

Eddie, The Collegiate Sophomore

Chapter Six Katarina's Story

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On a Saturday, Kathy and Eddie head to Kathy's parent's house for dinner. When they arrive, Kathy is glad to see that dessert today is chocolate mousse, which her mother made especially for Kathy. Standing in the kitchen, as she is talking with her mom, Kathy takes a spoon, getting an early taste of tonight's dessert. Kathy's mother tells her, "if you were sixteen, I'd tell you that you're going to spoil your dinner." Kathy replies, "not if the chocolate mousse is my dinner. Now, I'm wondering. How is it that no one ever says, 'you're eating way too much dinner. You're going to spoil your dessert.'" Kathy's mother replies, "you know, I've never heard anyone say that. I'm going to use that one someday." Kathy's mother then practices, saying, "I don't want to eat too much dinner. I might spoil my dessert." Kathy tells her mother, "see there? That sounds convincing!"

While Kathy and her mother are working on preparing dinner, Eddie and Kathy's father are out in the back yard, checking the pool. Kathy's father mentions to Eddie, "since I've been taking care of the pool myself, the water has been so much better. Thank you again for explaining to us how to do that." Eddie replies, "no problem." Looking at the water, Eddie mentions, "the water looks inviting." Kathy's father comments, "it is. But, it's still a little cold to go in. I really wish I had a heater." Eddie replies, "that's one thing we're glad to have."

Thinking about a pool heater for a moment, Eddie tells Kathy's father, "you know, it should be easy enough to heat the water. All you need is about 100 feet of black hose. You can connect it to the return, like you do the vacuum, and put the other end into the water. If the hose is laid out on the decking, the sun will heat the water in the hose." Kathy's father replies, "I might give that a try. If the water temperature was ten or fifteen degrees warmer, I'd be in the pool already. Or, I could always buy

a heater.” Eddie mentions, “you can get a black hose at the pool supply place on Sunrise Highway.”

Kathy’s father asks Eddie, “so, how is Mr. Frazier working out as the track coach?” Being the athletic director at the University, Dr. Karakova often does not hear the athletes’ point of view. Eddie replies, “awesome. We’re winning again, just like we did in high school. And, in the Spring, Mr. Frazier is out to win all the gold medals at the divisional meet.” Kathy’s father tells Eddie, “after the indoor divisional meet, it was clear that the team is moving in a positive direction. The administration has even taken notice.”

Eddie asks Kathy’s father, “so, what’s up with Dean Grimsby?” Knowing exactly what Eddie is asking, Kathy’s father replies, “let me put it to you this way. Everyone would be better off if the University paid him a full salary to stay home.” Eddie laughs, now knowing Dr. Karakova’s official position on the matter. Eddie also now knows why Mr. Frazier messes with Dean Grimsby whenever he gets the chance, and gets away with it. Eddie and Kathy’s father go inside, and join Kathy and her mom.

While preparing part of tonight’s dinner, Kathy’s mother mentions, “you guys got here really early.” Kathy replies, “yeah. That’s because I wanted to go for a walk with Eddie before dinner.” Kathy’s mother asks, “where are you going to walk to?” Kathy replies, “for some reason, I just wanted to walk to the middle school and back, but through the woods. It shouldn’t take too long.” Kathy’s mother tells her, “you guys can go for your walk whenever you’d like.” Dinner is around six o’clock. Kathy and Eddie arrived at 2:00 p.m., an hour earlier than they were expected, so Kathy can go on her walk.

After a few minutes, Kathy tells her mother, “we’re going on our walk now. We’ll be back in about an hour.” Eddie and Kathy head out on their walk. When they get to the road, Kathy turns to the right, and Eddie mentions, “the middle school is the other way.” Kathy replies, “I know. But, this is the way I walked when I went to middle school.” Walking down the street, Kathy asks Eddie, “do you remember when I told you that I wanted a house in the woods?” Eddie replies, “yeah. You said that you walked through the woods to get to school.” Kathy exclaims, “you remembered! So, now I want to show you why I walked through the woods.”

Walking down the street, Kathy and Eddie take a right, and walk past the elementary school that Kathy’s parent’s house backs onto. Going a little farther, they walk down a rarely walked path near a bridge abutment, and into the woods along the parkway. As they walk in the direction of the middle school, Eddie comments, “if we walk the other way, we’d eventually end up at the beach.”

Kathy finds the paved path, which meanders through the woods along the parkway. Pointing to the woods on the right, Kathy tells Eddie, “the elementary school is through there, on the other side of the parkway. In the Winter, you can see it really well. But, now that the trees are coming out, it’s kind of hard to see.”

Getting closer to the middle school, Kathy looks for the path she used to take from the parkway to get to the middle school. It’s been years, and no one has likely walked this path daily since Kathy has. Kathy stops, and tells Eddie, “my path is here somewhere. I hope I can find it.” Eddie asks, “can I help?” Kathy replies, “we’re looking for two really big trees.” Going a little farther, Kathy exclaims, “there they are! Eddie, I found them!” Kathy takes a left turn off the path, and the already faint sounds of the parkway begin to fade out and disappear.

As they walk, Eddie notices Kathy looking at the ground a lot as she weaves her way through the trees. Eddie asks, “are you looking for something?” Kathy replies, “yeah. A blue stone.” Eddie asks, “what’s up with a blue stone?” Kathy explains, “they’re really hard to find. I found two of them a long time ago, but I lost one, and then I could never find the other one. One I left in school somewhere, and the other kind of just disappeared one day. That was a sad day. They’re special.” Eddie asks, “okay, Katarina, what’s so special about a blue stone?” Kathy asks, “do you promise to believe me?” Eddie replies, “I promise.” Kathy tells Eddie, “they have superpowers. I was hoping to find a blue stone today.” Eddie replies, “Katarina Karakova, I totally believe you.”

As they are strolling around through the woods, and getting closer to the middle school, Kathy asks Eddie, “do you see how quiet and peaceful it is here?” Eddie replies, “yeah. It’s kind of like where we live.” Kathy replies, “exactly! That’s why I walked to school this way every day. It sure beats walking along the road with all the traffic. And, this is why I wanted a house in the woods.” Eddie can clearly see how peaceful the woods are. Kathy tells Eddie, “the middle school is just beyond the rocks.” They get to the end of the woods and, walking through a rocky area, Eddie comments, “these rocks look like the ones near where the portal is.” Kathy replies, “yeah, I see that.”

Kathy meanders around the rocks for a few minutes, hoping to find another blue stone like the two she found many years ago. Eddie stops near a large boulder next to a tree, and picks up a blue rock, brushes it off, and briefly looks it over. Handing the rock to Kathy, Eddie asks, “is this what you were looking for?” Taking a close look at the stone, Kathy jumps up and down, and exclaims, “Eddie! You found one! You found one! I thought we’d never find one again! Almost three years of walking this path, and I only found two of them. And, look at you! You found

one!” Eddie tells Kathy, “I didn’t think a rock could make you so happy.” Kathy replies, “you just don’t know!”

Eddie and Kathy get to the middle school, and slide through a narrow opening in the fence that has been there for years. Very few people know the opening is even there. On the other side of the fence, they enter the schoolyard near the maintenance building, and walk toward the track. Eddie comments, “wow! I haven’t been here in a while. Not much has changed.” Pointing to the football field encircled by the track, Eddie tells Kathy, “there’s the Kill the Man with the Ball field. We used to play there at lunchtime every day.” As they walk toward the finish line, Kathy holds on to her blue stone tightly. Thinking she’d never see a prized blue stone again, Kathy is not about to lose this one.

Arriving at the finish line, Kathy tells Eddie, “here it is! This is where I was standing when I first saw you run. You were coming down the track, in lane three. Mark was next to you, in lane four.” Eddie exclaims, “wow! You remembered! And, McCrutchen was next to Mark.” Kathy remembers, “Mr. Frazier was standing right here, at the finish line. He had his own stopwatches on you and Mark. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Mr. Frazier said, ‘these guys are fast! I can’t believe it!’ He was pretty fired up that day.”

Eddie tells Kathy, “don’t move. Wait here for a minute.” Eddie gets onto the track and jogs halfway toward the starting line. Turning around, Eddie runs toward the finish line. Crossing the finish line, Eddie retraces his steps during his last 100-yard dash of middle school. Walking toward the shot-put pad, which is about 100 feet away, Eddie remembers talking with Bobby B., wondering whether he or Mark won the race. Retracing his steps back to the finish line, Eddie remembers meeting the mechanic, who informed him that the race was a tie. Eddie looks in all directions, trying to remember what he saw that day. Kathy yells out to Eddie, “what are you doing?” Eddie yells back, “I’m trying to remember if I saw you that day.”

Eddie jogs back to where Kathy is standing, and tells her, “there were a lot of people standing around that day, a lot more than usual. I wasn’t paying attention to much of anything. I must have been in my own world.” Kathy replies, “you were in your own world. After each race, you were always near the finish line, but away from the crowd. You were congratulating the winners, and going over to the field area a lot.” Eddie replies, “yeah. I remember that. I was letting the field guys know what was happening on the track, and they were letting me know how they were doing.”

Kathy hands the blue stone to Eddie, and tells him, “here. Hold our blue stone, and retrace your steps again. I’ll be standing right here.”

Eddie, again, gets onto the track and jogs toward the starting line. Running toward the finish line, Eddie again retraces his steps of the race. Heading to the shot-put pad, and turning around, Eddie tries to recall the events from years ago. Walking back to the finish line, Eddie catches a glimpse of that day in his mind, clearly seeing Mr. Frazier and Kathy standing alongside each other. Seeing Kathy's smile from back then, Eddie apparently can now clearly see something that he just as clearly never knew he knew.

Returning to where Kathy is standing, Eddie tells her, "that was really weird!" Kathy asks, "how so?" Eddie explains, "now, I remember seeing you standing with Mr. Frazier at the starting line! You were smiling!" Kathy replies, "and looking right at you." Eddie adds, "and, there were a bunch of officials off to the side talking. And, Mr. Frazier was exclaiming, 'that was a 10.1 hundred, a 10.1! Can you believe it?' But, I didn't know if he meant my time or Mark's." Eddie remarks, "I wonder how I can remember that now." Kathy replies, "superpowers. See? The blue stone has superpowers." Eddie admits, "when I am holding the blue stone, I could see that day as if it just happened."

Kathy takes the stone from Eddie's hand, and takes a closer look at it. Kathy is now sure it's just like the one she lost a long time ago. It's been years since Kathy has seen her blue stone. Kathy emphatically tells Eddie, "we can't lose this one, Eddie. We have to put it in a very safe place." Eddie asks, "what is it made of?" Kathy replies, "I don't know." Eddie tells Kathy, "we'll call it Katarinium."

Kathy asks Eddie, "do you remember the day you told me about the portal?" Eddie replies, "yeah. We were at the Greek restaurant." Kathy replies, "yeah. That was it. So, this blue stone, whatever it is, is how I knew you were telling the truth about the portal. This blue stone has superpowers." Eddie asks, "what kind of superpowers?" Kathy replies, "I don't exactly know. It just does. I know that doesn't make any sense. But, there's something special about this blue stone." Eddie remarks, "yeah, I can see that."

Kathy mentions to Eddie, "if I had to guess, having the blue stone makes me a better bullshit detector." Eddie asks, "so, it magnifies your superpowers?" Kathy replies, "yeah, but it's not just that. It's kind of like, in a way, you can better see what is going on around you." Eddie observes, "by better seeing what is going on would make you a better bullshit detector." Kathy replies, "oh, yeah. I guess so."

Kathy tells Eddie, "let's take a walk around the track." Eddie takes Kathy's hand, as Kathy holds their blue stone in her other hand. Eddie asks, "when we were out here playing Kill the Man with the Ball, where were you?" Thinking back to her middle school days, Kathy explains,

“sometimes, me and Paula sat over on the soccer field with our friends, and sometimes we went back into the woods. But, when I was in the eighth grade, most of us stayed in the lunchroom, and got all our homework done before we got home. Then, we would have a whole lot more time after school.”

At the 220-yard mark, Kathy asks, “is this track round?” Eddie replies, “almost. It’s a slightly flattened circle that is vaguely oval. I don’t think there’s another track like it anywhere.” Looking back at the starting line, Eddie mentions, “it seems kind of lopsided.” Kathy comments, “I’ve never noticed that before.” Eddie points out, “maybe you can see it now because of your blue stone.” Kathy smiles, knowing her blue stone really does have superpowers.

Kathy tells Eddie, “I remember the first time I ran around this track. It was in gym class. We had to run around the track once, and the teacher was timing us.” Eddie asks, “did you win?” Kathy replies, “I sure did! I beat Paula by a few yards. She was so mad. And, it was so funny.” Eddie asks, “okay, Katarina, what was so funny about beating Paula?” Kathy explains, “after we crossed the finish line, I told Paula, ‘the prize for second place is everybody in the class gives you raspberries.’ So, Paula started chasing me, and we ran around the track a second time. And so, we passed some of the other runners, and finished before they did.” Eddie laughs, and tells her, “that sounds like something Braden would do.” Kathy mentions, “the gym teacher was sort of impressed that we lapped some of the runners.”

After walking around the track, Kathy and Eddie decide to head back to Kathy’s parent’s house. They take the same path through the woods that got them to the middle school. When they get to the rocky outcropping where Eddie found the blue stone, Kathy walks around the rocks, hoping to find another blue stone. While they pass by a large boulder, Kathy tells Eddie, “there’s one right here somewhere.” Eddie asks, “how do you know?” Kathy replies, “I just do. Maybe it’s because I’m holding our blue stone.” They carefully look around, trying to find another blue stone.

Eddie bends down to pick up a yellow stone he found lying between two very large boulders, and asks Kathy, “do yellow stones count?” Looking at the yellow stone, Eddie notices that it has a slight resemblance to the blue stone, but is yellow. Eddie hands the yellow stone to Kathy who, after looking it over, replies, “maybe. Let’s keep it.” Kathy hands the yellow stone back to Eddie, who places it in his pocket.

Kathy bends down, and moves a few rocks, certain there is another blue stone hidden somewhere. Kathy carefully searches the area for a few minutes, missing nothing. Glancing over toward the boulder, Kathy

exclaims, “yes! Eddie! I found another one!” Kathy picks up a blue stone, which was hidden in the dirt next to the large boulder. Eddie comes over to take a look, as Kathy continues to exclaim, “I found one! I found one! Eddie! I found a blue stone!” Eddie still cannot fathom how a blue stone could make Kathy so happy. Eddie takes a look at Kathy’s treasure, telling her, “it’s kind of like the other one.” Kathy replies, “yeah. It is!”

Holding both blue stones, Kathy tells Eddie, “that’s about it for the blue stones today. There aren’t any others to be found right now.” Eddie asks, “how do you know?” Kathy replies, “superpowers. But, there’ll be more sometime soon.” Eddie understands. Kathy hands Eddie the blue stone that he found, as they walk along the path back to Kathy’s parent’s house.

Arriving back at Kathy’s parent’s house, Kathy tells her mom, “guess what I found! You’ll never believe it!” Kathy’s mom replies, “I can’t even imagine. What did you find?” Kathy shows her mother one of the blue stones, telling her, “I found a blue stone! And, so did Eddie!” Kathy’s mother surprisingly exclaims, “you haven’t found a blue stone since you were in middle school! And, by the way, I’ve never run across the one you lost.” Kathy mentions, “I’m still wondering where that one went to.”

After dinner, Kathy asks Eddie, “hey, can we go by the jewelry store near the mall before we go home?” Eddie replies, “sure. What are you getting?” Kathy explains, “I want to see if the jeweler can make a necklace out of one of the blue stones. But, I want to have it made really strong, so I won’t lose it.” Eddie asks, “does the stone still have its superpowers if you’re not touching it?” Kathy replies, “yeah. I used to keep mine in my pocket.” Eddie asks, “so, you can make a necklace out of it, and it will still have superpowers?” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! Exactly! And, we can have the jeweler make us matching necklaces.”

Kathy and Eddie head to the jewelry store that they’ve visited many times. Kathy explains to the jeweler exactly what she wants, which is very simple. The jeweler tells Kathy that he is able to make a strong cage for the stones, and make a pendant out of it, but it will take a week. Kathy and Eddie pick out matching gold chains to go with the necklaces. Kathy asks the jeweler, “do you know what kind of stone that is?” The jeweler replies, “I can’t say that I do. You might find a gemologist who might know, but I’ve never seen one quite like this before.” Eddie and Kathy drive home but, on the way, Kathy gets impatient and wants her blue stone necklace now.

Arriving home, Kathy tells Eddie, “let’s go to the portal, and then back to the jeweler, and get our necklaces.” Eddie replies, “it sounds like your blue stone is really special.” Kathy replies, “it is. I want to go and get it

now.” Kathy and Eddie get on their bicycles, and head to the portal to go into the future and get their blue stone necklaces.

At the portal, Kathy brings her and Eddie a week into the future. They head to the jewelry store, hoping that their necklaces are ready. As Kathy and Eddie are walking into the store, the jeweler announces, “I had a feeling you guys were going to show up right now. I have your necklaces ready.” Kathy replies, “perfect!”

The jeweler shows Kathy and Eddie the matching necklaces, pointing out the strong setting Kathy desired. Eddie pays the jeweler, and Kathy and Eddie head home for the evening. On the way home, Kathy wonders whether the blue stone is how the jeweler knew she was going to show up when she did.