

Eddie, The Senior Year

Chapter Four Spring Track Tryouts

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Spring track tryouts this year will bring a much larger field of athletes than in prior years. With so many decorated track athletes walking around the school draped with their medals, many of the other students want a medal draped around their neck too. Many students who overestimate their ability will try out for the team, finding out what it really takes to be a superior athlete. They will quickly find out that running is more than putting one foot in front of the other as fast as you can. And, if they think that they can get a medal in a relay event, they will quickly learn that everyone has to carry their own weight.

Swimming tryouts begin on Tuesday afternoon, which means Tessa will be back in the pool for the Spring. Tessa actually performs better on the track than in the pool, but swimming is where her heart is. Mr. Frazier has told Tessa that, if she doesn't make the swimming team, she has a place on the track team. Tessa, a junior this year, is not only going to make the swimming team, but will likely go to the State invitational swimming meet this year.

Tuesday afternoon arrives, and Eddie heads to the locker room with his swimsuit. As he is changing into his swimming attire, there is a lot of talk among the swimmers why the track star is headed to the pool. Hearing the chatter and his name mentioned a few times, Eddie simply ignores it all. It's anybody's guess why Eddie is apparently trying out for the swimming team.

Mr. Zunde enters the locker room and announces, "if you are trying out for golf, the bus is waiting for you in the front of the school. Don't forget to bring your balls and shafts. If you are trying out for swimming, you will meet in the natatorium. If you are trying out for baseball, track, or any other sport, tryouts for those sports will begin tomorrow. Please come back then." Mr. Zunde then heads home. He cares not about golf,

and the swimming coach has the pool under control. Calling it an early day, Mr. Zunde will be back tomorrow for track and field tryouts.

Eddie heads to the pool, where he finds Tessa sitting on the back row of the three rows of bleachers. Surprised to see Eddie, Tessa asks, "what are you doing here?" Eddie tells Tessa, "I want to see how I measure up. I've been practicing and doing a lot of cross training." Tessa grins, and asks Eddie, "so, me beating you last Spring was too much for you to handle?" Surprised at Tessa's confidence when she's around a pool, Eddie replies, "yeah, that's it! I'm here to race you." Displaying her confidence, Tessa informs Eddie, "you'll never win." Eddie asks, "and, if I do?" Tessa replies, "then, I'm beating all of your training secrets out of you." Tessa clearly has a bolder personality when around water.

The swimming coach, Miss Barbara Hamilton, walks in wearing her swimsuit, along with two student assistants. Looking over the field of swimmers, Miss Hamilton announces, "good afternoon! It looks like we have a lot of returning athletes this season and a few new ones. For those of you who were part of the team last year, please bear with me. For those of you who have not tried out for the swimming team before, please listen carefully. Today, we will be swimming the freestyle. The butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke are on the agenda later this week." Miss Hamilton goes over the order of events, telling the students, "we will start with the 100-yard freestyle, and I will be recording your 50-yard split times. Then, we will move on to the 200-yard and 500-yard freestyle. This is a 50-yard pool. You are all in high school. You do the math. Everyone get in the pool, and warm up."

Eddie gets in the pool along with Tessa. Explaining to Eddie how the tryouts work, Tessa informs him, "she's going to put us in groups of six. The better swimmers from last year get to go first." Eddie replies, "that sounds familiar. It sounds just like what we do in track." Tessa smiles, and replies, "yeah. And, since you're new, you're going last. So sad, too bad." Eddie laughs and, surprising Tessa, replies, "poor little me." After everyone is wet and warmed up, Miss Hamilton blows her whistle, telling everyone to get out of the pool.

Miss Hamilton announces the names of the athletes who are in each group of six. As Tessa predicted, Eddie is in the last group, along with a bunch of freshmen. Tessa is in the second group. As the swimmers in the first group get on their starting blocks, Eddie sits back and studies the procedure. Miss Hamilton yells out, "take your mark," which echoes throughout the natatorium. The swimmers get into position to dive in, and Miss Hamilton sounds the buzzer, simultaneously starting the four 36-inch pace clocks on the walls.

As the swimmers enter the water, Eddie notices that some are faster off the block than others. Watching as the race progresses, Eddie notices some of the swimmer's flip turns are smooth and perfect, but a few are a bit on the sloppy side. Eddie also watches the pace clock on the wall, gauging the swimmers' performance. Once the heat is over, Miss Hamilton and her two assistants record the times. Unlike Mr. Frazier, who lets the world immediately know what the runner's times were, no mention is made of any of the swimmer's times.

A few more heats are completed, and now it is Eddie's turn. Eddie takes one of the center lanes, knowing that they are a bit better for competition. Eddie is aware that he is up against the less experienced swimmers, and will have to swim as if Tessa is in the lane next to him. Ready to give it all he has, Eddie is not playing around in the 100-yard freestyle. To swim in this race is the only reason he is here today. Miss Hamilton announces, "take your mark." Miss Hamilton sounds the buzzer, and Eddie is clearly off the block first.

Since the faster swimmers have already swum, not many swimmers pay attention to this heat. Many of the swimmers in this heat will not make the team anyway, so they are pretty much ignored. Tessa, however, is very interested in Eddie's performance. Watching the pace clock on the wall, Tessa notices that Eddie is faster than he was during last Summer's race. Paying careful attention, Tessa wants to know what she will be up against this Summer during their annual rematch at the county pool.

After Eddie's flip turn, Miss Hamilton exclaims, "what the! Who is this guy?" As Eddie touched the wall, Tessa was watching the pace clock, not believing what she just saw. Paying much closer attention after Eddie's 50-yard split, Tessa gets off the bleachers and stands at the pool's edge. Tessa impatiently walks over to Miss Hamilton, and asks, "what was his split?" Miss Hamilton exclaims, "22.1! Who in the world is this guy?" Tessa replies, "Eddie Bogenskaya." On Eddie's last lap, all of the swimmers line the pool's edge. Aware that he is under the microscope, Eddie gives it all he has. All eyes are on the clock as Eddie approaches the wall. Touching the wall, Eddie delivers a time of 46.5 seconds.

Silence falls over the natatorium as Eddie gets out of the pool. Tessa is the only one who approaches Eddie. Tessa gives Eddie a high-five, telling him, "you so suck!" Eddie asks, "what? Am I not fast enough?" Tessa informs Eddie, "no, you're too fast! I'm never going to beat that next Summer!"

Miss Hamilton approaches Eddie, and exclaims, "do you have any idea what you just did?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I think I just ruined Tessa's day." Miss Hamilton informs Eddie, "you just broke the State record in the 100-yard freestyle! And your 50-yard split broke that record too!"

Hearing what Miss Hamilton just announced, Tessa exclaims, “okay, buddy. You’re spilling your secrets! And, you can start right now!” Eddie tells Tessa, “sure. But, it will cost you a pizza.” Miss Hamilton is quite surprised at the playful exchange between Eddie and Tessa. Tessa, taking control of the tryout session, exclaims, “how did you shave twelve seconds off your time since last Summer? And, this is a 50-yard pool! You have a secret and I want to hear it!” Miss Hamilton comments, “yeah! I want to hear this too!” Eddie tells Tessa, “I told you. It’s going to cost you a pizza. Maybe two pizzas.”

Miss Hamilton announces to the athletes, “in case you’ve missed what just happened, Eddie just unofficially broke the State record in both the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle.” Hearing the news, the swimmers don’t even know how to respond. Some of the upperclassmen, who know Eddie, are not surprised.

Having to move on to the next event, Miss Hamilton blows her whistle and tells the first group, “get ready for the 200-yard freestyle.” While the first heat is getting ready, Miss Hamilton tells Tessa, “if he’s got a secret, I want to know what it is.” Tessa tells her coach, “Eddie’s the one who taught me how to do a flip turn a few years ago. And, he’s the fastest guy in the State in track. He’s got his share of secrets all right.”

After the first heat of the 200-yard freestyle gets underway, Eddie takes a seat on the bench and relaxes. Tessa takes a seat next to him, asking, “so, do you really have a secret?” Eddie replies, “no, not really. But, I’ve been practicing my swimming stroke at home in my gym.” Tessa asks, “how do you do that?” Eddie explains, “it’s simple. I put two pulleys on the ceiling in my basement, and got some cables. So, I practice my swimming strokes with the cables, which are connected to weights.” Expecting to hear more, Tessa asks, “is that it?” Eddie replies, “yeah. You saw what weights did for your flip turn. The same can happen for your stroke.” Tessa now gets it. Tessa tells Eddie, “okay. I want one. Can you show me how to make it?” Eddie replies, “sure. No problem.” Tessa tells Eddie, “dang, it’s my turn. I’m up. Now I’m fired up!” As Tessa walks toward the blocks, Eddie yells out, “you owe me a pizza!”

After the experienced swimmers have completed their heats, Eddie, retaining his poorly esteemed position in the last heat, heads to the blocks. This time, no one will be just casually hanging around. Miss Hamilton announces, “take your mark.” Miss Hamilton sounds the buzzer and, as in his last race, Eddie is into the water first. This time, Miss Hamilton is studying Eddie as he swims. Tessa tells her coach, “watch his flip turn. That’s where he has an advantage.” Miss Hamilton watches as Eddie does his next flip turn, noticing that Eddie’s speed is incredible when he kicks off the wall. Miss Hamilton tells Tessa, “I see exactly what you mean.”

Eddie finishes the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 1:47.8, not quite breaking the State record, but delivering the best time of the day. The last race of the day is the 500-yard freestyle, which, to Eddie, is a good workout. Eddie also comes in with the best time of the day in the 500-yard freestyle. But, truth be told, Eddie only came to tryouts today to be timed in the 100-yard freestyle.

After the last heat, Tessa is waiting at the wall for Eddie. Before Eddie gets out of the water, Tessa asks him, "okay. So, when can we build this thing?" Eddie replies, "whenever you want. It will only take two hours, including getting the parts from the hardware store. No, wait. The pizza afterward will add an hour, so make it three hours."

After tryouts Miss Hamilton asks Eddie, "how long have you been swimming?" Eddie replies, "since the fifth grade. I would ride my bicycle to the county pool, swim laps, and ride home." Miss Hamilton, who is kind of sad knowing that Eddie is the school's track star, tells Eddie, "well, I guess it's back to track for you tomorrow." Eddie tells Miss Hamilton, "I didn't know I was any good at swimming. Tessa beat me last year. So, I've been practicing." Miss Hamilton informs Eddie, "I'm not sure what the rule is about being on more than one team. I'll have to check it out."

Eddie heads to the locker room, knowing that he does measure up in swimming as well as he does in track. And, Miss Hamilton heads back to her office, now wondering if Mr. Zunde can help with the swimming team as well.

Spring track tryouts are going to be everything but routine this year. With so many decorated track athletes, the word has gotten around that you must be an elite athlete to make the track team. This may discourage some of the athletes from trying out for the team, but encourage others who desire to have a medal draped around their neck. Many students who overestimate their ability will try out for the team. They will quickly find out that running is more than putting one foot in front of the other faster than the runner next to you. Others, like Erika, underestimate their abilities, and perform better than they ever thought they could.

This Spring, Eddie and Mark have convinced Gump to try out for the shot-put. Bobby B. will surely take first place in every meet. If Gump can deliver, the team can lock in second place at every meet as well. Bobby B. will be sure not to educate Gump on the proper transportation and handling of the shot-put, but keep that specialized secret knowledge to himself and Erika. Mark might envision otherwise, and will likely suggest to Bobby B. that he instruct Gump on the proper handling of the shot-put.

Wednesday afternoon, after school, a crowd of athletes hit the locker rooms. Swimming and golf tryouts, which began yesterday, continue

today. Today, baseball and track tryouts begin, along with a few other Spring sports. The talk in the locker room today is how Eddie made a splash during swimming tryouts yesterday. No one, including Eddie himself, expected Eddie to try out for the team. It was a last minute decision on Eddie's part.

Before they head to the auxiliary gym where the track meeting will be held, Mark asks Eddie, "so, how come you tried out for the swimming team?" Eddie replies, "I've been practicing for the rematch with Tessa next Summer. I wanted to see how I measured up." Mark replies, "from what I hear, it looks like Tessa has a lot of work to do."

Eddie, Mark, and the rest of the tribe take a seat on the bleachers, with Gump joining them. The seasoned runners and the novices slowly trickle in, glancing over at Eddie and his friends as they find a seat. Just seeing the sheer size of Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Bobby B., and Gump shatters the confidence of some of the athletes. Kathy, Paula, and Barbara arrive, and take a seat with the tribe. Also walking in is Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, who are probably only showing up to cause trouble. And, the inevitable occurs as Jimmy O'Brien walks in and takes a seat. O'Brien, now a senior, figures he just might snatch a place on the team.

While they are waiting, Eddie asks Kathy, "so, how was your day?" Kathy whispers to Eddie, "it was good! We can sign the papers for the house on Friday!" Eddie whispers back, "awesome!" Eddie asks Kathy, "when do we do that?" Kathy whispers, "the choices were mid morning or at lunchtime. So, I picked lunchtime." Eddie asks Kathy, "has all the bank stuff been done?" Kathy whispers, "yeah. It's so awesome being in college. I can do all this stuff between classes." Eddie replies, "I'm still in jail." Kathy reminds Eddie, "only three months, and then you're out of here."

Mr. Frazier walks in, and stops to talk to Eddie before addressing the athletes. Wondering why Eddie tried out for the swimming team, Mr. Frazier asks, "what's this I hear about you trying out for swimming?" Eddie explains, "Tessa beat me last Summer in our annual race at the county pool. I've been practicing in my gym. I'm not letting her beat me again this Summer. So, I wanted to see where I stood." Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, "breaking State records! That's where you stand! I heard all about it from Miss Hamilton!" Eddie tells Mr. Frazier, "I'm done with breaking State records. I'm breaking the National record in the 100-yard dash this year." Mr. Frazier gives Eddie the thumbs up, and walks out in front of the bleachers to address the students. What Mr. Frazier does not know is that Eddie ran the 100-yard dash in 9.3 seconds this past Autumn at the University, tying the National high school record.

After introducing himself and his assistants, Mr. Frazier announces, "if you are a field athlete, you will assemble in the field area with Mr. Zunde, who is already outside. When we head out, follow Bobby B., and he will take you there. If you are a distance runner, you will follow Barbara out to the track. If you are a sprinter, you will follow Kathy and Paula out to the track." After a few more announcements, Mr. Frazier dismisses the athletes, who all head out to the track together.

Seeing Jimmy O'Brien, Chuckie, Goldstein, and Haynes, Mr. Frazier whispers to Kathy, "all the clowns are back. Those guys are so dumb, they can't even spell YMCA. Get rid of them as fast as you can, and I don't care how you do it." Mr. Frazier then whispers to Barbara, "six minutes this year," signifying the minimum time in the mile to survive the first cut.

Mr. Frazier tells Kathy and Paula, "we're running the 100-yard dash first, then the quarter mile. I'll set the cutoff at eleven seconds for the 100-yard dash, and 70 seconds for the quarter mile. If anyone is slower than that, send them home immediately. We don't have the time to deal with all these people." The times Mr. Frazier set as the cutoff for each event are noncompetitive times compared with the required skill level to win. With the cutoffs Mr. Frazier quoted, more than half the athletes will be sent home today.

Mr. Frazier is now required to give Jimmy O'Brien a chance to try out for the team. During the indoor track season, Mr. O'Brien complained voraciously to Mr. Crum that Jimmy was cut before tryouts began. Mr. Crum has ruled that all students must have an opportunity to try out for a sports team, and threatened to take it to the school board if anyone challenged him. This Spring, everyone has to be given their 'fair chance' to try out for any team. And, after all the problems they caused over the indoor track season, even Goldstein and Haynes have to be given a chance to try out as well. But, the coaches can cut whomever they want, making Mr. Crum's edict worthless. So, the coaches didn't bother challenging Mr. Crum's rule. The lack of a challenge to his ruling deceived Mr. Crum into believing that he is very powerful and authoritative.

On the way out to the track, Mark tells Braden, "you'd better watch out for Goldshit. He's back." Braden assures Mark, "if he pulls any of that shit again, I ain't holding back. I'll kick his fat ass again if I have to! And, this time, I'll break his legs so he can't try out for track anymore!" Mark reminds Braden, "this is our senior year. We won't be trying out after this year." Braden replies, "that don't matter none. I'll save everyone else the trouble of kicking his ass."

Erika notices that Chuckie will be again trying out for something today, but Chuckie keeps his distance from Erika and the tribe. Usually taking a ride in the Cushman¹ with Erika on his lap as they transport the shot-put using the prescribed method to the field, Bobby B. is walking out with the team this year. The shot-put, along with all the other equipment, is now kept in a storage building that was recently built near the track. Wendy still drives the Cushman, using it to move a few items to the track and to retrieve the airborne implements during practice.

On his way out to the track, Eddie sees a new car parked in the faculty parking lot, and takes a slight detour to take a closer look. The vehicle that caught Eddie's eye is a new De Tomaso Pantera, a high end mid-engine sports car. Made in Argentina, the Italian-designed luxury sports car has a 351 cubic inch Ford Cleveland engine. Going from zero to 60 miles per hour in 5.5 seconds, it's no wonder why the car caught Eddie's attention. Eddie looks over the car, wondering which teacher owns it. After satisfying his curiosity, Eddie joins up again with the team.

On the way to the track, Mark, already knowing the answer, asks Bobby B., "where's the shot-put being kept this year?" Bobby B. replies, "in the new storage building, with everything else." Mark tells Bobby B., "you'd better make sure it gets out to the field in the carefully prescribed manner. I'd hate to see it being mishandled." Knowing where this is going, Kathy and Paula both giggle. Bobby B., trying to gain the upper hand, informs Mark, "the building is temperature controlled. There's even a restroom with a sink so it can be cleaned." Mark tells Bobby B., "yeah, I know. My father built the storage building. I told him it had to be specially heated and cooled just for the shot-put." Bobby B. dare not take this any further. No one will win this type of exchange against Mark.

Barbara organizes the one-mile run, and will set the six-minute pace herself. Since she is on the University team, she might as well get a workout in by running with the high school team. Kathy and Paula get the sprinters ready to run the 100-yard dash trials. Organizing groups of six runners per heat, Kathy and Paula group everyone according to their reported skill level. Over in the field area, Mr. Zunde organizes the tryouts for the field events. Mr. Zunde, getting the distinct pleasure of working with Chuckie and Goldstein, will get rid of them as fast as possible.

Mr. Zunde walks over to Mr. Frazier, informing him, "by the way, Mr. Crum and Mr. O'Brien are sitting in the bleachers again." Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "well, I hope they enjoy the show." Mr. Zunde replies, "I

¹ Cushman: (a corporation) A utility vehicle, larger than a golf cart, used to transport small items.

suspect they're here to make sure Jimmy gets a fair shake." Today, Jimmy O'Brien will get his fair chance. Nevertheless, running 100 yards at O'Brien's speed wouldn't secure a place for him on the middle school track team.

Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Hoffer, and John are up in the first 100-yard dash heat. Eddie is particularly excited today. This is his last season, and he is unarguably the fastest high school student in the State, and perhaps the country. The sprinters get ready, and will demonstrate the standard for winning a gold medal to the rest of the athletes. Mr. Frazier is ready too, anxiously waiting to see what his star athletes can deliver this year.

Erika, who is in the second heat, announces, "on your marks." Taking their time to get ready, they finally get positioned in the blocks. Erika announces, "set." She fires the gun, and the A team is out of the blocks. At twenty yards, Eddie and Mark are nearly tied, with Eddie having a slight advantage. Pushing himself harder and lengthening his stride, Eddie begins to break away from the pack. At 50 yards, Mr. Frazier pays very close attention to each of his star sprinters. Mark is following Eddie closely, but Mr. Frazier is puzzled why the rest of the field is lagging so far behind. As Eddie crosses the finish line, Mr. Frazier captures his time. Kathy and Paula capture the time of the other runners as Mr. Frazier captures Braden's time, and the results are in.

Mr. Frazier stares at his stopwatch, as Eddie and Mark take a cool down walk. In charge of recording the results, Kathy asks Mr. Frazier, "what do you have?" Mr. Frazier, still looking at his stopwatches, remains silent. Paula whispers to Kathy, "it must have been good. I clocked Mark at 9.5, and Eddie beat him." Kathy asks Mr. Frazier again, "what did you clock them at?" Not believing what he is seeing, Mr. Frazier replies, exclaiming, "a 9.4! Eddie ran a 9.4! A 9.4!" Paula informs Mr. Frazier, "that fits. I had Mark at a 9.5." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "Eddie just broke the State record! And, the National high school record is 9.3!" Hearing his time, Eddie replies, "wow! That's three State records this week." The time is unofficial, but nevertheless an indication of Eddie's ability. Mr. Frazier continues to exclaim, "a 9.4! I can't believe it!"

Eddie, and the rest of the first heat, takes a seat on the bench, watching as the other heats are run. They know that the 440-yard dash is up next, so they take the time to rest. Eddie asks Braden, "so, are you going to kick O'Brien's ass twice?" Braden replies, "I don't know yet. If I get the chance, I'm gonna! The problem is he only has one scrawny little ass." Eddie informs Braden, "no, bro. You got it all wrong. He's got two asses. The other one is sitting on his neck." Braden laughs, telling Eddie, "you might be right about that!" Braden, who can run 880 yards in the

time O'Brien takes to run 440 yards, cannot resist the temptation to prove that every year.

Mark tells Braden, "with any luck, bro, you might break the State record in the 440 this year." Braden, getting fired up, replies, "I own the record!" Throwing out a challenge, Mark reminds Braden, "that's no excuse. You can still break your own record." They all then chill out, and watch the rest of the heats.

After the 100-yard dash heats are completed, it's on to the 440-yard dash. Between these two events, Mr. Frazier is able to trim the field down to the most competitive athletes. With the heats being run in the same order, Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Hoffer, and John are up first. This is Braden's race, in which he set the State record a few days ago. All of the runners in this heat have already made the team. Today, Mr. Frazier is seeing how fast they are, and showing everyone else, including Mr. Crum and Mr. O'Brien, the standard for making the team. Oddly, Mr. Frazier is not bothering to put Jimmy O'Brien up against Braden today. O'Brien's deficiencies will become self evident when the time comes.

The first heat gets in the blocks, with Braden getting the inside lane. Mr. Frazier tells the rest of the athletes, "watch these guys carefully as they run. The race you are about to see is the highest level of competition you will see in this event all year!" Mr. Frazier not only said that for the athletes watching the race, but for those running the race as well. Kathy tells Eddie, "good luck, sweetie!" Mr. Frazier announces, "on your marks." The runners get positioned, and Mr. Frazier announces, "set." The gun is fired, and the six star athletes are out of the blocks.

Braden takes the lead, with Eddie and Mark right behind him. Fifty yards into the race, Eddie drops into second place, drafting off of Braden. Mark is fighting it out with Johnson for third place. Hoffer and John deliver a better than expected start, and are right behind Johnson.

As they approach the curve, Chuckie, who is trying out for the field events, turns around. Seeing Eddie and the tribe coming around the curve, Chuckie throws the javelin right into the field of runners. Envisioning what is about to happen, Mr. Zunde yells out, "heads up!" Seeing the javelin about to hit him, Eddie tries to get out of its way. The javelin glances off of Eddie's leg, leaving a gash on his calf. Eddie goes down hard, taking Mark and Johnson down with him.

Kathy, seeing what happened, runs toward Eddie, screaming, "Eddie! Eddie! Are you okay?" Mr. Frazier and Paula also run over to aid the runners. Chuckie walks over to Goldstein, followed by Goldstein giving Chuckie a high-five. Directing his attention to Chuckie and Goldstein, Mr. Zunde, who saw exactly what happened, exclaims at the top of his voice,

“what was that?” Eddie, however, knows exactly what occurred, and he’s had enough of it. Eddie has patiently tolerated Chuckie for years. Seeing what happened, Mr. Crum comes down from the bleachers to take control of the situation.

Eddie stands up and walks toward Chuckie. Chuckie backs away, exclaiming, “no! Somebody stop him! Somebody stop him! He’s going crazy!” Eddie continues to walk toward Chuckie, and no one dares to stop him. Braden exclaims, “uh oh. Here it comes! This is the end of the road for Chuckie!” Chuckie starts running, so Eddie jogs to catch him, which wasn’t at all hard to do. Eddie grabs Chuckie, and drags him toward the newly built storage building. Seeing what is about to happen, Mr. Frazier tells Erika to go inside and call the police and get an ambulance. Adding his two cents, Mr. Crum yells out to Eddie, “let him go!”

Eddie rams Chuckie against the brick storage building, and proceeds to pummel Chuckie’s mid section. Eddie turns Chuckie around, and forcefully smashes his face into the brick a few times. Making sure Chuckie is never able to throw a javelin again, Eddie twists Chuckie’s right arm into a position that it was never intended to move. A loud crack is heard coming from Chuckie’s shoulder, which is nothing compared to the loud scream Chuckie let out. Eddie does the same with Chuckie’s left arm. As Eddie holds Chuckie up, he delivers a solid right uppercut, rivaling the one Braden gave to Goldstein, sending Chuckie to the ground. Finishing off Chuckie, Eddie kicks him in his rib cage followed by a swift and very powerful kick to his hip, and walks away.

Eddie walks slowly toward the bench, having enough of Chuckie’s crap. Kathy, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and Paula join him. Kathy, who is crying and traumatized by what happened, holds Eddie and asks, “sweetie, are you okay?” Eddie replies, “no! I twisted something when I went down.”

Mark and Johnson join Eddie on the bench. Mr. Frazier asks Mark and Johnson, “how about you guys? Are you okay?” Mark tells Mr. Frazier, “I think I’m done for today.” Johnson agrees, adding, “me too. My leg’s all cut up from landing on the track.” Johnson’s leg received a bad abrasion when he went down on the gravel track. Mr. Frazier takes a look, and heads to the storage building to get the first aid kit.

Meanwhile, Chuckie is laying on the ground hyperventilating, and screaming in pain. Mr. O’Brien and Mr. Crum go over to help Chuckie, not that there’s much that they can do.

Mr. Crum approaches Eddie, and yells out, “Edward, I want to see you right now in my office!” Eddie yells back at Mr. Crum, “shut up, you piece of shit!” Pointing to Chuckie laying on the ground, Eddie yells out at Mr.

Crum, “if I’m ever in your office again, take a good look, junior! That’s what I’m going to do to you, you sorry ass piece of shit!” Eddie has clearly had enough of Chuckie and Mr. Crum. And, after seeing the job Eddie just did on Chuckie, Mr. Crum becomes frightened, shaking like a leaf in the wind.

Mr. Zunde, yelling at Mr. Crum, exclaims, “Crum, this is all your fault! This is exactly why everyone should not have their ‘fair chance’ at trying out!” Seeing Mr. O’Brien attending to Chuckie, Mr. Zunde exclaims, “and, this is your fault too, O’Brien! This is exactly what happens with your definition of ‘fair’. And, let me add, since you are always interested in what is fair, that idiot laying on the ground just got his fair recompense for what he just did!”

The police arrive, and immediately see the commotion. It’s hard not to notice Chuckie, who is still screaming in pain. The senior officer, Officer Richard Hayes, pointing to Chuckie, tells the rookie officer, “go and see what that character’s problem is.” Officer Hayes asks, “who’s in charge here?” Mr. Crum quickly replies, “I am. I’m the principal.” Mr. Zunde tells the principal, “you’re not in charge of anything out here, Crum. Go back to your office, and push your pencil around. Or, maybe you should use a crayon so you don’t hurt yourself.” That about says it to the senior officer, who now clearly understands that Mr. Zunde is in charge.

The rookie officer, reporting back to Officer Hayes, explains, “we have to ship that one out fast. He’s pretty bad. Both shoulders look like they’ve been dislocated. He’s in some pretty serious pain.” Officer Hayes tells his partner, “radio for a bus. Monitor him occasionally until they arrive.” Mr. Frazier tells the senior officer, “we already called for an ambulance.” The officer informs Mr. Frazier, “they’ll respond faster with an additional call coming from us.”

Turning his attention to Mr. Zunde, Officer Hayes asks, “okay, what happened here?” Mr. Zunde explains, “Charles Black, the guy laying on the ground over there, intentionally threw a javelin into a pack of runners. Three of the runners went down. One of them apparently saw it fit to kick the shit out of him.” Officer Hayes asks Mr. Zunde, “how do you know it was intentional?” Pointing to the red zone², Mr. Zunde explains, “the javelin is thrown in that direction. Charles turned around, and threw it right into the field of runners. Then, he gave another student a high-five, celebrating what he just did.” The officer asks, “who did he give the high-

² Red Zone: That part of the field into where the airborne implements are thrown

five to?" Pointing to Goldstein, Mr. Zunde replies, "that guy standing over there, Andrew Goldstein."

Perceiving that he is potentially in trouble, Goldstein runs toward the school. Officer Hayes pursues Goldstein, who is running from the scene. Braden steps in and, outrunning the officer, chases down Goldstein. Braden catches Goldstein who, remembering what happened last semester, dares not fight back. Braden hands Goldstein over to the officer, who escorts Goldstein back to the track.

The officer tells Goldstein, "sit on the bench and, if you run away again, I'm handcuffing you to the bench." Eddie whispers to Mark, "I could just belt his ass to the fence." Seeing that this is no minor incident, the officer tells everyone to have a seat on the bench.

Officer Hayes tells Mr. Zunde, "so, where were we? Oh, yeah. You mentioned this Charles Black character threw a javelin into a pack of runners. Where is this javelin now?" Mr. Zunde tells Wendy, "bring the javelin here." Wendy drives the Cushman over and brings the javelin to the officer.

Taking a look at the javelin and noticing the very sharp end, the officer asks, "let me see if I understand this correctly. This Charles Black character intentionally threw this into a pack of runners?" Mr. Zunde replies, "yes. That is correct." Holding the javelin, Officer Hayes asks the athletes, "who here saw this javelin thrown into the group of runners?" All of the sprinters raise their hand. Mr. Frazier tells Officer Hayes, "the guys who were running are the fastest guys in the State. I told the rest of my sprinters to watch the race carefully as they run. They all had their eyes on the race." The senior officer tells his partner, "get all of their names, please."

Officer Hayes asks, "and, who beat up this Charles Black character?" Eddie replies, "me. I did." Officer Hayes, who remembers Eddie from the pizzeria years ago, pulls Eddie aside for a moment, and asks him, "so, what happened out here?" Eddie explains, "the Chuckie threw the javelin at us when we were running the 440-yard dash." Officer Hayes asks Eddie, "tell me why you beat him." Removing the gauze over the cut on his calf, which is still profusely bleeding if the pressure is removed, Eddie replies, "he hit me with the javelin, right here." The officer asks, "so, the javelin actually hit you?" Eddie replies, "yes. And, when I went down, I sprained my hip or something."

Officer Hayes, gathering that Mr. Frazier is the head coach, asks him what happened. Mr. Frazier gives his side of the story to the officer, which is the same as how Mr. Zunde saw it. Both officers then talk to the

athletes who were in the race, getting their perspective. Mr. Crum, pacing up and down the track is, at the moment, ignored by the officers.

Recognizing Goldstein from earlier this year, the officers also get Goldstein's statement, not that it's worth much. Officer Hayes asks Goldstein, "did you give this Charles Black character a high-five after he threw the javelin into the group of runners?" Knowing that he is potentially in more trouble, Goldstein replies, "yeah, yeah. But, I didn't really mean it. It was an accident. Yeah, yeah, that's what it was. An accident." The officer replies, asking, "you didn't mean it? Would you care to explain that further?" Goldstein replies, "yeah, yeah. Charles threw the long pole. Isn't that what he was supposed to do?" Mr. Zunde interjects, telling Officer Hayes, "you're wasting your time with him. He's got a rotted turnip for a brain." The officer replies, "I can see that."

Mr. O'Brien, hearing Mr. Zunde's comment, tells Mr. Zunde, "I don't think your comment was appropriate, now, do you?" Mr. Zunde, lecturing Mr. O'Brien, explains, "O'Brien, shut up. I don't care what you think. In fact, you cannot think at all. If you had half a brain in your head, which is really giving you the benefit of the doubt, you would quickly realize what happened out here was no accident. It was clearly intentional. And, you're just as much of a moron as that guy laying on the ground over there. Why don't you just do us all a favor and get out of here permanently?" Mr. Zunde clearly has little tolerance for Mr. O'Brien.

After taking everyone's statement, referring to the javelin, Officer Hayes tells the athletes and the coaches, "I don't care what you call this thing on the track. To me, this is called a deadly weapon. When it is intentionally directed to hit someone, that is called assault with a deadly weapon and could be construed as attempted murder. And, just from the looks of some of you, if you were to throw this at someone, you could easily kill them."

Officer Hayes tells his partner, "get the details on that guy on the ground. He's under arrest. Start with assault with a deadly weapon. We'll sort out the rest of the charges downtown." Chuckie is apparently in a lot of trouble. Mr. Crum and Mr. O'Brien, hearing the officer's edict, begin to sweat.

The paramedics arrive, and attend to Chuckie. Quite incoherent, Chuckie does not recall who kicked the shit out of him. As he is crying in pain, Chuckie screams out, "my plane crashed! Where's my plane?" Hearing this, Eddie tells Officer Hayes, "well, that explains it all." Officer Hayes asks, "explains what?" Eddie informs the officer, "that asshole is always taking drugs. It sounds like he's high again." The officer now sees yet another dimension to the problem.

Mr. Zunde, finding this all very interesting, walks over to Chuckie as he is being belted to a gurney. Officer Hayes, now also quite interested, follows Mr. Zunde. Mr. Zunde asks Chuckie, "Charles, what happened to you?" Chuckie cries out as he is gasping for air, "my plane crashed! Where is it? Where's my plane?" Mr. Zunde asks, "did Eddie beat you up?" Chuckie babbles, "no! My plane crashed! Find my plane!"

Mr. Zunde tells the paramedics, "he's a known drug user." Officer Hayes tells the paramedics, "make sure they screen him for drugs when you take him in." Mr. Zunde tells Chuckie, "Charles, these nice men are going to take you to your airplane now. You'll be back up in the air again soon." Officer Hayes laughs, and whispers to Mr. Zunde, "that was a good one."

After the officers have left and the paramedics take Chuckie away, Mr. Crum, standing with Mr. O'Brien, tells Mr. Frazier, "what is it with your team? Every year, there seems to be some altercation out here during tryouts." Mr. Frazier informs Mr. Crum, "every time there is an altercation, this Chuckie character, Jimmy O'Brien, Haynes, or Goldstein are involved. Does that tell you anything?" Continuing to verbally pummel Mr. Crum, Mr. Frazier continues, exclaiming, "and, you're the one who wanted these guys to have their 'fair chance' at making the team! And, we won't even bring up that crap you pulled with Paul Mahoney two years ago." Mr. Crum, who has been backed into a corner, has no rebuttal. Mr. Crum has again been caught red handed interfering with athletics.

With the team together, and Mr. Crum present, Mr. Frazier informs the team, "as I said over the indoor season, anyone who pulls the kind of crap that Charles Black just pulled is on their own. If you are stupid enough to throw a javelin at someone, and get your ass kicked, that's your own problem. Don't make it mine. That about does it for tryouts today. Everyone come back tomorrow, and meet in the auxiliary gym after school."

The next day, Eddie is absent from school. Eddie's mother takes him to a chiropractor, who found out Eddie's hip got misaligned when he went down on the track. The doctor, giving some good news, tells them that, after a few visits, Eddie should be fine. Other good news is that Eddie's spine is found to be in really good shape. The bad news is that Eddie will have to skip track tryouts and practice for a few days.

But, Eddie's bad news is good news compared with the news Chuckie got once he got pulled from his plane wreckage. Chuckie is being charged with assault with a deadly weapon by the district attorney. Once Chuckie is out of the hospital, he will again land in jail. His parents will probably bail him out, and he'll end up back in school. Chuckie, however, will likely not graduate because Mr. Zunde will make sure he fails gym

class. Or, perhaps, Mr. Zunde will pass Chuckie in gym class just to get rid of him once and for all.

And, sure enough, Chuckie's drug test came back positive. With very high levels of THC³, Chuckie is apparently now taking it in pill form. The police returned with a warrant to search Chuckie's locker, and found enough THC in pill form to fly Chuckie to the moon and back. They also found bennies in Chuckie's locker, which are Goldstein's primary commodity. The police also decided to search Goldstein's locker again, finding nothing this time. The police deduce that Goldstein is still dealing, and Chuckie's locker is his local warehouse. But, it doesn't matter. The drugs were in Chuckie's locker, and he'll probably use the worthless defense of not knowing how they got there.

After school, on Thursday, Mr. Frazier trims the team down to the competitive athletes. This was not a difficult task to do this year. Mr. Frazier, annoyed by the events of yesterday, set the standard very high. The rumor is that, because Eddie, Mark, and Johnson are absent from school today, Mr. Frazier is very ticked off. Anyone who could not perform at the required level was sent back to the locker room immediately.

And, because Mr. O'Brien was watching from the bleachers, Mr. Frazier gave Jimmy O'Brien every chance to make the team and every benefit of the doubt. Allowing Jimmy to run in every event, Mr. Frazier gave him every chance to demonstrate his skill, or lack of it. At the end of the workout, O'Brien's legs were shaking so badly that he could not even stand up. Wendy had to drive O'Brien back to the school in the Cushman. Needless to say, O'Brien was cut from the team, and justifiably so. An eighteen-second 100-yard dash, a 115-second quarter mile, and a four and a half-minute 880-yard run are not exactly competitive times.

The next day, on Friday, Jimmy O'Brien was absent from school. O'Brien didn't even have the strength to get dressed in the morning. O'Brien upchucked his breakfast, but that is not the biggest problem he will face today. When O'Brien went to the bathroom, his urine was a very dark color. Mrs. O'Brien called the doctor, who instructed her to bring her son to the hospital emergency room immediately. O'Brien was so weak that he couldn't even make it to the car, so an ambulance had to be called.

At the emergency room, they ran a few tests on O'Brien. O'Brien was admitted to the hospital with a severe case of rhabdomyolysis, where

³ THC: Tetrahydrocannabinol, i.e., the chemical compound in cannabis responsible for the 'high'.

damaged muscle tissue breaks down very rapidly. O'Brien developed the condition because he was severely dehydrated during intense physical exertion. The doctor informed Mrs. O'Brien that her son is lucky to be alive, and that he could have dropped dead on the track from a cardiac arrhythmia. If that had happened, O'Brien would essentially have cut himself from the team, solving Mr. Frazier's problem of doing so. Although there were plenty of salt tablets, Gatorade, and water available, O'Brien did not see the value in keeping himself well hydrated.

Mark and Johnson return to school on Friday, but no one has heard from Eddie after he kicked the shit out of Chuckie. Eddie has been called to the principal's office several times over the last two days. Although Mr. Crum has no authority on the sports field, it doesn't stop him from stirring the pot. Eddie decides to embellish a bit regarding his injury, taking another day off. Eddie has something more important to do. Today, he and Kathy are buying their house.

Eddie and Kathy drive to the attorney's office, but they drive separately since Kathy has to come from school. Kathy picked the law firm, which is Davies and Rice, L.L.P., for a very good reason. The partners are John Davies and Joseph Rice, who both attended Northside High School years ago. John Davies, the school's quarterback many years ago, lost a football scholarship because of Mr. Crum. Joseph Rice was also on the football team at that time, and was the school's star wide receiver. Neither of the attorneys are fans of Mr. Crum.

When they arrive, Eddie and Kathy wait a few minutes while the paperwork is prepared. While they are waiting, Kathy asks Eddie, "how's your hip doing?" Eddie replies, "after the visit to the chiropractor, it's doing a whole lot better. I have to go one or two more times. I scheduled my other appointments during school." Kathy asks, "when do you get to run again?" Eddie replies, "the doctor says I can probably start running again on Monday or Tuesday. But, he also said that I can kick the shit out of anyone who throws a javelin at me again." Kathy laughs, and asks, "no! He didn't say that, did he?" Eddie tells Kathy, "yeah, he did, sort of. But not exactly in those words."

When they are called in by the attorney, Kathy tells Eddie, "I'm so excited! We're getting our house in the woods!" Kathy and Eddie sit at the conference table, across from the seller. The seller is amazed at how young the buyers are. The real estate agent has previously told the seller that Kathy is someone famous, and not to ask questions because Kathy doesn't like the publicity. Mr. Rice, the attorney, goes over the paperwork, which is minimal since Eddie and Kathy are paying cash for the house. Kathy hands over the certified funds, and in return they get the keys to their new house.

After the seller and the real estate agent leave, Eddie asks Mr. Rice for a favor. Eddie briefly explains to the attorney what happened on the track Wednesday. Mr. Rice assures Eddie that he is not in any trouble, but that is not about what Eddie was asking. Eddie asks Mr. Rice for a note so he can get back into school. Eddie asks that the note be written to get the principal, Mr. Crum, off his back. Mr. Rice, who has had his own run-ins with Mr. Crum in the past, fully understands Eddie's position. Mr. Rice is glad to draft the letter for Eddie.

As Eddie and Kathy wait for the letter, they talk for a while. Eddie tells Kathy, "the first thing we have to do is change the locks." Kathy agrees, and that will be one of the first projects on the list. After all, Eddie has a few days off from working out. Kathy and Eddie talk about all the things they have to do in the next few days. High on Kathy's list is making sure the pool water is good and that there are no dead frogs in the skimmers.

The attorney returns with the letter. Handing it to Eddie, Mr. Rice asks, "how's this?" Eddie reads the letter, written on an official letterhead, which states,

To Whom it May Concern:

Please be advised that the law firm of Davies and Rice represents Mr. Edward Bogenskaya for recent developments over the last few days. Please direct any and all communication regarding these developments to our office. Also, please be advised that Mr. Bogenskaya has not agreed to any ex parte communications regarding the matter at hand.

Please be further advised that Mr. Bogenskaya is of full legal age, and has the legal right to leave school grounds to seek representation. I strongly suggest that you do not harass Mr. Bogenskaya for being late to school.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Rice, Esq.

After Kathy and Eddie read the letter, Eddie replies, "wow!" Mr. Rice tells Eddie, "I intentionally left out how I represent you. If you read the letter, it is fully truthful regarding the purchase of your and Kathy's house. Let Mr. Crum come to his own wrong conclusion, which he will do." And, that is exactly what Mr. Crum will do, come to the wrong conclusion.

Eddie and Kathy laugh, knowing that Mr. Crum is going to have a shit fit. Mr. Rice tells Eddie, "if he calls here, I'll get him off your back. And, I'm sure that Mr. Crum will enjoy seeing the name John Davies again, which is also on the letterhead." Eddie thanks Mr. Rice for the note. For now, Kathy has to head back to the University, and Eddie has to go to school.

Eddie returns to school in the early afternoon. Walking into the administration area, Eddie asks for a late pass. Mrs. Marlowe tells Eddie, "Mr. Crum has been wanting to see you." Eddie informs Mrs. Marlowe, "tell Mr. Crum that I don't want to see him." Mrs. Marlowe asks Eddie, "do you have a note from your parents?" Eddie replies, "no. I have something better," and hands the letter drafted by Mr. Rice to Mrs. Marlowe. Looking at the letter, Mrs. Marlowe dares not question Eddie further. She hands Eddie a late pass, and Eddie goes to class.

Within a few minutes, it's a sure bet Mr. Crum will have seen Eddie's letter, and will spend the rest of the day worrying his ass off. For the rest of the day, no announcement is made calling Eddie to the principal's office.

After school, Eddie skips track practice, and runs a few errands. Kathy, however, still has to show up to track practice. She will update Mr. Frazier on Eddie's condition, letting him know that Eddie will return next week. Heading to the locksmith of the future through the portal, Eddie buys new high-tech Abloy locks for the house. When he returns to his time, Eddie picks up some pool supplies that he knows he'll need. Eddie and Kathy will probably be making many trips to the hardware store in the next few months.

On Monday morning, Eddie walks into physics class and all the students cheer. Apparently, Chuckie is not the most admired guy in school, and many students were glad to hear that he got his ass kicked. Eddie takes his seat among the tribe. Goldstein and Haynes wisely sit on the other side of the classroom today. They are very unclear about what line Chuckie crossed when he got the shit kicked out of him. Whatever that line may be, they certainly do not want to cross it themselves. After all, in more than three-and-a-half years of high school, no one has ever seen Eddie kick the shit out of anyone.

At the end of first period, the inevitable words come over the loudspeaker, "Edward Bogenskaya please report to the principal's office immediately." Upon hearing the announcement, Mr. Frazier runs to Mr. Crum's office. Mr. Frazier remembered Eddie saying, referring to Chuckie laying on the ground, "if I'm ever in your office again, take a good look, junior. That's what I'm going to do to you, you sorry ass piece of shit!"

Eddie takes his time going to Mr. Crum's office today, making sure that Mr. Crum is the one having to wait this time. Eddie goes out to his car to check his oil, coolant level, and tire pressure, and then heads to the principal's office.

When Eddie finally gets around to visiting Mr. Crum, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are already there waiting for him. Eddie asks Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, "what's this all about?" Mr. Zunde replies, "oh, I'm sure it's about Charles Black." Eddie tells Mr. Zunde, "I told Mr. Crum that I didn't want to see him." Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier both can tell that Eddie is ticked off. Mrs. Marlowe informs Mr. Crum that Eddie has arrived. Mr. Crum invites Eddie into his office. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde follow.

Upon entering Mr. Crum's office, Eddie, Mr. Zunde, and Mr. Frazier see Mrs. Black seated in a guest chair. Instead of taking a seat, Eddie stands alongside his coaches. Taking immediate control of the meeting, Eddie asks Mr. Crum, "what's this all about? I've missed enough school because of my hip injury, and now I'm missing another class!" Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "now, please calm down, Edward." Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "this is calm! Last Wednesday out on the track was not calm! Do you not see any difference?"

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "okay, okay, let me get started." Eddie replies, "waiting," which is a very sarcastic innuendo trademarked by the tribe a few years ago. Mr. Crum, reading from his notes, informs everyone, "during the altercation on the field last Wednesday, Charles suffered a broken nose, three broken ribs, two broken arms, one of which was severely dislocated. Both will require surgery to repair. His left hip was also broken, for which they had to do an immediate surgery to put a screw in. Charles also suffered a neck sprain, a concussion, and severe internal contusions. A contusion is a fancy doctor word for bruising inside the body. And, Charles has a broken jaw and six broken teeth." With a pause in Mr. Crum's discourse, Eddie responds, "so what. That would be his problem, not mine."

Eddie, Mr. Zunde, and Mr. Frazier are all surprised that Mr. Crum and Mrs. Black are remaining so calm, especially with Eddie's nonchalant attitude. And, it is clear to Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier that Eddie is playing offense today, and Mr. Crum is playing defense.

Mr. Crum slides a piece of paper onto his desk, telling Eddie, "I see that you're now represented by an attorney." Eddie, going in for the kill, replies, "oh, good. You can read. I was really beginning to have my doubts." Referring to the letter of representation, Mr. Zunde asks, "may I see that?" Mr. Crum replies, "certainly." Mr. Frazier, who was expecting all hell to break loose by now, is surprised that Mr. Crum has not blown up yet. And, so is Eddie. Mr. Zunde reads the letter that Mr. Rice, the

attorney, gave Eddie last week. Mrs. Black, for some reason, has been very silent.

Knowing that Mr. Crum has no authority in this situation, Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, "Crum, you are beating around the bush. Get to the point already." Mr. Crum responds, "okay, okay. Mrs. Black would like your help, Edward, in getting the district attorney to drop the assault charges against Charles. Charles has suffered enough. He's in great pain, and will be for some time." Eddie replies, "so what. The Chuckie is still alive. He should be grateful."

For the first time contributing to the conversation, Mrs. Black starts sobbing and begs, "Eddie, please! Please consider helping Charles out. He doesn't want to go to jail. They beat him in there." Knowing he can drag this out for a while, Eddie replies, "I'll think about it. I'll talk to my attorney about it. That's all I'm saying for now." Mr. Crum calmly asks, "Eddie, may I ask why you have an attorney?" Eddie firmly replies, "no." By now, it is obvious to everyone that Eddie clearly has the upper hand.

Changing the subject, Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "I thought you called me to your office to give me a gold medal." Mr. Crum asks Eddie, "I'm not sure I understand. Can you please clarify what you are talking about, Edward?" Eddie replies, "sure. I was expecting to get a gold medal for the biggest ass kicking this school has ever seen. I'm kind of disappointed that I didn't get one." Brushing off Eddie's remark, Mr. Crum replies, "Edward, please be a little more serious." Eddie replies, "I am serious. I did a much better job on the Chuckie than Braden did on Goldshit."

Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde are both quite amazed that Mr. Crum is being verbally hammered by Eddie, and yet responds as if he is in a coma. Mr. Frazier whispers to Mr. Zunde, "I have no idea what has gotten into Crum." Mr. Zunde reminds Mr. Frazier, "he's interfered with athletics again, and look at what happened. This Charles Black character and O'Brien are both down, and it's all his fault. And, last season it was Goldstein and that girl, whatever her name was." Mr. Frazier replies, "good point." Mr. Zunde comments, "with all that Eddie has said, Crum should have detonated by now. Crum clearly has another agenda."

Mr. Crum, not wanting to belabor the point, if there even is a point, tells Eddie, "I'm very happy that you're at least considering Mrs. Black's request. I suppose we're done here for the day. Please inform me, Edward, when you have decided if you will help." Eddie replies, "yeah. I'll do that. And, please inform me when you have my gold medal. And, Crum, I want solid gold. Not a gold-plated piece of shit."

Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "Mrs. Marlowe will give you your pass to get back into class." Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "I don't need a pass. You called me

here, so you take care of the paperwork. That makes it your problem, not mine.” Eddie leaves, followed by Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier.

Once they are out of the office, Mr. Zunde asks Eddie, “what’s all this about an attorney?” Eddie laughs, telling Mr. Zunde, “me and Kathy bought a house, and Mr. Rice, the attorney, did all the paperwork last Friday. I told him what happened on Wednesday at tryouts, and he told me I have nothing to worry about. I asked him for a letter to get back into school, and so he gave me that letter. He just represented me and Kathy for the house.” Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier start laughing hysterically.

Eddie tells his coaches, “but, here’s the good part. Mr. Rice, the attorney, said, ‘let Mr. Crum come to his own wrong conclusion,’ about the note.” Mr. Zunde comments, “and Mr. Crum certainly did.” Mr. Frazier observes, “that letter certainly turned Mr. Crum into a mouse.” Eddie informs Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier, “and, the really good part is John Davies is the other attorney.” Mr. Frazier laughs, and says, “I’m sure that scared Mr. Crum a bit and brought back some bad memories.” Mr. Zunde suggests, “we’ll just let Mr. Crum keep believing his wrong conclusion. It will hopefully keep him at bay for a while.”

Mr. Zunde asks Eddie, “so, where is the house that you and Kathy bought?” Eddie replies, “it’s on Rolling Hill Road. It’s not too far from here.” Mr. Zunde’s eyes become wide open, and he asks, “back behind the school?” Eddie replies, “yeah.” Mr. Zunde tells Eddie, “welcome to the neighborhood!” Eddie asks, “do you live near there?” Mr. Zunde informs Eddie, “yes. I live around the corner from Rolling Hill. It’s a nice and quiet area.” Eddie tells Mr. Zunde, “that’s why Kathy likes it.” Eddie then heads back to class without his late pass. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde head back to the gym, wondering what is really going on with Mr. Crum.

With the opening of the track season right around the corner, Eddie’s hip is getting much better. The same can’t be said about Chuckie, who is still in the hospital. Mr. Frazier is not too concerned that Eddie has not been at track practice since getting injured on the track. In fact, Mr. Frazier has told Eddie that the job he did on Chuckie will get him an A in gym class. Eddie would have gotten an A anyway, but Mr. Frazier couldn’t help but comment. Mr. Frazier also couldn’t resist mentioning that he will fail Chuckie and Goldstein in gym class, making them Mr. Crum’s problem over the Summer. Mr. Frazier does not care if Chuckie and Goldstein have to repeat gym over the Summer. They will be running laps around the track in the heat.

Right before the first Spring track meet, Mr. Crum sees Eddie walking with his friends down the hall during class change. Mr. Crum, appearing to be concerned about Eddie’s health, pulls Eddie aside and talks with him a while. Mr. Crum opens by asking Eddie how his hip is doing and when

he will be cleared to practice again. Eddie tells Mr. Crum that he should be back on the track very soon. Mr. Crum also asks what exactly happened to Eddie's hip, not that he really cares. Mr. Crum was just buying some time.

After the hallway clears out, Mr. Crum asks Eddie, "have you given any consideration to Mrs. Black's request to help Charles out?" Eddie replies, "yes, I have. I'm not helping the Chuckie out at all. The Chuckie can go to jail, where he belongs." Mr. Crum tells Eddie, "Edward, I was really hoping that you would help out with this situation. I'm asking you to reconsider." Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "I'm not reconsidering. The Chuckie can go to jail, and they can rip him another hole for all I care."

Mr. Crum can clearly see that he is getting nowhere with Eddie. So, in no uncertain terms, Mr. Crum sternly tells Eddie, "Edward, let me put it to you this way. If you do not help out Charles, you will not graduate from this school. I'll make sure of it myself." Having a hard time accepting Mr. Crum's belligerence, Eddie replies, "fine. Then, I'm out of here! You can take your school and shove it up your moronic ass! And, good luck with your pussy factory." Eddie, having enough of Mr. Crum, walks out the front door of the school, with absolutely no reason to return.

Mr. Crum stands angrily by himself in the hallway. After Eddie's unexpected reaction, sweat begins to fall from Mr. Crum's face. Wiping his forehead, Mr. Crum walks back toward his office, reasoning to himself that, should anything ever become of this, it's Eddie's word versus his. Mr. Crum figures that no one would believe Eddie over the school's principal anyway.

Except for, perhaps, Mark, Braden, Mitchell, Johnson, and Bobby B., who are hanging out in the alcove leading to the restrooms, and just heard the full conversation. Seeing the core members of the track team hiding in the alcove, and late for class, Mr. Crum asks them, "what are you guys doing here?" Braden replies, "listening to all that bullshit that you tried to ram down Eddie's throat about helping out Chuckie." Mark reassures Mr. Crum, telling him, "we heard the whole thing." Great fear comes over Mr. Crum, as the tribe heads off to class, leaving Mr. Crum standing alone in the hallway.

What Mr. Crum did not know is that, when he pulled Eddie aside, Mark knew Mr. Crum was up to something. Mr. Crum does not act nicely to Eddie, and does not care about Eddie's hip. The principal's behavior today is clearly a red flag and suggests that he has a hidden agenda. Mark, and the others, quietly slipped into the alcove to the restroom to hear what Mr. Crum's real order of business was. And, without a doubt, they found out.

Taking advantage of his self-prescribed time off of school, Eddie searches for Kurt Richter, the Georgia Tech Engineer who modified Kathy's Porsche. The first place Eddie heads to is the county library, where they have phone books for all of the neighboring cities. Hoping that Kurt lives in the area, Eddie goes through the phone books one by one. Fortunately, for Eddie, he is not looking for a guy named John Smith. Finding only one entry for a Kurt Richter in a town near the beach, Eddie thinks he has found it. Writing down the address and phone number, Eddie will try to call later.

Driving back to the school later that day, Eddie walks toward the track to see how practice is going. Standing at the side of the storage building where he cannot be seen, he watches from a distance as Mr. Frazier, Kathy, and Paula have the team run relay drills. Wendy, driving the Cushman, retrieves the airborne instruments and returns them to the launch site. Barbara, managing the distance team, heads out on a run along the three-mile path behind the school. No one notices Eddie as he watches today's activities. To Eddie, it looks as if the wheels are turning fine and the team doesn't really need him after all.

Eddie watches as the team practices. Eddie recalls how Chuckie's mother begged him to help out Chuckie by influencing the district attorney to drop the assault charges against Chuckie. Eddie is very firm in his decision not to help Chuckie at all. Eddie thinks about all the shit Mr. Crum gave him and Kathy over the last few years, and now Mr. Crum wants a favor in return. Eddie thinks to himself that is not going to happen. Eddie then recalls how Mr. Crum threatened him earlier today, telling him that he will not graduate unless he helps Chuckie.

Eddie reasons that, if he is never going to graduate, there is no point in returning to school anymore, not even for track. Eddie wonders why he just doesn't go and work for Angelo now. The track team will be fine without him and, after all, he'll be gone next year anyway. Disgusted with his school and Mr. Crum, Eddie decides to never return to school, and walks back to his car.

Kathy, who was waiting for Eddie all day, catches her first glimpse of Eddie as he is walking away. Kathy has a flashback to the time when Eddie was a freshman and she first met him. Kathy recalls she was waiting patiently for Eddie to come out of the locker room, but he left out the back exit. She then checked the front of the school, and saw Eddie off in a distance, riding away on his bicycle. The sad feeling she felt then suddenly comes back to her as she sees Eddie almost to his car. Kathy senses that something is seriously wrong.

Eddie gets into his car, and Kathy runs to him, yelling, "Eddie! Eddie!" Eddie couldn't hear Kathy's cry over the sound of his engine starting.

Eddie backs out of his parking place and drives away, totally unaware that Kathy was running to him. In tears, Kathy walks back to the track, and sits on the bench and cries.

Concerned about Kathy, Mr. Frazier runs over, and asks her, "Kathy, what's wrong?" Kathy tells him, "something's wrong with Eddie! He came here, and then he drove away!" Mr. Frazier asks, "how do you know something is wrong?" Still crying, Kathy replies, "Eddie wouldn't do that! Eddie just wouldn't do that! That's not like him! Something is wrong! I know it!"

Not knowing what to do, Mr. Frazier waves to Mark, Braden, Johnson, Bobby B., and a few others, signaling for them to come over. Mr. Frazier asks the group, "does anyone know if anything is wrong with Eddie?" Braden steps up, and replies, "yeah. After that shit went down with Mr. Crum today, he walked out of the school." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "what shit?" Braden explains, "Mr. Crum threatened Eddie, and told him that, if he doesn't help out Chuckie, he won't graduate from this school. Then, Eddie told Mr. Crum that he can take his school and shove it up his ass." Mr. Frazier exclaims, "what? When was this?" Braden replies, "between fifth and sixth period. We all heard it."

Hearing what happened earlier today with Eddie, Kathy cries harder, as Paula gives her a hug. Paula tells Kathy, "it's going to be okay. Don't worry. Eddie is probably okay." Kathy tells Paula, "no! Something is wrong, and you know it!" Paula whispers to Kathy, "yeah, you're right. I know it. Superpowers." Paula holds Kathy as she cries in anger at what Mr. Crum is reported to have done.

Mr. Frazier walks over to Mr. Zunde, taking Braden and the others with him. Mr. Frazier tells Braden to explain to Mr. Zunde what he heard earlier today. After hearing the complete story, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "I don't even know how to begin to sort this one out." Mr. Zunde informs Mr. Frazier, "me either. This one needs to go directly to the school board. Crum has crossed the line this time. He's gone way too far." Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Zunde, "there's nothing I can do about this right now. And, the first meet is tomorrow! Shit!"

Mr. Frazier returns to Kathy, who has somewhat calmed down, telling her, "if you want, you can take the rest of the day off. Maybe you can find Eddie and see what's up." Kathy tells Mr. Frazier, "we're almost done. I'll just head over to Eddie's house after practice." Kathy doesn't want to leave because she doesn't want to be alone. She'd rather stay with her friends rather than drive around aimlessly looking for Eddie if she doesn't find him at home.

After practice, Kathy drives to Eddie's house, where no one is home at the moment. Her next stop is the house Kathy and Eddie bought, thinking Eddie might be there, working on something. Kathy does not find Eddie there either. Kathy checks Angelo's Service Station, and Angelo informs Kathy that he has not seen Eddie today.

After driving around for an hour, Kathy finds Eddie nowhere, and decides to drive to Paula's house. Not seeing Paula's Jeep in the driveway, Kathy drives home. When she gets home, she asks her mother if Eddie has called. Kathy's mother tells her that he has not. Kathy goes to her room, closes her door, and cries on her bed hoping to hear from Eddie soon. No word about Eddie comes, and Kathy cries herself to sleep.

That night, Eddie came home very late. Eddie drove down to the beach to see Kurt Richter, the engineer who modified Kathy's Porsche. Eddie had a very long and interesting conversation with Kurt, learning more in their six-hour meeting than in an entire semester of school. Kurt showed Eddie a few of his other projects. One project, a dune buggy built on a square tubular steel frame, with a Porsche 911 engine and drive train, caught Eddie's eye. Eddie was quite impressed with the vehicle, which was built from the ground up. Kurt explained to Eddie that his MGB would handle a lot better if he removed the rear leaf springs and replaced them with an independent rear suspension. Kurt even showed Eddie how to make the modifications. Eddie, however, prefers to leave his MGB close to factory specifications.

The next day at school, Eddie is absent. Eddie is never absent on the day of a track meet. Mr. Crum keeps asking the school secretary, Mrs. Marlowe, whether Eddie has arrived at school. Mr. Crum even takes a few trips outside to the school parking lot to check whether Eddie's MGB is out there. It's easy to come to the conclusion that Mr. Crum is paranoid or worrying about something.

Mr. Crum is so obsessed about Eddie's absence that he completely missed the fact that Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are also absent today. While Mr. Crum is running outside to check the parking lot every ten minutes, Mr. Zunde and Mr. Frazier are meeting with Dr. Noreen Brooks, the superintendent of schools, about yesterday's incident.

Mr. Crum, who has walked a few miles back and forth, will not find Eddie's car in the high school parking lot. Eddie is sitting in his car, parked at the University, close to Kathy's car, waiting for Kathy to get out of class.

Seeing Kathy walking to her car, Eddie gets out of his car and runs up to her. Kathy exclaims, "Eddie! I was so worried about you! Are you okay?" Eddie replies, "yeah, I'm fine. My hip is a lot better!" Kathy asks, "I

looked for you all day yesterday! Where were you?" Eddie tells Kathy, "I found Kurt Richter, the guy who modified your car. So, I drove down to the beach where he lives. We talked for a long time. Time got away from me and I got home really late last night."

Somewhat relieved, Kathy asks, "how come you're not in school?" Eddie, explaining all of what happened with Mr. Crum, tells Kathy, "I'm not going back." Kathy begs Eddie, "Eddie, you have to go back! You're out of there in three months anyway!" Eddie explains that his parents are behind him, and that he can always get a GED. After a long discussion, Kathy finally sees Eddie's point and understands. If he's been assured that he won't graduate, there is no point at all in going back. And, Kathy is livid, using quite a colorful vocabulary to describe Mr. Crum.

Kathy reminds Eddie, "the first meet is today. Are you going to be there?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I'm coming to watch. I'll be standing next to the equipment building. Once the sprints are over, I'll move to the bleachers. But, don't tell anyone that I'm there." Kathy tells Eddie, "okay. I'll see you there, hon." Eddie heads out to his and Kathy's new house, where there is an abundance of projects waiting for him. Installing the new door locks are at the top of the list, which Eddie plans to do today.

Kathy is relieved that Eddie is okay. Knowing that Eddie was waiting for her all morning really made her day. After their hour long conversation, Kathy has to go to her last class of the day. After that, it's off to the high school for the first meet of the Spring season. Kathy will have to be the one to break the news to Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde that Eddie won't be returning to school or running track. While Kathy understands Eddie's position, explaining it to Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde will not be easy.