

Eddie, The Collegiate Freshman

Chapter Six The Shit Hits the Fan

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Eddie never needed anything the University had to offer to begin with, and certainly doesn't need anything the University has to offer now. Eddie, however, has everything the University wants. Running the 100-yard dash in 9.1 seconds, Eddie is among the fastest men in the world. Any college or university would be glad to have him on their track team. Eddie has helped the University's track team in every way imaginable.

Chief Toledo's investigation revealed that the lot number and the production date of the steroids that McCutchen and Leggett attempted to plant in Mark's locker match those that were found in Eddie's locker. What Chief Toledo could not say to the team and the coaches is that his investigation also revealed that the anabolic steroids found at the crime scene are the identical substance that McCutchen tested positive for two years ago while in high school. Remembering that McCutchen was disqualified during the indoor State invitational meet during his senior year due to steroid use, Officer Braden had the records subpoenaed. The records were sitting in Dr. Karakova's office, which he was more than happy to turn over. Those records are now officially part of the investigation.

Officer Braden, after making the bust, began his own investigation into McCutchen and Leggett. Braden has discovered that Leggett's father is a locksmith. Leggett, who is apparently quite proficient at picking locks, is now a suspect in a few other campus break-ins. One such incident involved the theft of twenty stopwatches from the track office one year ago, with no evidence of forced entry. Another rash of incidents, which occurred earlier this year, involved the theft of money and other valuables from a particular dormitory on campus, again with no forced entry. It just so happens that Leggett happens to live in that dormitory, on the same floor where most of the break-ins were reported.

McCutchen, likewise, is not so innocent. Records from the alumni office revealed that McCutchen's father donates a lot of money to the University, which is why McCutchen is on the track team. It also explains why McCutchen's older brother, who has since graduated, was formerly on the University's track team. Apparently, the McCutchen brothers have bought their way onto the team, courtesy of their father. Braden's investigation also revealed that their father, Scott McCutchen, Senior, attended the University many years ago, and was also on the track team.

A warrant was obtained to search McCutchen's dorm room, where additional quantities of anabolic steroids were discovered, again matching those that were found at the crime scene. While McCutchen was in the infirmary, he consented to a drug test in writing, which revealed that he was, in fact, using anabolic steroids. The steroids McCutchen is using also chemically matched those found in Eddie's and Mark's locker. Ironically, McCutchen never read what he signed, and is whining like a baby that he got caught.

When a student is subject to certain types of disciplinary action, they have the right to a hearing. In some cases, such as Eddie's, the hearing is mandatory. Before the hearing is conducted, the case is often fully investigated by both sides. In Eddie's situation, the two sides of the case were blurred in the beginning. As soon as the evidence was discovered and presented, the evidence on each side became crystal clear. Since there was absolutely no evidence incriminating Eddie, the hearing is just a matter of formality to clear Eddie's name and restore his reputation.

When the day of Eddie's hearing arrives, many faculty members and administrators are in attendance. Many of those present at Eddie's hearing today technically do not have to attend. Some of those attending today are present just to hear what Dean Grimsby has to say. Others, particularly the track coaches, are curious to find out how this debacle blew up to be such a mess. And, the police officers are attending the hearing to see their exemplary work shine in front of the administrators.

Representing the track team today is Dr. Braun, the head track coach, Coach Herndon, the sprinting coach, and Dr. Paxton the distance coach. Dr. Karakova, the Athletic Director has also chosen to be present today, although his presence is not mandatory. Mr. Gerald Rosenberg, the Director of Admissions, and Dr. Addison Grimsby, the Dean of Students, represent the administration. Chief Anthony Toledo, Officer Jeff Levy, and Officer Axel Braden were requested to be present, primarily due to the part they played in the case. And, with some impressive detective work done by Chief Toledo's department, Chief Toledo strongly desired to see the outcome of his officers' work.

On the student side, McCutchen and Leggett were required by the administration to be present, which was probably meant to serve as a stern warning to them. Eddie's wife, Kathy, was allowed to attend the hearing, so she has chosen to be present. And, of course, Eddie was cordially invited by the University to attend the hearing, since he is the center of attention.

The morning of the hearing arrives, and the participants arrive one by one. It seems that the more important an administrator believes themselves to be, the later they arrive. This behavior seems to be some sort of unofficial game among the faculty and staff. On the side of the administration, Dr. Addison Grimsby, the Dean of Students, is the last to arrive. Bringing along with him a pile of meaningless and irrelevant papers and documents in a thick folder, the dean makes himself look more important than he really is.

With the hearing about ready to begin, Dean Grimsby, who is chairing the meeting today, opens by orating, "good morning. I think we're all here and ready to begin. So, please allow me to get started." After everyone settles down, Dean Grimsby continues, "when a student is subject to certain types of potential disciplinary action, they are granted a hearing where the facts surrounding their case are presented. The facts are then reflected against the law, the University's rules and regulations, and the Code of Student Conduct, arriving at a resolution. The reason for this hearing today is to finalize the alleged charges against Edward Bogenskaya." Dean Grimsby then asks Eddie, "Edward, I'm sure you're fully aware of why you are here today." Answering for Eddie, Kathy tells Dean Grimsby, "in case you haven't noticed, Eddie isn't here." After the embarrassing circumstance sinks in, an uncomfortable silence comes over the room.

Breaking the silence is Dean Grimsby, who asks, "does anyone know where Edward may be?" Dean Grimsby's question goes unanswered, as the room remains silent. Rephrasing his question, Dean Grimsby asks, "has anyone seen Edward today?" Kathy replies, "Eddie was at home when I left this morning." Dean Grimsby asks Kathy, "would you, then, know where Edward is?" Kathy, with distinct hints of a sarcastic tone in her voice, replies, "since he's obviously not here, he might be at home doing something really important, like laundry. Or, he could be working at Angelo's Service Station or working on his brother's Dune Buggy."

Dean Grimsby asks Kathy, "would it be too much trouble for me to ask that you call Edward at home to see if he is there?" Kathy replies, "yes, it would be. But, I'll call anyway." There is no longer any question about Kathy's sarcastic attitude today. In answering Dean Grimsby, the Dean of Students, in the way she did, Kathy has just made her stance perfectly

clear. And, since Kathy's father, the athletic director, is present, there's not a whole lot the dean can say to Kathy in return.

Kathy calls Eddie at home from a phone in the meeting room. Eddie answers the phone, clearing up the question of his whereabouts. Kathy tells Eddie, "hey. I'm here at your hearing. They want to know where you are." Relaying Eddie's response, Kathy tells Dean Grimsby, "he said to tell everyone that he's at home." Dean Grimsby asks Kathy, "is he coming to the hearing?" Kathy asks Eddie, "they want to know are you coming to the hearing?" Relaying Eddie's response, Kathy tells Dean Grimsby, "he said 'no.'" Quite puzzled at Eddie's response, Dean Grimsby tells Kathy, "well, ask him why not." After Kathy and Eddie talk for a moment, Kathy informs Dean Grimsby, "he's at home, working on John's Dune Buggy. They're trying to get it finished before the Summer."

Dean Grimsby asks Kathy, "can you please put Edward on the speaker phone?" Kathy sarcastically comments, "what? Am I the secretary around here or something?" Dean Grimsby is clearly bothered by Kathy's attitude, but he dare not say a thing. Kathy asks Eddie, "they want me to put you on the speaker phone. Is that okay?" Eddie tells Kathy, "sure. This should be fun." Kathy puts Eddie on the speaker phone, and tells Dean Grimsby, "go for it, junior. And, good luck."

Dean Grimsby asks Eddie, "Edward, are you aware that your hearing is being held right now?" Eddie replies, "yes." Dean Grimsby asks, "are you planning to attend?" Eddie replies, "no." Dean Grimsby asks Eddie, "may I ask why not?" Eddie replies, "because I don't give a shit about what you have to say. As far as I am concerned, you can go shit in the ocean for all I care. And, while you're at it, you can shove all that paperwork sitting in front of you up your fat ass."

Dean Grimsby, along with everyone else in the room, is shocked at Eddie's candid and forthright response. Kathy and Braden are trying not to laugh, but neither are too successful. Dean Grimsby firmly tells Eddie, "Edward, for the record, I do not appreciate your attitude." Eddie replies, "I'm sorry. Did I accidentally give you the impression that I give a shit what you think?" As she is drinking from her glass of water, Kathy laughs hysterically at Eddie's response, spraying water all over the immediate area.

Dr. Braun asks Eddie, "Eddie, this is Dr. Braun. I'm asking that you please attend your hearing." Having a change of heart, Eddie replies, "sure. I'll be glad to attend. And, the second I see McCrutchin or lug nut, what I do to them will make what I did to the Chuckie look like a friendly pat on the back." With a puzzled look on his face, Dr. Braun asks Kathy, "what is he talking about?" Kathy tells Eddie, "hey, hold on for a minute, sweetie. I have to explain something to them." Eddie replies, "sure."

Kathy explains to Dr. Braun, “first of all, lug nut is that asshole sitting over there, Steve Leggett.” In light of the recent circumstances of Leggett and McCutchen getting caught planting steroids in Mark’s locker, Leggett dare not respond to Kathy. Kathy continues, “so, when Eddie was a senior in high school, this guy, Chuckie, intentionally threw a javelin at him, cutting Eddie’s leg. Eddie fell to the ground, and sprained his hip, and couldn’t run for a few weeks. Mark and Johnson went down with him, but they didn’t get hit. Mark and Johnson were out for a week. Now, listen carefully. Here’s what Eddie was talking about.”

Kathy, now having everyone’s full attention, continues, “so, Eddie kicked the shit out of the Chuckie. When Eddie was done, the Chuckie ended up with a broken nose, a bunch of broken ribs, two broken arms, a broken hip, a broken jaw, and he lost all his front teeth. Oh, and he also got a really bad concussion. And, that’s just to start. There’s more, but I think you get the picture.”

With everyone now fully understanding Eddie’s reference, Kathy then looks at McCutchen and Leggett, and continues, explaining, “so, Eddie made sure the Chuckie would never throw a javelin again. And, trust me, the Chuckie will never ever throw a javelin again. It took the hospital months to put him back together, and they didn’t do a very good job.” Looking McCutchen and Leggett straight in their eyes, Kathy warns them, “and, if Eddie decides that either of you two assholes will never run again, trust me. You will never run again.”

Remembering the incident, Braden adds, “I remember that! I was in that race! I saw the whole thing when it went down. That Chuckie guy is really lucky to be alive! That went down as the biggest ass kicking that high school has ever seen!”

After hearing the commentary that Braden offered, Kathy tells McCutchen and Leggett, “and, by the way. For your information, Eddie knows the law really well. The second that either of you cross the line, you’re both dead meat. And, just to let you know, during a high school meet this past Winter, Eddie told me, and I quote, ‘when someone threatens my track career, they’re finished.’” Kathy then tells everyone, “so, if what Eddie did to the Chuckie was a friendly pat on the back, I’d really hate to be in McCutchen or lug nut’s shoes right now.”

Great fear comes over McCutchen after hearing Eddie’s response when Chuckie threw a javelin at him. McCutchen realizes that what he and Leggett did is obviously construed by Eddie to be much worse than what Chuckie did. Chuckie took Eddie out of commission for a week or two. McCutchen and Leggett tried to end Eddie’s track career and get him in trouble with the law. Leggett, McCutchen’s accomplice, is now visually shaking, with sweat pouring down his face. And Eddie, at six feet, five

inches, and 260 pounds of solid muscle, can clearly deliver on his threat to kick the shit out of McCutchen and Leggett if he chose to do so.

Kathy asks Dr. Braun, “well? What do you want me to do?” Deciding how the meeting will proceed, Dean Grimsby wisely tells Dr. Braun, “I think it’s best that we proceed without Edward.” Overhearing Dean Grimsby, Eddie announces, “you don’t have any choice. Unless, of course, you want to clean up the mess I leave after I kick the shit out of McCutchen and lug nut.” Kathy sarcastically tells Dean Grimsby, “wow! It sounds like to me that you must have done something to really tick Eddie off! I wonder what that could have been.”

Wanting to get the meeting moving along, Dr. Braun tells Eddie, “Eddie, we’re going to hold the hearing without you. We will call you after the meeting to let you know the results. We would greatly appreciate it if you answer the phone.” Eddie replies, “sure. And, tell McCutchen to watch out for Prickly Sea Spiders.” Eddie hangs up the phone. Now very curious, Dr. Braun asks Kathy, “what was that last comment about Prickly Sea Spiders?” Kathy replies, “Eddie pretty much just told everyone in the room that McCutchen is the biggest sucker on the face of the Earth.” Like Leggett, McCutchen dare not respond to Kathy’s comment.

Dean Grimsby, dishing out sarcasm in frustration, announces, “okay. Now we can finally get on with this meeting.” Kathy replies with the even more sarcastic, “waiting.” Everyone’s attention is now focused on Dean Grimsby, who spends ten minutes rehashing the circumstances surrounding the case brought against Eddie. As Dean Grimsby is speaking, Kathy is twiddling her thumbs in such a way that Dean Grimsby cannot miss or overlook. Kathy’s sarcasm and embellishment of having the floor earlier were quite evident, and well justified. She put forth a great effort to build up this team. And, to see it torn down right before her eyes has boiled her blood.

Dean Grimsby, who apparently likes to hear himself speak, finally gets to the point. The long awaited announcement comes, as he orates, “the administration of this University has examined all of the evidence in this case. It is the official position of this University that Edward Bogenskaya be fully exonerated regarding all the complaints and charges brought against him. It is also the position of this University that Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett are to be placed on disciplinary probation until the time of their hearing, at which time their status will be reevaluated. The administration, however, prefers not to interfere with the Athletic Department’s business. In this case, however, we strongly recommend that all of the students involved will still be permitted to participate with the University’s track team until a final decision is rendered.”

Dean Grimsby concludes, “unless anyone has any further questions, I believe we can adjourn this meeting.” Dr. Braun, who has been having trouble hiding his frustration and anger, suggests, “I don’t think we can adjourn until Eddie has been notified of your edict.” Dr. Braun asks Kathy, “will you please phone Eddie and give him the good news?” Kathy sarcastically replies with an obviously faked sweet tone, “sure. I’d love to.” Dean Grimsby, overriding Dr. Braun, tells Kathy, “when he answers, please put him on speaker. I’ll give him the good news myself.” By delivering the good news, Dean Grimsby apparently wants to be the star of the show.

With dead silence in the room, Kathy makes the call to Eddie. Eddie answers the phone, and Kathy tells him, “hey, they have some news!” Eddie replies, “oh yeah? What’s that?” Kathy informs Eddie, “Dean Grimsby wants to give you the news herself, so she wants me to put you on the speaker phone.” It was no accident that Kathy referred to Dean Grimsby in the feminine. It was Kathy’s special way of calling the dean a pussy. Eddie tells Kathy, “okay. Let’s get this over with.” Kathy puts Eddie on the speaker phone, and sarcastically tells Dean Grimsby, “go for it.”

In an upbeat tone, Dean Grimsby tells Eddie, “Edward, we have come to a decision. You’ll be happy to know that you have been fully exonerated from any and all of the charges brought against you.” Eddie replies, “so what.” Showing some excitement, Dean Grimsby tells Eddie, “you’re back in school, and you’re back on the track team!” Eddie informs Dean Grimsby, “news flash. I’m not coming back to your University. And, as far as the track team goes, they have McCrutchen and.” Dean Grimsby interrupts, and tells Eddie, “Edward, I’m asking you to reconsider.” Repeating the words the dean brazenly spoke to Eddie earlier this semester, Eddie tells Dean Grimsby, “please do not interrupt me again. Is that clear?” Eddie continues, “so, as I was saying, they have McCrutchen and lug nut. The team doesn’t need me. And, tell McCrutchen and lug nut that they are still on very thin ice. And, by the way, Grimsby, I want my twenty dollars for my lock that was destroyed when you had my locker opened. Mail the check to my house. Have a nice life.” Eddie hangs up the phone, and Dean Grimsby is greeted with a dial tone.

Kathy, already knowing well in advance what Eddie’s response was going to be, announces, “well, there you go. And, just for the record, next year I will not be running for the University either. So, please file your administrative paperwork to revoke my scholarship. I’ll just pay for my own education next year.” Focusing her attention on Dean Grimsby, Kathy tells him, “oh, and Dean Grimsby. If you didn’t catch the drift, Eddie pretty much flipped you a bird.” Kathy walks out of the meeting, slamming the door hard on her way out.

After Kathy leaves, Kathy's father, Dr. Karakova, tells Dr. Braun, "well, after what Grimsby put Eddie through, I can't say I blame him for not coming back. If you're lucky, Eddie and Kathy are the only ones you'll lose." Dean Grimsby, defending himself, tells Dr. Karakova, "Alexander, may I remind you that I've fully exonerated and reinstated Edward." Dr. Karakova boldly tells Dean Grimsby, "and, may I remind you that Eddie doesn't seem to give a shit about either you or your decision." Dr. Karakova's last remark ended that conversation quickly, but opened another one.

Dr. Braun hammers his fist on the table, and yells at Dean Grimsby, telling him, "get my star athletes back in this University, and back on my team, immediately!" Dean Grimsby responds, "in light of what I've just heard, I don't know if I can do that, sir." Slamming his fist onto the table again, Dr. Braun raises his voice and tells the dean in no uncertain terms, "did I sound like I gave you a choice? No, I didn't! I told you what you will do, and you will do it! Get Eddie back into this school and back on my team, or I'll be talking to the provost¹. And, if I don't get anywhere with her, I'll be talking to the President of this University. And, for your sake, you had better hope that Kathy doesn't walk from the team!"

Backed into a corner, Dean Grimsby asks Dr. Karakova, "do you think Kathy was serious about quitting the team?" Throwing the ball back into Dean Grimsby's court, Dr. Karakova puts his hands behind his head, leans back in his chair, and replies, "I believe you'll find out the answer to that question next year. You could always ask her yourself. But, it sure sounded to me that she was serious." Dr. Karakova's answer is not quite what Dean Grimsby was expecting or wanting to hear. But, Dean Grimsby hasn't gotten anything he expected today.

Knowing that Officer Braden is on the track team, Dean Grimsby asks Braden, "Officer Braden, you're on the track team. Do you have any words of wisdom?" Braden stands tall, and replies, "yes, sir. I certainly do! If Eddie and Kathy quit, Mark and Paula will probably be right behind them. Bobby B. works construction with Mark. If Mark leaves, Bobby B. might just go with him. And, who knows who else." Dr. Braun hammers his fist on the table again, telling Dean Grimsby, "you! Get them back on my team today! Now! And, for the record, I'm not offering you any choice in the matter!"

¹ Provost: The chief academic officer of a University who has responsibility for the University's academic and budgetary affairs. The dean typically reports to the provost.

Dr. Braun leaves the meeting, not giving Dean Grimsby a chance to respond. With two people walking out of the meeting, Dean Grimsby announces, “well, there’s not much more that we can do here today, so this meeting is adjourned.” Coach Herndon informs Dean Grimsby, “that’s probably a good decision, because it sounds like you have a lot of work ahead of you today.” Dr. Karakova smiles and laughs at Coach Herndon’s remark. For emphasis, Dr. Karakova adds, “and, he’d better get to it. He’s got a very tight deadline to meet.” Dr. Karakova leaves the meeting room, followed by those who remain. Apparently Dean Grimsby is not the most popular administrator on campus, either among students or the faculty.

The next morning, at track practice, Dr. Braun and Coach Herndon pull Kathy aside. It is no secret about what the discussion will attempt to unveil. Kathy is still miffed about the entire situation, and pretty much it will be Kathy’s way or the highway. And, with Kathy, the highway is perfectly fine. She will no longer allow herself to be on the same team as McCutchen and Leggett.

Dr. Braun, Coach Herndon, and Kathy walk into the nicely appointed office with a glass window overlooking the arena, which is usually reserved for the officials during a meet. Dr. Braun opens by telling Kathy, “I’m sorry that Eddie, you, and the rest of us for that matter, had to endure Dean Grimsby’s tirades.” Kathy replies, “Eddie is pretty much done with Dean Grimsby.” Coach Herndon comments, “I think everyone saw that yesterday.”

Getting to the heart of the matter, Coach Herndon asks Kathy, “tell us about Eddie.” Kathy asks, “do you want the long version or the short version?” Coach Herndon is afraid the short version will be simply a statement that Eddie isn’t coming back. Coach Herndon, and everyone else, has already gathered that. But, Dr. Braun and Coach Herndon want Eddie back on the team, and they certainly don’t want Kathy to leave. Wanting to understand the situation completely, Coach Herndon replies, “give us the long version.”

Kathy begins, “when Eddie was almost six years old, he got his second bicycle for Christmas, which was a five-speed bicycle with twenty-inch wheels. That year, he also got a stopwatch, which is something he really, really wanted. He would ride his bicycle around the block, timing himself with his stopwatch. He would try to bicycle around the block faster and faster. So, as he got older, the courses he rode got longer and longer. And, when Eddie got his first ten-speed, he was able to do his courses even faster.” This was not what Coach Herndon or Dr. Braun was expecting to hear, but Kathy now has their interest.

Kathy continues, “so, Eddie would ride his bicycle everywhere. His favorite course was to ride to the beach and back, which he first did when he was like ten years old. That’s about 22 miles round trip, by the way. So, he would time himself riding his bicycle to the beach and back. Then, one day his bicycle broke, and so he fixed it himself. That’s when he first decided that he wanted to be a mechanic, because he found something that he can do. And, when he started cutting lawns, he bought all the parts, and built his own bicycle. And, now he has a track bicycle.”

Getting back on track, Kathy backs up, and continues, “okay, so where was I? Oh yeah. So, in sixth grade, Eddie tried out for the track team with Mark. And, they weren’t even sure they’d make the team, but it turned out that they were the fastest guys in the school. During the tryouts, Eddie ran the 100-yard dash in 10.7 seconds, and Mark ran it in 10.6 seconds. They would always argue about who was faster. Sometimes Mark won, and sometimes Eddie won.” Dr. Braun comments, “that is really fast for the sixth grade! I remember Eddie mentioning that during his interview on the radio.”

Kathy continues, “so, when they were in eighth grade, Eddie and Mark both ran a 10.1-second 100-yard dash, and beat McCutchen. I was actually there to see that. In that same race, McCutchen came in third place and he didn’t even break eleven seconds.”

Dr. Braun laughs, and interrupts, saying, “well, that certainly explains it.” Coach Herndon asks Dr. Braun, “that explains what?” Dr. Braun explains, “that would explain Mark’s and Eddie’s comments. They are always saying something to the effect, ‘I ran that time in middle school.’ They actually did run that fast back then. So, they weren’t really just messing around.” Kathy replies, “yeah. They weren’t messing around back then, and they’re not messing around now either.” Kathy just informed her coaches that what McCutchen and Leggett have done is not likely to be overlooked.

Kathy continues, “so, then the 4 by 440 relay team, which is Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden, went totally undefeated for seven years. Well, except for the two years that me and Paula took Johnson’s and Braden’s place. But, we were undefeated too. And so, when Eddie was in high school, he won the gold medal at State in the 40-yard dash and the 100-yard dash every year at the State meet, except for once. When Eddie was a freshman, he only got the silver medal in the 40-yard dash. He put all of his gold medals in a box, and gave some to me so I can wear them. But, he kept his silver medal out where he could always see it, reminding him to work harder. If I had to guess, that one silver medal did more to motivate Eddie than all his gold medals combined. And, if you guys remember when you were at our house, Eddie’s silver medal has its special place on the wall, on the top row, right in the middle.”

Kathy continues with her dissertation, “so, Eddie and Mark have always beaten McCrutchen on the track. McCrutchen is such a sucker. For six years, Mark messed with McCrutchen big time. Mark told McCrutchen that his shoelaces were untied right before the gun went off. Mark once told McCrutchen that the track was infected with ticks. And, we told McCrutchen that we all got paid to run. Oh, and that thing yesterday at the meeting. When they were seniors in high school, Mark told McCrutchen that he has a Prickly Sea Spider bite, and his tendons are going to rot away. And, that idiot actually believed all of it. And then, when McCrutchen went bald, Mark told him it was a long term effect of a Prickly Sea Spider bite. Oh yeah, and Mark started calling McCrutchen ‘McCrutchen’ like in the eighth grade, because he runs as fast as someone with crutches.” Dr. Braun laughs, and comments, “that certainly explains a lot too.”

Moving on to Dean Grimsby’s actions, Kathy continues, “oh, and about Dean Grimsby. If Eddie comes back to this school, don’t think for a second that he’s done with that asshole. In high school, the principal, Mr. Crum, started something with Eddie. Mr. Crum told Eddie that he would never graduate. Long story short, the school superintendent got involved and, so now, the entire physical education staff reports to Mr. Zunde. And, Mr. Zunde reports directly to the school board. That keeps the principal, Mr. Crum, out of the way. But, Mr. Crum is in jail now. Eddie left the biggest trail of carnage behind him in that high school, and it was to everyone’s benefit. Don’t think that he won’t do the same here. You heard how he spoke to Dean Grimsby.” Dr. Braun comments, “yes, I have. I’ve never heard anyone speak to the dean with that tone of voice before.” Coach Herndon adds, “I hate to say it, but it was quite amusing listening to Eddie lambast Dean Grimsby in the way that he did.”

Kathy then explains, “if McCrutchen wants to start a war with Eddie, McCrutchen will lose big time. If you heard everything that I babbled on about, my point was that Eddie does not lose. Period. He doesn’t lose on the track, or off. You heard what Eddie did to the Chuckie. So, if you want to know what it will take to get Eddie back on the team, you’ll have to get rid of McCrutchen and lug nut. Like, get them out of the school. And, by the way, if Eddie does come back, Dean Grimsby will also be his target.”

Coach Herndon tells Kathy, “wow! I really liked that story about the bicycle and the stopwatch! No wonder Eddie is so fast! He got a very early start.” Kathy tells Coach Herndon, “yeah. Eddie never had much competition, so he would always compete against himself.” Dr. Braun concludes, “I’m glad you gave us the long version. We can only hope that somehow Eddie decides to come back.” The two coaches and Kathy head out to the track, where the other coaches and athletes have already begun practice.

Since Eddie is no longer on the team, and has no immediate plans to return, he works out a deal with Angelo where he opens up at 9:00 a.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. Angelo, of course, agrees, seeing no problem opening the station a little earlier. Angelo now arrives at the service station somewhere around lunchtime, and works until 6:00 p.m. Angelo, amazed that his stocks are doing so well, has finally got a chance to rest a bit. Down to a more normal 40-hour work week, Angelo has much more time to spend with his family.

Dean Grimsby has decreed that McCutchen and Leggett may remain on the track team. As a result of Dean Grimsby's decision, McCutchen and Leggett still practice with the team. But, in light of the situation that occurred with Eddie and Mark, the majority of the team members have shunned McCutchen and Leggett. They are told that whether they compete or not is still yet to be decided. But, McCutchen testing positive for steroids, is likely out for the rest of the season. The coaches are hopeful that they still may find a use for Leggett somewhere on the team.

It seems no one on the team is happy with McCutchen, especially Mark. The next day, after practice, in the locker room, Mark hears Braden telling Bobby B., "McCrutchen is really lucky that Eddie's not here. After seeing what Eddie did to Chuckie, I can't imagine what kind of ass kicking he's going to hand down to McCutchen. I definitely don't want to miss that ass kicking when it comes down! That's gonna be the biggest ass kicking of the century!" Braden intentionally words his comments making it sound like a major league ass kicking is definitely on the horizon. As Braden and Bobby B. continue their conversation, McCutchen and Leggett move to a position where they can more clearly hear the conversation. Giving his opinion, Bobby B. tells Braden, "McCrutchen wouldn't make it out in one piece. He'll never run again." Bobby B. and Braden's conversation reinforces what McCutchen and Leggett heard directly from Eddie and Kathy during Eddie's hearing. Suddenly, McCutchen and Leggett feel a bit weak in their knees.

Seeing the perfect opening as McCutchen and Leggett are eavesdropping on Braden and Bobby B's. conversation, Mark quickly switches McCutchen's shampoo bottle with one specially mixed with hair removal gel. And, at the same time, Mark switches Leggett's shampoo bottle as well. McCutchen and Leggett were too busy eavesdropping on Braden and Bobby B. discussing the potential ass kicking that may come down, that they carelessly left their lockers unattended.

Once Braden's and Bobby B's. conversation shifts to another topic, McCutchen and Leggett return to their lockers, pick up their soap and shampoo, and head to the showers. In a few weeks, Mark will further educate McCutchen, concocting more stories about Prickly Sea Spiders. And, as far as what Mark will tell Leggett remains to be seen.

Thursday at practice, the sprinting team gets on the training sled and works out, which will last for 45 minutes. Once they are done, they will get on the track, running the interval training drill. Waiting in line for their turn on the resistance sled, Braden asks Mark in a military tone of voice, “are you ready?” Mark, knowing exactly to what Braden is referring, replies back in the same tone, “ready in thirty!”

A few minutes later, Paula and Kathy are waiting in line for their turn. Braden, returning from his trek down the track and back, in his military tone, asks Kathy and Paula, “are you ready?” With Eddie no longer around, Kathy replies, “I’m definitely ready!” And, with what McCutchen and Leggett tried to do to Mark, Paula, using a few of Braden’s favorite words, replies, “bring it on, brother!” Hoffer and Erika are also in. The distance team, however, will be on the training sled and will miss out on Braden’s activities. No one outside of the tribe, however, knows to what Braden is referring.

The time arrives for the sprinters to get on the track and the distance team to drag the training sled. Taking a warm-up lap, the sprinters are all clustered together. The tribe is intentionally staying very close together for this exercise. The tribe then sprints for 440 yards, with Braden and Mark finishing first. Braden and Mark slow their pace, waiting a few seconds for the rest of the tribe to catch up.

The tribe starts their recovery lap, and Braden yells out, “there is nothing that I like.” The tribe follows suit, repeating, “there is nothing that I like.” Braden then yells, “more than running on the track.” The tribe again follows suit, exclaiming, “more than running on the track.” Braden chants, “I will set the winning pace,” and the tribe follows suit. Braden then chants, “I will kick ass every race,” with the tribe again following suit. The tribe quickly catches on, and gets in good rhythm. Braden continues, immediately catching the team’s and the coach’s attention.

Dr. Braun walks over and tells coach Herndon, “wow! Just listen to them!” Referring to Braden, Coach Herndon reminisces, “for some reason, I liked that guy right from the minute he walked through the door. I can still hear his words when he walked into the arena that day, ‘I’m here for the ass kicking! Whose ass am I kicking today?’” Dr. Braun replies, “he certainly has the fire, and he always delivers exactly what he says he will.” Coach Herndon tells Dr. Braun, “I’m just going to let them do whatever it is they’re doing. I need a break anyway.”

During their second recovery lap, Braden leads the group with a few more running cadences, which are a bit more interesting than the ones he

chanted during their first recovery lap. With the tribe repeating each of Braden's verses, Braden continues, chanting, “

I will kick McCrutchen's ass.
Land his fat ass in the grass.
Leggett's ass is fat as shit.
That is why he likes to quit.
When they run we lose the race.
They can't run a decent pace.
McCrutchen doesn't have a brain.
All his muscles he will strain.
Leggett's ass is very slow.
Relay races he will blow.”

Hearing the marching cadence, Coach Herndon has a difficult time composing herself, laughing hysterically at Braden's military running cadences. As she is part of the ROTC staff, Braden now has Coach Herndon's full attention. Mark, in particular, is enjoying this drill. And, hearing their own names mentioned, McCutchen and Leggett are not the least bit happy.

After the tribe completes their sprinting lap of 440 yards and moves on to their third recovery lap, they gather together again, and Braden continues, with the tribe repeating, “

Let the races all begin.
All I know is that I'll win.
Relay races are the best.
Put four asses to the test.
Leggett seems to have no game.
That's because his ass is lame.
McCrutchen runs just like a snail.
That's because his ass is frail.
Get McCrutchen off the team.
That is our biggest dream.
Leggett's on his way to jail.
All his classes he will fail.”

Braden and the tribe continue with the chants during each recovery lap. Braden has absolutely no problem coming up with new material each time around the track. Coach Herndon tells Dr. Braun, “just listen to him! How does he come up with this shit?” Dr. Braun laughs, and replies, “I really don't know. I must admit though, Axel Braden is very entertaining.”

McCutchen and Leggett approach Coach Herndon, exclaiming, “don't you hear them? Can't you do something about them?” Coach Herndon replies, “yeah, I hear them. Get out there and run!” Leggett exclaims,

“they’re making fun of us! This is supposed to be a team!” Coach Herndon replies, “Leggett, you haven’t placed in a race in three years. And, McCutchen, you haven’t placed in a race since you’ve been at this University. Now, get out on that track and run!” Quite surprised at the coach’s response, McCutchen and Leggett get back to running their laps, trying their best to ignore Braden and the tribe.

After practice, in the locker room, Mark tells Braden, “that was an awesome workout, bro!” Knowing that McCutchen and Leggett are listening in, Braden replies, “I’m glad you enjoyed it. We’re gonna have to do that a lot more often!” McCutchen interjects, “you guys suck!” Mark sternly warns McCutchen, “hey, junior. You heard your doctor. You sound stressed. Your hair is going to start falling out again.” Braden, already knowing that Mark replaced McCutchen’s and Leggett’s shampoo bottles with his special mixture, adds, “yeah, they’re both stressed. During Eddie’s hearing, both of their asses were sweating and shaking like a leaf in the wind.” Mark comments, “I hear that stress can make your adrenal glands shrivel up, and then your hair will fall out. And then, all your muscles will atrophy.” Adding some credibility to Mark’s claim, Braden replies, “that’s what must have happened to Jimmy O’Brien!”

McCutchen and Leggett try to verbally attack Braden, but Braden chants, “shaking like a leaf, your life is full of grief.” Mark and Hoffer, in like tone, repeat, “shaking like a leaf, your life is full of grief.” Braden continues, “your hair is falling out, and now you’re gonna pout.” Mark and Hoffer repeat Braden’s chant, as McCutchen and Leggett wisely walk away. McCutchen’s biggest concern, however, is that maybe Mark is correct about the Prickly Sea Spider bite. McCutchen has noticed signs that his hair is beginning to fall out again.

As everyone begins to leave the locker room, McCutchen is among the very last to leave. As he is standing in front of his locker, someone comes up behind McCutchen, shoves him into his locker, and closes the door. Locking the lock, the perpetrator walks away into the hallway and out the door. McCutchen starts banging on his locker screaming for someone to let him out.

Meanwhile, in the hallway, the entire tribe is talking with Coach Braun. The topic of intense conversation is this Spring’s divisional meet, which is coming up shortly. Seeing Dr. Braun and the tribe talking, the perpetrator quickly leaves the scene.

Hearing yelling and screaming coming from the locker room, Coach Braun comments, “what in the world is going on in there?” Braden, assuming his role as an officer, asks, “do you want me to go and check it out?” Coach Braun replies, “sure.” Mark tells Braden, “I’ll be your backup.” Braden heads toward the locker room, with Dr. Braun and Mark following

him. The rest of the tribe waits in the hallway for Braden and Mark to return.

Entering the locker room, Braden, Mark, and Dr. Braun find it to be empty. They do, however, hear screaming coming from one of the lockers. They narrow down the screaming to a specific locker. Braden bangs on the locker door, and asks, "who's in there?" The guy inside screams, "Todd McCutchen! Get me out of here!" Braden asks, "junior! What's your ass doing in your locker?" In response, McCutchen yells out, "just get me out of here!"

Seeing that McCutchen uses a combination lock, just to irritate him, Braden asks McCutchen, "where's your key?" McCutchen screams out, "it's a combination lock! The combination is 36-18-24." As he is opening the lock, Braden tells McCutchen, "those numbers sound a lot like your 100-yard dash times, junior." Mark laughs, as he catches Dr. Braun also finding it hard not to laugh. And, just to mess with McCutchen, Braden tells him, "that ain't your combination. This must be someone else's lock."

Braden opens the locker, and tells McCutchen, "get your ass out of your locker, junior!" McCutchen comes out of his locker, seeing Braden, Mark, and Dr. Braun there to greet him. Dr. Braun asks, "who locked you in your locker?" McCutchen waves his hand toward Braden and Mark, saying, "it was probably one of them, or one of their friends. Didn't you hear them today?" Dr. Braun assures McCutchen, "I can assure you that it was not one of the members of that group. They were all, and I repeat, all talking with me in the hallway for quite some time before you started screaming." McCutchen gathers his stuff, as Braden, Mark, and Dr. Braun head back to the hallway. As everyone leaves the locker room, they wonder who locked McCutchen in his locker, including McCutchen himself.

As they approach the rest of the tribe, Mark yells out, "hey! Which one of you locked McCutchen in his locker?" The tribe starts laughing, as Johnson exclaims, "what?" Mark explains, "seriously. Somebody locked McCutchen in his locker?" The tribe starts laughing, wondering who would do such a thing. Should they find out, they will likely give whoever it was a high-five. Dr. Braun finishes his conversation with his core group, then everyone heads to class.

Braden and Mark, however, hang around for a few minutes. Braden tells Mark, "I know who locked his ass in his locker." Mark asks, "oh yeah? Who was that?" Braden replies, "it was Leggett. I saw him. He was the last one out of the locker room, and he bolted when he saw us in the hallway." Mark tells Braden, "give me a piece of paper." Braden gives Mark a piece of paper and a pen, and asks, "what's on your mind, bro?"

Mark tells Braden, "I'm going to write, 'I know what you did yesterday,' on it, and stick it in Leggett's locker. I got to disguise my writing though." Braden laughs, telling Mark, "that's a good idea! Write it with your left hand. And, I'm getting here early tomorrow morning. I want to see this when it goes down!" Walking back into the locker room, Mark deposits the note into Leggett's locker, and leaves with Braden.

Sure enough, the next morning, Braden is the first one to arrive at practice. Mark also arrives a bit early, wanting to see first hand the result of his mischievous act. As he is talking with Mark, Braden is taking his time to get dressed and ready. After a few other team members walk in, Leggett finally arrives. Mark motions to Braden, signaling that Leggett is coming toward his locker.

Tossing down his gym bag onto the bench, Leggett proceeds to open his locker. Leggett opens his gym bag, pulling out his running shorts, shirt, and track shoes. As he is about to throw his gym bag into his locker, Leggett quickly finds the note Mark left for him yesterday. Reading the note, which reads, "I know what you did yesterday," Leggett turns an interesting shade of red. Leggett slams his locker shut, and slams his fist into his locker door, and exclaims, "shit!" Hearing Leggett's frustration, Mark tells Leggett, "the toilet's around the corner, junior. You can shit in there, just like everyone else." Leggett ignores Mark, mumbling obscenities as he heads into the arena.

On the way out to the outdoor track, Braden tells Mark, "did you see how his ass reacted? That was definitely the frustration of a guilty ass man!" Mark asks, "I wonder why Leggett would lock McCutchen in his locker." Braden explains to Mark, "so he can blame it on one of us. They're trying to take us all down. But, it backfired again." Mark replies, "oh, yeah. I forgot about that. I guess that didn't go exactly as planned." Pointing to Leggett, Braden comments, "and, look at that. Leggett's walking out to the track all by himself."

Not exactly knowing who left the note, while they are all out on the track, Leggett steers clear of McCutchen. Since it is Friday, the sprinters are running the interval drill, and will be on the resistance sled during the second half of the training session. Leggett runs on his own, leaving McCutchen trying to keep up with a few other team members. Braden watches carefully, and has not seen Leggett speak with McCutchen all day.

When practice comes to an end, everyone heads to the lockers. On the way, Mark asks Braden, "so, what are you and Wendy doing this weekend?" Braden replies, "I work Friday and Saturday night. But, on Sunday, I think we're gonna visit my parents and Wendy's parents too. We've been doing that every other weekend."

Braden asks Mark, "are you and Paula doing anything special?" Seeing that Leggett is nearby, Mark comments, "I don't know. Maybe I'll lock a few of my friends in their locker." Hearing Mark's comment, Leggett turns to look at the tribe and, by the look on Mark's and Braden's face, he immediately knows that he's been busted. Leggett will have all weekend to rehash in his mind the details of the day before, trying to figure out who caught him.