

Eddie, The Collegiate Junior

Chapter One School Starts

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With Mr. Crum now in jail, sports teams at the high school have had a respite from the turmoil of previous years. The position of principal at the high school is still open, and Mr. Shapiro is very hopeful that the job will soon be his. With the lack of his gambling income, Mr. O'Brien has sold his house, and moved to a much smaller house on Fourth Street, on the other side of the railroad tracks from Eddie's and Mark's storage yards. Mr. Harrison has sold his De Tomaso Pantera, moved into a small apartment, and is not very happy.

Mr. Zunde has removed Mr. Ryan from his position as baseball coach. Three teachers have quickly stepped up, and applied for Mr. Ryan's former position. Mr. Ryan has complained to the school board but, for some strange reason, his complaint has fallen on deaf ears. The reason could very well be that Dr. Noreen Brooks, the superintendent of schools, is Mr. Zunde's cousin, and is not open to addressing the issue.

Dean Grimsby is out on bail and awaiting trial. His absence has made life at the University more peaceful for everyone, especially Eddie. Dr. Paxton still has not been found, and probably never will be. Todd McCutchen is gone from the University for good. He has applied to another university in the division, choosing the school with the worst track team on record. Perhaps being a big fish in a small pond is the only way McCutchen can rise to being the track star that he always wanted to be. Mark would argue that McCutchen is a puny fish in an ocean of sharks. But, McCutchen will still have to compete against the other teams in the division. That simply means that he will still lose.

Last year's awesome track season has Mr. Frazier confident that the University's track team will again dominate the division. Dr. Bonamo, coaching the field events, now shares Mr. Frazier's confidence and enthusiasm. And, Provost Leighton is on the top of the world, once again

being part of the sport she loves so dearly. As the academic year begins at the University, everyone looks forward to their best year yet on the track.

On the first official day of track practice for this academic year, the University's team meets in the indoor arena. With a strong showing at both divisional meets last year, the team is really looking forward to the upcoming track season. Already very well prepared for this year's first meet, the team has a few new additions bound to make the team stronger than last year. Among them, sitting with the tribe on the bleachers, is Eddie's brother, John. Following in the family tradition, John held the title of the fastest high school athlete in the country last year.

Mr. Frazier walks into the arena, joined by Dr. Bonamo, Provost Leighton, Kathy, and Paula. Silently looking over the talent he has to work with this year, Mr. Frazier shuffles a few papers on a small lectern before he begins this year's introductory speech. Many of the freshmen have heard of Mr. Frazier and of his coaching staff, for they are the very reason they now attend the University. Silence falls over the arena, as Mr. Frazier prepares to address this year's team for the first time.

Mr. Frazier begins his address, "good morning. As all of you know, or maybe don't know, I am George Frazier. I am one of the coaches of this University's track team." Mr. Frazier is the team's head coach, but he sees himself as no more important than the other coaches. Mr. Frazier continues, "standing next to me on my left is Dr. Bonamo, who is our field events coach. Standing to my right is Coach Leighton, who will be working with the track athletes throughout the year. And, standing to the right of Coach Leighton is Kathy, who many of you already know. Next to Kathy is Paula. Kathy and Paula ran for this team for the last four years. This year, they will be part of our coaching staff." The team cheers, making all the coaches feel welcome.

Mr. Frazier begins with some news, stating, "all of you previously ran on a track measured in yards or miles. Starting this year, all events in the division will be run on a metric standard track. There will no longer be a 100-yard dash, which has been replaced by the 100-meter dash. In most meets, there will be no more one-mile run, which has been replaced by the 1,500-meter run. For those of you who don't understand the metric system, you will understand it well by the time the official season starts. One mile, by the way, is about 1,609 meters. So, the 1,500-meter run is 109 meters short of a mile."

Mr. Frazier looks over at Mark, and is reminded of something that Mark informed him of earlier. Mr. Frazier asks the team, "by a show of hands, how many of you ran for Centerville High School?" Only one person raises their hand. Mr. Frazier then asks, "by a show of hands, how

many of you ran against Centerville High School on their track?" In contrast, a few athletes raise their hand. Mark sits back on the bleachers, smiling, knowing exactly what is about to come.

Mr. Frazier reports to his team, "I am informed, by a very reliable source, that the track over at Centerville was grossly out of calibration until it was recently recalibrated to the metric standard. On the Centerville track, before the recalibration, lane one was two-and-a-half yards short of 440 yards! And, the engravings on the curb denoting where the blocks are to be placed in a staggered start were way off. Lane six is reported to me to be 448 yards! You would have had roughly a ten and one-half yard advantage over the runner in lane six if you were running in lane one! If you ever ran on the Centerville High School track, you were running in a rigged race!"

Mr. Frazier pauses for a moment, then tells the group of athletes, "let me quote another Bible verse to you. This verse comes from the book of Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 5. The verse reads, 'Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.' Did you hear that? Anyone who does not compete according to the rules is disqualified! Step out of your lane, and you're disqualified! Interfere with another runner on the track, and you're disqualified! Hand off outside the transition zone, and you're disqualified! Now, I don't know what is going to happen to the Centerville High School team, but the usual remediation is to sanction the team for a period of time, which means they cannot compete at the State level."

The ex-Centerville athlete rudely interrupts Mr. Frazier's presentation, and asks, "how did you find this out?" Not wanting to bring Mark into the discussion, Mr. Frazier explains, "one of the former athletes from my high school team is now a landscape architect, specializing in the installation of sporting venues. His name is Louis Zaino. Some of you may know him. Louis has obtained contracts to convert several tracks in the region to the metric standard. The surveyors found gross variations in the length of each lane of the Centerville track. But, the good news is that I hear that the sprinting track, where the 100-yard dash was held, was accurate."

Looking over at the athlete who interrupted Mr. Frazier's presentation, Mark whispers to Eddie, "that guy looks familiar." Overhearing Mark's whisper, Braden whispers to Mark, "that's McCrutchen, Junior's ass sitting over there. Two years ago, during the State meet, his puny ass was supposed to be on the track, but his brother, McCrutchen, took his place. We busted their asses." Mark whispers, "what's he doing here?" Eddie whispers to Mark, "he came to get his ass kicked." Braden whispers, "that's all he's gonna do is get his ass kicked. And, I'm gonna be the one to kick it."

Jeff McCutchen, the youngest of the McCutchen family, is a walk on, and will be trying out for a place on the team. Jeff was accepted to the University and, after making his decision, learned about the gambling ring being busted wide open. There is no doubt the youngest of the McCutchen brothers was planning to continue the family tradition of fixing events.

During Mr. Frazier's address, Braden whispers to the tribe, "and, Dulaney's ass is back again too. He's sitting right next to McCutchen, Junior." Eddie whispers to Braden, "I wonder if he knows how to pick locks." Braden whispers back, "looking at these guys, now I'm glad you gave me that pick proof lock."

Mark reminds everyone, "if I remember correctly, we were going to get rid of Dulaney." Eddie suggests, "we can start today." Mark mentions, "I need to find out what kind of shampoo he uses." Mark's plan is to buy a bottle of Dulaney's brand of shampoo, mix a depilatory in with it, and swap it with Dulaney's bottle when Dulaney is not looking. Dulaney will then slowly go bald over a week or two, just like McCutchen did.

Catching the tribe's immediate attention, Mr. Frazier, addressing an important topic, announces, "I've heard that a few members and former members of this team have been arrested for the possession of drugs, specifically marijuana." Mr. Frazier loudly exclaims, "what part of smoking dope is in your training protocol?" Silence suddenly falls over the arena. Following a brief pause, Mr. Frazier tells the team, "that's what I thought. Now, listen up. If anyone on this team is involved in using illegal drugs of any type, you will be cut and I will personally see to it that your scholarship is revoked! I don't care who you are. And, I don't care who your father is! I sincerely hope this is the last time I have to address this topic." Mr. Frazier's announcement regarding drug use was specifically directed at McCutchen and Dulaney.

Mr. Frazier continues with his introductory address, "now, we're going to get down to business and start with the basics. There are only two events that are run in track. Those two races are the 100-meter dash and the 400-meter dash." As expected, some chatter is heard among the athletes, such as, "he's crazy," or, "what is he talking about?" Mr. Frazier explains, "the 200-meter dash is nothing more than a prolonged 100-meter dash. The 60-meter dash is nothing more than a short 100-meter dash. The strategy is the same, which is to run as fast as you possibly can. If you can run one of those races, you can run the others."

The tribe, having heard Mr. Frazier's energetically charged introductory address many times before, sits back and relaxes as Mr. Frazier reiterates much of his speech from last year. Looking around the bleachers, Braden notices Dulaney and Jeff McCutchen whispering back

and forth. John Bogenskaya, new to the team this year, realizes a new level of energy in Mr. Frazier's address. Joe Sepulveda, a high jumper who is also good at the long jump and triple jump, also joins the team this year. Lucius Hill, also new to the team, can't wait to get on the track. And, with Darryl Stone having graduated, Tom Davidson, a strong distance runner, will likely be running the 1,500-meter and 800-meter events along with Mitchell and Akinmola. Stone, by special arrangement, will be working out with the team this year as he is training for the Olympics.

Once Mr. Frazier is finished with his fifteen-minute introductory address, he announces, "we will now run a few time trials. But first, all of the freshmen will meet with Kathy and Paula on the sprinting track. Kathy and Paula will help you to determine your optimal block settings. Do not assume the block settings you were using in high school were correct! They probably weren't! As for everyone else, you will be running a 400-meter dash for time. And, for you freshmen, don't think you're getting off easy. You will be running the 400-meter dash once your optimal block settings have been determined!"

Giving the team instruction on how the time trial will proceed, Mr. Frazier announces, "Coach Leighton and myself have prearranged the heats for the 400-meter dash." Holding up a piece of paper with the assignments, Mr. Frazier continues, "your heat assignments are listed on this paper. I will leave the list on the lectern. Please check the list, and make sure you are warmed up and ready to run when your heat is called. Once your heat is over, please take a seat on the bleachers. Okay. Everyone, get up and warm up!" The upperclassmen warm up, as the freshmen meet with Kathy and Paula on the sprinting track.

Once the runners are warmed up, Mr. Frazier announces, "Braden, take lane one. Eddie, lane two. Mark, lane three. Johnson, lane four. Hoffer, lane five. Hill, lane six. Stone, lane seven. And, Dulaney, lane eight." Braden exclaims, "here we go! This year's ass kicking season is about to begin!" Approaching the blocks, Mark whispers to Eddie, "why did he put Dulaney in this heat?" Eddie whispers back, "so he can get his ass kicked, and show him how bad he really is." Hearing Eddie and Mark's whispering, Braden chimes in, adding, "this is step one of getting rid of his ass."

The first heat gets behind the blocks, ready to show the freshmen how it's done. Except for, perhaps, Lucius Hill, a freshman, who is in the first heat. Hill was previously coached by Mr. Frazier. He was granted an exception for determining his block settings, for the State's high school gold medalist in the 440-yard dash knows his block settings very well. So does Eddie's brother, John, who is standing among the upperclassmen.

The Starter announces, “on your marks,” followed by, “set.” The buzzer sounds, signaling the start of this year’s preparation for the track season, and the race. Halfway through the first lap of the two-lap race, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “these guys are fast! They’re clocking! Can you believe it?” At 200 meters, Eddie, Mark, and Braden are head to head. Halfway through the last lap, Kathy exclaims, “Eddie’s going to beat Braden!” With all eyes on the finish, Eddie and Braden come around the curve, fighting it out for the title of the fastest man in this heat. At the finish line, Eddie edges out Braden by slightly less than a meter, surprising not only the veterans on the team, but the coaches as well.

Looking up at the newly installed electronic timer on the wall, Eddie sees his time of 44.71 seconds as he walks off his run. Pointing to the scoreboard, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “did everybody see that? These guys are fast! Look at those times!” Provost Leighton, who heard from Mr. Frazier that Eddie could probably beat Braden in the 440-yard dash, can hardly believe what just transpired. The freshmen quickly realize that the bar is set very high in collegiate competition, and a 400-meter run in the lower 50-second range simply won’t cut it. Kathy gives Paula a high-five, knowing that the guys are still highly competitive.

Knowing that he was beat, Braden is eerily silent. With no boasting, no ranting, and no chanting, Braden takes a cool-down jog around the track alone, wondering whether he had a bad run or Eddie had an unusually good run. Looking up at the scoreboard again, Braden knows he will either have to step up his game or give up his title of chief ass kicker. The latter is not one of Braden’s options.

Receiving a high-five from everyone he passes, Eddie heads toward the bleachers and takes a seat. Sitting back relaxing as the second heat is underway, Eddie watches Kathy as she shows the freshmen how to set the blocks. Eddie thinks back to the Summer, when he rode his bicycle to work on most days instead of driving. Taking a longer route home every day than was necessary, Eddie now is confident that all the extra training he put in was worth it. So was the occasional fifteen or thirty-minute stop off at the high school on his way home to practice his sprints. The frequent trips to the sand track in the afternoons using the training sled along with Kathy and Karen appears to have paid off. And, the laps he swam in the pool in the evenings were the icing on the cake.

Karen now stands behind the blocks, up against Erika, Tessa, and a few other star sprinters from last year. When Kathy and Karen took the 80-mile trip to Karen’s house to get her bicycle, they talked about training on the way. After their discussion, Karen, too, rode her bicycle to work over the Summer when the weather permitted. When Karen got home from work, she, Kathy, and Eddie would ride their bicycles to the

University's track, and train. With Karen using Eddie's training protocols, Eddie is curious to see how Karen does in the 400-meter dash.

The buzzer sounds, followed by several primal screams announcing the girl fight has begun. At the 100-meter mark, as expected, Erika is in the lead, but not by much. Karen, right on Erika's heels, is in second place, with Tessa very unhappy in third place. Coming around the second curve, Karen effortlessly passes Erika, surprising both Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton. Entering the final lap, Karen has gained a substantial lead. Kathy, and the group of freshmen she is helping with the blocks, stops, and watches, as the end of the 400-meter race draws near. Coming out of the final curve, Erika and Tessa are nearly tied as they approach the finish line. At the finish line, Erika beats out Tessa by less than one meter, but it doesn't matter. Karen crossed the finish line three seconds before Erika and Tessa.

Taking a recovery lap and walking off her run, Karen looks up at the scoreboard, and smiles. Her time of 52.3 seconds is far better than she, or anyone else, expected today. Knowing she had to give it her best, Karen went all out. Walking along the back straightaway, Karen smiles as she hears Mr. Frazier exclaiming, "can anyone believe this? These women are clocking!" Passing by Eddie, Karen gives him a high-five, then turns around to give a high-five to the rest of the women in her heat. Taking a seat together on the bleachers, the women sit and rest as the next heat gets underway.

With all the action on the track, little discussion is heard on the bleachers. The team, wanting to know how strong the team as a whole is this year, is just as interested as the coaches to see where everyone stands. Once the upperclass men and women have run, the freshmen take to the track, and will be measured against the high standard set by the seasoned veterans. Truth be told, the freshmen, after watching the upperclass run, are very nervous, especially since most of them did not even know how to properly set their starting blocks.

The buzzer sounds, and the first heat of freshmen men are out of the blocks. Breaking his silence, Braden asks Eddie, "I must be doing something wrong. How did you get faster than me?" With a simple answer, Eddie explains, "I trained all Summer." Braden replies, "you must be doing something different. Either that, or I must be doing something wrong." Eddie elaborates, explaining to Braden, "over the Summer, I rode my bicycle to work, except when it rained. On my way home, I took the long way. After work, me and Kathy worked out in our gym for a while. Then, when Karen came home from work, we rode our bicycles to the University, and trained on the track. But, one of us would drive and bring the training sled so we can work out on the sand track." Braden observes, "dang! You're making me look like a lazy ass!" Eddie informs Braden,

“the Olympics are this Summer, bro. Think about it.” Braden is silent, now seeing a far bigger picture than he did earlier today.

As the freshmen approach the finish line, Braden asks Eddie, “so, that’s how Karen got so fast?” Eddie replies, “I guess so. It’s the bicycle, bro. It’s the bicycle.” Suspecting that he might have to step up his game, Braden asks, “do you think riding a bicycle will help me?” Eddie replies, “yeah, bro. The first thing you need to do is stop sitting on your ass all day long in that police car of yours. Maybe you can convince the chief that, at least for part of the day, you can go on patrol on a bicycle. Then, you can get a workout in during the day. That would make a lot more sense than sitting in your car.” Braden exclaims, “we got bicycles down at the station! I’m gonna see if I can do that!” Eddie tells Braden, “yeah, bro. You’ll definitely get faster.” Braden now has a plan, which is patrolling the campus on a bicycle.

Looking up at the scoreboard, Braden mentions, “the freshmen are looking better than I expected.” Eddie adds, “except for McCrutchen, Junior. He came in at about 65 seconds.” Braden replies, “yeah. We need to get rid of his puny ass, and that Dulaney guy too.” Eddie predicts, “they’ll just get cut. They’re running middle school times. So, if we want to mess with them, we’d better do it soon.” Mark cannot help but comment, “we’d better start today.”

With the time trials over for now, and thirty minutes remaining, Mr. Frazier has the team run the interval drill and get some training in. While the team is on the track, Mr. Frazier mentions to Provost Leighton, “it’s looking good this year. These guys all look better than last year’s team.” Provost Leighton replies, “I can see that, George. And, you were right. Eddie beat Braden in the 400-meter.” Mr. Frazier smiles, and replies, “I saw that. But, I can tell you this. The 400-meter is Braden’s race. Braden is not going to stand for it. He’ll be training a lot harder now.”

At the end of practice, Kathy and Paula walk over to join Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton. Mr. Frazier wastes no time asking Kathy, “has Eddie been training any differently?” Kathy explains, “he sure has! He’s been riding his new bicycle a lot more. He’s been riding it to work when it’s nice out. And, me, Eddie, and Karen were hitting the track every day over the Summer.” Mr. Frazier comments, “Karen beat Erika and Tessa. That was the biggest surprise of the day.” Kathy explains, “Karen was riding her bicycle to work over the Summer too. And, she’s been swimming a lot and working out in our gym.”

Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, and the athletes take a seat on the bleachers. Mr. Frazier announces, “tomorrow, we will be running a relay drill. For those of you who are new, we will be using a nonvisual-nonverbal exchange with an up sweep delivery. And, the baton never

changes hands. The technique will be demonstrated to you tomorrow morning. To be on a relay team, you must perfect this technique. On the following day, we will all be running a 1,500-meter run for time. So, please be prepared.” Mr. Frazier blows his whistle again, and points to the locker rooms. The athletes hit the lockers, fully understanding the level of competition in the arena today.

In the men’s locker room, Braden walks by Jeff McCutchen, looks at him sternly, and asks, “what’s your ass doing here, junior?” Suddenly fearful, McCutchen replies, “I’m trying out for the team.” McCutchen should have ignored Braden, but he stepped right into Braden’s trap. Braden replies, “you ain’t gonna make the team anyway, so why don’t you just clean out your locker right now and go home.” Stupidly, McCutchen replies, “tryouts aren’t over yet.” Braden informs McCutchen, “that don’t matter none! You got your ass kicked out there today!” McCutchen boldly informs Braden, “well, I run distance! I’m not a sprinter.” Braden laughs, and replies, “I really wanna see this. I’m gonna get a front row seat so I can see that ass kicking come down!”

Overhearing the exchange between Braden and McCutchen, Mitchell, who is usually quiet, asks McCutchen, “so, you run distance?” McCutchen proudly responds, “yeah. I run distance!” Mitchell informs McCutchen, “if you’re going to be competitive at distance with this team, you’d better be running a four-minute mile, or close to it.” Brushing Mitchell aside, McCutchen replies, “you guys can’t run a four-minute mile!” Akinmola, who rarely joins in such discussions, tells McCutchen, “that’s right, my friend. We all break four minutes now!” McCutchen, who has heard from his brother that some of the guys on the track team mess with heads, figures this is just a case of exactly that.

While Braden and Mitchell are distracting McCutchen, Mark observes that Jeff McCutchen uses the same brand of shampoo as his brother. Looking into Dulaney’s locker, Mark makes a note of Dulaney’s brand of shampoo. Mark tells Eddie, “I need to stop by the store on the way home today, and get a few bottles of shampoo.” Eddie laughs, knowing exactly what Mark is referring to, and replies, “I can’t wait.”

While the athletes are getting dressed, Provost Leighton asks Kathy, “did I understand correctly that you, Eddie, and Karen were working out together over the Summer?” Kathy replies, “yeah. Karen stayed with us over the Summer, and she worked out nearly every day. On some days, Paula and Mark would join us.” Provost Leighton comments, “it really showed in Karen’s and Eddie’s performance today.” Kathy replies, “I suspected that Karen might beat Erika this year. She’s been working really hard. And, Erika is not going to be too happy that she got beat.”

Provost Leighton asks, “so, Karen stayed with you and Eddie over the Summer?” Kathy explains, “yeah. They wouldn’t let her stay in the dorms because she wasn’t taking any classes, so she stayed with us.” Provost Leighton tells Kathy, “here’s a secret. If someone wants to stay in the dorms over the Summer, all they have to do is audit or take a one-hour class. Then, they’re eligible to stay in the dorms over the Summer. Even if they drop the class, they still have their dorm room for the rest of the semester.” Kathy tells Provost Leighton, “wow! I’ll let Karen know that in case she decides to stay around next Summer.”

Kathy then tells Provost Leighton, “Eddie and Mark don’t really want to work with the high school team this year, but they’ve still been helping Barbara. Barbara was wondering if she can get two other interns for this year. I told her I’d bring it up to you.” Provost Leighton asks, “what’s up with Eddie and Mark?” Kathy explains, “Eddie thinks he might be able to make the Olympics. And now, so does Mark. So, Eddie is training more.” Understanding Eddie’s concern, Provost Leighton tells Kathy, “we can certainly find someone for Barbara. The money has already been allocated, so it shouldn’t be a problem at all.”

Kathy suggests, “Karen and Amber might want the job. They worked together over the Summer at the Summer day camp that I used to work at.” Knowing that Karen and Amber are among the most skilled women on the team, Provost Leighton tells Kathy, “I can probably arrange for that.”

With practice now over, Provost Leighton heads to her office. Kathy and Paula start their first day of graduate school. Mark makes a side trip to the grocery store before he heads over to meet Bobby B. at the job site. Mark and Bobby B., trying to meet a tight deadline, are still working on Dr. Akinmola’s church building. Eddie, now driving to work since track practice has started, heads over to the service station. And, Todd McCutchen, now running for another university, is nowhere to be found. Unfortunately, his less than skilled brother, Jeff, showed up in his place.

Eddie arrives at the service station, taking his time as he opens up, thinking back to this morning and the first day of track practice this year. Recalling how good this year’s team is, Eddie visualizes yet another winning season. Thinking back over the years, Eddie finds it hard to believe that the tribe is not only still together, but unstoppable on the track. With his mind now back on track and field, Eddie is slow to get into the mood to work.

Peering out of the first service bay, Eddie sees the first customer driving in. Eddie, hoping the customer only wants to fill his tank, does not really want to start working yet. As Eddie walks into the office, seeing a significant amount of smoke coming out of the vehicle’s exhaust, Eddie

realizes he has no such luck. The customer pulls up in front of one of the service bays with an engine that can definitely use some work. Out of the corner of his eye, Eddie sees the customer walk toward the door. Turning around to turn on the radio, Eddie hopes the problem is something simple and, at the same time, knows the problem is a serious one.

The customer walks in, and announces, “hey! Do you guys work on foreign cars?” Eddie turns around, is quite surprised, and exclaims, “Gump! How have you been?” Eddie walks over, as Gump, whose proper name is Daniel Gaspari, replies, “great! I’m just headed back to college to start my senior year.” Gump asks, “what have you been up to?” Eddie replies, “for one, I’m working here. And, I’m running track over at the University.” Gump asks, “seriously? Which one? The State University a few miles from the high school?” Eddie replies, “that’s the one. Mark, Braden, Johnson, Bobby B., Mitchell, and a few other guys you might know are also on the team. And, get this. Mr. Frazier is now our coach!” Gump exclaims, “no! You’re shittin’ me!” Eddie replies, “bro! I’m as serious as a blown head gasket, which is probably what’s wrong with your car.”

Gump explains, “I was headed back to college this morning, and all this white smoke started coming out of the exhaust.” Eddie replies, “I saw that when you drove up. You probably blew a head gasket. The antifreeze is getting into your combustion chambers, which makes white smoke when it burns.” Gump asks, “can you fix it?” Eddie replies, “yeah, bro. Let’s take a look at it. Give me your keys.” Eddie, with renewed energy to start working today, drives Gump’s car into an empty service bay.

As Eddie checks the compression in each of the cylinders, Gump asks, “so, what’s been going on around here for the last three years?” Eddie replies, asking, “do you remember Mr. Crum?” Gump replies, “yeah.” Eddie reveals, “he’s in jail now.” Gump exclaims, “what? Seriously? Why?” Eddie explains, “he was the school drug dealer, and he was involved in a gambling ring. He was working with a few of the teachers to fix the outcomes of some of the meets.” Not believing what he is hearing, Gump exclaims, “what? Are you serious?” As Gump is cranking the engine for Eddie as he checks the compression, Eddie replies, “yeah. Serious as no compression in cylinder number three. Your head gasket is gone. Let me call the auto parts store. They’ll have it here in ten minutes.” Gump asks, “that quick?” Eddie replies, “yeah. They’re across the street. But, the bad news is we have to wait for your engine to cool down before I can replace it.” During the wait, Eddie fills Gump in on the last three years.

Once the engine has cooled sufficiently, Eddie begins removing the cylinder head, asking Gump, “so, what have you been up to?” Gump explains, “wrestling, and some school work here and there. I’m looking to go to graduate school but, at my college, they don’t offer a doctorate in

gym.” Eddie suggests, “why don’t you apply to the State University where we all go. They have a Ph.D. program in Exercise Science.” Gump replies, “that’s a good idea! Maybe I’ll do that. I kind of miss being so close to the beach. And, I met up with Jan Lucida over the Summer. We had a great Summer together.” Eddie replies, “yeah. Jan Lucida. I remember her. She was on the swimming team, wasn’t she?” Gump replies, “yeah. She’s into ocean swimming now, and competes in triathlons.” Eddie hands Gump his blown cylinder head gasket and, pointing to the defect, tells Gump, “here’s your problem, bro.” Gump examines the gasket, clearly seeing the problem.

Eddie and Gump talk while Eddie replaces the cylinder head gasket. Of all people, Jimmy O’Brien, driving his old AMC Gremlin, pulls up to the pumps, and waits for Eddie to come out and wait on him. Seeing O’Brien, Eddie is in no rush to walk out to help him. O’Brien honks his horn a few times, strongly suggesting that Eddie come outside and fill his tank. Gump asks Eddie, “what’s wrong with that guy?” Eddie replies, “that’s Jimmy O’Brien. Remember him?” Remembering O’Brien from high school, Gump laughs, and tells Eddie, “say no more. That guy is a turd.”

Eddie walks out to the pumps with Gump, wondering why O’Brien is in such a tizzy. Walking up to O’Brien, who is impatiently sitting in his car, Eddie asks, “fill it up?” O’Brien yells back, “yeah! I’m late for work! Can you make it quick?” Eddie replies, “sure, junior. No problem.” O’Brien, who is in a crappy mood, yells back to Eddie, “I’m not a junior!” Eddie ignores O’Brien’s comeback and continues to talk with Gump, which irritates O’Brien even more.

As he is filling O’Brien’s tank, Eddie tells Gump, “O’Brien’s father, the social studies teacher, was also involved in the gambling ring. Mr. O’Brien was failing athletes so they couldn’t compete in important meets.” Through the car window, O’Brien exclaims, “he was not!” Eddie asks O’Brien, “then, where did your Mercedes go, junior? And, where did your father’s Mercedes go? And, why did your dad sell his big house and moved to Fourth Street?” Gump laughs, repeating, “Fourth Street? Those houses are worse than mobile homes!” Eddie tells Gump, “yeah, I know. Right? Mr. O’Brien lost all his gambling income, so he had to move to the bad side of the railroad tracks.” O’Brien exclaims, “that’s not the reason!” Eddie continues to ignore O’Brien for the moment. O’Brien is now ready to blow a gasket.

Eddie collects the money from O’Brien, and is slow to count out O’Brien’s change. O’Brien exclaims, “can you hurry up and give me my change? I’m going to be late!” Eddie tells O’Brien, “I thought you said you’re a hotshot manager. What’s the big deal?” Eddie then turns to Gump, and tells him, “O’Brien, here, always drives up to the pumps, and likes it when I pump his gas and clean his filthy windshield. It makes him

feel strong and powerful when he tells me what to do.” O’Brien, who thinks Eddie is nothing more than a dumb mechanic, is flabbergasted that Eddie is astute enough to have him figured out. Eddie hands O’Brien his change, and tells him, “have a nice day, junior.” O’Brien drives off, leaving a small puddle of oil on the ground.

Eddie and Gump head back inside, where Eddie finishes up the repair. Gump asks Eddie, “what’s O’Brien’s problem? That guy is seriously twisted.” Eddie replies, “I don’t know. I guess he was born that way.” As Eddie checks the torque on the cylinder head bolts, Gump tells Eddie, “O’Brien should have just found something that he’s good at rather than trying to do what everyone else is good at. I remember when he tried out for wrestling in middle school. He wanted to wrestle because he thought he’d get a girlfriend. He really embarrassed himself. Some guy a grade ahead of him pinned him in under ten seconds.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “he was about as competent when he tried out for track.”

Eddie tells Gump, “okay, bro! We’re ready to crank it.” Eddie turns the key, and the engine starts flawlessly. Best of all, there is no smoke coming out of the exhaust pipe. Eddie tells Gump, “it looks like you’re back in business.” Gump replies, “great! Now I can get back on the road.” Gump pays his bill, which Eddie discounted. Gump thanks Eddie, and heads back to college. Eddie gets back to work, glad to hear Gump is doing well.

The second day of track practice, as promised, brings instruction in the relay handoff and a relay drill. The athletes gather on the bleachers, awaiting the arrival of the coaches. Sitting together, the tribe discusses what they have been up to over the Summer. At the other end of the bleachers, the freshmen congregate together, trying to figure out what today will bring. Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, Kathy, and Paula walk in, and the athletes quiet down as everyone is eager to hear today’s announcements and agenda.

Mr. Frazier announces, “good morning. Today, we are going to learn how to properly execute the relay handoff technique that we, as a team, will be using. Kathy and Paula will be demonstrating the technique to you, and I will be describing exactly what is happening during the handoff. But first, I am going to demonstrate to you how a relay race is supposed to be run. Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson, please come up here.” The acclaimed 4 by 440-yard relay team steps onto the track, suspecting that, with the new metric standard, they will be running a 4 by 400-meter relay for the first time.

Mr. Frazier tells the seasoned runners to warm up. As the guys are warming up, Kathy and Paula briefly demonstrate the nonvisual-nonverbal exchange using an up sweep delivery so that those on the bench will be

knowing what they will be seeing. Mr. Frazier describes what is happening, as Kathy and Paula demonstrate the technique in slow motion.

Fielding a few questions of the efficacy of the technique, Mrs. Owens steps up, presenting the data from last year's analysis of the nonvisual-nonverbal exchange compared with other techniques. The freshmen quickly realize that track and field at the University is far more advanced than it was in high school. But, what they just heard is nothing compared to what they are about to see.

Dr. Bonamo, who walked in a bit late, walks up to the lectern, and tells the field athletes, "all of the field athletes look a little deficient in Vitamin D. So, we're going to hold practice outside today." At 7:00 a.m., the sun is not high enough in the sky to facilitate Vitamin D production. But, Dr. Bonamo takes every chance he gets to hold practice outside. The field athletes head outside, where they will be demonstrating their skill in all field events, not just the indoor events. Within a week, the track athletes will be also practicing outside, weather permitting.

Mr. Frazier tosses the baton to Mark, telling the relay team, "you'll be running a 4 by 400-meter relay. Run in any order you want." Mr. Frazier then tells the team, "notice I told them they can run in any order they want. That is usually not the case. But, this relay team has been running together for nine years. They've never lost a race. Did you hear that? They have never lost a race!" As Mr. Frazier is addressing his team, Kathy whispers to the relay team, "the world record in the 4 by 400 is something like 2:56.2¹. After yesterday's 400-meter competition, you guys are really close."

Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, and Mark gets on the track. Braden exclaims, "we need some asses to kick!" Looking through yesterday's performance statistics for the top runners, Mr. Frazier announces, "Hill, Mitchell, John, and Hoffer, warm up! And, you will run in that order!" Mr. Frazier clearly sees Braden's point. Having competition on the track will result in a better performance. And, Mr. Frazier is quite curious to see what the guys can deliver this year.

With everyone warmed up and ready to go, the Starter announces, "on your marks." The arena goes silent, as the Starter announces, "set." The buzzer sounds, and Mark leaves the blocks, out to make Hill look like he is still in high school. Mr. Frazier announces, "watch carefully when Mark hands off to Johnson. And, then watch when Hill hands off to Mitchell."

¹ At the time of the storyline, the world record for the 4 by 400-meter relay was 2:56.16, set by Vincent Matthews, Ron Freeman, Larry James, and Lee Evans.

Mr. Frazier obviously knows that Mark will win this heat. In about 45 seconds, Mark hands off to Johnson, which goes seamlessly. Hill then hands off to Mitchell five seconds later, which also goes well.

During the second lap, Mr. Frazier announces, “during the handoff, there was no break in the cadence of either runner. And, very little time was lost in the transition. That is what I expect to see!” As the second leg approaches the transition zone, it is revealed that Johnson gained some ground over Mitchell. Johnson hands off to Eddie, and Mitchell hands off to John.

Now brother against brother, Eddie is out to make John look bad, just for the fun of it. Looking at his stopwatch, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “did you see that? These guys are clocking!” The freshmen are astounded at the skill level being demonstrated on the track. Truth be told, some of them are very worried. But, what the freshmen are not aware of is that they are watching a world class performance. Eddie, gaining ground over John, hands off to Braden. Hoffer receives the baton from John, hoping not to lose too much ground.

During the anchor leg, Provost Leighton, looking at her stopwatches, tells Mr. Frazier, “these guys are definitely ready. And, if I am not mistaken, Braden is having a much better run today than he did yesterday.” Mr. Frazier laughs, and replies, “that’s because Eddie beat him yesterday. That’s the best thing that could have ever happened to Braden.” Provost Leighton recalls and mentions, “the missing link, George. Training the mind.” Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton both smile, both knowing that, if Eddie had not beat Braden yesterday, Braden would not be at his best today.

Not relenting in the least at the end of his leg, Braden approaches and crosses the finish line. Eighteen seconds later, Hoffer crosses the finish line with a performance that would have won the gold medal at last year’s divisional meet if Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden were not around.

Immediately looking up at the electronic timer, Braden sees his relay team’s time, which is 2:59.12. Mr. Frazier, ecstatic at the time, exclaims, “did everyone see that? These guys were clocking! These guys broke three minutes! Can you believe it?” Braden heads over to the rest of his relay team, where they all exchange high-fives. Once he is calmed down, Mr. Frazier asks Kathy, “what’s the world record?” Kathy replies, “about 2:56.2.” Mr. Frazier exclaims, “these guys are three seconds off the world record! Can you believe it? And, the reason these guys are so fast is because the clock is their main competitor! They are always out to beat their last performance!”

Mr. Frazier would be correct. When Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson are on the track, they always give it 100 percent, and do not slack off because they are running a time trial. The same can be said of Barbara, Kathy, Paula, Erika, Tessa, and anyone else who trained under Mr. Frazier. And, learning from Eddie and Kathy, Karen is now displaying the same characteristic.

Now that the athletes are aware of what is expected, Kathy and Paula demonstrate and explain the handoff technique to the team one more time, this time in detail. During the demonstration, Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, "I can't wait to see what the women can do. At the end of last year, they all have improved dramatically. And, this year, they're all faster." Mr. Frazier replies, "go for it. After Kathy and Paula are done, call them up and see what they can do." Provost Leighton looks through yesterday's performance statistics, quickly putting together a relay team suggestive of this year's potential assignments.

Calling Karen, Erika, Tessa, and Amanda aside, Provost Leighton tells them, "you guys will be running a 4 by 400-meter relay after Kathy and Paula are finished. Go ahead and warm up. And, this race is not for fun. We need to see what you guys can do." The women immediately get the message that Provost Leighton is serious. Provost Leighton then calls Stone, McCutchen, Mitchell, and Dulaney aside, telling them, "we need better times on your top end, so you will be running in this heat. I don't want any slacking off. And, please do not let the women beat you. Okay, get warmed up." Mitchell, a distance runner who excels at the 400-meter dash, is not worried.

Once Kathy and Paula finish their instruction, Provost Leighton announces, "before we begin our drill, Karen, Erika, Tessa, and Amanda will be running a 4 by 400-meter relay. Joining them on the track will be Stone, McCutchen, Mitchell, and Dulaney. And, you will be running in the order I announced." Already been beaten by Karen, Erika and Tessa have something to prove. And, Amanda, coming in fourth place during yesterday's 400-meter time trials, does not want to be seen as the weak link. It's not hard to figure out that the coaching staff is trying out potential combinations for this year's relay teams.

The women get on the track, fired up and ready to prove themselves. Joining them on the track is a relay team of two highly skilled men and two relatively unskilled men, all of who will hopefully entice the women into running a faster race. Looking over the competition, the women realize they have a very good chance of beating the guys, which was Provost Leighton's intent.

Right before Karen gets onto the track, there is a lot of whispering going on among the women in this race. There is also a lot of pointing at

the guys by the women, making the guys wonder what the women are talking about. The women exchange high-fives as Karen gets on the track. With the lead-off runners behind the blocks, the athletes on the bleachers are paying close attention. The Starter gets the runners set, and the buzzer sounds.

With the race now underway, Mr. Frazier smiles, and tells Provost Leighton, "I think I see what you're doing here." Provost Leighton smiles, and replies, "tell me, George. What do you think I am up to?" George explains, "you have Karen, the fastest woman on the team, chasing down Stone. Then, during her leg, Erika will take the lead since she'll be up against Jeff McCutchen. And, Tessa is going to do everything she can to not let Mitchell catch her. For the final leg, it's no secret that Amanda will not let Dulaney beat her. From what I gather from the team, Amanda despises Dulaney." Provost Leighton replies, "that's my plan! And, according to yesterday's data, the women have a slight advantage." Mr. Frazier looks over yesterday's performance statistics, realizing that the women might just take this race.

Stone hands off to McCutchen and, a few seconds later, Karen hands off to Erika. As Erika erodes away at McCutchen's lead, Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, "I'm thinking that Erika will be in the lead after this leg. Jeff McCutchen had the slowest time yesterday during the time trials." Mr. Frazier whispers to Coach Leighton, "I think we're going to have to cut him. But, he's supposedly a distance guy. We'll see what he has tomorrow." At the end of her leg, Erika hands Tessa a significant lead. McCutchen, not very skilled at handing off the baton, slows down at the transition zone, bungling the handoff, giving Mitchell much more work to do than originally expected.

Back on the bleachers, Eddie comments, "it must be genetic. That new McCutchen guy messed up the handoff." Mark tells Eddie, "we can't call him McCutchen. That name is already taken." Braden pipes up and offers, "how about we call him McCrotchen?" Mark replies, "yeah. McCutchen, McClutching, and McCrotchen. Then, we can keep them all straight." Eddie replies, "I don't know, bro. They all look like a McCutchen to me." Mark agrees, telling everyone, "yeah, all of them look like an old Rock 'em Sock 'em Robot." It is decided by the tribe, at least for now, that all McCutchens will be called McCutchen. Tessa approaches the transition zone first, handing off to Amanda. Mitchell arrives shortly afterward, and hands off to Dulaney.

After the first lap of the final leg, it is clear that Amanda is increasing her lead over Dulaney. The athletes on the bleachers, knowing that the women are having a great run, begin to cheer for Amanda. Amanda crosses the finish line with a time of 3:36.43, which is about thirteen seconds shy of the women's world record. Mr. Frazier exclaims, "I can't

believe it! These women are fast! They were clocking!” With all the excitement over the women, no one really notices that Dulaney crossed the finish line with a time of 3:44.94. The women exchange high-fives, and head back to the bleachers, receiving a high-five from everyone they pass.

Very excited at the women’s performance, Provost Leighton announces, “well, that was certainly very enlightening!” Turning to the women who just won, Provost Leighton tells them, “that was a great run! Congratulations to every one of you!” Hearing Provost Leighton’s words of encouragement, the athletes on the bleachers cheer for the women.

Now focusing on the team, Provost Leighton announces, “we’re all going to run the relay drill now. We will start with the women in lane one and the men in lane two. And, please, let’s try not to have a collision on the track.” Some of the athletes laugh, remembering a few violent collisions on the track from last year.

Ready to perfect their skill in the nonvisual-nonverbal technique, the team gets onto the track. Using two batons, the drill moves along quickly, with the runners receiving the baton, sprinting for 100 meters, and handing off to the next runner. As Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, Kathy, and Paula observe the handoffs, they are looking for a smooth transition. Any slowing of the runner’s pace or break in cadence is indicative of a bad handoff. Some of the freshmen clearly need help with the technique. When the coaching staff sees an athlete who can use some extra help, they are pulled aside, and one of the coaches provides individual instruction.

A few minutes into the drill, as the runners are lined up on both sides of the track, as fate would have it, Braden is about to hand off to Dulaney. Mark whispers to Eddie, “here it comes. Captain dyslexic just got on the track.” Eddie quickly realizes to what Mark is referring, and alerts Johnson of who is coming around the curve. Dulaney, seeing who is approaching, is very apprehensive. And, justifiably so. Braden clearly wants Dulaney off the team.

Braden approaches the transition zone at full speed with the baton in his right hand. Dulaney takes off, with his right hand behind him, expecting to receive the baton in his hand. Instead, Braden throws the baton at Dulaney, hitting him in his head. Dulaney stops and leaves the track, wondering what in the world just happened. Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, stopping the drill.

Approaching Dulaney, Braden exclaims, “what’s the matter with your ass? You were supposed to have your left hand out! You’re just lucky I didn’t put that baton right where I was supposed to! If I have the baton in

my right hand, you're supposed to grab it with your left! What is so hard about that? Next time, I'm gonna shove that baton right where I was supposed to!" Dulaney yells back, "you didn't have to throw it at me!" Braden exclaims, "yes, I did! How else is your ass gonna learn? And, there ain't nobody else who's gonna make that mistake again today! Your ass must have been taking too much of that psycho Chubin. Now, get your fat ass back in line and get it right this time!"

Braden picks up the baton, and heads back to the transition zone. The drill is restarted, with some of the freshmen now wondering what's up with Braden and Dulaney. So does Mr. Frazier, who gets the rundown from Paula on what transpired over the Summer when McCutchen and Dulaney planted marijuana in a few of the athlete's Dune Buggies. And, on the other side of the track, Provost Leighton gets Kathy's version of what transpired last Summer with McCutchen and Dulaney.

The rest of the morning goes well, with no more confrontations between the athletes. After practice, the team takes a seat on the bleachers. Mr. Frazier goes over a few details and makes a few announcements, followed by an announcement that Provost Leighton would like to see Amber and Karen for a moment after practice. The team hits the lockers as Amber and Karen meet with Provost Leighton.

Amber and Karen follow Provost Leighton and Kathy into the nicely appointed office reserved for the officials during a meet, both wondering what the meeting is all about. Provost Leighton opens by telling Amber and Karen, "first, I'd like to say that both of you have turned in quite impressive performances today. Both of you have obviously been working hard over the Summer." Almost in unison, Amber and Karen reply, "thank you," still wondering why they have been called aside. Provost Leighton smiles, and mentions, "and, I might add, both of you looked pretty good out there during the relay drill."

Getting down to business, Provost Leighton tells Amber and Karen, "I'm sure that, by now, both of you know that Kathy, Paula, Eddie, and Mark each held a position as an intern, working with their high school track team. With Kathy and Paula having graduated, they are now working with our University's team. Eddie and Mark have chosen to not return to their positions at the high school this year." Amber and Karen wonder why Provost Leighton is sharing this information with them.

Provost Leighton continues, "the University would like to extend an offer to each of you for the positions vacated by Eddie and Mark." Expecting Provost Leighton to tell them little more than their performance is great so far this year, Amber and Karen look at each other, wondering what Provost Leighton will say next. Provost Leighton explains, "the position involves coaching the Northside High School team for roughly

two hours a day. The position also requires that you be present at the high school track meets, so long as they do not interfere with the University's meets." Amber and Karen, expecting the position to pay little more than the minimum wage, are quite surprised when Provost Leighton announces, "the position pays 45 dollars an hour, which is considered scholarship money², for roughly twelve hours a week work. And, you will also receive class credit for helping to coach the team." To Karen and Amber, Provost Leighton's deal sounds like a dream come true.

Amber and Karen are speechless. Breaking the silence, Karen tells Provost Leighton, "wow! I'd really love to do that! Thank you so much!" Also accepting Provost Leighton's offer, Amber replies, "me too! Thank you so much! I really appreciate this!"

Provost Leighton tells Amber and Karen, "I've asked Kathy to be present today should you have any questions about the position. But, I'm taking it that both of you are accepting the University's offer." Both Amber and Karen exclaim, "yes!" Provost Leighton tells Amber and Karen, "okay, then. I'll take care of all the paperwork, and Kathy will answer any questions that you may have. And, the University prefers that you please keep the details of your compensation strictly confidential. It's not every day the University makes such an offer to our athletes." Provost Leighton then heads to her office. Amber and Karen hang around for a while, with a few questions for Kathy.

Once Provost Leighton has left, Karen wastes no time asking Kathy, "how come she picked us?" Kathy explains, "for one, you guys are sophomores, so you'll be around for three years. And, both of you guys are running times more like a senior than a sophomore. And, you guys worked really well together at the Summer day camp." Amber asks, "why am I thinking you had something to do with this?" Kathy smiles, and replies, "maybe it's because I did. So did Paula and Mr. Frazier." Kathy explains a few details about the position to Amber and Karen, then Kathy heads out for the day. Amber and Karen head to the locker room, quietly discussing Provost Leighton's offer between themselves.

On the third day of practice, the team meets in the arena. After getting a few administrative details out of the way, Mr. Frazier announces, "today, everyone will be running a mile for time. Oops. I haven't gotten used to the metric system yet. Well, you know what? Forget about the 1,500-meter run. Today, all of you will be running a mile for time! Then, we will run the interval drill and work outside on the sand track. And, as usual, the field athletes will be working outside today with Dr. Bonamo."

² Scholarship Money: Therefore not taxable.

The team heads out to the track, knowing that the last two days of vacation are now over.

Out at the track, Mr. Frazier reviews his roster, and announces, “in the first heat, I want Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, Braden, Eddie, Mark, Johnson, John, Davidson, and McCutchen. Get warmed up, and we’ll start in a few minutes.” Mr. Frazier then raises his voice, and exclaims, “and, I don’t want anyone slacking off!” The group warms up, knowing that this race will be a serious fight to the finish.

As they are warming up, Eddie tells Mark, “I guess we can’t pull that crap we did with Mahoney when we were in high school.” Mark laughs and replies, “that was seriously funny. I totally forgot about that.” When they were freshmen in high school, Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson purposely ran a slow 880-yard run, letting Paul Mahoney win. Mahoney, who hated the 880-yard run, ended up with the best time of the day and got stuck running that event, an event that he totally despised. Eddie asks Mark, “so, this new McCutchen is supposedly a distance guy?” Mark replies, “yeah, right. We’ll see about that.” Eddie laughs, knowing that McCutchen is likely coming in last place in this race.

The runners, all fired up, line up and are ready to go. The Starter announces, “set.” Interested to see how Darryl does this year, Provost Leighton has her own stopwatches out, ready to time each of his laps. This year, Mitchell and Akinmola do not care about Stone, for he has graduated. Stone is just working out with the team, training for the Olympics. The gun is fired, and the runners quickly leave the starting line, fighting for a position where they feel comfortable.

Stone immediately takes the lead and, slipping in front of Akinmola, Mitchell moves into position to draft off of Stone. Not wanting to fall too far behind, Akinmola drops in behind Mitchell. Braden will have nothing to do with the cat and mouse strategy of the seasoned distance runners, and passes Stone on the back straightaway. Right up there with Braden is Eddie, who is not about to let Braden steal today’s show.

After the first quarter mile, Braden is in the lead, followed closely by Eddie. A few yards back are Stone, Mitchell, and Akinmola, running their usual race. Mark, Johnson, John, and Davidson are bunched up a few yards behind Akinmola, with Jeff McCutchen trailing far behind the pack.

As the second lap is underway, Mr. Frazier studies how the runners are running. A bit reserved during the second lap, Mr. Frazier calmly tells Provost Leighton, “I think we’re on track to have five runners break four minutes.” Provost Leighton adds, “I wouldn’t count Mark and Eric out just yet. They just broke from the pack and are chasing down Akinmola.” As they approach the end of the second quarter mile, suggesting that the

runners are not running fast enough, Mr. Frazier yells out, “move it! Move it! Show me something!”

During the third lap, the runners maintain position, waiting for someone to make a move. Mr. Frazier asks Kathy, “when did Eddie start running distance?” Kathy explains, “he changed how he trains, but he hasn’t been running distance.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I definitely want to hear more about this later.” At the end of the third lap, Stone starts chasing down Braden and Eddie. And, referring to the five front runners, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “they’re all going to break four minutes!”

On the fourth, and last, lap, Mitchell passes Stone, moving into third place. Stone and Akinmola step up their pace, chasing down Mitchell. On the back straightaway, Eddie passes Braden. Braden drafts off of Eddie, hearing the footsteps of Mitchell closing in behind him. Coming around the final curve, Braden attempts to pass Eddie, but Eddie steps up the pace. Right behind Braden, Mitchell gives it all he has. At the finish, Eddie crosses first, followed by Braden. Fighting it out for third place, Mitchell edges out Stone by one well fought for yard. Finishing in fifth place, a position in which he is very unfamiliar, is Akinmola. Johnson takes sixth place, followed by Mark, Davidson, then John. Just starting his fourth lap is McCutchen, who apparently does not matter in this race.

Quite impatient, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “what’s on the clock? These guys were clocking! What do we got?” Knowing that Mr. Frazier cannot wait, Mrs. Owens begins recording the times from the Timekeepers as quickly as she can, which takes a few minutes. McCutchen finally crosses the finish line, and his time is added to the run sheet. Mrs. Owens hands the run sheet to Mr. Frazier, who quickly looks over the runners’ times. Mr. Frazier hands the sheet to Kathy, telling her, “please announce these!”

Kathy announces to the team, “Eddie, 3:53.8! Braden, 3:54.4! Mitchell, 3:54.6! Stone, 3:54.7! Akinmola, 3:55.7! Johnson, 3:58.4! Mark, 3:59.8! Davidson, 4:12.3! John, 4:20.4! And, McCutchen, 5:23.3.” The team claps and cheers, knowing exactly what they have all witnessed. Kathy gives Eddie a big hug and a kiss, knowing that his training has paid off. Paula gives Mark a hug and a kiss, never expecting him to break a four-minute mile. And Mr. Frazier cannot believe that he has seven runners on his team who can break a four-minute mile. Most universities would be ecstatic to have one runner able to break four minutes.

Eddie takes a seat on the bench, watching what goes on as the other heats get started. Eddie sees another group of runners rounding the track, as Kathy and Paula arrange the upcoming heats. Eight Timekeepers record every last statistic of the runners, as Mrs. Owens documents the times. Mr. Frazier looks over the field of runners he has to work with this year, wondering where all the superior talent came from. And, as all that

is going on, Eddie sees that a sophomore transfer student, Dagmar Kramer, who moved from Germany to attend the University, unexpectedly beats Amber with a time of 4:40.3 in the one-mile run.

Once the time trials are over, the athletes begin dragging the training sled on the sand track and running the interval training drill. Kathy and Paula work out with the team, pushing the athletes hard. Not too concerned with evaluating everyone's performance in the first week, Mr. Frazier plans to mix training in with time trials as the semester progresses.

While the athletes are training, Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, "in all of my life, George, I have never imagined that I would see what I did today." Mr. Frazier replies, "I don't know what I'm going to do, Athena. These guys came back stronger and faster this year than when they left in the Spring. I'm not sure there's too much more that I can do for them. I've taught them almost everything I know." Provost Leighton reminds Mr. Frazier, "last year, at the end of the season, you told the team that, 'next year, if you want to be equally as successful as this year, you will have to raise the bar again.' They heard you, George."

Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "Kathy mentioned that Eddie changed his workouts. I need to ask him what he changed. Whatever it is, it worked for Karen too. And, Dagmar, the girl from Germany, is a lot faster than the statistics we had on her when we accepted her." Provost Leighton, who has been studying the team's statistics, informs Mr. Frazier, "from what I've seen so far, I really feel that the team will take all the gold medals again in the divisional meet." Mr. Frazier replies, "that reminds me. I need to have Akinmola practice his high jump with the field group occasionally."

Mr. Frazier asks Provost Leighton, "by the way, do you know what happens at this annual coach's meeting that we're attending later today?" Provost Leighton replies, "I can't say that I do, George. Last year, Dr. Karakova, Dr. Braun, and Dr. Paxton attended that meeting." Mr. Frazier comments, "at least we'll be getting a free lunch out of it." Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, "I suspect that whatever is covered, it could be done in 30 minutes. But, we'll find out."

Practice comes to an end, and the team heads to the lockers. After today's practice, the team's energy level is enormous. On the way to the locker room, Braden exclaims, "we're gonna have a kick ass season! They're all going down! Ain't no one stopping us this year!" The tribe all exchange high-fives with each other and all those around. The energy is contagious in a way, with many of the team members sharing the tribe's unequalled enthusiasm.

The last to walk into the men's locker room is Braden, who is still fired up. Braden exclaims, "those other teams don't stand a chance! We're kicking everyone's ass this year!" Braden walks by Eddie, who gives Braden another high-five. McCutchen, desperately wanting to be part of the team, raises his hand, trying to give Braden a high-five. Braden sternly looks at McCutchen, exclaiming, "what's your lazy ass want a high-five for? I thought you said you ran distance! You ain't done shit today!" As he is headed to the shower, Eddie raises his voice, yelling back to Braden, "he does run distance! He runs just about as fast as we did when we were in elementary school!" Most of the athletes in the locker room laugh, with the freshmen beginning to figure out the team's complex and interesting dynamics.

The verbal confrontation does not end there. Braden tells McCutchen, "turn your flimsy ass around so I can boot it out of here!" Trying to act tough, McCutchen tells Braden, "shut your ass." Braden laughs, yelling at McCutchen, "why don't you just clean out your locker and go home! You ain't making this team anyway!" Mark walks by, and tells McCutchen, "yeah, junior. We win. You lose. Do you see the problem here?" Everyone within earshot of Mark laughs, with the freshmen wondering what's up with McCutchen. Clearly, with less of a chance of winning this confrontation than winning the mile earlier today, McCutchen wisely backs down.

And, Mark won again. While McCutchen was in a verbal pissing match with Braden, Mark switched McCutchen's bottle of shampoo with a special mixture he made yesterday. Like his brother Todd, Jeff McCutchen will be bald within a week or two.

Later that morning, Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, and Dr. Karakova attend the annual divisional meeting of track coaches. During the annual meeting, the topics of discussion are the order of events at the meets, any proposed rule changes, setting the meet dates for the following academic year, and any other issues that may be of concern to the teams in the division. Dr. Karakova, who is the regional track and field rules expert, attends the meeting every year.

Dr. Gregory, the chairman of the meeting, calls the meeting to order. Going around the room, Dr. Gregory introduces today's guests, a rather pointless activity since most of the coaches already know each other. And, for those who have not met, informal introductions were made before the meeting began.

Coming to the University's table, Dr. Gregory announces, "this year, we have Mr. George Frazier joining us who, from what I hear, has moved up to our level from teaching gym class at Northside High School," placing great emphasis on the word "mister". Dr. Gregory condescendingly asks

Mr. Frazier, “how’s the team doing without Dr. Braun? Do you think you’ll win anything this year?” Mr. Frazier confidently replies, “yes. I plan to take home all of the gold medals again during the upcoming divisional meet.” Apparently, Dr. Gregory quickly forgot about the results of last Spring’s divisional meet. Dr. Gregory laughs, and sarcastically asks, “how about the silver and bronze medals, coach? In a serious tone, Mr. Frazier replies, “only one person wins the race. The silver and bronze medals count for nothing.” Many in attendance laugh, belittling Mr. Frazier’s remarks, believing that he is a very inexperienced coach.

Addressing Provost Leighton, Dr. Gregory comments, “Dr. Leighton, I see you’re in attendance today. Are you here in an administrative role?” Provost Leighton replies, “no, sir. I am now the assistant track coach of our University’s team.” Dr. Gregory then announces to the group, “I’d like to introduce Provost Athena Leighton, who will apparently be joining Mr. George Frazier this year,” this time with only a slight emphasis on the word “mister”. Dr. Gregory then makes the highly sarcastic remark, “I’m guessing that your University hasn’t found a suitable replacement for Dr. Braun yet, provost.” Provost Leighton replies, “as George hinted at a moment ago, we’re looking forward to a winning season.” Although she is good at hiding her emotions, Provost Leighton is livid having heard Dr. Gregory’s treatment of herself and Mr. Frazier.

Dr. Gregory, coming to Dr. Karakova, announces, “and, I’m sure you all know Dr. Alexander Karakova, who is our regional rules expert.” Dr. Karakova waves to the group, and receives the expected applause. Although he remains quiet, Dr. Karakova would like to admonish Dr. Gregory for his condescending attitude toward Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton. But, Dr. Karakova has inside information that Dr. Gregory and his team will be admonished on the track in a few months.

The morning session of the meeting is rather boring, as the committee plans the meet dates for the following academic year. As in every year, the order of the meets remains the same, but the dates are adjusted so that the meet dates land on the weekends whenever possible. Casual observance would suggest that a secretary could perform this menial task, but Dr. Gregory apparently likes to run the show.

Over lunch, Dr. Karakova comments to Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton, “I have to apologize for Dr. Gregory’s behavior in there. I honestly don’t know what his problem is this year.” Provost Leighton responds, “I’ve known Pete Gregory since my college days. He hasn’t changed one bit. He’s still as sarcastic and demeaning as ever.” Mr. Frazier replies, “as Gerhard always says, we’ll just settle our differences on the track. Then, we’ll hear what he has to say.” Dr. Karakova confidently informs Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton, “if the last few years are any

indication, Dr. Gregory's team is not likely to have a strong showing this year."

After lunch, the meeting continues for another two long hours, which Mr. Frazier concludes is equally as boring as the first two hours. Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, and Dr. Karakova, at least, got a good lunch out of the deal. And, Mr. Frazier got a chance to observe and understand the dynamics between the other coaches who he will be up against come the track season.

The weekend arrives, and Kathy wants to go rock hunting. Inviting Paula and Mark, Kathy is in search of more blue and yellow stones, and perhaps stones of different colors, if they even exist. Once they are all together, they drive to the middle school in Paula's Jeep.

Sliding through the opening in the fence near the maintenance building, the group heads to the rocky outcropping where Kathy and Eddie earlier found several blue and yellow stones. On their walk, Mark asks, "what exactly are we looking for?" Kathy replies, "blue and yellow stones, kind of like the one I'm wearing." Paula tells Mark, "they have superpowers." Mark replies, "yeah. I remember you telling me that."

Arriving at the rocky outcropping, Kathy, Eddie, Paula, and Mark carefully look around for prized blue and yellow stones. Various types and sizes of stones are scattered all over the area, as if a stone mason once used the area as a dumping ground. Eddie finds another yellow stone, and yells out to Kathy, "I found another yellow one!" Kathy rushes over to see exactly what Eddie found. Kathy shows Mark and Paula the stone, telling Mark, "this is what we're looking for."

Mark, not well versed in parallel universes as are Kathy and Paula, takes a look at the stone, and asks, "so, this stone can bring us to a parallel universe?" Kathy explains, "yeah. We live in the yellow universe. You need a blue stone to go to the parallel universe that me and Paula went to." Looking around, Mark mentions, "we should get a front-end loader and dig this place up." Eddie laughs, and tells Mark, "that's what I said last Summer when me and Kathy were looking for stones." Paula tells Mark, "I'd love to hear you explain why you're digging this area up with a front-end loader if we get caught." Mark would undoubtedly have an interesting explanation for the officials should they show up during the excavation.

Under some gravel, Kathy finds another blue stone near where she found the large blue stone last Summer. Mark and Paula come over, and start searching in that area. Finding a few more blue and yellow stones, Kathy yells out to Eddie, "hey, Eddie. I found a bunch of them!" Eddie comes over to take a look, and shows the stones he just found to the

group. Kathy exclaims, “wow! These are red! They are so beautiful!” Eddie tells Kathy, “there’s probably a bunch more there too.”

Everyone heads over to Eddie’s newly found red stone mine, where there is also a generous supply of blue and yellow stones. While they are all searching the area, Kathy mentions, “now I’m wondering that, if the red stones have superpowers too, if there is a red universe.” Paula, having entered the blue parallel universe with Kathy, replies, “seriously, girl. If there is one, I wonder where we live in the red universe.” Kathy smiles, and replies, “on Second Street.” Paula quickly replies, “not! Stop that, girl!” Eddie chimes in, “hey! Second Street isn’t so bad now.” Paula tells Eddie, “yeah, in our universe. In the blue universe, Mr. Crum still lives on Second Street.”

The afternoon yields six yellow stones, six blue stones, and nine red stones. All of the red stones were found in the same location, making everyone wonder whether there are more stones of different colors. Eddie was convinced that there was a large red stone in the area, but was unsuccessful at finding it. Everyone heads back to Paula’s Jeep, wondering how many more stones they’ve left at the rocky outcrop.

When they arrive back at Eddie and Kathy’s house, they divide the stones among themselves. Kathy mentions that she is going to head back to the jeweler, and have settings made for the yellow and red stones, matching the one she had made for her blue stone. Paula is very curious whether there is a red universe and, if so, what is different about it. But, since the weather is beautiful outside, for the rest of the afternoon, Mark and Paula join Eddie and Kathy in their pool.

Monday arrives, starting the second week of track practice. Mr. Frazier does things a little differently than the former head coach, Dr. Braun. Specifically, Mr. Frazier evaluates the athlete’s skills when the athletes are well rested at the beginning of the week. Running one timed event per day is sufficient, as the start of the season is many weeks away. And, the heavier workouts are scheduled toward the end of the week, when the athletes have the weekend to fully recover.

Addressing the team, Mr. Frazier announces, “today, since it is raining, we will be staying inside. For the first half of our time together today, you will be running the 60-meter dash, and you will be electronically timed. For the second half of our time together, you will be running the relay drill. On this lectern is the line-up sheet for the heats. Please check the list and make sure you are warmed up before your heat is called. Okay! Let’s go!” The team heads to the lectern to check which heat they are in, and those in the earlier heats begin to warm up.

In the first heat are the team's star sprinters. Eddie, in lane four, and Mark, in lane five, are expected to set today's standard. Hoffer, Braden, Johnson, John, Davida, and Bull fill out the field. Those in the later heats, who are mostly freshmen, sit on the bleachers and watch. If they haven't already, they will quickly understand the level of collegiate competition.

The first heat gets behind the blocks, ready to prove themselves once again. Standing at the finish line is Kathy and Paula, wondering what their guys can deliver this year. The Starter announces, "on your marks." Eddie, oblivious to anything else going on around him, is about to demonstrate how this race is run. The Starter announces, "set." Knowing that, in competition, he will never be up against a faster group of men, Eddie, is fired up. The buzzer sounds, and everyone is off to a great start.

Quickly breaking from the pack, Eddie and Mark take the lead. Halfway through the race, Eddie is in the lead, followed by Mark. Braden, in third place, is being chased down by Johnson, Hoffer, and John. Approaching the finish line, the field of runners push themselves harder than they ever have. Crossing first is Eddie, followed by Mark, then Braden. Fourth place is a tie between Johnson and Hoffer. John finished in sixth place, followed by Bull and Davida.

Looking up at the scoreboard, Eddie sees his time of 6.52 seconds, realizing that he has accomplished his goal. Equaling the world record³ at this distance, Eddie walks back to the finish line, knowing for sure that his new workout routine has paid off. Receiving high-fives from his teammates and coaches, Eddie heads straight for Kathy. Mr. Frazier exclaims, "these guys are fast! That was a great run! This is what I expect!"

Kathy, knowing the world record in every track event, gives Eddie a hug, telling him, "you did it! You tied it!" Overhearing Kathy's comment, Mr. Frazier, not too familiar with the 60-meter dash record, asks Kathy, "what? He tied what?" Kathy replies, "Eddie tied the world record!" Mr. Frazier exclaims, "Eddie tied the record! Did everyone hear that? Eddie tied the world record in the 60-meter dash!" Hearing that Eddie tied the record, Mark's time of 6.64 seconds, and Braden's time of 6.68 seconds, all of a sudden, do not look too shabby.

Knowing that Eddie will be idle for a while, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "run the rest of this exercise. I'll be back in a few minutes." Provost Leighton, Kathy, and Paula can easily handle the time trials on

³ At the time of the run, the world record for the 60-meter dash was held by Zenon Nowosz of Poland, with a time of 6.52 seconds set on February 25, 1973.

their own. Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, “follow me,” as he heads to one of the offices overlooking the arena.

As they take a seat in the office, Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, “that was a great run! I’m very surprised this year! You beat Braden in the 400-meter, and the relay team is looking strong! You won the mile! And, now this!” Eddie replies, “thank you.” Mr. Frazier asks, “Kathy mentioned you’ve changed the way you’ve been training. What have you been doing differently?” Eddie replies, “I wonder what she was talking about.”

Mr. Frazier then mentions, “during one of the practice sessions, Kathy mentioned something about a new bicycle.” Eddie replies, “oh, yeah. I bought a new bicycle a while ago. I rode my bicycle to work when the weather was nice. On my way home, I took the long way. Then, later in the afternoon, I trained on the track.”

Mr. Frazier asks, “what kind of bicycle did you get?” Eddie explains, “it’s a track frame, but it has road wheels. It has a five-speed rear hub, and brakes. I got it from Vito. When I ride, I mostly use first or fifth gear. So, I’m either pedaling really fast, or really hard. If I’m going uphill, I use the high gears, which is the opposite of what you’d normally do. I rode about 20 miles a day on the days I worked. I didn’t really think of riding my bicycle to work as training. If I rode my bicycle to work, it’s that much less training I’d have to do later. Oh, and Karen rode her bicycle to work too, training in the same way.”

Eddie continues, “after work, me and Kathy worked out in our gym for a while or we went for a swim. When Karen came home from work, we would ride our bicycles to the University, and trained on the track. But, someone would have to drive to bring the training sled. It would usually be me, since I already got 20 miles in on the bike. The three of us would train on the sand track, then run a few laps. Mark and Paula joined us a lot.” Mr. Frazier asks, “did Kathy do any other training?” Eddie replies, “yeah. When I was at work, she was always doing something, like swimming laps, or riding her bicycle. Kathy and Paula trained together over the Summer, using the same biking protocol.”

Mr. Frazier asks, “did you do anything else different?” Eddie laughs, and replies, “yeah. I modified my running shoes.” Quite surprised, Mr. Frazier asks, “you modified your running shoes?” Taking off one of his running shoes, Eddie explains, “yeah. I cut horizontal grooves across the sole so the shoes get better traction on the track. I can actually feel the difference when I run.” Mr. Frazier examines the sole of Eddie’s shoe, knowing that Eddie is always looking for short cuts to getting faster.

Mr. Frazier asks, “is there anything else?” Eddie replies, “no. That’s about it. But, pretty much, I incorporated my training into my everyday

life.” Satisfied with the information and knowledge he gained, Mr. Frazier tells Eddie, “well, let’s get out there and see what everyone else did.” Eddie and Mr. Frazier head back out to the arena, where they will quickly learn of a few more surprises.

Mr. Frazier asks Provost Leighton, “so, what did I miss?” Getting the run sheet from Mrs. Owens, Provost Leighton explains, “you’re not going to believe this. Karen ran a 7.31, Erika ran a 7.42, and Tessa ran a 7.45. Kathy tells me the world record is 7.12. But, get this. Kathy got on the track with them. She ran a 7.14.” Mr. Frazier replies, “wow! They all must have put a lot of work in over the Summer. Maybe I can go back to telling them to put one foot in front of the other faster than the other runners.” Provost Leighton laughs, fully catching the connotation.

Looking at the run sheet, Provost Leighton informs Mr. Frazier, “speaking of putting one foot in front of the other, Dulaney ran an 8.1, and McCutchen ran an 8.4.” Already knowing the answer, Mr. Frazier asks, “what do you think we should do?” Provost Leighton replies, “cut them. Neither of them is on scholarship. And, after that alleged incident over the Summer with Dulaney, we just don’t have the time to deal with them.” Mr. Frazier agrees, telling Provost Leighton, “I was thinking the same thing.” Mr. Frazier then asks, “is there anyone else not on scholarship that we should cut?” Provost Leighton replies, “not that I can see. The team looks pretty solid.” Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, “I’ll get rid of them after practice today.”

Once the time trials are completed, the team runs the relay drill for the second hour. Mr. Frazier, working with Paula on one side of the track, and Provost Leighton, working with Kathy on the other side of the track, will be watching the athlete’s skill carefully. The athletes, now fully understanding that this is a highly competitive team, will be delivering the best performance they can.

On the track, the relay drill goes reasonably well. The coaches catch a few athletes who need some additional work with their handoffs. They are pulled aside and given some additional instruction. McCutchen bumbles a few handoffs, but that is to be expected. The freshmen are beginning to catch on to the technique, which takes a lot of practice to perfect. But, the freshmen know their efforts will pay off in the long run.

Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, and announces, “that was a great workout today! Tomorrow, we’ll be running the 200-meter dash for time. Dulaney and McCutchen, please see me after practice.” Everyone, except for Dulaney and McCutchen, hits the locker rooms, feeling very confident about both their own and the team’s performance.

Mr. Frazier brings Dulaney into one of the offices, and tells him to have a seat. Examining Dulaney's performance statistics, Mr. Frazier explains, "from what we've seen over the last week, your performance on the track is not quite up to par. You ran the 400-meter in 65.3 seconds, the mile in 5:21.2, and the 60-meter dash in 8.1 seconds. Unfortunately, those times are not competitive enough to retain a position on this team, so I'm going to have to cut you. But, keep up your training on your own, and feel free to try out again next year." Dulaney brashly replies, "how come I made it last year, but not this year?" Mr. Frazier explains, "the bar has been raised. Your competitiveness is measured against this year's team, not last year's." While Dulaney is disappointed, he understands. Not expecting this news today, Dulaney hits the locker room for the last time.

McCutchen is then called into the office, and told to have a seat. Mr. Frazier opens by saying, "first, I'd like to thank you for trying out for the University's track team this year. Unfortunately, in reviewing your performance statistics, the coaching staff has come to a consensus that you are not currently competitive enough for a position on the team. So, unfortunately, I'm going to have to cut you." McCutchen yells back, "I wasn't that bad!" Reviewing McCutchen's statistics, Mr. Frazier replies, "let's take a look at this. You ran the 400-meter in 65.8 seconds, the mile in 5:23.3, and the 60-meter dash in 8.4 seconds. Those times represent the slowest times on the team." McCutchen yells out, "I bet this has something to do with that Mark guy! My brother told me about him!" Mr. Frazier, who does not argue, tells McCutchen, "that's enough! This has absolutely nothing to do with Mark, and everything to do with your performance on the track. Now, clean out your locker, and go home." McCutchen mutters, "this isn't the end of this," and storms out of the room.

As McCutchen enters the locker room, he hears the tribe energetically proclaiming how great the team is this year. McCutchen hears Braden ranting that the team is going to kick ass this year. Off to the side, Mitchell, Akinmola, and Stone discuss who is the best miler this year, ignoring the fact that Eddie and Braden both beat them a few days ago. As Mark gets dressed in his work clothes, and Eddie gets dressed in his mechanic's uniform, McCutchen notes in his mind that everything his brother, Todd, told him is true. Not even bothering to take a shower, McCutchen cleans out his locker, including his special bottle of shampoo courtesy of Mark, and goes back to his dorm.

After practice, Eddie arrives at the service station, ready to begin his day. Not long after he arrives, Officer Richard Hayes drives up, walks into the service bay, yelling out, "what's up?" Eddie yells back, "what's up?" Richard replies, "it looks like we're moving!" Eddie asks, "oh, yeah? Where to?" Richard explains, "we took a look at that house over on Alicia Drive a

while ago. We looked at a few others, but we kept coming back to that one. So, we signed the contract last week.” Eddie gives Richard a high-five, telling him, “awesome!”

Richard elaborates, “I’d like to thank you again for your stock market advice. We were able to pay cash for the house, and pay off our other house too. We’re going to rent it out. This way, we can live in our new house free. The rent will pay for the taxes and insurance on both places, with a lot left over.” Eddie replies, “that sounds awesome! And, remember to sell the stocks you’re holding at the right time and reinvest your money at the right time.” Knowing that Eddie has been quite accurate in his financial advice, Richard tells Eddie, “believe me. I won’t forget. And, I’m going to take some of the money I make renting out my old house and invest that too.”

Eddie asks, “so, when are you moving?” Richard replies, “hopefully, in about three or four weeks.” Eddie offers, “let me know when you’re moving. I’ll get the guys together and we can knock it out in a few hours.” Richard thanks Eddie, telling him, “I really appreciate that! I might just take you up on that. Movers can be on the expensive side. And, those characters always end up damaging or losing something.”

Wondering if there is any recent news, Richard asks Eddie, “is there anything new going on at the University that I should know about?” Eddie replies, “we just started the semester. Before I left today, Kathy told me that Mr. Frazier cut two guys from the team. One of them was Jeff McCutchen. He wasn’t too happy that he got cut.” Richard asks, “refresh my memory. Where does this Jeff McCutchen character fit in?” Eddie explains, “he’s a freshman, and runs middle school times. He should have been cut. Actually, he shouldn’t have even bothered to try out.” Richard remarks, “I’ll make a note of it. You never know with that McCutchen group.” Richard knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the McCutchen family is up to something not quite legal.

Wondering what may be going on, Eddie asks, “is there still gambling activity going on?” Richard emphatically replies, “not that I’m directly aware of. But, gambling rings are like drug dealers. When you take them down, someone else moves in and takes over their territory. While we think we brought all the characters in, if anyone in the ring is still out there, they’ll undoubtedly start it up again.” Hearing the news, Eddie replies, “I’ll keep an eye out.” After catching up, Eddie gets to work, and Richard hits the streets.

About two weeks later, at practice, before the team gathers in the arena, Provost Leighton meets privately with Mr. Frazier. After a short discussion of the team’s performance, Provost Leighton informs Mr. Frazier, “George, I think we have a minor problem.” Mr. Frazier asks,

“what’s that?” Provost Leighton explains, “two weeks ago, we cut Jeff McCutchen and Harry Dulaney. Well, Jeff’s father, Scott McCutchen, hired an attorney, from whom I received a piece of Certified Mail late yesterday.” Mr. Frazier replies, “oh, really? What’s their problem?” Provost Leighton explains, “they’re claiming that Jeff was not afforded a reasonable chance of trying out for the team and was treated unfairly by some of the team members.”

Mr. Frazier thinks for a moment, recalling his days of coaching the high school team. Mr. Frazier smiles and laughs, and tells Provost Leighton, “this is good. We can use this to our advantage.” Wondering what Mr. Frazier is up to, Provost Leighton asks, “George, what are you thinking?” Mr. Frazier replies, “when I coached the high school team, there was this guy, Jimmy O’Brien, who tried out for the team for four years. He was never competent enough to make the team. His father, who was a teacher at the high school, complained every year that I cut him. During the time trials for the 440-yard dash, Braden would run 440-yards in the time O’Brien could run 220-yards. And, Braden would run 880-yards in the time O’Brien could run 440-yards. Go ahead and invite Jeff McCutchen, his father, and his attorney back to practice, and we’ll demonstrate to them exactly why he was cut.” Provost Leighton replies, “I like that idea! I’ll send them a response, and put the ball back in their court.”

Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, “I don’t know yet how I’m going to demonstrate this but, when they leave, there will be no doubt in their mind that Jeff is not skilled enough to make the team.” Recalling Mr. Frazier’s past dealings with Dean Grimsby, Provost Leighton can’t wait.

Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton enter the arena, where the team is already seated. Without much ado, Mr. Frazier announces, “today, we are going to hit the sand track and run the interval drill. And, remember, everyone will be running the interval drill as if you are a sprinter. Okay. Let’s hit the track!” As the team gets up and heads outside, Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, “that was easy.” Mr. Frazier replies, “hopefully, getting rid of McCutchen and his attorney will be just as easy.”

At the sand track, in between runs, Braden mentions to Eddie, “Chief Toledo gave me a raise. He said he was really happy with my performance.” Eddie asks, “on the track, or in the squad car, bro?” Braden laughs, and replies, “in the squad car. And, he said he’d like to keep me on after I graduate, if I was up to it.” Eddie replies, “that’s good news. Are you going to do it?” Braden replies, “I think I might. This job ain’t that hard. And, me and Wendy are looking for a house somewhere around here. Wendy doesn’t want to leave the area. Hopefully, she’ll get a job somewhere around here when she graduates.” Eddie tells Braden, “it

looks like it's your turn, bro." Braden takes a run down the sand track, dragging the training sled.

Overhearing the conversation between Eddie and Braden was Erika. Erika tells Eddie, "I'm really glad Wendy and Braden are staying around after they graduate. I'd really hate for them to move away." Eddie asks, "how about you guys?" Erika informs Eddie, "we're not going anywhere. We actually found a piece of property over there where you guys live. We really want to buy it, but Bobby is wondering if this stock market thing will keep going like it is." Eddie tells Erika, "it will. And, gold is going to triple by January. You guys might want to pick up some of that too. But, don't wait too long." Erika asks, "where do you buy gold around here?" Eddie replies, "at the coin store, next to the record store, near the mall." It's now Eddie's turn. Putting on the harness, Eddie takes a run down the track.

After practice, Eddie meets up with Bobby B. on the way to the locker room. Eddie asks, "how's the field team looking this year?" Bobby B. explains, "with Akinmola in the high jump, we're looking a lot better. But, it looks like I'm going to be back on the hammer this Spring." Eddie asks, "why is that?" Bobby B. elaborates, "Anthony Marianelli graduated. The other guys aren't that good. So, I guess it's up to me." Eddie tells Bobby B., "I hear Mark is really good at the hammer. He took care of McCutchen's father pretty well last year." Bobby B. replies, "we've got to do something." The guys hit the locker room, where they convince Mark to start practicing the hammer throw.

The day of Braden's interview at the campus radio station with Angela Meadows arrives. Braden has received permission from the police department to discuss the events surrounding the arrest of Dean Grimsby. But, what Braden is allowed to discuss is limited, since Dean Grimsby's case has not yet gone to trial. Angela has been advised as to what she can and can not ask Braden. And, Kathy has already filled Angela in on some of the highlights of Braden's accomplishments on the track and with the police department.

Walking into the campus radio station, Kathy and Braden stop to take a look at the equipment mounted in several nineteen-inch equipment racks behind a glass window. Braden tells Kathy, "that's a lot of fancy looking equipment!" Kathy replies, "that's the radio station. But, the transmitter is in a different room, all by itself."

Angela Meadows comes out to greet Kathy and Braden, handing Kathy a note. Kathy reads the note, which says, "I have laryngitis. You'll have to do the interview today. Thanks." Kathy looks at Angela, and tells her, "that's fine. I can do that." Angela escorts Kathy and Braden into the studio, where the interview will take place.

In the studio, Kathy takes a seat behind the mixing console. Not even remotely knowing what she is doing, Kathy adjusts the microphone, then starts turning a few dials and pushing a few buttons. Angela, seeing Kathy about to push a button labeled "AIR", exclaims, "no! Don't push that one!" Pushing the button labeled "AIR" will immediately put the studio on the air, live. Kathy, suspecting that Angela was pulling her leg about the laryngitis, smiles and tells Angela, "wow! That was a really fast recovery! I was wondering which one of these buttons was the magic button." Angela confesses, "okay. You win!" Kathy smiles, and replies, "I always win!" Angela confesses, "I've noticed." Truth be told, Kathy and Angela were waiting to see who caved first.

Braden asks, "did I miss something here?" Kathy hands Braden the note that Angela handed to her earlier, and explains, "Angela handed me this note. She was messing with us. Angela is almost as good as Mark when it comes to messing with people." Kathy and Angela fill Braden in on how Angela messed with Kathy when she first visited the radio station, and how Angela tried to mess with Eddie, but Eddie won.

Moving on to the interview, Angela explains to Braden that she will do a lot of talking, and that she'll ask questions. Angela also explains to Braden that, if he messes up what he is saying, to just start over, and it will be fixed later during the editing process. Braden sits across the console from Angela, and is ready to go. Angela tells Braden that she will start by asking a few simple questions. Angela, who will be working the mixing board and tape machine herself, starts the tape, and the interview begins.

Totally unscripted, Angela begins, announcing, "good evening again, and welcome to the program Waves, where we talk with students making waves on campus. This is Angela Meadows and, today, I have the distinct pleasure and honor of having Officer Axel Braden sitting in the studio right in front of me. For those of you who do not know, Axel Braden is one of our campus police officers, and is a star member of the University's track team. Officer Braden is also enrolled in the University's Criminal Justice program."

Angela pauses for a moment to make editing easier, then continues, asking Braden, "Officer Braden, I hear that, last year, you broke the divisional record in the 440-yard dash. Am I correct in what I hear?" Braden replies, "that's right! I'm the master of the track, and ready to attack! I ran the 440 in 44.91 seconds! And, this year, I'm gonna break my own record!" Angela was forewarned by Kathy about Braden's charismatic personality. Angela, caught a bit off guard, now fully understands. But, Braden will not get the chance to break his record in the 440-yard dash. This year, all the events run will be in accordance to the metric standard.

Angela continues, “wow! That is impressive! I also hear, Officer Braden, that you once had to use your speed to chase someone down who broke into a locker room right here on campus.” Braden responds, “yeah. Three guys broke into the arena one night. When they got in, Todd McCrutchen, and this other guy, Steve Leggett, tried to plant steroids in Mark Svoboda’s locker to get Mark thrown off the track team. We caught Leggett, but McCrutchen and another guy made a run for it. I chased McCrutchen down and nailed his ass. He wasn’t looking too good after that.” Angela pauses for a second and stops the tape. Angela laughs, and tells Braden, “okay. I can’t exactly put the word ‘ass’ on the air. But, that was really good, so I’m going to leave it. We’ll just bleep it out later. The audience can fill in the bleeps.” Braden replies, “oh, yeah. I forgot about that.”

On a subject she was requested to address by the campus police department, Angela then asks, “I heard they never caught the third person who broke in. Do you have any idea who that might have been?” Knowing ahead of time how he was instructed by the police chief to answer the question, Braden replies, “McCrutchen and Leggett both denied there was a third person. But, they say blood is thicker than water. We think the third person was someone related to either McCutchen or Leggett. Todd McCrutchen’s brother, Scott, used to attend the University. And, as far as we can tell, no relative of Leggett has ever attended this University.” Braden just let the world know that the police know exactly who the third person was.

Angela then asks Braden, “Todd McCutchen, I understand, is no longer enrolled at our University. What happened to him?” Braden explains, “I heard he went to another university. He wasn’t no good for our track team anyway. He ran really good during time trials, but, when they put him on the track, he blew the race. According to the coaches’ records, we suspected he was rigging the races.”

Moving to the main part of the interview, Angela continues, “wow! So, Todd McCutchen is suspected of rigging the outcomes of the events! I can’t believe that happened right here at our University! I also hear that someone else right here at the University was allegedly involved with rigging the races and involved in an organized gambling ring. Can you tell us who that was?” Referring to his pre-prepared statement, Braden reveals, “that was Dean Grimsby. Dean Grimsby was allegedly the odds maker for the gambling ring. Dean Grimsby was arrested last year, at the end of the Spring semester. So was Mr. Ruff, who was the coach at Centerville High School, and Mr. Parker, who was the coach at Henderson High School. They are all suspected to be involved in the same gambling ring.”

Angela pauses, then energetically summarizes, “can you believe that, my listeners? Our own Dean of Students, Dean Addison Grimsby, was arrested for charges associated with an organized gambling ring! That is certainly not news you hear every day!” Angela pauses again, and announces, “so, my listening audience, our Dean of Students, Dean Grimsby, has been arrested, and it is also my understanding that he is not likely returning to the University.”

Angela then asks Braden, “Officer Braden, are any more arrests on the horizon?” Braden replies with his prescribed response, “I can’t comment on that, since it’s an ongoing investigation. But, I can say this. We definitely have a couple of people under surveillance. And, Provost Leighton and Mr. Frazier aren’t standing for any interference with the track team.” Braden just hinted that more arrests may be coming. Braden also notified anyone potentially involved in a gambling ring that, if they do interfere with the track team, someone is coming after them.

Already knowing the answer to her question, Angela asks, “Officer Braden, can you tell us where Todd McCutchen went to high school?” Braden replies, “McCutchen went to Centerville High School, where Mr. Ruff was the coach.” Angela then mentions, “so, Mr. Ruff, the track coach at Centerville High School, got arrested for charges associated with gambling, and Todd McCutchen, who was suspected of rigging the events, went to that high school. It’s not hard to see the potential connection there.” Officer Braden replies, “we have strong evidence of the connection, Angela. I really want to hear them try to get out of this one.” Braden is specifically referring to several years ago when Todd McCutchen compromised his integrity by running in his brother’s place for Centerville High School during the high school State invitational meet.

Angela pauses the tape, and tells Braden, “let’s take a break. And, by the way, you’re doing really great!” Angela, Braden, and Kathy talk for a while, discussing what will be brought up during the next segment. Kathy offers to Angela, “if you want, I’ll finish the interview for you.” Angela looks at the clock, and exclaims, “sure! I’m late for class!” It’s not likely that Angela or Kathy will ever fall for each other’s games again. But, that will not stop either of them from trying.

For the rest of the interview, Braden discusses with Angela other events surrounding the arrest of Dean Grimsby. Rehashing a bit of history, it is revealed how Dean Grimsby tried to expel Eddie. Braden also describes the events leading up to Dean Grimsby’s arrest. Of special interest, Braden describes in detail how the undercover officers Mack, Bad Dog, and Mad Dog took Dean Grimsby away on the day he got arrested. And, as a final note, Angela announces to her listening audience that the new Dean of Students is Dr. James Beckman, who attended the University many years ago with Provost Leighton.

After the interview, Angela tells Kathy, “the commercial radio stations are going to really wonder how I got this story.” Kathy replies, “I suppose they could have reported on it too, if they wanted.” Angela explains, “they could. But, the University is really quiet about stuff like this. Their public relations people only tell the news media what the University wants them to know. This is inside stuff.” Kathy mentions, “they might be coming to you for information.” Revealing what Kathy does not know, Angela explains, “the commercial stations look down on us because we’re a college radio station, and we’re run entirely by students. They’re not getting anything out of me until they start acting a lot nicer.” Kathy replies, “I can see that.”

Angela informs Braden and Kathy that the show will be aired sometime next week. Kathy asks Angela to let her know when the interview will be aired, so that she can let the track team know. Angela’s show, Waves, airs twice weekly. This episode is sure to be aired multiple times, since most of the students are unaware that Dean Grimsby has been arrested.

Taking up Provost Leighton on her offer to allow Todd McCutchen to demonstrate his skill and proficiency on the track, Mr. Scott McCutchen, Senior, his son Jeff, and their attorney, Mr. Alexander Stupeck arrive one morning at practice. Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton have previously given the team the heads up that Jeff McCutchen will attend a practice session with his father and attorney.

Provost Leighton has informed Mr. Stupeck that, in no uncertain terms, Jeff will have to demonstrate his proficiency during the prescribed session. The team is ready to kick McCutchen’s ass at the event of Mr. Stupeck’s choosing. The problem is that no one knows which event or events will be placed on the table. But, Mr. Frazier and the team are ready for whatever may come their way.

The team is assembled on the bench, ready to practice. The team is well aware that Jeff McCutchen, his father, and another unidentified person are sitting at the far end of the bleachers. For those who don’t know, they will quickly find out the man in the plaid suit is Jeff McCutchen’s attorney. Mark throws out the question, “I wonder who’s going to get to kick McCutchen’s ass today.” Braden is quick to respond, “anyone who wants to. He ain’t no good at nothing.” Mitchell comments, “McCutchen thinks he’s a distance runner. So, it’s probably us distance guys.” Braden boasts, “then, I’m gonna be a distance guy today!”

Eddie casually comments, “McCutchen is bald, just like his brother. It must be genetic.” Mark replies, “it must be stress. It’s got to be.” Eddie tells Mark, “yeah, bro. You’re stressing McCutchen out.” Mark laughs,

and replies, “so they say. But, it looks more like another Prickly Sea Spider bite to me.”

Braden asks, “who’s those two guys with him?” Recognizing Scott McCutchen, Sr., Mark replies, “one of the guys is his father, the hammer. I’m not sure who the other guy is.” Braden laughs, and comments, “I didn’t recognize McCutchen’s father. The last time I saw him, his ass was all busted up.” Eddie comments, “that other guy must be his attorney. He’s wearing a suit.” Seeing McCutchen’s attorney wearing a plaid suit, Johnson comments, “that guy looks like he escaped from the circus.” Mark sits back and announces to the tribe, “today is going to be fun.”

Mr. Frazier walks in with Provost Leighton, Dr. Bonamo, Kathy, and Paula. Placing the small lectern in front of the group, Mr. Frazier smiles, knowing that today might bring some interesting entertainment. Before Mr. Frazier even starts, Mr. Stupeck walks up to Mr. Frazier and asks, “are you Mr. George Frazier?” Mr. Frazier replies, “I am. And, you’re interrupting my training session.” Mr. Stupeck informs Mr. Frazier, “my name is Alexander Stupeck. I represent Todd.” Before Mr. Stupeck can finish his sentence, Mr. Frazier firmly tells Mr. Stupeck, “first, let’s get something straight. I’m in charge of what goes on here, not you. Please take a seat, and I will address your concern in a few minutes. And, for the record, I don’t care who you are.” Mr. Stupeck takes a seat, and is put on notice that he is in for a bumpy ride today.

Mr. Frazier announces to the team, “good morning. If any of the track athletes can throw the hammer, please see Dr. Bonamo sometime during the next week. Today, we’re going to run a few time trials in individual events and in the relay events. We need to get the events fine tuned before the divisional meet in January. And, as I mentioned last year, you have raised the bar! You can be sure that the other teams are not sitting on their asses! They plan to meet it!” Mr. Frazier makes a few more announcements, then moves on to the day’s main event.

Mr. Frazier then yells out, “Stupeck! You may now approach the lectern!” Walking up to the lectern, Mr. Stupeck now understands who is boss. The team already knows who is boss, and is ready for some entertainment. Standing next to Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton cannot wait to see how the head coach she fought so hard for will handle McCutchen and his attorney.

Knowing that a confrontation will get the team’s adrenaline levels up, Mr. Frazier asks Mr. Stupeck, “in twenty words or less, exactly what do you want?” Mr. Stupeck informs Mr. Frazier, “I represent Jeff McCutchen, whom I believe was unfairly cut from the team. Today, Jeff is here to demonstrate his proficiency to you.” Mark yells out from the bleachers,

“that was 23 words!” Laughter comes from the team, suggesting to Mr. Stupeck that he cannot even count.

Once the laughter dies down, Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Stupeck, “I know who you are and why you are here. So, let’s get right down to business. In what event or events would Jeff care to demonstrate his proficiency today?” Mr. Stupeck, who now knows better than to usurp Mr. Frazier’s authority, replies, “Jeff is a distance runner. He would like to run the mile.” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Stupeck, “fair enough.”

Mr. Stupeck boldly informs Mr. Frazier, “for your information, both Mr. McCutchen and I will be timing Jeff.” Claiming the upper hand, Mr. Frazier smiles, and replies, “go ahead. Be my guest. Time anyone you want. I don’t care. You can even use a metric stopwatch if you want.” Mr. Stupeck is quite flustered by Mr. Frazier’s confidence level and Mr. Frazier’s total lack of fear. And, it’s now no secret that the concept of the bogus metric stopwatch has made its way all the way to Mr. Frazier.

Addressing his team, Mr. Frazier smiles and yells out, “who wants to kick McCutchen’s ass in the mile?” A sudden look of shock comes over Mr. Stupeck and Mr. McCutchen. Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, Braden, Mark, and Eddie all yell out, “me!” Mr. Frazier tells McCutchen’s challengers, “get out there and start warming up!” The challengers quickly get off the bleachers, and head out to the track. Mr. Frazier tells the rest of his team, “we are all going to watch this race, and it’s going to be a good one. Then, we will run a few events for time. And, tomorrow, we’ll hit the sand track and run the interval drill.”

On the way to the track, Mr. Frazier further reviews the runner’s performance statistics. Provost Leighton tells Mr. Frazier, “Jeff doesn’t stand a chance against those guys.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I know. But, I’m going to make this interesting. I think we’ll see some good times from our guys today.” Provost Leighton strongly suspects Mr. Frazier has something up his sleeve.

Calling Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, Braden, Mark, Eddie, and the Timekeepers aside, Mr. Frazier carefully explains today’s race strategy. Walking over to inconsiderately interrupt Mr. Frazier’s meeting, Mr. Stupeck is strategically intercepted by Provost Leighton. Keeping Mr. Stupeck at a distance, Provost Leighton asks, “may I help you, sir?” Mr. Stupeck asks, “what’s going on over there?” What’s going on is none of Mr. Stupeck’s business, but Provost Leighton kindly informs him, “they’re likely discussing the race strategy, and other things coaches talk with their athletes about right before a race. I’m sure you’re quite familiar with what a coach discusses before a race.” Pointing out one of McCutchen’s deficiencies, Provost Leighton asks Mr. Stupeck, “Jeff is about to run a

mile. Isn't he going to warm up?" Mr. Stupeck yells out to McCutchen, "hey, Jeff! Warm up!"

At the starting line, Mr. Frazier announces, "this is a one-mile run. You are all expected to run your best race today. Jeff McCutchen! When the gun is fired, you are to run, and deliver the best performance you can! Do not pay attention to what anyone else is doing! And, do not pay attention to a second gun that may go off during the race! Am I understood?" McCutchen replies, "yeah." Mr. Frazier then announces, "McCutchen! Take the inside lane!" For this race, Mr. Frazier even gives McCutchen the choice lane.

The Starter announces, "set." McCutchen gets set, ready to demonstrate to the world why he should be reinstated to the team. The gun is fired, and three stopwatches are started to document McCutchen's time. Right off the line, McCutchen quickly takes the lead. McCutchen, however, is only in the lead because Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, Braden, Mark, and Eddie remain standing at the starting line. Mark comments, "wow! Look at him go." Eddie replies, "it looks like he's winning!" Braden adds, "that don't matter none. He's still gonna get his ass kicked." And, Braden will make sure of it.

As McCutchen rounds the track, Provost Leighton laughs, and asks Mr. Frazier, "George, now what are you up to?" Having to deal with Mr. Stupeck earlier, Provost Leighton missed hearing one important detail of Mr. Frazier's race strategy. Mr. Frazier laughs, and explains, "when McCutchen finishes his first quarter mile, our guys will begin the race. If I am correct, they will all beat McCutchen to the finish line." Provost Leighton concludes, "so, you think McCutchen will lose the race, even with a quarter mile head start?" Mr. Frazier replies, "exactly!" Provost Leighton laughs, knowing that, under this arrangement, the guys will run an excellent race.

As McCutchen is on the back straightaway, Mr. Stupeck yells out to Mr. Frazier, "what's going on here?" Mr. Frazier boldly replies, "they're running a mile. It looks like your guy is winning!" Pointing to the six runners on the track who have barely moved one inch, Mr. Stupeck exclaims, "they're not running! They're just standing there!" Mr. Frazier looks over at his six runners and, sounding a bit like Mark or Mr. Zunde, replies, "oh, yeah. I can see that now. Thank you for bringing that to my attention."

With McCutchen approaching the starting line from 100 yards away, Mr. Frazier asks the six runners, "are you guys ready?" Braden exclaims, "bring it on! Let's get this ass kicking in high gear!" The guys line up, leaving lane one open for McCutchen to pass. The Starter announces, "set." As McCutchen completes his first quarter mile, the gun is fired.

With 440 yards to make up, Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, Braden, Mark, and Eddie are not playing games. They know they have a lot of work to do.

The group of six runners quickly passes McCutchen, with Stone leading the pack. Mr. Frazier, along with Provost Leighton, Kathy, and Paula, watch, as the guys try to pull this off. Curious whether Mr. Frazier is correct, Provost Leighton asks Kathy, "I'm curious. How do you see this ending?" Also wanting to hear the answer, Mr. Frazier listens as Kathy explains to Provost Leighton, "technically, it's going to be a close race. If the guys run anywhere near a four-minute mile, they'll be able to beat McCutchen. But, practically speaking, they'll all kick his ass. None of these guys will let McCutchen win."

Mr. McCutchen, a former track athlete himself, watches as his son continually loses ground to the competition. Now knowing exactly what is going on, Mr. McCutchen does not like it. But, there is nothing that he can say. To Mr. McCutchen and Mr. Stupeck, time goes by very slowly, as Jeff slowly gets hammered on the track.

McCutchen enters his fourth, and final, lap. On his third lap, Stone, leading the pack, has already left the back straightaway, and far into the curve. The pack closely follows Stone. Kathy tells Provost Leighton, "okay. So, now there is no way McCutchen is going to win." Provost Leighton tells Kathy, "please explain." Looking at one of her stopwatches, Kathy explains, "the guys are running a 60-second quarter-mile pace, which every one of them can sustain for the entire final lap. McCutchen is, at best, running an 80-second pace. The way things look right now, the guys are expected to beat him by at least five seconds."

On their final lap, the guys have not one, but two goals. The first goal is to beat McCutchen. The second goal, among themselves, is to win the race. On the back straightaway, the pack closes in on McCutchen. Mitchell passes Stone, and Braden steps out and passes Mitchell. Braden breaks from the pack, but Eddie will have nothing to do with it. In the final curve, Eddie passes Stone, but has a problem passing Mitchell. Coming out of the final curve, the runners pass McCutchen one by one. In a sprint to the finish, Braden takes first place, Eddie takes second place, and Mitchell takes third place. Akinmola, Stone, and Mark all finish within a second of each other. Eight seconds later, McCutchen crosses the finish line.

Realizing what just happened, Mr. McCutchen exclaims, "that wasn't very nice, embarrassing Jeff like that! What's wrong with you people?" Mr. Frazier replies, "I'm not finished embarrassing him yet!" Mr. Frazier then asks Mrs. Owens, "what's on the clock? What do we got?" Mrs. Owens, who has gotten much quicker at compiling the results, hands Mr. Frazier

the run sheet. Mr. Frazier exclaims, “Braden, Eddie, Mitchell, Akinmola, Stone, and Mark all broke four minutes! Can you believe it?”

Focusing his attention to Mr. McCutchen and Mr. Stupeck, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “Jeff McCutchen ran the mile in five minutes and twenty-six seconds! I gave him a quarter-mile head start! And, he still couldn’t win! That is exactly why he is not on the team! Do you finally get it? That is exactly why he was cut!” Mr. Frazier then announces the times of the other runners.

Again, focusing his attention to Mr. McCutchen and Mr. Stupeck, Mr. Frazier continues, exclaiming, “I cut him to avoid the embarrassment of a performance like that in a meet! That kind of performance will embarrass him, our coaching staff, and this whole team! How am I going to put him in if that’s the best he can deliver? Someone, please answer me!” Avoiding the question, Mr. Stupeck stupidly asks, “have you tried him out in a sprint?” Mr. Frazier throws his hands in the air, and yells out, “Karen, Erika, Tessa, Amanda, Michelle, Leslie, and Dagmar, warm up for a 100-meter dash!” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Stupeck, “go ahead, and get your guy ready!” Braden adds, “yeah! Tell McCutchen to get his flimsy ass ready for his next ass kicking!”

Trying to negotiate a recovery period for Jeff McCutchen, Mr. Stupeck exclaims, “he just ran a mile! He’ll need a recovery period!” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Stupeck, “fine, then! Tell me when he’s ready. In the meantime, we’ll run a few other time trials.” Mr. Stupeck and Mr. McCutchen step aside and have a private discussion. It’s anybody’s guess what they may be talking about. But, Mr. Frazier does not care. Already proving his point, Mr. Frazier moves on to the team’s workout.

A half hour later, Mr. Stupeck tells Mr. Frazier, “we’re ready to have Jeff run again.” Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, and yells out, “Karen, Erika, Tessa, Amanda, Michelle, Leslie, and Dagmar, get behind the blocks!” The women walk toward the starting line, leaving Mr. Stupeck and Mr. McCutchen wondering why Mr. Frazier put Jeff McCutchen up against seven women. The Timekeepers immediately stop what they are doing, and head to the finish line.

As McCutchen heads over to the starting line, Mr. Stupeck asks Mr. McCutchen, “what’s a good time in the 100-meter dash?” Mr. McCutchen replies, “I don’t really know. I’m used to the events being measured in yards.” Overhearing the question, Mr. Frazier informs Mr. Stupeck, “for men, in the ten to eleven-second range. For women, in the eleven to twelve-second range.” Mr. McCutchen confidently assures Mr. Stupeck, “Jeff should be able to do that.”

McCutchen is granted the privilege of running in the highly esteemed lane four, and gets behind the blocks along with the women. The Starter announces, "on your marks." Once the runners appear to be ready, the Starter announces, "set." The runners get set, and the gun is fired. Ten meters into the race, Karen takes the lead, with Erika and Tessa not far behind her. Dagmar, a distance athlete, is surprisingly in fourth place. At 50 meters, Karen retains the lead, but Erika and Tessa are pushing her hard. As the runners approach the finish line, Karen takes first place, Erika takes second place, and Tessa takes third place. Dagmar, finishing right behind Tessa is today's big surprise. Last place goes to McCutchen, who is again sorely disappointed in his own performance.

Waiting patiently for the times to be compiled, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "these women are fast! Did you see that?" Provost Leighton replies, "George, it looks like we're going to sweep the 60-meter and the 100-meter dash this year." Mr. Frazier adds, "and, from what I see, add to that the 200-meter dash and the 4 by 100-meter relay!"

Mrs. Owens hands Mr. Frazier the run sheet, who looks it over with Provost Leighton. Provost Leighton whispers to Mr. Frazier, "that was a really great run. And, Dagmar really surprised me." Mr. Frazier then boldly announces, "the winning time in this event was 11.4 seconds! Jeff McCutchen ran 100 meters in 14.1 seconds." Figuring a 14.1-second 100-meter dash is roughly equivalent to a 12.5-second 100-yard dash, Mark exclaims, "wow! I ran faster than that in fourth grade."

Not at all appreciative of how the day is going, Mr. Stupeck tells Mr. Frazier, "I'm kind of appalled about how you are handling this, coach." Reviewing McCutchen's statistics on his clipboard, Mr. Frazier frankly replies, "what do you want me to do? Jeff ran the 400-meter dash in 65.8 seconds, the mile in 5:23.3, and the 60-meter dash in 8.4 seconds. And now, add to that 14.1 seconds in the 100-meter dash. He gets his ass kicked every time he gets on the track! So, please tell me which one of those times qualifies him to be on this team?" Knowing that McCutchen ran poorly today, neither Mr. McCutchen nor Mr. Stupeck dare to answer Mr. Frazier.

Breaking the silence, Provost Leighton answers, "none of them. So, I would like to thank you Mr. Stupeck, Mr. McCutchen, and Jeff for coming out today. But, unfortunately, Mr. Frazier's original assessment of Todd McCutchen's qualifications and abilities still stands, and Jeff is cut from the team. If any of you have any further complaint, please contact me in writing. But, I can assure you. Neither I nor Mr. Frazier will be addressing any more nonsense of this type. And, if you do decide to raise this issue again, please be aware that, if we do choose to address it, any complaint will be handled in the same manner that it was here today. And, in the future, please don't entertain me with nonsense such as how Todd was

treated unfairly. Performance on the track is the issue and, I might add, the only issue.”

Hearing Provost Leighton give McCutchen the boot, Braden comments under his breath, “McCutchen’s getting his ass kicked worse than Mr. Crum is right now.” Braden, however, still fired up from the race, is heard by all those standing around. Not hearing the former high school principal’s name for quite some time, Braden immediately gets Mr. Frazier’s attention. Braden also inadvertently gets the attention of Mr. McCutchen who, like Mr. Crum, was involved with the organized gambling ring that was busted wide open by Officer Hayes.

Now curious, Mr. Frazier asks Braden, “how is Mr. Crum getting his ass kicked now? He’s in jail.” Mr. McCutchen, wanting to hear the answer because his future fate may also involve being behind bars, hangs around to hear Braden’s answer. Braden explains, “in a prison, there’s a pecking order. And, nobody’s crossing up the pecking order and getting away with it. When they put his ass in prison, the first thing Mr. Crum did is to try to tell the other inmates that he runs the place now. They ripped him a hole in a place where there ain’t supposed to be one. Someone kicks Mr. Crum’s fat ass in there every day.”

Mr. McCutchen brazenly asks Braden, “how do you know all this?” Braden exclaims, “because my father is the prison warden! I know what goes on in there! And, if you’re gonna keep fixing races, that’s where your ass is gonna end up someday.” Mr. McCutchen yells out, “I’m not fixing any races!” Braden replies, “yeah, junior. You just keep telling yourself that. Where did I hear that shit before?” Not wanting his client to get more upset than he already is, Mr. Stupeck tells Mr. McCutchen, “come on, Scott. Let’s get out of here. We’re done here for now.”

Mr. Stupeck, Mr. McCutchen, and Jeff McCutchen leave the track, and head back to their cars. Finally understanding that his son is nowhere near being qualified to run on the University’s team, Mr. McCutchen suggests to Jeff that he apply to another college if he wants to run track. Mr. Stupeck informs Mr. McCutchen that the team’s caliber is far beyond what he ever thought, and there is nothing further that he can do. The good news is that Mr. Frazier has hopefully gotten rid of Jeff McCutchen for good. The bad news is that Mr. McCutchen has heard first hand of Mr. Crum’s less than lavish life in prison.

Moving day arrives for Officer Richard Hayes, and much of the tribe descends upon the officer’s house at eight o’clock in the morning. Mark and Paula arrive with Mark’s truck and a trailer. Eddie and Kathy take Eddie’s Dune Buggy, also towing a trailer. Richard has rented a truck, which will carry most of the household items and furniture.

Richard's wife, Sandy, comes out to greet the moving crew, telling them, "it's so nice of you guys to help us. I've heard so much about you guys over the years. It's so good to finally meet you." Everyone introduces themselves, giving Sandy a face to go with the names she's heard about for years. Sandy then tells the crew, "and, we're taking all of you for pizza for lunch." Everyone appreciates getting pizza, which is the standard fare whenever anyone moves.

Eddie asks Richard, "so, what do we got?" Richard suggests, "furniture, boxes, and lawn equipment. From the looks of things, we can put the furniture in the truck, the boxes on one trailer, and the lawn and outside stuff on the other trailer." Eddie replies, "got it," with the rest of the tribe echoing the sentiment. The tribe gets to work, loading the trucks and trailers. Wendy directs the traffic, making sure there is no collision at the front door.

After an hour, Eddie takes a short break, and explains to Richard how Mr. McCutchen brought his father and attorney to a practice session a few weeks ago. Hearing Eddie's description of what went on, Richard mentions, "that's not good news. These guys seem to stop at nothing to get these McCutchen characters on a track team. The only thing that I can think of is they're back to their same old games." Eddie agrees, telling Richard, "I can see that." Richard explains to Eddie, "let me tell you something. To some people, money is like heroin. When the supply runs out, they'll do anything for another fix. I'll have to keep an eye out and see where these characters go next."

During their discussion, Eddie and Richard take a walk to the backyard, making sure nothing was missed. Richard tells Eddie, "here's another thing I've seen over the years. Whenever there is a controversy or conflict, the many views can be always reduced down to one issue. The issue is money. Follow the money trail, and you'll eventually find your answers. Someone might argue that the issue is not money, but power. But, you have to remember this. Power paves the way to money. So, we're back to money again." Eddie replies, "so, if they want McCutchen on the team that badly, some money must be at stake." Richard replies, "exactly." Eddie tells Richard, "if I hear anything more, I'll definitely let you know."

By mid morning, the truck is loaded, and the trailers are full. The crew makes the two-mile trip to Alicia drive, where they will unload everything. When they arrive, Braden tells Sandy, "just tell us where you want everything, and we'll put it there." The first order of business is to get the baby's room set up, which they intentionally loaded onto the truck last. Then, the baby can be put down for a nap while everything else is being unloaded.

While they are unloading the truck, Wendy mentions to Braden, “this house is really nice. Maybe someday we can get something like this.” Braden replies, “we’d better start looking. There’s not much for sale around here.” Wendy asks, “can we afford a place like this?” Braden confidently replies, “yeah.” Braden, who has no expenses other than food, gas for his Dune Buggy, and dates with Wendy, has been investing nearly his entire salary, following Eddie’s stock market advice.

Shortly after noon, everything is unloaded, and set into the house, perhaps setting a record for the fastest move in history. But, fast is the name of the game for the tribe. The group then washes up, and gets ready to go out and get pizza with the Hayes family. Most excited about getting pizza are Richard’s two older kids, who were asking all morning, “is it time to get pizza yet?” With the move completed, everyone heads to the pizzeria for a well-deserved lunch.

Working the third shift very early one Saturday morning, while on patrol, Officer Braden hears on his radio, “radio to 365.” Officer Braden replies, “365. Go ahead.” The dispatcher responds, “silent 10-46⁴, back service door, at the arena, two minutes ago.” Officer Braden replies, “365 10-17⁵.” Officer Braden then heads to the arena, wondering who is breaking into the indoor arena at four o’clock in the morning, and why.

Arriving at the scene, Officer Braden parks in the main parking lot in front of the arena, and walks around to the back service door, which he sees is closed. Officer Braden jumps up and grabs onto the brick ledge and, pulling himself up, takes a look through the window. Officer Braden sees a light on, which should be off, and an open door to one of the offices overlooking the arena. Officer Braden radios the dispatcher, informing them that there is, in fact a break in. The dispatcher relays to Officer Braden that Officer Levy is on his way, and to meet him on TAC-1.

On tactical channel number one, Officer Braden broadcasts, “365 to 412.” Officer Levy replies, “412. Go ahead.” Officer Braden tells Officer Levy, “we have lights on and an open door to one of the offices overlooking the indoor track. How far out are you?” Officer Levy replies, “I just pulled into the parking lot. I’ll be there in less than a minute.” Officer Braden replies, “I’m at the service entrance. I’ll wait.” Officer Braden, pulling himself up on the ledge one more time, takes another peek through the window, seeing that nothing has changed.

⁴ 10-46: Alarm going off

⁵ 10-17: En Route

Officer Levy arrives, and Officer Braden informs him, “they’re still in there. There’s no forced entry, so they either have a key or they picked the lock.” Officer Levy asks, “do you know what’s in that office?” Officer Braden replies, “that’s the coach’s records room. That’s where they keep the performance records for the University’s athletes, and performance records for the other teams in the division. And, there’s some other equipment in there, like about three dozen stopwatches, whistles, the batons, and the shot-puts. There’s probably more stuff in there, but that’s all I know of.” Officer Levy asks, “is there another way out of that office?” Officer Braden replies, “no.” Officer Levy replies, “good. That will make this easy.”

Officer Levy tells Officer Braden, “let’s go in and see what we got.” Officer Braden quietly opens the service door, and the two officers get down low, quickly and quietly moving over toward the opened office door. As Officers Braden and Levy approach the office, they hear talking and the shuffling of papers going on in the room. As Officers Braden and Levy get closer to the office, they hear one of the perpetrators say to the other, “I think we got it all.” The other perpetrator replies, “double check it, just to make sure.” Hearing what was said, Officer Levy signals to Officer Braden to move in.

Officers Braden and Levy rush through the door, entering the room. Suddenly turning around, the two perpetrators realizing they have no other escape route, run to try to escape through the door. Officer Braden quickly blocks the exit, as officer Levy quickly places one of the perpetrators in hand cuffs. Officer Braden, placing the other perpetrator in an arm lock, exclaims, “what’s your ass doing in this office?” The perpetrator yells out, “let me go!” Tightening the arm lock, Officer Braden replies, “yeah, right. That ain’t happening.”

Officer Levy asks Officer Braden, “do you recognize these guys?” Officer Braden replies, “yeah. This one is Todd McCutchen, and the one you cuffed is his sorry-ass brother, Jeff McCutchen.” Braden then asks the McCutchen brothers, “what are your asses doing in this office at four o’clock in the morning?” Todd McCutchen again yells out, “let me go!” Braden tells McCutchen, “shut up, and answer my question!” Todd McCutchen yells out louder, “let me go! You’re hurting me!” Braden cuffs McCutchen, and asks again, “now, what are you doing in this office at four o’clock in the morning?”

Todd McCutchen, who now goes to another University, starts yelling out, “what Mark took away, we’re trying to get home! Don’t you see them trying to get home?” Braden exclaims, “what are you talking about, junior?” Todd McCutchen yells out again, “what Mark took away, we’re trying to get home!” Turning to his brother, Todd yells to Jeff, “tell them about it!” Not making any sense of what Todd McCutchen is saying,

Officer Levy tells Officer Braden, “he must be on some sort of drugs. He’s not making any sense.” Officer Braden replies, “his dumb shit ass never did make no sense anyway.”

With the McCutchen brothers now restrained, Officer Braden observes that the drawers to one of the filing cabinets are opened. Examining the contents of a box sitting on the table, Officer Braden finds a slew of stopwatches, the most recent performance records for the University’s team, and the performance records for the other teams in the division from last year. Officer Braden tells Officer Levy, “from what I see, these guys are stealing the performance records for our track team, and the records from last year’s meets. And, the stopwatches look like the pay dirt.”

Officer Braden asks the McCutchen brothers, “I’m going to ask you guys one more time. What are you guys doing in this office at four o’clock in the morning?” Todd McCutchen exclaims, “what Mark took away, we’re trying to get home!” Jeff tells his brother, “shut up already! You’re going to get us in trouble!” Officer Braden raises his voice and tells Jeff, “junior! Your ass is already in trouble!” Officer Braden then tells Officer Levy, “it looks like they’re spending the rest of their weekend in the tank.” Officer Levy replies, “maybe we’ll get something out of them in the morning when the drugs get out of their system.”

Officer Braden and Officer Levy place Todd and Jeff McCutchen under arrest and read them their rights. The McCutchen brothers are charged with breaking and entering, and are escorted outside to Officer Braden’s police car. Officer Levy returns to the scene, and places crime scene tape over the entrance to the office. Heading back to the station, Officer Levy will help Officer Braden sort out the details of the break in.

When Todd McCutchen is booked, he is forced to empty his pockets. Among Todd McCutchen’s possessions, Officer Braden found a few pills in a small plastic bag, lock picking tools, a switchblade, and a piece of paper with a phone number on it.

Among the items found in Jeff McCutchen’s pockets is a list of the items that were found in the box on the table. Further analysis reveals that the piece of paper found in Jeff’s pocket was torn from the piece of paper found in Todd’s pocket. And, the handwriting on both pieces of paper appears to be the same.

Monday, at practice, it is clearly evident to all the athletes and Timekeepers that crime scene tape has been placed over the coach’s record room. The tribe moves to the end of the bleachers, where Braden explains to the tribe what went down over the weekend. Braden also tells the tribe that Chief Toledo will be explaining what happened to the team

at the end of practice today, and that Officer Hayes also plans to be there. After giving his rundown, Braden mentions, “it was really weird. McCrutchen was yelling out, ‘what Mark took away, we’re trying to get home! Don’t you see them trying to get home?’ I couldn’t make no sense out of him.”

Eddie tells Braden, “we can make some sense out of this. The first thing I see is that Mark took something away.” Johnson mentions, “whatever Mark took away, it must have been really valuable, since they’re trying to get it home.” Adding to the conversation, Erika observes, “Mark must be really strong, since there are multiple people trying to get it home, whatever ‘it’ is.” Johnson points out, “they’re crying out for sympathy, because he said, ‘don’t you see them trying to get home?’” Karen adds, “whatever Mark took away, was taken from the home, because they’re trying to get it back home again.” Mark, himself, suggests, “whoever ‘they’ are, they haven’t gotten it home yet. And, they’re trying very hard.” Bobby B. then suggests, “maybe Mark took people out of the home, since he was saying, ‘don’t you see them trying to get home.’”

Eddie then tells Braden, “see that, bro? It’s beginning to make a lot more sense now!” Braden laughs, and replies, “it still don’t make no sense to me.” Mark adds, “McCrutchen never made any sense anyway.” Braden laughs, and replies, “that’s what I told Officer Levy.”

Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, Dr. Bonamo, Kathy, and Paula walk into the arena. Mr. Frazier begins today by announcing, “good morning. As you can see, there has been another break in over the weekend. To squelch any rumors, Chief Toledo will provide you with information regarding what occurred here over the weekend at the end of today’s practice session.” Many of the team members wonder why someone would even break into the arena. They will have to wait until the end of practice to find out. Mr. Frazier then makes a few announcements, and the team begins practice.

At the end of the practice session, Mr. Frazier blows his whistle and instructs the athletes to have a seat on the bleachers. Chief Toledo walks into the arena, accompanied by Officer Richard Hayes. Now strongly suspecting that there is still an active gambling ring in the area, Officer Hayes has chosen to be present today. And, hearing the name McCutchen come up once again certainly raised his interest.

Chief Toledo begins, telling the athletes, “first of all, I apologize for cutting your training session a little short today, but your coaches wanted you to have an explanation of what occurred in the arena over the weekend. I’ll be brief. Two former members of this track team have been arrested for breaking and entering into the arena this past weekend.

They have been transferred to the county jail, and are currently under investigation. What they were attempting to steal were the performance records of every one of you, and the performance records for the other teams in the division over the past year. They were also attempting to steal a good number of stopwatches, but we believe that is not what they were originally after.” The team members are surprised at hearing the announcement, wondering who it was that had broken in. After revealing a few more details, and asking anyone who has any information to contact him, Chief Toledo concludes, by telling everyone, “thank you for your time, and I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Frazier.”

Previously hearing from Mr. Frazier that he suspects he knows why the break in occurred, Chief Toledo stays around, wanting to hear Mr. Frazier’s take on the events that occurred. So does Officer Hayes.

Never missing an opportunity to give the team a pep talk, Mr. Frazier takes the floor, announcing to the team, “good morning, again. As Chief Toledo mentioned, the thieves were after your performance records, and the records we’ve kept from last year’s meets.” Mr. Frazier raises his voice, and asks, “do you know why they were after your performance records?” The team is silent, waiting for Mr. Frazier’s explanation. Mr. Frazier exclaims, “one reason they want your performance records is because they have no idea how to beat this team! Last year, at the divisional meet, our team took all the gold medals! And, we have the potential to do that again next month when we come back from Christmas break! They have no idea how to stop you! They were after your performance statistics! That means they’ll know who to put up in a race to beat you!” Mr. Frazier then laughs, and tells the team, “it wouldn’t take them too long to figure out that they don’t have anyone who can beat you!”

Mr. Frazier continues, and explains, “now, listen to this. Dean Grimsby, and a few others, were arrested for running an organized gambling ring. While I don’t have direct evidence of this, I strongly suspect that we have not seen the end of organized gambling affecting our sport.” Mr. Frazier then raises his voice, and exclaims, “if someone has all of our performance statistics, they will know exactly who will win each event! They’ll not only know who will win each event, but they’ll also know what the winning time will be! If they have that information, someone stands to make a lot of money! All of that information is contained in the records they attempted to steal!” Officer Hayes, listening to Mr. Frazier’s analysis, his highly convinced that the coach is spot on.

Mr. Frazier then instructs the team, “if any of you are aware of any information about gambling within our sport, please bring it to my, Provost Leighton’s, or Dr. Bonamo’s attention. And, if anyone approaches you to fix a race, you’d better bring it to my attention! If you get caught

fixing a race, your track career is over! And, I will be the one making sure your track career is over! No one will ever trust you to run again!” The team claps and cheers after listening to Mr. Frazier’s address, signifying that they do not want to compete in a rigged sport. A few more announcements are made, then the student athletes hit the locker rooms.

Right before the end of the semester, at the recommendation of Mr. Zunde, Kathy and Paula drive over to the administration building in the school district in which they grew up. Planning to apply for positions as physical education instructors, they hope that something will come through by the time they graduate.

On the way, Paula asks Kathy, “do you think anything will come up?” Kathy replies, “I hope so. Mr. Zunde sounded pretty confident. And, I really can’t imagine doing anything else.” Paula comically suggests, “maybe I can apply to be the principal at the high school.” Kathy laughs, and replies, “that would be funny! Then, you can hobble out to the track and tell Barbara that she can’t hold track practice in the Fall because track is not a Fall sport.” Paula exclaims, “stop it, girl! If I were the principal, I’d be out there helping Barbara coach track!”

Kathy then recalls from her high school days, “you know, if you look around the high school, the only people who are happy are the gym teachers, and the teachers who don’t really need their jobs, like Miss Amherst, Miss Starr, and Mr. Malik. And, if you look around society, most people aren’t really happy with their jobs.” Paula replies, “yeah. I can see that.” Kathy further observes, “even Richard has been a lot less stressed since Eddie has been giving him stock tips. The same with Angelo. Now that they really don’t need their jobs, they’re a lot more relaxed.”

Kathy drives into the parking lot of the administration building, which is located on a corner of the same tract of land where the high school sits. Paula comments, “if it weren’t for those trees, they’d have a great view of the high school track from the administration building. And, from where I’m sitting, they had a great view of where the Chuckie used to smoke pot.” Kathy asks, “how did they not even see that?” Paula replies, “they probably did, and called Mr. Crum. And, Mr. Crum did absolutely nothing about it because he was the school drug dealer.” Kathy exclaims, “you’re right! I can’t imagine what Mr. Crum told them.” Imitating Mr. Crum, Paula replies, “yeah. I’ll take care of it. I’ll call their parents right away.”

As they are walking to the administration building, Kathy tells Paula, “if I were back in high school again, I wouldn’t give a crap about half the stuff I had to put up with, like that old Crum.” Paula laughs, and exclaims, “it’s not like you gave a crap about him anyway, girl! Like, remember that cutoff shirt thing when we were seniors?” Kathy laughs, and replies, “okay. You’re right! So, I guess I didn’t give a crap about a

lot of stuff in high school.” Paula tells Kathy, “remember that when you start teaching.” Kathy and Paula head inside, hopefully landing jobs as physical education teachers someday.