

Eddie, The Junior Year

Chapter Three The Long and Cold Winter

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The first meet of the year is on Saturday. This is the yearly match up between Northside, Riverdale, Centerville, and Madison. These four teams seem to meet every year, and the result is always the same. Mr. Frazier seems to walk away with more medals than there are events. Madison, always in the basement, might win an event in a good year. Centerville's coach, Mr. Ruff, will either start a controversy or plan one. The Riverdale coach, Mr. Lyons, will walk away with the bulk of the second place medals in the relay events, and a few third place medals in the individual events. Second place does not concern Mr. Frazier. To Mr. Frazier, second place is analogous to being the first loser.

With Centerville also comes Todd McCutchen. McCutchen, as Mark calls him, always provides Mark with some form of amusement. McCutchen falls for every trick in the book before a race. This year is not likely to be any different. The story is the same during every meet. Mark points out some deficiency in McCutchen's uniform, blocks, positioning in the blocks, or qualifications for even being on the team. McCutchen checks and rechecks whatever Mark suggests. Doubt is introduced in McCutchen's mind, and the gun goes off. McCutchen gets off to a bad start, and loses the race. Mark could easily beat McCutchen without these tactics. Mark, however, cannot resist the temptation to mess with McCutchen's mind in every way possible.

The team is assembled, and everyone has been assigned their events. When Saturday morning arrives, everyone is excited and ready to repeat last year's performance. Mr. Frazier is again looking forward to sweeping the gold medal in every event. The three visiting teams arrive, and see the Northside team relaxing on the bench, as if the meet is already over.

Team assistants from all teams walk around, seeing if they can recognize any of the key runners. The competing teams know exactly

who to watch out for. They know each of the key runner's events, times, and personal records. In fact, the coaches of the competing teams probably know the statistics on Eddie better than Eddie does himself. They even know about Braden's pre-race rants, and the Amazon chants that may break out during the meet.

As a few more Centerville athletes walk into the arena, Eddie mentions to Mark, "hey, it looks like McCrutchen, Junior has arrived." Eddie points out a guy walking with McCutchen who looks as if he could be his younger brother. Mark takes a look at the guy, telling Eddie, "you might be right about that." Mark mentions, "let's see what they do with McJunior." Eddie remarks, "I think it's safe to say he's not a sprinter. He'd get blown out of his lane when someone runs by." The guy walking with McCutchen is about five feet, six inches tall, and weighs less than 100 pounds. They will have to wait and see to which events the presumed freshman is assigned.

Kathy stops by and sits with Eddie. Eddie tells Kathy, "I'm not overly excited today. I'd rather spend the weekend with you, somewhere else." Kathy tells him, "we're good here. Wherever you are, that's where I want to be too. Right here is just fine." Kathy's comment makes Eddie feel a lot better about today's meet. Eddie is saddened by Kathy not being able to run. That kind of emotion would usually show up in a runner's performance. By telling Eddie, "wherever you are, that's where I want to be too," Kathy just improved Eddie's 40-yard dash time.

Kathy tells Eddie, "it looks like they're ready to start. I forget what I'm supposed to do. It's been a whole year since I've helped with the team." Eddie explains to Kathy, "you're supposed to tell me who's running in my race. Then, you're supposed to be at the finish line to tell me how I did. And then, when I win, you're supposed to kiss me." Kathy replies to Eddie, "yeah, that's right! I'm supposed to watch you during the whole meet, like I did when you were a freshman! That's what I spent that whole season doing!"

Eddie asks, "so, who's running in my race?" Kathy replies, "it doesn't matter, Edward Bogenskaya. You are the fastest guy in the State, and you are going to win! And, since I can't run, you'll have to win it for both of us." Eddie is now motivated to win, not only for the team, but for Kathy.

The call is made for the first event, which are the 40-yard dash preliminaries. Kathy tells Eddie, "you're taller now, so don't forget your new block settings." Kathy walks to the finish line, not really remembering what she is supposed to do. Eddie gets to the starting line, and none other than McCutchen is walking toward the blocks. Eddie is all ready to run, and is waiting for the race to start. He stands behind the blocks, looking at Kathy 40 yards away. McCutchen makes a comment to

Eddie, who does not even hear what McCutchen said. The Starter tells the first heat to get ready.

The Starter announces, “on your marks.” Eddie thinks to himself, “I’m running this race for Kathy. If I win, she’ll get better. If I win, she’ll get better.” The Starter announces, “set.” The buzzer sounds, signaling the beginning of the race and the beginning of this year’s indoor track season. Eddie takes a quick and early lead, leaving everyone in the dust. He has his eyes on Kathy, at the finish line. Eddie is running as if Kathy’s life depended on it. At the halfway mark, it is a one-man race. Hoffer and Tessa are far behind, and do not know whether they are slower than usual or Eddie is faster than usual. Eddie approaches the finish line, and crosses first.

After the race, Eddie heads straight for Kathy. Kathy tells him, “wow! That was really fast.” Kathy kisses Eddie, showing her excitement that he won. Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, “I think that was your fastest time ever!” Without even thinking, Eddie replies, “that’s because Kathy is more important than a gold medal.” Mr. Frazier doesn’t quite understand why Eddie said that, and he doesn’t venture to ask. Kathy walks with Eddie back to the bench, not even caring about his time. Kathy sits with him for a while, but has to go back to her duties.

Eddie sits back on the bench and watches the meet as a spectator. He watches as Kathy moves from the bench to the finish line and back again. He sees her making sure everyone’s block settings are correct. Even though she’s sick, no one can tell. Eddie notices that Kathy’s smile still shines through. He watches Kathy over and over again, doing what she did when he first met her. After a few events, Kathy comes over to the bench and tells Eddie, “didn’t you hear the call? It’s time for the 40-yard dash final.” Eddie tells her, “I guess I didn’t hear it. My mind must have been elsewhere.” Eddie walks with Kathy to the starting line.

Eddie is ready to get the race over with. Kathy walks over to the finish line, so she can be there when he finishes. The Starter announces, “on your marks.” Eddie thinks again to himself, “this is Kathy’s race. If I win, she’ll get better. I’m going to win for Kathy.” The Starter announces, “set.” The buzzer sounds, and the runners are off.

Ten yards into the race, Eddie is clearly leading. Eddie sees Kathy at the finish line, and runs faster. The spectators can hardly believe the spread between Eddie and the rest of the pack. Eddie approaches the finish line with only one thing in mind, giving Kathy a hug and a kiss. Eddie crosses the finish line, and again heads straight for Kathy.

After the race, there is a lot of cheering and discussion. All the noise and talk sounds too distant to Eddie, who gives Kathy a hug and a kiss,

telling her, “that one was for you.” They squeeze each other tightly. Mr. Frazier congratulates Eddie, and gives him a high-five. Eddie, however, is less than excited. He walks quietly back to the team bench with Kathy, where he’ll wait until his next event. Kathy resumes her team duties, as Eddie sits back watching her as she does her thing.

Mr. Frazier is informed by one of the Timekeepers that Eddie may have broken the State record in the 40-yard dash. Mr. Frazier asks, “please explain to me how he ‘may have’ broken the record. He either did, or he didn’t.” Mr. Frazier was somewhat puzzled by the Timekeepers wording. The Timekeeper tells Mr. Frazier, “it would have been nice to have more than one watch on him. I’ll record it as it was timed and send it to the State.” Mr. Frazier informs the Timekeeper that he was also clocking Eddie, and has the same time on his stopwatch. The Timekeeper informs Mr. Frazier, “unfortunately, we can only recognize times recorded by the officials.” Mr. Frazier already knew that, but he thought he’d offer the information anyway.

Mr. Frazier is ecstatic, and cannot contain his excitement at Eddie’s time. He rushes over to the team bench, telling Eddie, “you may have broken the State record!” Eddie, showing no excitement at all, replies, “really? Good.” Mr. Frazier understands why Eddie is so unconcerned about his time. Eddie’s mind is clearly elsewhere, and everyone knows it. Mr. Frazier congratulates him again, and moves on to the next event. Eddie sits back again and watches the meet. At the moment, time seems to move very slowly for the fastest guy in the State.

Once all the other events are completed, the call is finally made for the 4 by 440 relay, which couldn’t have come soon enough for Eddie. Eddie gets up and walks to the starting line with Mark, Paula, and Erika. Kathy tells Eddie, “good luck, sweetie,” as she sits on the bench for a moment. Kathy has to sit and rest. Her energy level has dropped, and she can no longer conceal it. She, nevertheless, does the best she can.

Once the teams are all present and ready, the Starter tells the runners, “on your marks.” The Starter announces, “set.” When the buzzer sounds, Mark is out of the blocks first, and takes a very early lead. Mark, who set a personal record in the 220-yard dash earlier during today’s meet, appears as if he will set another personal record in his 440-yard leg. He approaches the transition zone, and is clearly in first place.

Mark hands off the baton to Paula, who takes off running like she is running for gold. Paula maintains the lead well into her leg. Kathy, sitting alone on the bench, watches as Paula makes her way around the track. As Paula approaches the transition zone, tears begin to roll down Kathy’s cheeks, unnoticed by anyone. This is the part of the race where Kathy is supposed to receive the baton from Paula, and then hand it off to

her sweetheart. But, instead, Kathy doesn't even have the energy to stand and cheer for the relay team that gave her so much joy last year.

As she comes out of the curve, Paula hands off to Erika, which goes flawlessly. The flawless handoff is important, since this is Erika's first relay competition. It will give her the confidence she needs for future meets. Erika, in the lead, runs as fast as she can. She remembers Mr. Frazier telling her during tryouts, "don't let anyone beat you." Now is not the time for Erika to let anyone beat her.

Eddie enters the track, waiting for Erika. McCutchen, also entering the track, asks Eddie, "what happened? Your girl didn't make the team?" Mark, overhearing McCutchen's comment to Eddie, tells McCutchen, "hey! Shut up, you piece of shit! He's going to hammer your ass. That would make you hammered shit." Eddie ignores McCutchen's comment, thinking to himself, "yeah, I'm running for Kathy. This is her race." Eddie has no time to give McCutchen any attention.

Erika hands off to Eddie, who pulls the baton out of Erika's hand faster than Erika could imagine. Eddie takes off, as Kathy watches from the bench. Mr. Frazier, who is clocking Eddie, is antsy from the sidelines as if he is trying to help Eddie run. After Eddie's first lap, Mr. Frazier checks his stopwatch, and notices his 220-yard split time is less than 25 seconds. With no one remotely close to him, Eddie crosses the finish line first, and the relay team cheers.

Paula gives Mark a hug, and Mr. Frazier congratulates everyone. Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, "you ran the quarter in 50 seconds! A fifty-second quarter mile!" Eddie smiles, as he pretends to care, and gives Mr. Frazier a high-five. Riverdale, as expected, takes second place. Centerville, who always expects to win, takes third place. And, Madison at least finished the race.

Eddie heads to the bench so he can sit with Kathy. Kathy tells him, "I'm sorry that I wasn't at the finish line for you. I ran out of energy." Eddie asks Kathy, "are you okay?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I just did too much today. I just want to go home." Mark and Paula walk up to the bench, seeing that Kathy looks very tired. Paula asks Kathy, "are you okay?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I'm just really tired. I just want to go to sleep." Eddie tells Mark, "I'm taking Kathy home. I'm not waiting around for the awards ceremony. Tell Mr. Frazier for me." Kathy and Eddie walk up the staircase. Eddie picks up his stuff from the locker room, and they walk to Kathy's house.

On the way home, Kathy walks slower than she usually does. Eddie, trying to cheer Kathy up, asks, "do you want me to carry you?" Kathy tells Eddie, "no. I'm going to make it all by myself. You can carry me again

when I'm all better." Kathy has to stop halfway home to rest, but she's determined to make it home.

They stop again at the corner so Kathy can rest for a moment. Kathy tells Eddie, "I heard you might have broken the State record in the 40." Eddie replies, "yeah, that's what they say." Kathy asks, "aren't you excited?" Eddie explains, "I'd be more excited if you were running next to me. It just doesn't seem the same. In the relay, Mr. Frazier told me I ran a 50-second quarter mile but, since you weren't in the race, it didn't seem to matter much." Kathy tells Eddie, "wow! You're faster than ever!" Eddie mentions, "I think I can break 50 seconds in the 440."

They get to Kathy's house, and they make a lunch together. In a while, everyone else will be at the pizzeria celebrating the team's victory. But, right now, Eddie would rather be with Kathy. They sit at the kitchen table, which overlooks the pool, and eat lunch.

Looking out the window, Kathy mentions, "dead frogs." Eddie asks, "what?" Kathy explains, "dead frogs. That's how I got sick. The pool water was a mess. I got an ear infection, and it was all downhill from there. I'm blaming that dead frog." Eddie mentions, "that could be." Kathy tells Eddie, "yeah, it is. I'm sure of it. Dead frogs. I hate dead frogs when they're in my pool."

After lunch, Kathy gets her recording of the Céline Dion version of *The Power of Love*, and plays it on the stereo. Kathy and Eddie sit back and listen to the song. Eddie asks Kathy, "do you want to dance?" Kathy replies, "yeah. But, I can't right now. I'm just so tired. I'd rather just sit here and listen with you if that's okay." Eddie tells Kathy, "that's okay. We'll listen to it."

When the song is over, Kathy tells Eddie, "I really want to be with you all afternoon, but I need to take a nap." Eddie tells her, "that's okay. The doctor said you need to rest, and you had a really long day today." Kathy kisses Eddie goodbye, and Eddie walks home. Kathy goes upstairs to get her well-needed nap.

Kathy rests for the remainder of the weekend. She tells Eddie that he needs to work out. On Sunday, Eddie works out for a while, but cuts his workout short to visit Kathy. They spend the afternoon together and, even though it's cold outside, they go for a short walk. They spend most of their time together sitting and talking. That afternoon, they found out a lot about each other that they never knew.

Kathy is able to make it to school for the next week. She skips track practice, and informs Mr. Frazier that she can't help out with the team because she doesn't have any energy by the end of the day. Mr. Frazier,

who is quite concerned about Kathy, understands. Eddie makes it to practice a few times during the week, but Mr. Frazier is not overly concerned that he's missed a lot. Eddie stops by Kathy's house every day on his way home from school. The next weekend, Kathy rests, hoping that it will do some good. The doctor keeps telling Kathy that it will take time for her to get better, but Kathy is now having her doubts. Kathy knows she's not any better now but, instead, is getting worse.

On Monday, Eddie walks to school, stopping at Kathy's house on the way. Kathy's mother tells Eddie, "Kathy won't be going to school today. She doesn't have much energy." Eddie asks, "can I see her?" Kathy's mother tells him, "she was up for a while getting ready for school, then she went back to bed. She's sleeping now, and I don't really want to wake her." Eddie replies, "yeah, let her sleep. It's probably best anyway." Eddie, feeling sad, walks to school without Kathy. He wants to do something to help her, but he feels helpless.

At lunchtime, Eddie walks to Kathy's house to see how she is doing. He knocks on the door, and finds Kathy is up and moving around. Eddie asks Kathy, "are you doing any better?" Kathy explains, "yeah. I am now. I don't know what happened to me. I was getting ready for school, and I didn't think I had the energy to get there. I laid back down on my bed, and I guess I fell asleep. So, I guess my mom just let me sleep." Kathy's mom has to run an errand, and tells Kathy she'll be back in a while.

Instead of returning to school, Eddie spends the afternoon with Kathy. Kathy tries to convince Eddie that he should go back to school, but he decides to stay with Kathy. Crying on Eddie's shoulder, Kathy tells him, "I'm scared, Eddie! I'm really going downhill fast!" Kathy asks, "what do I do?" Eddie asks, "did your parents talk to the doctor?" Kathy tells him, "yeah. And, that's where I'm going tomorrow, again. All the doctors do is to tell me to wait and that it takes time. I'm just so tired of waiting. I'm too tired to wait anymore."

Kathy and Eddie sit for a while on the sofa. Kathy lays her head on Eddie's chest. Eddie holds Kathy tightly, with both arms around her, which makes her feel a little better. Eddie, by the way he holds her, makes Kathy feel as if everything is going to be okay. Kathy holds Eddie's necklace, which she gave him for Christmas. She reads the inscription, which reads, "You Say it Best When You Say Nothing at All."

Kathy looks out the window, thinking that she sees snow falling. Kathy, seeing that it is snowing, exclaims, "look! Snow!" She stands up, wanting to see the snow, but gets dizzy and falls back onto the sofa. Eddie holds her, and exclaims, "sweetie, are you okay?" Kathy tells Eddie, "no!" Kathy starts crying, telling Eddie, "please, help me! I'm going downhill way too fast! Eddie, I feel like I'm dying!" Kathy cries harder

than she ever has in her entire life. Eddie holds Kathy, both of them crying their hearts out. Through her tears, Kathy tells Eddie, "I just lay in bed thinking that, one of these times when I get up, I'll be better. Even just a little. But, it never happens! It just never happens. I just keep getting worse." Eddie holds his sweetheart, not knowing what to do to help her.

After a long while, Kathy tells Eddie, "please get me my notebook and find me a pen." Eddie wonders why Kathy wants her school book right now. Eddie brings it to her, and she opens the notebook to a blank page. Kathy writes something on the page, but she won't let Eddie see it until she is finished. As she is crying, she tells Eddie, "if I die, I want this on my tombstone. Please, please, please, promise me that, if I die, this is what it will say." She shows Eddie what she wrote, which reads,

Katarina
(Almost Bogenskaya)
Karakova

I Didn't Quite Make It

♥ The Power of Love ♥

When Eddie sees what Kathy wrote, he cries his heart out. Kathy begs Eddie, "promise me, please, please, please!" Eddie tells her, "I promise, sweetie. I promise." Kathy and Eddie hold each other like they never have before. Kathy folds up the paper, and gives it to Eddie. As she is crying, Kathy tells him, "and, when I die, I want *The Power of Love* played at my funeral. I don't even care that it's from the future. Keep the record and hide it, and no one will ever know. Promise me, Eddie! Please promise me!" Eddie holds Kathy and whispers to her, "I promise, sweetie. I promise."

They sit for a while longer on the sofa, holding each other. Kathy's mother comes home, surprised to see Eddie still there. Kathy's mom asks, "Kathy, are you okay?" Eddie replies, "she's not okay. She tried to stand up and she got dizzy. She said she's going downhill fast." Kathy's mom asks her, "how long have you felt this way?" Kathy cries, and replies, "a few days. And, I'm getting worse!" Kathy stands up again, and falls back onto the sofa. Kathy starts crying again, begging her mother, "please, find someone to help me!" Kathy's mother tells her, "I'm taking you back to the hospital right now."

Kathy's mother tells Eddie, "please help me get Kathy to the car." Eddie carries Kathy to the car, and puts her in the front seat. Kathy's mother tells Eddie, "I don't know how long we'll be. I'll call you and let you know something as soon as I find out." Eddie kisses Kathy, and her

mom drives away, taking Kathy to the hospital. Eddie walks home in the snow, remembering the snowgirl that he and Kathy made just last month.

Later that night, Eddie finally gets a call from Kathy's mother. Kathy's mother tells Eddie, "they're keeping her overnight. They had to give her blood. The anemia got really bad." Eddie asks, "how can that happen so fast?" Kathy's mom tells him, "they don't know, Eddie. They just don't know." Kathy's mom tells Eddie, "I know you shouldn't have skipped school, but thank you so much for staying with Kathy. If you need a note, we'll get you one." Kathy's mother then tells Eddie, "Kathy will be home tomorrow afternoon. She really wants to see you." Eddie assures Kathy's mother that he will be there tomorrow. Eddie really wants to talk to Kathy, but finds out that she was sleeping when Kathy's parents left the hospital. When they hang up, Eddie goes to bed.

The next day, Eddie skips school, and rides his bicycle to the hospital. When he arrives, he finds out what room Kathy is in, and wanders around until he finds it. When he finds the room, he walks in, and finds Kathy awake laying in bed. Seeing Eddie, Kathy exclaims, "Eddie! I'm so glad you're here!" Eddie asks, "are you any better, sweetie?" Kathy replies, "lots! Well, right now anyway!" Eddie tells Kathy, "your mom told me that you get to come home this afternoon." Kathy explains, "yeah. Once they gave me back the gallon of blood they took from me last time, I got all better. They have to make sure I'm okay, and then I can go home." Kathy tells Eddie, "thank you so much for staying with me yesterday afternoon."

Kathy quickly realizes that it is a school day. Kathy asks Eddie, "hey, shouldn't you be in school?" Eddie replies, "there's no school today. It's National Visit Your Girlfriend in the Hospital Day." Kathy replies, "oh yeah, that's right! How could I forget?" Eddie tells Kathy, "yeah, you're better." Kathy tells Eddie, "but, if I die, don't forget about what I wrote on that paper. You still have it, right?" Eddie tells her, "yeah. It's at home. It's in my locked box in my closet." Kathy tells him, "good."

Eddie stays for a while longer, but then a nurse arrives. The nurse tells Eddie that she has to take Kathy for a few more tests. Eddie tells Kathy, "I'll come visit you when you get home." They kiss each other, as the nurse stands there pretending not to pay any attention. Eddie leaves, and is happy that Kathy is doing a lot better.

Instead of going home or to school, Eddie heads to the portal. He picks a random time during the day, and transports himself ten years into the future. At that time, Angelo has moved back to Greece and Eddie now owns the service station. He passes by Mark's parent's house, and rides to the service station. Eddie contemplates turning around and going home, but this time he came to the future to get some answers.

When Eddie gets to the service station, he finds the mechanic doing a simple tune up. Simple, however, may not be the word for it. The car is a 12-cylinder Ferrari. Performing a tune-up on such a car is like tuning two separate engines at the same time. Simply put, the left and right sides of the engine are exactly that; two separate engines joined by a crankshaft. Two distributor caps and a few carburetors that need to be adjusted identically is anything but simple.

Eddie walks up to the mechanic, telling him, "hey! I need some answers." The mechanic can clearly see the expression of concern on Eddie's face. They walk into the office, and both take a seat. Getting right to the point, Eddie asks, "what happens with Kathy?" The mechanic puts his elbows on his desk, and holds his head in his hands. Eddie can clearly see how the mechanic suddenly got very upset, which is not good news. Knowing exactly what Eddie is asking, the mechanic tells Eddie, "I don't want to tell you this, but Kathy didn't make it. She died." Eddie starts crying, and exclaims, "no, she can't! She can't die!"

A minute or so goes by, and Eddie asks the mechanic, "what happened?" The mechanic continues, telling Eddie, "it was her senior year. She got some sort of anemia. Thinking back over the years, I don't know if they ever really knew what was wrong with her. They tried everything, but she just kept getting weaker and weaker." The mechanic tells Eddie, "Kathy's last words, which I could barely make out, were, 'Eddie, please don't let me die, please.' She could barely get the words out." Eddie continues to cry, wishing now that he had not made the trip to the future to find out what happens with Kathy. As he is crying, Eddie says, "I can't believe this. It can't be real!" A few minutes go by, which seems like an eternity to both Eddie and the mechanic.

The mechanic explains to Eddie, "I still have all of her stuff, her track medals, and the necklace with the inscription, 'The Power of Love.' I also have the recording of her song, and the other one. Her father couldn't even look at the 914 after she died. Every time he saw it, he would cry. He couldn't bring himself to sell it, so he gave it to me. He said Kathy loved that car so much. It's not that she really loved the car. It's how we got it working together. Her father would always be so happy when Kathy let him drive it. I have the 914 at home in the garage."

The mechanic tells Eddie, "I'll be right back." The mechanic goes back to his hidden safe, and brings back Kathy's first track medal. The mechanic shows Eddie the medal. Eddie takes a look at the medal, which they won together in the 4 by 440 relay at the indoor track State invitational meet during the first year she was on the team. The mechanic tells Eddie, "I'm sure you recognize it." Eddie holds the medal, remembering how happy Kathy was when she won her first medal. Eddie holds Kathy's medal tightly, crying his heart out.

The mechanic tells Eddie, “after Kathy died, that was it for me. I never finished high school, and started working for Angelo. I never looked for anyone else.” Eddie keeps repeating to himself, “no! This can’t be real. I can’t let this happen!” The mechanic tells Eddie, “I’m so, so sorry. I wish I can change it, but I can’t.”

Eddie, still not wanting to believe what he is hearing, tells the mechanic, “show me. Show me where she’s buried then.” The mechanic asks Eddie, “are you sure you really want to see that?” Eddie, still crying, tells him, “yeah, show me!”

The mechanic closes the station, and they get into the MGB. The mechanic drives to the graveyard at the church. Eddie tries to compose himself, but he is very upset. The mechanic drives along the road in the graveyard to Kathy’s grave, as he has done hundreds of times in the past. He stops the car on the road, and asks Eddie again, “are you sure you want to do this?” Eddie replies, “I have to. I have no other choice.”

The mechanic gets out of the car. Eddie also gets out, and follows the mechanic. The mechanic stops at a grave, telling Eddie, “here’s where Kathy is.” Eddie looks at the headstone, which is surrounded by flowers. The headstone is inscribed “Katarina (Almost Bogenskaya) Karakova” exactly as Kathy made him promise. The words “I Didn’t Quite Make It” are inscribed under her birth date and the date she died. Over her name are the words “The Power of Love” inscribed within a heart, just like the first Christmas present Eddie gave to Kathy.

Eddie starts to cry. The mechanic tells him, “take as much time as you need. I’ll be in the car.” The mechanic walks back to the MGB, and sits inside. Eddie still does not want to believe what he is seeing, but he knows that it must be true. Nevertheless, Eddie says to himself, “I can’t let this happen to Kathy.” Eddie then notices something that he wishes he hadn’t seen. The date that Kathy dies is May fourth, exactly two months after her eighteenth birthday.

After fifteen minutes, Eddie walks back to the car, and gets in. He tells the mechanic, “I can’t let this happen to Kathy.” The mechanic replies, “if there’s a way to change it, let God allow it to happen.” The mechanic drives off. Both Eddie and the mechanic are silent on the trip back to the station.

When they arrive back at the station, Eddie tells the mechanic, “thanks. I’m sorry that I took up a lot of your time.” The mechanic tells Eddie, “I wish I could change what happened.” Very depressed, Eddie replies, “I can’t let this happen to Kathy. It just can’t happen! This is not going to happen!” Eddie rides away on his bicycle, but does not go back to the portal.

Eddie rides past Kathy's house. There is no Porsche 914 in the driveway. The mechanic must have been right. The 914 must be at his house, wherever that may be. Kathy's house looks about the same as he remembers. Eddie rides to the schoolyard that backs onto Kathy's back yard. He peeks into Kathy's back yard. The pool is still there, and looks clean. Eddie remembers when Kathy would check the skimmers every day for dead frogs, and how Kathy would always make sure that the pool water is perfect.

Eddie sits on the bleachers where he and Kathy first stopped when she told him, "we're taking the long way home today." Eddie sits on the bleachers for about an hour. Eddie then takes a walk, and sees the discus pad Kathy painted at the edge of the parking lot. The paint is mostly worn away now, and can barely be seen. Eddie and Kathy practiced the discus there many times together. Kathy was so looking forward to throwing the discus come the Spring. He remembers all of the memories he had with Kathy, especially the long way home. Kathy really liked to take Eddie home the long way.

Eddie gets back onto his bicycle, and heads back to the portal. He returns to his time, not even able to remember what day or time it is. On the way back to his house, he remembers that Kathy comes home from the hospital later this afternoon. Eddie can't go home, because he's supposed to be in school. He can't go to school, because an encounter with Mr. Crum will likely lead to assault charges. Eddie is not in the mood for putting up with Mr. Crum's shit right now anyway. Without any good choices, Eddie decides to stop in a delicatessen and get lunch.

After lunch, Eddie rides to Kathy's house. He sits on the sidewalk, waiting for Kathy, like he did when they first began to walk to school together. Kathy's mother drives up into the driveway, and Kathy is with her. Kathy, who he had to place in the front seat of the car yesterday, is able to get out of the car without any problem today. Eddie thinks to himself, "maybe the mechanic is wrong." Eddie gives Kathy a hug, whispering to her, "I love you. I love you so much." Eddie is trying not to cry, but Kathy can tell he's upset about something. They all walk into the house together.

Kathy asks Eddie, "are you okay?" Eddie tells her, "I'm just really upset because I hate to see you like this." Kathy tells him, "I feel a whole lot better today than I did yesterday!" Eddie and Kathy both get a sliver of hope that Kathy is on the way to recovery. Kathy's mother tells her, "remember, the doctor told you not to overdo it." Kathy replies, "yeah, yeah, I know. But, I didn't realize how bad I really felt until after they gave me all my blood back." Kathy's unusual sense of humor is obviously back. Eddie stays with Kathy for part of the afternoon, but then Kathy has to get her prescribed rest.

Kathy is able to make it to school later that week. Eddie also makes it to school, and attends track practice on the days Kathy is in school. Otherwise, he walks Kathy home and stays with her until dinner. Eddie attends the weekend meets, winning every event as usual. Mr. Frazier is beginning to get concerned that Eddie frequently misses practice, but it's not because of his performance. It has been confirmed that Eddie did, in fact, break the State record in the 40-yard dash. Mr. Frazier knows Eddie's frequent absences from practice means that Kathy is not doing very well.

The following week, Kathy is able to make it to school every day. The week after that, Kathy is only able to make it to school three of the five days. This week has not been going too well for her. She takes Thursday off, because she is very tired. On Friday, she completely runs out of energy again, and stays home. Because Kathy is not in school on Friday, Eddie takes his lunchtime to visit her at home. After he finishes his lunch, he leaves school and walks to Kathy's house.

When he arrives, the first thing Eddie asks Kathy is, "you're not getting sick again, are you?" Kathy reassures him, "no. I don't think so. It's just been a long two weeks, and I've been through a lot." Kathy tells him, "here, I'll show you that I'm better." Kathy plays her song, *The Power of Love*, and dances with Eddie. During that dance, Eddie tells Kathy a dozen times that he loves her. After the dance, Kathy tells him, "see, I'm better!" They spend an hour together, both very happy to see each other. But, today Eddie has to go back to school.

Eddie arrives back at school but, by spending too much time at Kathy's house, he is late. Mr. Crum happens to see him walking through the door, and tells him, "Edward, I want to see you in my office immediately!" Eddie asks, "why?" Mr. Crum informs him, "you have cut out of school several times in the last few weeks, and you have left campus during the day without permission. And, that's just the beginning!" Eddie asks, "so, what are you going to do about it?" Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "I'm going to either give you detention, or I'm going to suspend you." Eddie, who has had enough of Mr. Crum over the last year, tells him, "go ahead. See if I care."

Mr. Crum again tells Eddie, "I want to see you in my office immediately!" Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "it looks to me like this meeting is going just fine right here in the lobby." Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "with that attitude, young man, you really leave me no choice but to suspend you." Eddie asks, "oh yeah? Really? How many days do I get?" Mr. Crum, carefully calculating the number of days needed to keep Eddie out of the next track meet, replies, "four." Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "only four days? Make it five days and we have a deal. When does it start?" Mr. Crum brashly replies, "immediately. And, you do understand that this means

you can't run in Wednesday's meet?" Eddie coldly replies, "do I sound like I care?" Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "I've had enough of your attitude, young man." Remembering what Kathy told Mr. Crum earlier in the Autumn, Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "well, then, maybe it's time for your barbed wire fence enema."

Turning around, Eddie walks toward the door. Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "get back here, now!" Eddie ignores the irate principal, and continues walking. Getting to the door, Eddie opens the door with a flying drop kick, shattering the glass, and destroying the door. Mr. Crum exclaims, "Edward! Get back to my office immediately!" Eddie yells back, "sure. I'd be glad to. I'll finish the job on your office where my father left off. And, then, I'll take care of you!" Eddie walks out of the school, as Mr. Crum surveys the carnage Eddie left behind. And, Eddie now has five days off school, perhaps more now that he destroyed one of the doors to the school.

Mr. Crum got everything that he wanted out of his meeting with Eddie, and more. Eddie is gone, and voluntarily walked right out of the school. Mr. Crum finally got what he wanted by suspending Eddie, and keeping him out of a track meet this coming Wednesday. Eddie will not be allowed to be at track practice this afternoon, and for most of next week. And, Eddie will not return to school until next Friday, when more disciplinary action will likely be waiting for him.

Mr. Crum, however, is shaking like a heroin addict in need of a fix. Eddie does not seem to care that he got suspended, and Mr. Crum does not know why. Mr. Crum will now have to deal with Mr. Zunde, Mr. Frazier, and Mr. Bogenskaya, and potentially the school board. It is clear that Eddie had the upper hand in today's meeting, teaching Mr. Crum a lesson he'll never forget.

Later that day, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are furious. Neither Mr. Zunde nor Mr. Frazier has heard from Eddie in days. The only side of the story they have is Mr. Crum's, which is highly biased. The front door to the school, however, tells quite a different story. Mr. Crum must have clearly done something to really tick Eddie off. Since Eddie got suspended, he is obviously not going to be at the track meet on Wednesday.

Eddie walks home on the cold Friday afternoon. The wind blows cold today, reminding Eddie that he's lost everything and there's nothing left. Sleet begins to fall, stinging Eddie's face as he walks into the gusty wind. When he gets home, he goes upstairs to his room, and shuts the door.

He opens his locked box, and takes out the paper that Kathy gave him. Eddie reads what Kathy wrote, in her writing, "Katarina (Almost

Bogenskaya) Karakova” and “I Didn’t Quite Make It.” Eddie recalls Kathy’s headstone, which was engraved exactly as Kathy wished. Eddie lies on his bed, holding onto the paper Kathy gave him, and cries himself to sleep.

Eddie wakes up the next morning. His parents think that he was just out late last night with his friends. Eddie gets a shower, and has breakfast. He does a few things around the house, just to keep busy. Later in the morning, he tells his parents that he is going to Kathy’s house.

When Eddie arrives at Kathy’s house, Kathy is home with her mother. Kathy’s mother takes Eddie aside, telling him, “Kathy’s birthday is coming up, and I want to go to the store and get her a few presents. Her dad is gone for the day, doing something over at the college. I don’t want to leave Kathy alone. She’s not doing well again. Can you please stay with her a while?” Eddie tells her, “I’d be glad to.” Kathy’s mom tells Eddie, “thank you. Thank you very much.” Kathy’s mom heads out to the store, and Eddie and Kathy have some time together.

Eddie tells Kathy, “your mom said you’re not doing too well.” Kathy puts her arms around Eddie’s neck and gently places her head on his shoulder, telling him, “I thought I was, but I’m not. I’m going downhill again fast, just like last time. It’s the same thing, all over again!” Eddie remembers those words, which Kathy said right before she landed in the hospital.

Kathy cries on Eddie’s shoulder, telling him, “we’ve got to do something, Eddie! Please, Eddie! We’ve got to do something!” Eddie tells Kathy, “let’s think about this.” Kathy cries and tells him, “I’ve thought about this over and over again. I keep coming up with nothing, absolutely nothing. I’m empty, Eddie! I have no answers!”

Eddie suggests, “maybe your vitamins aren’t working. You can try mine if you want.” Kathy asks, “where do you get yours again?” Eddie explains, “from a doctor about 30 years in the future. They don’t make the vitamins that I need today.” Suddenly full of adrenaline, Kathy stands up and screams out, begging Eddie, “that’s it! Take me to that doctor! Maybe he knows what’s wrong with me and how to fix it! Take me now, Eddie! Please, take me now!” Eddie tells Kathy, “yeah! Maybe that’s the thing to do!”

Eddie asks, “we have to get to the portal. Do you think you can make it?” Kathy cries, telling him, “I don’t have any choice, Eddie. I have to make it! I don’t have any other choice. The doctors told me that I’m probably going to die!” Eddie thinks back to the date “May 4” that he saw on Kathy’s headstone, and tells her, “okay, we’re going.” They both reason that doing anything at this point is better than doing nothing.

Kathy tells Eddie that she doesn't think she can ride her bicycle, and that she'd have to walk. Kathy calls Mark's mother and asks if it's okay to park her car there for a while. Mark's mother tells Kathy that it will be okay. Mark's house is the closest to the portal, so that would shorten the walking part of the trip for Kathy.

Kathy and Eddie get some food, Gatorade, and water together for the trip. Kathy uses her father's copier to make copies of her medical records and blood tests to bring with her, thinking that having the test results may help. Kathy is brilliant. She makes a poor quality copy of the report, making the date of the test and her birth date unreadable. They get in the car, and Kathy drives to Mark's house, albeit a little slower than she would usually drive.

When they arrive at Mark's house, Kathy parks in the unused part of the driveway. Eddie and Kathy walk down the road to the parkway, and walk along the path. Eddie tells Kathy, "it's a mile to go." Kathy tells Eddie, "I can make it. I've got to do this." Kathy, however, is not moving very fast. They stop a few times so Kathy can recover, then continue on walking.

Kathy and Eddie arrive at the portal, and Eddie brings them to the date October 1, 2011. They arrive at their date, but now have to walk for a few miles again. Walking down the paved path, they make it to the end, stopping twice for Kathy to recover and regain her strength. Eddie tells Kathy, "we need to make it to the service station." While that sounds simple enough, Kathy is getting fatigued. Eddie gives Kathy some food, which seems to help. They take the one-mile trek slowly, which also seems to help. Eddie is focused on helping Kathy make the walk, which is proving to be difficult for her.

Arriving at Angelo's Service Station, Kathy exclaims in her fatigued voice, "hey, look! It says 'Eddie's Service Station.'" Eddie tells Kathy, "yeah, this is the future. It's my station now. The guy inside is me." Kathy exclaims, asking, "you? You, in the future?" Eddie replies, "yeah. He'll drive us to the doctor. You need to conserve your energy." Kathy replies, "good, because I'm about done." They walk up to the station, and Kathy cries out, "hey! That's my Porsche!" Eddie tells her, "yeah, it is." Apparently, the mechanic drove the Porsche 914 to work today.

Eddie and Kathy walk into the office. Kathy, fatigued from walking and not able to stand any longer, sits down. The mechanic walks in from the service area, and sees Eddie. The mechanic immediately recognizes Kathy, and a tear rolls down his face. Eddie tells the mechanic, "I brought Kathy. Take us to that doctor who has my vitamins." Kathy looks at Eddie, and asks, "that's you, in the future?" Eddie and the mechanic both

reply, “yes.” The mechanic wants to say something more, but cannot. He is at a loss for words. The mechanic has not seen Kathy in years.

Wasting no time, the mechanic phones the doctor, who is actually working this weekend for a half day. The doctor tells the mechanic that he can come in. The mechanic tells Eddie and Kathy, “let’s go. He’s there now and he can see you.” They all get in the 914, with Kathy sitting on Eddie’s lap. Eddie asks, “isn’t there a car that seats four?” The mechanic replies, “yeah, there is. But, they don’t run well. That’s why they’re at the station.” The last thing they need to do is drive a car that will break down on the way. Kathy is very glad to have a chance to rest on the way to the doctor’s office.

On the way to the doctor’s office, Eddie explains to Kathy that, in the future, he took a genetic test, which is why he needs the vitamins. Eddie explains that he has to go into the future to buy them, and the doctor that they are driving to supplies them. Kathy, with her understanding of how the portal works, understands completely. She hopes that her problem can be solved just as easily.

They arrive at the doctor’s office, and sit in the waiting room, hoping to be worked in soon. The mechanic recognizes the voice of a patient walking out of one of the rooms. He tells Kathy and Eddie, “bury your head in a magazine. Don’t let the guy who is about to leave see you.” Eddie and Kathy pretend to read a magazine, but take a peek at the patient who is now at the front desk. As the patient turns to leave, Kathy and Eddie get a good look at him. After the patient leaves, the mechanic tells them, “that was Mr. Zunde. He’s still the athletic director at the high school. I work on his Porsche.” Mr. Zunde, who is now much older, still seems to be in perfect physical condition.

Eddie tells Kathy, “by the way, the doctor thinks my name is ‘George,’ my middle name.” Doctor Bobin, the chiropractor, comes out to greet them. He asks the mechanic, “how are you doing today?” The mechanic replies, “I’m good, but she’s not. We need some answers. We were wondering if we can ask you a few questions and get some answers.” The mechanic then asks, “can you work her in? It’s really, really important.” The doctor tells the mechanic, “sure, no problem.”

The doctor gives Kathy some paperwork to fill out and tells her that he’ll be with her in a few minutes. Eddie tells Kathy, “you’d better make up a better birthday. This is 2011.” Kathy does some quick math in her head, and writes the date “March 4, 1992” for her birth date. That would make her eighteen, allowing her to see the doctor without parental permission.

While Kathy and Eddie are working on the paperwork, Eddie notices that the mechanic is in much better physical condition than he was during the first time Eddie visited this era in time. The first time, the mechanic looked sick and fatigued, and appeared to have lost a lot of muscle mass. Today, Eddie sees that the mechanic can probably still throw the discus farther than 200 feet. Eddie quickly figures out that the reason is that the vitamins he is now taking are working. Seeing the difference gives Eddie all the motivation that he needs to continue taking the vitamins and staying on top of his health. Eddie is hoping that the same can be done for Kathy, if they can only get some real answers.

When Kathy is finished with the requisite paperwork, the doctor tells them, “okay, come on back.” Kathy has regained a little energy, and can walk back to the examination room on her own. The doctor reviews Kathy’s entrance form as Kathy impatiently waits to explain her problem. After reviewing the forms, the doctor asks Kathy, “so, tell me how I can help you today?”

Kathy, who is very impatient, begins by asking, “have you ever heard of hemolytic anemia?” The doctor replies, “certainly. It’s usually an autoimmune disorder, but can also be caused by certain drugs.” That is the kind of answer Kathy was hoping to hear. Kathy tells him, “well, I have hemolytic anemia. Lucky me, I guess.” The doctor asks, “for how long?” Kathy replies, “about five months now. I brought my blood test results.” Kathy hands the copies of the blood test results to the doctor.

The doctor looks over the report, asking “who ran these tests?” Kathy replies, “my doctor.” While reviewing the lab test results, the doctor mentions, “I haven’t seen a report in this format in a long time.” The doctor has caught on that the blood tests, although valid, do not appear to be in any modern format. The doctor tells Kathy, “it looks like you also have or had a bacterial infection.” Kathy asks, “how do you know that?” The doctor tells her, “your neutrophils are elevated, and your ratios are way off.”

The doctor asks, “and, let me guess, your doctor prescribed an antibiotic?” Kathy replies, “yeah, penicillin.” The doctor asks, “and the hemolytic anemia started shortly after taking the antibiotic, right?” Kathy replies, “yeah.” The doctor tells Kathy, “well, that explains it all. It’s all right here in the test results. It makes perfect sense.”

The doctor tells Kathy, “I’m assuming you’re under some sort of treatment.” Kathy tells him, “yeah, I am. But, it’s failing and I’m not doing well at all. I’m going downhill really fast.” The doctor asks, “what kind of treatment are they giving you?” Kathy tells him, “the last thing they did is give me a blood transfusion. It worked for a while, but now I’m not doing good again.” The doctor asks, “no steroids?” Kathy replies, “no.” The

doctor replies, “no steroids? That’s odd. How about immunosuppressive drugs?” Kathy replies, “no.”

The doctor asks, “okay, so how can I help?” Kathy tells him, “tell me how do I fix it?” The doctor asks, “to begin with, do you want the long or short version of what happened?” Kathy is literally sick of the non answers she has been getting from the doctors she has seen. She tells him, “I want to hear it all. Give me the long version. I want to know what’s going on.”

The doctor tells Kathy, “well, most autoimmune disorders have their origin in the gut. The antibiotic killed all the beneficial bacteria in your intestines. You now likely have a yeast overgrowth in your intestines. All of that caused an immune system imbalance, setting up a cascade of events leading to autoimmune hemolytic anemia. Technically, it’s called Th1 dominance. It’s the basis of autoimmunity, but don’t worry about that for now. Certain drugs can cause it too.”

Kathy asks, “like which ones?” The doctor tells her, “well, penicillin is on the list. Are you taking any other drugs?” Kathy replies, “no.” The doctor tells Kathy, “well, any of the other drugs that can cause it would have a hard time doing so if you hadn’t taken them.” Kathy thinks about the doctor’s statement for a second. Kathy, showing the little bit of life that is still left in her body, tells the doctor, “hey, you have my sense of humor!” The doctor smiles, and tells Kathy, “so, what you have here are the classical beginnings of the autoimmune process.”

Kathy asks, “okay. But, how do I fix it?” The doctor tells Kathy, “well, since you can’t go back in time, and not take the antibiotic, we have to begin by cleaning up your gut.” Kathy breaks out in immediate happiness, and it is not because of the possibility that she can be cured by cleaning up her gut. A light went off in Kathy’s head at the moment the doctor said, “since you can’t go back in time, and not take the antibiotic.” Kathy thinks to herself that, if she can go back in time through the portal and not take the antibiotic, she will never get hemolytic anemia to begin with. Eddie, listening to what the doctor has to say, has not yet figured out Kathy’s plan.

After the doctor explains in detail how to clean up and heal the gut, Kathy, having her plan, moves on and asks, “okay. So, how do you get rid of an ear infection without an antibiotic?” The doctor replies, “if you take the natural route, oil of oregano, probiotics, and some homeopathic remedies will do it. But, it’s important to take the probiotics to keep your immune system properly in balance.”

Kathy tells Eddie, “write all this down for me.” The doctor tells Kathy, “that won’t be necessary. I already have it all written out. You’re not the

first patient who has walked in with an autoimmune issue caused by antibiotics. I'll gladly print out the information and give it to you." Kathy was certainly happy to hear that she was not the first person to have this problem. What is most comforting to Kathy is that she has not heard the words "give it some more time" and "we just don't know" out of this doctor.

The doctor asks, "do you know how you got an ear infection?" Kathy replies, "a dead frog gave it to me." The doctor replies, "a dead frog? Okay. I haven't heard that one before." Kathy tells him, "yeah, the pool guy wasn't doing his job. The chlorine was next to zero. And, the pH was way off. And, there was a dead frog in the skimmer. But, the water is fixed now." The doctor mentions, "well, I can definitely see that happening. Who knows what else could have been growing in that water." Kathy recalls Eddie using similar words about the pool water.

Kathy wonders whether she is dreaming or not. In the last twenty minutes, Kathy has gotten more answers than she has in the last few months. Eddie, taking all of this in, is figuring out how to prevent Kathy from dying. Although Kathy has already figured it out, Eddie has not yet arrived at how to do that. The mechanic listens, as Kathy talks to the doctor, remembering how intelligent Kathy really is. The entire time, the mechanic is wondering what will happen if Kathy lives. The mechanic reasons to himself that, if Kathy lives, when Eddie and Kathy enter the portal and go back to their time, the future will immediately be changed.

Kathy asks, "okay. So, where do we go from here?" The doctor tells them, "I'll be right back. Let me print out the information for you." The doctor leaves the room, and goes to get Kathy the information she needs. While the doctor is away, Kathy tells Eddie, "Eddie, we're going back in time! Then, we're going to find me. And then, I'm going to tell myself, the Kathy in the past, not to take that stupid antibiotic. So, then all my red blood cells won't burst like balloons and I'll never get sick." Eddie tells her, "yeah! That sounds like it will work!" All of a sudden, everyone in the room is ecstatic.

The doctor returns to the room with papers describing the protocol to clean up the gut, and to treat the ear infection without a prescription antibiotic. He explains the protocol to Kathy in detail, and suggests that she make a follow-up appointment in one month. He tells her which supplements she will need, which are itemized on the printouts, and that she could buy them at the nutrition store on Market Street. The mechanic mentions he knows where the store is.

Kathy asks the doctor, "so, this is not that big of a problem after all?" The doctor replies, "no, not really. But, if I were you, I'd never take another antibiotic again. Since this happened to you once, it will very

likely happen again. And, since you have a propensity toward autoimmune disease, you should probably take the probiotics regularly. Also, avoid stress. Stress is a major contributing factor in all autoimmune disease.” Kathy looks at Eddie, and mentions, “Mr. Crum.” Kathy asks the doctor, “okay. What else?” The doctor replies, “that’s about it.”

Kathy, now curious, says to the doctor, “I have an off the wall question.” The doctor asks, “sure. What is it?” Kathy asks, “just for curiosity, how would they treat hemolytic anemia, say, 30 years ago?” The doctor replies, “thirty years ago, they had no real treatment because they didn’t know the cause. You can’t properly treat something if you don’t know the cause. Today, you’re fortunate. It can be treated because we know what causes it. Today, we also have methods to suppress the immune system in severe cases, but that’s certainly not the cure. Cleaning up the gut is the key. Back then, if anyone recovered, it would be quite by accident.” Kathy just got the reassurance she’s been looking for, and that going back in time is the right thing to do. She also got some confirmation that her doctors back home really are at a loss as to what to do.

The mechanic pays the doctor, and they all head back to Kathy’s car. Kathy asks, “can we go to the nutrition store right now?” Kathy wants to waste no time implementing her plan. The mechanic replies, “certainly. The sooner the better.” They drive to the store, which is not too far away.

On the way, Kathy tells Eddie, “this is going to work! I know it!” Eddie replies, “it’s got to. It’s your only hope.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I’m not getting any help from my doctors back home.” The mechanic then tells Kathy, “no, Kathy. This is your only hope. It has to work.” Kathy asks, “how do you mean?” The mechanic tells Kathy, “you didn’t make it. You don’t have much time.” Kathy begins crying, and asks, “you mean, I die?” The mechanic tells her, “yes. I could explain more, but it sounds like you now have a second chance. So, don’t plan on dying.” Kathy cries out, “Eddie, please, please, please don’t let me die.” Eddie tells her, “that’s what we’re doing. Hold on, sweetie. Hold on. You need to be strong.” Kathy cries, saying, “I just don’t want to wake up dead someday.”

They pick up the supplements, and head back to the service station. On the way back to the station, Eddie tells the mechanic, “it would be too hard for Kathy to walk all the way to the portal. She may not be able to make it back. She’s really running out of energy.” Before Eddie can ask, the mechanic says, “I’ll drive you there.”

The mechanic passes the station, and heads to the parkway. He heads South on the parkway for about a mile, and pulls off onto the shoulder. Kathy, with a very fatigued voice, says, “this is my stop.” They all get out of the car. Eddie and Kathy thank the mechanic for all of his

help. Eddie and Kathy walk up to the portal as the mechanic stands and watches. Eddie helps Kathy, as they walk into the portal, back into their time.

Now that they are back to their present time, they are not done. They must now go back into the past to convince Kathy's counterpart from the past to not take the antibiotic. Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, let me think. When did I go to the doctor and get the antibiotics?" Eddie tells her, "think hard." Kathy is having a hard time remembering. Kathy tells Eddie, "hey! The portal is smart. Maybe it can figure it out. Remember when Mark asked, 'about two months from now on a sunny day?'" Eddie replies, "yeah. That worked." Kathy raises her right hand, and says, "take me to the day, an hour before I left to go to the doctor for my ear infection."

They arrive on a warm Autumn day, quite a stark difference than the cold day they just left. Eddie tells Kathy, "now, we have to make it to your house." Kathy replies, "oh crap. I totally forgot about that." They begin the long walk to Kathy's house. Kathy, who ran out of energy a long time ago, has to stop a few times along the paved path. Eddie gives her some more food, which again helps a little. They exit the path and walk down the road, passing Mark's house. Kathy tells Eddie, "I thought my car was at Mark's house. I remember I left it there. Where did it go?" Eddie has to remind Kathy, "your car is at Mark's house at our time." Kathy replies, "oh, yeah." Kathy has to stop again, and is fading fast. Eddie gives Kathy the last of the Gatorade. Kathy cries out, "I don't think I can make it." Kathy starts crying on Eddie's shoulder, telling him, "I'm so close, but I'm so far away."

Kathy is unable to stand, much less walk. Eddie carries Kathy along the road. All of that practice that Eddie had carrying Kathy to the pizzeria has finally paid off. Since Angelo's Service Station is on the way, Kathy tells Eddie, "maybe Angelo can drive me home." Eddie tells her, "yeah. We can give it a try. He's probably there. He always is." In another quarter of a mile, Eddie can see Angelo's Service Station. Eddie carries Kathy in his arms, finding strength that he never knew he had.

Eddie finally arrives at Angelo's Service Station, and walks in to the office carrying Kathy. They see Angelo working on a car. Angelo, seeing Eddie carrying Kathy, exclaims, "what's wrong with Kathy?" Eddie tells Angelo, "Kathy's sick. Can you please drive her home?" Eddie puts Kathy down on a chair, holding her up because she can barely sit up by herself. Angelo closes the station, and tells Eddie to bring Kathy to his car.

Angelo drives them to Kathy's house, easily doubling any posted speed limit. On the way, Angelo asks, "what happened?" Eddie tells Angelo, "she's been sick for a while, and she's suddenly gone downhill fast. The doctors really don't know what's wrong with her." Angelo

replies, “Kathy looked fine the last time she came in for gas.” Angelo then asks, “are you sure you don’t want me to take you to the hospital?” Kathy replies, “no! They’ll kill me there.”

Arriving at Kathy’s house, Eddie and Kathy get out of the car, and thank Angelo. Kathy tells Eddie, “okay, I made it. But, I’m fading fast again.” They go to the side of the house, in the shade, where they can think about what to do next.

Kathy, who is having a problem thinking, tells Eddie, “the good news is that my car is not here. I drove to the doctor that day with my mom. The other me should get home real soon.” Eddie asks, “is there anything else you remember?” Kathy thinks for a moment, and tells Eddie, “when I got home, my mom left and filled the prescription.” Eddie asks, “did you go with her?” Kathy tells him, “no. I waited here until she got home. She wanted me to take the antibiotic before I went to school. Then, I went to school later that day, and got to school just in time for lunch period. But, I already ate lunch at home.”

They wait a while longer, but Kathy is getting anxious. Kathy tells Eddie, “I really need some water, but I can’t go inside. If my mom comes home, and sees two of me, she’ll like die or something.” Eddie finds the garden hose, and gives Kathy some water.

A few minutes later, Eddie tells Kathy, “here you come.” Kathy asks, “where? How do you know?” Eddie replies, “I can hear the engine.” Kathy and Eddie hide behind the bushes, as Kathy’s counterpart from the past drives up with her mom in the 914. Kathy whispers to Eddie, “now, all we have to do is wait for my mom to leave. She’s going to leave in her car.” Eddie asks, “do you remember how long she was gone?” Kathy replies, “about an hour, I think.”

About five minutes later, Kathy’s mom leaves, taking her own car to run her errands and fill Kathy’s prescription. Once her mom is gone, Kathy and Eddie wait for a minute or so for her to get down the street. They walk up to the door, and ring the doorbell. Kathy’s counterpart from the past opens the door. Upon seeing herself and Eddie, she says, “uh oh,” and tells them to come in. Kathy’s counterpart from the past immediately knows something is seriously wrong.

Kathy and Eddie walk inside. Kathy’s counterpart from the past can clearly see Kathy is very sick. Kathy’s counterpart from the past exclaims, “what’s going on? What happened? How are you here?” Kathy, who is fading even faster, tells her, “we came back to the past. You’ve got to believe me! You’ve really got to believe me!” Kathy’s counterpart exclaims, “what? Tell me!” Kathy, crying her heart out, tells her counterpart from the past, “don’t take the antibiotic that mom is getting

filled! If you do, I'm going to die! Please, please, please, don't take the antibiotic!" Kathy, who can barely stand up on her own, starts crying even more. Kathy's counterpart helps Eddie hold Kathy up. Eddie tells Kathy's counterpart, "you've got to believe us. We've been traveling through the portal trying to keep Kathy, or you, from dying."

Kathy's counterpart from the past nearly goes into a panic. Kathy begs her counterpart from the past again, "please, please, don't take the antibiotic!" Kathy's counterpart asks, "what happened?" Crying her heart out, Kathy tells her counterpart from the past, "I got hemolytic anemia, and I'm going to die! I got it from taking the antibiotic." Eddie tells Kathy's counterpart from the past, "on May fourth." Eddie puts Kathy, who is still crying, on the sofa. She cannot even stand up well, even with Eddie and Kathy's counterpart holding her.

Kathy's counterpart from the past tells them, "okay, I'm convinced. I'm onboard. What do we do?" Eddie gives Kathy's counterpart from the past the supplements, and the instructions for taking them. Eddie asks, "can you get me a pen?" He writes the date "October 1, 2011" on one of the pieces of paper. He tells Kathy's counterpart from the past, "if there are any problems, go to Angelo's Service Station, which will be called Eddie's Service Station in the future. My future self will be there, and will take you to the doctor." Pointing to the date he wrote on the paper, Eddie explains, "that's the date we went to the doctor. So, if you have to go back, make sure it's after that date."

Kathy's counterpart from the past exclaims, "okay, I'm definitely onboard!" Kathy, still crying, tells her counterpart from the past, "whatever you do, please, please, please don't take that stupid antibiotic!" Kathy's counterpart tells her, "got it." Eddie tells Kathy's counterpart, "pretend to take it, and flush it down the toilet, or something. But, don't take it."

Eddie tells Kathy's counterpart, "we need to get back to the portal. You'll have to drive us. Kathy will never make it. She's way too weak." Eddie, and Kathy's counterpart from the past, help Kathy out to the 914. Kathy sits on Eddie's lap, and Kathy's counterpart backs out of the driveway. Kathy's counterpart heads toward the parkway. Once she gets to the entrance ramp, she drives South. In about a mile, Eddie tells her, "we're getting close. Pull off onto the shoulder." Kathy's counterpart drives onto the shoulder, and they all get out.

Eddie reminds Kathy's counterpart, "remember, this is your only chance. Don't take the antibiotic." Eddie carries Kathy, who can no longer stand up, to the portal. Kathy's counterpart watches, and cries, understanding that Eddie is carrying her future self back to the portal.

Eddie kisses Kathy, as he carries her into the portal, and return to their time.

Walking out of the portal, Eddie tells Kathy, “okay, sweetie, we’re back home.” He asks, “are you okay?” Kathy opens her eyes, and exclaims, “I think I’m better! Eddie! I think I’m all better!” Kathy jumps up out of Eddie’s arms, and yells out, “I’m better, I’m better, I’m better!” Kathy runs out of the portal. Eddie knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Kathy is now better.

Eddie runs after Kathy, finally catching up with her. They hug each other tightly, and embrace each other. Kathy exclaims, “Eddie, it worked! I’m all better!” Kathy runs a little farther down the path. Eddie catches up to her, and asks, “how come you keep running?” Kathy replies, “because I can, Edward Bogenskaya! Because I can! I’m alive, and I can run!”

Kathy tells Eddie, “okay, I won’t run away this time!” Kathy screams out to Eddie, asking, “Edward Bogenskaya, will you marry me?” Eddie replies, “Katarina Karakova, I will marry you!” Kathy jumps up onto Eddie, with her legs around his hips, and her arms around his neck. Kathy embraces Eddie with all the love in her heart.

Eddie and Kathy don’t even remember what day it is. All they know is that Kathy is no longer sick, and she is all better. By not taking the antibiotic, Kathy’s counterpart from the past has changed the future, which is now Kathy and Eddie’s present. The world they just walked into is not anything like the world they left.

Kathy and Eddie walk down the paved path back to the road. Kathy mentions to Eddie, “oh, yeah. I think I left my car at Mark’s house.” Eddie tells Kathy, “good, because I’ve been carrying you around all day.” Kathy tells Eddie, “I guess I owe you a pizza for carrying me.” Eddie replies, “and, then a nap.” They don’t say much on the way to Mark’s house. Just holding each other’s hand as they walk together is all they want to do right now.

They arrive at Mark’s house, and get in Kathy’s car. Kathy drives back to her house, wondering what may be in store for her. On the way, Eddie tells her, “we changed the future. I wonder if your mom is still out shopping.” Kathy tells him, “I don’t know. But, I haven’t had a pizza in weeks.” Eddie tells her, “it sounds like you have pizza on the brain now.” Kathy replies, “well, it’s a whole lot better than having hemolytic anemia.”

Kathy pulls into her driveway. They get out of the car and go inside. Kathy’s mother is getting ready to run a few errands. Kathy’s mother asks, “you two are back a little early. Did you want me to make you a lunch or are you guys getting your usual Saturday pizza?” Kathy, wasting

no time, jumps up and down and screams out, “pizza, pizza, pizza!” Kathy’s mother tells Eddie, “well, at least she’s not an expensive date.” Kathy’s mom tells her, “I’ll be back later. Your dad has something going on all day at the college. Enjoy your afternoon!” Kathy’s mom drives away to run her errands.

Kathy exclaims, “do you know what this means?” Eddie replies, “she acted like everything is perfectly normal.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! Exactly! That must mean I’m all better!” Kathy tells Eddie, “do you know what I want to do right now?” Eddie replies, “no. Tell me. This is going to be good. I can tell.” Kathy tells Eddie, “I’m going to go and check the pool skimmers for dead frogs. Come with me.” Kathy and Eddie go outside and check the skimmers. Kathy says, “whoopie! No dead frogs!” Eddie replies, “whoopie? That was like really funny!”

Eddie has previously convinced Kathy’s father to keep the pool open all year. Eddie explained that it makes no sense to cover the pool over the Winter and let the stagnant water sit for several months. Eddie also explained that it also makes no sense to have to shock the pool, adding huge quantities of chemicals, to remove whatever decided to grow in the water over the Winter. By keeping the pool open all year, and the water circulating over the Winter, nothing has to be done in the Spring to fix a problem that should have never been allowed to occur to begin with.

Once Kathy has checked the skimmers, they go back inside. All excited, Kathy tells Eddie, “okay, let’s go and get pizza!” They walk outside, and get in Kathy’s car. Before starting the engine, Kathy tells Eddie, “I really want to walk to the pizzeria, but you had to carry me around. You must be tired.” Eddie tells her, “let’s walk. I’ll make it. But, if I give out, Katarina Karakova, you’re carrying me!” Kathy gives Eddie a high-five, and exclaims, “deal!”

They walk to the pizzeria, only because they can. On the way, Kathy asks Eddie, “so, when are we going to tell our parents that we’re getting married?” Eddie suggests, “tonight, maybe?” Kathy thinks about it for a while, and tells Eddie, “maybe we should wait. How about after I graduate? We can keep it our secret until then.” Eddie replies, “when the time is right to announce it, we’ll know.” Kathy agrees, telling Eddie, “yeah, you’re right. We’ll know.”

They get to the pizzeria and run into Mark and Paula, who also frequently get pizza on Saturday. There is no track meet today, but that doesn’t stop anyone from getting pizza. Eddie and Kathy sit with Mark and Paula, who just arrived a moment ago. Paula asks Kathy, “how come you didn’t drive?” Kathy replies, “I guess I needed some exercise.” Paula appears to be puzzled by Kathy’s answer, telling her, “what are you talking about, girl?” Kathy ignores Paula’s response for now, not really

knowing how to answer. After everyone decides what they want, the guys go up and place the order.

When Eddie gets out his money to pay, he unexpectedly finds something in his wallet that surprises him. Eddie, who is now seventeen years old, finds a driver's license, complete with a motorcycle endorsement. Eddie does not remember taking the driving test, and that's because he never did in the world he just left. But, when he and Kathy changed the future, Eddie must have taken the test at some point, and passed. Eddie now wonders what else he may have done during their alternative past that he and Kathy did not experience. Now, Eddie, the mechanic, finally gets to drive what he is so good at repairing.

When the guys get back to the table, Kathy, wanting to understand how the future was changed, asks Paula, "do you notice anything different about me?" Paula replies, "no. Am I supposed to?" Kathy answers, "no. I guess not." Kathy asks Mark, "how's the team doing?" Mark tells her, "you're ahead of Braden. That about says it all." Kathy asks, "what? What are you talking about?" Paula tells Kathy, "the bet. Don't tell me you forgot." Kathy asks, "what bet?" Paula explains, "at the beginning of the season, you bet Braden a pizza that you'll win more medals than he will this year. Did you forget or something?" Kathy looks at Eddie and exclaims, "I must be on the team!" Paula responds, "well, duh. Of course you are." Paula is at a loss to explain Kathy's sudden odd behavior.

Kathy tells Eddie, "okay, everything's back to normal. But, I wasn't here for it. I missed everything." Paula asks Kathy, "what are you talking about, girl? You're going to State. You didn't miss a thing." Kathy, repeating what Paula said, exclaims, "I'm going to State!" Mark and Paula look at Kathy as if she is from a different planet.

Kathy asks Paula, "you don't remember me being sick?" Paula replies, "no, not at all. What's this all about?" Kathy bounces in her seat, and gives Eddie a high-five. Mark asks, "will someone please tell me what I'm missing here?"

Kathy tells Mark and Paula, in her usual run-on style, "okay, so listen to this. Me and Eddie went back in time and we changed it. I got sick from taking an antibiotic for an ear infection, and I was going to die. And then, we went to the doctor where Eddie gets his vitamins, and he said the antibiotic is what made me sick. Then, we came back, and then we went back into the past a second time. Then, I told the other me not to take the antibiotic. And I guess she, or me, or whoever, didn't take it. And, when we came out of the portal back to today, I was all better." Paula asks, "can you repeat that?" Kathy, coming up for air, asks, "okay, what part?" Paula replies, "the part after, 'okay, so listen to this.'" Kathy

explains it again, but this time she does it slowly, and fills in a few more details.

Once Mark and Paula understand what Kathy has explained, Kathy tells them, “we might need your help.” Mark asks, “what kind of help?” Kathy explains, “as far as I know, I’m not on the track team. But, Paula said I’m going to State. I don’t even know what events I’m running.” Paula tells Kathy, “you’re going to State in the 40-yard dash, along with Eddie, and us in the 4 by 440 relay.” Kathy asks, “how about Erika?” Paula tells Kathy, “she runs the 440-yard dash, and she’s on the 4 by 220 relay. She’s really pushing Braden too.”

Eddie asks, “am I suspended from school?” Mark replies, “I hadn’t heard anything about that. You guys were at practice on Friday.” Eddie asks Mark and Paula, “was the front door to the school destroyed and the glass broken?” Mark replies, “I hadn’t heard anything about that either.” Kathy says, “wow! I guess we’ll have a lot of catching up to do.”

Kathy, getting around to the big question, asks Paula, “how fast can I run?” Paula informs Kathy, “you’re the number two seed in the State in the 40, and our relay team is the number one seed. You actually beat Eddie fair and square during one meet.” Kathy exclaims, “darn, and I missed that!” Kathy asks, “how about Mr. Crum?” Mark replies, “he’s as quiet as a mouse.” Eddie adds, “and about as strong as one too.” Mark tells Eddie, “it sounds like at least your acting normal.”

Kathy tells Eddie, “I guess we’ll go to school Monday and see what happens.” Eddie tells Kathy, “I could drive to school Monday.” Kathy replies, “no, you can’t. You don’t have a driver’s license and your car is not running yet.” Eddie shows Kathy his driver’s license, and tells her, “I suppose I took my driving test in our alternative past. And, it looks like I passed.” Kathy exclaims, “wow! I wonder what else we changed.” Eddie replies, “I was wondering the same thing. Now, I’m kind of wondering how much work I got done on my MGB. I guess I’ll find out later.”

After lunch, Eddie and Kathy walk back to Kathy’s house. When they are almost to Kathy’s, Eddie tells her, “I don’t think I can make it. You’ll have to carry me.” Kathy lifts Eddie by the waist and carries him a few feet. She puts him down again, and rests for a moment. She picks him up again, carrying him a few more feet. Kathy tells Eddie, “you’re heavy!” Eddie replies, “it looks like you’re really all better.” Eddie and Kathy walk together again. When they get to the entrance to the schoolyard behind Kathy’s house, Kathy tells Eddie, “we’re taking the long way home.” It’s been a long time since Kathy has taken Eddie home the long way.