

Eddie, The Senior Year

Chapter One Autumn Semester

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Surviving their last year in high school, Kathy and Paula are now attending the University, along with Barbara. Eddie, Mark, and most of the tribe, are stuck in high school for one more year. This year, Eddie and the tribe are all at the top of the food chain, not that they weren't in the last three years, at least in track and field. That does not mean that their senior year will be an easy one, on the track or off. Eddie is positioned to break the State record in the 100-yard dash. Mark might just do the same in the 220-yard dash. Braden has his sights on breaking the State record in the 440-yard dash. And, Bobby B. might just break the State record in the shot-put this year.

On the track, Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, and Bobby B. set the performance standard not only for the school, but for the entire State. There are quite a few track athletes in the State who cannot wait for them to graduate, opening the door for others to win. The bar has been set very high this year, and it appears as if some of the gold medals to be distributed during the State invitational meets have already been assigned to certain athletes. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde will have a strong team this year, including some new talent coming up from middle school. Among the new talent is John Bogenskaya, Eddie's mischievous younger brother.

Mr. Crum, the principal, is still on the warpath, more so this year than last. He is still bothered by the incident last Spring where an airborne discus hit him in the leg, breaking his fibula. Since it has never been discovered who actually threw the discus that was intercepted by Mr. Crum, the chronically irate principal will likely antagonize any track athlete he can. But, it doesn't stop there. Stepping in front of an airborne discus did a little more than breaking Mr. Crum's leg. It seemed to have damaged his brain as well. So, Mr. Crum is now after all athletes with more voracity than ever. And, with another member of the Bogenskaya

family now in high school, Mr. Crum will likely blow a gasket sometime during the year.

The first day of school arrives, and Eddie drives his MGB that he spent the last year rebuilding. Eddie's brother, John, who is too lazy to walk to the bus stop, catches a ride with Eddie. Eddie could have just as easily walked to school but, like all seniors, he drives just because he can. Kathy, who starts college in a week, is still at home sleeping. Paula is likely doing the same. Eddie pulls into the parking lot, taking the space that Kathy parked in all last year. Eddie and his brother sit in the car for a while, until they see Bobby B. walk by. Eddie and John join Bobby B. on the walk to the front lawn.

Eddie asks Bobby B., "hey, where's Erika?" Bobby B. replies, "she's taking the bus today, if she's even up yet. She's been sleeping late recently." Bobby B. gives Eddie's brother, John, a fist bump. Bobby B. jokes with John, telling him, "it's great to see you in high school, but track tryouts aren't until January. What are you doing here three months early?" John replies, "something about taking classes, whatever that is."

Eddie and Bobby B. catch up a bit on the last few weeks of Summer, as a few students who walk to school head inside. Comparing their schedules, they realize they are again in the same section. The busses begin to arrive, so Eddie, Bobby B., and John head inside to wait for the tribe.

Mark, who is walking to school today, arrives next. It is odd to see Mark without Paula by his side. Last year, they walked to school together nearly every day as did Eddie and Kathy. Mark finds out that he is in the same section as Eddie and Bobby B. Eddie mentions that Mr. Zunde probably pulled some strings to get the track team in the same section again this year.

Mitchell arrives next, along with Amber, who is a sophomore this year. Erika follows, and runs up to Bobby B., giving him a hug. Still half asleep, Erika is going to have a long day. Erika, who has been hitting the weights and working out more this past Summer, is stronger than ever.

Johnson walked halfway to school, and saw Tessa walking toward Hoffer's bus stop, in the opposite direction of the school. Johnson, deciding to take the bus with Tessa and Hoffer, joined Tessa on her way to the bus stop. Hoffer and Tessa find out that they are also in the same section, probably as a courtesy of Mr. Zunde.

Johnson, Hoffer, and Tessa arrive next. Tessa mentions to the tribe that she cannot wait for track to begin again. Although she loves being on the swimming team, the track team is a lot more fun. Tessa also

mentions that she is ready to race Eddie in the pool again. Perhaps that challenge will come sooner than expected this year.

Braden and Wendy arrive next, which is unusual. Wendy usually gets everywhere early, but apparently she has gotten a bit lazy over the Summer. Braden and Wendy find out that they are in the same section as the rest of the tribe.

With everyone now together, Braden asks, "hey, is anyone going to try out for football this year?" Mark laughs, and replies, "do you really want to try that again?" Braden walked off the team his sophomore year because the football players were too weak and slow. The rest of the tribe followed him to the locker room. If they had stayed, many of the first-string players would likely have been out for the rest of the season.

As the tribe gathers in the lobby, Mr. Crum, the principal, walks by, most likely looking for trouble. Glancing over at the tribe, Mr. Crum is glad not to see Kathy and Paula among the track athletes this year. But, he spots a new member of the group, who just happens to be Eddie's brother. Eddie's brother has a reputation of being very mischievous. It's no secret where that trait may have come from. Eddie and his father have been a problem for Mr. Crum over the past few years. With Eddie's brother being a freshman, it's a sure bet that Mr. Crum has a few more years of contention with the Bogenskaya family waiting for him.

Also hanging out in the lobby is Chuckie, who has two new friends with him this year. One of them is Andy Goldstein. Goldstein is Chuckie's drug supplier. Goldstein got kicked out of the neighboring school district for dealing drugs. He missed an entire year of school being tied up in court. Goldstein also spent some time in juvenile detention, which is a nice word for jail. The court has decided that Goldstein will not be allowed to return to the high school in his hometown. So, Goldstein will be spending his senior year at Northside High School, likely causing as much trouble as Chuckie. How Goldstein landed at Northside High School remains a big mystery, but that's where the judge sent him.

Also, standing with Chuckie is Terry Haynes. Haynes is a psychopath in training. Chuckie met Haynes over the Summer while they both were smoking pot in the woods. Haynes, also a senior this year, has one thing in common with Chuckie. They have both, at one time or another, been on the business end of Erika kicking the shit out of them. Their shared experience with Erika is perhaps the reason that Chuckie and Haynes are now friends. Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes standing together spells trouble for Mr. Crum, and he knows it. It's just a matter of time before the shit hits the fan.

With school about to start, everyone heads to their classroom. Eddie's brother, John, has English class during first period. Eddie tells John where room 117 is, and mentions that the teacher, Miss Starr, is awesome.

Eddie, and the senior members of the tribe, head to the physics classroom. Mr. Zunde has recommended that the tribe take physics so they can better learn the mechanics involved in track and field competition, particularly the field implements. Unknown to the tribe, Mr. Zunde has also arranged that the tribe passes physics class.

Eddie, and the rest of the core seniors on the track team, walks into the classroom, taking their usual seat by the window. As they are catching up on what they did over the Summer, Braden mentions, "shit. Here comes some big trouble." Mark comments, "gym class is really going to be interesting this year." Chuckie, and his two new buddies, Goldstein and Haynes, walk into the class. Instead of sitting in the back of the classroom, or near the door, where Chuckie usually sits, Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes brazenly all take a seat right next to the tribe. Apparently, feeling empowered by the presence of his newfound friends, Chuckie is getting a little bold.

Waving his hand in the direction of the tribe, Chuckie mentions to Goldstein, "these are the jocks. They ain't worth shit." Braden rebuffs Chuckie, "what ain't worth shit is your fat ass, especially after Erika kicked the shit out of you last Spring. That was the best ass kicking this school has ever seen!"

Boasting his perceived dominance, Goldstein announces to Braden, "you just shut up. Yeah, yeah. I don't put up with people like you." Eddie tells Braden, "hey, did you hear that? He told you to shut up. You'd better tell him you're sorry." Mark mentions, "that ain't happening." Not able to distinguish muscle from fat, Haynes mentions to Chuckie, "it looks like they're all fat." The tribe laughs hysterically at Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes. The rest of the class also laughs, knowing that, if a fight broke out, Chuckie and Goldstein would have their clocks cleaned.

Miss Lynn Amherst, the physics teacher, walks in, and the class quiets down. Miss Amherst announces, "good morning. This is physics class, and your home room for the year. I am Miss Amherst, your teacher." Looking around the classroom, she mentions, "I see we have a few members of our award winning track team with us this year!" The class applauds, except for Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, who all sit in their seats with their arms crossed as if they're all very bitter about something.

Miss Amherst, specifically addressing the track athletes, continues, "one thing we will be learning in this class is how to throw the shot-put and other airborne implements farther. Another thing we will talk about

is angular momentum, and how that affects performance on the track. Mr. Zunde, our school's athletic director, will be present for a few of the lectures, and he will provide some good information to you."

Often ignored in the classroom, the track athletes finally feel as if they are going to learn something they are interested in, and will help with their performance. A few teachers in the school frequently attend the athletic events. Miss Amherst is one of them. Miss Starr is another. Miss Amherst recognizes that not everyone in the school is on their way to college to obtain a physics or math degree. What she does in the classroom is to take the science of physics, and apply it to real world situations that can help the students in any future career that they may choose.

Miss Amherst takes attendance, already knowing the names of the track athletes. She now has faces to go with those names. She also has faces to go with the names of the chronic troublemakers, such as Chuckie and Haynes.

It doesn't take long for Chuckie to get himself in trouble. Miss Amherst catches Chuckie whispering to Goldstein, not once, but in an exchange that has been going on continuously for a few minutes. But, this is the first day of class, and the students are a little energetic. Being quite tolerant, her patience, however, is being worn thin.

Miss Amherst tells Goldstein, "you, Andrew Goldstein. Please get up and move to a seat on the other side of the classroom." Goldstein is surprised that the teacher quickly learned his name. Getting out of his seat, Goldstein intentionally kicks Eddie's and Braden's feet on his way to his newly assigned seat.

Goldstein's action did not go unnoticed by the teacher. Miss Amherst tells Goldstein, "don't think I didn't see what you just did. Just remember. This is physics class. In classical physics, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In some cases outside of classical physics, the opposite reaction is not necessarily equal and, in many cases, disproportionately excessive." Miss Amherst just told Goldstein, in a very scientific way, that he is on his way to getting his ass kicked by Eddie or Braden. She, like many of the teachers in the school, would not be too sympathetic toward Goldstein should that happen.

After the introductory class, the bell rings, and everyone is off to the next class. On the way to the next class, Braden mentions to Eddie, "I sense a major league ass kicking coming down this year. It's only the first day, and that Goldshit guy is already causing trouble." Eddie replies, "the little Chuckie put him up to it. They'll get what's coming to them sooner or later. Just ignore them for now. When the time comes, bro.

When the time comes.” Eddie, constantly brushing Chuckie off as a minor annoyance, has put up with Chuckie since middle school.

On the way to the next class, Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes have their own conversation. Chuckie tells Goldstein, “I have a plan. Those guys cause trouble all the time. I’m going to tell the principal that Eddie beat me up. The principal really hates Eddie, so he’ll believe me.” Goldstein, who is new to the school, asks, “yeah man, is that really going to work?” Chuckie replies, “yeah. Especially if there are witnesses. You should have heard some of the stories that happened before you got here.” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. I see where you’re going with this. We’ll set him up. Yeah, I can see it now. Yeah, yeah.” Chuckie asks Goldstein, “so, you’re in?” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah, man. I’m all in.” Haynes also is in, telling Chuckie, “yeah, me too. I really want to see this.”

Haynes once got the shit kicked out of her by Erika in middle school. During gym class, when Erika was in the seventh grade, everyone was headed back to the locker room after a softball game. Haynes violently threw a softball at Erika’s back. In retaliation, Erika proceeded to relentlessly kick the shit out of Haynes. Haynes got suspended for three days for fighting. But, the suspension was a moot point. Haynes was so injured following the altercation, that she spent the three days at home recovering from the injuries that she sustained during the fight. Erika, for some reason, was not reprimanded. Haynes does not stand a chance one on one against Erika. Haynes has a score to settle and, if she can’t get to Erika, going after Erika’s friends is just about as good.

When the final bell of the day rings, Eddie offers to drop John off before he heads to Kathy’s house, but John tells Eddie that, since the weather is nice, he’ll just walk home. Truth is, John has no idea of which bus he should be on. Besides, he can probably walk home faster than the bus can get him there.

Leaving the school grounds through a narrow walking path that serves as a short cut for students who walk to school, John is suddenly greeted by a few juniors and seniors. One of the seniors asks John, “you a freshman?” Aware that the high school is known for its hazing of freshmen, John replies, “no.” Another one of the seniors pipes up, confidently announcing, “he’s a freshman. That’s a freshman math book he’s got.” Quickly realizing what he is up against, John strategically replies, “I failed math last year.” One of John’s adversaries announces to the others, “he’s full of shit. I ain’t never seen him around here before. He’s a freshman.” Outnumbered five to one, John tries to slip by, hoping to make a run for it.

Intercepted by the group of thugs, John tries to escape, but is quickly detained by four people, some of whom are a lot bigger than he is. The

head of the welcoming crew, some guy named Ronald Rex, walks up to John, and delivers a solid blow to John's mid section, announcing, "welcome to high school!" Delivering another fierce blow, Rex tells John, "I hope you enjoy your stay." John is released by the four other thugs and doubles over in pain, now wishing he had taken the bus.

Seeing their next victim approaching, Rex tells the others, "forget this one for now. We'll finish him off later. We got ourselves another freshman coming." Not wanting to stay around for an extended welcome, John makes himself scarce as fast as possible. Rex, and the high school welcoming committee, waits as the next unsuspecting freshman approaches.

Totally unaware of what happened with John, Eddie arrives at Kathy's house. Kathy, wearing her swimsuit, is outside, waxing her Porsche before her first day of college next week. Once college starts, Kathy will have a lot of work to do, so she is tying up all the loose ends now.

Eddie drives up, and asks Kathy, "hey, do you need some help?" Kathy replies, "sure. I've been at this all afternoon." Eddie asks, "how could you be at this all afternoon and not be done?" Kathy replies, "well. Paula came by, and we started to talk. Then, we had to go by Vinnie's to pick up her Jeep." Eddie asks, "what did she have done to it this time?" Kathy tells him, "she had 'Beach Patrol' painted on the front bumper in a mirror image. So, if you see her in your rear view mirror, you can read it. And, then she had 'Beach Patrol' painted on her back bumper, but not in a mirror image." Eddie remarks, "wow! She's really into this beach patrol thing."

Eddie helps Kathy as she waxes her Porsche. While they are talking, Eddie checks the engine, air cleaner, fluid levels, and a few other items. Showing Eddie what she did all afternoon, Kathy opens the front and back trunks. Kathy, being quite organized, has all of her gym related items in the larger rear trunk and, in the front trunk, she keeps her school items. With a few towels, a swimsuit, gym clothes, her personal stopwatch, and a discus in the rear trunk, Kathy is ready for anything. Eddie asks, "hey, when did you get the discus?" Kathy tells him, "since I really liked throwing the discus last year, my dad got one for me. He gave it to me this morning."

Kathy asks Eddie, "so, how was school today?" Telling her the truth, Eddie replies, "well, it kind of sucks. It's not the same without you there. And, Mark seems to be really quiet, especially now that Paula's not there. But, the team is in the same section again. So, that's good news." Giving Eddie some encouragement, Kathy tells him, "well, things will get a whole lot better once track starts. And besides, me and Paula will be there after school during track practice."

After Kathy and Eddie are finished with Kathy's car, they go for a swim in her pool. Kathy, with her legs around Eddie's waist, tells him, "hey, at least this hasn't changed. After school is still the same." Putting her arms around Eddie's neck, she tells him, "here, let me make your day better." Kathy kisses Eddie, bringing Eddie's Summer back, at least for now. They float around the pool, embracing each other, forgetting about everything else for a while.

Later in the afternoon, Kathy tells Eddie, "hey, while you're in school this week, I'm going to go and buy some gold and sell it in the future like you do. And, then I'm going to drive around and look at more houses. I got a whole week and a half, and nothing to do." Eddie suggests, "you can take Paula with you. Mark needs a truck, and he doesn't have enough money for one." Kathy screams out, "yeah! Mark really wants a truck! Paula mentioned that was really bothering him. He wants to work after he graduates, but can't find a truck. He really wants one." Eddie replies, "that problem is easy to solve." Kathy exclaims, "wow, Eddie! That just made my week. I'm on a mission now." Eddie replies, "wait until you see how it makes Paula and Mark's week."

Later that night, John explains to Eddie what happened after school. Eddie assures John that he will take care of the situation. Eddie also explains that Ronald Rex and his buddies can usually be found behind the school late Friday or Saturday night, sitting in a stolen car, drinking beer, or smoking dope. To his credit, Rex occasionally makes it to school, but rarely during school hours. In one instance, Rex was caught burglarizing the school at three o'clock in the morning.

The next day, during physics class, Eddie explains to the tribe what happened to John. Braden asks Eddie, "are you gonna kick Rex's ass?" Eddie replies, "yeah, bro." Braden asks "when?" Eddie replies, "today, if I can. Hopefully, Rex made it to school today." Mark interjects, "he'll make it to school all this week only because he can mess with the freshmen."

Eddie explains, "John said they were waiting behind the bushes on the other side of the walking path. Me and John are going to walk through there after school, and see what happens." Braden replies, "I'm gonna be there too. I'll be your backup." Bobby B., who walks to school, replies, "count me in. I'll be there, too." Mark, Johnson, and Mitchell all agree to back Eddie up just in case things happen to get a little rough.

The final bell of the day rings, and the tribe meets in the parking lot at Eddie's MGB. With them is John, who will be glad to see Rex go down. Seeing Rex and his welcoming committee off in a distance near the gate at the other end of the parking lot, Eddie tells John, "we're going to walk down the sidewalk along the main road on the other side of the fence. When you see us getting close, walk through the gate, and we'll see what

happens.” John replies, “okay. But, I don’t really want to take another hit by those guys.” Braden informs John, “that ain’t nothing compared to what Rex is gonna get!” John gets the point, but would rather not be defenselessly punched in his stomach again.

Eddie and the tribe walk down the sidewalk toward the corner of the schoolyard, discussing among themselves how they will handle this. Seeing Rex and his four thugs approach, John nervously walks through the gate, hoping not to have a confrontation like the one he had yesterday. The tribe turns the corner, nearing the gate from the back side. Rex, and his buddies, with their view blocked by several tall bushes, cannot see Eddie and the tribe approaching.

Rex and the four others in the welcoming committee step in front of John, asking, “you come back for some more?” John replies, “no. Get out of my way.” Rex announces to his henchmen, “wow! Did you hear that? This freshman wants me to get out of his way! I don’t think I’m in the mood to do that right now.” As they did yesterday, Rex’s four assistants approach John to detain him.

Walking up with the tribe and interrupting the party, Eddie asks John, “is there a problem here?” Rex turns around and, before he can say anything, Eddie firmly instructs Rex and his four buddies, “line up.” Seeing who has confronted them, two of the five thugs try to make a run for it. They are quickly apprehended by Braden and Johnson who hold them in an arm lock. Eddie again instructs the five thugs, “I said, line up!” The five thugs line up, clearly recognizing that they are outnumbered, seven against five. Not to mention, Rex and his four buddies are absolutely no physical match for Eddie and the tribe, and they know it.

Eddie tells Rex’s group, “if any of you so much as move, we will tear you apart, limb by limb. Got it?” Replying for the group, Rex tells Eddie, “yeah. I got it! We can work this out. Just chill out, man. We don’t want no trouble.” John thinks to himself that he really likes the phrase ‘tear you apart, limb by limb’, and plans to use it someday.

Eddie asks John, “which one?” John points to Rex, telling Eddie, “that one.” Eddie instructs Rex, “you. Step forward.” Fearing what would happen should he disobey Eddie, Rex steps forward, telling Eddie, “hey! Chill out.” Eddie points at Rex, and tells him, “shut up. And, don’t move. If you do, you’re dead meat.” Eddie whispers to John, “punch him as hard as you can.” Not fully comprehending the situation he is in, a sudden look of dismal fright comes over Rex’s face.

John walks up to Rex and, with as much force as he can, delivers a solid uppercut, sending Rex to the ground. One of the thugs loudly exclaims, “are you going to take that from these guys?” Rex, lying on the

ground, making sure all the parts to his face are still attached, does not reply. Eddie tells John, "wow! It looks like junior, here, isn't as tough as he thinks." Braden comments, "he ain't looking too good. He should have ducked." Mark tells Braden, "he's too stupid to figure that out."

Eddie asks Rex's four accomplices, "who's next?" One of the accomplices, whose name is Scott, announces, "we ain't taking this shit from you!" Braden laughs, and replies, "oh yeah? And, just what's your puny ass gonna do about it, junior?" The hotshot accomplice, Scott, tells Braden, "I'll kick your ass!" Braden laughs, and replies, "bring it on, junior! I wanna see that!" Scott approaches Braden, attempting to throw a punch. Braden blocks the punch, picks up Scott, and hurls him through the bushes, landing him into the chain-link fence. The rest of Rex's group quickly realizes that they are in quite the predicament, with no easy way of escape.

As Braden retrieves Scott, another of Rex's accomplices, a tough guy wannabe who goes by the name Snake, pulls a knife out of his pocket. Mitchell, now trained in martial arts, swiftly kicks Snake in the arm, causing the knife to go flying. Bobby B. grabs Snake by the arm and, kicking him behind the knees, causes him to fall to the ground. Bobby B. picks up Snake, holds him upside down, shaking him violently to see what else may fall out of his pockets. Once finished shaking down Snake, Bobby B. drops him on his head, announcing, "I think he's clean now. No more knives."

Eddie asks the tribe, "does anybody want that knife?" No one pipes up, so Braden replies, "I'll take it." Eddie tells Braden, "it looks like no one else wants it, so it's yours, bro." Braden picks up the knife, and puts it in his pocket. Eddie asks the group of thugs, "does anybody else got a knife?" No one replies, prompting Eddie to exclaim, "what? Only one knife? This isn't a very profitable day!"

Mark whispers to Eddie, "they're all wearing a belt. Let's belt their asses to the fence." Eddie smiles, and whispers back, "that's a great idea, bro." Mark then whispers to each tribe member individually, "before we leave, we're going to belt their asses to the fence." Meanwhile, Rex's buddies, clearly seeing that Mark is arranging something, are wondering what their fate will be.

Eddie kicks Rex, who is still laying on the ground, in the ass, telling him, "hey, you! Stand up!" Lecturing Rex and his four friends, Eddie explains, "today, you guys got off easy. If you so much as look at John the wrong way, next time they'll be a real ass kicking, not the little warning you got today. Got it?" Scott, now speaking for the group, replies, "yeah. We're good. We won't mess with him. We're good. We got it." Eddie then tells the five thugs, "everyone! Get against the fence. Now!"

Once the thugs are lined up along the fence, Braden informs Rex and his four buddies, “nobody better move! If anybody moves, you’re gonna get a major league ass kicking. And, it will be my pleasure to give you your major league ass kicking!” No one dares to disobey, for they all know that Braden is perfectly capable of delivering on his promise.

Eddie goes to the other side of the fence and, with Mark’s help, belts each of the thugs to the fence using the same technique Eddie perfected belting Chuckie to the fence over the years. The rest of the tribe makes sure no one causes any problems. Once finished, Eddie returns, announcing, “I think we’re done here. Let’s get out of here.”

Snake exclaims, “what? Are you just going to leave us here like this?” Eddie replies, “wow! You figured it out! I’m impressed. You’re smarter than they say you are.” Scott exclaims, “you guys can’t just leave us here!” Johnson replies, “sure we can. Watch us.” Mark mentions, “by the way, you guys are standing in Poison Ivy. You should have been more careful.” Snake exclaims, “shit! I’m really allergic to this stuff!” Sounding a bit like Mr. Zunde, Mark tells Snake, “that would be your problem, not mine.” Eddie announces, “we’re out of here.”

The tribe heads back to the school, leaving Rex and his four buddies belted to the fence, Chuckie style. It’s not likely anyone will come and rescue them anytime soon. On the way, Mitchell mentions, “we’ll probably all end up in Mr. Crum’s office tomorrow morning.” Eddie replies, “it won’t matter. Everything happened off school grounds, and school wasn’t in session.” Braden points out, “from where I was standing, it looked to me like we prevented a hazing.” Mark replies, “yeah. That’s it. We prevented a hazing. That sounds good.” Arriving back at the school, Mitchell heads to cross country practice. Everyone else heads home for the day.

Sure enough, the next day, between second and third periods, the announcement is made over the loudspeaker, “the following students please report to room 121 immediately. Ronald Rex, Scott Baird, Sean Smith, Jeff Houser, Wendell Wadler, John Bogenskaya, Edward Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, Axel Braden, Gary Mitchell, and Robert Bradshaw. Mr. Harrison, please report to room 121.”

Mr. Zunde, sitting in the physical education office with Mr. Frazier and Mr. Chubin, announces, “I’m going to see what this is about. This sounds like the athletes versus the D-list.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I’m coming with you.” Mr. Chubin tells Mr. Zunde, “take your time. I’ll hold down the fort.” Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier head to room 121, wondering what is going on so early in the school year.

Taking the long way, Eddie and the tribe are the last to arrive. Seeing Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier standing in the back of the room gives the tribe

a comforting feeling. Seeing the principal, Mr. Crum, pacing back and forth gives the clear impression that he is very nervous about something.

Pointing to the desks closest to the door, Mr. Crum instructs the tribe, “take a seat, over here.” Eddie comically replies, “wow! What a disappointment! I was hoping for a window seat.” Mark agrees, telling Mr. Crum, “me, too.” Already displaying his anger, Mr. Crum tells Eddie and Mark, “I’m running this meeting, not you guys.” Eddie replies with the highly sarcastic innuendo invented by the tribe, “waiting.”

Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, “the guys seem really relaxed. That tells me Crum is on another fishing expedition.” Mr. Frazier whispers back, “and, look who’s on the other side of the room. Those guys will be lucky to make it out of high school.” Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, “I don’t know what’s going on here but, if I’m right, this will be quite entertaining.” Mr. Frazier replies, “it looks to me that he’s arranging some sort of competition between the track team and the tobacco team.” Mr. Zunde laughs, overheard by Mr. Crum, who is now getting even more stressed.

Opening the meeting, using an angry tone of voice, Mr. Crum announces, “a very serious incident occurred after school yesterday. The reason I have called this meeting is to find out exactly what happened. I’m going to get to the bottom of this. Now, from what I understand, there was a massive fight yesterday after school. My understanding is those on the left side of the room were fighting with those on the right side of the room in what you people call a rumble.”

Mark interrupts, and asks, “are we on the right side or the left side of the room?” The tribe laughs as Mr. Crum exclaims, “it doesn’t matter! And, don’t interrupt me again!” Mr. Crum continues, “as I was saying, there was a very serious incident yesterday, and I’m going to find out exactly what happened.”

Mr. Crum begins his interrogation, asking Ronald Rex, “Ronald, please tell me your side of the story.” Rex explains, “we were just hanging out, minding our own business, and the jocks came over and picked a fight with us. They told us to line up and, if we move, they were going to tear us apart, limb by limb. Then, the freshman, over there, socked me in my face. I think he knocked one of my teeth loose. And, the big guy over there roughed up Snake, and stole his knife.” Mr. Crum asks, “and, who is Snake?” Rex replies, “Wendell Wadler. He goes by Snake.” Mr. Crum should have known that. Wendell Wadler picked a fight with Mr. Crum last year. Perhaps getting hit by the discus damaged Mr. Crum’s memory. Mr. Crum then asks, “who is the big guy you are talking about?” Pointing to Bobby B., Rex replies, “that guy, sitting in the front seat on the end row.”

Mr. Crum asks those on the left side of the room, "is there anything else?" Rex explains, "yeah. After they were done, they used our belts and tied us to the fence. We were there for about a half hour before Mr. Harrison saw us and helped us out." Knowing Eddie's method of operations quite well, Mr. Crum looks over at Eddie, who laughs.

Mr. Crum asks Mr. Harrison, "when did you first see them?" Mr. Harrison explains, "I was on my way home, and got stuck at the red light. I glanced over to my left, and saw them. So, I drove around the corner, and got them off the fence. They were all pretty traumatized when I found them." Mr. Crum has already heard Mr. Harrison's side of the story, for it was Mr. Harrison who brought the issue to the administration's attention earlier today. Mr. Crum was only asking Mr. Harrison to elaborate for effect.

Mr. Crum asks, "does anyone else on the left side of the room have anything more to add?" Mark interjects, "finally. He answered my question. We're on the right side of the room." Mr. Crum looks at Mark, and exclaims, "I'm running this meeting, not you!" Mr. Crum, however, previously identified which group is on the left side of the room and which group is on the right a few minutes ago, but Mark was not paying attention.

Again, addressing those on the left side of the room, Mr. Crum again asks, "does anyone else have anything to add?" Wendell Wadler, also known as Snake, boldly demands, "I want my knife back." Mr. Crum asks, "who stole your knife?" Snake replies, "the big black guy. Yeah, that was him. He got my knife." Mr. Crum asks Wadler, "which one? There are three black guys sitting on that side of the room." Pointing to Braden, Wadler replies, "the one sitting next to the freshman." Braden stares at Wadler as if he is from a different planet. Mr. Crum makes a few notes so he can properly accuse those on the right side of the room when the time comes.

While Mr. Crum continues with his interrogation, Mr. Frazier whispers to Mr. Zunde, "I can't wait to hear our guy's side of this story. I've never known them to start something, but I've seen them put an end to quite a few confrontations." Mr. Zunde replies, "you're right. Look at Mark. He's sitting comfortably with his feet up on the seat in front of him. And, Braden wasn't the least bit phased by Wadler's accusation." Mr. Frazier points out, "and, take a look at Johnson. It looks like he's taking a nap." Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier look over at the tribe, clearly seeing they do not appear worried in the least.

Focusing his attention on the other side of the room, Mr. Crum announces, "now, I'm going to hear your side of the story. I am going to ask you a few questions, and I expect serious answers. And, I don't want

any backtalk. As I said earlier, I want to get to the bottom of this.” Eddie replies, “waiting.” Mr. Crum has learned not to respond to that particular innuendo from the tribe, for it never gets him anywhere. But, nevertheless, his blood begins to boil.

Mr. Crum asks John, “John, did you hit Ronald Rex in the jaw yesterday after school?” John replies, “yeah.” Mr. Crum smugly asks John, “please tell me why you hit Ronald in the face.” John replies, “two days ago, that idiot punched me in the stomach twice while those four other jokers restrained me. I think you administrators call it hazing. So, I was walking home yesterday, and Rex asked me, ‘did you come back for some more?’ I told him no, and to get out of my way. When they approached me, my brother and the rest of the guys here stopped them.”

Mr. Crum hostilely asks Eddie, “and, just why were you hanging around?” Eddie casually replies, “I wanted to make sure my brother got home safely.” Repeating Eddie’s answer, Mr. Crum states, “you wanted to make sure your brother got home safely.” Eddie replies, “yeah. Two days ago, Rex and those four other clowns tried to kick the shit out of John. So, we all made sure John got off school grounds safely, which, by the way, is your job. You should be thanking me for doing your job for you.” Admonishing Eddie, Mr. Crum exclaims, “don’t you tell me what my job is around here!” Eddie replies, “that’s okay. My father told me to make sure John gets home safely. And, for the record, I think I did that quite well. John got home safely yesterday.”

Now realizing that there is more to the picture, Mr. Crum asks Eddie, “let me see if I understand this. Your father told you to make sure John got home safely?” Eddie replies, “yeah. I can tell you exactly what he said if you want.” Mr. Crum sarcastically asks, “and, just what did your father say?” Eddie replies, “he told me to kick the shit out of anyone who gets in John’s way, but make sure it’s off school grounds so that pencil pushing moron of a principal around there can’t do anything about it.”

As the tribe laughs, Mr. Crum exclaims, “that’s enough! I’m just getting started, and I’ve had enough out of you already!” Eddie calmly replies, “does that mean I can leave now?” Mr. Crum exclaims, “no!” Purely to irritate Mr. Crum, Eddie points out, “well, you wanted to know what my father said. So, I told you. If you want, I can tell you what else he said.” Getting hot under the collar, Mr. Crum replies, “that won’t be necessary!”

Getting back to whom he sees as the more credible witnesses, Mr. Crum asks Rex, “did this incident yesterday happen off school grounds?” Rex replies, “yeah. It was right outside the fence.” Mr. Crum asks Rex, “How far off school grounds was it?” Rex replies, “between the bushes

and the road.” Mr. Crum authoritatively announces, “well, that’s close enough to school grounds.”

As Mr. Crum continues to interrogate Eddie, Mr. Frazier whispers to Mr. Zunde, “do you want to put an end to this now?” Mr. Zunde whispers back, “no. Not yet. I’m curious to see where he goes with this. If this happened off school grounds, Crum doesn’t have a leg to stand on. Whether it’s two feet or two miles off school grounds, it’s still out of his jurisdiction. And besides, the guys sound like they’re working Crum over really good.” Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier stand back and listen as Eddie and the tribe verbally rip Mr. Crum to shreds.

Coming to Braden, Mr. Crum asks, “Axel, did you steal Wendell Wadler’s knife?” Braden replies, “no. I found it laying on the ground.” Again repeating the answer he was given, Mr. Crum says, “you found it laying on the ground.” Braden replies, “yeah. That’s right. Why don’t you ask junior, over there, about that knife, and how it got on the ground?”

Focusing his attention on the other side of the room, Mr. Crum tells Wadler, “tell me about this knife.” Wadler replies, “I dropped it. It fell out of my hand, and that guy stole it from me.” Braden stands up, points at Wadler, and exclaims, “that’s a bunch of bullshit! You pulled that knife, and it looked like to me that you were gonna use it! But, Mitchell kicked it out of your hand. Then Eddie asked everyone, ‘does anybody want that knife?’ It looked to me like nobody else wanted it, so I said, ‘I’ll take it.’ Then, Eddie told me, ‘it looks like no one else wants it, so it’s yours.’ So, I took the knife.” Wadler exclaims, “I want it back!” Braden yells back, “well, you ain’t getting it back, junior! It’s my knife now.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “that’s enough! I’m running this meeting.” Eddie intentionally yawns, and sarcastically replies, “waiting.”

Tired of getting nowhere, Mr. Crum announces, “I’ve about had enough of this! I have half a mind to suspend everyone in this room!” Mark raises his hand, as if he has a question. Mr. Crum points at Mark, asking, “you. What’s your question?” Mark replies, “is that the left or the right side of your mind that wants to suspend us?” Mr. Crum exclaims “that’s it! Everyone in this room is suspended for one week!” Eddie replies, “that’s really kind of stupid.”

Now extremely hot under the collar, Mr. Crum, with a bit of sarcasm of his own, asks Eddie, “and, just why is my decision stupid?” Eddie calmly replies, “well, let’s think about this for a minute. Rex, over there, should have graduated a year ago, along with half his moronic buddies. He’s always absent anyway. So, by suspending him, you’re giving him exactly what he wants. And, when he does show up at school, it’s usually on Friday or Saturday night, when he’s behind the school smoking dope, drinking beer, or taking apart a stolen car. If he does manage to make it

to school during a school day, he's probably cutting class." Rex stands up, points to Eddie, and exclaims, "hey, you! Shut up!" Eddie tauntingly replies, "make me. Waiting." Mr. Crum exclaims, "that's enough! As I said, everyone here is suspended for one week."

Ignoring Mr. Crum, Rex stands up, briskly walks across the room right by Mr. Crum, telling Eddie, "you're dead meat." Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, both aware that a confrontation is on its way, stand and watch. Rex approaches Eddie, and attempts to throw a punch. Eddie blocks the punch, stands up, and hurls Rex right into the concrete wall with all the force he can deliver. Rex hits his head against the wall, goes down, and is knocked unconscious.

Mr. Crum exclaims, "that's it! I've had enough!" Eddie sarcastically replies, "that's two of us." Mr. Crum yells at Mr. Zunde, "why didn't you do something?" Mr. Zunde calmly replies, "you've made it perfectly clear to everyone that you are running this meeting. Rex walked right by you. You should have stopped him."

Mr. Zunde checks on Rex, and tells Mitchell, "go and get the school nurse." Mr. Crum asks Mr. Zunde, "is he all right?" Responding to Mr. Crum's stupid question, Mr. Zunde replies, "I don't know. Why don't you ask him?" Mr. Crum brilliantly exclaims, "he's been knocked out!" Mr. Zunde replies, "then, if I had to take a wild guess, I'd say he's not okay." The tribe laughs, quite aware that Mr. Crum walked right into that one.

As the nurse is working on Rex, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "Mr. Crum, you are not suspending anyone. The incident that occurred yesterday happened off school grounds at a time when school wasn't even in session, which means it is completely out of your jurisdiction. So, there's nothing you can do about it." Mr. Crum replies, "something has to be done about this, Mr. Zunde!" Mr. Zunde calmly replies, "I agree completely. The incident that occurred yesterday would be in the jurisdiction of the police department, not the school. Perhaps you should give the police a call." Mr. Crum, who detests any mention of police involvement, tells Mr. Zunde, "I really don't think we need to go to that extreme." Mr. Zunde suggests, "then, send everyone back to class."

Mr. Crum points out, "I can't send everyone back to class right now! This isn't over yet. Eddie and Ronald were just involved in a fight!" Eddie stands up and, pointing at Mr. Crum, exclaims, "what do you always tell us to do when there's a fight? Get a teacher? Yeah, that's it! Get a teacher! What did you do to stop Rex? Absolutely nothing! That's exactly why your stupid advice about go and find a teacher never works! You just stood there like a moron and let him attack me! So, I'm taking my father's advice, and kicking the shit out of anyone who attacks me. If you don't like it, call my father. By the way, he's waiting for your call. He

hasn't been down here to your pussy factory for a while." Hearing that Mr. Bogenskaya is awaiting a phone call regarding yesterday's incident, Mr. Crum begins nervously shaking.

Mr. Zunde, quite angered by Mr. Crum's attitude and belligerence, steps in, calmly telling Mr. Crum, "Eddie does have a point. Ronald Rex did walk right by you with a hot temper, and you did absolutely nothing to stop him. Rex even told Eddie that he's dead meat. You should have realized a fight was about to break out, stepped in, and stopped it. And, if a massive fight broke out here, what can you possibly do to stop it? By the way, while we're on the subject, the only person here who should be suspended is Wendell Wadler, since he obviously brought a knife to school, which is against school regulations. Other than the case against Wadler, you have no case here today." Not wanting to be admonished by Mr. Zunde in front of the students, Mr. Crum exclaims, "Mr. Zunde, we'll discuss this later!" Mr. Zunde quickly replies, "no, we won't. And, as I said, you won't be suspending anyone on the right side of the room. As for the left side of the room, you sort that out yourself."

Mr. Crum, realizing that he completely misunderstood the situation, composes himself, and announces, "everyone in this room is walking a fine line. I haven't decided what I'm going to do yet, but I'll have my eye on each and every one of you. Once I get to the bottom of this, I will be calling you into my office one by one. This is a serious matter, and, I can assure you, none of this will be overlooked."

Mark interrupts, and asks, "can we go now?" Angrily pacing back and forth and not wanting to get into another argument, Mr. Crum replies, "yes! And, stop by the office to pick up a late pass." The tribe gets up and walks out, followed by their coaches. In the hallway, Mr. Zunde tells the tribe to head to the auxiliary gym, where he intends to find out what really happened yesterday.

In the auxiliary gym, Mr. Zunde asks the track athletes, "so, what really happened yesterday?" Eddie explains, "Rex, and the other four clowns, tried to kick the shit out of John a second time, so we stepped in. I told the five of them to line up. I was surprised that they even listened to me. So, I asked John, 'which one?' John pointed to Rex, and said, 'that one.' So, I whispered to John and told him to punch Rex. I seriously expected Rex to put up a fight, but he didn't. So, Rex stepped forward, and John gave him an uppercut. Rex fell to the ground, and laid there for a while. Then, the guy they called Snake pulled a knife, and Mitchell disarmed him. Then, we belted their asses to the fence, and went home." Mr. Zunde asks, "all of this happened off school grounds?" Eddie replies, "yeah."

John tells Mr. Zunde, “two days ago, when I got my hazing, that was on school grounds.” Mr. Zunde replies, “good. If Mr. Crum decides to suspend anyone, we’ll have that fact on our side.” Mr. Frazier asks John, “you couldn’t escape?” John explains, “one guy had me in a choke hold, and the other three were holding me by my arms. Then Rex punched me in my stomach.” Mr. Frazier shakes his head, and comments, “I know a few people who are going to fail gym class this year.”

Mr. Zunde asks Mitchell, “how did you disarm Wadler?” Mitchell explains, “I kicked the knife out of his hand.” Johnson interjects, “Mitchell is a third-level black belt now.” Mr. Zunde replies, asking Mitchell, “oh, really? When did you earn your Sandan¹?” Mitchell replies, “over the Summer.” Mitchell started taking martial arts when he was a freshman, after he was a target of hazing.

While on the subject of the knife, Braden mentions, “that Wadler guy didn’t seem to want his knife back. So, I took it. Now, all of a sudden, he wants his knife back.” Mr. Zunde tells Braden, “don’t worry about Wadler’s knife. Knowing those guys, Wadler probably has at least a dozen more at home.”

Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier wind up the meeting, and head back into the gym. Stopping by the office for their late passes, Eddie and the tribe head back to class, clearly off the hook. Mr. Crum, however, is more angry than ever. There is no doubt that he’s again on the warpath this year.

While Eddie and Mark are in school, Kathy and Paula spend their days buying gold, and selling it in the future. Kathy is surprised at how easy it is to buy and sell gold, and make a profit, as Eddie has been doing for years. Mark gave Paula part of his savings in the beginning of the week. By the end of the week, Paula, working with Mark’s money, earned enough money for Mark to buy a new truck and a service body² for it. But, Paula has not told Mark yet. Also, by the end of the week, Kathy and Paula have made enough money to pay for their entire four years of college. In fact, Kathy and Paula have decided to cancel their student loans, and pay cash for their college expenses not covered by their scholarships.

During the second week of school, more trouble looks as if it is coming Eddie’s way. Chuckie tells his mother that Eddie beat him up at

¹ Sandan: Proper name for the third-level black belt.

² Service Body: A specialized body replacing the bed of a pickup truck, with compartments for storing tools and other equipment. Typically used by tradesmen.

lunchtime in the field at school. Chuckie explains that, while he was sitting under a tree doing his homework, Eddie approached him and, for no reason at all, beat him up. Without a single bruise on his body, Chuckie tells her that Eddie was extremely violent. Chuckie adds that Andy Goldstein and Terry Haynes were both right there but, because Eddie was out of control, Andy was unable to do anything to help. Seeing the seriousness of the situation, Chuckie's mother asks if the incident was reported to the principal. Chuckie tells his mother that Eddie told him that, if he reports it, Eddie will throw the discus at him, just like he threw it at Mr. Crum last year. Chuckie's mother, now furious, has heard enough. Eddie must be stopped. Mrs. Black will visit Mr. Crum, the principal, first thing tomorrow morning.

The next morning, Chuckie's mother, Mrs. Black, arrives at school, demanding to see Mr. Crum, the principal. Mrs. Marlowe, the school secretary, tells her to have a seat, and that the principal will be able to see her shortly. Mrs. Black waits for a while, nervously tapping her foot on the floor and fidgeting with anything she can get her hands on. After a few minutes, Mr. Crum is finished with his meeting involving a student who has often been late to class. It's still way too early in the school year for Mr. Crum to deal with overdue library books, but that is certainly on the horizon.

Mr. Crum comes out of his office, and sees Mrs. Black seated, waiting for him. Mr. Crum greets her, saying, "Mrs. Black, hi. How have you been?" Mrs. Black replies, "well, I'd be better if I didn't have to be here this morning." Mr. Crum, who appears to be concerned, asks, "is there a problem?" Mrs. Black, wasting no time getting down to business, replies, "I'd say so! It's Eddie again! Charles said that Eddie, and I quote, 'beat the crap' out of him yesterday." This is exactly what Mr. Crum looks forward to, the opportunity to potentially discipline an athlete, especially an athlete on a winning sports team. Inviting Mrs. Black into his office, Mr. Crum tells her, "please, please, come in, and tell me exactly what happened."

Mrs. Black, already knowing the answer to her question, exclaims, "oh my! What in the world happened to your desk, Mr. Crum?" Mr. Crum replies, "well, we have Eddie's father to thank for that. But, please tell me more about why you are here today." Mrs. Black explains, "Charles told me that Eddie beat him up on the field yesterday at lunch. He said they were sitting under the tree, doing their homework, and Eddie just came up and beat the crap out of him." Mrs. Black starts sobbing, exclaiming, "I just don't know if I can take this anymore! Something has to be done about Eddie!" Mr. Crum compassionately replies, "I can't say that I disagree with you."

Backtracking, Mr. Crum asks, “they? Who else was there?” Mrs. Black replies, “Andy Goldstein and Terry Haynes. Charles said Andy wanted to break up the fight, but Eddie was so violent!” Taking notes, Mr. Crum clarifies, “and, this happened at lunch yesterday?” Mrs. Black replies, “yes, under the tree by the gate.” That particular tree is the same tree where Chuckie and his friends often smoke pot before school and during lunch. But, Mrs. Black, of course, knows nothing about that.

Mr. Crum asks, “why didn’t Charles report this to us yesterday?” Mrs. Black replies, “Eddie threatened him. He said that, if Charles reported it, Eddie would throw the discus at Charles, the same way that he threw it at you last year.” Now giving Mrs. Black his full attention, Mr. Crum asks, “now, let me get this clear. Eddie said he threw the discus at me?” Mrs. Black replies, “that’s what Eddie said to Charles. Eddie said that he threw the discus at you.” Standing up, Mrs. Black exclaims, “he told Charles that he would throw the discus at him, just like he threw it at you!”

After asking a few more questions, and documenting the incident, Mr. Crum tells Mrs. Black, “okay, I’m going to do something about this. I’ll get to the bottom if it. I cannot have this sort of thing going on in my school.”

On her way out of the school, Mrs. Black believes she will finally get justice. And, Mr. Crum now has a good idea of who threw the discus last Spring that broke his leg. Mr. Crum, already knowing what the result of his investigation will be, starts investigating.

Nearly immediately after Mrs. Black leaves the school, the announcement comes, “will Charles Black please report to the principal’s office.” As Chuckie leaves class, Eddie and the tribe think nothing of it. Chuckie smiles as he walks down the hall, heading to Mr. Crum’s office. Chuckie is totally aware of why he is being called to the principal’s office today. Now, it’s Chuckie’s turn to get Eddie back, once and for all. Chuckie walks into the administration area, with his scripted story he rehearsed many times over the last few days.

Chuckie is invited into the principal’s office, and Mr. Crum tells him to have a seat. Getting his pad and pen ready, Mr. Crum tells Chuckie, “I understand there was a fight between you and someone else yesterday.” Chuckie, pretending to be traumatized, replies, “yeah. It was really bad!” Mr. Crum tells Chuckie, “please tell me what happened yesterday out on the field.” Chuckie explains, “me and Andy and Terry were doing our homework outside, and Eddie came up and beat me up. I don’t even know why! Andy wanted to stop him, but Eddie was so violent! Andy was afraid, and couldn’t do anything to help. Then, Eddie said that, if I reported it, he would throw the discus at me.”

Prying for more information, Mr. Crum asks, “has Eddie ever thrown a discus at anyone before?” Chuckie replies, “yeah. He said he threw it at you last year, and he was going to do the same thing to me.” Carefully documenting Chuckie’s story, Mr. Crum asks him, “and, specifically when and where was this?” Chuckie replies, “yesterday, at lunch, under the tree by the gate.”

Mr. Crum asks a few more questions, carefully documenting his case. Satisfied with the information he received, Mr. Crum dismisses Chuckie, who heads back to class.

A while later, during the period before lunch, the announcement comes, “will Andrew Goldstein and Terry Haynes please report to the principal’s office.” Goldstein and Haynes cheerfully arrive at the principal’s office, also knowing exactly why they are being called there. Goldstein and Haynes also have their scripts memorized, and are ready to incriminate Eddie. All ready to testify, Goldstein is called into Mr. Crum’s office first.

Mr. Crum tells Goldstein, “I understand that you were a witness to an altercation that occurred in the schoolyard yesterday between Charles Black and Edward Bogenskaya.” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. There was a fight. Like a big fight. Yeah, man, I saw the whole thing. I was there.” Mr. Crum tells Goldstein, “please tell me what you saw.” Goldstein explains, “yeah, yeah. Well, we were sitting under the tree, doing our homework. This Eddie guy comes up and starts a fight with Charles. Yeah, man. That’s what happened. I tried to get him to stop, but this Eddie guy was so violent. There was nothing that I could do.” Mr. Crum asks, “when was this?” Obviously orating a rehearsed script, Goldstein replies, “yesterday, at lunch. Yeah, yeah, it was yesterday, at lunch. Under the tree.”

Wanting more information, Mr. Crum asks, “did Eddie mention anything about a discus?” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. He said he would throw a discus, whatever that is, at Charles if he said anything. What’s a discus?” Mr. Crum replies, “it’s like a really heavy Frisbee.” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. Eddie said he was going to throw that discus thing at Charles if he said anything. I heard it. Yeah, man. I was there. I saw the whole thing.”

Mr. Crum, now having enough information for his case, tells Goldstein, “we’re very glad to have you in our school. I really want to make you feel welcome here, but I’m sorry it got off to a bad start. You shouldn’t have to deal with these kinds of problems when you are in school.” Goldstein gets his pass back to class and gives a thumbs up to Terry Haynes, who is next in line for a pre-scripted discussion with the principal.

Mr. Crum graciously asks Terry Haynes to come into his office. Mr. Crum opens by telling Haynes, "I understand that you and Andy were witnesses to an altercation that occurred out in the schoolyard yesterday. Please tell me about it." With obvious added theatrics, Haynes replies, "I saw a fight! I was so scared!" Mr. Crum tells Haynes, "please, please, tell me what you saw." Haynes explains, "we were all sitting under the tree, doing our homework together. Eddie, this really, really big guy, comes up and starts fighting with Charles. Andy tried to get him to stop, but this Eddie guy was so violent. I've never been so scared in my life!" Mr. Crum asks, "when was this?" Haynes replies, "yesterday, at lunch."

Mr. Crum, after asking a few more questions, is highly satisfied that Haynes's and Goldstein's stories all match. Mr. Crum is oblivious to the fact that they were well scripted and obviously rehearsed. Even the keywords were all the same.

Mr. Crum, getting to the most important part of his discussion, asks Haynes, "did Eddie mention anything about a discus?" Haynes starts crying, obviously crocodile tears, and replies, "I don't remember. I was so scared!" Mr. Crum, now having enough information, tells Haynes, "well, I'm so sorry that you had to go through that. Obviously you were very traumatized by the situation. Since it's so late, don't bother going back to class. Just go to lunch." Haynes takes an early lunch, and heads to the cafeteria.

During lunch, the inevitable announcement comes, "will Edward Bogenskaya please report to the principal's office." Back in the physical education office, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "it sounds like Mr. Crum is off to an early start this year. That's twice this month already. I wonder what's going on this time." Mr. Zunde replies, "me too. I'd better go and see what Mr. Crum is up to this time." Mr. Frazier tells him, "well, on the bright side, it's not the track season. Good luck." Mr. Zunde heads to the principal's office, seeing Eddie waiting in the administration area.

Mr. Zunde asks Eddie, "what's this all about?" Eddie, remembering all the crap Kathy had to go through during her senior year, replies, "I don't know." Mr. Zunde asks, "are you saying you have absolutely no idea?" Obviously perturbed, Eddie replies, "exactly. I have no idea why I'm here this time. Maybe it's more about what happened with that Waddler guy." After talking with Eddie, Mr. Zunde is clearly puzzled himself.

Turning to Mrs. Marlowe, Mr. Zunde asks, "do you know what this is all about?" Mrs. Marlowe replies, "it is my understanding that this is about the fight yesterday." Quite puzzled, Mr. Zunde asks Mrs. Marlowe, "there was a fight?" Eddie interjects, "I wasn't in a fight." Rephrasing his question, Mr. Zunde asks Mrs. Marlowe, "who was involved in the fight?" Mrs. Marlowe replies, "I understand from Mr. Crum that the fight was

between Eddie and Charles Black.” Mr. Zunde asks Eddie, “and, you said you weren’t in a fight?” Eddie exclaims, “exactly! I wasn’t in a fight!” Mr. Zunde shakes his head, and mentions, “wow. I can’t wait to hear this one.” Eddie and Mr. Zunde wait outside Mr. Crum’s office for ten minutes before Mr. Crum is able to see Eddie. Mr. Crum is undoubtedly putting the finishing touches on his case.

Mr. Crum opens his door, smiles, and says, “Edward, please come into my office.” Eddie walks in, and Mr. Zunde follows. Not at all surprised to see Mr. Zunde, Mr. Crum announces, “I suppose you’re here, Mr. Zunde, because my action involves an athlete.” Mr. Zunde replies, “well, it finally appears that you might have learned something. After all, this is a school.” Mr. Crum, believing he has a very solid and indisputable case against Eddie, does not further question the reason for Mr. Zunde’s presence today. Mr. Crum tells Eddie to have a seat. Mr. Zunde prefers to stand next to the bookshelf, which is his favorite place to watch the comedy show hosted by Mr. Crum.

Mr. Crum begins, “Edward, I understand from multiple sources that you were involved in an altercation in the schoolyard yesterday.” Eddie frankly replies, “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Mr. Crum responds, “of course, you don’t. Well, let me refresh your memory. It has been alleged that you beat up Charles Black yesterday at lunchtime. Does that jog your memory at all?” Eddie replies, “no.” Getting nowhere, Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “really? Charles alleges that you beat him up yesterday at lunch, under the tree by the South gate to the field. Now, does that ring a bell?” Eddie, taking a lot of time to answer, replies, “no. I was on the front lawn yesterday, at lunch, with my friends. You can ask them. They’ll all tell you I was there.” Feeling as if he is getting stonewalled, Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “Edward, unless you cooperate with me, I have no choice but to call your parents in.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “go ahead. Maybe my dad will finish off your desk. Then, maybe he can start finishing you off too.”

Eddie quickly realizes that he is being set up by Chuckie. Formulating a plan, he looks at the clock on the wall, and writes the time on a page in his notebook, also writing the time that he recalls entering the administration area. Eddie is taking very detailed notes. Mr. Zunde is also taking his own notes, albeit mentally. It is obvious to Mr. Zunde that Mr. Crum is full of shit again, and is on a fishing expedition. But, nevertheless, Mr. Zunde allows Mr. Crum to continue. With any luck, Mr. Bogenskaya will be brought in to settle this dispute.

Eddie asks, “when did this so-called fight happen?” Mr. Crum brashly replies, “I ask the questions here, not you.” Taking control of the situation, Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “then, go for it. Fire away. Waiting.” Mr. Crum asks Eddie, “so, you’re denying everything?” Recognizing he is in a

no win situation with Mr. Crum, Eddie replies, “exactly. I wasn’t in a fight with the Chuckie. The little Chuckie probably took way too much dope, and he hallucinated the whole thing. Maybe the Loch Ness monster beat him up. Or, wait! Maybe it was Bigfoot! Yeah, that’s it! It was definitely Bigfoot. It had to have been. It would take a very big foot to kick his ass because his ass is so fat.”

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “watch it! I’m not in the mood for that today.” Eddie returns the serve, telling Mr. Crum, “I see. You’re not in the mood for the truth. Got it.” Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “that’s enough out of you!” Eddie quickly replies, “does that mean I can go now?” Mr. Crum, not wanting to engage Eddie’s sarcasm, asks again, “so, you’re telling me you weren’t in a fight yesterday?” Again, Eddie denies the allegations, replying, “exactly. They’re making it all up.” Eddie again looks at the clock, records the time, and takes a few more notes.

Mr. Crum, confidently accusing Eddie, announces, “well, young man, let me tell you what happened. Charles Black, and his mother, Mrs. Black, both allege that you beat up Charles in the schoolyard yesterday at lunchtime. The incident is reported to have occurred under the tree at the South gate to the schoolyard. Andrew Goldstein and Terry Haynes are reported to have seen the entire incident, and Andrew even tried to stop the fight. Andrew states, and I quote, ‘I tried to get him to stop, but this Eddie guy was so violent. There was nothing that I could do.’ Does any of this sound familiar to you?” Stalling for as much time as he can, Eddie replies, “let me think about this.” Thirty seconds later, Eddie replies, “no.”

Mr. Crum further alleges, “now, Edward. I’ve heard something else that bothers me deeply. Charles mentioned that, if he said anything about what happened yesterday, you would throw the discus at him in the same way you threw it at me last year.” Eddie, again pausing before he answers, replies, “I didn’t throw the discus at you.” Sounding a little like Mr. Zunde, Eddie continues, telling Mr. Crum, “and besides, no one threw the discus at you. You got in its way. You should have been more careful.”

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “Edward, I’ve really had enough of your attitude this morning. My patience is running out. I want to hear your side of the story, and I’m trying to give you that opportunity.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “I told you. There was no fight yesterday. And, I didn’t throw the discus that you were too stupid to stay clear of. And, I’m tired of your bullshit too. So, call my dad.”

Mr. Zunde now knows that Mr. Crum is full of shit. Interrupting the conversation, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “Eddie didn’t throw the discus that hit you. And, as Eddie pointed out, no one threw the discus at you. You got in its way. So, there’s the first hole in your story. So, that issue

can be put to rest and taken off your agenda.” In a demanding tone, Mr. Crum asks Mr. Zunde, “then, who threw the discus at me last year?” Mr. Zunde calmly replies, “Kathy threw the discus but, as I said, you got in its way. And, by the way, she was quite upset that you messed up her throw.”

Before Mr. Crum can say anything, Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “yeah, that was kind of funny. You ran around like a little baby for days, trying to find out who threw the discus. And, you said a girl couldn’t throw the discus twenty feet. She certainly showed you, didn’t she? We all laughed about that for a week.” Mr. Crum tells Eddie, “I have half a mind to give you detention for that last remark!” Eddie replies, “wow, Mr. Crum! I’m so sorry that you only have half a mind. I have a whole mind, and my bullshit meter is pegged. And besides, it’s not the track season. So, I don’t care. Call my father.”

There’s nothing Mr. Crum can do about being hit by the discus now. Kathy has graduated. It’s not like Mr. Crum can drag her back into school and suspend her or give her detention. Mr. Crum is getting nowhere with Eddie, and rightly so. Eddie was not in a fight. And, Mr. Zunde knows that Mr. Crum has fallen for an obvious setup.

Mr. Crum, at an impasse, does not know what to do. Mr. Crum announces, “well, Edward, I’m not done with my investigation yet. For now, you can go back to class. But, do not think that this is the end of this.” Eddie synchronizes his watch with the clock in Mr. Crum’s office, and writes the time on his notebook. He makes a few notes, and leaves the principal’s office. As Eddie walks out the door, he warns Mr. Crum, “watch out for flying discuses. If you get hit by one, you could get injured.” Mr. Zunde, laughing at Eddie’s remark, leaves right behind him.

Mr. Zunde tells Eddie, “well, it certainly sounds like to me that you are being set up.” Eddie, who is very ticked off, replies, “yeah, I’d say so. If I kicked the shit out of the Chuckie, he wouldn’t even be in school today. Just look at what Erika did to him last year. That’s nothing compared with what I could do.” Mr. Zunde mentions, “well, you do have a point. Erika really took him apart. She did quite a good job on him.”

Eddie explains to Mr. Zunde, “yesterday, at lunch, I was out on the front lawn, with Mark, Johnson, Braden, Wendy, Bobby B., and Mitchell. There were a few others around too. I was nowhere near the back of the school, where the Chuckie was probably smoking pot. And, if there was a fight near the tree, half the school would have seen what happened through the windows.” Mr. Zunde tells Eddie, “that’s a good point. And, I’ll be sure to talk to the group. This is going to get interesting.” Heading back to the gym, Mr. Zunde tells Eddie, “keep me informed.”

Between classes, Eddie explains to Mark how Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes set him up. Eddie tells Mark that he is going to go through the portal, and take care of the situation. Eddie asks for Mark's help, and Mark is glad to help him. They decide to meet after school and head to the portal.

On his way home, Eddie drives past Kathy's house. Seeing her car in the driveway, he stops by and tells Kathy what happened at school with Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes. Eddie explains to Kathy how he got set up. Eddie explains to Kathy that he and Mark are going to the portal to set up Chuckie, and make him look like a bigger idiot than he is. Not wanting Chuckie to get away with this, Kathy decides she wants to come along and help. Kathy calls Paula, who also wants to help out. After all, this is a serious matter. Chuckie has to be stopped. If Chuckie is allowed to get away with this, it will be only the beginning.

Once they are all together, Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula head to the portal on their bicycles. When they arrive at the portal, Eddie brings them back to earlier today, at 10:30 a.m., long before Eddie got called to Mr. Crum's office. They ride to the school, which is currently in session. Eddie has a few times recorded on a piece of paper, including the time he entered the administration area, the time he entered Mr. Crum's office, and the time he left. According to Eddie's notes, the total elapsed time that Eddie was in Mr. Crum's office was 33 minutes. Before he was called in, Eddie sat outside the principal's office, in the administration area, for ten minutes, talking with Mr. Zunde.

When they arrive at the school, they hide in the trees and bushes on the South side of the track. Eddie explains his plan to everyone, who all agree it should work well. When the time approaches to make the move, Kathy and Paula watch the bicycles, as Eddie and Mark execute Eddie's master plan.

Eddie and Mark move closer as they watch carefully, expecting Chuckie to head out to the field to smoke pot under the tree near the gate. Under this special tree is Chuckie's usual lunchtime hangout. Hopefully, today will not be any different. As they are waiting, Eddie mentions to Mark, "we're in there, sitting in the lunchroom right now." Mark replies, "wow! That is like so weird."

Shortly after lunch period begins, Eddie sees Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes headed to their usual lunchtime hangout. Seeing this, Mark runs to the other side of the schoolyard, and enters the school near the gym. Mark's counterpart from this morning is currently sitting on the front lawn, hanging out with the rest of the tribe. Well, except for Eddie, whose counterpart is sitting outside the principal's office right now along with Mr. Zunde. Mark's task for today is to hide in the hallway, in the alcove to

the restroom adjacent to the administration office, and to overhear what is about to transpire. Kathy and Paula, for now, sit back and watch the entertainment.

Eddie checks his watch, which is synchronized to the clock on Mr. Crum's wall. Recognizing that his counterpart has been in Mr. Crum's office for about twelve minutes now, Eddie walks toward the South gate of the schoolyard. Eddie approaches Chuckie, and places him in an arm lock. Goldstein tries to stop Eddie, but receives a swift and powerful kick in the ass that Braden would be proud of.

Eddie yells at Goldstein, telling him, "I'm going to kick the shit out of the Chuckie! You'd better go and get Mr. Crum! Go! Or, I'll kick your ass too!" Goldstein runs to the school, and makes a bee line to the principal's office. Eddie tells Haynes, "you just sit there! If you move, I will tear Chuckie apart limb by limb!" Haynes starts to cry, but Eddie pays her no attention. Chuckie starts to cry too, knowing what is about to come.

Now that Goldstein is gone, Eddie belts Chuckie's ass to the fence using the same trademarked method that he used last year. There will be no doubt in anyone's mind that Eddie was here, for his trademarked signature is on the work. Eddie tells Chuckie, "you can start crying louder now. The head of the pussy factory will be here in a few minutes to rescue you." Eddie tightens the belt as tight as he can get it.

Eddie sternly reminds Haynes, "and remember, don't you even think about moving. I'll be watching you. If you move, I'm belting your ass to the fence next."

Eddie leaves, and runs back into the bushes behind the track where Kathy and Paula are waiting. If all goes according to plan, Mark should be back shortly. Chuckie, belted to the fence, is sobbing like a little baby, awaiting to be rescued. And, Haynes is fearfully afraid to move.

Meanwhile, back at the administration office, Goldstein runs into the administration area, screaming, "Eddie's kicking the shit out of Charles! Yeah, yeah! Right now! I saw it myself! Someone's got to do something!" Mrs. Marlowe asks Goldstein, "where?" Goldstein replies, "out in the field! Right now! Charles told me to come and get Mr. Crum!" Actually, it was Eddie who told Goldstein to get Mr. Crum, but Goldstein couldn't tell the truth if his life depended on it. Mrs. Marlowe gets on the phone, and calls Mr. Crum. She tells him, "sir, you'd better come out here right now. There's a fight going on."

Mr. Crum opens the door to his office, seeing Goldstein in severe distress. Mrs. Marlowe attempts to explain Goldstein's concern to Mr. Crum, but Goldstein interrupts, screaming out, "Eddie's beating up

Charles, in the schoolyard, right now! He's going to kick the shit out of him! Yeah, yeah, I heard him say it myself! Yeah, man. It's going on right now! I saw it happening!" Eddie's counterpart from this morning, who is sitting in Mr. Crum's office, quickly realizes his plan worked.

Mr. Zunde, knowing that Eddie is sitting in Mr. Crum's office, tells Mr. Crum, "wow! Eddie is out on the field beating up Charles right now. I'm going to go and check this out for myself. This should be quite interesting." Mr. Crum adds, "I'm coming too. Something's not right here." Even Mr. Crum knows that Eddie has been in his office for quite a while. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Crum leave the office, and head out to the field to see what is going on. Not wanting to miss out on the action, Goldstein follows them.

Eddie's counterpart from this morning remains in the principal's office, fully understanding that he just threw Mr. Crum and Chuckie under the same bus that Eddie was thrown under. And, Goldstein had no idea that Eddie's counterpart has been sitting in the principal's office for fifteen minutes, making the perfect alibi.

Eddie casually walks out of the principal's office, and asks Mrs. Marlowe, "did he just say that I'm in a fight with someone out in the field right now?" Mrs. Marlowe replies, "that's what he said." Eddie tells Mrs. Marlowe, "wow! I wonder how I can be in two places at once." Mrs. Marlowe tells Eddie, "I can't wait to hear this one." Eddie replies, "yeah. Me too."

Now that Mr. Crum and Mr. Zunde are on their way to the field, Mark's part is done. If Goldstein had not reported the incident that is occurring on the field to Mr. Crum, Mark would have found someone else that he does not know and would have told them to report the incident. Mark was part of the backup plan. Leaving the school through the athletic entrance, Mark runs toward the back of the track and around to the bushes.

Mark tells Eddie, "that went over really good. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Crum are on their way out right now." Eddie suggests to the group, "hey, let's move in and get a closer look." Eddie and the rest of the group move closer, and hide behind the storage building, which is under construction. The storage building will be used to store the track and field equipment this Spring, eliminating the need to transport it from the school during track practice and track meets.

Mr. Zunde, Mr. Crum, and Goldstein approach Chuckie, who is belted to the fence. Chuckie is still crying like a baby, screaming, "Eddie belted me to the fence again! Eddie belted me to the fence!" Mr. Zunde asks, "oh, really? When exactly did Eddie belt you to the fence?" Chuckie

replies, “about five minutes ago! He just did it!” Mr. Zunde asks Goldstein, “is that true?” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah, it must be! I ran right in to get Mr. Crum! Eddie said he was going to kick the shit out of Charles! He definitely wasn’t belted to the fence when I left. Yeah, yeah. I didn’t see him belted to the fence before.”

Puzzled, Mr. Zunde asks again, “so, Eddie did this just now?” Chuckie and Goldstein both reply, “yeah.” Haynes, who is sitting under the tree crying, tells Mr. Crum, “yeah! It was Eddie! I was so scared!” Mr. Zunde remarks, “wow. This is all very interesting.” Chuckie screams, “can someone get me off this fence?” Reluctantly, Mr. Zunde tells Goldstein to unbelt Chuckie from the fence.

Mr. Crum, perplexed at what he is hearing, does not even know what to say. Not coming up with any original questions of his own, Mr. Crum reiterates all of Mr. Zunde’s questions, getting the same answers. Eddie belted Chuckie to the fence five minutes ago. Eddie has been in the principal’s office for fifteen minutes before Goldstein arrived. And, on top of that, Eddie had to wait for ten minutes in the administration area to see Mr. Crum, with Mr. Zunde and Mrs. Marlowe as witnesses. Even Mr. Crum can see the holes in Chuckie and Goldstein’s story, and knows that Chuckie and Goldstein are full of it.

Mr. Crum, wanting to get to the bottom of this tells Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, “all of you, get to my office immediately!” Pointing to the bushes near the track, Haynes screams out to Mr. Crum, “Eddie is hiding in the bushes! Over there!” Mr. Crum, knowing that Eddie is in his office, ignores Haynes. They all head back to Mr. Crum’s office, where Eddie is waiting for them.

Meanwhile, Eddie and Mark, who are hiding in the bushes with Kathy and Paula, laugh as all of this goes down. Eddie tells Mark, “this went down way better than I expected.” Mark replies, “I wish I could be in Mr. Crum’s office right now, watching as the shit hits the fan. Chuckie and Goldshit are going to derail their own train. This one’s going to go down real good.” They all head back to the portal, knowing that their mission was accomplished.

While the group is on their way back to the portal, Mr. Zunde, Mr. Crum, Chuckie, Haynes, and Goldstein all walk into Mr. Crum’s office, where Eddie’s counterpart from the morning is waiting to greet them. Upon seeing Eddie, Chuckie and Goldstein exclaim, “you caught him!” Mr. Crum tells Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes to have a seat. Eddie stands up, and tells Chuckie, “here, Chuckie, take my seat. It looks like you need some rest.”

Stepping aside, and standing next to Mr. Zunde, Eddie casually mentions, “wow! All of you, except for Mr. Zunde, look like you’re all out of breath. Was the trip from the field too much for you?” Before Mr. Crum can respond, Mr. Zunde whispers to Eddie, “this is going to be good. I can’t wait to hear this one.”

Unfortunately, since Eddie and his crew are headed to the portal, they will never know exactly what transpired in Mr. Crum’s office. Since they have changed the future, they will have to wait until tomorrow to learn of what happens. Even then, they will learn of the outcome from their friends.

Back in Mr. Crum’s office, Mr. Zunde points out all of the illogical paths Mr. Crum is traveling down. Mr. Crum finally relents, realizing that Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes have completely fabricated this afternoon’s story. Mr. Zunde has also pointed out to Mr. Crum that there were dozens of witnesses that saw Eddie on the front lawn of the school yesterday. Mr. Crum has no choice but to let this fishing expedition end.

Coming back to their time, Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula ride to Kathy’s house. They sit at the pool side, where Paula tells Mark, “hey, by the way, I have some really good news for you.” Mark asks, “what’s that?” Paula tells him, “I made you a little bit of money.” Mark, suddenly excited, asks, “oh yeah? How much?” Paula replies, “enough to buy a truck. Not only that, but enough to buy a brand-new truck with a service body, like your dad’s.” Mark stands up, exclaiming, “you ain’t shittin’ me, are you?” Quite seriously, Kathy tells Mark, “no, she’s not. Not at all.” Mark is at a loss for words. While Mark is silent, Kathy mentions, “me and Paula also made enough money for our college expenses for the next four years too.”

After Mark comes back to reality, he asks Paula, “how do you know about a service body?” Paula explains, “I talked to Vinnie. He told me all about them. I went over to Vinnie’s to ask him about a used truck. But, as the week went on, I realized you can get a new truck. And, Vinnie says he could put the service body on for you.” Mark replies, “wow! I thought I’d have to wait years to get a good truck.” Mark is now ecstatic. He gives Paula a really big hug. Mark’s plan is now to buy a truck before the track season starts. With his own truck, Mark figures he can begin to find work even before he graduates.

Over the next few days, Mark contemplates various ways to get a truck. Eddie, meanwhile, is trying to figure out ways to increase his performance on the track. The word is that the other teams have had enough of getting their asses kicked, so they’ve hired trainers and interns to increase their team’s performance. A few teams, in fact, have secretly

begun having track practice in the Autumn in preparation for the indoor track season this Winter. Centerville, McCutchen's team, is among them.

Eddie makes a trip to the future to pick up the vitamins he needs. Going into the portal, Eddie picks a date 40 years into the future. When he arrives, he wonders whether picking a date 40 years into the future was a good idea or not. He thinks to himself that maybe the service station is no longer there or, worse yet, he has moved away or died. He decides to make the trip anyway. If the station is no longer there, he'll just ride back to the portal, and choose an earlier date.

Arriving at the station, Eddie notices the mechanic is working at his desk. Eddie walks in and asks, "hey, what are you doing?" The mechanic replies, "I'm working on my website." Eddie asks, "your what?" The mechanic replies, "oh yeah. I forgot. They don't have any of this stuff at your time. It's my website, www.eddiethemechanic.com. It's all about track and field. It has nothing to do with the service station." Eddie tells the mechanic, "I need some vitamins. Do you want to go with me?" The mechanic replies, "I need some myself. Sure, I'll go with you."

Before they go, the mechanic tells Eddie, "hey, before we go, take a look at this." The mechanic brings up a Diffusion Tensor MRI study of his brain. Eddie looks at the computer screen, and tells the mechanic, "it looks like a picture of a brain to me." The mechanic tells Eddie, "yeah, it's your brain." Eddie exclaims, "what! How did you get a picture of my brain?" The mechanic explains, "it's called a Diffusion Tensor MRI. They put you into this tube. You lay there for fifteen minutes, and out come images of your brain. They can also get images of your knee, shoulder, or whatever else they want to look at." Eddie replies, "wow! cool!"

The mechanic explains, "with the Diffusion Tensor MRI they can tell what's working and what's not working. The good news is that everything is working fine. The interesting news is that your brain is three-quarters the size of normal." Eddie asks, "really? What does that mean?" The mechanic tells Eddie, "your brain works faster than normal. Maybe that's why you can run so fast. They explained it to me. They said that, with fewer neural pathways, everything occurs a lot faster, especially getting out of the blocks. That's why you're always the first person out of the blocks." The mechanic shows Eddie a few dozen images of his brain, which is quite amazing to Eddie.

Eddie gets to the inevitable question, "so, how come you had this done?" The mechanic explains, "I work on the guy's car who installs and services these machines. He was installing a new machine, and working around the clock. His car wouldn't start at 6:00 a.m. when he was going home, so he called me. I went over and looked at it for him on the way to work. The battery was dead. But, he needed someone to test the new

MRI machine he installed, so I helped him out and volunteered. The guy is some sort of genius, but he couldn't tell that his car battery was dead."

Eddie remarks, "it's too bad that they don't have one of those machines to look inside an automobile engine." The mechanic explains, "we have something better. Today, we hook a computer up to the engine, and it tells us exactly what the problem is. For example, if someone's camshaft position sensor has gone bad, I can know immediately." Eddie asks, "what's a camshaft position sensor?" The mechanic tells Eddie, "oh. That's right. They didn't have those back then either. The engines today are run by computers. It's nothing like it used to be. You won't need your timing light and dwell meter any longer. Well, except for the MGB and the 914."

The mechanic and Eddie make the trip to the doctor's office. While he is at the doctor's office, the mechanic tells Dr. Bobin that Eddie, who the doctor knows as George, has a few questions. The doctor, Eddie, and the mechanic go back to an exam room, where they have a discussion. Eddie asks, "is there any way for me to get faster on the track? I'm doing everything I know. I work out, ride my bicycle, take my vitamins, and all that sort of stuff." The doctor tells Eddie, "we can check a few things, and see."

Seeing that Eddie is very well developed, the doctor asks him to lay face up on the exam table. The doctor checks Eddie's range of motion, and finds that Eddie's hamstrings are relatively tight compared with what they should be for a sprinter. The doctor makes a few more checks, finding the quadriceps and a few other muscle groups are also tight compared with what is considered optimal for a sprinter. Showing Eddie a few appropriate stretches, the doctor explains to Eddie that stretching, if added to his current workouts, will be the fastest way to improve his performance on the track. The doctor tells Eddie, "when you're working out, stretch between sets. Don't just stand there and stare at the wall."

Eddie is skeptical because it is hard for him to comprehend that something as simple as stretching will do much to improve his performance. So, the doctor asks Eddie to run down the hall using only a one-foot stride. Eddie moved so slowly that McCutchen could have beat him. The doctor then tells Eddie to run down the hall using a two-foot stride this time. Able to run a little faster, Eddie begins to see the point. Next, Eddie tries a three-foot stride. Eddie quickly understands, as the doctor explains that, if a sprinter can increase their stride by only a few inches, it will translate into better performance on the track.

Giving Eddie another example, the doctor explains that Usain Bolt is the fastest man in the world, in part because his stride length is extraordinary. The doctor explains that Bolt, because he is six feet, five

inches tall, has a longer stride than most runners. Eddie, who is also six feet, five inches, begins to understand after the doctor mentions that Bolt takes only 41 steps to run 100 meters when other world-class runners take 45 to 48 steps to cover the same distance. The doctor suggests to Eddie that he have someone count the number of steps that he needs to complete the race, and to do this with all the other sprinters on the team.

The doctor also tells Eddie that the biggest issue in running is wind resistance. He explains to Eddie, “the wind resistance encountered by a runner increases with the square of the velocity. If you double your speed, the wind resistance increases by a factor of four. Distance runners know this, which is why many of them do not want to be in the lead until the end of the race. If you follow someone closely, they cut the wind resistance for you, and you expend less energy. I was up at the high school a few years ago, where Coach Johnson and I timed some of the distance runners to determine the optimal time for them to begin their sprint at the end of the race.” Eddie asks, “coach Johnson?” The doctor replies, “yeah, Eric Johnson. He’s one of the PE teachers and the track coach.” Eddie already knew that drafting off the opponent allows him to expend less energy. He sees Mitchell do it all the time. What Eddie did not know, and just found out, is that Johnson will someday be the track coach at the high school.

Knowing that he is many years in the future, Eddie asks, “so, what’s the record in the 100-yard dash?” Surprised that Eddie doesn’t know, the doctor replies, “well, we don’t run the 100-yard dash anymore. It’s been replaced by the 100-meter. The 100-meter record is 9.58 seconds, held by Usain Bolt.” The doctor takes out a calculator, and converts the world record in the 100-meter dash to a 100-yard dash equivalent. Coming up with the answer, the doctor tells Eddie, “that would be equivalent to an 8.76 in the 100-yard dash.” Amazed, Eddie replies, “wow! It looks like I have a lot of work to do.”

The doctor asks Eddie, “what’s your best time?” Eddie replies, “my best in the 100-yard dash³ was a 9.5.” The doctor replies, “wow! You’re faster than I was.” Eddie asks, “what was your time?” Not really wanting to answer the question, the doctor replies, “when I was in tenth grade, I ran a 9.9 in the 100-yard dash.” Wanting more information, Eddie asks, “how about the 440? What did you run that in?” Figuring that Eddie is gauging his performance, the doctor tells him, “a 54 was my best quarter mile, and my best mile was 4:56 in my second year of college. But, I was a sprinter. And, once I made my goal of breaking five minutes in the mile, I quit running.”

³ The world record in the 100-yard dash was 9.1 seconds when Eddie ran it in 9.5 seconds.

“But, getting back to you,” the doctor continues, “if you’re running a 9.5 right now, you can probably get that down to 9.2 or 9.3 come the Spring if you stretch.” Eddie exclaims, “what? You’ve got to be kidding me!” Now wanting more information, Eddie asks, “okay, how much should I stretch?” The doctor replies, “your goal is to work toward being able to do a full split. One foot in front of the other, not out to the sides. And, equal on both sides. It doesn’t do you any good at all if your body is not symmetrical.” Eddie now gets it. If he increases his stride length, like Usain Bolt, he’ll be able to run much faster.

Having one last question, Eddie asks the doctor, “how do you know all this?” The doctor replies, “well, I have an engineering degree from Georgia Tech, and I’m a chiropractor. This is what I do.” Eddie asks, “Georgia Tech? Hey, do you know anything about a Porsche 914 that was modified years ago for agility racing?” With a surprised look, the doctor looks over at the mechanic, and asks Eddie, “do you mean Kathy’s 914?” Eddie replies, “yeah.” The doctor replies, “the guy’s name who modified it is Kurt Richter. He’s a mechanical engineer. I know the guy. I went to school with his brother, Andy, at Tech.” Quite astounded, Eddie replies, “wow! It’s a small world.” After thanking the doctor for his time, Eddie and the mechanic head back to the station.

On the way back to the service station, the mechanic tells Eddie, “by the way, you may have just changed the future again.” Eddie asks, “how did I do that?” The mechanic replies, “I never knew the name of the guy who modified Kathy’s Porsche. I knew he was an engineer from Georgia Tech, but I never knew his name was Kurt Richter.” Eddie asks, “you remembered his name?” The mechanic replies, “yeah. I wrote it down. I want to meet this guy someday.”

Having a stroke of wisdom, Eddie tells the mechanic, “hey! Write his name on a piece of paper for me. When I find him, it will change the future, and you will have then known him for years.” The mechanic replies, “yeah! You’re right!” Once they arrive at the service station, the mechanic hands Eddie a piece of paper with the name Kurt Richter written on it. Eddie then rides back to the portal.

On the ride back to the portal, Eddie decides that he is going to tell Mark, Kathy, and Paula, along with the rest of the tribe, about stretching. Kathy is a lot more flexible than just about anyone, and has her years of hooping to thank for that. But, Eddie figures it might help her in her running too. Also, on the way back to the portal, Eddie contemplates what it means that his brain is three-quarters the normal size. Eddie always knew he was different than everyone else. Eddie figures that it doesn’t matter anyway because he’s happy, and that doesn’t seem to be the norm around the school. Arriving at the portal, Eddie is transported back to his time.

Kathy's first day of classes arrives, which is quite the departure from high school. On the first day of class, the professors do little more than go over the syllabus, and tell the students what books they need to buy for the class. Surprisingly, to Kathy, the syllabus has a description of what will be covered on each day of class, the date that any papers and assignments are due, and the date of every exam. Best of all, there are no pop quizzes or surprise tests. The biggest change to Kathy's routine is that she will have to wake up early and get to track practice, which starts at 7:00 a.m. The team trains five days per week during the Autumn, even though there is no Autumn track season.

After school, Kathy and Paula go to the campus bookstore to pick up what they need. They both find it fitting to buy a daily planner to write down the dates their assignments are due and when their tests will be given. While they are in the bookstore, they run into Genise, who was kind enough to time them in the 440-yard dash two years ago on the University's track. Genise exclaims, "hey! I know you guys!" Kathy exclaims, "hey! It's Genise, from the track!" Genise asks, "are you guys here now?" Kathy replies, "yeah! It's our first semester!" Genise asks, "what are you guys majoring in?" Kathy replies, "Exercise Science. How about you?" Genise replies, "same. I'm starting my junior year."

The conversation inevitably comes around to track and field, but in the most unusual way. Genise mentions, "I hate to run, but I have to go and train. There's more competition this year." Remembering Genise was training at the track when they met her two years ago, Paula asks, "track team?" Genise mentions, "yeah. The word is there are two freshman," and then she pauses. Genise exclaims, "no! Don't tell me! It's you guys?" Not knowing where Genise is going with this, Kathy asks, "what?" Continuing with her original thought, Genise says, "the word around here is there are two freshmen that are faster than shit." Paula asks, "how fast is shit anyway?" Looking at Paula, Kathy smiles and says, "I think she means us." Genise asks, "are you two on track scholarship?" Kathy replies, "yeah, both of us."

Genise, nearly at a loss for words, mentions, "wow! Now I remember. You guys ran the quarter mile in something like the mid fifties." Paula replies, "yeah, that would be us." Genise curiously asks, "so, what are your events?" Kathy replies, "mine is the 100-yard dash, or any sprint." Paula mentions, "mine is the 220, but the 100-yard dash is okay for me too." Breathing a partial sigh of relief, Genise asks, "do either of you guys run the 440 or the half mile?" Kathy replies, "we both ran a leg in the 4 by 440 relay, but the 440-yard dash isn't our main event."

Genise sighs and tells them, "okay. Good. Now I'm going to sleep a lot better tonight." Paula asks, "why?" Genise explains, "the word is that the State's high school record holder in the 100-yard dash will be on our

team. Some people are worried.” Paula asks, “worried about what?” Genise replies, “losing their place on the team, or their scholarship.” She then asks, “okay, so is it true? Do one of you guys hold the record?” Kathy replies, “yeah. That would be me. Guilty as charged.” Not knowing what to say, Genise replies, “wow!”

Happy to hear that she will not be competing directly with Kathy and Paula, Genise tells them, “I run the half mile, and I’m on the mile medley relay team with Barbara Wyngate. But, we lost our two sprinters this year.” Kathy replies, “really? Barbara?” Genise replies, “yeah. Do you know her?” Not surprised to hear Barbara’s name, Kathy replies, “do we ever. She ran the mile and the half mile for our high school.”

Figuring out quite a lot in very little time, Genise informs Kathy and Paula, “now, this makes total sense. You guys must be our two new sprinters. How fast are you guys anyway?” Paula replies, “if you’re talking about the 100-yard dash, in the lower ten-second range.” Again at a loss for many words, Genise screams, “what? Are you serious?” Paula informs Genise, “yeah.” Now understanding the big picture, Genise concludes, “maybe we’ll win something this year.”

As Genise goes to train, she is relieved that Kathy and Paula will not be in direct competition with her. Kathy and Paula walk away, learning that they are now the University’s two new sprinters. They kind of suspected this, so they are not too surprised.

On the way to the parking lot, Paula mentions to Kathy, “it sounds like she was worried that someone might take her spot.” Remembering her senior year in high school when she got sick with hemolytic anemia, Kathy replies, “yeah, I can relate.” Paula mentions, “but, she seems nice. I wonder how fast she is.” With track practice starting later in the week, Kathy replies, “I guess we’ll find out soon enough.”

As they get closer to their vehicles, Kathy mentions, “hey! Look at that! Your beach patrol Jeep is getting a lot of attention.” As Paula approaches her Jeep, she tells Kathy, “yeah, I see that. Catch ya later.” Kathy gets into her Porsche, watching as Paula walks up to her Jeep. None of the three or four guys standing around dare say anything to Paula, but rather disperse as Paula gets into the official-looking beach patrol vehicle. The guys, who are freshmen, walk away wondering what the deal is with the Beach Patrol girl.

A week later, once everyone gets into their normal routines, Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula meet to get pizza one weekend. Kathy and Paula mention that track practice is quite the workout at 7:00 a.m. Kathy tells the guys that she and Paula are the fastest sprinters on the team. She is also quick to point out that the senior members of the track team are glad

that they are fast, and that there is no heated competition or resentment like there occasionally was in high school. The team is truly a team, where everyone plays their part.

While they are eating, Kathy asks Eddie, “so, when are we going to race?” Eddie replies, “the 100-yard dash or the 440?” Kathy tells Eddie, “40 yards.” Wondering where Kathy is going with this, Eddie asks, “why only 40 yards?” Reminding Eddie of the challenge he posed a year ago, Kathy reminds Eddie, “we were talking about whose car was faster, yours or mine. And, you said mine was faster, but that you could beat it in a 40-yard dash if you were running.” Eddie confidently tells Kathy, “you’re on. I’ll win.” Kathy replies, “no, you won’t.” Eddie contends, “yeah, I will.” Kathy replies, “oh no, you won’t.” Paula tells Eddie, “you won’t win this verbal battle with her, trust me.” Paula then suggests, “maybe we should all race Kathy.” Eddie remarks, “yeah, that would be fair. That’s six legs versus six cylinders.” So, it’s agreed upon. They will race after lunch.

After lunch, Kathy and Eddie drive to the school in Kathy’s Porsche 914, followed by Mark and Paula in her Jeep. In the parking lot, there are markings for 40 yards, 100 yards, and 220 yards. Before the school got their indoor track arena, the indoor track team used to practice in the parking lot and in the gym. Eddie and Mark look over the race course, which is an asphalt parking lot with vague markings that have been worn away over the years by the weather. After a little work, they identify the starting line and finish line for the 40-yard dash.

Kathy asks, “okay, so how are we going to do this?” Mark suggests, “it’s too bad Mr. Crum isn’t here. He could be the Starter.” Kathy replies, “yeah, I’d love to see that.” Not missing Mr. Crum’s antics in the least bit, Paula remarks, “well, he couldn’t suspend us, just you guys.” Mark comments, “for what? Running in the parking lot?” Paula answers, “I wouldn’t put it past him.”

To start the race, Eddie suggests to Kathy, “honk your horn three times and, on the third time, we’ll all start.” They all agree, and get into position. Kathy is in one lane of the parking lot, with Eddie, Mark, and Paula in the other lane. Giving them the heads up, Kathy tells them, “I’ll give three seconds between honks.” That is good news to Eddie, who is the master at anticipating the gun. Everyone is onboard, and is ready to race.

With her engine revved up and ready to go, Kathy honks the horn. The runners all quickly get in the “set” position. At the second honk, Kathy revs up her engine even more. The third honk comes, and they are all off. Eddie, Mark, and Paula all take an early lead over Kathy in her Porsche. Eddie, off the starting line first, is leading the pack. Kathy, in her 914, is trailing just a bit, but is closing in on the runners. Halfway

through the race, at 20 yards, Kathy, in her 914, is moving faster than the three runners, and is still accelerating. Eddie, Mark, and Paula, however, are all at their top speed, having nothing more to deliver. At thirty yards, now moving more than 40 miles per hour, Kathy overtakes Paula, Mark, and finally Eddie. Kathy crosses the finish line first, followed by Eddie, Mark, and then Paula.

Finishing the race at 50 miles per hour, Kathy honks her horn again, and screams out, “yes!” Eddie looks at Mark and Paula, at a loss to explain how Kathy’s Porsche could beat them in a 40-yard race. Kathy returns screaming again, “yes! I beat you, buddy!” Eddie asks, “how fast were you going on the finish line?” Kathy tells him, “about 50 miles an hour. Twice as fast as you!”

Eddie concedes, admitting, “well, I guess I was wrong about that one.” All energetic, Kathy tells Eddie and Mark, “you guys just wait until track practice! I’m going to be cracking my whip!” Paula comments, “does she have a whip we don’t know about?” Mark replies, “you don’t want to go there.” Hearing Mark’s comment, Kathy exclaims, “I got a whip, buddy! And I’m cracking it!”

Eddie asks Kathy, “hey, is your stopwatch in your trunk?” Kathy replies, “yeah, along with the rest of my stuff.” Curious to know, Eddie tells her, “let’s see what your car does zero to sixty in.” Kathy gets her stopwatch, and Eddie gets in the car with her. Mark mentions, “I think I’ll skip this race.” Kathy drives to the end of the parking lot, and Eddie tells her, “go whenever you’re ready.”

Kathy revs up her engine and pops the clutch, as Eddie starts the stopwatch. Eddie watches the speedometer, as Kathy watches the parking lot and the tachometer. In just under three seconds, shifting at the redline, Kathy picks up more speed. At about five seconds, Kathy is at the redline again, and has to shift once more. Eddie watches carefully, and stops the stopwatch once Kathy hits 60 miles per hour.

Kathy hits the brakes, and asks, “what did you clock me at?” Eddie tells Kathy, “you sound like Mr. Frazier. That’s what he always says.” Kathy laughs, and says, “yeah, you’re right! So, what’s my time?” Eddie tells her, “I clocked you at 6.5 seconds. That’s not bad. A 914 is not supposed to accelerate that fast.” Kathy asks, “what should it be?” Eddie informs Kathy, “with a 2-liter engine, probably in the lower ten-second range. With the 1.7-liter engine, about fourteen seconds. But, you have a six-cylinder that has been modified.” Kathy exclaims, “I kicked ass! Braden would be proud of me! I kicked ass!”

When they get back to where Mark and Paula are standing, Paula remarks, “wow! You moved really fast.” Kathy replies, “zero to sixty in 6.5

seconds!” Mark suggests, “maybe we should race Paula’s Jeep.” Eddie mentions, “we would beat her Jeep.” Paula mentions, “yeah, I agree. But, not in the sand you won’t.” Throwing out the next challenge, Mark mentions, “in the sand? Yeah we will!” Looking at Mark, Eddie informs him, “her CJ does zero to sixty in the twelve-second range on the road. I have no idea what it will do in the sand. And, we ain’t going to be running our fastest in the sand.” Thinking about what Eddie said, Mark tells Paula, “you’re on! Sometime when we’re at the beach, we’re doing this.”

As they all get ready to head out to Kathy’s house, Paula asks, “hey, how come we can go ‘up the street’, and ‘down the street’, and we can go ‘up the road’, and ‘down the road’, but we only go ‘down the highway?’ No one ever says ‘up the highway’.” Kathy asks Eddie, “okay, Mr. Mechanic, how come?” Eddie replies, “I don’t know. We’ll have to ask our parents. Their generation invented those phrases.” Mark mentions, “it makes it sound like the highway is a one way.” Kathy replies, “yeah, a one way to nowhere. I like the side streets. Especially the ones behind the high school that I get to drive on my way to the University.”

When they arrive at Kathy’s house, they get into their swimsuits and get into Kathy’s pool. The conversation comes around to college, and what college life is like. Kathy and Paula relate to Eddie and Mark how they have to get up at 6:00 a.m. to get to track practice. Eddie and Mark mention that they have to get up at 6:30 a.m., boasting that they get an extra half hour of sleep.

While everyone is floating around in the pool, Kathy mentions, “in college we don’t have to do homework.” Eddie asks, “how is that?” Clarifying her statement, Kathy tells Eddie and Mark, “we have to learn the material, and take tests, but we don’t have to turn in homework every day.” Eddie mentions, “wow! That must be nice.”

Eddie asks Mark, “speaking about homework assignments, what did you write about for that paper in social studies class?” Mark asks, “we have an assignment due?” Eddie reminds Mark, “yeah, bro. It’s due on Monday. The one where we have to pick something society does that we don’t agree with, and write one or two pages on why we disagree.” Mark mentions, “wow! I’m glad you reminded me about that! I totally forgot about that.” Mark has been too busy looking for a truck.

Kathy asks Eddie, “so, what was your paper on?” Eddie replies, “it’s about why it’s not fair that Jimmy O’Brien and the Chuckie are not on the track team.” Mark exclaims, “it is not!” Eddie, in a serious tone, tells Mark, “yeah, it is. Don’t you feel sorry for them? They want to be on the team so badly, and they keep getting cut for no reason at all.” Kathy tells Eddie, “hey now! You seriously don’t expect us to believe that, now do

you?” Eddie responds, “they never get a fair chance!” Kathy laughs, and tells Eddie, “now, we know you’re full of it!” Paula tells Kathy, “yeah, your superpowers are at work.”

Eddie confesses, “okay, I’m busted. My paper is on daylight-saving time and why it’s so stupid.” Kathy remarks, “I’ve got to read this one.” Eddie tells her, “it’s out in my car.” Curious about what Eddie’s paper is about, Kathy tells him, “go and get it for me, sweetie. I want to read it.” Eddie gets out of the pool, goes to his car, and gets his notebook. While Eddie is getting his paper, Kathy comments to Paula and Mark, “I can feel it. This is going to be good.”

Eddie returns from his car with his paper, and Kathy wants to see it. But, she is all wet from being in the pool, so she tells Eddie, “read it to us. I want to hear it.” Eddie reads his paper to Kathy, Mark, and Paula, who are still in the pool. Eddie reads,

Daylight-Saving Time - Society’s Biggest Blunder
By Edward Bogenskaya

Not everything that society does makes sense. Daylight-saving time, the ritualistic act of changing the clocks twice a year, is one example. By changing the clocks to read one hour ahead of what the time should be during the Spring and Summer months we, as a society, fool ourselves into thinking that an extra hour of sunlight can magically appear at the end of the day. Politicians, in a like way, fool themselves into thinking that changing the clocks will somehow save energy.

As a result of daylight-saving time, people’s sleep cycles are disrupted to an extent that it takes many people weeks to adjust to the change. Because of the time change in the Spring, we all sleep in school during first and second period. The adults need three cups of coffee to get themselves moving in the morning. And, everyone is cranky, especially the school’s principal, since the early morning seems to be when students are always called to his office for disciplinary action.

We might as well propose that, for the Summer months, we change the thermometers in the same manner that we change the clocks. By changing all thermometers to read ten degrees cooler during the Summer months, we can fool ourselves into thinking that it is cooler outside than it really is. This will solve the problem of people having to run their air conditioners as much, and we will save lots of energy.

And, if we remember, saving energy is the big reason for changing the clocks. If we believe that changing the clocks can save the country energy, it logically follows that changing the thermometers is an equally good idea. But it's not. It's kind of stupid to think that changing a thermometer can actually change the temperature. Changing the clocks is no different.

After he is finished, Eddie tells them, "and, that's it." Kathy exclaims, "Eddie, that is so awesome! I love it!" Eddie mentions, "I don't like daylight-saving time. It really messes me up." Kathy, Paula, and Mark all agree. Kathy tells Eddie, "I really like that comment about the principal. The only problem I see is that he's cranky all the time." Eddie replies, "yeah. And, he's at it early this year. Track season hasn't even started yet." Paula adds, "that's too bad for you guys. You have another year of him. We don't have a Mr. Crum at the University." Mark points out to Paula and Kathy, "yeah, you just wait. You'll be back for the indoor track season. He's sure to start something up with you again." Eddie puts his notebook on the table, and joins everyone in the pool.

Mark mentions, "so, I got to come up with something for my paper. Anyone got any ideas?" Trying to keep a straight face, Kathy tells Mark, "you could always write a paper on why it's stupid to have both regular time and metric time throughout the world." Mark splashes Kathy, telling him, "I'm not falling for that one again!"

Mark then mentions, "I got to come up with something." Eddie tells him, "write about why the United States and Britain are the only two countries holding on to the English system. We still use miles and yards. The rest of the world uses kilometers and meters." Mark agrees, telling Eddie, "yeah! That sounds good. I'm going to use that one." Paula mentions, "yeah! They keep saying that we're going to change over to the metric system, but it never happens. We've been hearing this since grade school. And, it seems like it's never going to happen." Kathy comments, "we're not on the metric system because there's a shortage of metric stopwatches." Mark heads underwater, not really wanting to hear the rest of this discussion.

A few days later, the tribe is sitting in physics class discussing the upcoming track season. The rest of the class is cramming for the test that will begin when Miss Amherst walks in. Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes take a seat next to the tribe, specifically close to Wendy and Mitchell. It's no secret why they chose those seats. Wendy and Mitchell are honors students, and are the perfect students to cheat off of. It's not likely that Miss Amherst will notice that Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes are perfectly positioned to cheat. She has had to move the three troublemakers all over the classroom in the last few weeks.

Wendy passes a note to Mitchell, who passes it to Mark, who then passes it to Eddie. Although she is blonde, Wendy is not stupid. She knows exactly why Chuckie and Goldstein are sitting next to her and Mitchell with Haynes behind them. Wendy's note reads,

Chuckie, Goldshit, and the Bitchkrieg are going to cheat off me and Mitchell.

Plan A: Do nothing.

Plan B: Mark and Eddie switch seats with us.

Eddie writes "B" on the note, and passes it back to Mark. Mark also writes, "B" on the note, and passes the note to Mitchell, who gives it back to Wendy. The note is then passed to Johnson, Braden, and Bobby B., to fill them in on what's going on. The plan is now set. It's not that Eddie and Mark are dumb, but rather that they will not allow Chuckie or Goldstein to easily see their papers, mostly due to the sheer size of their arms blocking the view. It's also not likely that Haynes will be able to see around Eddie's or Mark's broad shoulders.

Miss Amherst walks in as everyone is doing their last minute cramming. Wendy announces to the tribe, "plan B." Eddie and Mark quickly switch seats with Mitchell and Wendy. Miss Amherst missed what just happened, but it's not exactly something she was looking for. Students move around all the time. Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, however, are ticked off. They all know exactly what just happened, now knowing that they'll have to do their own work on the test that they failed to study for.

Miss Amherst tells everyone, "today, we are having a test, which hopefully does not come as a surprise to anyone. Please place your books on the floor under your desk so we can get started. And, no calculators are allowed." Sounding a little like Mr. Zunde, Miss Amherst adds, "if you can't do the simple math on this test, you probably shouldn't even be in this class." Miss Amherst hands out the tests, face down, as not to give anyone a time advantage. Once everyone has a test, she tells the class, "you may begin taking the test. If you are done early, please place your test paper face down on the desk and relax."

Instead of immediately beginning the test, Eddie, Mark, and the rest of the tribe sit in their seats with their arms crossed, as they often do during a test. The class period is 45 minutes, but tests can usually be completed in half that time. Two minutes go by, and the tribe still all sits with their arms crossed.

Goldstein looks at Eddie, who pays him no attention. Goldstein looks over at Braden, who grins as Goldstein makes eye contact. Chuckie, likewise, is very irritated. Looking through his test, Chuckie cannot

answer a single question. Three minutes into the test, Goldstein cannot find any questions he can answer either. Haynes, imitating the tribe, sits with her arms crossed. Seeing what is going on, Mark laughs under his breath. Psychological warfare is just as effective in the classroom as on the track.

Goldstein, however, does not see any humor in the situation. Standing up, Goldstein has a meltdown, kicking Eddie's desk and then kicking Mark's desk. Goldstein then attempts to push Mark out of his seat, but is not very successful. Mark, however, pretends that Goldstein pushed him really hard, and falls out of his chair, landing on the ground. Mark exclaims, "geesh! I can't even take a test without these guys causing trouble."

In response to Mark's comment, Goldstein exclaims, "you guys suck," then kicks Braden's desk. Miss Amherst yells out, "Andrew Goldstein, please sit in your seat!" Ignoring Miss Amherst, Goldstein punches Braden several times, and then attempts to push Braden out of his seat. Not able to budge Braden, Goldstein kicks Braden in his leg, yelling out, "asshole!"

The attention in the room abruptly shifts as Braden stands up, and walks over to Goldstein. Johnson comments, "oh shit. Here it comes." Braden grabs Goldstein, placing him in an arm lock. Goldstein screams some obscenities, and tries to escape Braden's grasp. Goldstein, however, is no match for Braden, who tightens the arm lock. Braden asks Miss Amherst, "what do you want me to do with him?" One student on the other side of the class mutters, "kick his ass." That student must know Braden quite well.

Miss Amherst tells the class, "the rest of you are on the honor system right now. Please continue taking your test. I'll be right back." Miss Amherst instructs Braden, "please follow me. Bring him with you. We're taking a trip to the principal's office." On the way out of the classroom, Goldstein yells at Braden, "I'm going to kick your ass! Yeah, yeah. You just wait, man! I'm kicking your ass." Braden laughs, and replies, "yeah, right! I wanna see that. Go for it, junior. I'm waiting." Leading the way, Miss Amherst walks down the hall, followed by Braden, who is maintaining Goldstein in a tight arm lock.

After they leave, Eddie mentions, "dang. I missed my chance. I should have taken Goldshit outside and belted his ass to the fence." Chuckie, who has a lot of experience having his ass belted to a fence, becomes irate. Chuckie stands up, and throws several punches at Eddie's shoulder. Eddie, who is able to take out Chuckie with one punch, pretends to sob, and cries out, "please! Please! Chuckie, stop it! Stop it! I can't take it

anymore! Someone please find Erika to help me!" The whole class laughs at Chuckie, which does not sit well with Chuckie.

Mark asks Eddie, "hey, do you want me to belt Chuckie to the fence?" Chuckie becomes even more irate, and kicks Mark's chair, and tries to punch Mark. Mark, quickly avoiding Chuckie's jabs, laughs as Chuckie tries to connect but can't. Mark comments, "this is called the rope-a-dope. I learned it from Muhammad Ali." Eddie comments, "that would make Chuckie the dope." Getting nowhere with Mark, Chuckie then starts attempting to punch Eddie again. Following Mark's rope-a-dope tactics, Eddie now avoids Chuckie's blows. Chuckie, however, quickly realizes he now has another problem.

Bobby B. stands up, and approaches Chuckie. Chuckie throws a punch at Bobby B's. mid section, causing the shot doc to laugh hysterically. Bobby B. picks up Chuckie, and throws the 200-pound pest over his shoulder and across his back. The shot doc tells someone to open the door as he carries Chuckie out of the classroom in a fireman's carry. Chuckie starts screaming, "someone stop him! Stop him!" Bobby B. announces, "someone come with me," as he walks out the door. Mark comments, "well, this test didn't go exactly as planned."

Two students, Lynn Berson and Penny Hart, who are both involved in the school's newspaper and yearbook, follow Bobby B. Perhaps a news story for this week's newspaper will develop for Lynn and Penny. Lynn and Penny even bring their cameras, hoping to get a good photograph for the yearbook. Chuckie, being carried by Bobby B. over his shoulder to the principal's office, is crying like a baby. Following Bobby B., Lynn and Penny get a few good pictures of Bobby B. carrying Chuckie over his shoulder.

Miss Amherst enters the administration office, followed by Braden who still has Goldstein in an arm lock. Mrs. Marlowe exclaims, "what is going on?" Miss Amherst asks Mrs. Marlowe, "is Mr. Crum in his office?" Mrs. Marlowe replies, "yes," and, using the intercom, tells Mr. Crum, "I think you'd better get out here now, sir. It looks like there is a problem." Mr. Crum rushes out of his office, seeing Miss Amherst, and Braden holding Goldstein in an arm lock.

Before Mr. Crum can fully assess the situation, Bobby B. carries Chuckie into the administration area, followed by Lynn and Penny. Bobby B. announces, "I have another one for you," and dumps Chuckie on the floor in front of Mr. Crum. Chuckie starts sobbing, acting again as if he is the victim.

Lynn, who accompanied Bobby B., tells Miss Amherst, "the guy on the floor went crazy and started punching everyone. He tried to start a fight

with Eddie. Then, he punched Mark and Robert.” Miss Amherst replies, “oh, wonderful. I can’t even give a test without these two clowns causing a problem.”

Mr. Crum asks Miss Amherst, “you’re giving a test right now?” Miss Amherst replies, “yes.” Mr. Crum tells Mrs. Marlowe, “page Mr. Harrison and tell him to report to the physics classroom immediately.” The school’s permanent substitute teacher, Mr. Harrison, will proctor the test in Miss Amherst’s absence.

Mr. Crum, who seems agitated, asks Miss Amherst, “what is going on here?” Miss Amherst explains, “as if I don’t have enough problems with Andrew Goldstein, he started kicking a few desks and pushing people out of their seats shortly after the test began.” Mr. Crum asks, “what does Axel Braden have to do with this?” Miss Amherst tells Mr. Crum, “I asked him to bring Andrew Goldstein to your office. Goldstein was out of control.” Mr. Crum tells Braden, who still has Goldstein in an arm lock, “okay, let him go.”

As instructed, Braden lets Goldstein go. Goldstein turns around and punches Braden in his mid section. Braden laughs hysterically, and exclaims, “somebody get a teacher! Goldshit’s starting a fight!” Mr. Crum exclaims, “okay, I’ve had enough! Everyone into my office!” Miss Amherst tells Braden, Bobby B., Lynn, and Penny, “thank you for helping. You can go back and finish your test now.” Mr. Crum, seeing Braden and Bobby B., remarks, “I didn’t tell anyone that they can leave. Everyone, into my office! Now!”

Braden tells Mrs. Marlowe, “call Mr. Zunde. I ain’t putting up with this shit today.” Mr. Crum tells Mrs. Marlowe, “don’t call Mr. Zunde. This has nothing to do with him.” Braden tells Mr. Crum, “fine, then. I’ll go and get him myself.” Braden leaves the administration area, heading to the physical education office. Mr. Crum yells out to Braden, “Axel, get back here right now!” Ignoring Mr. Crum’s command, Braden walks briskly to the physical education office in search of Mr. Zunde.

Mr. Crum sits behind his desk, and commands Miss Amherst, “tell me what is going on here!” Miss Amherst explains, “I was giving a test. About five minutes into the test, Andrew Goldstein stood up and started kicking a few of the student’s desks, and pushed Mark out of his seat. I told Andrew to sit in his seat, and then he punched Axel, and then tried to push Axel out of his seat. Axel restrained him, and asked me what I wanted him to do with Goldstein. I told him we’re taking Andrew Goldstein to the principal’s office. And, here we are.”

Because there is obviously more to the story, Mr. Crum, pointing to Chuckie, asks, “how does Charles fit into this picture?” Miss Amherst

replies, "I don't know." Bobby B. interjects, "I can answer that." Mr. Crum tells Bobby B., "go ahead. I'm listening." Bobby B., describing what he saw, explains, "after Miss Amherst left, Chuckie started to punch Eddie. Eddie told him to stop, but he kept punching him. Then, Chuckie kicked Mark's chair and tried to punch Mark, but Mark evaded all his punches. Then, Chuckie started to punch Eddie again, and Eddie also evaded his punches, like the rope-a-dope. Chuckie was going psycho, so I picked him up and carried him here." Mr. Crum asks, "so, Eddie and Charles were in a fight?" Bobby B. replies, "no. I didn't say that. Chuckie hit Eddie, but Eddie did not hit him back." Over the intercom, Mr. Crum tells Mrs. Marlowe to get Eddie to his office immediately.

Mrs. Marlowe announces over the loudspeaker, "will Edward Bogenskaya please report to the principal's office immediately." Just as the announcement comes, Mr. Zunde and Braden walk into the administration area. Already getting the story from Braden, Mr. Zunde asks Mrs. Marlowe, "what seems to be the problem today?" Mrs. Marlowe replies, "I'm not sure. It's going to take a while to sort this one out."

Eddie walks into the administration area, wondering why he is even here. Mr. Zunde asks Eddie, "what's the problem?" Eddie replies, "I have no idea, other than the Chuckie and Goldshit have gone off the deep end again." Hearing the chatter outside his office, Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, Braden, and Eddie, "please, come in. I can tell that this is going to waste my entire morning getting to the bottom of this one."

Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "wow. It looks like there must be an epidemic of overdue library books. I didn't even realize this school had so many books." Just hearing Mr. Zunde's comment puts Eddie, Braden, and Bobby B. at ease. Mr. Crum brashly tells Mr. Zunde, "that's not the issue here today." Mr. Zunde replies, "oh, I see. Axel Braden must have used profanity in the hallway again, and these are the witnesses." Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, "I've already found out what happened from Miss Amherst, and I got Robert Bradshaw's statement. You missed it. And, I'm not going over it again." While Mr. Crum is orating nonsense to the students, Miss Amherst explains to Mr. Zunde what happened.

Mr. Crum, getting on with his meeting, tells Goldstein, "Andrew, tell me what happened." Goldstein answers, "they switched seats. I think they were cheating. Yeah, yeah, that's what I saw. They wanted to cheat off of me." Mr. Crum asks Goldstein, "who switched seats?" Goldstein replies, "the blonde girl, yeah, her. And the smart guy behind her. Yeah, they switched seats with Egghead, and Bark." Miss Amherst informs Mr. Crum, "I can assure you, sir, that no one was going to cheat off of Andrew. Andrew got an F on the first quiz, and has failed to turn in any of his assignments."

Mr. Crum asks, “and just who are Egghead and Bark?” Pointing to Eddie, Goldstein replies, “he’s Egghead, and Bark is his buddy. Yeah, yeah.” Mr. Zunde whispers to Eddie, “I can’t make any sense out of him.” Eddie replies, “me either, and I was there. It looks like I’m Egghead and I’m guessing that Mark is Bark.” Mr. Zunde whispers to Eddie, “there’s definitely something wrong with that guy.” Eddie replies, “yeah. He was born.”

Mr. Crum, who is getting impatient, asks Chuckie, “Charles, tell me what happened. Why did Robert carry you to my office?” Chuckie replies, “Eddie was beating me up.” Eddie interjects, “I was not.” Mr. Crum abruptly tells Eddie, “I’ll get to you. For now, please keep quiet.” Lynn whispers to Miss Amherst, “the whole class saw it. Chuckie was hitting Eddie, but Eddie definitely did not hit him back.” Chuckie explains, “Eddie started a fight with me after the teacher left the classroom.” Eddie interjects again, “he’s so full of shit.” Mr. Crum again admonishes Eddie, telling him, “Edward, I told you I will get to you. In the mean time, please keep your mouth shut.” Mr. Crum’s blatant arrogance does not sit well with Eddie.

Mr. Crum thinks for a moment. Looking around the room, Mr. Crum sees five students that were clearly involved in a physical altercation. Braden had Goldstein in an arm lock. Bobby B. dumped Chuckie on the floor in the administration area. And, Eddie and Chuckie were in a fight, or at least some sort of clash occurred between them. Physical altercations are not allowed during school. What Mr. Crum saw, himself, was clear evidence of multiple physical altercations. Mr. Crum, therefore, must take action.

Mr. Crum announces, “as you all know, fighting is not allowed in school. We have a zero tolerance policy regarding this issue.” Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Amherst, “here comes the mother lode.” Mr. Crum continues, “Miss Amherst reported that you, Andrew, started an altercation. So, I am suspending you. And, Axel Braden, I clearly saw that you had Andrew forcibly restrained, presumably against his will. It was not within your authority to intervene during a fight between other students. So, I am suspending you too. Robert and Charles, you were both obviously involved in some sort of an altercation, so I am suspending the both of you. And Eddie, I am suspending you too.”

Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “no, you’re not. You’re not suspending me.” Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Amherst, “this is going to get good. Just watch.” Miss Amherst whispers back, “I can see that.” Mr. Crum brazenly asks Eddie, “what did you just say?” Eddie informs Mr. Crum, “do you need a hearing aid? Maybe that discus last year did a little more damage than they thought. I told you that you’re not suspending me.” Now angry and agitated, Mr. Crum asks Eddie, “and, now just what is that supposed to

mean?” Eddie slams his fist onto a shelf on Mr. Crum’s bookcase, breaking the shelf. The books on the shelf fall to the floor, and Eddie steps aside. Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Amherst, “I think he’s just getting warmed up. Let’s see how this goes.”

Eddie exclaims, “I did not hit the Chuckie! He knows it! The whole class saw what happened. And, this time, I’m telling you what I’m going to do. So, you just shut up for once and listen.” The whole room falls silent as Eddie takes control of Mr. Crum’s meeting.

Eddie continues, “if you suspend me for fighting, go for it. If I have to pay the price for something I haven’t done, the way I see it, I now have the right to do whatever it is that I’m falsely accused of. So, if you suspend me for fighting with the Chuckie, I’m going to kick the shit out of the Chuckie. And, when I’m done, no one will ever recognize that piece of shit again. And, I’ll do it right here in this school. In front of you, and in front of everyone. And, go ahead and call a teacher to break it up. We’ll see how well that goes. If anyone tries to stop me, I’ll kick their ass too. And, that includes you!”

Miss Amherst whispers to Mr. Zunde, “did I really just hear that?” Mr. Zunde whispers back, “yes. And, I don’t think he’s done.” Miss Amherst whispers to Mr. Zunde, “it sounds like Mr. Crum has a lot of square root of negative one⁴ activity going on his head today.” Mr. Zunde whispers back, “it’s not like any other day with him.”

All of a sudden, Chuckie starts sobbing, and confesses, “he didn’t hit me. He didn’t start a fight. I made it all up! I made it up!” Adding his opinion, Goldstein says, “hey! Can’t you see that Egghead’s threatening Charles. I saw what happened! Yeah, yeah, I saw it. Egghead was hitting Charles. Yeah, yeah, I saw the whole thing!” Raising his voice, Braden exclaims, “that’s a bunch of bullshit! I was dragging your ass to the principal’s office when that went down. You didn’t see shit.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “why don’t you call my father down here to your little pussy factory? I’m sick of your bullshit and your shit shows.”

Miss Amherst cannot believe what she is hearing. Mr. Zunde, who heard Miss Amherst’s side of the story during Mr. Crum’s earlier pontification, interrupts the meeting. Giving Mr. Crum some advice, Mr. Zunde tells him, “may I suggest that you reconsider your position, Mr. Crum. It seems to me that Miss Amherst asked for help from the students. Did you really expect her to drag Goldstein to your office all by herself?”

⁴ Square root of -1, ie., an irrational number. Miss Amherst’s reference is that Mr. Crum is being irrational.

Silence falls over the room as Mr. Crum thinks of a way to back himself out of the dead end he just drove into at 90 miles per hour. Mr. Crum cannot decide what to do. He's heard Chuckie retract his accusation. He caught Goldstein in a flat out lie. If Mr. Crum suspends Eddie, Mr. Crum will have a bigger problem should Eddie decide to kick the shit out of Chuckie. And, seeing Mr. Bogenskaya show up again at the school is not exactly at the top of Mr. Crum's list. Everyone else's stories seem to coincide. Mr. Crum is at a dead end, and he knows it.

Mr. Crum, knowing that he's lost this one, announces, "okay, I have made a decision." Mr. Zunde whispers to Miss Amherst, "here it comes. He's made a decision. Hold on." Mr. Crum announces, "for now, I am not suspending anyone. But, I am not through with my investigation. I will get to the bottom of this and, when I do, I will take the appropriate action. Until then, I will have a close eye on every single one of you." Miss Amherst whispers to Mr. Zunde, "he basically just said nothing." Mr. Crum tells everyone, "okay, everyone get back to class."

Eddie, who is the first one to leave, tells Mr. Crum, "oh, and by the way, I'm sorry about your bookcase. You should have bought a better one. It's built like a piece of shit." Fear comes across Mr. Crum, for those are the exact words that Eddie's father used when he broke Mr. Crum's desk two years ago. Eddie, slightly perturbed, is gone before anyone else leaves the office.

Mr. Zunde escorts Miss Amherst back to her classroom. Braden, Bobby B., Chuckie, Goldstein, Lynn, and Penny all walk down the hall together. On the way, Goldstein tells Braden, "paybacks, man. Yeah, yeah, paybacks. You're gonna get yours." Mr. Zunde stops, and asks Goldstein, "would you care to elaborate on what you just said?" Goldstein boldly replies, "yeah, yeah. There's definitely going to be a payback for this one." Mr. Zunde sternly advises Goldstein and Chuckie, "if I were either one of you, I would carefully calculate what you are up against. If you are foolish enough to start something with any of these guys, you are not likely to make it out the other end in one piece." Goldstein tells Mr. Zunde, "those guys don't scare me." Mr. Zunde replies, "that would be your problem, whether you recognize it or not."

Miss Amherst, Mr. Zunde, and the other students continue to the classroom, where the rest of the class is finishing the test. Miss Amherst tells the seven students who were in Mr. Crum's office to begin taking their tests. Mr. Zunde spends the rest of the period, which amounts to less than five minutes, talking with Miss Amherst. Mr. Zunde is hanging around until the end of the period, making sure no further altercations occur between the students.

Eddie, Braden, and Bobby B. do not have enough time to answer even one question on the test. Lynn and Penny, likewise, do not have enough time to answer a single question. Chuckie and Goldstein do little more than put their names on their papers. The bell rings, everyone turns in their test papers, and it's off to the next class.

At lunchtime, Kathy and Paula drive to the high school in Kathy's 914, looking for Eddie and Mark on the front lawn. They walk up, and are all together once again. Eddie, and the rest of the tribe, fills Kathy and Paula in on what transpired during physics class. After listening to what happened, Kathy asks Eddie, "are you counting down the days yet?" Eddie replies, "to track season or graduation?" Thinking about what Eddie said, Kathy replies, "wow! That's three shit fits out of Crum, and the track season hasn't even started yet."

Mark, who is laying on his side relaxing, comments, "four shit fits." Kathy asks, "how do you mean, four?" Mark points to the faculty parking lot, where Mr. Crum is standing in front of Kathy's Porsche 914. It is no secret who owns the Porsche 914. The tribe watches while Mr. Crum stands there, as if he's waiting for the Porsche to say something to him. Even if the Porsche did say something, Mr. Crum would probably lose the argument. Instead of going back inside through the front door, Mr. Crum reenters the school through the athletic entrance. He expects to find Kathy somewhere around the athletic office, but will be out of luck.

Once Mr. Crum goes inside, Kathy mentions, "I thought I was all done with him. I guess he's back." Paula reminds Kathy, "hey, don't worry about it. Just remember. They pay you to make his life miserable now." Kathy replies, "yeah! That's right! And besides, we report to Mr. Zunde, not that old Crum." Paula laughs, repeating what Kathy said, "that old Crum?" Kathy replies, "yeah, 'that old Crum'. That's what I'm calling him now."

After a while, the bell rings, and the tribe must get back to class. Paula mentions, "this was a nice break." Kathy and Paula head back to the University for their afternoon classes, and will meet up with Eddie and Mark later.

The next day, Miss Amherst returns the graded tests to the students. Chuckie, upon receiving his paper, exclaims, "hey! How come I got a zero?" Miss Amherst replies, "if a student receives a grade of zero on a test, it's usually because they didn't answer any of the questions correctly." Chuckie tells Miss Amherst, "I didn't have enough time!" With absolutely no sympathy, Miss Amherst, sounding a bit like Mr. Zunde, tells Chuckie, "that would be your problem, not mine."

Next alphabetically is Eddie, who, after hearing Chuckie got a zero, is a little concerned. Yesterday, during the test, Eddie did not have enough time to answer any questions either. Eddie receives his paper and, unlike Chuckie, is very quiet. Braden, who is also concerned, receives his paper. Upon receiving his test paper, Braden also says nothing, if anyone can actually believe that. Bobby B. is next, and follows suit.

Goldstein, sitting next to Chuckie, receives his test, and exclaims, "this ain't fair! I got a zero too. Yeah, yeah, this definitely ain't fair."

Bobby B. shows his paper to Eddie and Braden, which has a grade of 100. Eddie and Braden received the same grade as Bobby B. Sitting at the other end of the room, Lynn Berson and Penny Hart have also both received a grade of 100.

Eddie, Braden, and Bobby B. are puzzled about their grade. After class, Braden, standing with Eddie and Bobby B., asks Miss Amherst, "how come I got a 100?" Miss Amherst replies, "because you didn't get any questions wrong." Braden then asks, "then, how come Chuckie and Goldshit got a zero?" Miss Amherst replies, "because they didn't get any questions right." Miss Amherst explains, "anyone who had to go through what you guys did yesterday deserves a break." This is good news to Eddie, who, having to deal with Mr. Crum's bullshit, was contemplating quitting school and going to work for Angelo.

The rest of the week goes much better for the tribe. Chuckie's mother has been seen lurking around the school lobby with Chuckie by her side. Goldstein's father has also been called to the school. Mr. Crum dares not call Eddie's father to the school again. Already down one desk and a bookcase, Mr. Crum can't afford to explain to the school board why so much of his office furniture is in need of replacement. By the end of the week, it is clear that Eddie, Braden, and Bobby B. have escaped any disciplinary action, and justifiably so. Goldstein and Chuckie were the instigators, as usual, and paid the price.

The next weekend, Mark tells Eddie that he's found a truck that he wants to buy. Mark has his eye on a Jeep pickup truck, which is a four-wheel drive vehicle. The good news is that Mark can obtain a service body for the Jeep. The combination of four-wheel drive and a service body means that Mark can use the truck for both work and driving on the beach. And, the best part is that one of the compartments in the service body can be used to store his beach stuff.

Early Saturday morning, Mark is out riding his bicycle. Mark rides past Eddie's house, where he sees that Kathy and Eddie are in the back yard working on the Autumn garden. Mark rides up on his bicycle, and asks Eddie, "hey, can you come check out a Jeep with me?" Eddie tells Mark,

“sure.” Kathy asks, “is Paula coming?” Mark replies, “yeah. We were going to go and take a look at it after lunch.” Kathy exclaims, “pizza!” Well, that about decides it. Everyone will head out with Mark to take a look at a Jeep after a Saturday midday pizza party.

Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula meet at the pizzeria earlier than usual. Mark is too excited to wait until later, so lunch is early, at 11:00 a.m. Kathy notices that Mark is eating faster than usual. Paula mentions to Mark, “a little wired, hon?” Mark replies, “no. Well yeah, I guess I am. I was out on a ride, and rode by the Jeep dealership last week. I’m thinking that I need to get moving on this.” Kathy tells Mark, “it doesn’t matter how fast you eat. If you buy a Jeep today, the best you can hope for is getting it ten minutes earlier.” Eddie comments, “yeah. Mark hasn’t had a Jeep for eighteen years. What’s a few more minutes?” Lunch is finally over, which could not come soon enough for Mark.

Kathy and Eddie follow Mark and Paula to the Jeep dealership. When they arrive, none of the salesmen give them any immediate attention. After all, it’s not likely that a group of seventeen and eighteen-year-olds will buy a Jeep on a Saturday afternoon. The sales staff all thinks that they’re just looking around and dreaming. The good side of this is that Mark has more time to look at the vehicles without the distraction of a salesman. After looking around for a while, Mark looks for the vehicle that caught his interest earlier this week.

Mark finds the truck that he is interested in, telling the group, “here it is.” Paula takes a look, and tells Mark, “wow! With a little work, you just might get this looking like an official Beach Patrol vehicle.” Looking at the sticker, Eddie mentions, “this is not bad. It has 225 horsepower and 320 foot-pounds of torque. And, it’s four-wheel drive.”

Although Paula likes the pickup truck, she likes her CJ better, mostly because of all the work she had to put in to get it, not to mention her customization job. Mark asks Paula, “can I get it?” Paula replies, “well, yeah. It’s your money.” Mark mentions, “yeah. But, you got the money for me.” Kathy whispers to Eddie, “he’s not even thinking. He wants it.”

A salesman walks over, asking, “can I help you guys with something?” Mark replies, “yeah. Can I take this for a test drive?” The salesman asks, “do you have a driver’s license?” Mark replies, “yeah.”

Sensing that Mark is not going to get very far with the salesman, Eddie interrupts and mentions, “Vinnie can definitely put a service body on this for you.” The salesman asks Mark, “so, you need a truck for work?” Mark informs the salesman, “yeah. And, I need a service body put on it.” The salesman quickly realizes that Mark might be a serious buyer. The salesman and Mark go inside, where the salesman makes a copy of

Mark's driver's license. Getting the keys, the salesman and Mark walk back to the Jeep.

Paula mentions to Kathy, "when Eddie mentioned the 'service body', the salesman really changed his tune." Kathy mentions, "yeah, I saw that too." Eddie, who is looking over the vehicle, mentions, "he should get it. He's really going to need something reliable when he starts working." Paula tells Eddie, "oh, he's already decided. All I've heard about for the last few days is this Jeep. It's going to take a lot to talk him out of it." Eddie tells Paula, "well, at least he's thinking ahead."

Mark and the salesman return with the key, and take the Jeep for a test drive. The salesman drives first, talking about the vehicle as they drive away. After a few miles, Mark gets behind the wheel. Prepared for the worst, the salesman is quite surprised that Mark can drive the manual transmission with absolutely no problem. The salesman asks Mark what type of business he is in. Mark informs the salesman that his father is a jobber, and does a lot of construction work. Mark tells him that he plans to do the same thing after graduation. The salesman now quickly realizes that Mark is a potentially serious buyer. They return to the lot, where Eddie, Paula, and Kathy are standing between Paula's Jeep and Kathy's Porsche.

Eddie, Kathy, and Paula walk back over to Mark, as he gets out of the Jeep. Paula asks Mark, "what did you think?" Mark replies, "it drives good." As they drove back into the dealership, the salesman could not help noticing the "Beach Patrol" CJ the rest of the group was standing near. It was also hard not to notice Kathy's Porsche 914.

The salesman asks, "whose CJ is that?" Paula replies, "it's mine. Vinnie, at the body shop bought it from the insurance company. And, Vinnie did the paint job. Pretty awesome, isn't it?" The salesman replies, "it is. I've heard all about the Beach Patrol CJ, but I've never actually seen it until now." Paula now thinks everyone in the world must know about her Jeep.

The salesman asks, "and the Porsche?" Kathy replies, "that's mine." The salesman asks Kathy, "how does that run?" Eddie, who is not too fond of salesmen, wants to reply, "on gasoline," but he decided not to. Kathy, however, replies, "awesome. It has a six-cylinder 911 engine in it. It was modified for agility racing by a Georgia Tech engineer, and it now does zero to sixty in 6.5 seconds. And, Eddie fixed the engine. It was revved past its redline, and dropped a valve." The salesman is quite surprised at what he is hearing.

The salesman asks Mark, "so, are you interested?" Mark replies, "yeah." The salesman tells Mark, "let's go inside, and we'll talk about it."

Paula whispers to Eddie, “here comes the bullshit session. My parents have sat through a few of these.” Eddie tells Paula, “don’t worry. I’ll put an end to the bullshit.” Eddie, Kathy, and Paula follow Mark and the salesman to the office. On the way, Paula whispers to Eddie, “how are you going to do that?” Eddie tells Paula, “you’ll see. I know their game. Angelo and Vinnie told me about how they work.”

The salesman excuses himself for a moment to get some information about the Jeep. Eddie whispers to Mark, “hey, do you want me to help you out?” Mark replies, “yeah. I really hate how this works.” Paula comments, “this crap can drag on for hours.” Eddie asks Mark, “do you have enough cash to buy the Jeep?” Mark replies, “yeah, at home.” Eddie replies, “good. That will make it really easy.”

The salesman returns with a folder of papers, and tells Mark, “okay, here’s what I can do.” Throwing out a price, the salesman tells Mark, “I think I can get the sales manager to go for it.” The salesman then talks about the warranty, and tells Mark what a good choice the vehicle is. The salesman goes on talking about a lot of nonsense, such as the towing capacity, the trailer hitch, and that a four-wheel drive vehicle is an excellent choice if Mark is planning on working at construction sites. But, Mark already knew all of that. Mark can read. It was all spelled out on the window sticker.

Eddie interrupts the sales presentation, and tells the salesman, “we talked about this when you were away. Mark is willing to give you the invoice price for the Jeep, which has a 3 percent holdback⁵. The options have a 5 percent holdback, so you’re getting a good deal. He’ll give you your standard documentation fees, which we both know are excessive, but no dealer prep fees. And, it’s an all-cash deal. So, you’re spending no time with Mark, and more time with your next customer. And, Mark will be nice enough to bring it back to you guys for any warranty work, which is where you make your real money.” The salesman, who is in shock, knows exactly what Eddie said. The salesman tells Mark, “I’ll be right back.”

Eddie tells Kathy and Paula, “walk out into the showroom, and see if you can hear anything.” Kathy and Paula walk over to the water fountain, pretending to drink some water. They listen as the salesman talks with the sales manager. Kathy and Paula hear the salesman saying, “they clearly know how we work. Someone in the family must be in the business. They must have sent them here on their own.” The sales

⁵ Holdback: An amount paid by the manufacturer to the dealer for each new vehicle sold.

manager asks, "what did they offer?" The salesman replies, "invoice plus the standard doc fees sans our prep fees." The sales manager asks, "how's he going to pay for it?" Not knowing whether Mark can deliver, the salesman replies, "he says cash." The sales manager informs the salesman, "he just quoted our standard fleet price back to us. Take it, or they'll go to the next dealership. Someone will eventually give it to them anyway. It might as well be us." The salesman and sales manager talk a little longer, but Paula has heard what she needed to. Paula walks quickly back to Mark, and reports what she overheard.

Returning to his office, where Mark, Paula, and Eddie are talking about the service body, the salesman informs Mark, "I'm very surprised, but he took your deal." The salesman shows Mark the invoice, which indicates a price 3 percent higher than the dealership actually paid for the vehicle. The salesman writes up the deal, and gives Mark a copy. Mark tells him that he'll be back later in the afternoon with the money, and that he expects the vehicle to be ready.

Mark, and the rest of the group, walks back to the vehicle, comparing Mark's deal with the sticker price. Mark tells Eddie, "hey, thanks! You got me a good deal!" Looking over Mark's shoulder, Paula is comparing Mark's deal with the sticker price, and exclaims, "wow! Check it out!"

Kathy asks Eddie, "what is all that stuff you said back there anyway?" Eddie explains, "that's how they price vehicles. Angelo told me all about it. Vinnie told me a few things too." Kathy replies, "well, it looked like it worked!" Eddie explains to Kathy, "if it didn't work, we would just walk out. They'd either chase after us, or we'd go to the next Jeep dealership." Kathy and Eddie head out, while Mark and Paula take one last detailed look at the Jeep before they leave.

Later that afternoon, Mark heads back to the dealership with his father and the cash. Mark's father looks over the vehicle, and gives his approval. After all, if Mark is going to be working after he graduates, he has to get to the job site. With graduation about six months away, Mark will be all ready to go to work. And, seeing that Mark got a great deal, Mark's father is considering getting a new Jeep for himself.

After driving his Jeep around for a few days, Mark takes a trip to Vinnie's Body Shop. Vinnie, who immediately recognizes Mark, greets him saying, "hey! It's the Jeep girl's boyfriend!" Mark, sounding a bit like Paula, tells Vinnie, "yeah, that would be me." Vinnie asks, "what's up?" Mark explains to Vinnie, "I bought a Jeep pickup. I want to put a service body on it." Vinnie asks Mark, "is it here?" Mark replies, "yeah. It's outside." Vinnie tells Mark, "let's go and take a look at it."

Vinnie and Mark go outside, and Vinnie looks over the Jeep. Recognizing that the vehicle is new, Vinnie mentions, “good, it’s new. That will make it a lot easier.” Mark asks, “why?” Vinnie explains, “on older vehicles, it’s sometimes hard to find a service body to fit. With a newer vehicle, you have a lot more choices.”

Vinnie and Mark go back inside, where Vinnie shows Mark a catalog of service bodies. Vinnie asks Mark, “do you need a crane to go with it?” Thinking about it, Mark replies, “no. But, I’ll have a lot of tools, and I’ll need to carry stuff.” After learning what Mark will be using the truck for, Vinnie recommends a service body that preserves the use of the bed, although the bed will be narrower, while having several side compartments to store Mark’s tools. Vinnie also points out an option that will allow Mark to carry longer items above the service body and cab. Mark decides to go with the one that Vinnie recommends. Vinnie tells Mark that he will order it, and it will take a week or two to get it. The good news is that, once the service body arrives, it will only take Vinnie a day or two to install it.

A few weeks later, on a Saturday morning, Eddie and Kathy are sitting by Kathy’s pool. The weather, however, is now too cold to swim. Mark and Paula will be over soon, and then they will all go out for their Saturday lunchtime pizza. While they are waiting, Kathy tells Eddie, “hey, we’re doing time trials next week in track practice. I told the coach a few weeks ago that you and Mark are faster than anyone on his team.” Eddie replies, “really? Are they slow?” Kathy replies, “I think some of them are fast. But, that’s why we’re doing time trials next week. So, now I’m wondering if you and Mark are faster than they are.”

Somewhat suspicious that there is more to the story, Eddie tells Kathy, “okay, spill the beans. I know you. There’s more to this story.” Kathy asks, “what makes you think there’s more to this story?” Eddie replies, “well, part of it is that you are asking that question.” Kathy confesses, “well, he did sort of mention that, if you guys are that fast, that I should invite you to the time trials.” Eddie asks, “and?” Kathy replies, “well, I sort of told them you’ll come by sometime next week.” Eddie asks, “you ‘sort of told them’?” Kathy replies, “well, okay. I told them you’ll come by.”

Finally getting the big picture, Eddie tells Kathy, “okay, Katarina Karakova, now we’re getting somewhere. When do I show up for time trials?” Kathy replies, “the sprints begin on Monday.” Eddie asks, “what time?” Kathy tells Eddie, “practice starts at 7:00 a.m. And, that’s when we’re supposed to be on the track, not in the locker room.” Wanting to know how he measures up, Eddie tells her, “I’ll be there.”

Mark and Paula arrive, announcing their entrance by the sound of a car horn. Eddie mentions to Kathy, “that’s Mark’s horn.” Kathy asks, “how

do you know?” Eddie replies, “because I’m Eddie, the Mechanic.” Eddie and Kathy walk to the front of the house, and see that Mark has had the service body installed on his Jeep. Seeing the service body, Eddie exclaims, “hey! Check it out! Awesome, dude!” Kathy mentions, “wow! That looks pretty nice.”

Mark asks, “well, what do you think?” Eddie tells Mark, “I like it.” Kathy looks over the service body, telling Mark, “hey! There are a lot of little baby trunks for all our beach stuff!” Mark unlocks and opens one of the compartments, and inside are two beach towels, and some water. Opening another compartment, Mark shows Eddie his set of tire chains and recovery straps. As if that is not enough, Mark opens a few more compartments that contain his tools that he’s acquired over the years. Eddie exclaims, “it looks like you’re all set, bro!” Mark tells Eddie, “now, my dad wants a new Jeep too.”

They all head to the back yard, where Kathy asks Paula, “did you tell Mark about the time trials?” Paula replies, “no, not yet?” Mark asks, “what did you sign me up for this time?” Paula explains, “we’re having time trials next week at track practice, and you’re coming.” Mark asks, “when and where?” Paula replies, “Monday, at 7:00 a.m. sharp, at the University track.” Mark replies, “okay, I’ll be there.”

Almost as an afterthought, Paula tells Mark, “oh, and do I ever have a surprise for you.” Mark asks, “oh yeah? What is it?” Paula replies, “I’m not going to tell you.” Mark asks again, “come on, tell me!” Kathy tells Mark, “forget it. You’ll never get this one out of her.” Mark will just have to wait.

Eddie asks Kathy, “did you hear that, Katarina Karakova?” Kathy replies, “yes I did, Edward Bogenskaya.” Eddie points out, “see that? Paula got right to the point.” Paula laughs, and tells Eddie, “you know Kathy never gets right to the point.” Kathy tells Paula, “yeah, I do. Don’t you remember when I yelled at Mr. Crum last year?” Paula replies, “that’s different.” Kathy answers, “is not.” Paula quickly replies, “is so.” After a few iterations of, “is not,” followed by, “is so,” Kathy asks, “what were we talking about anyway?” Paula replies, “I don’t know. I forgot.”

Eddie reminds everyone what they were talking about, telling them, “we’re going to time trials Monday morning, at 7:00 a.m. sharp, at the University track.” Mark asks, “are the college runners fast?” Paula replies, “it’s really hard to tell. Even though the girls and guys practice together, we run in separate events.” Mark mentions, “this should be fun.” Paula points out, “yeah, and now you can drive there.”

Kathy mentions, “speaking about driving, it’s pizza time.” Eddie asks, “what does driving have to do with pizza?” Paula explains, “nothing.”

Kathy links everything to pizza. I can imagine her in a psychologist's office doing that word association thing. Car-pizza. Christmas-pizza. Pool-pizza. Chicken-pizza." Kathy laughs, and replies, "hey, now! I'm not that bad!"

They all get up, and walk to the front of the house, where they see three vehicles that seat only two. Paula mentions, "hey! I'm the only one with four seats! And my Jeep isn't here!" Kathy mentions, "then, I guess we're driving separate." They head out to get pizza, Mark driving Paula, and Eddie driving Kathy.

On Monday morning, Eddie wakes up early to get to the track on time. When he arrives, he parks next to Kathy's Porsche 914. He waits for a while, and Mark arrives, parking in the same area. Eddie and Mark hang out together, waiting for Kathy and Paula to come out of the locker room.

The college athletes emerge from the arena, heading toward the track en masse. Seeing Kathy and Paula walking out with Barbara, Eddie and Mark head out to the track together, meeting up with the girls. Eddie comments, "so, this is college." Kathy kisses Eddie, telling him, "yeah, buddy! This is the big time!" Eddie mentions, "hmm, the big time? I ran on that track when I was a freshman." Kathy bumps Eddie's hip, and tells him, "yeah! Those were good times."

The head coach, Dr. Braun, walks out, along with the distance coach, Dr. Paxton. Seeing the coaches walking out to the track, the distance runners head over to one bench, and the sprinters head over to another bench. Miss Herndon, the sprinting coach, and Mrs. Owens, the events coordinator and team statistician, walk out next. Kathy tells Eddie, "they work almost the same way here as we did in high school. It must be some sort of standard way of doing things." Last to walk out is Dr. Bonamo, the field events coach.

Coach Herndon, the sprinter's coach, announces to the sprinters, "listen up. The 100-yard dash time trials are up first. Everyone is running, and you must, and I repeat, you must run your best today." Seeing Eddie and Mark, Coach Herndon asks, "okay, who are you guys?" Kathy tells her coach, "that's Eddie and Mark. They're the guys we were telling you about." Coach Herndon announces, "okay, these guys are seniors from another school, and they're visiting with us today. We'll let our guests run first. Does anyone want to run against them?" A few of the fastest upperclassmen volunteer, and Coach Herndon tells them they will be in the first heat.

Eddie's and Mark's adrenaline levels rise. They will be running against the fastest guys on the University team. Wasting no time, Coach Herndon tells the six runners in the first heat to get warmed up and ready. At the

other end of the track are six student assistants, who are the Timekeepers.

Kathy asks Eddie, "are you ready for this?" Eddie tells Kathy, "for some reason, I'm more fired up now than when I run in my meets." That is, perhaps, because today's race might involve some real competition. These guys are in college. Compared with high school, college athletes demonstrate a much higher level of proficiency. The other runners line the sprinting track, and will watch closely as the race gets underway. Coach Herndon heads to the finish line, wanting a good view of the finish.

Eddie and Mark set their blocks, as the competition checks out the visitors from another school. Eddie whispers to Mark, "hey. Check out the lug nut in the running boots and heavy socks." Mark replies, "maybe cement shoes are the standard team issue around here." The runner Eddie was singling out is wearing heavy sneakers, and socks up to his knees, not exactly normal attire for a sprinter.

One of the upperclassmen whispers to another, "let's show them." Eddie and Mark know exactly what that means. These guys are serious. Not intimidated, Mark offers up some psychological warfare, asking Eddie, "do you think you can break ten?" Eddie replies, "I don't know. I was lazy this Summer." One of the University sprinters takes notice of Eddie's and Mark's comments, and grins.

The Starter announces, "on your marks." The runners get into the blocks, waiting for the signal. The Starter announces, "set." The Starter fires the gun, and jogs backward to get a better view of the finish. At 25 yards into the race, Kathy jumps up and down because Eddie is in front. Mark is right there with him. Knowing that he is up against much better competition, Eddie pushes it harder than he ever has. A few steps behind Eddie, Mark is doing the same. Halfway through the race, Eddie is clearly in the lead. With the visitors way ahead of her runners, Coach Herndon cannot believe what she is seeing. Knowing that he must deliver a good time, Eddie keeps pushing it. At the finish line, Eddie takes first place, and Mark takes second place. The best of the upperclassmen finish about eight yards behind Mark.

Coach Herndon walks up, and receives a report from one of the Timekeepers. Kathy runs to the finish line, wanting to know how Eddie did. Coach Herndon asks Eddie, "okay, which one are you?" Eddie replies, "Eddie." As if there is nothing special about Eddie's run, Coach Herndon announces, "Eddie, 9.3 seconds. Mark, 9.5 seconds. Now, for our team. Leggett, 9.9 seconds, Carrington, 10.1 seconds. And, I'll spare the rest of you the embarrassment and not announce your times." With her last statement, the coach caused more embarrassment than if she announced the apparently deficient times.

Eddie asks Kathy, "is she for real?" Kathy replies, "yeah. She's for real all right! She doesn't make stuff up. But, Eddie! You ran a 9.3!" Mark tells Eddie, "wow! I don't think I've ever run that fast." Kathy and Paula give Eddie and Mark high-fives, congratulating them on their awesome run.

Wondering about Coach Herndon, Eddie asks Kathy, "what's up with her anyway?" Kathy explains, "she's military. She runs the ROTC program around here. She comes across strong, but she's really nice." Mark sarcastically mentions, "I would have never guessed." Kathy tells Eddie and Mark, "you guys could have broken the world record, and she would have acted as if nothing unusual happened."

Dr. Braun, the head coach, walks up and asks Coach Herndon, "so, how did our visitors measure up?" Coach Herndon replies, "they kicked the shit out of Leggett. And, I'm about to find out what Kathy and Paula can do." Coach Herndon announces to the team, "the next heat, get behind the blocks!" Focusing her attention back to Dr. Braun, Coach Herndon tells him, "they ran a 9.3 and 9.5. I had my doubts about what Kathy told me. Not anymore."

While the other heats are underway, Dr. Braun tells Eddie and Mark, "I heard you guys had an awesome run. I am very impressed with your times." Eddie tells him, "thank you, sir." Dr. Braun asks, "and, you're both seniors?" Eddie replies, "yeah." Dr. Braun asks, "at which college?" Apparently, Kathy mentioned to Coach Herndon that her boyfriend is a senior. She forgot to mention to her coach the little detail that Eddie is a senior in high school. Correcting Dr. Braun, Eddie informs him, "we're seniors in high school." Dr. Braun exclaims, "what! Are you kidding me?" Mark informs the coach, "we go to Northside High School." Seeing that Coach Herndon is between heats, Dr. Braun yells out, "Coach Herndon, please come here for a second!"

Coach Herndon jogs over, and asks, "what's up, sir?" Dr. Braun asks, "did you know these guys are seniors?" Coach Herndon replies, "yes, sir. Kathy and Paula told me their boyfriends were seniors." Dr. Braun asks Coach Herndon, "what would you say if I told you they're seniors in high school?" After a few seconds of silence, Coach Herndon looks at Mark, and then Eddie, and says, "wow! When Kathy and Paula said they were seniors, I assumed college. I had no idea. And, here I was, secretly hoping that we don't run against their college this season." Dr. Braun tells Coach Herndon, "don't feel bad. I made the same assumption myself."

Dr. Braun asks Eddie and Mark, "can you guys hang around to run a 440?" Eddie replies, "sure. That would be fun." Dr. Braun tells Coach Herndon, "run the 440-yard dash next. I want to see this for myself." The

440-yard dash separates the men from the boys. It is perhaps the most demanding sprint in track. Eddie asks, “can I run with Kathy?” Coach Herndon replies, “you got it.” Eddie knows that, if he is in the race with Kathy, she will run a better time.

Once the 100-yard dash time trials are completed, the time to run the 440-yard dash comes. Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula will be running in the first heat. Paula begs Coach Herndon to put a certain runner in the same heat as them. The coach agrees, as the runners approach the starting blocks. Eddie and Mark are very familiar with this track. They have both won numerous gold medals in this stadium before. Today, though, it seems as if much more is at stake.

As they are approaching the starting line, Paula asks Mark, “are you ready for your surprise?” Mark replies, “oh, yeah. I almost forgot about that. What’s my surprise?” Paula waves for Eddie to come closer, and whispers to Mark and Eddie, “do you see the guy in the number 20 shirt?” Mark replies, “yeah.” Paula informs Mark, “that’s Scott McCutchen. He’s Todd McCutchen’s older brother.” Mark exclaims, “wow! You ain’t shittin’ me, are you?” Kathy assures Mark, “she’s not. There’s another McCutchen out there. He’s a junior.” Eddie laughs, and asks Mark, “so, you’re up against another McCutchen. Are you going to mess with him?” Mark replies, “yeah. I’ll just tell him my name. He’ll mess with his own head after that.”

They get to the blocks, and Coach Herndon announces, “we’re letting our guests today run in the first heat with Kathy, Paula, McCutchen, and Leggett. And, when the race is over, I have a surprise for all of you.” Mark comments, “wow! Two surprises in one day.”

Mark, hearing the name McCutchen, asks the guy in the number 20 shirt, “hey, so you’re McCutchen?” McCutchen replies, “yeah. That’s me.” Mark tells McCutchen, “it’s nice to meet you. I’m Mark Svoboda. Do you have a brother who runs for Centerville?” McCutchen replies, “yeah. Oh, so you’re that guy, Mark?” Mark replies, “yeah,” and pointing to Eddie, adds, “and, this is Eddie.” McCutchen is now the only runner around that knows Mark and Eddie are in high school. Everyone else still thinks they are in college.

The coach allows the guests to have the inside lanes. For this race, Coach Herndon, herself, announces, “on your marks.” The runners get into the blocks. Mark looks over at McCutchen, and smiles. McCutchen has heard a lot about Mark from his younger brother. Instead of focusing on the race, McCutchen is focused on Mark and Eddie. Coach Herndon announces, “set.” She fires the gun, and the runners are out of the blocks. Eddie and Mark are not messing around today. Not losing a race in years, they are not about to start now.

After the first 110 yards, Eddie is in the lead. Mark is not about to let Eddie steal the entire show. Kathy and Paula, running with Eddie and Mark, appear to be running faster than ever. McCutchen, like his younger brother, keeps glancing over at Mark during the race instead of focusing on his own performance. Halfway through the race, Eddie is in the lead. Mark is in second place. Kathy and Paula, who have much more at stake, are tied for third place. Kathy and Paula are used to chasing Eddie and Mark on the track.

During the latter half of the race, Kathy feels she is falling behind because Eddie is farther in front than he usually is. Kathy runs even faster, giving it all that she has. Paula is not about to let Kathy beat her, so Paula keeps pace with Kathy. On the final straightaway, Eddie leads, with Mark slightly behind. Kathy and Paula fight it out for third place. McCutchen, upholding the family tradition, is unfortunately in last place.

At the finish line, Eddie takes first place, Mark takes second place, and Kathy edges Paula out by inches for third place. But, Kathy and Paula have not lost this race. They just came in first and second place, for Eddie and Mark are not on their University team.

Coach Herndon gets the compiled times from one of the Timekeepers. Dr. Braun peeks at the times before Coach Herndon makes the announcement. Coach Herndon announces, "everyone, listen carefully. Here are the times. One of our visitors today, Eddie, who is a senior, ran a 47.1! Mark, our other visitor, who is also a senior, ran a 47.5! Kathy, you ran a 54.4 and Paula, you also ran a 54.4. Leggett, you ran a 58.3, and McCutchen, a 59.1." Eddie quickly realizes that his times have improved tremendously since he has been stretching. Mark and Paula show the same improvements. It seems to Eddie that the doctor gave him some really good advice.

Coach Herndon asks everyone on her team, "are you ready for your surprise?" A few runners reply, "yeah," but it doesn't matter. They're all getting their surprise anyway. Coach Herndon announces, "here's your surprise. I mentioned earlier that Eddie and Mark are seniors. But, I failed to mention that they are seniors in high school. And, they just beat every single one of you in the 100-yard dash and, now again, in the 440-yard dash!" This is the coach's way of telling the runners they have to try harder. The runners look over at Eddie and Mark who, because of their size, can easily be mistaken for college seniors.

Eddie and Mark have to head off to school. They thank the coaches for letting them run with the team. Dr. Braun tells them to come back anytime, and invites them to the meets. Eddie and Mark will surely be at the meets so that they can watch Kathy and Paula compete. After seeing Eddie's and Mark's performance on the track, it's no secret that Dr. Braun

and Coach Herndon will be questioning Kathy and Paula a little bit more about their boyfriends. Most importantly, Eddie and Mark walk away with much more confidence going into this year's indoor track season.

Arriving at school right before class, Eddie and Mark meet up with the tribe in the school lobby. Everyone seems to be having a good laugh, so Eddie and Mark check out what they are missing out on. Bobby B. tells Eddie, "Braden wrote a Christmas song." Eddie replies, "really?" Mark comments, "this has got to be good." Braden shows Eddie and Mark his composition, which reads,

Little Drummer Boy
My Tribute to the Armed Forces
By Axel Braden, Ass Kicker in Chief

Army, Navy pa rum pum pum pum
Air Force, Marine Corps pa rum pum pum pum
Our finest troops we bring pa rum pum pum pum
The finest arms we bring pa rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum rum pum pum pum

All to kick your ass pa rum pum pum pum
When we come

I don't like you pa rum pum pum pum
You are my enemy pa rum pum pum pum
I'll drop my bombs on you pa rum pum pum pum
I'll launch grenades at you pa rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum rum pum pum pum

Shall I shoot at you pa rum pum pum pum
With my gun

You are dead meat pa rum pum pum pum
You are a sorry ass pa rum pum pum pum
Your ass had better run pa rum pum pum pum
These colors never run pa rum pum pum pum
rum pum pum pum rum pum pum pum

Now I come for you pa rum pum pum pum
Me and my gun

Eddie and Mark join in with the laughter, as they all walk down the hall to class. Eddie and Mark both give Braden a high-five, telling him his creation is awesome. The comic relief is noticed by quite a few students and teachers, all wondering what could possibly be so funny. Among those noticing is Mr. Crum, wondering what the group of track athletes is

up to now. After all, the students are in school, and school is serious business.

Before the Autumn semester is over, the annual high school faculty Christmas party is held in the teacher's lounge. In the past two years, Mr. Crum has been the recipient of a few odd and embarrassing gifts. Firmly believing that Eddie and his friends have something to do with the presents he has been receiving, Mr. Crum has never been able to get to the bottom of it. This year, the mystery Santa strikes again, delivering two very special presents to Mr. Crum.

Mr. Crum opens his first present, finding a Frisbee, on which the word "DISCUS" was professionally embossed in gold lettering. Reminiscent of last year's track season when his leg was struck by an airborne discus, Mr. Crum prefers not to be reminded of that incident. The teachers, also remembering the incident, laugh at the very fitting present. But, as expected, Mr. Crum is not amused. Mr. Crum would obviously prefer to no longer attend the annual Christmas party, but he is the principal. He really has no choice.

While he really doesn't want to open his second present, Mr. Crum is urged on by other members of the faculty to do so. Hoping that something a little more fitting for a high school principal is in the next package, Mr. Crum unwraps the long and narrow box. Inside, underneath the cotton, Mr. Crum is expecting a pendant or piece of jewelry. Mr. Crum removes the cotton, and underneath is a ten-inch long piece of barbed wire, with a well-crafted wooden handle attached to it. The teachers again all laugh, this time hysterically, but Mr. Crum is not the least bit amused.

It's no secret to anyone why Mr. Crum received the gifts that he did this year. Mr. Crum has about had it with the discus. And, Mr. Crum clearly recalls Kathy making mention of barbed wire being shoved up his constipated ass last year. Still fuming that he got struck by an airborne discus last year, Mr. Crum is now sure that the track team, in one way or another, is behind these mystery gifts he has been receiving. Eddie and Kathy appear to be, from Mr. Crum's perspective, the common denominator behind the gifts.

Mr. Crum reminisces about the presents he's received over the last few years. Two years ago, Mr. Crum received a screwdriver set and a bag of marbles. Mr. Crum reasons that Eddie, who wants to be a mechanic, knows all about screwdrivers. And, marbles look like ball bearings. Mr. Crum has not quite figured out that someone was trying to tell him that he has a screw loose, and has lost his marbles.

Eddie's father coined the term 'pussy factory', leading to Mr. Crum's gift of a box of tampons last year. And, Eddie's girlfriend, Kathy, was

behind the clothing controversy last year, leading to Mr. Crum receiving two bras that year. Mr. Crum then thinks about this year's presents, recalling that the track athletes were all laughing hysterically and giving each other high-fives a few days ago in the hallway about something. That about settles it for Mr. Crum. From Mr. Crum's viewpoint, Eddie must be behind the prank presents Mr. Crum has been receiving.

Mr. Crum is not the only one who got an unwanted Christmas present this year. During the last week of classes before Christmas break, Chuckie and Goldstein conspire together to drag Braden across the street and kick the shit out of him off school grounds. The problem is that Chuckie cannot keep his mouth shut, and the word has gotten out that Braden will get his ass kicked after school today. Braden, of course, can't wait to see how this will go down. Neither can half the students in the school who have made plans to attend the event.

The final bell of the day rings, and Mark asks Braden, "are you ready to get your ass kicked, bro?" Braden replies, "let them bring it on! Ain't no one gonna kick my ass!" Eddie comically informs Braden, "I don't know about that, bro. There's two of them and one of you." Braden replies, "that don't matter none! Ain't no one kicking my ass! No, wait. What did I just say? What I meant to say is ain't no two kicking my ass!" As the tribe walks out the front door to the school, Eddie tells Braden, "good luck, bro. We'll be across the street if you need us." Braden walks down the sidewalk as Eddie and the rest of the tribe hang out on the grass, waiting to see what happens.

Mark mentions to Eddie, "it looks like half the school came out to watch the fight." Eddie replies, "I see that. I guess the word really got around." Mitchell mentions, "Mr. Zunde said he's even going to stop by and watch." Mark replies, "that's really kind of funny."

Rushing out of the bushes, Goldstein and Chuckie approach Braden, with Goldstein telling him, "hey! You're coming with us!" Braden laughs, and replies, "and, what if I don't?" Goldstein replies, "yeah. Well, we'll kick your ass. Yeah, yeah. That's coming down anyway. We're kicking your ass." Braden is willingly escorted across the street by Chuckie and Goldstein, where Chuckie and Goldstein plan to get even with Braden once and for all.

Walking up to the tribe, Mr. Zunde asks, "have I missed any of the action?" Eddie replies, "nope. They just rushed out of the bushes, and taking Braden across the street right now." The tribe and Mr. Zunde walk a little closer to the street to get a better view. And, just in case, the tribe can take matters into their own hands should Chuckie and Goldstein have something unexpected up their sleeves.

Across the street, Goldstein tells Braden, "it's time for your ass kicking. Yeah, yeah. I hope you're ready." Braden replies, "you might not want to do that." Chuckie tells Braden, "shut up. Don't tell us what to do." Expecting someone to deliver the first punch, Braden is not surprised when Goldstein shoves Braden in his shoulder. Chuckie quickly steps in and attempts to punch Braden in his mid section, which Braden blocks. The tit for tat session continues for a few minutes, giving Goldstein and Chuckie a false sense of security. Messing with Chuckie and Goldstein for a while, Braden feigns a position of weakness before he lets the hammer down.

Mr. Crum waddles up to Mr. Zunde, exclaiming, "what's going on here?" Mr. Zunde replies, "if I had to guess, I'd say that it appears that Andrew Goldstein and Charles Black are starting a fight with Axel Braden." Mr. Crum exclaims, "aren't you going to break it up?" Mr. Zunde replies, "no. The fight is off school grounds. I just came out here to watch. Perhaps you should call the police." Not wanting the police called out, Mr. Crum yells out to Braden, Chuckie, and Goldstein, "hey, you guys! Break it up! All of you! Get to my office right now!"

Realizing that he now has limited time, Braden hurls Chuckie into a patch of Poison Ivy. Goldstein comes up from behind, and feebly punches Braden in his shoulder. With Chuckie out of commission, Braden lifts Goldstein high into the air, tossing him onto Chuckie as if he were trash. Goldstein yells out, "shit! This shit is Poison Ivy! Yeah. That's what this shit is!" Hearing the news, Braden decides the fight is over, for he does not want to come into contact with two people who have just landed in Poison Ivy.

Across the street from the action, Eddie comments, "it looks like Braden is winning." Now getting angry, Mr. Crum asks Eddie, "what do you have to do with this?" Eddie replies, "nothing, unless Braden is losing. Then, I'll step in and kick the shit out of the Chuckie and Goldshit. But, it looks like Braden is winning."

All of a sudden, Mark exclaims, "well, that didn't exactly go as planned." As Braden steps back, the spectator group watches as a pack of three dogs attack Goldstein and Chuckie. Not wanting to be part of a dog fight, Braden casually walks across the street.

Seeing Braden approach, Eddie yells out, "it looks like you won, bro!" Not caring that Braden won the fight, Mr. Crum exclaims, "someone! Do something!" Mr. Zunde asks, "what would you like us to do?" Mr. Crum yells out, "somebody, call the dog catcher!" Mr. Zunde tells the tribe, "will one of you please go inside and have the secretary call animal control and the paramedics." Johnson replies, "sure. I'll do that." Johnson jogs back

to the school, clearly giving everyone the impression that he could run a lot faster than he is.

Seeing that Goldstein and Chuckie are no match for the dogs, Mr. Zunde walks across the street and, blowing his whistle, quickly gets the dogs attention. Mr. Zunde blows his whistle a second time, and points down the road to the direction from which the dogs came. Obeying Mr. Zunde, the three dogs take a graceful jog down the street wagging their tails, perhaps thinking to themselves that they were glad they could help out Braden.

Mr. Crum angrily asks Mr. Zunde, “how come you didn’t stop the dogs before?” Mr. Zunde replies, “shut up, Crum. Why don’t you go across the street and see how the two students are?” Mr. Crum hastily replies, “I was just going to do that!” Eddie comments with the highly sarcastic, “waiting.” Mr. Crum walks across the street, where he will be more interested in finding out why Braden supposedly started a fight as opposed to the condition of Goldstein and Chuckie.

As Mr. Crum walks through the patch of Poison Ivy and attends to the injured parties, Mr. Zunde asks Braden, “what exactly happened?” Braden explains, “they came out from behind the bushes. Then, they told me that they were gonna kick my ass. So, I let them take me across the street. I didn’t even get started on kicking their asses! Those dogs stepped in and kicked their flimsy asses for me!” Mr. Zunde replies, “dogs sense fear. They knew whose aid to come to and who to go after.” Eddie comments, “it looks like the dogs are smarter than the Chuckie and Goldshit.”

Mr. Zunde tells the group, “well, Mr. Crum seems to have this under control. It looks like it’s time to go home.” As the group heads back toward the school, Mr. Zunde informs the group, “don’t be too surprised if Mr. Crum calls you to his office tomorrow. But, there’s nothing he can do about it. All of this happened off school grounds.” Mark replies, “we’ll be waiting.” Mr. Zunde and the tribe head home for the day, leaving Mr. Crum to clean up the mess.

Oddly, for the rest of the semester, neither Braden nor the rest of the tribe get called to Mr. Crum’s office. Chuckie and Goldstein, all mangled up from the dogfight, are absent from school for a few days. And, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are quite happy not to deal with an irate Mr. Crum right before Christmas break.

With the Autumn semester coming to a close, Kathy and Eddie are looking forward to Christmas break. Kathy’s break is a bit longer than Eddie’s, but she still has track practice five days a week. But, between Christmas and New Year’s Day, the team is given a one-week break.

Kathy and Eddie arrange for their parents to go out for dinner on the Saturday before Christmas. Since Kathy is probably not going to get a pizza until next semester, the Italian restaurant is where everyone will land.

Saturday comes, and Eddie, Kathy, and their parents all meet at the Italian restaurant. When they meet, the parents decide to get typical Italian dishes, whereas Eddie and Kathy decide to split a pizza. Eddie tells his brother John, who will try out for the track team next semester, “you can’t be on the track team unless you eat pizza.” Eddie’s mother tells Eddie, “Eddie, don’t tell him that!” John tells his mother, “but mom, look at them. They’re the fastest in the State. It’s got to be the pizza.” Eddie’s mother relents, telling John, “okay, you can get a pizza, but I don’t want you to eat the whole thing yourself. We’ll take the rest home.” Eddie suggests, “we’ll finish it for him. We don’t want him to run too fast.” The waitress, Arianna, arrives to take their order, and everyone gets what they want.

While they are waiting for the food, Kathy, all bubbly, tells everyone, “I have an announcement to make.” Kathy’s mother asks, “oh? What’s that?” With all attention focused on Kathy, Kathy announces, “Eddie and I are getting married!”

Eddie’s mother, Nina, exclaims, “oh! That is so wonderful! I was hoping this day would come!” Kathy’s mother, Chloë, also exclaims, “that is so great! You two are always so happy together!” Eddie’s and Kathy’s fathers are both also very glad to hear the news. They both see how Kathy and Eddie are always together and having fun.

Kathy tells everyone, “we haven’t set a date yet, but it’s going to be after Eddie graduates.” The announcement is well received by all and, as expected, everyone has lots of questions.

During dinner, John asks Eddie, “hey, can I have your room?” Eddie tells John, “sure. And, you can keep yours too.” John exclaims, “awesome!” John gets around to asking Eddie, “hey, are you taking your weights?” Eddie tells John, “yeah. But, I’ll leave you something even better.” John replies, “cool! What’s that?” Eddie replies, “you can cut the grass and do the yard work. It’s great exercise.” Everyone laughs at Eddie’s comment. John, however, figures he’d better stop while he’s ahead. Eddie’s mother mentions, “Eddie, you’ll have to show your brother how to till and plant the garden this Spring.” John, who just wanted Eddie’s room, gets a little more than he bargained for.

After dinner, everyone wishes each other a merry Christmas. Chloë tells everyone, “I guess we’ll be seeing a lot more of each other!” That is

good news to everyone, since they all enjoy going out to eat together, and attending the track meets with each other.

On the way out, everyone hugs the bride to be. The parents head on home, all very happy to see that Eddie and Kathy are getting married. Eddie and Kathy drive away, wanting to spend some time together.

Eddie and Kathy drive to the park in the town behind the high school. This park has become one of Kathy's favorite places. They walk around for a while, and sit on the sole bench in the park. Eddie tells Kathy, "I got something for you." Kathy asks, "is it a Christmas present?" Eddie replies, "no. That's next week." Kathy asks, "then, what is it?" Catching Kathy by surprise, Eddie takes Kathy's hand, and slides a beautiful engagement ring on her ring finger. Looking at the ring on her finger, Kathy exclaims, "oh, Eddie! It's so beautiful!" Kathy puts her head on Eddie's shoulder, giving Eddie a big hug, crying tears of happiness. Looking at her ring again, Kathy tells Eddie, "I love you so much." Kathy and Eddie hug and embrace each other as a light snow begins to fall.