

Eddie, The Senior Year

Chapter Two Indoor Track Tryouts

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Now that Christmas break is over, it's back to school for Eddie. Kathy still has another week off before school starts, which is really not a week off. Kathy, along with Paula and Barbara, will be at the first day of indoor track tryouts at the high school. They will be returning to their roles as Mr. Frazier's team assistants, just as they were when Eddie and Mark were freshmen. This year they are interns, earning both class credit and a salary to help out with the team.

There is no debate this year whether women are allowed on the men's sports teams. Women are allowed to participate on the men's teams as long as there is not a corresponding woman's team and the sport is not a contact sport. Mr. Zunde, the school's athletic director, has made this quite clear. After a long and heated debate over the previous two years, Mr. Crum, the principal, has finally relented, and is no longer challenging the issue. Mr. Crum has moved on to other methods of disrupting the school's athletic programs.

One of the ways Mr. Crum disrupts the athletic programs is to carefully time his disciplinary action to coincide with tryouts, meets, and divisional competitions. The issue at the end of last semester between Braden and his two adversaries, Chuckie and Goldstein, is no different. On the first day back from Christmas break, during second period, the announcement is made over the loudspeaker, "will Axel Braden, Edward Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Gary Mitchell, Eric Johnson, Robert Bradshaw, Charles Black, and Andrew Goldstein please report to room 103."

In the gym, Mr. Frazier asks Mr. Zunde, "do you know what this is all about?" Mr. Zunde replies, "I suspect it's about the fight between Braden and those two clowns at the end of last semester. I'm going to see what Crum is up to." Mr. Frazier replies, "track tryouts begin tomorrow. We can't afford to have those guys getting suspended." Mr. Zunde tells Mr.

Frazier, "Crum's timing certainly is impeccable." Mr. Frazier replies, "I can't argue with that."

Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier arrive at room 103, seeing Braden and the tribe comfortably seated in the choice seats near the window. Sitting far away, at the other side of the room, is Chuckie and Goldstein, who dare not infringe upon the tribe's territory.

Not seeing that Mr. Crum has arrived yet, Mr. Zunde asks, "okay. Who here kept a library book checked out over Christmas break?" Braden replies, "it couldn't have been those two asses on the other side of the room. Their flimsy asses can't read." Goldstein yells back to Braden, "hey! Shut your ass." Braden laughs, and replies, "what's your fat ass gonna do about it, anyway?" Goldstein yells back, "I'm gonna kick your ass. Yeah, man. You just wait. Yeah, yeah." Braden laughs and replies, "I'll just sic my three guard dogs on your fat asses again."

Mr. Crum briskly walks into the room, exclaiming, "that's enough! Everyone, quiet down! I'm running this meeting!" As expected, three voices coming from the window seats reply, "waiting." Mr. Zunde replies to the tribe's comments, telling Mr. Crum, "so am I. What is this all about?" Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, "I'm running this meeting, not you!" Mr. Zunde replies, "don't let me stop you. Go ahead. Get started." Quietly taking note of Braden's statement regarding dogs, Mr. Crum smiles, knowing he now has more evidence stacked upon the sham evidence he already has.

Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, "this has nothing to do with athletics. So, just why are you two here?" Mr. Zunde replies, "for the same reason we're always here. There are six athletes seated in this classroom. Track tryouts begin tomorrow, so we're making sure you don't suspend any of them, not to mention the free entertainment." Mr. Crum smugly informs Mr. Zunde, "fine. But, remember. I'm running this meeting." Mr. Zunde replies, "don't let me stop you. Go for it."

Johnson asks Mr. Crum, "why are we here, and not in your office?" Before Mr. Crum can answer, Braden replies, "because he ain't got his piece of shit desk that Eddie's father busted up fixed yet." Offering his opinion, Mitchell replies, "he's just afraid a fight will break out in his office, and there's no emergency exit." Johnson tells Mitchell, "it's six of us against two half asses. So that would make it six against one. We won." Shuffling a few papers, Mr. Crum tries to ignore the tribe's commentary, but it is clear that he is getting hot under the collar.

Opening the meeting, Mr. Crum orates, "a very serious incident occurred at the end of last semester after school." Interrupting Mr. Crum, Mark asks, "why am I here?" Mr. Crum yells back at Mark, "please don't

interrupt me again!” Mr. Crum then continues, “as I was saying, at the end of last semester a very serious incident occurred after school. It is my understanding that Axel Braden dragged Charles Black and Andrew Goldstein across the street and started a fight. I called this meeting to get to the bottom of it. I want to know exactly what happened.”

Braden interrupts, insisting, “they’re full of shit. They dragged my ass across the street, and said they were gonna kick my ass.” Addressing Braden, Mr. Crum sarcastically tells him, “since you want to talk, why don’t you go ahead and tell me what happened?” Braden replies, “I just told you what happened. They dragged my ass across the street, and said they were gonna kick my ass. So, I let them take me across the street. Then, I was gonna kick their fat asses, but a dog pack stepped in and kicked their asses for me.” Repeating what Braden said, Mr. Crum eloquently says, “a dog pack stepped in and kicked their asses for you.” Mark tells Mr. Crum, “you shouldn’t be using profanity in school.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “that’s enough! I’m running this meeting, not you! And, I’m asking the questions here! I’ll get to you in a moment!”

Mr. Crum again addresses Braden, telling him, “explain to me why you decided to get involved in a fight.” Braden explains, “they wanted to kick my ass, so I wanted to see what they got. And, they ain’t got much.” Mr. Crum asks Braden, “would you care to explain to me how your three dogs managed to show up at school and join the fight?” Braden replies, “they ain’t my dogs. I don’t know why those dogs showed up. Maybe it was dinner time.” Mr. Crum asks Braden, “so, those three dogs are not your dogs?” Braden replies, “that’s what I said. They ain’t my dogs.” Mr. Crum, trying not to show his anger, asks Braden, “do you really expect me to believe that those dogs were not yours?”

Mark interrupts, telling Mr. Crum, “Braden doesn’t have any dogs.” Mr. Crum asks Mark, “and, just how would you know?” Mark replies, “because I’ve been over at his house a hundred times. He doesn’t have any dogs.” Mr. Zunde suggests to Mr. Crum, “I think we’ve established the fact that Axel Braden does not have a dog. If you still have your doubts, you can call Braden’s parents. I’m sure they can clear up the issue for you. So, let’s move on.”

Not wanting an argument with Mr. Zunde at the moment, Mr. Crum turns to the rest of the tribe, and asks, “and, how were the rest of you involved?” Eddie replies, “we weren’t. We just came by to watch, like everyone else in the school.” Mr. Crum stupidly asks, “do you expect me to believe that?” Sounding a bit like Kathy, Eddie replies, “no. You only believe what you want to believe. So, no. I don’t expect you to believe that, or anything else I say.” Mr. Crum boldly informs Eddie, “if I hear any further remarks like that out of you, I’ll suspend you immediately!” Eddie replies, “that’s your whole goal here anyway. We all know that. In about

fifteen minutes you're going to say, 'I've decided to suspend everyone in this room.' Then, Mr. Zunde is going to tell you that you're not, because the ass kicking was off school grounds."

As Mr. Crum continues to interrogate Eddie and the rest of the tribe, Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "Eddie even has Crum figured out." Mr. Frazier whispers back, "I see that. He's obviously trying to prevent these guys from trying out for the team." Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "that's certainly a new angle. I wonder if Crum thinks that, if the guys can't attend tryouts, they can't be on the team." Mr. Frazier whispers back, "I'm not aware of any rule that prohibits me from putting them on the roster." Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "that's because there is no such rule. And, Crum is going nowhere with this, and he knows it. I'd put an end to this right now, but he hasn't mentioned detention or suspension yet."

Getting nowhere with the tribe after ten more minutes of interrogation, Mr. Crum focuses his attention to Chuckie and Goldstein, asking, "Charles, please tell me what happened." Chuckie replies, "last month, Braden was telling everyone all day that he was going to take us across the street and beat us up. We were scared all day long. And, that's what he did." Goldstein adds, "yeah, yeah. I heard it. I was there. That big guy over there was telling everyone that he was going to kick our ass after school. Yeah. I heard it."

Mr. Zunde interrupts, and asks Goldstein, "may I ask that, if you heard that you were going to be involved in a fight, why you didn't bring it to the administration's attention before hand?" Mr. Crum dare not question Mr. Zunde's motive for asking such a question, for it is the next logical question in the sequence. Goldstein replies, "I really didn't think he was going to do it. Yeah, yeah. That's it. Me and Charles didn't really believe him. Yeah." Braden laughs, exclaiming, "that ain't what happened. Ask anybody in the school!"

Mr. Crum paces the floor, not knowing how to proceed. Drawing no definitive conclusions, Mr. Crum announces, "I don't know what happened out there, but I do know this. Axel Braden was involved in a fight with Charles Black and Andrew Goldstein at the end of last semester. I also suspect that the others in this room were somehow involved. So, I am going to suspend Axel Braden for a period of one week. Charles Black, Andrew Goldstein, and everyone else in this room will get one-week of detention, starting tomorrow."

Braden asks Mr. Crum, "why do I get suspension and those two assholes get detention?" Mr. Crum replies, "because, Axel, it is clear that you instigated the fight." Braden replies, "that's a bunch of bullshit! Ask anybody in the school! And, I'm gonna tell your fat ass this! If you

suspend my ass, next time, I'm gonna drag their flimsy asses so far off school grounds ain't no one gonna hear them scream for help! You might not never find them again!" It is clear to everyone in the room that Braden is now beyond upset, and very angry.

Mr. Zunde steps in, informing Mr. Crum, "Crum, you are not suspending anyone unless it's Charles Black or Andrew Goldstein. If you had done your homework, you would have found out, just as Mr. Frazier and I found out, that Charles Black and Andrew Goldstein were boasting the entire day of the upcoming fight and how they were going to kick Braden's ass. In case you hadn't noticed, half the students in the school showed up to watch the fight, including a few teachers. Many of the students even missed their busses to see the entertainment. I'm surprised the news never made it to your office. And, not to mention, the incident occurred off school grounds, so it was completely out of your jurisdiction." Mr. Crum replies, "nevertheless, Mr. Zunde, the incident began on school grounds." Mr. Zunde replies, "while I understand that, Mr. Crum, I witnessed the entire incident. What I saw was that Andrew Goldstein and Charles Black initiated the fight." Mr. Crum asks, "then, why didn't you stop it?" Mr. Zunde replies, "it was out of my jurisdiction, just like it is out of yours. If the fight were on school grounds during school hours, I might have taken action."

Pacing the floor, Mr. Crum exclaims, "nevertheless, Mr. Zunde, there was a fight, and something has to be done about it!" Mr. Zunde replies, "I completely agree. There were over a hundred witnesses to the altercation. Perhaps you should call the police department and have them begin an investigation. I'm sure they can call all the students and teachers who witnessed the incident to the auditorium and get their statements." Mr. Crum replies, "I don't think we have to go to that extreme!" Mr. Zunde boldly informs Mr. Crum, "then, you're done here. You have no case, and you know it. So, send everyone back to class."

Realizing that he truly has no case, Mr. Crum decrees, "I am not done with my investigation. I am still going to get to the bottom of this. This was just a preliminary meeting to discover what exactly happened. For now, everyone can go back to class. But, I have my eyes on every single one of you."

Mark asks, "if this was a preliminary investigation, then why were you going to send me to detention?" Mr. Crum replies, "I've had enough out of you, already." Mark asks, "does that mean I can leave now?" Mr. Crum brashly replies, "yes! Get out of here. Get back to class." Johnson asks Mr. Crum, "where are our late passes?" Mr. Crum angrily replies, "stop by the office and pick them up." The tribe gets up and walks out, heading back to class.

On the way back to the gym, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, "I don't know exactly what he thought he was doing back there, but he's obviously after everyone this year." Mr. Frazier replies, "I see that. This is going to be a really rough season." Mr. Zunde responds, "this is the third time those two clowns have been after our guys. Something's up." Mr. Frazier replies, "hopefully, this is the end of it for a while." Neither Mr. Frazier nor Mr. Zunde believes this is the end of the trouble for this year, but they are nevertheless hopeful.

As the second school day of the Winter semester comes to an end, tryouts for the Winter sports begin. Those trying out for a team head to the locker rooms. The upperclassmen know the all too familiar drill. The freshmen, on the other hand, have no clue what to expect.

As the guys are getting dressed, Mr. Zunde makes his usual announcement, shouting out into the locker room, "listen carefully. Basketball tryouts will be in the main gym. Wrestling tryouts are in the auxiliary gym. If you are trying out for indoor track, please meet in the hallway right outside the locker room. If you are trying out for golf, please bring your balls and your shafts back in the Spring." Mr. Zunde, for some reason, is not a fan of golf.

Eddie and the tribe all congregate together in the hallway. This year, they are joined by Eddie's younger brother, John. Like Eddie, John is a sprinter. Also, like Eddie, John was the fastest guy in middle school. Hiding around the corner is Jimmy O'Brien, Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, who will all be trying out for the track team this year.

Looking at the seniors, many of the freshmen are already discouraged. Braden, however, lifts everyone's spirits and gets the energy level up by telling everyone, "we're going to have a kick ass season! It looks like we got a lot of good men here today! And, some good women too!"

Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde walk down the hallway together. With them are Kathy, Paula, Barbara, and Wendy. Seeing the vast number of students trying out for the team, Mr. Frazier mentions to the girls, "I'm really glad to have you all back this year. I'm going to need a lot of help sorting through all of this." Now that the team assistants are back, Mr. Zunde can immediately begin working with the field athletes.

Mr. Frazier announces, "this is the meeting place for indoor track. If you are not trying out for track, you are in the wrong place." Mr. Frazier instructs the crowd to follow him, as he walks down the hallway to the unmarked door leading to the indoor arena. The upperclassmen know exactly what is behind this door but, to many of the freshmen, it will be a surprise. Mr. Frazier opens the door, and the group heads down the metal stairway.

Behind the door is a very wide and open steel staircase, which goes to the basement of the school. Underneath the classrooms is a full-sized 220-yard indoor track. On one side of the 220-yard oval track is a long track for the sprinting events. In the center of the oval track is an area for the high jump and shot-put events. To either side of the track are bleachers for spectators. And, at the corners of the expansive arena are benches that can accommodate up to four competing teams.

Mr. Frazier tells the athletes to have a seat on the bleachers. Standing with Mr. Zunde and his team assistants, Mr. Frazier announces, "welcome to tryouts for indoor track. I am Mr. Frazier, the head coach. Standing next to me is Mr. Zunde, the school's athletic director. Also standing next to me are Barbara, Kathy, and Paula, who are the assistant coaches. And, to my far right is Wendy, our equipment manager and team assistant." Mr. Frazier then makes the surprise announcement, "if you are willing to settle for second place, please head to the locker room, get dressed, and go home." That announcement comes as a shock to many of the freshmen.

Mr. Frazier continues, "if you are trying out for a field event, Mr. Zunde will be your coach today. Please follow him now." The field athletes follow Mr. Zunde to a corner on the other side of the arena. Bobby B, the shot doc, leads the group, following Mr. Zunde. Also among the field athletes is Chuckie, who apparently has been working on his shot-put skills over the last year.

Mr. Frazier continues, "if you are a distance runner, Barbara, my assistant coach, will be your coach today. Wendy will be working with her. Please follow them to the other side of the arena now." Mr. Frazier waits a moment as the distance runners walk to the other side of the arena. Mitchell, walking with Barbara, is the school's five-star miler, and is expected to take the gold medal in the State invitational meet this year. Akinmola, however, also wants that gold medal. In the best scenario, one of them will have to settle for the silver medal.

Mr. Frazier continues, "if you are a sprinter, Kathy and Paula will be your coach today." Mr. Frazier then raises his voice, and announces, "and, if your name is Jimmy O'Brien, head to the locker room! Now! You are cut!" The upperclassmen, who have been through tryouts with O'Brien before, all laugh. O'Brien leaves, passing by Braden on his way out. As O'Brien walks by, Braden comments, "it's for your own safety, junior." O'Brien heads up the staircase, wondering why he was yet again denied a chance to try out for the team this year. Mr. Frazier continues, "now that we got rid of that problem, Kathy and Paula will arrange a few exercises so that you may demonstrate your skill." Exercises, in this case, will mean running the 40-yard dash and the 440-yard dash time trials.

Mr. Frazier tells Kathy and Paula to time Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson in the 40-yard dash in the first heat, and Tessa, Erika, Hoffer, and John, Eddie's younger brother, in the second heat. Mr. Frazier is curious to see how fast his core sprinters are this year. Mr. Frazier explains to Kathy and Paula that, after the 40-yard dash heats are completed, the mile should also be finished. To trim the field down faster, Mr. Frazier instructs his team assistants to organize the 440-yard dash after the 40-yard dash, immediately cutting anyone who cannot run faster than 70 seconds. Although 70 seconds is not at all a competitive time, Mr. Frazier might discover the slower sprinters may have some other skill, such as being better at distance races.

Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson get on the track, and set their blocks. The other sprinting candidates sit on the bleachers, and will be watching what is expected of them. With the experienced runners not needing any instruction, Mr. Frazier announces, "on your marks." He then announces, "set." Once everyone is in the "set" position, the buzzer sounds. In the first few steps, the runners go from zero to twenty miles per hour faster than an automobile. Eddie, who has been focusing on stretching, takes a very early lead. Mark, Braden, and Johnson are tied at twenty yards. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, Mark second, with Braden and Johnson tied for third place.

Mr. Frazier impatiently asks, "what did you clock them at? What do we got on the clock?" All excited, Kathy replies, "Eddie at 4.5 seconds, and Braden at 4.7 seconds." Paula replies, "Mark got 4.6, and I also got 4.7 for Johnson." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "this is what I expect! Those are awesome times!" Mr. Frazier already knows these four runners are unbeatable. He just wanted to see where they stood this year. And, this is tryouts. The times delivered by any runner during an actual meet are generally faster.

Hoffer, Tessa, Erika, and John get on the track next, clearly demonstrating that they all have been behind the blocks before. Mr. Frazier announces, "on your marks." Once they appear ready, he announces, "set." Once everyone is in the "set" position, the buzzer sounds. Ten yards into the race, the runners are tied. At 20 yards, no one has yet broken from the pack. At 30 yards, John takes a slight lead. Crossing the finish line first is John, followed by Hoffer, Tessa, and Erika. It appears the rivals Erika and Tessa tied this time.

Even more impatient than before, Mr. Frazier asks, "what's on the clock? What do we got? What do we got?" Kathy replies, "John at 5.0 seconds and Erika at 5.2 seconds." Paula replies, "Hoffer at 5.1 seconds, and Tessa at 5.2 seconds." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "can you believe it? Look at these times this year!" One freshman in the bleachers was heard commenting, "well, two of them are girls. We can beat them." They will

likely learn otherwise very shortly. But, for now, Mr. Frazier is satisfied with his core sprinters.

Once the mile is over, and the rest of the 40-yard dash heats have been completed, it's time to run the 440-yard dash. The 440-yard dash is Braden's race. He is not about to let anyone beat him.

Kathy instructs the sprinters to form groups of six, preferably with athletes of their own skill level. Kathy instructs Braden, Eddie, Mark, Johnson, Hoffer, and John to run in the first heat. These six runners were among those with the fastest 40-yard dash times. Since this is Braden's race, and he can easily run a sub-50 second time, he is assigned the inside lane. Unknown to Braden and Mr. Frazier, Eddie can also now run a sub-50 second quarter mile, and so can Mark and Johnson. And, so can Mitchell.

Braden, all fired up, exclaims, "now, it's down to business! It's ass kicking time! Ain't no one beating me this year! All the gold medals are mine!" One freshman comments, asking, "who is that guy?" Braden, overhearing the comment, repeatedly points to his chest, exclaiming, "I'm the chief ass kicker around here, and I have the medals to prove it!" Braden is not bashful before a race. His pre-race rants get his adrenaline up, leading to a better race.

Kathy announces to those watching the race, "Braden, in lane one, took the gold medal at State last year in this event. Pay close attention to him. And, by the way, this race will be more competitive than the 440-yard dash was at State last year." The other sprinters, standing with their groups on the inside of the track, will have an excellent view of how this race is run. For the benefit of those who may not know, Kathy announces, "this is a two-lap race. The way the blocks are set, the runners must stay in their lanes for the entire race."

Kathy announces, "on your marks." Paula mentions to the spectators, "pay close attention to the runners when they get in the 'set' position, and how they are focused." Kathy announces, "set." The runners are set, and are ready to go. The buzzer sounds, and the runners are out of the blocks.

The six star athletes all have an awesome start. Five steps into the race, quite unexpectedly, Braden suddenly falls to the ground, and goes down hard. Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, stopping the race. Silence comes over the arena, as Mr. Frazier, Kathy, and Paula rush over to aid Braden to find out what's wrong. Braden is very slow to get up, but manages well. Wendy, seeing what happened, runs over from where the distance group is seated to help Braden.

Expressing great concern, Mr. Frazier asks Braden, “what happened?” Braden stands up, albeit slowly, exclaiming, “somebody tripped me! Somebody stuck their foot out and tripped me!” Looking around for the perpetrator, Braden is exceedingly angry.

Turning to the crowd, Mr. Frazier asks, in a very loud and demanding tone, “who tripped him?” All fingers point to Andrew Goldstein, but Braden already knew that. Mr. Frazier approaches Goldstein and yells, “did you trip him?” Goldstein arrogantly replies, “yeah, yeah. I didn’t like mean it or anything. It was an accident. Yeah, yeah, that’s what it was. An accident.” Mr. Frazier, yelling at the top of his voice, exclaims, “what did you do that for?” Goldstein, acting cool and nonchalant, replies, “paybacks. Yeah, yeah, paybacks.” A lot of chatter among the athletes can be heard about what just happened. And, as usual, Goldstein makes no sense at all.

As Mr. Frazier is verbally having it out with Goldstein, Braden has reasonably recovered from his fall. Everyone in the arena suddenly gets very quiet as Braden approaches Goldstein. Braden knows exactly who tripped him. He was there, and he saw Goldstein’s foot intentionally step out. Braden grabs Goldstein by the arm, places his right arm in an arm lock, and drags him away from Mr. Frazier. Braden tells Goldstein, “you shouldn’t have done that.” Silence now comes over the arena to the extent that you can hear a pin drop. Mark whispers to Eddie, “let’s get a good seat. This is going to be good.” They quickly move closer to watch what is about to come down.

Braden forces Goldstein’s arm, which is still in an arm lock, over Goldstein’s head, twisting it into a position it was never meant to move in. A loud pop comes from Goldstein’s shoulder, as he screams out in pain, which echoes throughout the arena. Braden turns Goldstein around, and the two adversaries are now face to face. With a right uppercut, Braden solidly connects with Goldstein’s left jaw, which makes a very loud cracking sound, followed rapidly by a left cross punch to the right side of Goldstein’s face. Goldstein falls to the ground, and lays motionless. With an elapsed time of approximately fifteen seconds, Goldstein is knocked out and taken out of commission. Braden walks away, and sits on the bleachers.

As if that incident wasn’t enough, watching the event from the steel staircase is Mr. O’Brien and his son, Jimmy. Mr. O’Brien asks Jimmy, “so, is this what always goes on during track practice?” Jimmy responds, “yeah. And, that’s Axel Braden. He’s the same guy who ran me over on the track last year.” Mr. O’Brien tells Jimmy, “he looks like a real bully. We should go and get Mr. Crum.” Mr. O’Brien and Jimmy walk back up the staircase, and head straight to the principal’s office.

Barbara, who is trained in CPR, and the unofficial team paramedic, walks over to Goldstein. She finds Goldstein is breathing and has a pulse, so she lets him lay there. Barbara walks over and tells Mr. Frazier, “well, the good news is he’s still alive. But, he smells like he’s been smoking pot. It’s pretty strong.” Mr. Frazier asks, “are you sure?” Barbara replies, “yeah. I’m 100 percent sure.” Mr. Frazier throws his arms in the air, and exclaims, “here we go again! What else can go wrong?”

Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde walk over to Goldstein, who is still motionless. Mr. Zunde, who saw the takedown, mentions to Mr. Frazier, “it looks like he broke his jaw and dislocated his shoulder when he fell. The jaw is usually in the center of the face, not off to the side like that. And, the arm doesn’t usually move into that position as far as I know. I suspect he’s out for the rest of the season.” Mr. Zunde has little intolerance for stupidity, and quite an unusual sense of humor, explaining his verbal assessment of the situation.

Mr. Frazier tells Paula to call for an ambulance and the police, the latter because drugs are suspected to be involved. Mr. Zunde, who saw the fight, but not the events leading up to it, asks, “what exactly happened?” Mr. Frazier, who is quite angry, explains, “whoever that guy is laying on the floor tripped Braden a few steps into the race! Braden went down hard.” Mr. Zunde asks, “he tripped him? Intentionally?” Mr. Frazier replies, “yeah. It looks like it was intentional. The guy even admitted it.”

From the bleachers, Braden stands up and exclaims, “yeah, it was intentional! I saw that asshole stick his foot out! And, so I kicked his ass! I should just go over there now and break his legs so he won’t do that to nobody else!” Mr. Zunde asks Braden, “you saw it?” Braden exclaims, “yeah! I saw it! And, I had no time to react.” With several runners seeing Goldstein intentionally trip Braden, Goldstein admitting that he tripped Braden, Goldstein admitting that it was a payback, and Braden seeing Goldstein’s foot step out to intentionally trip him, Goldstein has little defense.

Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, “I don’t quite recognize him. Who is he?” Mr. Frazier replies, “I recognize him from gym class, but don’t recall his name. If I remember correctly, he’s one of the guys that tried to kick the shit out of Braden at the end of last semester.” Mr. Frazier then yells out, “does anyone know who that guy is?” Chuckie, who is trying out for the shot-put today, replies, “yeah. That’s Andy Goldstein.” Mr. Zunde, who remembers Chuckie from last year from the incident with Erika, asks, “is he your friend?” Chuckie replies, “yeah.” Mr. Zunde tells Chuckie, “you’re cut! Head to the locker room now. Get out of here. Now.” Chuckie asks, “why?” Mr. Zunde replies, “if he’s your friend, you’re probably next. Get out of here. Now!”

Chuckie heads to the locker room, passing by Goldstein. Great fear comes over Chuckie as he sees Goldstein laying motionless on the floor. It's hard not to notice that Goldstein's right arm and jaw are no longer in their normal anatomical positions. Chuckie watched, as Goldstein was on the business end of Braden's fifteen-second ass kicking. All of a sudden, Chuckie realizes how fortunate he was to be belted to the fence by Eddie. Chuckie reasons to himself that, if Braden can do this to Goldstein in only fifteen seconds, what could Eddie do? After all, Eddie is stronger than Braden, and Chuckie is quite weak in comparison to Goldstein.

The paramedics arrive, and are directed to Goldstein. While Goldstein is attended to, two police officers walk down the staircase. Mr. Zunde greets the police, explains to them what happened, and then tells them, "we suspect that drugs are involved. You may want to check it out." The senior officer, Officer Richard Hayes, asks, "what makes you think drugs are involved?" Mr. Zunde tells the officer, "follow me."

Mr. Zunde and Officer Hayes walk over to Goldstein. The officer can smell the essence of marijuana on Goldstein. The officer tells Mr. Zunde, "I see what you mean. I can't argue with that." Mr. Zunde tells the officer, "his name is Goldstein or something." The officer mentions, "yeah, Andrew Goldstein. We've known about this character for years. So, this is where the judge sent him. And, seeing what we have here, we'll be back in the morning with a warrant to search his locker." Mr. Zunde then directs the officer to Mr. Frazier.

Officer Hayes asks Mr. Frazier, "so, what happened to him?" Mr. Frazier answers, "he tripped one of my runners during a race. When the runner got up, he kicked the shit out of him." The officer asks, "so, let me get this straight. Goldstein intentionally tripped the runner during a race?" Mr. Frazier replies, "that's what I hear." The officer asks, "did anyone see it?" Mr. Frazier replies, "yes. Everyone in the area pointed to him. They all saw the same thing." The officer gets everyone together, and takes the names of the witnesses for his report.

Braden, still sitting alone on the bleachers, is watching what is going on. Officer Hayes, accompanied by Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, approaches Braden. Braden thinks to himself that he is now in big trouble. Officer Hayes asks Braden, "are you Axel Braden?" Braden replies, "yeah." The officer tells Braden, "tell me what happened." Braden answers, "I was running the 440. That guy stuck his foot out and tripped me, and I fell. I barely made it ten yards before he tripped me." The officer asks, "and, then what happened?" Knowing where this is going, Braden replies, "then, I kicked his ass." Hearing all the evidence, the officer asks Braden, "do you want me to make an arrest?" Misunderstanding the officers question, Braden exclaims, "I don't want to get arrested!" Clarifying his question,

the officer asks, “no, no, no. Do you want me to arrest this Goldstein character?”

Officer Hayes sees that everyone is confused, so he has Braden, and the key witnesses, sit on the bleachers. The officer explains to the group, “if this Goldstein character intentionally tripped a runner on the track, that would be considered assault. Assault is defined as any unwanted touch, especially when it is intended to cause physical harm or injury to another person. The key word here is ‘intentional’. If what happened on the track were an accident, that would be a different story. As another example, if a football player gets tackled and suffers a severe injury, that cannot be considered assault since it is an inherent risk of the game. Let me be very clear about this. ‘Intent to cause physical injury’ is the key phrase. Intentionally tripping someone running on the track falls into that category.”

Turning to Braden, Officer Hayes explains, “to be clear, this Goldstein character assaulted you when he intentionally tripped you. For that, he can be arrested. If you like, I can make an arrest right now.” Braden tells the officer, “I don’t know. I’d better talk to my dad about this one.” Reassuring Braden, the officer tells him, “you don’t have to decide today. In this State, you have two years to decide to press charges.” Turning his attention again to Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, Officer Hayes informs them, “and, to be clear, if we find anything in his locker, we’ll arrest him.” The officers seem like they already know what is in Goldstein’s locker.

Braden is greatly relieved that he is not in trouble. But, a different sort of trouble is now walking down the steel staircase. Mr. Crum, Mr. O’Brien and his son, Jimmy, approach Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, who are still talking to the police officers. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “there are no overdue library books down here. You can leave now.” Mr. Crum announces, “I hear Axel Braden started a fight.” Setting the record straight, Mr. Frazier replies, “Axel Braden did not start a fight.” Mr. Crum tells Mr. Frazier, “that’s not what I hear. Mr. O’Brien, here, said that he saw it!” Chronically perturbed at Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Frazier replies, “Mr. O’Brien only sees what he wants to see.”

Officer Hayes interrupts the conversation, asking Mr. Crum, “and, who are you?” Bothered by the questioning of his authority, Mr. Crum brashly replies, “I’m Mr. Crum, the principal of this school.” The officer explains to Mr. Crum, “we have this under control. This Andrew Goldstein character is reported to have intentionally tripped a runner during a race. In our book, that is called assault. We’re taking care of it. But, you have another problem. There is a serious drug problem in this school. Andrew Goldstein, who is a known drug dealer, is apparently intoxicated with drugs. We’ll be back in the morning with a warrant to search his locker, and I suggest that no one tamper with any potential evidence.”

Not knowing how to respond, Mr. Crum replies, “did Axel Braden start a fight?” The officer firmly answers, “it doesn’t matter. He was assaulted. Anything that immediately follows an assault is considered justifiable self defense.”

Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “Crum, get out of my arena. If you would have done your job and monitor the school grounds for students smoking dope, this would not have happened.” Angered by Mr. Zunde’s remark, Mr. Crum exclaims, “you can’t talk to me that way!” Countering Mr. Crum’s claim, Mr. Zunde replies, “I just did, so apparently I am perfectly capable of talking to you that way. Get out of my arena, Crum. This has been taken care of.” Mr. Zunde’s comments clearly let the officers know who is in charge.

The police officers and paramedics leave, taking Goldstein away in a bus¹. Mr. Frazier tells everyone to get back to tryouts. Mr. Zunde finally gets rid of Mr. Crum, at least for now. Mr. Zunde again rejoins the field athletes, who have been practicing for a while on their own. Mr. O’Brien, however, does not leave that quickly. Mr. O’Brien is beside himself that Jimmy was not allowed to try out for the track team.

Mr. O’Brien boldly asks Mr. Frazier, “why wasn’t Jimmy allowed to try out for the team?” Mr. Frazier replies, “because he’s too dangerous on the track. I cut him. It’s for his own good.” Mr. O’Brien asks, “do you really think that’s fair?” Losing his patience with Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Frazier replies, “look. Jimmy presents a danger to himself and the other runners. Don’t you remember what happened last year? Jimmy stepped onto the track and caused a collision. I can’t have that, or you interfering with my team, like you did last year. He’s cut. So, both of you, go home.”

Not taking “no” for an answer, Mr. O’Brien raises his voice, telling Mr. Frazier, “I demand that Jimmy is given the opportunity to try out for the team!” Mr. Frazier replies, “and, just who appointed your scrawny little ass coach?” Mr. O’Brien replies, “now, that was uncalled for.” Mr. Frazier, knowing that Jimmy does not have what it takes to make the team, tells Mr. O’Brien, “okay. Have it your way then.”

Having enough of Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, and yells out, “who wants to kick Jimmy O’Brien’s ass?” Mr. O’Brien tells the coach, “now, that wasn’t very nice, now was it?” Mr. Frazier replies, “so what. Deal with it.” Braden, still full of adrenaline from his encounter with Goldstein, exclaims, “I’ll kick his puny little ass. I’m on a good ass kicking streak today! Get his flimsy little ass on the track!” Mark also volunteers,

¹ Bus: Slang term for an ambulance.

which brings Eddie and Johnson in on the ass kicking. Erika also steps up, filling the field.

Mr. Frazier asks Jimmy O'Brien, "pick your poison! What race do you want to run?" Jimmy talks it over with his father, and they decide that Jimmy will run the 40-yard dash. Jimmy figures that, since the 40-yard dash is shorter, his deficiencies may not be quite as evident. It is well known that Braden will kick O'Brien's ass big time in the 440-yard dash, so they choose to avoid that contest. And, Jimmy doesn't stand a chance in the mile. Practice will be over before he could complete a one-mile run.

The runners adjust, and get behind their blocks, except for O'Brien, who uses the blocks where the previous runner had them set. Mr. Frazier is quick to announce, "on your marks." Braden tells O'Brien, "I hope you're ready for your ass kicking, junior." After a ten-second delay waiting for O'Brien, Mr. Frazier announces, "set." The runners get set, and Mr. Frazier sounds the buzzer.

O'Brien is out of the blocks last, with the other runners already three steps ahead. Halfway through the race, Eddie takes the lead, but this is his race. Mark is in second place, tied with Braden and Johnson. Erika is slightly behind Mark and Johnson. Not surprisingly, O'Brien is in last place. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, Mark second, with Braden and Johnson tied for third place. Erika is right behind Braden and Johnson, delivering an awesome time. As expected, finishing in last place is O'Brien.

Wasting no time, Mr. Frazier asks Kathy, "what did you clock O'Brien at? What do we got?" Kathy, who timed O'Brien, replies, "I got him at 10.4 seconds." Mr. Frazier turns to Mr. O'Brien, and exclaims, "and, that is exactly why Jimmy is not on the team!" Mr. O'Brien stupidly asks, "is Jimmy's time really that bad?" Mr. Frazier replies, "no! Not if you're running a 100-yard dash! This was a 40-yard dash! His time should be in the five's, not 10.4 seconds! Anyone else in that race can run 100 yards in the time it took Jimmy to run 40 yards!"

Quite angry with Mr. Frazier's handling of the situation, Mr. O'Brien bluntly tells Mr. Frazier, "I really don't think that was a very fair race. You set Jimmy up. You put him up against your fastest runners." Mr. Frazier, who has had enough of O'Brien, replies, "oh, really? Would you like to hand pick the runners that Jimmy will compete against?" Mr. O'Brien replies, "that would certainly make it a lot more fair." Lecturing Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Frazier replies, "no, it won't, you moron! Jimmy will not have the option of choosing who he will run against in a meet! No one gets that choice! No matter how you look at it, 10.4 seconds in a 40-yard dash is not a competitive time. He's cut! Both of you, head to the locker room! Now!"

Mr. O'Brien and Jimmy head to the stairs. Mr. Frazier tells Kathy and Paula to get the 440-yard dash time trials underway. A lot of time was lost during this tryout session because of Goldstein and O'Brien. This causes Mr. Frazier to announce, "we have a lot of work to do, and not much time to get it done. Let's get moving! We don't have all day! And, the next person to trip someone, I'm sorry, but you'll be on your own!" Kathy and Paula start the time trials where they left off, with Braden and the rest of the tribe rerunning their heat.

After the tryout session, Mr. Frazier has everyone sit on the bleachers. He explains that the first cut will take place before tomorrow's tryout session. He also explains that the list of successful candidates thus far will be posted on the window of the administration office tomorrow morning. The bad news is another cut will take place after tomorrow's practice. Everyone heads up the staircase and to the locker room, hoping that they are invited to return tomorrow. After today's practice, however, the athletes have a good idea whether they will be invited to return.

The athletes head to the locker room, except for Braden, who is called aside by Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde. Mr. Frazier asks Braden, "what was the issue with that guy? He mentioned something about paybacks." Braden explains, "yeah. Goldshit and Chuckie have been after us for a while, ever since school started. It all started when they said Eddie beat up Chuckie when we were all sitting on the lawn at lunch, back when school started. And then, that Goldshit guy started all that shit in physics class during a test, kicking the chairs and pushing people out of their seats."

Mr. Zunde interjects, "now, I remember him and all that crap from last semester. I told those two clowns that they should carefully calculate what they are up against and, if they are foolish enough to start something with any of these guys, they are not likely to make it out the other end in one piece. It appears Goldstein didn't take my advice." Braden continues, "and, they've been after me, Eddie, and Mark ever since. We've been just ignoring them." Mr. Frazier asks, "how about Johnson, Mitchell, and Bobby B.?" Braden replies, "they ain't been after them yet. But, I'm sure their turn is coming." Mr. Zunde mentions, "from what I saw of Goldstein laying on the floor today, they probably won't get their turn any time soon."

Mr. Zunde tells Braden, "well, it's no secret that you'll be called to Mr. Crum's office tomorrow. He's going to try to suspend you. He might even call your father down to the school. But, don't worry about it. You heard what the officer said." Braden comments, "I still can't believe that guy did that." Mr. Zunde points out, "well, if drugs were involved, it doesn't surprise me." Mr. Frazier assures Braden, "we'll listen for the announcement tomorrow morning. We'll be right behind you." Braden

heads to the locker room, as Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier walk back to the physical education office.

The next morning, one by one, the tribe takes their usual seat by the window in physics class. Conspicuously missing today is Andrew Goldstein, whose absence motivated Chuckie to sit on the other side of the classroom today with Haynes. It doesn't take long for the class, and the school, to learn what happened to Goldstein yesterday. Chuckie wasted no time telling everyone that Braden kicked the shit out of Goldstein for no reason at all. Fortunately, no one is dumb enough to believe Chuckie's stories anyway. Braden walks into the classroom and, much to everyone's surprise, the class claps and cheers. Goldstein has apparently made many more enemies than friends in the last few months.

As Braden takes his seat, the teacher, Miss Amherst walks in. After taking attendance, Miss Amherst begins her lecture for today. She begins, stating, "last week, we learned that, if an object in motion collides with another object, as in an elastic collision, there will be a transfer of momentum. The transfer of momentum is in accordance with the formula we learned, which is mass times velocity is equal to mass times velocity. In an inelastic collision, however, there is an incomplete transfer of momentum." Miss Amherst asks the class, "does anyone know what happens to the loss in velocity in an inelastic collision that is not transferred from one object to the other?"

The class falls silent. Realizing that her question is probably beyond the scope of the class material, Miss Amherst explains, "let me give an example of an inelastic collision. A fist, moving rapidly through the air, encountering a jaw is an example of an inelastic collision. Where would the energy not transferred from the fist's velocity to the jaw's resultant velocity go?" Mitchell, the honors student, replies, "something's going to be deformed." Miss Amherst replies, "very good. The excess energy will either cause deformation of one or both of the objects or, in some cases, the excess energy can be stored and liberated in the future." Miss Amherst explains, "so, if a fist has an inelastic collision with a jaw, as in boxing, the energy that does not get transferred as momentum will likely cause physical damage to the jaw."

Braden whispers to Mark, "I think she's talking about me." Mark whispers back, "how did she know about what happened yesterday?" Braden replies, "I don't know. Teachers are usually gone after school is out."

Miss Amherst continues, "but don't worry, none of this will be on the test. Since we had an example of an inelastic collision occur yesterday after school, this is the perfect time to discuss the physics behind it. In real life, inelastic collisions are often used to solve problems that can't be

solved in any other way.” Mark then whispers to Braden, “yo bro, she just gave you a high-five!” Braden whispers back, “yeah! I see that.” Braden is not used to being complimented in this manner.

Mid morning brings the expected announcement over the loudspeaker, “Axel Braden, please report to the administration office immediately.” This time, Braden knows exactly why he is being summoned. Mark tells Braden, “yo, bro. They’re busting you for overdue library books.” Braden replies, “the only thing that was overdue was yesterday’s ass kicking.” Braden heads to the principal’s office, knowing what is coming. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, hearing the announcement, also head to the principal’s office.

When Braden arrives, the secretary, Mrs. Marlowe, tells him to take a seat. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde walk in shortly after, and see Braden waiting to see Mr. Crum. Already knowing the answer, Mr. Zunde asks Mrs. Marlowe, the secretary, “do you know what the issue is today with Axel Braden?” She replies, “it’s about the fight yesterday. Mr. Crum asked me to call him to his office.” Mr. Zunde calmly replies, “oh, that. I see. That’s already been taken care of.”

Mr. Zunde mentions to Braden, “I wonder what flavor of bellicose pontification Mr. Crum has in store for us today.” Mrs. Marlowe, overhearing Mr. Zunde, whispers to him, “Mr. Goldstein is in there right now. He’s not too happy.” Mr. Zunde informs Mrs. Marlowe, “I can perfectly understand that. He has a very good reason to be upset. His son was smoking pot in school yesterday.” Mr. Zunde then asks Braden, “do you have any overdue library books?” Braden replies, “no.” Mr. Zunde comments, “well, this meeting must be about using the restroom without permission or something equally as serious.”

Inside Mr. Crum’s office, Mr. Crum assures Mr. Goldstein that he will be talking with Axel Braden next, and will investigate and get to the bottom of the situation. “Getting to the bottom” of the situation is one of Mr. Crum’s favorite phrases. When Mr. Crum uses that particular phrase, Mr. Zunde has discovered that Mr. Crum really has no idea how to move forward.

After ten minutes of waiting, Mr. Crum’s door opens, and Mr. Goldstein walks out. Seeing Braden, Mr. Goldstein yells out, “hey! Are you the one that beat up Andy?” Braden replies, “I wouldn’t have kicked his ass if he didn’t trip me.” Mr. Goldstein grabs Braden’s right arm, and attempts to punch Braden in the face with a right. Before Mr. Zunde or Mr. Frazier could react, Braden stands up, blocks the punch, and forcefully shoves Mr. Goldstein back into Mr. Crum’s office, propelling him clear across the principal’s office. Falling over a chair, and onto the floor, Mr. Goldstein is very slow to get up as he yells out a few choice obscenities.

Truth be told, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier did very little to avert the altercation between Braden and Mr. Goldstein.

Rushing out of his office, Mr. Crum exclaims, “what is going on here?” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Crum, “it appears that Mr. Goldstein tried to start a fight with Braden. Perhaps you should suspend Mr. Goldstein. Or, maybe you can send him to detention since this is his first offense.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “enough with the funny stuff! What is going on here?” Braden tells Mr. Crum, “he grabbed my arm and threw a punch. I blocked the punch, and threw his fat ass back into your office.” Embellishing a bit, Braden adds, “first Goldshit, and now his father. I just don’t feel safe in this school anymore.” Mrs. Marlowe assures Mr. Crum, “it happened just like they said, sir. Mr. Goldstein tried to start a fight with Axel.”

Wanting to sort out the details, Mr. Crum tells everyone to get into his office. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier walk in, followed by Braden. Braden comments, “I see you ain’t got a new desk yet. It looks like this one still needs some work. It looks like to me that your bookshelf needs some work too. I wonder what happened to it.” Braden knows exactly what happened to Mr. Crum’s bookcase, for he was present and watched first hand as Eddie hammered his fist down and damaged it.

Mr. Crum ignores Braden’s comments, but Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier both crack a smile. Mr. Zunde moves one of the guest chairs to the other side of the room, and tells Braden to have a seat. Mr. Goldstein is seated on the other side of the room, slowly recovering from being thrown across the room by Braden. Mr. Zunde, learning from Erika’s father, knows that keeping Braden and Mr. Goldstein separated is probably a good idea. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier stand in their usual place near the bookcase, which now has a missing shelf, courtesy of Eddie.

Mr. Crum opens the meeting, informing everyone, “a very serious incident occurred at this school yesterday. For everyone’s information, Andrew Goldstein is now in the hospital, and is in critical condition. I am informed that he has a broken jaw, a fractured skull, and a badly dislocated shoulder. I further understand that two surgeries will be required to repair the damage.” Quite upset, Mr. Goldstein interjects, asking, “and, this is the guy who did it?” Mr. Crum replies, “yes, he is.”

Braden mentions, “if he didn’t trip me, I wouldn’t have kicked his ass.” Mr. Crum asks Braden, “so, you’re admitting that you ‘kicked his ass’?” Braden replies, “just like the officer said yesterday, he assaulted me. So, I kicked his ass. And, I’ll kick his ass again if he pulls any more shit like that.” Turning toward Mr. Goldstein, Braden adds, “and, if you touch me again, I’ll kick your fat ass too.” Mr. Crum tells Braden, “Axel, we’ve been over this before. Please watch your language.” Not putting up with Mr. Crum today, Braden tells Mr. Crum and Mr. Goldstein, “how come no one’s

telling Goldshit to watch his foot?” Mr. Goldstein sternly informs Braden, “for your information, it’s Goldstein.”

A heated exchange occurs between Mr. Crum, Braden, and Mr. Goldstein. During the verbal ping pong match, Mr. Zunde is perusing the school’s policy manual, which he finds on the usual place on Mr. Crum’s bookcase. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde calmly listen to the argument, as Braden attempts to convince Mr. Crum that it was Goldstein who started the altercation. Mr. Zunde shares a section of the policy manual he found last year with Mr. Frazier as the heated discussion continues. Mr. Zunde then takes Mr. Crum’s copy of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, opens it, and displays it on the bookshelf, letting everyone know of Mr. Crum’s advanced literary interests.

Mr. Crum finally announces the long awaited words, “Axel, I’m going to suspend you.” Braden replies, “I thought you might do that. My father told me to tell you that, if you suspend me, he’s going to have Goldshit arrested.” Mr. Goldstein interjects, “it’s Goldstein, not Goldshit!” Braden replies, “not around here, it’s not.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “okay, that’s it! I’ve had enough! Axel, you’re suspended.” Braden replies, “you already said that. So, now my father’s going to have Goldshit arrested.”

Mr. Zunde has also had enough. Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “Mr. Crum, you are not suspending Axel Braden. It was self defense, and I’m sure that Mr. Goldstein does not want Andrew to be arrested again.” Not appreciating being challenged, Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, “I have made my decision, Mr. Zunde. And, I am suspending Axel Braden. And, that’s final.” Mr. Zunde calmly informs Mr. Crum, “you can’t suspend him. It’s not within your jurisdiction to suspend him.” Unable to contain his anger, Mr. Crum sarcastically exclaims, “and, may I ask why not, Mr. Zunde?”

Mr. Zunde hands the school’s policy manual to Braden, and tells him, “Axel, will you please read section 5.6 of Mr. Crum’s very own copy of the school’s policy manual to everyone in this room.” Braden reads the paragraph aloud to everyone, which reads,

5.6. Physical Altercations on the Sports Field.

Should a physical altercation occur on the sports field, either in practice or competition, any necessary disciplinary action will be the sole responsibility of the head coach. Should the head coach not come to a resolution, he or she, at their option, may bring the issue to the school’s principal or assistant principal.

Mr. Crum exclaims, “let me see that!” Braden hands the policy manual to Mr. Crum, forcing Mr. Crum to reach far over his desk to grab it.

Braden even taunts Mr. Crum a bit by quickly pulling the manual away when Mr. Crum tries to grab it.

Browsing through a few pages, Mr. Crum looks for anything to refute what he just heard Braden read. Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "I want to see him weasel his way out of this one." Braden clearly understands what he just read. Braden sits back in his seat, with his hands clasped behind his head, relaxing as the principal is about to blow a gasket and a fuse.

After a few minutes of silence, Mr. Zunde addresses Mr. Crum, telling him, "it appears that any disciplinary action is the responsibility of Mr. Frazier. Perhaps you should ask Mr. Frazier what will be done about this situation." Braden now knows he is off the hook. Mr. Crum replies, exclaiming, "this is a serious incident!" Mr. Frazier informs Mr. Crum, "I know. That's why I had the police come out. They're taking care of it." Not enjoying being usurped, Mr. Crum exclaims, asking, "that's it?" Mr. Frazier reminds Mr. Crum, "this is a case of assault. The police were called, and they're handling it. For now, that's all I'm going to do." Mr. Zunde proposes to Mr. Frazier, loud enough for everyone to hear, "you can always punish Braden by making him run a few laps around the track after school."

Hearing all that transpired, Mr. Goldstein exclaims, "my son is sitting in the hospital with a broken jaw, a fractured skull, and a dislocated shoulder! And nothing is going to be done about it?" Braden answers, "his ass wouldn't be there if he didn't trip me. He'd be out in the field with Chuckie smoking dope right now. How is that any better?" Mr. Crum tells Braden, "don't start getting smart." Braden replies, "well, then why don't you just walk out there at lunch and take a look for yourself? They were so high, they hallucinated Eddie belting Chuckie's fat ass to the fence."

Having enough of listening to Braden, Mr. Zunde, and Mr. Frazier, Mr. Goldstein exclaims, "I can't believe this situation is being taken so lightly!" Braden calmly tells Mr. Goldstein, "this shit ain't being taken lightly. I kicked his ass because he tripped me. I didn't take what Goldshit did lightly." Braden again ignites Mr. Goldstein, and another heated discussion erupts.

Mrs. Marlowe informs Mr. Crum, over the intercom, that the police are here and want to see him immediately. Mr. Crum excuses himself for a moment to find out why the police have been called to the school. Officer Richard Hayes, the senior officer, and his partner, took the call yesterday regarding the altercation on the track. Today, they arrive with Detective Garrison, who presents Mr. Crum with a warrant to search Andrew Goldstein's locker. Mr. Crum calls Mr. Shapiro, instructing him to open

Andrew Goldstein's locker for the officers. Mr. Shapiro escorts the three police officers to Goldstein's locker, and Mr. Crum returns to his verbal wrestling match.

Hearing what transpired with the officer, Mr. Goldstein turns to Mr. Crum, and exclaims, "I demand to know why they are searching my son's locker!" Mr. Crum replies, "I don't know. They have a warrant to search it, so I have to allow it." Mr. Zunde whispers to Mr. Frazier, "at least he understands that part of the law."

Mr. Crum asks Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, "do either of you know what this is all about?" Mr. Frazier replies, "sure we do. Goldstein was smoking pot before tryouts. The paramedics smelled it on him. So, the police got a warrant to search his locker." Mr. Goldstein exclaims, "I told you people, my son does not take drugs!" Braden replies, "and, I suppose you don't think his ass trips anyone either." Another heated argument between Braden, Mr. Crum, and Mr. Goldstein begins, as Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier stand with their arms crossed, enjoying the entertainment. It appears that Braden has figured out exactly how to inflame Mr. Goldstein.

During the lengthy argument, Mrs. Marlowe interrupts again, telling Mr. Crum, over the intercom, that the officers want to see him again. Mr. Crum steps out of his office, and is told by Officer Hayes, the senior officer, "we need to know where Andrew Goldstein is right now. Can you advise us of his whereabouts?" Mr. Crum replies, "I understand that he's in the hospital. Why do you want to see him?" The officer replies, "I'm arresting him." Hearing those words, Mr. Goldstein steps out of Mr. Crum's office into the administration area, and asks the officer, "why are you arresting Andy?" The officer asks, "who are you?" Mr. Goldstein replies, "I'm his father. What's the problem here?" The officer informs Mr. Goldstein, "Detective Garrison searched his locker. He found marijuana, a few unlabeled pill bottles filled with bennies², some sugar cubes³, and a weapon. We'll let them sort the package out downtown."

Mr. Goldstein's countenance suddenly drops. The evidence that his son is dealing drugs again is right in front of his face. The officer asks, "where is Andrew now?" Mr. Goldstein replies, "he's in the county medical center in critical condition. He's having one surgery in a few hours, and another one in a few days."

Officer Hayes mentions to Detective Garrison, "he was unconscious when we arrived yesterday. We couldn't question him then. They took

² Bennies: Slang term for Benzedrine, an amphetamine.

³ Sugar Cubes: Slang term for LSD, a hallucinogenic drug.

him away in a bus.” Taking some notes, Officer Hayes informs Mr. Goldstein, “as of now, there is a warrant out for your son’s arrest. We’ll pick him up when he is discharged from the hospital.” The officers depart with the evidence, leaving behind more carnage than Braden left on the track yesterday.

With a lot more to worry about, Mr. Goldstein leaves the school. Mr. Crum returns to his office, and sits behind his desk. Knowing again that he is in checkmate, Mr. Crum tells Mr. Zunde, Mr. Frazier, and Braden, “I haven’t decided exactly what I’m going to do about this. Axel, for now, you can return to class.” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Crum, “Crum, you aren’t doing anything about this. It’s already been taken care of.” Not wanting another argument, Mr. Crum tells everyone, “okay, okay, everybody just get back to work.”

Mr. Zunde, Mr. Frazier, and Braden leave, as Mr. Crum fails to appreciate that his office is still intact. Mr. Zunde tells Braden, “don’t worry about this. From what I can tell, Goldstein won’t be returning to school anytime soon. He’s got much bigger problems now.” Mr. Frazier tells Braden, “and, as for your punishment, you’ll be running the 440-yard dash for the next few months, and you’re back on the 4 by 440 relay team.” Braden stands tall, and replies, “yes, sir!” Braden heads to lunch, where the whole school will find out what happened with Goldstein.

On the way back to the gym, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, “I wasn’t aware of that rule giving the coach full authority on the field.” Mr. Zunde confesses, “I found that last year during the altercation between Charles Black and Erika. I didn’t need to bring it up last year. I was saving that as a surprise for Crum.” Now elated, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, “well, Mr. Crum now certainly knows his limits. Perhaps he’ll stay away from all sports.” Not quite as confident, Mr. Zunde replies, “I don’t know about that. With Crum, nothing ever makes sense.” Agreeing, Mr. Frazier responds, “you do have a valid point.”

The next day, at tryouts, O’Brien, Chuckie, and Goldstein are not present. It’s no secret to anyone where Goldstein is. Everyone’s just lucky that O’Brien and Chuckie didn’t return for a second day of embarrassment. For some reason, however, Terry Haynes returned for the second day. It could be that Mr. Frazier, too busy with yesterday’s problems, forgot to cut her. Or, perhaps, she met the minimal standard for an invitation to return for the second day of tryouts.

Since the weather is nice outside, Barbara has taken a few of the distance runners outside to run along the three-mile loop along the road behind the school. Among them are Mitchell, Akinmola, Elliot, and a few others who have already earned a spot on the team because of their past

performance. Barbara, who is on the University track team, runs with the athletes today, getting a workout in herself.

Today, it's down to real business. Having everyone else who is not out running with Barbara sit on the bleachers, Mr. Frazier announces, "today, we are running the 220-yard dash and the 880-yard run. Everyone will be running in both events. We will start with the 220-yard dash. Form groups of six. Let's get moving!"

Kathy and Paula organize the heats, lining up the athletes in the order in which they will run. The two assistant coaches, along with Mr. Frazier, will be working two stopwatches apiece.

The first 220-yard dash heat is ready to run, which includes Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Hoffer, and Tessa. Everyone not running is instructed to stand on the sprinting track and watch as the heat is run. Mr. Frazier gives the command, "on your marks." The runners look serious, and it's because, to them, this is serious business. Mr. Frazier announces, "set." The buzzer is sounded, and the runners are out of the blocks.

Halfway through the one-lap race, it appears that Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson are tied. Tessa, in lane one, is up against the fastest guys in the State, and holds her own. As they come out of the final curve, it appears Eddie is in first place, with a one step lead over Mark. Johnson and Braden are less than one step behind Mark. Hoffer and Tessa are not far behind. A very tight field is good news, since Mark won the gold medal at the State invitational meet in this event last year. Eddie crosses the finish line first, with Mark less than one yard behind. Braden and Johnson tie for third place, with Hoffer and Tessa surprisingly finishing together. Tessa has done a lot of work improving her flip turn last year, which has clearly improved her performance on the track.

Mr. Frazier compiles the times, and asks Paula if she remembers what her third place time in the 220-yard dash at the State invitational meet was last year. Paula remembers her time, and tells Mr. Frazier that her third place time was on par with Tessa and Hoffer's performance today. Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, telling everyone, "listen up!" Mr. Frazier announces, "every single one of these runners could have won a medal at the State meet last year! They are fast! Can you believe it?" The bar has been set, and this year it's apparently quite high.

Paula looks at Kathy, telling her, "I'm glad we're back here. I'm having fun." Kathy replies, "yeah. This is what I want to do with my life. Look at Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde. They have more fun than anyone else around this school." Looking at Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, Paula responds, "yeah,

I can definitely see that.” Kathy comments, “they even have fun beating up on that old Crum.”

A few more 220-yard dash heats are run, with some runners delivering good times, and others delivering not so good times. Once everyone has run the 220-yard dash, the 880-yard run is organized. Mr. Frazier tells everyone that they will run with the same group, and in the same order, as the 220-yard dash.

On the way to the starting line, Mark tells Mr. Frazier, “I’m doing good this year. I can run the 100-yard dash in the mid nine-second region, the quarter mile in under 50 seconds, and the half mile in five minutes.” Mr. Frazier replies, “it sounds like you don’t want to run the half mile.” Mark replies, “not really, but I’m going to try to beat Johnson just so I can mess with him later.”

As the first heat is underway, an unwelcome visitor walks down the metal staircase. Quickly noticed by all, Mr. Crum is probably not looking for students with overdue library books today. Knowing that Mr. Crum is looking for trouble, Mr. Zunde ignores him for a while, waiting to see what dirt he is digging up today.

Mr. Crum approaches Kathy, and tells her, “I want to see you right now!” Kathy tells Mr. Crum, “I’m sorry. It will have to wait. I’m working.” Repeating himself, Mr. Crum exclaims, “I said, I want to see you right now!” Kathy yells back at the principal, telling him, “if you have your eyes open, then you are seeing me right now. Now, get out of my way!” Kathy walks away, recording the 440-yard split times of the two runners to whom she is assigned.

Not appreciative of Kathy’s combative attitude, Mr. Crum approaches her again, telling her, “did you hear me? I told you that I want to see you right now!” Responding firmly, Kathy tells him, “and, I told you that I am busy! Please make an appointment with my secretary. And, stay out of my way!” Kathy walks away, catching Eddie’s and Tessa’s 880-yard times. Kathy knows Mr. Crum cannot give her any further problems, so she just brushes him off as a minor annoyance.

Getting no response from Kathy, Mr. Crum approaches Mr. Frazier, who is ecstatic with the times just delivered on the track. Mr. Crum asks Mr. Frazier, “what are Kathy Karakova and Paula Giovani doing here?” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Crum, “they’re my assistant coaches.” Mr. Frazier goes about his business, ignoring Mr. Crum for the time being.

Now that the heat is over, Kathy, no longer having any fear of Mr. Crum, walks over and asks Mr. Crum, “now, what’s the problem here?” Mr. Crum tells Kathy, “first of all, you’re parked in the faculty lot. Second of

all, you're not supposed to be here. You graduated." Replying firmly, Kathy tells Mr. Crum, "first of all, junior, my car has a faculty parking sticker on it. And, for your information, I work here now, and so does Paula and Barbara. Mr. Zunde is my boss. Talk to him. Until then, get out of my way." Mr. Frazier is glad to see Kathy has a backbone, unlike Mr. Crum, the school's resident jellyfish.

Not getting anywhere with Kathy or Mr. Frazier, Mr. Crum goes over to talk to Mr. Zunde. Mr. Zunde sees Mr. Crum approaching, and yells out to the field athletes, "okay, which one of you were late to class this week?"

Ignoring Mr. Zunde's comment, Mr. Crum exclaims, "why are Kathy and Paula here?" Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "they work for me. Is there a problem?" With the ball back in his court, Mr. Crum replies, asking, "what do you mean, they work for you?" Mr. Zunde replies, "exactly that. They come here and work, which they are doing right now. At the end of the month, they receive a paycheck, just like you and me."

In a demanding tone, Mr. Crum asks, "they get paid? Who pays them?" Having enough of Mr. Crum, Mr. Zunde tells him, "the University pays them. They're interns. They make forty dollars an hour each. And, so does Barbara. But, don't worry. It's not coming out of your budget." Not believing what he just heard, Mr. Crum exclaims, "forty dollars an hour?" Mr. Zunde calmly replies, "yes. And, it appears that you are interfering with them doing their job. So, we are done here. Get out of my arena, Crum."

Mr. Crum tries to continue the conversation, but Mr. Zunde disposes of him for the time being. Forty dollars an hour is a lot more than Mr. Crum can relate to for someone whom he thinks just stands around holding a stopwatch. After hearing what the girls earn, Mr. Crum is even more irate. But, Mr. Zunde only informed Mr. Crum of their salaries purely to make him more irate. To the casual observer, it appears as if Mr. Zunde is intentionally trying to get Mr. Crum to blow a gasket.

Once Mr. Crum walks away, Bobby B. asks, "do they really make forty dollars an hour?" Mr. Zunde replies, "yes. That's what they make. It's scholarship money. Colleges and universities technically can't pay you to run, so they find other ways to reward the athletes."

Bobby B. gets it. While he can't get paid to throw the shot-put or for helping out the teacher with disruptive students, the grade of 100 that he received on the physics exam during Mr. Crum's temper tantrum last semester is evidence of what Mr. Zunde just explained. There is no reward for kicking chairs, disrupting class, and smoking pot during lunch, so Chuckie and Goldstein received a grade of zero.

The second heat of the 880-yard run is finally organized, which was interrupted by Mr. Crum's temper tantrum. Running in the second heat are the core distance runners, who have returned from their three-mile run. This group includes Mitchell, Akinmola, Livingston, Amber, and a few others. Giving Mr. Frazier, Kathy, and Paula a break, Barbara starts the race, which everyone knows will be a battle between Mitchell and Akinmola. Both Mitchell and Akinmola will make the team, but there is some sort of synergistic competition between them, setting a pace no one can match.

Watching the race is the runners in the next heat. Erika is among them, who everyone expects to be the pacesetter. Normally, Erika would be matched-up with Tessa, primarily because they are rivals on the track. But, since neither of them will likely be competing in this event, they were placed in separate heats. Also, for some reason, watching the race from the metal staircase, is Mr. Crum, taking notice that Barbara is also back this year.

As the second heat comes to an end, Mitchell, taking first place, edges out Akinmola by a few yards. Akinmola takes second place, Amber takes third place, and Livingston fourth place. Fifth and sixth place go to two runners with noncompetitive times, and will not likely make the team. Barbara tells Akinmola that his time was good enough for him to have earned a medal in the State invitational meet last year. This is good news to Akinmola, who always seems to be up against the State's best. Next year, he will be looking forward to holding that title.

As the third heat gets ready, Erika walks toward the starting line, exchanging high-fives with many of her teammates, one after another. Erika walks by Terry Haynes, also in this heat, who also raises her hand to give Erika a high-five. Raising her hand to receive the high-five, Erika unexpectedly receives a severe blow to her abdominal area by Haynes. Seeing what just happened, words like, "shit," and, "uh oh," are whispered around the arena. Anyone who knows Erika also knows what is about to come down. And, quite unfortunate for Haynes, Mr. Frazier saw the incident. Mr. Crum, standing on the staircase, also witnessed exactly what happened first hand.

Erika returns the favor, punching Haynes in her mid section causing her to double over. Erika delivers a solid right uppercut to Haynes in her jaw, who lands on the ground. Erika proceeds to pulverize Haynes, delivering punch after punch. As the team gathers around to watch, they give Erika and Haynes a lot of room to fight. Erika continues to relentlessly kick the shit out of Haynes. Haynes tries to fight back, but Erika hits Haynes both hard and at will.

Screaming from the staircase is Mr. Crum, yelling, “stop the fight! Someone, stop the fight!” No student dares to stop the fight. As stupid as it sounds, to do so will likely invite disciplinary action by Mr. Crum simply by being involved in the altercation.

Kathy tells Paula and Barbara, “I’m not stopping the fight. This is above my pay grade.” Paula replies, “yeah, mine too.” Mr. Frazier yells out, “hey, break it up,” sounding a bit like he doesn’t really mean it. Braden asks Mr. Frazier, “do you want me to break it up?” Mr. Frazier replies, “no. Here comes Mr. Crum. We’ll let him break it up.”

Mr. Crum arrives at the scene, as Erika continues beating Haynes to a bloody pulp. Mr. Crum yells at Mr. Frazier, screaming, “break up the fight! Do something!” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Crum, “I’ve told them to stop once already.” Turning his attention back to the fight, Mr. Frazier tells Erika and Haynes, “hey! Break it up you guys!”

Erika gets in a few good final blows, and decides that Haynes has almost had enough for today. Erika stands up and, with all her strength, kicks Haynes in her ass, prompting Haynes to let out a loud scream. Now that Haynes has been finished off, Erika walks over to Bobby B., who gives her a hug. Bobby B. whispers to Erika, “good job.”

Mr. Frazier asks Haynes, “are you okay?” Mr. Crum exclaims, “she’s not okay! Can’t you see that?” Haynes, after stumbling a few times, manages to stand up, crying in pain. As she falls back onto the floor, Mr. Crum asks Haynes, “do you want me to get an ambulance?” Haynes yells out, “no!”

After lying on the ground for a few minutes, Haynes stands up again, and limps toward the stairway, albeit very slowly. Mr. Frazier tells Barbara, “take her to the school nurse. Make sure she gets there.” Barbara follows Haynes, making sure she gets to her intended destination. Haynes was not around last year when Erika kicked the shit out of Chuckie. If she were, she may not have started something with Erika today.

Mr. Frazier tells everyone, “okay, let’s get back to practice!” Erika gets in her lane, and is ready to run. Mr. Crum, seeing that Mr. Frazier is moving along with tryouts as if nothing unusual happened, exclaims, “is that all you’re going to do about this?” Mr. Frazier replies, “for now, yes. I have to get a team ready by the end of the week. And, yesterday, I told everyone that the next person to pull any of this kind of crap will be on their own.”

Seeing that Mr. Crum is being a problem, Mr. Zunde walks over to join in on the entertainment. Intending to annoy Mr. Crum, Mr. Zunde asks,

“is there a problem here?” Mr. Crum replies, “of course there’s a problem here! There was a fight!” Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “I’m very aware of that. I saw it. It looks to me like Erika won.” Mr. Crum yells out, “something needs to be done about it!” Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “I can clearly see your point. You are right. Something needs to be done about it. Let me discuss this with Mr. Frazier.” Mr. Zunde steps aside, and has a short private conversation with Mr. Frazier, as Mr. Crum perceives he is now getting the attention he deserves.

Mr. Zunde privately tells Mr. Frazier, “the school’s policy manual states that the head coach may bring the issue to the school’s principal if he so desires. I think you should do that. Just turn the issue over to Mr. Crum and get rid of him. Then, we can all get back to tryouts.” Mr. Frazier replies, “he’ll suspend her.” Mr. Zunde explains, “no, he won’t. The last thing Mr. Crum would want is another encounter with Erika’s father.” Grinning ear to ear, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, “I see your point.”

Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde walk back over to Mr. Crum. In a demanding tone, Mr. Crum spouts out, “well?” Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, “we are not doing anything about what happened here today. Haynes started the fight, and Erika finished it. However, your policy manual states that the head coach, at their option, may bring the issue to the school’s principal. If you want to do anything more about what happened here today, feel free. I’m sure that Erika’s father would really like to see you again.” Mr. Crum quickly realizes he has been outwitted once again by Mr. Zunde. Mumbling something to himself, Mr. Crum kicks the ground, throws his hands in the air, and walks away.

As they leave practice for the day, Erika asks Mr. Frazier, “am I in trouble?” Mr. Frazier replies, “you’re not in any more trouble than you were last year when you took care of Chuckie. I’m sure that Mr. Crum might call you to his office tomorrow. If he does, tell him to call your father. I’m sure that your father will put an end to any action Mr. Crum will take.” Erika tells Mr. Frazier, “that’s going to go over real good.” Mr. Zunde comments, “I’m not so sure Mr. Crum wants to tread in that water again.”

On the way to the athletic office, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Frazier, “I lost all my shot-put guys. All we have is Bobby B. It doesn’t look good this year.” Mr. Frazier jokingly replies, asking, “what happened to that Chuckie character?” Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Frazier, “oh, yeah. Silly of me. I forgot about him. I cut him. My fault.” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, “we’ll just get Eddie, Mark, or Braden to throw it. I’m sure they can deliver. Look at what they did with the discus last year.” With some good news, Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Frazier, “at least I have two top notch high jumpers. I could use a third in that event.” Mr. Frazier suggests, “Johnson is good at the high jump. We can put him in if we need to.”

Now that tryouts are over, Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde have a lot of work to do. With the first meet coming up this weekend, they must have all the events assigned, and the relay teams formed. A lot of time was lost when Goldstein tripped Braden, but the final roster is complete with a lot of familiar names.

The first meet of the year is the annual rematch of Northside, Riverdale, Centerville, and Madison. These four teams seem to meet every year, and the result is always the same. But, this year, Mr. Frazier wants a change. He not only wants all the gold medals, but wants all the medals, gold, silver, and bronze, this year.

The next day, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier fully expect to hear Erika called to Mr. Crum's office over the loudspeaker. As the day goes on, the call never comes. Mr. Crum is between a rock and a hard place. If he takes action against Erika, he will have to deal with Erika's father, who is a police captain. If Erika's father is called to the school, he will undoubtedly file assault charges against Terry Haynes. With no good choices, Mr. Crum goes about his business, tracking down overdue library books and students using the restroom without permission. Who knows? With any luck, Mr. Crum might even find a student wandering the halls, late for class.