

Eddie, The Collegiate Freshman

Chapter Seven The Resolution

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While the University track team was practicing every day, so was Eddie. Eddie, however, has been working out much harder than if he were working out with the team. Taking many trips to the future, Eddie trained on the beach and, when he returned, time did not elapse in his world. Eddie estimates that he got in far more training than he would have otherwise. Eddie has been training for a very specific reason. Eddie wants to run the 100-yard dash in the divisional competition, if only to prove a point. Eddie's point is that he will win, and does not need steroids to do it.

The coaches are still hopeful that Eddie will return to the team. Knowing that he can walk back onto the team whenever he wants, Eddie is quite confident that he will be welcomed with open arms. But, to run in the divisional meet, Eddie has one condition. Eddie's demand is that Dean Grimsby watches the 100-yard dash, with a seat near the finish line. Eddie wants Dean Grimsby to have a front row seat so he can watch as Eddie wins the race. Considering the pressure Dean Grimsby has been under, the dean would probably be glad to oblige.

The week before the divisional competition, Kathy relays to Dr. Braun, "it may be a day late and a dollar short, but Eddie said he'll run in the divisional meet if he's still on the team. But, he doesn't even know if he's on the team. If he can't run, he said that's okay too." Dr. Braun replies, "wow! We'd be glad to have him back! He's still on the team roster." Kathy, not wanting to appear too excited, asks, "so, what should I tell him?" Dr. Braun replies, "tell him he's welcome to come to practice tomorrow."

Lowering the boom, Kathy mentions, "Eddie does, however, have one condition." Dr. Braun asks, "what's that?" Kathy replies, "he wants Dean Grimsby at the divisional meet so he can watch when Eddie wins the 100-

yard dash." Dr. Braun asks, "he's that confident?" Kathy replies, "oh, yeah. He's been training. When Eddie says he'll win, he'll win. There's no question about it." Dr. Braun assures Kathy, "the dean will be there. I've spoken to the provost about this entire situation. She will definitely make sure the dean will be there for the meet. She attends every meet herself."

The next day, Eddie shows up at practice. In the locker room, Eddie receives high-fives, fist bumps, and hugs, as if he's already won some big event. Braden exclaims, "our supreme ass kicking team is back," fully intended to let McCutchen and Leggett know they've been officially relegated back to their position of alternates and losers. McCutchen and Leggett are both stressed and shaking, in fear that Eddie might, for some reason, decide to kick their ass at any moment. Eddie's presence is enough to throw the two losers off base. But, for now, Eddie ignores McCutchen and Leggett.

Adding stress to McCutchen's already stressful day, Braden shows McCutchen his medal depicting a high-relief image of a runner's ass, with a leg and foot kicking the ass. Braden tells McCutchen, "see this medal, junior? Take a good look at it." In fear of disobeying Braden, McCutchen takes a look at Braden's medal. Braden exclaims, "I got this medal because I'm the chief ass kicker! Ain't no one ever given you a medal like this. And, do you see that ass on my medal? That's your fat ass and that's Eddie's foot kicking your ass!" McCutchen is now more stressed than ever, whittled down to being both mentally and physically nonfunctional.

In response to Braden's lecture, Leggett also becomes extremely stressed, and starts shaking. After hearing Braden, Eddie kicks his foot into the air, high above his shoulder, suggesting that an ass kicking might be on the horizon. Mark, enjoying every bit of the entertainment, tells McCutchen, "wow! It sounds like you must have ticked someone off, junior. I wonder who that could have been." McCutchen does not answer Mark, for doing so will only lead to further stress. Everyone then heads out to the track, wondering what will happen during today's training session.

With the divisional meet coming up this next weekend, Dr. Braun wants to see where Eddie stands in both the 100-yard dash and the 440-yard dash. The 440-yard dash time trial will be in the form of a 4 by 440 relay, which will also gauge the performance of the 4 by 440 relay team. Dr. Braun arranges a few time trials under the guise of wanting to know where the entire team stands before the meet. Eddie walks out to the track with Kathy and the rest of the tribe. Seeing that both McCutchen and Leggett are going bald, Eddie asks Mark, "Prickly Sea Spiders?" Mark replies, "yeah."

Coach Herndon makes the call for the 100-yard dash time trial, announcing, "Bogenskaya, Svoboda, Braden, Hoffer, Leggett, and McCrutchens, get behind the blocks!" Kathy asks Paula, "did she just call him McCrutchens?" Paula replies, "you heard that right." Kathy tells Paula, "at least we know where McCrutchens stands." Paula replies, "yeah. He stands in dog shit on Second Street." Leggett and McCutchen aspired to take Eddie's place. They will now find out whether they measure up.

Coach Herndon moves toward the finish line, wanting a good view of the finish. Taking advantage of the slight delay, Mark comments to McCutchen, "you really ought to see a doctor. It looks like you're in stage three of your Prickly Sea Spider bite." McCutchen tells Mark, "shut up. I did see a doctor, and he said it's stress." Mark replies, "yeah. Because of the Prickly Sea Spider bite, you can't handle stress anymore. Your adrenal glands are all shriveled up." Hearing Mark taunting McCutchen, Eddie strolls by McCutchen, causing McCutchen to suddenly jump back. Eddie whispers to McCutchen, "remember the Chuckie." McCutchen starts nervously shaking, prompting Mark to comment, "see that? Just look at you! You're a total basket case!" Eddie stares at Leggett for fifteen seconds, instilling great fear into him as well.

The Starter announces, "on your marks." Remembering when McCutchen failed to run during a relay time trial handoff, Braden tells McCutchen, "don't forget to run when the gun goes off, junior." Announcing, "set," the Starter is amused at the fun and games at the starting line. The Starter fires the gun. Eddie takes off and shows everyone that he has not lost his competitive edge. McCutchen, on the other hand, quickly assumes last place. What little competitive edge McCutchen does have has, yet again, been dulled by Mark.

Eddie quickly breaks away from the other runners. At 25 yards, Mark and Braden are right behind him. Hoffer, in the middle of the pack, is a few yards ahead of Leggett and McCutchen. At 50 yards, Eddie is being chased down by Mark and Braden. As the three front runners approach the finish line, as to not slow down, Eddie visualizes the line ten yards beyond where it actually is. Eddie wins the race, followed by Mark and Braden, who, as best as can be determined, tie. Hoffer follows in fourth place. McCutchen and Leggett finish, but with noncompetitive times.

Knowing he had an awesome run, Eddie walks away. Not caring what his time is, Eddie is more interested in everyone else knowing how fast he ran. After the times are compiled, Coach Herndon is heard asking the Timekeepers, "are you sure?" There is some discussion among Coach Herndon and the Timekeepers, but no one knows what all the talk is about. Dr. Braun comes over, joining in on the discussion. By now, Eddie is back at the starting line, talking with Kathy.

After a review of the times, Coach Herndon gets ready to make the announcement. Seeing that she is ready, the runners gather around to hear their times. Coach Herndon exclaims, "Eddie Bogenskaya, a fantastic 9.1 seconds," prompting the team to cheer. Continuing, Coach Herndon announces, "Svoboda 9.3 seconds. Braden, 9.3 seconds. Hoffer, 9.5 seconds. Leggett, 12.3 seconds. And McCutchen, 13.2 seconds," prompting Mark to laugh. Eddie, completely unaware of his time, is 100 yards away, still talking with Kathy.

Mark yells to Eddie at the other end of the track, "hey! You ran a 9.1!" Hearing the news, Eddie gives Mark a thumbs up, acting as if the 9.1-second 100-yard dash was nothing special. Kathy gives Eddie a high-five and a hug, telling him, "awesome run! You're ready!"

Mark then turns toward McCutchen and, even though McCutchen is only five yards away, yells out, "and McCutchen, you ran a 13.2! I ran faster than you just did when I was in the fourth grade!" Mark just whittled McCutchen down to the skill of a fourth grader. And Leggett, running a 12.3-second 100-yard dash, is not much better. It just goes to show what severe stress can do.

After the other heats are completed, Dr. Braun announces, "I want my star 4 by 440 relay team on the track! Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden, take lane one, and you will run in that order. Leggett, McCutchen, and Anderson, take lane two! And, you will run in that order!"

As everyone gathers around the starting line, McCutchen asks Dr. Braun, "who's our other runner?" Dr. Braun replies, "no one. Your team is only running three-quarters of a mile. The other team is running a mile. And, you'd better hope for your sake that they don't beat you!" Dr. Braun then tells the Timekeepers, "get me very accurate times on everyone's individual performance in lane one," kind of indicating that the runners in lane two do not matter quite as much, or at all.

Eddie is leading off, because Coach Braun wants Eddie's 440-yard performance from a standing start. The other runners have the benefit of already running when the clock starts timing their individual legs. Braden is assigned the anchor leg simply because Dr. Braun knows that Braden will not allow McCutchen's team to win anything. Mark and McCutchen are intentionally assigned the same leg for obvious reasons. Mark fully intends to show everyone how slow McCutchen really is, and the coaches know this. And, over the last year, Dr. Braun has developed a complete understanding of the interesting dynamics between the individual team members.

Braden starts exclaiming, "we're gonna kick their ass! And, there's only three of them! That makes them a little more than a half-ass team!"

Let's get this show on the road!" During Braden's rant, Mark tells McCutchen, "remember, your tendons are weak." Now that McCutchen is bald again, Eddie mentions to Mark, "yeah. But, his empty aerodynamic head will make up for it." Eddie then turns to Leggett, who is now also bald, and asks, "and, what's up with your head, you dumb lug nut?" Leggett does not respond to Eddie, so Mark answers for Leggett, telling Eddie, "it's up his fat ass, just like McCrutchens." By inducing some stress into their competitors, Mark and Eddie just added ten seconds to McCutchen's and Leggett's runs. It's no secret that Mark is seriously trying to get rid of McCutchen and Leggett.

The Starter announces, "on your marks." As he is positioning himself in the blocks, Eddie looks over at Leggett, and reminds him, "remember the Chuckie," adding a few more seconds to Leggett's run. The Starter announces, "set." The gun is fired, and Eddie explodes out of the blocks, clearly out to prove himself once again. Leggett, however, takes slightly short of forever to get to his relatively deficient top speed.

While Eddie is running, Paula tells Kathy, "I never expected to see Eddie on the track again." Kathy explains to Paula, "Eddie just wants to prove something to Dean Grimsby." Paula asks, "what's that?" Kathy replies, "that you don't need steroids to win." Kathy and Paula watch, as Eddie hands off to Mark. As Mark is running, Paula counts the seconds between Eddie's handoff and Leggett's handoff. Paula tells Kathy, "they're about eighteen seconds ahead." Kathy asks, "how do you know?" Paula tells her, "I counted the seconds." Kathy comments, "oh yeah. Duh."

During Mark's leg, he makes McCutchen look as bad as possible. Paula points out to Kathy, "look at Mark. He's creaming McCrutchens!" Kathy adds, "yeah, because McCrutchens' tendons are weak." It is clear that Mark widened the lead significantly as he approaches the transition zone. Mark hands off to Johnson, as McCutchen is very far behind.

Paula and Kathy both are counting the seconds between the two teams, concluding that the tribe is really kicking ass. Now about 40 seconds ahead according to Paula's estimate, Johnson is the next in line to make McCutchen look bad. While Johnson is widening the lead, Braden tells Anderson, "I'm sure glad I'm not in your shoes! Those guys left you all the work to do!" McCutchen hands off to Anderson, which does not go smoothly. As Johnson approaches the transition zone, Kathy exclaims, "they might just do it!" A few seconds after Anderson receives his baton, Braden receives his.

Braden takes off, knowing that he can pass Anderson. But, Braden wants more, and is out to get it. As Braden would put it, the ass kicking of the day would be beating Anderson to the finish line. Braden chases down Anderson, destined to put McCutchen and Leggett in their place.

As they approach the finish, Braden passes Anderson, crossing the finish line seven-tenths of a second ahead of Anderson.

After the times have been compiled, Coach Herndon announces, “the composite time of the winning team was 3:02.3. That would be an average of 45.6 seconds per leg. The approximate individual split times are Edward Bogenskaya, 45.8 seconds. Mark Svoboda, 45.3 seconds. Eric Johnson, 46.1 seconds. Axel Braden, 45.1 seconds. Congratulations! That was a very good run!” The winning 4 by 440 relay team exchange high-fives, celebrating their victory.

Coach Herndon then announces, “the composite time of the losing team is 3:03. And, I remind you, you only ran three-quarters of a mile! Three of the distance men on this team could have outpaced you! The approximate individual split times are McCutchen, 66.3 seconds. Leggett 62.2 seconds. Anderson, 54.5 seconds.” Apparently, Eddie’s and Mark’s psychological warfare helped them to win the race, even with the odds stacked against their relay team.

Hearing the news, Braden starts chanting,“

Java says, build a bigger muscle.
Java says, make it big and strong.
Java says, build a bigger muscle.
Java says, you gotta build a bigger muscle,
And make it big and strong.”

Java says, McCrutch is an asshole.
Java says, Leggett’s weak as shit.
Java says, McCrutch is a loser.
Java says, McCrutch is an asshole,
And Leggett is a prick.”

Once Braden comes back to Earth, he again exchanges high-fives with Eddie, Mark, and Johnson, who are continuing to celebrate. Referring to Braden’s chant, Mark asks Braden, “yo bro! What was that all about?” Braden replies, “I don’t know. I was just thinking back when we saw McCrutch and Leggett in the gym last year and McCrutch dumped the bar when he was doing his squats. I don’t know. I just made it up.” Mark tells Braden, “that was kind of funny.”

Kathy and Paula cheer, enjoying the moment because the team is back together again. With not much more to do during today’s training session, Eddie catches up with the tribe on what he has missed over the last few weeks, as the coaching staff evaluates the other runners.

After the practice session, the tribe's energy is off the charts compared with the last few weeks. Dr. Braun is confident that, going into the divisional meet, the team stands a good chance of dominating the show. Coach Herndon is glad to have Eddie back, and quickly relegates McCutchen back to being an alternate. McCutchen and Leggett are not happy at all, but they'll have to deal with it. If McCutchen and Leggett try to pull a stunt like what they did with Eddie's or Mark's locker again, they'll likely not make it to the other side in one piece.

With a little extra time on his hands, Eddie just about has John's Dune Buggy finished. John put in a lot of work himself, moving the project along a little faster than usual. The weekend before the divisional meet, Eddie calls John, and tells him to run to Angelo's Service Station, which is only a mile away. Eddie explains that he will do the wheel alignment, and John can drive it home. Eddie could have picked up John in the Dune Buggy, but John could be ready in ten minutes, or in an hour.

John, showing a bit of excitement, arrives at the service station a little earlier than Eddie. Eddie drives up in John's Dune Buggy, marking the first time John has ever seen it on the road. Eddie opens the station, and drives into the alignment bay. He asks John, "so, what do you think?" John replies, "it looks awesome!" Eddie then asks, "well, are you ready to learn something?" John replies, "sure. I'm game."

John's Dune Buggy is comparably equipped to the others that Eddie has built, but John's has additional lighting, which John installed himself, added to the roll bar. John's Dune Buggy, also like the others, has a two-way radio, and a trailer hitch complete with a tool box trunk.

Eddie explains to John, "since we built it, there are no factory specs for the alignment. I'll start with the specs on Kathy's Dune Buggy." As Eddie begins the alignment, he asks John, "so, how has the school part of high school been without Mr. Crum?" John replies, "no one's heard a peep out of Mr. Shapiro yet. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde seem to be happy about it." Eddie comments, "I wonder if they miss messing with Mr. Crum." John suggests, "I doubt it. All the other coaches seem to be happy about Crum being gone too." Mr. Shapiro, who was the assistant principal, has been appointed to the position of interim principal. Mr. Shapiro, who wants the position permanently, has clearly been on his best behavior.

As they are talking, Eddie shows John how an alignment is done, which John seems to understand. Once he has the alignment set, he tells John, "go ahead and sit in the driver's seat." Eddie rechecks the camber angle, which naturally changes slightly when John sits in the seat. Eddie tells John, "the alignment looks good, so let me take it for a road test." Eddie drives John's Dune Buggy up the street alone and, in five minutes, returns to the station.

When he returns, Eddie tells John, "okay, I think we're ready to go!" Eddie closes the station and tosses John the keys. John gets behind the wheel, and carefully drives out of the station. John has driven Kathy's Dune Buggy once, to see if he really wanted one. John drives Eddie home, quickly getting the hang of driving his new toy.

On the way, John casually mentions to Eddie, "Anne is really going to like this." Eddie asks, "oh, yeah? Who's Anne?" John replies, "she's my girlfriend." Eddie asks, "when did she come along?" John explains, "about four weeks ago. I've known her for years. She runs distance. We were all sitting on the lawn at school one day at lunch, and she decided to sit on my lap." Eddie laughs, and tells John, "now, I know why you wanted the Dune Buggy as fast as you can get it!"

Eddie and John arrive at Eddie's house, where Eddie asks, "so, are you headed home, or to Anne's house?" John replies, "I wasn't thinking about stopping by Anne's house. But, thanks for the idea!" Eddie reminds John to get the oil changed in about 3000 miles. John heads out to Anne's house, and Eddie heads inside to give Kathy the news of John's new girlfriend.

The day of the divisional meet arrives, and Eddie is more ready than ever. Since the weather is nice, Kathy and Eddie decide to take Kathy's Dune Buggy to the meet. Kathy gets behind the wheel, and Eddie turns on the two-way radio. Switching to the tribe's special channel, Eddie transmits, "KDB to the tribe," which means Kathy's Dune Buggy calling any tribe member. Surprisingly, Mark replies over the radio, "yo bro! This is PDB," referring to Paula's Dune Buggy. Eddie asks, "are you guys headed to the meet right now?" Mark replies, "yeah. We're just leaving." Hearing a weak signal in the background, they hear, "yo, guys. This is the shot-doc. Me and Erika are headed that way." On the way, they all have a refreshing and encouraging conversation about today's meet, also giving Eddie the reassurance that installing the two-way radios were worth the effort.

Eddie and Kathy meet up with Mark and Paula at the University's stadium, parking their Dune Buggies together in the usual tribal location. They head into the locker room together, meeting up with the other team members. Eddie, being a freshman and not too familiar with the protocol, asks Johnson, "where do the other teams change?" Johnson replies, "they use the locker room in the main gym, but a lot of them come dressed for the meet." Once the tribe is all present, they head to the indoor arena to join the rest of the team for a short meeting with the coaching staff before they walk out to the stadium.

Addressing his team, Dr. Braun announces, "today, we walk out there confidently, knowing that we again have the potential to dominate today's

meet, as we proved over the indoor season. But, I don't want anyone to let their guard down. You can be sure that the other teams have been training as hard, if not harder, than we have. But, we have been training smarter."

Dr. Braun reminds the team, "if you have your spikes, leave them here. Today, if you remember, we will be running on the new all-weather track. This means that the finish line and the starting line are not in the same place. Even though the track is now a metric track, we will be running our usual events. Also, the relay transition zones are very well marked. Pay very close attention to them, because you can be sure the Lane Judges will be."

Dr. Braun continues for a while, making the usual announcements, then announces, "as you already know, a change has been made in the way you will be timed. Today, the Timekeepers will not be using stopwatches. You will all be timed electronically. The times reported today will be to the one-hundredth of a second, and will be highly accurate. Be warned, however, that there are sensors in the starting blocks that will detect any false start. So, do not try to anticipate the gun. You will be caught." This is all news to Eddie, who has not been around for a while.

Kathy whispers to Mark, "the electronic timers measure metric time, to match the new metric track." Mark, who fell for Kathy's metric time story in high school, laughs, and replies, "I ain't falling for that one again." Kathy explains, "really, it is. You heard him. They're timing us to the one-hundredth of a second. That's the metric system." Mark thinks about what Kathy said for a moment, but Paula, laughing under her breath, gives it all away.

Mark then whispers to Kathy, "you need new running shoes." Kathy replies, "how is that?" Mark tells her, "you need metric running shoes to run on a metric track. That's why Europeans have different shoe sizes." Kathy laughs, not falling for any of Mark's logic, or lack of it, today.

Dr. Braun then makes a special announcement, "there has been a lot of controversy surrounding this team in the last few months. Today, Dean Addison Grimsby, Provost Athena Leighton, President Joseph Caldwell, the admissions director, Mr. Gerald Rosenberg, and our athletic director, Dr. Alexander Karakova, along with a few other administrators, will be seated in the stands near the finish line. Today, we are going to demonstrate to them what track and field is. Some of these administrators play a big part in approving your scholarship money every year. Today, your job is to prove to them that you are worth more than they spend!" The team cheers, and is more than ready for the meet. They head out to the stadium, ready to give it their best.

Eddie is more fired up than ever. As he is walking out to the track, Eddie figuratively looks at his only competition, the clock, which is part of the new informational scoreboard at the end of the track. Standing around the team bench, Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer stretch and warm up, knowing that the 100-yard dash will be one of the first events to be called. Kathy and Paula, also stretching, are up in the women's 100-yard dash right after the men.

The call comes for the preliminary heats of the 100-yard dash, and Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer make their way to the starting line. Also walking to the starting line is Major Nachlobrocklin, who was handed a severe and unexpected blow by Eddie and Mark over the indoor season. Eddie and Mark are in the first heat, along with Nachlobrocklin and a few other highly seeded runners. Eddie and Mark do not appear worried. Nachlobrocklin, however, appears more stressed than ever.

Nachlobrocklin clearly remembers Mark from the indoor season. While waiting behind the blocks, Nachlobrocklin is quick to inform Mark, "this time, I'm winning!" Turning to Eddie, Mark tells him, "he said he's going to win." Eddie laughs, and replies, "no, he's not. Not in this universe." Mark calmly relays to Nachlobrocklin, "Eddie said you're not going to win." Getting a little hot under the collar, Nachlobrocklin tells Mark, "we'll just see about that!" Mark, pointing to his gluteal region, reminds Nachlobrocklin, "the only thing you'll be seeing about is watching my ass when it crosses the finish line ahead of yours." Nachlobrocklin, who seems a bit emotionally unstable at the moment, is now ticked off. That is not exactly where anyone wants to be immediately before a race.

In a heated rage, Nachlobrocklin boldly informs Mark, "two years ago, I won the National title in the 100-yard dash! And, I've been training!" Mark, thinking about what Nachlobrocklin said, replies, "oh, really? So, you're the guy who ran the 9.5 two years ago at Nationals?" Nachlobrocklin replies, "that's me! Major Nachlobrocklin!" Mark replies, "wow! That's when I was a senior. I ran a 9.3 back then. Eddie ran a 9.2. We didn't go to Nationals because it was a total waste of time. There was no competition." Nachlobrocklin yells out, "what do you mean there was no competition? I was there! What are you talking about?" As the runners are told to get ready, Mark informs Nachlobrocklin, "Eddie broke the National record, and I tied it. That kind of trumps your little National title." Nachlobrocklin, shoved a few rungs down on the ladder by Mark, is no longer emotionally ready to run.

The Starter announces, "on your marks," then announces, "set." The gun is fired, and the runners are off. Eddie and Mark, taking the lead early in the race, know that Nachlobrocklin is chasing them down. Eddie and Mark, however, know they will make the final. Running side by side with Mark, Eddie is aiming for a tie, only to see how accurate the new

electronic timing equipment is. At the finish line, Eddie and Mark appear to tie. Nachlobrocklin, not delivering on his promise, comes in third place. Nachlobrocklin has made the final, but realizes he will have to do a lot more work if he is to win anything during this meet.

After the race, Eddie and Mark look up at the scoreboard, immediately seeing their times. Eddie, in lane four, ran the race in 9.26 seconds. Mark, in lane five, ran it in 9.31 seconds. Nachlobrocklin, not quite as fast as Eddie or Mark, delivered a time of 9.49 seconds, slightly faster than he ran two years ago, which is on par with Hoffer's best times.

Eddie asks Mark, "did you run your fastest?" Mark replies, "not exactly. I kind of slacked off at the very end." Eddie tells Mark, "I tried to tie with you. I wanted to see how good the electronic timers are." Mark, referring to Nachlobrocklin, comments, "well, knock your block off ran a 9.49, and he also came in third place in the 40 during the indoor season."

Eddie and Mark sit back on the bench, watching the times delivered in the other heats as they are posted on the scoreboard. A few respectable times are delivered, but none match the performance of Eddie and Mark. The added benefit of electronically timed races is that the runners immediately know where they stand. The runners also know exactly what they will be up against in the final. Seeing the times that were delivered by the other runners, Eddie is more confident than ever that he will win the event.

After the preliminary heats of the men's 100-yard dash are finished, the women are up next in that event. At the starting line, Kathy and Paula again meet Adrianna, who came in third place in the 40-yard dash over the indoor track season. Unlike Liz Duncan, also known as the ice princess as Kathy named her last year, Adrianna is very friendly toward her competitors.

Kathy tells Adrianna, "hey! It's good to see you again!" Adrianna, who is now a senior, replies, "I remember you guys! It's good to see you too!" Remembering how happy she was when she got third place last year, Adrianna tells Kathy, "I really hope I do well today." Kathy tells Adrianna, "just make it to the final. That's all that matters right now. You'll do well." Adrianna, quite the antitheses of Liz Duncan, wishes Kathy and Paula, "good luck to you guys!"

The runners get behind the blocks, waiting for the event to begin. Once the other heats are lined up and ready to go when called, the Starter announces, "on your marks," followed by "set," as the runners assume the "set" position. The gun is fired and Kathy and Paula, as they are leaving the blocks, both let out their primal scream heard throughout the stadium. Within a few yards, Kathy and Paula are in the lead, with

Adrianna right behind them. At 50 yards, Kathy pulls slightly ahead of Paula. At the finish line, Kathy crosses first, followed by Paula. Adrianna finishes right behind Paula, with all three runners guaranteed a place in the final.

Kathy gives her teammate, Paula, a victory hug, followed by Kathy and Paula giving Adrianna a victory hug. Adrianna tells Kathy and Paula, "wow! I wish my team would treat me this nice." Looking up at the scoreboard, Kathy tells Paula and Adrianna, "we're all in the final." Adrianna asks, "how do you know?" Pointing at the scoreboard, Kathy replies, "with those times, trust me, girl, we're all in the final." Adrianna confides, "when I get back to my bench, they're going to tell me, 'you're going to have to do better than that.'" Paula tells Adrianna, "just run your best. That's all you can do." On the way back to the bench, Kathy tells Paula, "you know, I really wish Adrianna was on our team." Paula replies, "yeah, I know."

Later in the morning, the call is made for the men's 440-yard dash, which Braden has been waiting for all morning. Braden exclaims, "here we go! It's going down!" Braden stands up and, along with Johnson, heads to the starting line. Leggett, who Coach Herndon allowed to run this race, follows, but keeps his distance. Braden's energy and excitement cannot be contained. Leggett's enthusiasm, however, cannot be found. Braden walks to the starting line with a well-choreographed dance, exclaiming on the way, "gonna kick an ass, and land it in the grass! This race is all mine, and I am gonna shine!"

Braden, in the first heat, gets behind the blocks, dancing and exclaiming, "let's get this ass kicking over with!" Leggett, standing over to the side waiting for his heat, looks away, having heard enough from Braden over the last year. The Starter announces, "this is the 440-yard dash, and it sounds like we already have a winner." Braden exclaims, "and, that would be me! I'm gonna be the winner! No, wait. Did I really say that? There must be something wrong with me today! How did I make that mistake? What I meant to say was, I am the winner!" The Starter smiles, and announces, "good luck to all of you. On your marks." The Starter, wondering if Braden will deliver on his promise, then announces, "set." The gun is fired and the great ass kicking of the day is underway.

Braden quickly claims the lead, with a few runners attempting to keep up. After 110 yards, or one-quarter way around the track, Braden has lost all of his competition, except for Johnson. At the 220-yard mark, at the bench, Coach Herndon exclaims, "that was a 21.9 split!" As Braden approaches the finish line, many of the coaches and officials know exactly what they are witnessing. Braden crosses the finish line, delivering 440

yards in 44.93 seconds. Johnson follows, with a time of 46.94 seconds. Dr. Braun looks at Coach Herndon, and is at a loss for words.

Looking at the scoreboard, Braden immediately sees his winning time. Braden, who is not at a loss for words, points to his chest, exclaiming, “everybody step aside, ‘cause you can’t beat my stride. I am the greatest ass kicker of all time! There ain’t no ass kicker alive that’s better than me!” There is no longer any question about Braden’s claim. Braden just delivered a 440-yard dash performance that is a qualifying time for the Olympics in the 400-meter dash. Braden heads back to the bench, knowing that he, once again, won the event he’s owned for the last eight years.

In the stands, the President of the University, President Caldwell, asks the group sitting with him, “when did we pick him up?” Dean Grimsby, wanting to sound knowledgeable, replies, “I think we picked him up this year.” Mr. Rosenberg, the director of admissions, clarifies, “Axel Braden is a freshman, and he’s also one of our campus police officers. He graduated from the police academy last year, and he is now in our Criminal Justice program.” President Caldwell replies, “I feel a lot safer already.” Provost Leighton informs President Caldwell, “if I am not mistaken, he just set a divisional record.” President Caldwell replies, “he sounded very confident that he would win. I’d certainly agree that his abilities are congruent with his confidence.”

Right before lunch, the call is made for the 100-yard dash final. Eddie and Mark, highly encouraged by Braden’s enthusiasm, head to the starting line. In the stands, Mr. Rosenberg tells President Caldwell, “our two guys in the final are Eddie Bogenskaya and Mark Svoboda. We picked them up this year too. Eddie is expected to win this race. Mark is expected to come in second.” Provost Leighton comments, “this is the race I’ve been waiting for all day. I’m sure you have as well, Dean Grimsby. Haven’t you?” Dean Grimsby replies, “yes, yes. For sure.” Truth be told, Dean Grimsby could not care less about the race. He would rather be home cutting his lawn right now.

In the final, Eddie and Mark are again up against Major Nachlobrocklin. At the starting line, knowing that he has met his match, Nachlobrocklin is unusually quiet. Catching Nachlobrocklin’s eye, Mark points to his ass, implying that Nachlobrocklin will have a good view of it during the race. With the finalists behind the blocks, the coaches staring at the starting line, and the administrators at the edge of their seats, the big sprinting event of the day is about to begin.

The Starter announces, “this is the final for the 100-yard dash. Good luck to all of you. On your marks.” The eight finalists get themselves positioned in the blocks. The Starter announces, “set.” Without delay, the

gun is fired, and the runners are off. Eddie and Mark are in the lead right out of the blocks. After twenty-five yards, Eddie and Mark break away, leaving Nachlobrocklin with a good view of Mark's ass. At 50 yards, Eddie breaks away from Mark, taking a very clear lead. At the finish line, Eddie wins the gold medal, and Mark wins the silver medal. Nachlobrocklin wins the bronze medal, wondering where the two guys who keep beating him came from.

Everyone in the stadium cheers and applauds, seeing the times on the scoreboard. Hearing the cheering, Eddie looks up to see his time and, throwing his fist into the air, yells out, "yes!" Eddie's time of 9.11 seconds, represents the best official run of his life. Mark's time of 9.17 seconds, also represents his personal best. Eddie and Mark exchange high-fives and fist bumps. Nachlobrocklin is amazed that his personal best time of 9.43 seconds only affords him a bronze medal. At the finish, it is clear that the rest of the spread out pack never stood a chance at placing in this race.

In the stands, Provost Leighton comments to the other administrators, "I can't even express how pleased I am that Edward is back on our team!" President Caldwell, not well versed in track, asks anyone, "exactly how good were their times anyway?" Provost Leighton, who apparently knows a thing or two, answers, "I'm sure Edward just set a divisional record, especially since his run was very close to the world record. Edward's and Mark's times today would certainly qualify them for the Olympics. Wouldn't you agree, Dean Grimsby?" Caught in the middle of a daydream, Dean Grimsby, who must reply since he was addressed, answers, "yes, yes. I certainly agree." Provost Leighton is clearly not happy with Dean Grimsby for some reason.

As Eddie and Mark return to the team bench, they see Coach Herndon, who rarely shows emotion, exclaiming, "did everyone see that? I can't believe what I just saw!" Eddie and Mark are greeted by high-fives, fist bumps, and hugs. Kathy jumps up onto Eddie's hips, prompting Paula to jump up on Mark's hips. Kathy tells Eddie, "you did it! You won!" Eddie replies, "one down, five to go." The celebration continues for a while, until the women get called for their final in the 100-yard dash.

Now that the men's 100-yard dash final is over, the last call is made for the women's 100-yard dash final. It's now Kathy's and Paula's turn to show everyone what they have. With eight finalists in the race, Kathy, Paula, and Adrianna are the three women expected to place in the final. Adrianna asks Kathy and Paula, "does that scream thing you guys do really help?" Kathy replies, "I don't know. I just do it naturally. Try it and see." Paula adds, "Eddie calls it the 'Amazon war cry.'" Kathy then mentions to Adriana, "the least it will do is to scare the crap out of the person next to you." Adrianna smiles, and tells them, "I'm going to try it

and see." With the race about to begin, the women wish each other good luck, which is quite a departure from two years ago.

The Starter announces, "this is the final for the women's 100-yard dash. Good luck to every one of you. On your marks." Eddie and Mark are watching closely, as are the coaches. The word, "set," quiets the stadium, with the crowd wondering if they'll see a performance comparable to the men's final. The gun is fired, and three Amazon war cries announce the competition has begun.

At 25 yards, Kathy is in the lead, but Paula has some competition. Adrianna is right there next to her. Adrianna is totally convinced the Amazon war cry gave her a bit of an edge. At 50 yards, Paula closes in on Kathy's lead and pulls ahead of Adrianna. This race is now serious business. With Paula on her heels, Kathy gives it all she has. Paula, not willing to let Adrianna take second place, pours on the power. Adrianna, in her last 100-yard dash, wants to go out with the best time of her life. At the finish line, Kathy takes first place, and Paula takes second place. With the best run of her life, Adrianna takes third place.

At the finish line, Kathy, Paula, and Adrianna all exchange high-fives and victory hugs. Kathy, who seems to have everyone's statistics in their head, tells Adrianna, "by the way, you just beat Liz Duncan's best time." Adrianna gives Kathy another high-five, telling her, "wow! You just made my day!"

Looking up at the scoreboard, Kathy's time comes in at 10.51 seconds, setting a divisional record. Paula's time is 10.67 seconds, which would have set a divisional record if Kathy were not in the race. And Adrianna, with an awesome run, clocked in at 10.75 seconds. On the way to the benches, the winners exchange hugs again, congratulating each other for their awesome run.

Over at the expensive seats, not that anyone really paid to sit in them, Provost Leighton tells Dr. Karakova, "Kathy is a really good asset to our team. I'm sure you're very proud of her." Dr. Karakova replies, "I am. She put a lot of work into getting this far. It's just too bad that she and Eddie won't be back next year." Shocked at Dr. Karakova's comment, Provost Leighton replies, "really? Why not? Is there a problem?" Knowing exactly where he was going with his comment, Dr. Karakova tells Provost Leighton, "I'm sure Dean Grimsby could explain the reasons surrounding their decision much better than any of us."

Dr. Karakova's carefully worded comment was certainly the last thing Dean Grimsby wanted to hear today. Except for, perhaps, Provost Leighton, who now officially informs the dean, telling him, "Dean Grimsby, I would like to hear from you personally the explanation of why Kathy and

Edward will not be back next year. Please clear your calendar for Monday morning. We will start promptly at 9:00 a.m., in my office." Dean Grimsby, armed with the fact that he fully exonerated Eddie, replies, "I'll be there."

Dean Grimsby had previously assured Provost Leighton that Eddie was back on the team, only to find out otherwise. Provost Leighton is quite confused with the conflicting information she has received regarding Eddie's continued participation on the team. Hearing that Kathy will not be back next year now raises a red flag. If anyone is sending mixed signals, it is Dean Grimsby. Eddie agreed to run in today's meet only to prove a point. That point was that you do not need to take steroids in order to win. Eddie never said that he would return next year. Neither did Kathy. Dean Grimsby, agreeing to the meeting with Provost Leighton on Monday morning, had little or no choice.

When they return to the bench, everyone gives Kathy and Paula a high-five and a generous supply of hugs. Coach Herndon, displaying abundant energy herself, gives Kathy and Paula a high-five. Eddie gives Kathy a special congratulation, then tells her, "now that you guys are done, we can all finally get some lunch!" Kathy replies, "hey, now! I got here as fast as I can, in 10.51 seconds!" Mark comments, "if there was pizza at the finish line, she would have run a lot faster." Kathy smiles, and simply replies, "hey, now!" Now with a 45-minute break, the tribe heads to the cafeteria for a light lunch. Mitchell and Akinmola, who will be running the mile shortly, join them, but they have already had their lunch.

After lunch, the call is made for the men's one-mile run. Today, it's a toss up whether Mitchell or Stone will win. Akinmola might even take this race, but he has not yet broken a four-minute mile. Mitchell has formulated a plan by where he, Stone, and Akinmola might be able to improve their times. So, for this race, Mitchell, Stone, and Akinmola have come to a strategical agreement. With Mitchell's plan, the goal for the team is to take first, second, and third place in the event. Whether Mitchell's plan works or not remains to be seen.

At the starting line, Mitchell spots a guy wearing number 194, who presented a bit of a problem over the indoor season. Referring to number 194, Mitchell tells Stone and Akinmola, "we all have to break out ahead of that guy wearing number 194." Stone, who has been around for a while, comments, "the good news is I don't see anyone else who might pose a threat." Stone tells Akinmola, "see what you can do to block him."

The runners are positioned, with Mitchell, the number one seed, assigned to the inside position. Next to Mitchell is Stone. And, next to Stone is Akinmola. Number 194, the fourth seed, is next to Akinmola, whom Akinmola will try his best to block. The Starter announces, "set."

The gun is fired, and Mitchell, Stone, and Akinmola sprint the first 50 yards. As soon as Mitchell takes the lead, Stone and Akinmola synchronously drop in right behind him. Number 194 is in fourth place, and seems to be content with that position for now.

At exactly 220 yards into the race, Mitchell steps out, immediately followed by Stone and Akinmola sprinting ahead of him. Mitchell, however, does not drop his pace, but the planned strategy requires that Stone and Akinmola step up their pace. Mitchell drops into third place, with Stone now taking the lead. At the 440-yard mark, Stone steps out, followed by Akinmola and Mitchell sprinting to take the first and second place position. Stone drops into third place, and the group is now led by Akinmola. By rotating the lead, each runner gains the benefit of drafting. The three teammates continue the same procedure for three-quarters of a mile.

At the three-quarter mile mark, by prior agreement, the three distance stars are now on their own. By Mitchell's own design, he is now in the lead, right where he wanted to be all along. With the initial position of Mitchell-Stone-Akinmola, shifting positions every 220 yards would put Mitchell in the lead at the three-quarter mile mark. Calculating this in advance, Mitchell virtually assured himself a victory. But, with 440 yards to go, and less than a yard or two between any of the three frontrunners, it's still technically anyone's race. With a lot of energy remaining, Mitchell runs the last 440 yards as if it were a 440-yard dash.

Knowing that he will not be caught, Mitchell maintains the lead. Akinmola and Stone battle it out for second place, something Mitchell knew would happen well ahead of time. With a fight to the finish, the spectators all stand to get a good view as the contenders approach the finish line. Mitchell crosses the finish line with a time of 3:54.51. Akinmola takes second place, with a time of 3:59.87. Stone, finishing right behind Akinmola, delivers a time of 3:59.98.

Mitchell knew all along that he would win this race. During practice, Mitchell has been closely observing Stone and Akinmola. For weeks, they have all been practicing drafting off of each other. During the interval training drill, Mitchell discovered that, if pushed too hard in the beginning of the race, Stone will not run as good as usual. Mitchell has also discovered that Akinmola, being the tallest member of the distance team, has a greater frontal body surface area. Taking what he learned in Miss Amherst's physics class, Mitchell surmised that Akinmola would certainly benefit greatly from drafting. Mitchell has also surmised that, because of Akinmola's greater frontal body surface area, Mitchell would benefit the most by following Akinmola versus following Stone.

Today, Mitchell's analysis was proved correct. Oddly, Stone and Akinmola did not figure out that Mitchell's plan was designed to give Mitchell the best possible outcome for this race. But, either way, the University team placed first, second, and third in the event, and that's all that matters.

Immediately after the mile, the call is made for the men's mile medley relay. Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson, in the first heat, head to the starting line. McCutchen, who previously ran in this race, looks at the mile medley relay team with contempt. Disgusted with the way the meet is going, McCutchen stands up, and goes for a walk. Leggett stands up, and goes with him. Losing the 440-yard dash earlier today, Leggett's track career has come to a close. As long as the tribe is around, McCutchen's track career is essentially over as well.

Mark, and the other lead off men, get on the track. Up against Nachlobrocklin again, Mark has assumed the lead off position. The Starter gets the runners ready and set, and fires the gun. The runners are out of the blocks, all off to a good start.

Back at the expensive seats, Dr. Karakova mentions, "this is our star relay team. They've never lost a race." Dean Grimsby asks, "never? That's probably exaggerating a little." Putting the dean in his place, Dr. Karakova explains, "actually, it's no exaggeration at all. This relay team has been running together since middle school. And, they've never lost a relay race for as long as they have been running together." As Mark is about to hand off to Eddie, Dr. Karakova tells the other administrators, "watch their handoff, and compare it with the other team's handoffs. You'll see one of the reasons they are so good." Eddie receives the baton from Mark, prompting Provost Leighton to comment, "I can see that. That was a seamless transition if I ever saw one, and was very impressive."

President Caldwell moves to the edge of his seat as Braden gets on the track. Braden has quickly become President Caldwell's favorite team member. Braden receives the baton, widening the lead for Johnson, who will be up next. Far in the lead, Braden is running against the clock. President Caldwell exclaims, "look at him go! I never realized our team was so good!" Dr. Karakova tells President Caldwell, "at the risk of sounding a little crude, Axel Braden does have a medal that is inscribed 'Axel Braden, Ass Kicker in Chief' on the back of it." President Caldwell laughs, and replies, "I'd love to see it sometime." Dr. Karakova tells President Caldwell, "I'm sure he'd be very glad to show it to you. The coaches at his high school gave it to him." Braden hands off to Johnson, who has been granted a significant lead.

The administrators sit back and relax, watching Johnson run like a machine. After lapping two other teams, Johnson crosses the finish line

first, and walks back to join his teammates. The relay team celebrates yet another victory, winning by a significant margin. Heading back to the bench, they all know they have taken the gold medal yet again.

Provost Leighton cannot help but comment, “those guys are really, really good! It would be quite a shame if they all didn’t return next year.” Fully expecting to have a boring day, the administrators now have an air of excitement among them. And, losing the verbal chess match going on in the administrator’s box, Dean Grimsby cannot wait for the meet to be over.

After the men’s mile medley relay is over, the call is made for the women’s mile medley relay. Kathy, Paula, Erika, and Barbara, in the first heat, head to the starting line. Expected to win this event for the third straight year, the women’s mile medley team could easily set a divisional record today. This year, there is no controversy at the starting line. Instead, the controversy and tension are developing among the administrators sitting in the expensive seats.

The Starter announces, “on your marks,” followed by, “set.” The gun is fired, and Paula takes off, letting out her Amazon war cry. Another Amazon war cry is also heard on the track, which is that of Adrianna, who is now convinced that the primal scream affords a bit of an advantage out of the blocks. Adrianna now wishes she had learned that little secret when she was a freshman. Assuming the lead in her leg, Paula hands off to Kathy, who announces the beginning of her leg with her Amazon war cry.

In the administrator’s box, President Caldwell mentions to Dr. Karakova, “that’s your daughter, Kathy, again. She’s really stealing the show today!” Dr. Karakova proudly replies, “that’s my Kathy. She’s become very competitive on the track over the last few years.” President Caldwell agrees, saying, “I can definitely see that.” Dr. Caldwell then asks, “what year is she in now?” Dr. Karakova replies, “she’s a junior.” Provost Leighton adds, “Kathy’s 100-yard dash time pretty much would qualify her for the Olympics. I really hope Kathy chooses to return next year. If she continues on her path, and qualifies, it would certainly bring a lot of good publicity to this University.”

Not wanting to be left out of the conversation, Dean Grimsby asks, “Provost Leighton, I’m just curious how you know so much about track and field. Are you a fan?” Perceiving the dean’s malice, Provost Leighton replies, “well, let’s just say that, until Kathy and Paula arrived on the scene at our University, I held the University’s record in the women’s 100-yard dash and the 220-yard dash. Those records stood for many years.” President Caldwell comments, “I certainly remember those days. Back then, you were my teaching assistant.”

Attempting to dig himself out of the deep hole he was digging earlier, Dean Grimsby just got a little history lesson. Clearly, President Caldwell and Provost Leighton go back a long time. What Dean Grimsby does not know, and will not likely find out anytime soon, is that President Caldwell and Dr. Karakova were roommates in college. Many years ago, Dr. Karakova ran track, and President Caldwell was on the University's swimming team.

Back on the track, Kathy widens the lead and hands off to Erika. For her first time in college competition, Erika lets out an Amazon war cry, surprising Kathy and Paula. Erika, now consistently delivering a 440-yard time better than McCutchen's or Leggett's best performance, has all the confidence in the world. Running an awesome leg, Erika hands off to Barbara. In the lead by a significant margin, Barbara has never been passed by anyone on the track in this race. She is not about to start today. At the end of her last lap, Barbara sprints toward the finish line, knowing that a divisional record is within reach.

Taking first place in their heat, the women's mile medley relay team has, in fact, set a new divisional record. Seeing their time on the scoreboard, the relay team lets out an Amazon war cry in unison. The relay team members exchange hugs, and head to the team bench as the other heat is getting ready to run.

Having a short break from the running events, Eddie walks over to the field area, checking in to throw the discus. Bobby B. tells Eddie, "it's about time you showed up!" Eddie replies, "I ran around a little to warm up. So, did you win?" Bobby B. smiles and replies, "do you really have to ask?" Eddie replies, "that good, eh?" Bobby B., whose winning throw was twelve feet beyond the second place winner, has had a great day. Eddie, Bobby B., and Dr. Bonamo, the field coach, catch up on the day's events as Eddie waits to be called for his throw. Dr. Bonamo informs Eddie that the day's best throw is 204 feet, 8 inches. Eddie is quite confident that he can beat that distance.

Eddie is called to make his throw, and steps up to the discus pad, taking his time. A few of the seasoned discus men, wondering who the new guy is, watch intently. Going into the wind up, and into the spin, Eddie releases the discus, letting out a primal scream announcing to Kathy who just threw the discus. Soaring through the air, the discus lands slightly beyond the 220-foot mark. The Field Judges take the measurement. Eddie's throw comes in at 224 feet, 2 inches.

Eddie sits around relaxing as he is talking with Bobby B., waiting for his next throw. Eddie is called to make his second attempt. Stepping up to the discus pad, Eddie is now attracting a lot of attention. Eddie goes into his wind up, and releases the discus, along with another primal

scream. The discus soars through the air, again landing at just past the 220-foot mark. The Field Judges take the measurement, which comes in at 224 feet, 9 inches. Convinced that Eddie has the event wrapped up, Dr. Bonamo tells Eddie to call it a day. Eddie heads back to the bench, awaiting the call for his next event.

The call for the 220-yard dash could not have come soon enough. Eddie and Mark have been waiting for this event because they have gotten word that Nachlobrocklin has been going psycho. Wondering what is exactly meant by psycho, Mark has been thinking of ways to use the situation to his advantage. Mark will likely beat Nachlobrocklin anyway, but any entertainment potential brought to the starting line simply should not go to waste.

Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer head to the starting line. As they get closer, they see Nachlobrocklin pacing back and forth. Nachlobrocklin, who knows he will have another tough race, is not happy to see Eddie and Mark as they approach. Nachlobrocklin stares at Mark, prompting Mark to ask, "what's your problem?" Nachlobrocklin quickly becomes unhinged, and exclaims, "what's my problem? I'm on full scholarship because I always win! And, I'm not winning! So, my scholarship is on the line! That's what's my problem!" Mark calmly replies, "yeah, that would be your problem all right. I'm glad it's not my problem." Nachlobrocklin becomes even more unhinged after hearing Mark's comment, not something that is very beneficial right before a race.

Mark, Eddie, and Hoffer give each other a fist bump. Making sure Nachlobrocklin hears his comment, Mark tells Eddie and Hoffer, "we'd better win, or we might lose our scholarships." Eddie remarks, "yeah, we wouldn't want that to happen." Eddie whispers to Mark, "Amazon war cry at the start." Mark gives Eddie a high-five, telling him, "you got it, bro." Eddie then whispers to Hoffer, "Amazon war cry at the start." Hoffer also replies, "you got it," also giving Eddie a high-five.

Nachlobrocklin, wondering what Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer are up to, is still pacing back and forth, expending energy that would be better spent during the race. Hoffer seems to be Nachlobrocklin's number one problem. Hoffer, who took the bronze medal in the 220-yard dash during the indoor track season, is now the third seed. Nachlobrocklin knows by now that he is not likely to beat Eddie or Mark. Hoffer, who seems to have come out of nowhere, is the one who will likely hand Nachlobrocklin a fourth-place participation trophy in this race.

The Starter announces, "on your marks." Nachlobrocklin looks over at Hoffer, hoping Hoffer is having a bad day. The Starter announces, "set." The gun is fired, and Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer let out a primal scream in unison, completely unexpected by Nachlobrocklin and the other runners.

A few steps out of the blocks, Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer take control of the race. At the halfway mark, Nachlobrocklin, two yards behind Hoffer, is in fourth place. Nachlobrocklin can still beat Hoffer, and Hoffer knows this. But, it is evident that Hoffer is not having a bad day. As they approach the finish line, Nachlobrocklin gains a foot over Hoffer, but loses it again as the end of the race draws near. Eddie and Mark again appear to tie, but the scoreboard tells otherwise. Hoffer takes third place in this heat, and likely in the event. Nachlobrocklin will walk away with another participation trophy, adding to his growing collection of worthless treasures.

The scoreboard shows that, this time, Eddie edged out Mark by three one-hundredths of a second. If the finish were evaluated by photograph, the race could have been too close to call. Hoffer is glad to be in contention for the bronze medal. Eddie's, Mark's, and Hoffer's times on the scoreboard are a bit discouraging to the runners in the following heats. It is not likely that anyone will beat Hoffer, but Hoffer will certainly have his eyes glued to the scoreboard until all the heats are finished.

Back at the bench, Mark scans the stands, looking for anyone that he might know. Mark mentions to Paula, "wow! The Chuckie is back with that Goldshit guy. I wonder what they're doing here again." Paula, using her superpowers, replies, "that ain't good. They're definitely up to something." Mark adds, "and, look over there near the announcer's booth. There's Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and Miss Amherst." With a smile coming across her face, Paula replies, "I hope we get to see them after the meet!" Mark suggests, "maybe Mr. Frazier will make Chuckie and Goldshit take a few laps around the track." Paula laughs, telling Mark, "I'd love to see that!"

As the afternoon draws to a close, the call is made for the final event of the day, the 4 by 440 relay. Twelve teams will compete and, if you ask Braden, the winner has already been decided. The first heat brings the higher seeded teams, including Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson, who are assigned to lane one. Looking around, Mark sees Nachlobrocklin and his team in lane four. In lane two, a guy wearing number 1022, boasting to his teammates that they are going to win. Eddie recognizes number 1022 as Duane Harris, who ran for Central High School years ago. Harris looks over at the University's relay team, suddenly realizing winning might be a bit more difficult than originally thought.

Seeing Harris holding the baton, Eddie decides he wants to lead off. Harris knows he has never beaten Eddie, and is not likely to begin today. Braden will be the anchor, and will likely run against Nachlobrocklin. Mark will take the second leg, and Johnson will take the third leg. Johnson recognizes a few runners he ran against last year, and tells the

rest of the 4 by 440 relay team that none of the other teams should pose too much of a problem. But, the 4 by 440 relay team already knows this.

The lead-off men get behind the blocks, and the Starter announces, "on your marks." Harris looks over at Eddie, wondering if he is any better than he was in high school. The Starter announces, "set." Harris must now deliver on his boastful claims. Once the runners are set, the gun is fired, and the lead-off men are out of the blocks.

After 100 yards, Eddie is clearly in the lead. Harris quickly realizes that Eddie is much faster now than when he was in high school. Harris, now with a lot of work to do, delivers his best effort. Eddie hands off the baton, and an eight-second lead, to Mark. Continuing to expand the lead, Mark is intent on delivering his best 440-yard run ever. Mark hands off to Johnson, who begins his leg one minute and thirty-two seconds after the race began.

Braden gets on the track, dancing and exclaiming, "here we go! Give me that baton, so I can get it on! Get down with the boogie! I'm gonna win the gold! Everyone else is gonna fold!" Nachlobrocklin watches as Braden is announcing well ahead of time the winner of the race. Johnson hands off to Braden, who takes off with a greater intention than to just win the race. On his way to the finish line, Braden passes the last place runner. Having a specific goal, Braden is clearly out to meet it. Braden crosses the finish line, completing the race with a composite time of 2:59.82.

The goal of the 4 by 440 relay team was to break the three-minute mark, and to smash the divisional record. Today, they have accomplished their goal. The goal was set because Eddie is not likely to run with the team next year. Mark, Braden, and Johnson will be on their own. Although Hoffer is an exemplary runner, he is not quite up to the performance level for the 4 by 440 relay team to break three minutes. No one else on the University team, substituting for any of the runners today, could have delivered anything close to today's winning time.

McCutchens, an alternate on the team, did not participate in today's meet. Since McCutchen's father donates a lot of money to the school, McCutchen's absence on the track has not gone unnoticed. President Caldwell asks those in his box, "does anyone know what happened to the McCutchen kid? I haven't seen him run today." Dean Grimsby doesn't really want to answer the question, and really wishes the subject was never brought up. The president, however, does not go unanswered. Provost Leighton offers, "I believe that particular issue is related to the situation with Kathy and Edward. Dean Grimsby would be the best person to explain that as well. If you would like, please feel free to attend my meeting with the dean on Monday morning." President Caldwell replies, "I

think I might just do that." Dean Grimsby will be doing a lot of mental gymnastics trying to get himself out of this one. But, he will surely fail.

The end of the meet brings the awards ceremony, which Coach Braun and the rest of the coaching staff are looking forward to. Many of the other eleven divisional teams are curious to find out more about some of the newer runners dominating today's meet. The Meet Announcer introduces today's officials, and recognizes the coaches and athletes for their participation today. After the administrative announcements are out of the way, the presentation of the awards then begins.

In the men's events, Eddie, with a stellar performance, claims the gold medal in the 100-yard dash. Mark takes the silver medal, with a time representing the best run of his life. In the 220-yard dash, Eddie marginally beat out Mark, taking the gold medal. Mark takes the silver medal, and Hoffer takes the bronze. Braden kicked ass in the 440-yard dash, adding another gold medal to his growing collection. Johnson, having an excellent day, takes the silver medal in the 440-yard dash. In the 880-yard run, Mitchell takes the gold medal, Akinmola takes the silver medal, and Stone takes the bronze. In the mile, as in the 880-yard run, Mitchell takes the gold medal, Akinmola takes the silver medal, and Stone takes the bronze medal.

In the men's relay events, Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden take the gold medal in the mile medley relay and in the 4 by 440 relay, setting a divisional record in both events. Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, and Johnson take the gold medal in the 4 by 880 relay, also setting a divisional record.

In the men's field events, Bobby B. wins the gold medal in the shot-put. From the looks of things, Bobby B. will be undefeated in the years to come. Pete Mendenhall, who has improved tremendously after working with Bobby B., takes home the bronze medal in the shot-put. And, in the upset of the day, Eddie takes home the gold medal in the discus.

While the awards are distributed, President Caldwell mentions to Dr. Karakova, "I had no idea our track team was this skilled." Dr. Karakova informs President Caldwell, "well, until recently, we weren't. Last year, I believe we won eight gold medals and two silver medals. And, if I am not mistaken, six runners were responsible for those medals." President Caldwell suggests, "with a team of this caliber, we should be investigating the possibility of expansion." Expansion, from the University's perspective, is finding more scholarship money and searching for more exemplary athletes.

Hinting at the rift caused by Dean Grimsby, Dr. Karakova mentions, "hopefully, Dr. Braun will be able to keep the team together for the next year. I know he's doing his best to make that happen." President

Caldwell replies, "I'll just charge Dean Grimsby with that task. And, after today's performance, I think I'll be attending a few more meets in the future." Dean Grimsby, of course, overheard every word of the conversation between President Caldwell and Dr. Karakova.

The women's events also bring good news. In a repeat performance of last year, Kathy wins the gold medal, and Paula wins the silver medal in the 100-yard dash. In the 220-yard dash, Paula wins the gold medal, and Kathy wins the silver medal. As expected, Barbara wins the gold medal in the 880-yard run and in the mile. Kathy, Paula, Erika, and Barbara take the gold medal in the mile medley relay.

Many other of the University's team members walk away with medals in their events. Using the new training protocols introduced this year, the team is stronger than it ever has been.

In news from some of the competitor's teams, Nachlobrocklin's only medal is the bronze in the men's 100-yard dash. He is not the least bit happy, and neither is his coach. Nachlobrocklin's university paid a lot of money for him, and he has not been delivering as expected. But, that is because of the competition. Had Nachlobrocklin stayed at his other college, he might still be winning. In the women's events, Adrianna won the bronze medal in the women's 100-yard dash, and is ecstatic. And Duane Harris, who ran against Eddie and the tribe in high school, walks away with nothing today.

As they are about ready to pack up and head inside, a few unexpected visitors come down from the stands to congratulate the team. Being the first to see them, Kathy yells out, "hey! I didn't know you guys were going to be here! Mark saw you guys up in the stands right before the 4 by 440 relay!" Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, "we decided late Friday to come to the meet. You guys were clocking out there!" Kathy asks, "did you see Eddie's 100-yard dash?" Mr. Frazier exclaims, "I couldn't believe what I was seeing! All of you guys were awesome!"

Seeing Mr. Frazier, Mrs. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and Miss Amherst, the entire tribe walks over to say hello. The tribe's former coaches greet everyone with a high-five, fist bump, and a few hugs. Mr. Frazier tells Braden, "I saw your ass-kicking quarter-mile! I had my watch on you. You were clocking!" Braden exclaims, "we kicked every ass out there on the track today! Especially in the 4 by 440! Did you see that one?" Mr. Frazier replies, "with you guys, that was always the main event! You always won!" The tribe, and their current and former coaches, extends the celebration, as a few new introductions are made.

Dr. Karakova, seeing the high school coaching staff, tells President Caldwell and Provost Leighton, "if you have a minute, there's someone

here I'd like you to meet, if you have the time." President Caldwell replies, "sure. I'd love to." Dr. Karakova, President Caldwell, Provost Leighton, and a few other administrators walk over to join the celebration. They are followed by Dean Grimsby, who certainly doesn't want to miss anything should his name come up. Mr. Rosenberg, the Director of Admissions, who hasn't spoken to the tribe since their admissions meeting, also joins the group.

As the administrators walk up, Kathy gives her dad a hug, and asks, "did you see me run?" Kathy's father replies, "I think that was the fastest you've ever run!" Kathy, who has everyone's statistics in her head, including her own, replies, "it was! And, it was Paula's best too!" Dr. Karakova takes a look at Kathy's medals, telling her, "you did really well today. I'm very proud of you." Kathy's mother takes a look at Kathy's medals, and tells her, "you did great today!"

Kathy's father tells Kathy, "I'd like you to meet President Joseph Caldwell, and Provost Athena Leighton." Kathy tells them, "wow! It's so awesome to meet you guys!" Provost Leighton tells Kathy, "congratulations! You clearly had an awesome meet today." President Caldwell tells Kathy, "I've heard so much about you over the years. It's a pleasure to meet you again."

Kathy and President Caldwell have met a long time ago when Kathy was a lot younger and President Caldwell was a professor. Kathy was too young at the time to remember. After a short conversation with his daughter, Dr. Karakova moves on, introducing the University administrators to the Northside High School coaching staff.

Dr. Karakova tells Dr. Zunde, "Dr. Zunde, it's been a while." Dr. Zunde replies, "it has. About a year, I think. We thought we'd drop by and see how impressive the team is now. And, I can certainly say, they are quite impressive." Dr. Karakova introduces everyone to each other, specifically wanting President Caldwell to meet Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde. Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde are the two people most responsible for developing the talent that the University has today. The team, the coaching staff, the high school coaches, and the administrators congregate around the team bench, as no one wants to be left out of what appears to be a very important gathering.

Once everyone has been introduced, surprising everyone, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "Athena, it's simple! All you have to do is put one foot in front of the other faster than the other girl!" Provost Leighton exclaims, "I did! But, her legs are a lot longer than mine!" Mr. Frazier gives Provost Leighton a hug, leaving everyone to wonder what that exchange was all about. Mrs. Frazier, hearing the famous words, exclaims, "Athena! Athena! I can't believe it!" Athena exclaims, "Dawn!

It's been forever!" Mr. Frazier's wife, Dawn, also gives Athena a hug. It is clear to everyone that Dawn and Athena knew each other quite well at one time.

Provost Leighton, losing her administrative demeanor, cheerfully tells everyone around, "I'm sure all of you are wondering what that was all about. George and I were at the Olympic tryouts many years ago. Unfortunately, we both ended up being alternates. Our event was the 100-meter dash. During tryouts, after one race, George told me, 'Athena, it's simple! All you have to do is put one foot in front of the other faster than the other girl!' And, I responded, 'I did! But her legs are a lot longer than mine! Well, the other girl was over six feet tall. And, I'm only five feet, eight inches. I'll never forget when George said that.' The group standing around clearly enjoyed hearing Provost Leighton's story.

Provost Leighton's secret is now out. A select few of the administrators knew about her past track and field accomplishments, but it is not common knowledge around the University. Provost Leighton turns to Kathy, and tells her, "congratulations again! You broke my University record in the 100-yard dash today!" Kathy replies, "wow! I didn't know you held the record!" Provost Leighton replies, "actually, I can't believe that my record stood for so long!" While other conversations begin, Kathy has a long conversation with Provost Leighton.

Dr. Bonamo, the field events coach, along with Dr. Amherst and Dr. Zunde get into an in-depth technical discussion about the field implements. Dr. Bonamo is quite impressed at the extensive analysis done by Dr. Amherst to evaluate the optimum release angle of the field implements. Dr. Bonamo is quick to realize that Dr. Amherst's work at the high school is far beyond anything that the University team currently does. Wanting to learn more, Dr. Bonamo exchanges contact information with Dr. Amherst and plans to talk with her sometime in the near future. It is clear, however, from the discussion, that Dr. Bonamo and Dr. Zunde have known each other for a very long time.

While Dr. Bonamo is gaining insight into improving the performance of the field athletes, Dean Grimsby steps off to the side, talking with Dr. Paxton. Dean Grimsby asks Dr. Paxton to find a place for McCutchen on the distance team. Apparently, McCutchen's father gives a lot of money to the school, so finding a place for McCutchen seems to be somewhat important to the administration. Dr. Paxton informs Dean Grimsby that he will do his best to accomplish that goal. Dr. Paxton also makes Dean Grimsby aware that there are now several top notch distance runners on the team. But, somehow, the dean already knew that.

Mr. Rosenberg strikes up a conversation with Mark and Bobby B., neither of whom attends classes. Instead, they take special projects and

independent study courses. Mr. Rosenberg is very happy to see that Mark's and Bobby B.'s performance is worthy of the special arrangements they've received. Mr. Rosenberg jokingly asks Mark and Bobby B., "so, how are your classes going?" Bobby B. replies, "really good. I hit the gym for one or two hours a day after practice." Mr. Rosenberg informs Bobby B. and Mark, "it sounds like we'll have to give you guys credit for a few more physical education classes. I'll make a note of that." Since Mark and Bobby B. put in the work, they might as well get the class credit.

The party continues for about a half hour after the meet is over. The team is glad to meet the administrators outside of the world of academia. Likewise, the administrators are glad to meet the team in an informal setting. Dr. Braun, who has heard a lot about Mr. Frazier, is happy to finally meet the coach who has sent him so much talent. Many of the professors and administrators at the University already know Dr. Zunde, as he formerly taught at the University before taking the position at the high school.

But, not everyone is as happy and bubbly as some are. Dean Grimsby now gets the distinct impression that he is an outsider of sorts. Previously unaware that Provost Leighton was once a track star, the dean clearly embarrassed himself today. It is now obvious to Dean Grimsby that he might just have made a grave mistake in the way he treated Eddie. And, to see Provost Leighton warmly received by the team somehow bothers Dean Grimsby.

From McCutchen's perspective, he sees a circle of friendships and influence that has previously been invisible to him. For the first time, McCutchen gets to formally meet the Northside High School coaching staff responsible for delivering blow after blow to his high school's team. McCutchen is made aware of a few very close relationships that exist, highly suggestive of an inside circle. McCutchen gets the distinct impression that all the money his father donates to the school might just take a back seat to the relationships that exist among many of the people present today.

Leggett, likewise, gets his first real glimpse into the tribe's roots. Leggett now understands that, when he and McCutchen broke into Eddie's and Mark's lockers, they were getting in way over their head. Leggett, for the first time, realizes his friendship with McCutchen might be a serious problem. But, Leggett's track career is over after today. Leggett is ready to receive his diploma and move on.

During the meet, it was clear that Dr. Karakova and President Caldwell have known each other for a very long time. Hearing that Provost Leighton and Mr. Frazier go way back certainly was a surprise to everyone. News to some is that Athena Leighton was once President Caldwell's

teaching assistant. Mrs. Frazier, who apparently knew Provost Leighton very well at one time, completes a circle of friendship that few even knew existed.

Before everyone heads out, Provost Leighton mentions to Kathy, "before we all leave, I'd really like to meet Edward. Do you see him around anywhere?" Kathy searches for Eddie among the crowd, and does not find him. Kathy asks Mark, "hey, Mark. Have you seen Eddie?" Mark replies, "not recently." Kathy then asks Paula, "have you seen Eddie?" Paula replies, "the last time I saw him, he was talking with Mitchell." Now getting concerned, Kathy asks Mitchell, "did you see Eddie after you guys were talking?" Mitchell explains, "after the meet, Eddie said, 'here comes Dean Greaseball. I'm out of here.' Then, he walked back toward the locker room, and I haven't seen him since."

Hearing the news, a look of extreme disappointment comes over Provost Leighton's face. Provost Leighton really wanted to meet the guy who just ran an unquestionably qualifying time for the Olympics. Provost Leighton tells Kathy, "I guess I'll just meet him another time." A tear rolls down Kathy's face, as she breaks the news to Provost Leighton, "Eddie's not coming back." With a lot of conflicting information presented to her over the past week, Provost Leighton asks, "what do you mean? I thought he reconsidered and rejoined the team." Kathy explains, "no. Eddie only ran today to prove a point to Dean Grimsby. He wanted to show Dean Grimsby that he doesn't need steroids to win. That's why Eddie said he would run, and only if Dean Grimsby was at the finish line. I know Eddie. He's not coming back." Kathy wipes the tears from her eyes, and tells Provost Leighton, "well, it was so nice to meet you." As Kathy walks away, Provost Leighton can clearly see that Kathy is very upset.

Kathy joins her team as they head to the locker room, and Provost Leighton realizes that all she has heard over the last few weeks is a more serious problem than she previously thought. Provost Leighton has heard that, effective next year, Kathy has resigned from the team and requested that her scholarship be revoked. After McCutchen and Leggett broke into Mark's locker and nothing was done about it, Mark and Paula have put in the same request.

Provost Leighton has also heard through the grapevine that Eddie never returned to the team, but his presence today suggested to her that he may have, in fact, reconsidered. Dean Grimsby, hearing that Eddie will be running in today's meet, has assured Provost Leighton that everything has been worked out. Apparently, everything has been shoved under the carpet, and nothing has really been addressed. With so much conflicting information, Provost Leighton wants all the confusion cleared up.

Before Provost Leighton heads out, she sternly tells Dean Grimsby, "Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. In my office. Do not forget." Not waiting for Dean Grimsby to respond, Provost Leighton walks away with Dr. and Mrs. Karakova, as they head to their cars. Dean Grimsby will be spending all day Sunday worrying about Monday morning. As he walks to his car, Dean Grimsby can only imagine what is transpiring in the conversation between Dr. Karakova and Provost Leighton.

When Kathy gets to the locker area, she sees Eddie sitting on a bench, with his gym bag, in the hallway. Eddie stands up, and gives Kathy a hug. Eddie tells her, "I didn't think you guys would be out there for that long." Kathy tells Eddie, "Provost Leighton was looking for you. She wanted to meet you." Eddie asks, "what's a provost?" Kathy tells him, "she's like Dean Grimsby's boss or something." Explaining his absence, Eddie replies, "I didn't want to hear it from Grimsby. I've had enough of that asshole. When I saw him walking over, I just left." Kathy agrees, telling Eddie, "I can't say that I blame you." Kathy and Eddie talk for a few minutes longer, then Kathy tells him, "let me change. I'll be quick."

After the meet, many of the team members head out to the pizzeria for dinner. On the way, Eddie tells Kathy, "I thought you said that there wasn't a Mr. Crum at the University." Kathy replies, "I thought we didn't have one. I didn't even know that Dean Grimsby existed until he came to practice when Dr. Braun announced the events last Fall." Eddie replies, "yeah. Well, I don't know who's worse, Dean Grimsby or Mr. Crum."

Changing the subject a little bit, Kathy brings up, "Provost Leighton almost made the Olympics. She knows Mr. Frazier from way back. They were at the Olympic tryouts together a long time ago. And, Mr. Frazier's wife, Dawn, also knows Provost Leighton from somewhere." Eddie replies, "wow! It's a small world."

Seeing that Eddie is not as happy as he should be after having such a good meet, Kathy asks, "do you want to hear something funny?" Eddie replies, "sure!" Kathy tells the story, "when Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton were trying out for the Olympics, Mr. Frazier told her, 'Athena, it's simple. All you have to do is put one foot in front of the other faster than the other girl.' So, then, Provost Leighton told him, 'I did! But her legs are a lot longer than mine!'" Eddie laughs, and tells Kathy, "that is kind of funny. I can definitely hear Mr. Frazier saying that."

When they arrive at the pizzeria, Kathy and Eddie are among the last to arrive. Braden yells out, "yo, bro! We were wondering where you were!" Eddie replies, "I'm here. We wouldn't miss the pizza! I don't know why they just don't serve it at the finish line." Paula comments, "that would certainly make everyone run a lot faster." Looking around the tables, Eddie sees the whole tribe, including Amber sitting with Mitchell. Many of

the other team members are also present. As Eddie and Kathy walk to their seat, Mark gives Eddie a high-five.

Before Eddie takes a seat, he points to McCutchen and Leggett, and firmly tells them, "you two. Get out of here!" McCutchen and Leggett remain seated, prompting Eddie to respond, "did you hear me? I said, get out of here." Braden tells McCutchen and Leggett, "you heard him. You'd both better get your fat asses out of here." McCutchen tells Eddie, "we don't have to leave." Mark tells McCutchen, "yeah, and we don't have to sit with you. So, you heard Eddie. Get out of here." Following inaction by McCutchen and Leggett, Braden adds, "and, if someone decides to kick your ass, we don't have to stop them either."

Braden then tells Bobby B., "I hope you're ready. We might just be carrying their asses out of here like we did over the Summer." Bobby B. replies, "if I have to carry their ass out, I'm dumping them in the trash bin." Liking Bobby B.'s suggestion, Braden stands up, and suggests to Bobby B., "well, then it sounds like to me that it's time to take out the trash." Bobby B. follows suit, and stands up. Fearing what is about to happen, McCutchen and Leggett, knowing they will never win this one, quickly leave. Bobby B. and Braden follow them out to the parking lot, making sure they drive away without damaging anyone's vehicles.

Now that McCutchen and Leggett are gone, Eddie and Kathy take a seat. The damper hanging over the group is now gone since Eddie has disposed of the two clowns. Everyone can clearly see the energy of the group change in a very positive way. Joe comes over to take their order, checking out everyone's medals as he goes around the table. Joe sees some of the newer faces from the University, and many of whom have been coming in for pizza since the tribe started the tradition a few years ago.

After dinner, everyone heads home. On their way home, Kathy and Eddie stop by Kathy's parent's house, just to say hello. Kathy's father takes a moment to again admire the three gold medals draped around Kathy's neck and the five gold medals draped around Eddie's neck. Eddie then takes a moment to go into the back yard and check the pool water, making sure there are no dead frogs in the skimmers and that the water chemistry is just right.

While Eddie is in the back yard, Kathy's father tells her, "you know, Athena was very impressed with both of your performances today." Kathy tells him, "she seemed really nice. I really liked her story about her and Mr. Frazier at the Olympic trials. It seems like they were really good friends back then." Kathy's father tells her, "I never knew that about her. Athena is a very private person. She doesn't usually share stories like that with anyone." Kathy mentions, "Mr. Frazier must have broken her out

of her shell. When the two of them met, they both seemed really happy. And, so was Mr. Frazier's wife." Kathy's father agrees, telling Kathy, "I think we all saw that."

Kathy's father confides in her, "you do realize that Athena is very upset at what happened with Eddie, and the fact that you're not returning next year." Kathy frankly tells him, "let her be upset. She should be. Eddie had to deal with all of Mr. Crum's shit for four years. He's just not putting up with anyone's crap anymore." Kathy's father tells her, "I can't say that I blame him. I can tell you, however, that Athena plans to meet with you and Eddie." Kathy tells her father, "Eddie emptied out his locker today after the meet. He's not coming back to the University. That's going to make it really hard for Athena to meet with him."

Eddie walks in, announcing, "someone's been taking really good care of the pool!" Kathy's father replies, "thank you! And, thank you guys again for replacing the sand in the filter the other week." Eddie replies, "no problem." When Kathy's parents found out that the pool guy wasn't doing his job properly years ago, it was difficult to determine whether he replaced the sand in the filter when he claimed he did. Since Eddie and Kathy replaced the sand in their pool filter this year, they also decided to change the sand in Kathy's parent's pool filter as well.

Kathy's mother asks, "would you guys like dessert?" Kathy replies, "no, not really. We're kind of full from dinner." Kathy's mother tells Kathy, "I made chocolate mousse." Quickly changing her mind, Kathy exclaims, "sure! I'll have a little!" Ever since Kathy and Eddie's honeymoon cruise, chocolate mousse has become Kathy's favorite dessert. Eddie, Kathy, and her parents sit and have dessert, catching up on life. After dessert, Kathy and Eddie head home, stopping by the grocery store on the way to get the ingredients for chocolate mousse.

Monday morning, at 9:00 a.m., Dean Grimsby has been sitting outside Provost Leighton's office for fifteen minutes. Checking his watch every so often, Dean Grimsby is becoming optimistic that his meeting with Provost Leighton has been cancelled. At 9:12 a.m., Provost Leighton finally opens her door, and invites Dean Grimsby in. Already sitting in Provost Leighton's office is President Caldwell, who apparently has been speaking with the provost for a while.

Provost Leighton opens the meeting by telling Dean Grimsby, "I'm sure you enjoyed the track meet on Saturday, Dean Grimsby. I can tell you, for sure, that I certainly did." Dean Grimsby replies, "it was very enlightening." President Caldwell mentions, "I certainly enjoyed it. I had no idea that our track team is so awesome." Provost Leighton comments, "awesome is certainly the word for it. Kathy broke my University record in the 100-yard dash, and Paula broke my record in the 220-yard dash."

The truth is that, during the meet, Dean Grimsby wasn't paying one bit of attention to the action on the track. As students often daydream in class, the dean was daydreaming during the meet, waiting for the proverbial bell to ring so he can get out of there. Clearly distracted by some other issue running around in his head, the dean pretended to be very agreeable to everything that was said by his peers. Using the philosophy of "fake it 'til you make it," Dean Grimsby may have faked it, but he certainly didn't make it.

After greeting Dean Grimsby, Provost Leighton moves on to the prelude to her agenda, and asks the dean, "I'm just curious. Do you have any idea what you were witnessing, for example, when Edward Bogenskaya ran the 100-yard dash in 9.11 seconds, and Mark Svoboda ran it in 9.17 seconds?" Dean Grimsby, knowing that he paid little attention at the meet, replies, "they must have been good times. They won." Provost Leighton then asks, "how about Kathy's time of 10.51 seconds, and Paula's time of 10.67 seconds in the 100-yard dash?" Dean Grimsby replies, "well, their times don't sound quite as good." Provost Leighton repeats the dean's assessment, saying, "they don't sound quite as good. I see."

Referring to her notes, Provost Leighton asks the dean, "and, how about Axel Braden's performance in the 440-yard dash, running it in 44.93 seconds?" Dean Grimsby simply replies, "I suppose that was a good time. He won too, didn't he?" Provost Leighton, somewhat disgusted with the dean's ignorance, explains, "yes. He won. With a time of 44.93 seconds, forty-three hundredths of a second, less than a half second, off the world record¹, he won."

Provost Leighton quickly realizes that Dean Grimsby is in the dark. Giving the dean a quick education on what he saw this weekend, Provost Leighton asks him, "what would you say if I told you that any of those times that I just quoted are qualifying times for the Olympics?" Quite shocked and expressing some emotion, Dean Grimsby orates, "well, I had no idea they were that good!" But, the dean's emotion is obviously quite fake.

Provost Leighton then asks Dean Grimsby, "do you understand why you are here today?" In the hot seat, Dean Grimsby replies, "I'm sure this has something to do with Edward Bogenskaya but, I can assure you, I've fully exonerated Edward." Provost Leighton answers the dean, "yes, you've fully exonerated Edward. You've fully exonerated Edward from charges that should never have been brought against him without a full

¹ The world record in the 440-yard dash at the time of Braden's run was 44.5 seconds, set by John Smith in 1971.

investigation. And, the investigation revealed that no charges were ever warranted." Defending himself, Dean Grimsby explains, "I've informed Edward, who did not even see it fit to attend his own hearing, that he was welcome back to the University and that he is still on the track team." Provost Leighton quickly realizes that Dean Grimsby is attempting to defend the indefensible.

Provost Leighton tells Dean Grimsby in no uncertain terms, "I have a problem. Regardless of your edicts, Edward is not returning next year. I checked with the athletic office this morning. Katarina, Mark, and Paula will not be returning next year either. They have all requested that their athletic scholarships be terminated." Dean Grimsby comments, "I'm very sorry to hear that." Provost Leighton explains, "they are not returning, sir, strictly because of your malfeasance in handling Edward's case. That is quite a problem, wouldn't you think?" Silence falls over the room, as Dean Grimsby is at a loss as to how to respond.

Breaking the silence, Provost Leighton explains, "I have spoken with Coach Braun, who tells me that, during Edward's hearing, he personally charged you with the task of getting Edward back on the team." Dean Grimsby interrupts, and interjects, "yes, he did. But, with all due respect, I do not report to the coach." Provost Leighton replies, "yes, I fully understand that. But, you report to me, and now I'm charging you with the task of getting not only Edward, but Mark, Katarina, and Paula back on the team. And, for the record, I strongly suggest that you do not fail at doing so." Dean Grimsby, with a monumental task ahead of him, replies, "I understand."

Moving on to the next topic of the day, President Caldwell tells Dean Grimsby, "Addison, the reason I am here today is to gain an understanding into why Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett are still enrolled in this University. The offenses they have committed cannot only lead to criminal charges, but are clearly grounds for expulsion." Justifying his actions, Dean Grimsby replies, "I'm sure, President Caldwell and Provost Leighton, you are both aware of how much money Scott McCutchen, Senior, donates to this school. I have put both Steve Leggett and Todd McCutchen on disciplinary probation, and left their eligibility to participate on the track team up to the athletic department." President Caldwell replies, "I see."

Reviewing his notes as he is speaking, President Caldwell continues, "I understand from the campus police department that Steve Leggett was in possession of lock picking tools. Steve Leggett and Todd McCutchen were in possession of marijuana when the campus police department caught them. Steve Leggett and Todd McCutchen were in possession of anabolic steroids, and were caught in an attempt to place them in another athlete's locker. Todd McCutchen tested positive for anabolic steroids. And, what

else do we have here? Oh yes. The investigation revealed that Todd McCutchen planted the same steroids in Edward Bogenskaya's locker, evidenced by the same lot number and manufacturing date." Dean Grimsby agrees, stating, "those are some very serious charges." Dean Grimsby has little choice but to agree. He is stuck between a rock and a hard place.

President Caldwell then tells Dean Grimsby, "Addison, the amount of money that Mr. McCutchen donates to this University is a drop in the bucket compared to the notoriety Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett have brought to the track team and this institution. Not to mention, the potential of having several Olympiads attending this University will certainly bring positive attention to the University that money cannot buy." Dean Grimsby replies, "I can fully understand that, sir." There is not much more the dean can say. The dean's actions taken in the case against Eddie were not exactly well thought out. And, his lack of action against McCutchen and Leggett is indefensible.

Getting right to the point, President Caldwell instructs Dean Grimsby, "by the end of the day, I want Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett expelled from this University. And, please make sure the paperwork regarding their expulsion is in order, and that there is nothing overlooked. I don't want to have to deal with them getting readmitted to this University because of some technicality or because of a form that was improperly filed. As for their grades, they are both to receive the grade of 'incomplete' for any course in which they are enrolled. Am I clear?" Dean Grimsby replies, "yes, sir."

Dean Grimsby informs President Caldwell, "I'm sure you realize that Steve Leggett is supposed to graduate in a few weeks." President Caldwell informs the dean, "I am well aware of that fact. Steve Leggett will spend the entire next year filing appeals and filling out paperwork. He might eventually receive his degree, but I believe his expulsion might teach him a good lesson. In the mean time, he can get a job as a locksmith, and start paying back his student loans." With no choice in the matter, Dean Grimsby tells President Caldwell, "I'll get right on it, sir."

Looking over her note pad, Provost Leighton announces, "I believe we have covered everything on the agenda for today. So, to summarize today's meeting, first, Dean Grimsby will expel Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett, effective today. And second, Dean Grimsby is also charged with the task of getting Edward Bogenskaya, Katarina Karakova Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, and Paula Giovani Svoboda back on the University's track team." Provost Leighton adds, "and, as for getting our four athletes back on the team, I, myself, will be doing everything I can to meet that goal." The meeting is adjourned, and Dean Grimsby has a monumental task ahead of him.

Officer Braden, and the rest of the campus police department, has been informed of the University's decision to expel McCutchen and Leggett. Word has quickly gotten around campus that McCutchen and Leggett have been expelled. In light of McCutchen's and Leggett's past behavior, the police department will be keeping them under surveillance for the remainder of the day, and until they physically leave campus.

Hearing the news from Braden between their classes, Kathy and Paula are ecstatic. By the end of the day, the entire track team learns of the fate of McCutchen and Leggett, courtesy of Braden spreading the news. The news, however, doesn't matter too much to Kathy, Paula or Mark. They, like Eddie, will not be returning next year.

Quickly accomplishing part one of his assigned tasks, Dean Grimsby moves on to the second part. Dean Grimsby phones Eddie and, after a succinct greeting, tells him, "Edward, I have some news that I think you might be interested in." Eddie replies, "really? I can't even imagine what that would be." The dean is being very cordial to Eddie, but not by choice. Eddie, with the upper hand, cares little about what the dean may have to say.

Dean Grimsby relays, "Todd McCutchen and Steve Leggett have been expelled from the University. If you would like to rejoin the track team, I can assure you that Todd and Steve won't ever be back." Eddie replies, "I tell you what. I'll come back when the University gets rid of you too." Eddie abruptly hangs up the phone, making Dean Grimsby's task much more difficult.

After mulling over the situation for fifteen minutes, Dean Grimsby phones Provost Leighton. After delivering the good news that McCutchen and Leggett have been expelled and hearing Eddie's response, the dean informs Provost Leighton, "I'm not sure I'll be able to get Edward back on the team." Provost Leighton asks, "really? Just what is the insurmountable obstacle that is in your way?" Dean Grimsby replies, "I phoned Eddie. He has clearly indicated that he will not be returning to the University." Provost Leighton informs the dean, "that's it? One phone call and you think you're done? It sounds to me that you'll have to try a lot harder." Provost Leighton's response is not exactly what Dean Grimsby wanted to hear. For Dean Grimsby, it's on to plan B. Unfortunately, the dean has no plan B at the moment.

Tuesday morning, Provost Leighton stops by at the end of track practice to specifically speak with Kathy. Although the Spring track season is officially over, the team still practices. Kathy, Paula, and Mark attend practice this week in the event that Eddie, in some way, returns to the team. Today, in the arena, everyone is timed in events they do not usually run during competition. The coaching staff often performs this

ritual at the end of the academic year, and for good reasons. With some of the students graduating, such as Barbara, it's time to re-evaluate everyone's skill set. The positions on the team vacated by graduating seniors must be filled by next year. As Kathy just finishes her one-mile run, she sees Provost Leighton speaking with Dr. Braun. Dr. Braun catches Kathy's eye, and motions for her to come over.

Walking over, Kathy asks, "what's up?" Dr. Braun informs Kathy, "Provost Leighton would like to speak with you for a moment." Kathy replies, "sure. What's up?" Provost Leighton and Kathy walk outside, where Provost Leighton explains, "I've charged Dean Grimsby with the task of getting you, Edward, Mark, and Paula back on the track team next year. Dean Grimsby phoned Edward yesterday in an attempt to get him to return to the team. Dean Grimsby informs me that he hit a brick wall." Kathy tells Provost Leighton, "Dean Grimsby didn't hit a brick wall. Eddie told Dean Grimsby that he'll come back if the University gets rid of him too. That should be easy enough." Provost Leighton pauses for a moment, and replies, "trust me, I can see Edward's point." For obvious reasons, Dean Grimsby did not relate Eddie's conditions of him returning to the team to Provost Leighton.

Taking a seat on a bench with Kathy, Provost Leighton asks, "let me ask you this. Is there any chance at all to get Edward back on the team?" Kathy explains, "I seriously doubt it. Eddie has said a few times that the University has nothing that he wants, but he has everything that you guys want. That's a pretty hard sell in anyone's book." Provost Leighton confesses, "well, that would certainly make it difficult."

Formulating her own plan in her head, Provost Leighton asks, "what is Eddie doing now?" Kathy explains, "right now, he's working at Angelo's Service Station. When he's done, he's planning on going to pick up three more Dune Buggy frames with Mark." Provost Leighton asks, "Dune Buggy frames?" Kathy replies, "yeah. The five Dune Buggies around campus, well, Eddie built those. One is mine. Paula, Braden, Johnson, and Bobby B. also have one. And, so does Eddie's brother, but he's in high school." Provost Leighton replies, "I've seen them. They're really beautiful. A few of the administrators were wondering where all the Dune Buggies suddenly came from."

Provost Leighton continues, stating, "getting back to Eddie. If Eddie were to come back to the team, would you, Mark, and Paula also come back?" Kathy replies, "probably. Without Eddie, things just aren't the same. Just look at the 4 by 440 relay team for example. Put in McCrutchen, and they'll lose every race. Eddie, and the rest of the guys, do not like to lose. They've been running together for years. Take away one member, and they go from winning to losing. How can that get them

motivated? It can't." Provost Leighton replies, "I can definitely understand that."

Provost Leighton asks Kathy, "do you mind if I speak with Eddie myself?" Kathy replies, "you can try. But, don't be surprised if he doesn't want to talk." Kathy and Provost Leighton have a nice conversation, but then Kathy has to get changed and go to class.

Dean Grimsby has clearly gotten nowhere with Eddie, and is not likely to. Realizing this, Provost Leighton, taking things into her own hands, decides to take a trip to Angelo's Service Station. Angelo is, by far, the best mechanic around, and everyone knows exactly where his service station is.

Driving into the station, Provost Leighton walks into the office, and is greeted by Angelo. Announcing her intent, Provost Leighton asks Angelo, "is Edward Bogenskaya available? If he is, I'd like to speak with him for a moment, if I may." Angelo, wondering who the well-dressed woman driving a Jaguar is, asks, "and, who are you?" Provost Leighton replies, "Athena Leighton." Angelo tells her, "I'll be right back. Please wait here."

Angelo walks back to the shop, and tells Eddie, "there's someone here who wants to speak with you. She says her name is Athena Leighton." Quickly recognizing the name, Eddie tells Angelo, "tell her I'm busy. She's from the University, and I really don't want to talk to her right now. Actually, I don't really want to talk to her at all." Angelo asks, "should I give her a hard boot or a soft boot?" Eddie replies, "soft." When Mr. Crum drives into the service station, he gets the hard boot out of the station when he causes trouble. If it were Dean Grimsby, Eddie would tell Angelo to give him the hardest boot imaginable.

Angelo walks back into the office, and tells Provost Leighton, "he's in the middle of something right now. To be honest, unless it's a dire emergency, he doesn't really want to be interrupted. He's got to get this job done before he leaves today." Provost Leighton responds, "I fully understand. Do you know when he gets off work?" Angelo replies, "somewhere around two, or when he gets whatever he's working on finished. We don't punch a time clock around here." Provost Leighton gets into her car to leave and, with Eddie twenty feet away and inaccessible, finds her own brick wall.

After Provost Leighton is gone, Angelo asks Eddie, "what was that all about?" Eddie explains, "she's from the University. Kathy said she's really nice. I wonder what she wanted." Angelo informs Eddie, "she wanted to know what time you get out of here." Eddie tells Angelo, "I guess she'll be back then. But, I still don't want to talk to her." Eddie and Angelo get back to work, and Provost Leighton heads back to the University,

wondering what to do next. But, unlike Dean Grimsby, Provost Leighton will think of a plan B, and a plan C if necessary.

Later that afternoon, Eddie arrives home with Mark, and they unload the Dune Buggy frames off the trailer towed by Mark's Jeep. Kathy comes out to help. As they are unloading the Dune Buggy frames, Mark finally notices the front decorative plate on his Jeep that reads "Drive Defensively. Drive a Tank" that Paula bought for him almost a year ago. Mark, wondering how long it's been there, asks Eddie and Kathy, "hey. Do you know where the plate came from that's on my front bumper?" Kathy walks to the front of Mark's Jeep, and tells Mark, "Paula got that for you." Mark comments, "I wonder how long that's been there." Kathy smiles, and replies, "since the end of last Summer. Don't tell me you haven't noticed." Mark replies, "you ain't shittin' me, are you?" Kathy replies, "I wish I were. But, yeah. It's been there since the end of last Summer."

As they are unloading the Dune Buggy frames, Kathy tells Eddie, "Provost Leighton came and found me after track practice today. She wants you, me, Mark, and Paula back on the team." Eddie replies, "that's funny. She came by the service station and wanted to talk to me." Kathy asks, "did you talk with her?" Eddie replies, "no. I just figured it would be another dose of Dean Grimsby. So, I told Angelo to get rid of her."

Mark interjects, "at least McCrutchens is gone. That goal was accomplished." Kathy comments, "that's the best thing that ever happened to the team." Mark and Paula both wanted McCutchen off the team and, with McCutchen expelled, they got more than their wish. And, the icing on the cake is that Steve Leggett is gone too.

After unloading the Dune Buggy frames, Mark heads back home as Eddie and Kathy continue their conversation. Kathy tells Eddie, "you know, Provost Leighton really isn't anything like Dean Grimsby." Eddie explains, "that's because she wants something. I'm sure that, underneath, she's just like the rest of them." Kathy replies, "you might be right. But, maybe you should listen to what she has to say." Kathy has picked up that Provost Leighton is not quite the autocrat that Dean Grimsby is.

Eddie points out, "where were Provost Leighton, President Caldwell, and all these other people, before the shit hit the fan? As long as everything is going their way, they sit back in their air-conditioned offices and collect their huge paychecks. And then, a loose cannon goes off, and they all come out of their offices to clean up the collateral damage. Their problem is Grimsby. If they get rid of him, I'll come back." Kathy tells Eddie, "I told her that. She actually said that she can see your point. I even think she thought that was funny. She really tried to hide her smile."

As he is finishing up in the garage, Eddie then comes up with an alternative to the University getting rid of Dean Grimsby. As he is closing the garage door, Eddie tells Kathy, "well, there is another way that I'll come back." Suddenly excited, Kathy asks, "oh, yeah? What's that?" Eddie suggests, "put Grimsby in the ring with Braden for three minutes. And, I want a ringside seat." Kathy laughs, and exclaims, "Dean Grimsby wouldn't last thirty seconds! You saw what happened to Goldshit!" Eddie replies, "well, at least now they have two options."

When they get inside, Eddie comes up with yet another option. Eddie tells Kathy, "you know, I have a better plan." Kathy asks, "what's that?" Eddie explains, "what we do during practice is hard work. What makes an administrator think that, with a stroke of a pen, he can throw all of my work and training into the toilet? So, if they want me to come back, I will. But, my one condition is that Dean Grimsby drag the training sled on the sand track for 440 yards. And, I want 50 pounds on the sled. Then, that asshole might just understand the work we put into our training. And, next time, he will think twice about pulling any of his shit." Kathy exclaims, "that's a great idea! If I see Provost Leighton again, I'm going to tell her that's your condition." Eddie replies, "oh, and I want to be there to watch him drag my training sled."

Kathy now has a plan. Knowing Kathy, there's no doubt she'll be right on top of implementing Eddie's plan the next chance she gets. Dean Grimsby has no plan, simply because the problem can't be solved by pushing his pencil around. And, Provost Leighton is not likely to get anywhere with Eddie simply because Eddie won't let her.