

Eddie, The Collegiate Junior

Chapter Two Mr. Frazier

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Now that the semester is over and the student athletes are on break, Mr. Frazier and Coach Leighton take some time to review the statistics gathered by Mrs. Owens over the last few weeks. Although the events have already been assigned, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton's meeting today is to ensure the team again takes home all the gold medals in the upcoming divisional meet. Sitting in the coach's office adjacent to the indoor arena, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton, with such a strong team, have minimal work to do before the divisional meet in early January.

Provost Leighton mentions to the head coach, "It really appears that we have a winning team again this year, George." Mr. Frazier replies, "it sure looks that way, Athena. And, once we got the troublemakers out of the way, the team has made a lot of forward progress. I can't wait for the divisional meet." Provost Leighton smiles, and tells the head coach, "in all my life, George, I've never seen a team so motivated to win." Athena knows by now that much of the team's motivation comes from Mr. Frazier.

Provost Leighton sits back and asks Mr. Frazier, "so, what's your story, George?" George replies, asking, "what do you mean?" Athena replies, "when I met you at the Olympic tryouts, I knew you were fast. I've heard Eddie's story, and how he got to be so fast. Back in our day, how did you get to be one of the fastest men in the world?" George places the folder he is holding aside, sits back and tells Athena, "wow! That seems like it was a long time ago. Are you sure you want to hear this?" With more time than usual on her hands, Athena replies, "I sure do. No one ends up being one of the fastest men in the world and doesn't have an interesting story behind it."

George tells Athena, "when I was in junior high school, in the seventh grade, I had no idea I was the fastest guy in the school. I was in gym class, and we were playing a game of football. The score was tied, and we

had one play left before we had to go inside. Our quarterback, a guy name Rob Jones, tells our team, 'we have one play left. Does anyone have any ideas?' I told him, 'throw me a short pass. On the right side, they have a bunch of guys who are about as slow as they get.' So, I lined up on the right side. When the ball was snapped, I took four or five quick steps out, turned around, caught the pass, and started running. Mike Hightower, who was supposed to be the fastest guy in the school, suddenly came out of nowhere and was chasing me down. Athena, I headed for that goal line as fast as I could. I not only outran Hightower, but I left him in the dust. I had no idea I could run that fast. I ran about 50 yards for that touchdown. Our team went into the locker room as winners that day."

Athena comments, "you must have felt really great after that." George smiles, and continues, "I did. And, as I was getting dressed for class, the gym teacher, Mr. Ward, yelled out, 'Frazier! I want to see you in my office after class!' I was wondering what kind of trouble I was in. So, after I got dressed, I went to see Mr. Ward. I walked into his office, and he told me that, out on the football field, I outran the fastest sprinter on the track team. Then, Mr. Ward told me that, when Spring comes, he wants me to sign up for track." Athena asks, "how fast were you back then?" George replies, "when I was in seventh grade, at one of the meets, I ran the 100-yard dash in 10.6 seconds." Athena tells the head coach, "wow! That was pretty good for the seventh grade!"

George then reveals, "my parents lived in a high-rise apartment building outside of the city. It was fifteen floors to the top. We lived on the top floor. My father was a general contractor. He put additions onto homes, finished basements, and repaired homes for a living. Every day, before he left for work, I had to carry all his tools down to his truck while he stood by the truck to make sure nothing got stolen. Then, when he got home from work, I carried his tools up to our apartment while he stood by his truck. On some days, I must have made a dozen trips up fifteen stories to our apartment. We lived in a really rough area, so he couldn't leave his tools unattended. They'd get stolen in no time."

Athena comments, "so, that's how you got so fast! That's a lot of stair climbing! A dozen trips up fifteen floors would be 180 stories! And, you did that twice a day!" George smiles, and tells Athena, "trust me. That was a lot of work." Athena replies, "I can only imagine." Now curious, Athena asks, "wasn't there an elevator in the apartment building?" George laughs, and replies, "there was. But, it was so slow, that you could make it up fifteen flights of stairs faster than the elevator. And, it got stuck a lot."

George continues, "but, Athena, after junior high, things got a bit ugly." Quite surprised to hear that, Athena asks, "ugly? What happened?"

George explains, "I mentioned that I grew up in a rough area. The high school was known for hazing, which they called initiation. The first week of high school, when I was on my way home, a bunch of eight or so thugs came up to me, and asked, 'hey! Are you George Frazier?' Stupidly, I replied, 'yeah.' One of the guys said, 'well, George Frazier. It's time for your initiation.' They all came at me, so I had no choice but to run. I outran them all. There was no way I could take on eight upperclassmen alone. Apparently, I was on some kind of hit list."

Athena is quite surprised at George's story, as he continues, "then, as I'm running up the street, a guy pulls up beside me in a convertible, and yells out, 'get in!' With eight goons chasing me, getting in the car looked like my best option, so I got in. The guy drives up the street, turns around, and drives straight on at the group of thugs. It was a good thing that they all jumped out of the way, otherwise, he would have hit them." Athena exclaims, "wow! That must have been really scary." George replies, "what was scary, Athena, is that I had no idea who this guy was who was giving me a ride. Remember, this guy who was driving just tried to run all these clowns over."

George explains, "as it turns out, the guy in the car was a senior at the high school. His name was John Fulmer. He was on the football team and the track team. On the track team, John threw the shot-put. He explained to me that I just happened to run into the most notorious group of morons in the school. And, two of the thugs, as fate would have it, were on the track team. I couldn't thank Fulmer enough for giving me a ride that day." Athena comments, "that must have really been a rough high school." George replies, "it was. It really was."

George then explains, "later that week, right after lunch, when I was at my locker, Fulmer walks over with the head thug, whose name was Curtis Washington. Fulmer had Washington in an arm lock. Washington just happened to be on the track team, and was supposedly the fastest guy in the high school. Fulmer told Washington, 'tell my man, Frazier, that you're sorry.' Washington replied, 'I ain't telling him shit.' Fulmer socked Washington in his mid section so hard that he bent over in pain and landed on the floor. Fulmer then picked Washington up by his hair, and told him, 'let's try this again. Tell Frazier that you're sorry.' Washington looks at me and tells me, 'I'm sorry.' Apparently, Fulmer wasn't too happy with Washington's tone, so Fulmer slams Washington against one of the lockers so hard that the locker door got badly dented. Fulmer then tells Washington, 'say it like you mean it, or I'm setting your locker on fire.' Washington again tells me that he's sorry, but he didn't sound like he meant it to me. Then, Fulmer told Washington, 'if you ever touch Frazier, I'm burning your f-ing house down.' I couldn't believe what I was hearing." Repeating what she said earlier, Athena replies, "wow, George!

It really sounds like you went to a rough high school. So, what happened with Fulmer and Washington?"

George then explains, "so, the next day, during first period, the fire alarm goes off. Everyone leaves the school, thinking it was a fire drill. Within a few minutes, the fire department shows up. After standing outside for a half hour, we're told there was an actual fire in the school. We stood outside for another hour, waiting for the smoke to clear out of the hallways. As it turns out, someone set Washington's locker on fire, and his books and varsity jacket got burned up. They never found out who started the fire, but I knew. Washington also must have known exactly who set his locker on fire. But, reporting Fulmer would probably not have been in his best interest. Who knows? If Washington reported Fulmer, Fulmer might have actually burned his house down." Athena boldly replies, "I shouldn't say this, but it really serves Washington right." George tells Athena, "that year, Fulmer and I got to be good friends. And, I found out that the friction between Fulmer and Washington went way back to grade school."

Athena mentions, "that must have been some heated rivalry between those two guys. I wonder how that got started." George replies, "I can tell you exactly how it got started. Fulmer told me. When they were in fourth grade, Washington stole two cents off of Fulmer's lunch tray. Fulmer kicked the crap out of Washington, and then put him head first into the trash can where everyone tosses their lunch trash. Then, Fulmer announced to everyone in the lunchroom that anyone who finished lunch should bring their trays up now, and dump their trash in the trash can. From what Fulmer told me, there was a big rush to the trash can. Fulmer stood there, as everyone dumped their trash all over Washington."

Athena laughs, telling George, "I really shouldn't be laughing, but that is, in a way, quite funny." George continues, "it's funny because Washington was the bully. He really got what was coming to him. And, whenever Fulmer saw Washington bullying someone, he would step in and take care of things. You would think that Washington would get the message, but he never did."

Explaining a parallel, George tells Athena, "Braden reminds me a lot of Fulmer. When he was in high school, Braden must have stopped at least a dozen fights every year. And, if the right person was winning, Braden would just let the fight continue. Once, Erika got into a fight with Chuckie, and Erika was clearly winning. Braden was telling everyone to stand back. When Gerhard and I got there, Braden told us, 'I was afraid to stop her! I didn't want to get in the middle of that one.' I had to laugh. Any one of the guys could have stopped the fight. But, the right person was winning, so they let the fight go on."

Concluding his original story, George continues, “so, when I tried out for track, I was up against Washington in the 100-yard dash time trials. I not only wanted to beat him, but I wanted to let him know who’s boss. In the time trial, I ran a 9.9, and Washington ran a 10.3 or something. Washington was ticked off at me for the whole year. The contention between me and Washington never ended. What bothered him most is that I could beat him at everything on the track, and I was a freshman. By the end of the school year, I emerged as the clear winner and Washington the loser. And, all during high school and college, I’ve never lost a race, until the Olympic tryouts.”

Moving a few years into the future, George explains, “now, get this, Athena. When I was coaching track over at Northside High School, when Eddie was a freshman, there was a senior named Paul Mahoney who ran the 100-yard dash consistently in 10.4 seconds. Mahoney was the fastest guy in the high school until Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson came along. That year, there was serious contention among many of the team members. They didn’t think I saw it but, trust me, I saw every bit of it. I just allowed it to happen. It was the same story, all over again. In my high school days, the constant contention made me stronger. I was hoping that it would make those guys stronger too. And, it did.”

Athena asks, “but, what else did you do to get so fast? There must be more.” George explains, “at the apartment building, on the weekends, I would run up the stairs, back down again, and up until I could barely walk. Then, when I was a sophomore in high school, I bought a backpack, and put a 40-pound bag of sand in it. And, I would run up the stairs with 40 pounds on my back. And, when that got too hard, I would take the backpack off, and continue running up and down the stairs with no weight. Then, after the stairs got too hard with no weight, I would go out on the streets and run on level ground.” Athena exclaims, “that must have been pure torture!” George replies, “it was, Athena. It really was. But, I wanted to win, and that was the price I had to pay.”

George continues, “when I was a sophomore, my brother was old enough to help with the tools. So, on the weekdays, when my dad got home, we would both carry his tools up to our apartment. Once the tools were put away, I would put my 40-pound backpack on, and finish my workout. Then, it was dinner time and, trust me, in our family of four, I ate half the food. On the weekends, I would run to the beach, which was five miles away. And, I would lift weights quite frequently.” Athena exclaims, “wow! That was some workout! That’s similar to the training sled protocol the team uses.”

Athena then asks, “someone must have motivated you to be a winner, George. May I ask who that was?” George replies, “I’d have to say that was my father.” George then explains, “he would always watch sports on

television over the weekends. One weekend, my father was watching a track meet. I remember that day very well. It was storming outside, so everyone was stuck inside. And, since track was my sport, I watched with him. I was in junior high at the time. My race, the 100-yard dash, came up. It was clear which runner took first place, but second and third place seemed to be a tie. While we were waiting to find out who came in second and who came in third, I asked my father, 'who do you think came in second?' My father turned to me and said, 'George, it doesn't matter. They both lost. Only one person wins the race. Everyone else is a loser.' I told my father, 'but, they get medals for second and third place.' He replied, 'so what. They still lost.'" Mr. Frazier has repeated his father's sentiment ever since.

Athena has already heard George tell this story but, wanting to hear it again, Athena allows George to continue. George then explains to Athena, "my father told me, 'George, go and get your Bible.' I went to my room, and returned with my Bible. He told me to open it to First Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 24, and read it to him. I read, 'Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you win.' My father looked me straight in the eye, and told me, 'George, there is only one winner. Everyone else is a loser. It's that simple.' I really saw the deep conviction in his eyes that day." Athena tells George, "when you quoted that verse to the University's team, the look on some of the athlete's faces was priceless. By the way, George, when you address the team, they all pay far more attention to you than they do in class." Provost Leighton knows exactly what goes on in the classrooms, and that students often do not pay attention and sleep in class.

George continues, "but, Athena, my father didn't stop there. He asked me, 'when you play football in school, and your team loses, do you go around and tell everyone that your team came in second place?' I was silent, but we both know that, no, you don't go around bragging to everyone that you came in second place in a football game. He told me, 'of course, you don't! Second place is nothing to be proud of, especially if there are only two teams playing!' Then he said to me, 'anyone can get into the ring with Muhammad Ali, and come in second place! What good is that?' Then he asked, 'how is track any different? If there are two runners in the race, or eight, there is still only one winner.'" Beginning to see where George got his motivation for winning, Athena tells Mr. Frazier, "so, that's where you got your deep motivation to win!" George replies, "that's how he raised me. To win." And, that is exactly the message George Frazier has communicated to his team over the years.

George then continues, "my father always said things like, 'they can bend me, but they can never break me' and 'when you approach your opponent, you must do so with no fear' and 'whoever comes in second

place is the first loser.' Think about McCutchen, Athena. McCutchen tried to break Mark, and Mark tried to break McCutchen. Who bent, and who broke? Who had no fear, and who had great fear? Then, take a look at who won and who lost. You can't break Mark! And, no one is breaking me either. And, Eddie, and the rest of that group, never settle for second place."

With another example, George explains, "in high school, Eddie had his own adversary. Everyone knew the guy as Chuckie. Eddie pretty much ignored Chuckie for the entire time they were in high school. But, Chuckie's attacks on Eddie, which were mostly underhanded schemes or verbal bullying, got more intense each year. When it got bad enough, Eddie would drag Chuckie out to the schoolyard and belt Chuckie to the chain-link fence, which happened a few times a year." Suddenly laughing, Athena interrupts, and asks, "wait! Hold on! Eddie belted Chuckie to the fence?" George replies, "yeah. Eddie would put Chuckie up against the fence, and belt him to the fence with Chuckie's belt buckle on the other side of the fence. And, Eddie would tighten the belt so tight that Chuckie couldn't get off the fence if he wanted to. It was actually quite funny, if you ask me."

Moving on to the end of the story, George explains, "but, one day, Chuckie tried out for track, and intentionally threw a javelin at Eddie during a time trial. Chuckie really crossed the line on that one. The javelin cut Eddie's leg, and he went down hard, along with Mark and Johnson. Eddie then kicked the shit out of Chuckie. In all my life, Athena, I have never seen anyone punished that severely. But, Chuckie deserved it. Gerhard and I stood there, and watched. When it was all over, Chuckie looked like he got run over by a freight train. Chuckie had to be taken away in an ambulance. I saw exactly what went on between Eddie and Chuckie for four years. Chuckie relentlessly tried to break Eddie, but he was never able to do so. By trying to break Eddie, Chuckie ended up breaking himself." Silent for a moment, Athena tells George, "no matter where you go, someone is always trying to take down the winners. It seems they have no boundaries of what they'll do in order to achieve that goal. And yes, Addison Grimsby certainly comes to mind."

Thinking back to when he taught at the high school, Mr. Frazier tells Athena, "when I was coaching high school, Gerhard and the principal, Mr. Crum, were always at one another. Crum tried to break Gerhard every chance he got. But, to Gerhard, it was all fun and games." Athena laughs and asks, "really? What happened between Gerhard and the principal?" George laughs, and tells Athena, "I could write a book about what happened between Gerhard and Crum. Some of it was so funny that you couldn't even begin to make it up."

Citing one instance, George explains, “let me give you an example. During one meet, there was a question of whether a few of the athletes on our team were eligible to participate in the meet. Mr. Crum came down from the stands, and offered his two cents. After the meet, when Crum was walking across the red zone, Gerhard got onto the discus pad, and threw the discus over Crum’s head. That was Gerhard’s way of reminding Crum not to interfere with athletics. Now, get this, Athena! Thinking that the discus was thrown at him, Crum got very angry. Crum approached Gerhard, demanding to know who threw the discus at him. Gerhard simply told Crum that he shouldn’t have been in the red zone. Then, Crum started yelling like a madman, screaming, ‘it didn’t have to be thrown!’ Gerhard responded by calmly telling Crum, ‘sure it does. I was testing the discus to make sure it flies straight, just like I did before the meet.’ Crum got quite angry, and asked Gerhard, ‘and, if it hit me?’ Gerhard pretty much told him, ‘you were in the red zone. That would be your problem.’ Gerhard said that a lot, ‘that would be your problem, not mine.’ So, Gerhard bends. But, Crum broke every time.” Athena laughs, telling George, “that’s really funny, George. Testing a discus to make sure it flies straight.”

A discus is not tested to make sure it flies straight. A discus may be weighed to verify that its weight is correct. A discus may be measured to ensure it is a regulation discus. A discus may be examined for damage that may cause injury to the discus thrower. But, a discus is never tested to make sure it flies straight.

Quite amused, Athena tells George, “it must have been interesting being on the faculty of that high school.” Recalling his days at the high school, George laughs, and replies, “it really was. Some of us really had a good time there.” Athena, perceiving that George must be thinking of something amusing, tells him, “I have to hear this one.”

George asks Athena, “did Braden ever show you his special medal that was inscribed ‘Ass Kicker in Chief?’” Athena replies, “he did. I believe he’s shown that medal to just about everyone.” George explains, “every year, at Christmas time, Crum received some sort of prank Christmas present and, for the longest time, no one knew who was behind the gifts. Braden’s medal was modified by Pete Chubin, one of the other gym teachers. It was originally given to Mr. Crum as a Christmas present one year, pretty much telling Crum that he always gets his ass kicked. Each year, the presents got better and better.”

George continues, “but, the year before that, Crum received a modified track medal, where the upper body and legs have been removed from the runner, leaving only the runner’s buttocks. Mr. Crum walked around the Christmas party proudly wearing a medal with the depiction of an ass on it.” Athena laughs hysterically, telling George, “you can’t be serious! I

wish I could have been there to see that!” George, himself, laughs, and tells Athena, “all the teachers were laughing. None of them could keep a straight face. Some of us had to go out into the hallway to conceal our laughter. Once Crum realized what he was actually wearing, he blew a gasket.”

George then explains, “as I think back, Crum was really stupid. Once, Crum walked into the gym during class, and yelled out to Gerhard, ‘I need to see you right now!’ Gerhard yelled back at him, ‘it will have to wait. The water in the pool is on fire.’” Athena starts laughing, as George continues, “so, Crum rushes out into the hallway and pulls the fire alarm. He wasn’t even thinking. I honestly didn’t think anyone can be that stupid, Athena.” Athena repeats, “the water in the pool is on fire! Seriously, now! Who would ever believe that?” George replies, “well, Crum apparently did.” George shares a few more stories about his high school teaching days, mostly because Athena is quite amused by them.

Switching back to the current circumstances, George picks up the folder containing the team’s latest performance statistics, and mentions, “with performance like this, I can tell you exactly what is going to happen this year.” Quite curious, Athena asks, “what is that, George?” Referring to his team, George explains, “when these guys get on the track during the Winter divisional meet, they’re going to totally break the confidence of the other teams. Then, during the divisional meet in the Spring, the confidence of all the opponents will be completely shattered, and I wouldn’t be surprised if we walk away with nearly all the medals. And, when we win most of the medals, next year, the other teams are going to want us kicked out of the division.” Athena informs George, “technically, George, they can’t kick us out of the division. The eligibility for any college or university to participate in the division is based upon the student population, university’s location, and budget.” George smiles as if he knows something Athena does not, and replies, “but, that’s not going to keep them from trying. You’ll see.”

Athena catches George smiling, and asks, “George, what are you thinking?” George laughs, and replies, “next year, I wouldn’t put it past the other universities in the division to send spies over here to study our workouts. Right now, the coaches at the other universities are talking about us, just like we’re talking about them. They’re wondering what they can do to beat us when we come back in January. And, someone already sent those two McCutchen clowns over here to steal our performance records. What’s next? They’re certainly not going to just show up for their ass kicking, as Braden would put it, and walk away happy.”

Realizing that George has a point, Athena tells him, “we also have another problem.” George asks, “what’s that?” Athena replies, “I understand from Gerald Rosenberg that we have several students

interested in transferring to our University because of our track program.” George replies, “that doesn’t surprise me at all. The athletes want to be part of a winning team. No one wants to be on a team of losers. The energy is just not there.” George then hypothetically asks, “I wonder what it feels like to go into a meet knowing that you’re going to lose every event.” Athena replies, “I don’t know. I’ve never been in that position before.” George agrees, optimistically mentioning, “hopefully, we’ll never be in that position.”

George sits back and, after a moment of silence, tells Athena, “I’d be very careful about who we accept as a transfer student. I wouldn’t put it past some of the other schools to send a mole here to investigate our training, and report back to their coach what we do. Worse yet is if they send someone to disrupt our team.” Athena replies, “I see your point. Fortunately, at this time, adding any additional athletes to the team is not expected to make any appreciable difference in the outcome of any of the meets. That would make it difficult to justify offering any scholarship money to a potential transfer student. Scholarship money would be best spent on freshmen, who would be expected to be around for the full four years.” George agrees, telling Athena, “that’s a good point. And, no athlete will likely give up their scholarship to come here.”

Getting back to the original conversation, Athena asks George, “how about college? How did you train during your college years?” Thinking back to his college days, George replies, “it took me five years to get my four-year degree and my teaching certificate. For the four years that I ran track, Athena, I took a minimal class load, and went to school over the Summer. That gave me more time to train. I spent far more time training than I did on my course work.”

Explaining his training, George continues, “in the morning, I would wake up early, hit the weights, stretch, and head out to the track to join the team for practice. Then, I’d go to class. After class, I’d get back on the track and run the interval drill that our team runs for three or four days a week. I took vitamins, minerals, and every supplement I could find that claimed an increase in athletic performance. And, on Sunday, I would rest. I did everything I can, Athena. Then came the Olympic tryouts. All that work, and all I did was come in fourth place. I just wonder what the other guys did that I didn’t.”

Reminiscing, George continues, “I got my teaching certificate a few months after returning from the tryouts, and then I started looking for a job. No one hires teachers mid year. So, I picked up a job as a trainer for an NFL football team, which worked out for a few years. My job was improving the player’s sprinting abilities and to improve their agility. Speed and agility are perhaps the two most important attributes on the football field. Pay close attention to a game sometime. Most football

players are slow. A running back, receiver, or safety who is fast has a definite advantage, especially when the ball is headed toward the end zone.”

Explaining how he landed at Northside High School, George explains, “then, one day out of the blue, I got a call from Northside High School. I was told that a position came open for a physical education instructor. Something told me I should go down and talk with them. So, I did. They hired me. And, that’s where I’ve been until I came here.” Athena smiles, and tells George, “wow! And, all these years, I thought all you did was put one foot in front of the other faster than the other guy.” George laughs, knowing that, in a way, in the end, that’s what it’s really all about.

Athena asks, “would you, by any chance, know why Gerhard left the University? I understand from some of the administrators that he taught here for two years before I got here. But, our paths never crossed until I met you and Gerhard again at the track meet two years ago.” George sits back, and replies, “I’m glad you’re sitting down. You’re not going to believe this one. It’s going to sound very familiar.” Athena tells George, “from what I’ve seen and heard over the last two years, nothing would surprise me. What’s Gerhard’s story?”

George begins explaining, “as you probably already know, when Gerhard returned from the Olympics, he finished his Ph.D. He then took a job here as a professor in the Exercise Science Department. Somewhere during his tenure here at the University, his grandfather died, and left him everything. And, it’s my understanding that his grandfather left a lot behind. He probably would have stayed here at the University but, his cousin, Noreen Brooks, the superintendent of schools, offered him a job as the athletic director at the high school.” Athena is not surprised at anything George has mentioned so far.

George continues, “but, Noreen had a serious problem. At the high school, there were a huge number of athletes being sent to detention or getting suspended for trivial things. And, in some of the classes, the failure rate of athletes was much higher than normal. And, as it turns out, the same teachers were consistently failing the athletes. As a result, the school’s athletic program was failing miserably. I saw it all. Noreen heard the complaints from the parents, and had to do something about it.” Athena supposes, “and, that’s where Gerhard stepped in?” George replies, “exactly.”

George then explains, “now, get this, Athena. Gerhard didn’t really want the job, but Noreen really wanted this problem solved. She knew how witty Gerhard is and how he can detect bullshit a mile away. So, she made him a deal that he couldn’t refuse. Noreen paid Gerhard three times what the principal at Northside makes but, after all, he does have a

Ph.D. And, he held two positions, one as the athletic director of the school district, and the other as a gym teacher. And, Gerhard reports directly to the school board, not the principal.” Athena comments, “that’s quite the unusual arrangement. In any public school, all teachers usually report directly to the principal.” George replies, “I know. But, there was a serious problem in the high school, which is why the special arrangement was made.”

George then laughs, and tells Athena, “before Christmas break one year, I heard through the grapevine we were getting an athletic director. The reason was because our sports teams were, all of a sudden, doing very poorly. When we got back from break, we all went to a faculty meeting and, sure enough, Crum announced, ‘I have no idea why this school all of a sudden needs an athletic director, but please welcome Mr. Gerhard Zunde to our faculty.’ Crum even mispronounced his name. ‘Zunde’ is two syllables, and Crum pronounced it as if it had one. Gerhard stood up and waved to everyone, and all I heard was all the single women telling each other, ‘I wonder if he’s single.’” Athena laughs, telling George, “some things are the same everywhere!” George continues, “I’ll never forget when Gerhard walked in that day! The students weren’t back for classes yet. So, after the meeting, we had a long talk and caught up on a lot that day.”

Explaining the arrangement of Dr. Zunde’s position, George continues, “for some reason, Noreen couldn’t figure out why Mr. Crum, the principal, didn’t investigate why athletes were consistently given unfair treatment. In fact, the problem started in one particular year, and got worse the next year. All of our teams, which were quite good, started to occupy the basement. And, it wasn’t because of the athletes’ skill. It was because of detention, suspension, and failing grades. So, Gerhard was Noreen’s eyes and ears, and kept Crum, and some of the other teachers, in line.” Athena interjects, “Mr. Crum sounds a bit like Addison Grimsby.” George smiles, and replies, “exactly. I told you it was going to sound familiar.”

Finishing the story, George explains, “when Eddie was a senior, long story short, Mr. Crum tried to prevent him from graduating. Noreen found out about it, stepped in, and put a swift end to that. But, as a result of Mr. Crum’s tirades, the entire physical education staff at Northside now reports to Gerhard. I was there for the meeting when Noreen made the announcement. I was never so relieved in my life, Athena. And, the interim principal, Shapiro, hates the arrangement. From what I hear, Shapiro is now trying to get the physical education staff back under his control. That’s not very likely to happen.” Athena replies, “it sounds like Noreen has everything under control.” George smiles, confidently predicting, “for the time being. But, Shapiro is a snake in the grass. I just hope that, for Barbara’s sake, they hire someone from the outside as principal.”

Athena asks George, “do you miss the high school at all?” George replies, “at this time in my life, not really. Barbara is very happy there coaching the team. She’s an amazing person.” Not really knowing Barbara, Athena asks, “how so?” George explains, “Barbara helped out with the track team for a few years when she was in high school before she ran for the team. Barbara knows far more about athletics and the Human body than anyone would ever suspect. When I was coaching high school, I just put her in charge of the distance team as I worked with the sprinters and Gerhard worked with the field athletes.”

Athena asks, “so, Gerhard works with the field athletes?” George replies, “yes. During the track season, he primarily works with the field athletes. In the Fall, Gerhard works with the football team in the weight room. In the Winter, he works with the wrestlers and field athletes in the weight room. Quite often, in the weight room, Gerhard puts the wrestlers up against the field athletes in an unofficial competition, which makes them all work harder.” Athena comments, “I can definitely see that. At that age, you don’t dare to be shown up by your classmates.”

George laughs, and tells Athena, “so, get this. Gerhard told me that, one day in the weight room, Bobby B. called the heavyweight wrestler, a junior named Harry Stevens, weak. Bobby B. was a freshman at the time. Stevens challenged Bobby B. to a wrestling match. Gerhard asked Bobby B. if he was up for it, which he was. They rolled out the mat, and the wrestling coach was the referee. Athena, the match lasted all of fifteen seconds. Bobby B. pinned Stevens in no time. I wish I was there to see that.” Athena comments, “Bobby B. is probably the strongest guy I’ve ever come across. But, fifteen seconds? That’s definitely awesome!” George reveals, “by the time Bobby B. was a sophomore, he was the strongest guy in the high school.” Athena replies, “I can definitely see that.”

George continues, “but, Athena, it didn’t stop there. There was another freshman wrestler, Daniel Gaspari, who was also an excellent football player. After seeing Bobby B. pin Stevens so easily, from what I heard, Gaspari also made a comment to the effect that Stevens is weak and embarrassed the team. Stevens then challenged Gaspari to a match. And, you’ll never guess what happened.” Athena guesses, “Gaspari pinned Stevens?” George replies, “in fifteen seconds! You got to remember, though, Gaspari was a freshman, and Stevens was a junior.” George then laments, “I really wish I was in the weight room that day. I would have loved to see that.”

Dr. Bonamo knocks on the door, announcing, “I don’t mean to interrupt. Are you guys going?” After the long morning conversation, Athena replies, “wow! I didn’t realize it was getting so late. We’d better get going, or you guys are going to be last in line.” Quite puzzled at Athena’s response, Dr. Bonamo asks, “aren’t you going?” Athena replies,

"I'm going. I'll grab a quick bite to eat before I'm on." George asks, "wait a second. Am I missing something here?" Dr. Bonamo tells George, "whatever it is, George, I'm missing it too." Athena smiles, and tells George and Dr. Bonamo, "today, at our luncheon, I'm the entertainment. I'll be on stage."

Athena and George lock up the records in the filing cabinet, and head out to the faculty holiday luncheon with Dr. Bonamo. On the way out of the arena, George asks Athena, "so, what's this? You're the entertainment?" Athena replies, "that's correct. At lunch, today, I'm the entertainment. I'll be performing a few songs. Darryl, and his band, will be my accompaniment. And, if I make it through, I'll come and sit with you guys. Please save me a seat." George tells Athena, "wow! You're a singer! Someday, you'll have to tell me your story." Athena replies, "today, though, I won't be singing only Christmas songs. For my opening number, I'll be singing my story. My first number will be *Rock and Roll Lullaby*."

As the three track and field coaches walk together to the banquet hall, George is unusually quiet. Knowing the words quite well to *Rock and Roll Lullaby*, George now wonders deeply about Athena's story.