mr. Crum dig his own hole or sink his own ship. If Mr. Crum gets fired or demoted, Mr. Shapiro is next in line to take his position.

Mr. Crum announces, "let me get right to the point." Kathy replies to Mr. Crum with the highly sarcastic tribe trademark, "waiting." Mr. Crum begins his dissertation, telling Eddie and Kathy, "it has come to my attention that Kathy's car is not a street-legal vehicle. It has also come to my attention that you, Edward Bogenskaya, used the school's auto shop to make modifications to her car. The vehicle is also reported to me to be a racing car, which I simply cannot allow on school property. And, using the school facilities in the way that you did is a clear violation of school policy."

Eddie and Kathy, beyond a shadow of a doubt, know that Mr. Crum is full of shit. Kathy whispers to Eddie, "let's have some fun with this." Mr. Crum exclaims, asking, "what did you just say to him?" Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "she told me 'we just got busted.'" Mr. Crum, who's confidence in his accusation has just risen to new heights, tells them, "now, I'm going to get to the bottom of this." Kathy laughs, and replies, "waiting."

Mr. Crum asks Eddie, "how did you modify Kathy's car?" Eddie replies, "with a socket wrench set, a screwdriver, and a small hammer. I think I may have also used pliers at one point. Oh, and I used a valve spring compressor." Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "don't get smart with me, young man." Eddie replies, "well, what exactly do you want to know?" Mr. Crum instructs Eddie, "tell me exactly what you did to Kathy's car." Eddie replies, "I replaced a valve, which I did at Angelo's Service Station. And, while I was at it, I changed the oil, which I had to do since we opened up the engine. I also replaced the battery. Ask Angelo. He'll tell you."

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "I can see that I'm not getting anywhere with you. I was expecting your full cooperation, and I can see that I'm not getting any." Kathy asks, "so, you're not getting any?" Mr. Crum replies, "no, I'm not!" Kathy replies, "that's sad. I'm so sorry. I can clearly see that." Mr. Shapiro has difficulty containing his laughter at Kathy's double entendre that flew right over Mr. Crum's head. Kathy's comment will

certainly make its way around the teachers lounge later today. Mr. Shapiro is sure to tell someone by the end of the morning.

Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “hey, why don’t you just talk to Mr. Malik. He’ll explain it all to you.” Mr. Crum tells them, “I might just do that.” Kathy adds, “and, Mr. Zunde too. Bring him back with you. He seems to always enjoy these meetings.”

Mr. Crum whispers something to Mr. Shapiro, and Kathy exclaims, asking, “what did you just say to him?” Mr. Crum shakes his head and tells Eddie and Kathy, “don’t go anywhere. Just sit right there.” Eddie asks, “what if there’s a fire drill?” Mr. Crum dares not to respond to Eddie’s sarcasm. Mr. Crum leaves his office for a moment, taking Mr. Shapiro with him.

While Mr. Crum and Mr. Shapiro are away, Kathy tells Eddie, “wow! His full of shit gauge is totally pegged.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “yeah. I’d say so.” Eddie and Kathy hear the announcement, “Mr. Malik, please report to the administration office. Mr. Harrison, please report to the auto shop.” Kathy tells Eddie, “wow! They sent the permanent sub to the shop.” Eddie replies, “I guess we’ll be here for a while.” Kathy asks, “so, what do we do now?” Eddie suggests, “well, we can just let Mr. Crum make a fool out of himself, like he usually does. He’s really good at that.” Kathy replies, “yeah. We’ll let him self destruct. You’re right. He’s really good at it.”

Mr. Crum and Mr. Shapiro enter Mr. Crum’s office again, this time bringing Mr. Malik with them. Mr. Malik is at a loss to understand why he was called to Mr. Crum’s office. Mr. Zunde also walks in since two athletes are sitting in the principal’s office. Mr. Zunde stands by the bookcase, waiting to see what flavor of free entertainment is in store for him today.

Mr. Crum asks Mr. Malik, “can you please tell us what modifications were done to Kathy’s car?” Mr. Malik replies, “I can try, but Eddie can probably explain it better than I can. The modifications made to Kathy’s Porsche 914 were quite extensive.” Thinking that he has Eddie pinned down, Mr. Crum sits back in his chair, and replies, “I can’t wait to hear this.”

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “okay, explain it to me, and cut the funny stuff.” Eddie begins his dissertation, telling Mr. Crum, “first of all, the engine is a six-cylinder fuel-injected 911 engine, and not a four-cylinder 914 engine. Second, the battery has been moved to the rear trunk of the vehicle.” Kathy interjects, “that’s so it won’t have an engine fire.” Eddie continues, “the suspension has been completely re-engineered. An active suspension was added to the front and rear. The stock wheels were

replaced with alloy wheels.” Eddie thinks for a moment. Kathy tells Eddie, “oh, don’t forget the brakes.” Eddie continues, “oh yeah. The brakes are upgraded. The brakes are Girling brakes, which are designed for racing cars.”

Mr. Crum asks, “anything else?” Kathy replies, “yeah, I added a compass to the dashboard, and sometimes I’ll hang one of my track medals from the rear view mirror.” Eddie adds, “yeah, that’s right. And, there are a few more things. If we put it up on the rack, I can show you.” Mr. Crum replies, “that won’t be necessary.” Kathy sarcastically mentions, “that’s because you wouldn’t know what you’re looking at anyway.” Mr. Crum warns Kathy, “I don’t need your sarcasm right now.” Kathy replies, “well, let’s put my car up on the rack then. Let’s see if you can show everyone where the hydraulic links are for the active suspension. Or, maybe we’ll start off with something easy, and see if you can find the battery.” Mr. Crum tells Kathy, “that’s enough out of you.” Kathy replies, “hey! I’m not the one that’s having a shit fit here.” Kathy has really had enough of Mr. Crum. She knows she can get away with whatever she says, so she’s going for it.

Mr. Malik interrupts, and asks Mr. Crum, “may I ask what is the point of this exercise?” Mr. Zunde comments, “I’d like to hear the answer to that too.” Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “Mr. Zunde, I suppose that you are here because there are two athletes sitting in my office. But, none of this concerns you.” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Crum, “I’m quite sure that, when the dust clears, none of what is being discussed here concerns you either.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “Mr. Zunde, please let me get on with my meeting!” Trying out the tribe’s highly sarcastic innuendo, Mr. Zunde replies, “waiting.” Eddie and Kathy laugh, adding more fuel to the fire.

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Malik, “it is against school policy for a student to use the shop in the manner Eddie has.” Mr. Malik, who is quite puzzled, asks Mr. Crum, “what are you talking about?” Mr. Crum informs Mr. Malik, “Eddie is not allowed to use the auto shop to make modifications to Kathy’s car.” Mr. Malik informs Mr. Crum, “he didn’t. I fail to see what the big deal is here.” Mr. Crum asks, “what do you mean by ‘he didn’t?’” Mr. Malik tells Mr. Crum, “exactly that. He didn’t. Eddie didn’t make those modifications to her car in the shop. In fact, Eddie didn’t make those modifications at all.”

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Malik, “Eddie must have done something to that car!” But, how would Mr. Crum even know? He would not even take Kathy’s challenge to find the battery. Eddie replies to Mr. Crum’s accusation, announcing to everyone, “you’re right, Mr. Crum! I did make modifications to Kathy’s car in the auto shop. I removed the Holley carburetors, and I installed high performance azalea carburetors. I also put in stainless steel muffler bearings. The headlights were replaced with

arc welder bulbs. And, I Freon cooled the ball joints and steering rack. You wouldn't want the ball joints and the rack and pinion steering to overheat, now would you? Oh, and I almost forgot. I put high performance air in the tires, which is a mixture of oxygen, carbon dioxide and nitrogen. And, that's just to start." Mr. Crum exclaims, "see! I finally got it out of him! Eddie did modify that car!"

Eddie does not stop there. He goes on, making an offer to his principal, "Mr. Crum, if you'd like, I might be able to move the dipstick in your car from your passenger compartment to the engine compartment." Mr. Crum replies, "no. The dipstick will remain in my passenger compartment!" Kathy, not missing a beat, remarks, "I guess that dipstick is going to be in the passenger compartment for a long, long time." Mr. Malik, who is trying not to laugh, tells Mr. Crum, "do you understand what Eddie just said?" Mr. Crum replies, "yes, I do. He admitted that he modified the car." Mr. Malik whispers to Mr. Crum, "he just laid out so much bullshit in front of you that you'll need a fire hose to wash it away."

Mr. Crum, not knowing what to do next, asks Mr. Malik, "then, explain to me what the issue is with Kathy's car?" Mr. Malik tells Mr. Crum, "I was curious and put it on the rack one day. The car is perfectly street legal. I understand that it was extensively modified by an engineer from Georgia Tech. The guy must have been a genius. Quite frankly, the modifications that were made to the 914 are far beyond anything I can understand. You really should put it up on the rack and take a look at it. It is an engineering masterpiece." Eddie adds, "Angelo was even amazed by the car."

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Malik, "I just cannot have students driving racing cars to school." Mr. Malik tells Mr. Crum, "it's not a racing car. The Department of Motor Vehicles determines whether a car can be driven on the road or not. Private individuals, such as you or me, do not have the right to make that determination. Doing so may get you in legal trouble." The term "legal trouble" is all Mr. Crum needed to hear to end today's witch hunt. Mr. Crum tells Mr. Malik, "okay, you can return to your class. Thank you." Mr. Crum just got his head handed to him again, this time by Mr. Malik.

Mr. Crum, not having any solid ground to stand on, tells Kathy and Eddie, "okay, you can go back to class now." Kathy, who is really ticked off, sarcastically tells Mr. Crum, "really? It's that simple? We can go back to our class. Oh, how nice of you. You call us out of class every week for this sort of bullshit! Your argument today was full of holes so big that a tractor-trailer could drive through them. Anyone can see that. You're after me, Eddie, Paula, Braden, and anyone else you can find any little itty bitty problem with! Make no mistake about it! This time, I'm after you! Don't you even think for a second that this is the end of this. The next

time you even look at me, I'm going to have my father and his attorney shove barbed wire up your constipated ass! I'm just sick of your bullshit and your weekly shit shows already!"

As Kathy stands up getting ready to leave, Mr. Zunde laughs, and tells Kathy, "please advise me as to when that will happen. I would like to be there to see that myself." Abruptly changing her tune and attitude, Kathy smiles, and tells Mr. Zunde, "gladly. I wouldn't let you miss it for the world. And, we'll make sure Mr. Frazier is there to see it too. We can throw a party and get pizza afterwards." Eddie also mentions, "we should invite Braden. Whenever an ass kicking comes down, he's usually close by." Kathy replies, "yeah! We can't leave Braden out!"

Kathy takes Eddie's hand, and storms out of Mr. Crum's office. As they pass by, Mrs. Marlowe smiles and whispers to them, "Kathy two, Mr. Crum zero. Here are your passes for class." They take their passes, and overhear Mr. Shapiro tell Mr. Crum, "I think she might be a little pissed off at you." That was certainly the understatement of the day.

Kathy and Eddie leave the administration area, and take the long way back to class. Eddie mentions to Kathy, "shove barbed wire up his constipated ass? That was really funny." Kathy tells Eddie, "well, he's full of shit. It might do him some good." Eddie tells her, "hopefully, we won't hear from him for a while." Kathy replies, "I'd better not hear from him. Actually, on second thought, I hope he suspends me. It's still warm outside, and I have a pool to swim in." Eddie mentions, "if he suspends you, he'll suspend me too." Kathy rethinks this and tells Eddie, "well, after the clothing thing, I don't think he's going to try to suspend us. That's just too bad." Eddie mentions, "never underestimate that idiot. He simply can't be trusted." Kathy replies, "hmm, your superpower." They then head to their classes.

Eddie returns to Miss Starr's class just as it is ending. When Eddie walks in, Miss Starr asks, "well, were your socks too short?" Eddie replies, "no. I fixed a car over the Summer." Miss Starr asks, "seriously? Is that it?" Eddie replies, "no. Kathy put a compass in her car." Miss Starr comments, "you've got to be kidding me!" Eddie tells her, "it was just another deep sea fishing expedition. Unfortunately, for Mr. Crum, he caught a shark. Kathy ripped him to shreds." Miss Starr tells Eddie, "wow! I'm sorry I missed it. That must have been fun to watch."

Eddie tells Miss Starr, "Mr. Zunde was there. He can probably give you all the details." Miss Starr suggests, "maybe, someday, I can have the class write a paper on memorable encounters when in high school. It would be interesting to hear what really goes on around this school." From the classes reaction, the students kind of like that idea. Many of

them probably have some interesting stories to tell. Eddie takes his seat, just in time to get today's homework assignment.

At lunchtime, Kathy fills everyone in on Mr. Crum's latest witch hunt. Kathy talks about what happened in a comical manner, but everyone can tell that Mr. Crum is really beginning to stress her out. Today, however, everyone sees that Kathy has had enough. Mr. Crum is no longer treading on thin ice. He has fallen through. With Kathy now on offense and Mr. Crum on defense, Kathy is not likely to hear a peep out of Mr. Crum anytime soon.

When Kathy gets home, she fills her parents in about Mr. Crum's latest failed attempt at suspending her and Eddie. Kathy informs them of every last detail, including the barbed wire fence enema that she promised to Mr. Crum if he even looks at her again. Kathy's father tells Kathy not to worry about Mr. Crum. He tells her that he will call Mr. Crum tomorrow and, in no uncertain terms, will tell him to jump in a lake. Kathy's father informs her that what Mr. Crum is doing is harassment, and if there are any further instances, an attorney will be involved. Kathy is very happy to hear that.

Eddie and Kathy work out a few more times that week. By the end of the week, Kathy is still not at 100 percent. Kathy's mother called the doctor again because Kathy is more tired than usual. The doctor said that it's not unusual for what Kathy is experiencing to follow a course of antibiotics. Kathy is doing her best at working out, knowing that the track season is right around the corner.

Eddie is also doing his best. At six feet, three inches, and 240 pounds, Eddie has certainly made a lot of gains working out. Kathy is catching up. At six feet tall, 175 pounds, and solid as a rock, no one can claim that she has been slacking off. Kathy now takes pride in the fact that she can physically kick Mr. Crum's ass if she wanted to. That is something Braden would dare not miss.

Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula decide that, since the weather is warmer than usual, they would go back to the beach for one last visit this year. They could always go through the portal to a beach at another time, but not today. Eddie and Kathy meet at Mark's house. Paula has already arrived, so they are all ready to go. When they arrive, Mark shows Eddie the new gears he got for his bicycle. He now has a 15-tooth and a 20-tooth rear sprocket on the rear wheel, both freewheeling. Mark tells Eddie that he is now ready to go back to the hills of Hawaii someday.

They head to the beach, and get on the paved path that follows the parkway. Kathy and Paula lead, and the guys follow. They approach the portal, and ride right by. A mile down the path, Kathy begins to slow

down. She attributes her lack of energy to the antibiotic she took a while ago. Everyone slows down with Kathy, letting her set the pace. Eddie asks if she is all right. Kathy assures him that she is.

They make it two miles farther down the path, and Kathy has to stop. Kathy tells the others, "I'm sorry. I'm just not myself today." Eddie tells her, "that's okay. We can stop and rest if you want to." This is quite unusual for Kathy, who can ride her bicycle to the beach, wear herself out, and ride home with no problem. Kathy tells Eddie, "this is going to sound weird, but I don't think I can make it." Eddie tells her, "if you want, we can turn around and skip the beach today." Kathy thinks about it for a moment, and then tells them, "you guys go to the beach. I'm not going to be able to make it the whole way. I'll ride home by myself." Eddie tells Kathy, "I'll ride back home with you." Kathy and Eddie convince Mark and Paula to continue to the beach without them. Mark and Paula ride to the beach, and Eddie and Kathy return home.

When they come to the end of the paved path, Kathy takes another rest. Kathy asks Eddie, "what's wrong with me? This isn't normal." Eddie tells Kathy, "maybe it's the antibiotic. You said that the doctor said this is normal." Kathy replies, "if this is normal, I'm never taking another antibiotic again for as long as I live." Kathy drinks some water, and is ready to go again. They ride along the road, headed toward Kathy's house.

Kathy makes it back to her house without having to stop again, but she is definitely tired. Eddie asks her, "did you sleep okay last night?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I slept like a rock. I didn't even want to get up this morning." Kathy tells Eddie, "you know, come to think of it, I haven't been right since I took that stupid antibiotic." Eddie suggests, "maybe you should go back to the doctor." Kathy tells Eddie, "yeah, maybe. But I hate going to the doctor. All they do is poke and prod at you, do all this stuff, and give you pills to take."

Kathy and Eddie go inside, and Kathy's mother asks, "what's up? Did you decide to skip the beach today?" Kathy tells her mom, "I couldn't make it." Kathy's mom asks, "how do you mean, you couldn't make it?" Kathy explains, "we got part of the way there, and I had to stop. I didn't have the energy. If I kept going, I don't think I could have made it back home."

Eddie mentions, "in the last few weeks, her workouts haven't been the same either." Kathy tells her mom, "yeah, Eddie's right. I'm going backwards." Kathy's mom suggests, "maybe we should go back to the doctor and see what's up." Kathy tells her mom, "yeah, let's do that." Kathy doesn't really want to go back to the doctor, but she also knows that something is not quite right.

Kathy's mom calls the doctor and explains what is going on with Kathy. The receptionist at the office tells her to bring Kathy right in. Kathy's mom tells Kathy, "good news! They can see you this morning." Kathy replies, "can't it wait until Monday? I was hoping for another day off school." Kathy's mom tells her, "you certainly are acting like a senior."

Eddie mentions, "I'm sure that wanting to skip school has nothing to do with Mr. Crum." Kathy's mother tells Eddie, "oh, Kathy's father took care of that problem. I don't think he'll be bothering either of you anytime soon." Eddie asks, "how did he do that?" Kathy's mother explains to Eddie, "this is confidential, but he threatened Mr. Crum with a harassment suit if the nonsense continues." Kathy comments, "it's just too bad that it wasn't a back alley meeting with Guido." Kathy's mom tells Kathy, "we need to get ready to go." Eddie and Kathy kiss goodbye, and Eddie heads home.

While Kathy is at the doctor, Eddie works out. He is waiting to hear from Kathy but, after two hours, there is no word yet. He figures that, since it is Saturday, the office is probably backed up. After he works out, Eddie works on his MGB for a half hour or so. He almost has everything removed from the engine compartment, so he can clean it, paint it, and begin to rewire the electrical system before he reinstalls the engine.

Kathy calls Eddie, and gives him the news, or lack of it. Kathy tells him, "just like I said, he poked and prodded me. Then, he took half of my blood." Eddie asks, "so, he doesn't have any answers?" Kathy replies, "none. He said he has to wait for the blood test results. That could be almost a week." Eddie tells her, "that really sucks." Kathy replies, "yeah, I'd say so. But, what really sucks is that he told me to 'take it easy.'" Kathy then asks Eddie, "can you come over and be with me?" Eddie tells her, "yeah. I'll get a shower and come right over." Kathy tells Eddie, "thanks. I love you." Eddie tells her, "I love you. Be there soon."

When Eddie gets to Kathy's house, he finds her relaxing by the pool. Eddie walks up, and Kathy tells him, "the good news is there are no dead frogs in the skimmers." Eddie tells her, "good! You checked." Kathy tells Eddie, "for some reason, I really think that dead frog is what made me sick." Eddie asks Kathy, "are you feeling any better?" Kathy replies, "I feel like I can ride to the beach, but I also felt that way this morning. So, if I ride to the beach, I'll have to turn around again and come back home."

Eddie, seeing a pile of papers on the table, asks, "what are you working on?" Kathy tells him, "I'm filling out my application to college." Eddie replies, "wow, college!" Kathy tells him, "yeah. I'm going to Georgia Tech so that I can re-engineer cars." Eddie replies, asking, "really?" Kathy tells him, "no, because then I'll be too far away from you. I'm applying to my dad's school. I want to get an Exercise Physiology degree. Then, I can

be a gym teacher.” Eddie mentions, “so, you’ll be right around the corner.” Kathy replies, “yeah. And, Barbara is there, and Paula wants to go there too.” Eddie tells her, “so, it sounds like it’s going to be one big party.” Kathy sighs, and says, “yeah, if I can ever work out again.” Eddie reassures Kathy, “well, they should know in a week.” Kathy replies, “yeah. But, until then, I get to be a slug.”

Kathy continues filling out her application, as Eddie checks the pool chemistry. He finds that it is okay, and sits and relaxes along with Kathy. Kathy, looking through the course catalog, mentions to Eddie, “here’s a good class.” Eddie asks, “what class is that?” Kathy replies, “I’ll read it to you. Discus 201. Using the Discus as a Weapon. In this class you will learn how to throw the discus at the high school principal, and get away with it.” Eddie exclaims, “you’ve got to be kidding me!” Kathy, with a serious expression, replies, “no. It lists Dr. Zunde as the professor.” Eddie replies, “okay. Now I know you’re making this up!” Kathy laughs hysterically, telling Eddie, “I had you going for a minute.” Eddie tells Kathy, “well, at least your sense of humor hasn’t changed.”

Kathy and Eddie sit by the pool for a while longer after she finishes her application. Later in the afternoon, Kathy and Eddie remember that it is Saturday, and that their families are eating dinner out together. Kathy tells Eddie, “I think I want a nap before we go and eat.” Eddie tells her, “that’s probably a good idea. You probably need some rest.” Kathy goes inside for a nap, and Eddie rides his bicycle home. While Kathy is sleeping, Eddie spends some more time working on his MGB.

Later that week, Eddie and Kathy drive to her house after school. When she gets home, Kathy’s mother tells her, “the doctor got your blood test results.” Kathy excitedly asks, “so, did he find out how come I get tired so easily?” Kathy’s mom tells her, “he said your blood counts are all off. He mentioned you have anemia, and that you should take some iron and vitamins.” Kathy asks, “so, that’s why I couldn’t ride to the beach that day?” Kathy’s mom tells her, “that’s what he seems to think. He also said it could take a while before you begin to feel better and get your energy back.” Kathy asks, “how long did he say?” Kathy’s mom replies, “a few weeks, possibly a month or so.”

Kathy asks her mom, “okay, so where are my vitamins? I want them right now.” Kathy is tired of not being able to work out. She wants to get better as soon as possible, and is not wasting any time. Kathy’s mom tells her, “I picked them up for you at the pharmacy right after I got the news.” Kathy asks her, “where are they?” Kathy’s mom gets the bottles, and Kathy wastes no time wanting to take them.

Kathy’s mom tells her, “wait! You need to take them with a meal, not on an empty stomach.” Kathy asks, “when’s dinner?” Kathy’s mom tells

her, “at the usual time, around six.” Kathy takes one each of the vitamin and iron tablets and puts them in her pocket. She tells her mom, “I’m not waiting that long. I’m filling my stomach up with pizza, and then I’ll take them.” Kathy then tells Eddie, “come on, Eddie, we’re getting pizza.” Kathy grabs Eddie’s hand, and they run out the door.

Eddie and Kathy get to the pizzeria, and order Kathy’s favorite. While they are waiting, Kathy tells Eddie, “wow! After I went through all that, all I needed was a few vitamins and some iron.” Eddie tells her, “remember, they said it could take a while before you get better.” Kathy tells Eddie, “yeah, but now I’m going to get better three hours faster than I would have if I waited for dinner.” Eddie mentions, “you could have had a snack at home.” Kathy tells him, “yeah, I know. But I just wanted to get out of the house. I’ve been laying around all week waiting for the stupid test results.” Eddie replies, “yeah, I can see that. You were out of the house like real fast.”

The pizza arrives, but Kathy is bummed because she has to wait a minute for it to cool off. After the pizza cools off a bit, Kathy takes a slice and begins eating. Kathy finished her first slice in record time. She takes her vitamin and iron tablets, and says, “okay! Now I’m on the road to getting better.” Eddie tells her, “good! You can slow down now.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I don’t think I gobbled up a slice of pizza that fast in my life.” Eddie and Kathy enjoy dinner together, talking about the upcoming track season. Kathy is just happy to get the vitamin into her stomach. For some reason, vitamins sound a whole lot better to Kathy than does an antibiotic.

On the way home, after dinner, Kathy tells Eddie, “okay, so now I’m one day closer to being better.” Eddie tells her, “maybe it’s my fault you’re not better.” Kathy asks, “how is it your fault?” Eddie tells Kathy, “maybe I haven’t been giving you enough kisses. Kisses make things better. All of those little kids can’t be wrong.” Kathy tells Eddie, “I don’t think that’s it.” Kathy quickly reconsiders, and tells Eddie, “no, wait! Yeah, yeah, that’s it! I should have guessed. You’d better get started, buddy. Kiss me until I’m all better. All those stars in the sky. We’d definitely better get busy. We’re taking the long way home today.” Kathy takes a detour, and finds a park that is sparsely populated. Kathy has found a very long way home for today.

Kathy and Eddie escape from the world for the next hour. They totally get lost in each other, not caring about anything other than what they are feeling right now. As far as Kathy is concerned, her Summer is back, even though it’s only for an hour. Eddie’s warm embrace lets Kathy know that he’s right there with her as she gets better. Time escapes from them as the sun begins to set. Kathy tells Eddie, “okay. I’m beginning to feel

better already.” They both know it’s not from the vitamins, but from the love they have for each other.

Kathy and Eddie are both now taking vitamins. Eddie still takes the amino acids, methylfolate, and vitamins, which help with his athletic performance. After another visit to the doctor, Kathy is told that she can work out again, but not to go at it too hard. This is exactly what Kathy has been waiting to hear. She starts working out again with Eddie, taking it slow to begin with. With the end of the Autumn semester drawing near, and the indoor track season right around the corner, Kathy doesn’t have much time to get back in top shape. Over the next few weeks she gives it the best she can.

The end of the Autumn semester always brings a few special activities before the Christmas break. This year, Mr. Crum is again the recipient of a few Christmas presents during the annual gift exchange among the teachers. The mystery Santa has struck again, leaving two presents for Mr. Crum in the teacher’s lounge where the annual Christmas party is held one day after school.

Mr. Crum, opening one of his presents from the mystery Santa, is shocked to find a box of tampons inside. Many of the teachers laugh at Mr. Crum and his unexpected present. Mr. Crum, however, is not the least bit amused. One of the teachers whispers to another, “this looks like fallout from that ‘pussy factory’ thing last year.” Opening his second present, Mr. Crum is appalled to find two bras inside. It’s not hard for anyone to figure out that the bras have something to do with Mr. Crum’s spat with Kathy and Paula earlier this year regarding their clothing. The laughter continues, but Mr. Crum is not the least bit entertained.

After the party, Mr. Crum goes back to his office, and stew. Giving him a little credit, Mr. Crum is able to figure out the link between this year’s thoughtful gift of a box of tampons and Mr. Bogenskaya’s reference to his ‘pussy factory’ last year. He is also able to clearly see the link between the bras and his mistaken belief that Kathy and Paula were wearing bras, not gym tops, under their shirts earlier this year.

Thinking back to the prior year, when Mr. Crum received a screwdriver set and a bag of marbles, he comes to the conclusion that someone is clearly out to get him. Further thinking leads Mr. Crum to realize these gifts started arriving when Eddie and his friends entered the school. Regardless of who gave him the presents, Mr. Crum has decided that Eddie, Kathy, and Paula, and the rest of their friends, are somehow to blame.

Mr. Crum spends the rest of the semester analyzing the handwriting on the tags, comparing it with that of every teacher in the school. He

comes up empty-handed, not being able to figure out who found it so amusing to embarrass him in front of the entire faculty. Mr. Crum strongly suspects that Mr. Frazier or Mr. Zunde might have something to do with the gifts. Casual observance, however, reveals that the handwriting on the tag is likely that of a female, nothing like the handwriting of Mr. Frazier or Mr. Zunde. Anyone else, however, could easily figure out that the gift giver would likely have disguised their handwriting.

When Christmas break arrives, Eddie and Kathy spend every day with each other. They have decided to take a few days off from training. Hopefully, Kathy will be fully recovered when it is time for indoor track tryouts. After Christmas break is over, it will be pedal to the metal for the entire next semester. But, today is a day to relax and hang out.

On Christmas Eve, Kathy drives to Eddie's house right after lunch. The snow that has fallen in the last few days has stopped, and the roads have been cleared. Not even knowing whether Eddie is home or not, Kathy thought she would drive over and surprise him.

Kathy knocks on the door, and Eddie answers. Eddie exclaims, "wow! This is a surprise! How did you get here?" Kathy walks inside, and tells him, "they cleared the roads, so I just drove here." Eddie tells Kathy, "my parents are doing some last minute shopping at the mall. They just left a few minutes ago. I was about to call you." Kathy tells him, "put your jacket on, and come outside with me." Eddie asks, "what's up?" Kathy tells him, "you'll see."

Eddie and Kathy walk outside together. Kathy tells Eddie, "just look at your front yard." Eddie looks at the front yard, which is covered with snow. Before he can say anything, Kathy tells him, "we're building a snowman, Edward Bogenskaya!"

Kathy starts rolling a snowball, which gets bigger as she pushes it around the yard. Eddie pushes it with her, as the snowball gets bigger and bigger. Kathy tells him, "okay, now we got to push it over there," as she points to the middle of the yard. They get the snowball, which has gotten to be quite huge, to the middle of the yard. Eddie is about to walk in front of the snowball, and Kathy exclaims, "no! Don't walk there!" Eddie asks, "how come?" Kathy tells him, "it's a surprise. I'll show you after we're done with the snowman."

Eddie and Kathy begin working on the second snowball. They push the snowball around the yard, being careful not to make it too big. Once it is about the right size, they push it near the bigger snowball. Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, now we lift it." They give it a try, but it is way too heavy for them to lift. Kathy and Eddie, with all their strength, couldn't even lift

it together. Kathy tells Eddie, "I think we made it too big. What do we do now?" Eddie tells her, "I have an idea. I'll be right back."

Eddie runs inside for a minute, and returns with a Samurai sword. Kathy asks, "wow! Where did you get that?" Eddie tells her, "it's my Samurai sword. I use it sometimes for landscaping." Kathy asks, "okay, Samurai Eddie, what are you going to use that for?" Eddie tells Kathy, "we're going to cut the snowball in half, and lift half of it at a time."

Eddie takes careful aim at the snowball. He raises the sword, and yells, "Eddie, chop!" cutting the snowball in two equal halves. Kathy exclaims, "wow! That was great!" But, Eddie's twenty-inch Samurai sword was not long enough to cut the whole snowball in half. Eddie and Kathy cut the other half of the snowball, and now have two equal halves.

They pick up one half of the snowball together, and place it on the larger snowball. They then take the second half, and place it carefully on top of the first half. Kathy tells Eddie, "that was a pretty cool way to solve that problem."

Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, now we make his head." Eddie asks, "how do we know it's a he?" Kathy tells him, "because it's a snowman. If it was a she, it would be a snowgirl." Eddie replies, "oh yeah. I guess so." They roll the third snowball around the yard and, when it gets to the right size, they lift it, and place it on top. Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, now we're decorating it." Kathy looks around the yard for stuff to make the eyes, nose, and mouth. Eddie, in the meantime, is off playing in the snow, making another snowball.

When Kathy returns from the side yard, she sees Eddie still working on the snowman. Kathy walks up, and Eddie tells her, "look! We now have a snowgirl!" While Kathy was away, Eddie made another large snowball, cut it in half, and added breasts to their creation. Kathy starts laughing hysterically, telling him, "that's so cute! I've never seen a snowgirl before!" They finish their masterpiece, which is probably the largest snowgirl around. Or, perhaps, the only snowgirl around.

Kathy tells Eddie, "now, we're going to make snow angels in front of our snowgirl. That's why we couldn't walk in front of the snowgirl before." They lay in the snow, side by side, and make snow angels together. Kathy and Eddie make four snow angels in total. Kathy tells Eddie, "now, we have to get back to our snowgirl without messing up the rest of the snow." They manage to get back to the snowgirl, and walk around the yard, and down the driveway to the road.

Looking at their snowgirl and snow angels from the road, they see their creation as everyone will see it as they drive by. Eddie tells Kathy,

“wow! That’s really cool!” Kathy gives Eddie a kiss, telling him, “look! Our very first snowgirl, visited by four angels.” They stand there for a while, admiring their artistic talent. Kathy mentions, “I hope there’s something warm to drink inside.” Eddie tells her, “we have hot chocolate, but we’ll have to make it.” They head inside, where they’ll warm up every way they can.

Mid afternoon, when everyone else is still gone, Eddie tells Kathy, “there’s a Christmas present for you under the tree.” Kathy asks, “how can there be? Santa Claus hasn’t come yet. It’s only Christmas Eve.” Eddie tells Kathy, “oh yeah. That’s right! I guess we’ll have to wait until tomorrow before you can open it.”

Kathy gets up and runs to the Christmas tree. As fast as she got to the tree, it’s no surprise that she’s a sprinter. Eddie tells her, “hey, it’s not Christmas yet. That was a false start!” Kathy tells Eddie, “you can’t make me wait now!” Kathy then tells Eddie, “I’ll be right back. Don’t go anywhere.” It’s not like Eddie is going to get on his bicycle and ride away. Kathy runs out to her car, and gets Eddie’s Christmas present.

When she returns, Eddie gives Kathy her present, telling her, “merry Christmas, sweetie!” Kathy removes the wrapping from her present very slowly. Eddie and Kathy could have run a 220-yard dash in the time it takes Kathy to unwrap the box. Once she gets the wrapping paper off, and opens the box, she removes the cotton over the gift slow enough to convince anyone that she’ll see what’s inside by next Christmas.

Kathy looks inside, and finds a golden heart-shaped pendant, with the inscription around the heart that reads, “One Kiss for Every Star in the Sky.” Kathy exclaims, “it’s beautiful! Oh sweetie, it’s so beautiful!” Kathy then tells Eddie, “I’d better start catching up.” Kathy gives Eddie a kiss, followed by many, many more. With only a few billion more to go, they’ll be busy for a while.

Kathy then gives Eddie his present. She tells him, “I didn’t make your present this year. I sort of bought it.” Eddie shakes the box gently. Kathy asks, “can you guess what it is?” Eddie tells her, “it sounds like there’s a chain inside.” Kathy tells him, “you’ll never guess what it is.” Eddie shakes the box again, trying to figure out what is inside. Kathy tells him, “okay, you’d better open it up before you guess. I want it to be a surprise.”

Eddie unwraps the present, which he does a little faster than Kathy opened hers. Inside, Eddie finds the chain he suspected was in the box. But, hanging on the chain is a unique pendant, which is a miniature replica of a discus. Kathy tells Eddie, “read the back.” Eddie reads the back, which is inscribed, “You Say it Best When You Say Nothing at All.”

Eddie tells his sweetheart, “sweetie, I love it! It’s beautiful!” Eddie asks Kathy, “where in the world did you get this?” Evading the question, Kathy tells him, “it’s the only one in the whole wide world like it.” Eddie will have to wait for another day to find out where Kathy got his present because Kathy successfully avoided answering his question. Eddie embraces Kathy, and they hug each other. Christmas is again very special for both of them.