

Eddie, The Collegiate Junior

Chapter Six Spring Semester

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On the first day of practice, Mr. Frazier addresses the team longer than usual, primarily due to an expected event that was bound to occur sooner or later. After welcoming the team back from Spring break, beginning his introductory Spring address, Mr. Frazier asks the team, “by a show of hands, how many of you have been approached by another college or university to transfer to that school and run for them?” At first, two athletes raise their hands. Perceiving that it is okay to be completely honest, a few more athletes raise their hands, bringing the grand total to about a half dozen runners and field athletes. Included among those who have been approached by other teams is Eddie, who has been persistently pestered by a particular recruiter since he has been in high school. Mr. Frazier smiles, and announces, “that’s what I thought.”

Mr. Frazier raises his voice, exclaiming, “do you know why they are after you? It’s because you are the winners, and they are the losers! Now, listen to me carefully. You are the winners! Their teams can’t win without you! If they could, they would be doing it! But, they’re not. You got to where you are now because of all the work you put in!” Mr. Frazier then laughs, and adds, “the other teams got where they are because of the lack of work they put in.”

Mr. Frazier, now having everyone’s attention, continues, “while you were dragging the training sled up and down the sand track, they were jogging around their track. When you were running the interval drill, they were practicing a few sprints. And, when you were running relay drills for hours, they were practicing a few handoffs. During the meets, watch the other teams when they run a relay race. Their handoffs can use a lot of work. Their coaching can use a lot of work too, but that’s a different story.”

Using an example, Mr. Frazier tells the group, “many of you may remember Todd McCutchen.” Mark yells out, “you mean McCrutchchen.” Mr. Frazier laughs along with the team, then continues, “yeah. McCrutchchen. He was not competitive enough to be on this team. He always came in last place. Fortunately, he transferred to another University.” Mark yells out, “yeah. Dogpatch University.” Mark never misses an opportunity to mess with McCutchen, even when McCutchen is not present. Mr. Frazier laughs again, and explains, “at the divisional meet, and again when we ran against his university over the Winter, he still came in last place! McCrutchchen didn’t put in hard work! So, he loses!”

Mr. Frazier, giving the team some interesting news, announces, “last year, we had over one-hundred athletes applying to this University who were interested in running track at this institution of higher athletic performance. We chose nineteen of you, who are our freshmen this year. Some of you freshmen and sophomores may take the other schools up on their offers. If you do, be assured that you’ll be joining a losing team. Many of the athletes who were not accepted to our program at this University are running for other colleges and universities. Many of them were highly qualified! Many of them were just as qualified as you are! Why aren’t they winning?”

Giving the team his answer, Mr. Frazier explains, “they are not winning because, in their locker rooms, there is an atmosphere of defeat! They are not winning because, when they’re at practice, they see their performance, and compare it with yours! They’re not winning because their coaches have no clue how to improve their team’s performance! They are not winning because, when they get on the track, they see you guys! When they see you guys in the University’s uniform, they already feel defeated! When they see Bobby B. on the shot-put pad, they punt! When they hear Braden exclaiming that he’s going to kick their ass, they throw in the towel! They’ve lost the race before it ever began!” The team cheers, understanding that Mr. Frazier clearly knows what is going on with the other teams in the division.

Mr. Frazier then raises his voice, telling the team, “I stand here now, telling you that we can win all the gold medals in the upcoming divisional meet later this Spring! What do you think the other coaches are doing? The other coaches are looking through all their statistics, trying to find out what our weakest event is. Then, they’ll take their best guy, and put them up in that event. And, they’ll lose anyway! How can that motivate anyone? It can’t!”

Mr. Frazier tells the team, “now that von Däniken has graduated, our weakest event this Spring is the hammer.” Referring to Bobby B., Braden, and Mark, who all tried out humans as hammers at one time, Mr. Frazier jokes, “I hear some of you are quite good at throwing the hammer. The

one we use in the field events weighs quite a lot less than a person.” The athletes laugh, particularly those who remember the events surrounding the circumstances with Mr. Scott McCutchen, Sr. Mr. Frazier then announces, “if anyone wants to give the hammer a try, please see Dr. Bonamo after this meeting.”

During Mr. Frazier’s address, Eddie whispers to Mark and Braden, who are sitting alongside him, “McCutchchen, Junior, and that Dulaney guy are back. They’re all the way on the other side of the bleachers.” Taking a look, Mark asks, “what are they doing here?” Braden suggests, “they came back to get their asses kicked.” Mark laughs, and comments, “maybe they’re trying out for the hammer.” Braden replies, “yeah. Both of their asses will make some pretty good hammers.”

McCutchen and Dulaney, as anyone else, must be afforded the opportunity to try out for the Spring team as a walk on. It’s no secret that McCutchen and Dulaney will be cut at Mr. Frazier’s first opportunity. Officer Hayes was correct in the sense that they, whoever “they” are, they will stop at nothing to get a McCutchen on a track team.

Announcing today’s agenda, Mr. Frazier explains, “the first meet is in about a week. We are going to head outside, and begin running time trials. I need your best performance today so Coach Leighton, Mrs. Owens, Kathy, Paula, and myself can assign the events. And, you will be electronically timed!” Mr. Frazier then gives a warning of sorts, announcing, “and, your past performance does not matter! The only thing that matters is what you can deliver today! So, I don’t want anyone slacking off!” Mr. Frazier then instructs the team, “let’s hit the track and get to work!” The team heads out to the track, where the athletes will discover how their performance measures up.

On the way out to the track, Mark jogs up to Dr. Bonamo, telling him, “I want to try out for the hammer.” Dr. Bonamo asks, “have you ever thrown the hammer before?” Mark replies, “yeah, in high school a few times. And, I tried McCutchchen’s father out as a hammer once.” Dr. Bonamo laughs, and replies, “I remember hearing about that when it happened. I’m sorry I missed it.” Mark asks, “so, can I try out?” Quite happy to hear that Mark has some experience, Dr. Bonamo tells Mark, “sure. I’d like to see what you can do. But, the 100-meter time trials are up first. Get that under your belt, then head on over to the field area.” Mark replies, “you got it!”

On the track, the 100-meter time trials are up first. Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Hoffer, and John are in the first heat. Now warmed up and behind the blocks, the star sprinters are ready to go. The Starter announces, “on your marks.” With the runners on high alert, the Starter announces, “set.” The gun is fired, and the runners are out of the blocks.

Halfway through the race, Eddie and Mark have a clear lead, but the other sprinters are not far behind. At the finish, Eddie crosses first, with Mark right behind him. Braden finishes third, followed by Johnson, Hoffer, and John.

With the results posted on the scoreboard as soon as the race is over, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “did everyone see that? These guys were clocking! Eddie is ready! Did everyone see that?” The scoreboard reveals Eddie ran 100 meters in 9.98 seconds, which is three-hundredths of a second off the world record. Eddie looks up at the scoreboard, and smiles. All the work he has put in has paid off, and paid off big time.

With Eddie having an awesome run, Kathy runs up to him, giving him a high-five, a kiss, and a hug. Kathy tells Eddie, “that was awesome! 9.98 seconds!” Eddie replies, “I guess all that work paid off. Mark did really well too.” Kathy tells Eddie, “just look at Mr. Frazier. He’s still telling everyone, ‘these guys are clocking.’” Eddie tells Kathy, “that was the plan. Maybe he’ll keep saying that for two hours, and I can sit back and take the rest of the morning off.” Kathy laughs, replying, “that ain’t happening.”

As Mrs. Owens records the times, Braden observes Jeff McCutchen writing something on a small notepad. Braden, wondering why Jeff McCutchen is taking notes, decides to keep a close eye on him, albeit at a safe distance. With the second heat out of the blocks, Braden observes that McCutchen is watching the race very closely. Again, as the times are posted on the scoreboard for the second heat, Braden sees McCutchen taking notes. And, as McCutchen’s heat is called, Braden watches carefully as McCutchen takes off his warm-up jacket and, tucking his pad and pen inside, lays it on the ground.

Once the 100-meter time trials are over, the next event up is the 400-meter dash. As before, Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Hoffer, and John are in the first heat. Mark jogs over from the field area, where he delivered a stupendous performance in the hammer. As Braden is warming up, he observes McCutchen standing near the finish line, catching a glimpse of his pad in the pocket of his warm-up jacket.

The call is made to get behind the blocks. Braden rants, “here it comes! The ass kicking season is underway!” Eddie exclaims, “that’s right! The chief ass kicker is going down!” Hammering on his chest, Braden counters, “I’m the master of the track and ready to attack!” Imitating Braden, Eddie boasts, “I’m the master of the clock, and faster out the blocks.” As the Starter announces, “on your marks,” Eddie tells Braden, “not today, bro!” The energy between Eddie and Braden can only make them both run a better race. The Starter announces, “set.” The gun is fired and, in about 45 seconds, the title of the chief ass kicker will be claimed.

As the guys set out to set the standard in the 400-meter dash, Kathy tells Paula and Provost Leighton, “everyone looked really strong in the 100-meter. And, it looks like the 400-meter is off to a good start.” Paula comments, “except for those McCrutchen and Dulaney guys in the 100. Why are they back, anyway?” Provost Leighton replies, “the University rules allow anyone to walk on and try out. They’ll be cut but, until then, we’ll just let them embarrass themselves.” Halfway through the race, Kathy exclaims, “wow! Eddie, Mark, and Braden are nearly tied.”

As they come out of the final curve, everyone watches intently as the runners rapidly approach. In the sprint to the finish, Braden has a slight lead, being pushed hard by Eddie and Mark. At the line, Braden finishes just ahead of Eddie. Mark, finishing two steps behind Eddie, had a great run. Johnson finishes behind Mark, with Hoffer and John tying in this heat.

Braden returns to the starting line, receiving high-fives from everyone around. Looking up at the scoreboard, Braden sees his time of 44.10 seconds, clearly a qualifying time for the Olympics. Braden exclaims, “I’m the chief ass kicker of the whole wide world! Ain’t nobody beating me now!” Braden, on top of the world right now, knows exactly what his time of 44.10 seconds means.

While Braden is announcing his accomplishment, Mr. Frazier is exclaiming, “that’s three guys who are ready for the Olympics! These guys are clocking!” The times posted represent a great performance for everyone in the heat.

Braden briefly glances over at McCutchen, noticing he is attempting to conceal his pad and pen as he records the times appearing on the scoreboard. While the second heat is underway, Braden walks over to Provost Leighton, telling her, “I think we have a problem.” Provost Leighton asks, “really? What problem do we have?” Braden explains, “McCrutchen has a pocket pad and a pen. He’s writing down all of our times. Don’t let him see you, but watch him at the end of this heat when the times get posted on the scoreboard.” Recalling that McCutchen was caught breaking and entering into the coach’s records room early in the school year, Provost Leighton replies, “that would definitely be a big problem.”

As the second heat finishes and the times are announced, Provost Leighton occasionally glances over toward McCutchen. As Mrs. Owens records the times, McCutchen inconspicuously also records the athletes’ times. Provost Leighton whispers to Braden, “I see exactly what you mean. I’m going to cut him, and Dulaney, anyway.” Braden explains, “when McCrutchen runs his heat, he’s gonna take his warm-up jacket off, hide his pad and pen in it, and put it on the ground, just like he did

during the 100-meter.” Provost Leighton concludes, “I think it’s clear that he’s not here to try out for the team. He’s obviously here to spy on the team.” Braden replies, “that’s what I was thinking.” Provost Leighton tells Braden, “let me think about this one.” Braden and Provost Leighton get back to watching the heats, wondering what McCutchen’s reason is for recording the team’s statistics.

With the last heat of the 400-meter dash now underway, Provost Leighton walks over to Braden, and asks him, “is that McCutchen’s jacket laying over there on the ground?” Braden replies, “yeah. His notepad is hidden underneath.” Provost Leighton instructs Braden, “please do me a favor, and pick that jacket off the field area and place it on the bench. It really shouldn’t be laying that close to the red zone. And, if a notepad should happen to fall out of the jacket, please bring it to me.” In a military tone, Braden replies, “yes, ma’am!”

Braden retrieves McCutchen’s jacket, which is close enough to the red zone to cause a potential problem, and places it on the bench. Walking over to Provost Leighton, Braden informs her, “I put his jacket on the bench so it won’t get lost. And, I found this notepad on the ground near the jacket. Somebody must have lost it.” Braden hands Provost Leighton the notepad containing the statistics of today’s practice session. Provost Leighton tells Braden, “thank you. I’ll hold on to this for now.”

Finding out from Provost Leighton that McCutchen was keeping a record of the team’s performance, Mr. Frazier calls practice slightly earlier than usual today, telling the team to meet on the bleachers before they hit the locker room. McCutchen searches for his jacket, eventually finding it on the bench. More importantly, McCutchen frantically searches the area where he left his jacket, finding that his notepad is nowhere to be found. Seeing McCutchen lagging behind searching the field, Kathy yells out, “McCutchen! Head inside! Now!” McCutchen heads inside, deciding that he will search for his lost notepad later.

With the team assembled on the bleachers, Mr. Frazier announces, “from what I see so far, we can expect to have another undefeated season! And, again, we stand to win all the gold medals in the divisional meet later in the season!” Mr. Frazier makes a few more announcements, including tomorrow’s agenda. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Frazier announces, “Harry Dulaney, please see me before you hit the locker room. Jeff McCutchen, please see Provost Leighton before you hit the locker room.” It’s no secret to Braden why McCutchen and Dulaney are being singled out.

Mr. Frazier, who spent less than one minute to cut Dulaney, joins Provost Leighton for a closed-door meeting with Jeff McCutchen in a private room off the arena. Provost Leighton opens the meeting by

holding up the notepad Braden retrieved, asking McCutchen, “did you, by any chance, lose this?” McCutchen replies, “oh, good. Someone turned it in.” Confirming McCutchen’s answer, Provost Leighton asks, “so, this notepad is yours?” McCutchen replies, “yeah. Can I have it back?” Provost Leighton replies, “no.” McCutchen asks the proverbial question, “why not?” Provost Leighton explains, “returning your notepad to you would be a problem. Information regarding any athlete’s performance during a private and closed training session falls under the category of private and confidential information. And, I might add, the information you were attempting to steal with your brother clearly falls under that category as well. So, plain and simple, you will not be getting your notepad back.”

Provost Leighton asks McCutchen, “will you please explain to Mr. Frazier and I why you were recording the results of the time trials today?” McCutchen replies, “yeah. I wanted to see where I stand.” Not belaboring the point, Provost Leighton informs McCutchen, “if you want to know where you stand, I can tell you that. As of now, you’re cut from the team.” McCutchen exclaims, “what do you mean, I’m cut?” Provost Leighton calmly replies, “exactly that. You’re cut.”

Believing that he has a valid argument, McCutchen exclaims, “tryouts aren’t done yet! I run distance! The distance races haven’t been run!” Now with a better understanding of the logistics of distance races, Provost Leighton calmly explains, “your 400-meter time precludes you from a competitive performance in any distance race. To be competitive in any race above 800 meters, you will need to deliver a sub-60 second 400-meter performance, preferably in the 50-second range. A 65-second 400-meter is hardly a competitive time.”

Bothered by the fact that he has been cut, McCutchen becomes quite angry. Addressing her previously unanswered question, Provost Leighton again asks McCutchen, “will you please explain to Mr. Frazier and I why you were recording the results of the time trials today? And, please don’t entertain me with answers such as, ‘I wanted to see where I stand.’ I am not that stupid.” Standing his ground, McCutchen answers, “how am I supposed to perform well if I don’t know what I’m up against?” Provost Leighton replies to McCutchen’s evasive answer by telling him, “you could start by training a lot more. Your only competition during time trials is the clock. And, I might add, you are not being compared with the other athletes.” McCutchen exclaims, “this isn’t fair!”

Realizing she is getting nowhere, Provost Leighton informs McCutchen, “when you got caught breaking into the arena during the Autumn semester, you were placed on disciplinary probation. At that time, you were made aware that any future disciplinary infractions within one year could lead to your expulsion. As of right now, I am informing you that your presence in the outside stadium or the indoor arena

between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. will be construed as a disciplinary violation, and will lead to your immediate expulsion. Am I clear?" Reluctantly, McCutchen replies, "yeah," and hangs his head down. Provost Leighton informs McCutchen, "you are dismissed. Please clean out your locker, and please be careful." McCutchen leaves, clearly angry and upset.

Once McCutchen is gone, Mr. Frazier poses the question to Provost Leighton, "I wonder who he's working for." Provost Leighton replies, "most likely, it's the same people he was working for when he, and that brother of his, broke into the arena." Mr. Frazier suggests, "last time, they were caught with Brad Evans' phone number, and a list of what to take. But, Brad Evans is a high school coach. I fail to see any clear link here between stealing the University's records and the Centerville track team. There must be a common denominator. The only thing I can think of is that this has something to do with gambling again." Athena replies, "I think you're right, George. I can't think of any other explanation."

Recalling how Officer Hayes got Dean Grimsby to talk, Provost Leighton suggests, "maybe Officer Hayes can bring in Mack, Bad Dog, and Mad Dog, and get him to talk." Mr. Frazier laughs, saying, "I wouldn't want to miss that!" Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton decide to keep McCutchen under a close watch, making sure he doesn't steal any team secrets.

The University is not the only place where there is trouble on the track. Barbara, now coaching the high school team, suspects that, although Louis Zaino recalibrated the track at Centerville, the survey markers on the track may have been moved. This news comes as a result of a discussion between Barbara and another coach who, during a meet at Northside High, mentioned to Barbara that his team ran horrible times in the 200-meter dash at Centerville this year. Zaino, at Barbara's request, heads over to the Centerville track with a surveyor to recheck the calibration. Zaino, finding the markers were clearly moved, calls Mark to find a solution.

Meeting at the Centerville track, after catching up for a while, Zaino explains to Mark, "after I recalibrated this track, someone came behind me and changed it. They've moved all the markers. The inside lane is 400 meters, and each lane out from there is two meters longer." Mark replies, "that would really suck if you're running in lane six." Zaino agrees, saying, "yeah. If you're running the 400 meter in lane six, you're running 410 meters." Mark exclaims, "wow! That's over a second at high school times!"

Zaino tells Mark, "I've restored the track to the survey, but I need to make the markers immovable." Zaino shows Mark one of the markers,

which is a crowned surveying marker connected to a sixteen-inch metal anchoring rod. Evaluating the situation, Mark suggests, “we can just install the markers into the curb.” Zaino asks, “what’s to stop them from pulling it out again?” Mark explains, “I’ll cut the rod to six inches, and bend it at the end. Then, I’ll drill a two-inch hole in the curb, and set the marker in concrete. Trust me. It will never come out. Oh, and I’ll put yellow stain in the new concrete so it can be easily seen.” Zaino, wondering how he was going to solve this problem, tells Mark, “I really like that idea.” Mark and Zaino now have a plan.

Mark and Zaino set a date to meet at the Centerville track when the work can be done. Knowing that the work can be done in one day, Mark and Zaino choose a date when school is not in session, minimizing the chance that Brad Evans, or anyone else, will object or interfere. For this project, Zaino decided to get his hands dirty, and help Mark with the physical work. And, Barbara will put the word out that the Centerville track has been restored to proper calibration and how the new markers should appear. Any tampering of the markers in the future will be quite evident.

Over at the service station, Angelo makes his preparations to move back to Greece. Angelo and Eddie hire John Davies to draw up a contract for the sale of the property. A separate contract is drawn up for the sale of the tools and equipment. Not wanting to be bothered with the details of accounting, Eddie speaks with Ralph, who Eddie plans to hire as his accountant once the deal is finalized.

Noticing that the half-acre lot behind the service station is for sale, Eddie also has John Davies draw up a contract to purchase the property and the dilapidated house that sits on the lot. Eddie recalls that, eight years ago when he first traveled to the future, the mechanic explained that Mark built a wall around the back of the station and a brick storage building. Eddie vividly recalls the details of the landscaping, and the numerous artistic metal sculptures mounted along the brick wall. And, since Eddie is having Mark build a wall around his home, Eddie figures why not build one around the rear of the service station for security purposes.

With the divisional meet right around the corner, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton invite Officer Hayes to the university for a brief meeting where they will discuss a few recent developments. Invited to the meeting is Officer Braden, who was instrumental in the past investigation into the organized gambling ring. Eddie, Kathy, Mark, and Paula are also invited, mainly because they seem to be a goldmine of information.

Out in the hallway, before the meeting begins, Officer Hayes tells Eddie, “I have some information about this Giuseppe Vio Otto character

who broke into your house.” Eddie asks, “oh yeah? What’s that?” Officer Hayes explains, “this Vio Otto character worked for the town over in the planning department. We think he might be responsible for a few other break ins in the area. And, get this. That clown actually had the nerve to drive the town’s van to the break in.” Eddie asks, “wow! Is he still alive?” Officer Hayes replies, “marginally. He’ll be in sick bay for a while. You really did a job on him. They say he’ll never walk again. And, they still don’t have him back together. But, anyway, we think this Vio Otto character is working for someone else.” Eddie asks, “how do you know that?” Officer Hayes explains, “he’s not talking, and he’s scared. If he so much as chirps, whoever he’s working for will finish the job you did on him. Then, he’ll be feeding the fish on the bottom of a river somewhere.” Eddie quickly realizes that Vio Otto is involved with an organized crime ring. With the meeting about to start, Eddie and Officer Hayes walk into the room.

Since no introductions are needed, Provost Leighton opens the meeting, eloquently stating, “I would like to thank you all for taking the time out of your busy schedules to attend this meeting. Certain events have transpired over this past academic year, none of which, in themselves, are potentially alarming. However, when consideration is given to the sum of each of the instances, it certainly raises a red flag. While, on the surface, there appears to be no relationship between each of the instances, they may, in fact, be connected. I will leave it up to the experts to connect the dots.”

Officer Hayes, ready to take notes, clearly notices the professional demeanor of Provost Leighton when in a business setting, which is quite the contrast with when she is on the track. Provost Leighton begins, “as everyone knows by now, before the indoor season began, Todd McCutchen and Jeff McCutchen were caught breaking into the coach’s record room in an attempt to steal the team’s performance records. In addition, they attempted to steal our divisional performance records, which we meticulously compiled since Mr. Frazier has been with our University. At the time of the break in, they also attempted to steal about three dozen stopwatches.” Thumbing through his notebook, Officer Hayes mentions, “I remember that. I was out here shortly after the bust.”

Provost Leighton then continues, “while no crime was actually committed, Axel Braden caught Jeff McCutchen recording the results of the time trials in a notepad he brought to practice.” Handing the notepad to Officer Hayes, Provost Leighton continues, “I have thought about this, and the only conclusion that I can arrive at is that Jeff was collecting this information for some other party.” Officer Hayes agrees, telling Provost Leighton, “that would make a lot of sense.”

Provost Leighton then tells Mark, “Mark, will you please tell Officer Hayes what was found at the Centerville track.” Mark explains, “Louis Zaino recalibrated the Centerville track to the metric standard a while ago. Barbara was talking to one of the other coaches, who told her that they ran really bad times on that track. Barbara asked Zaino to go over to the Centerville track to make sure they haven’t messed with it. Zaino found that the inside lane was 400 meters. Lane two was recalibrated to be 402 meters. Lane three was 404 meters, and so on. So, lane six was 410 meters.”

Clearly understanding the problem, Officer Hayes asks, “how long has this track been rigged?” Mark explains, “it was rigged all along. Zaino recalibrated it to the metric standard a while ago. Someone came in behind him and moved the survey markers. And, when the track was supposed to be 440 yards, the inside lane was actually 400 meters, which is about two-and-one-half yards short of a 440. And, Zaino found that each lane was successively two meters longer as you go out.” Officer Hayes shakes his head, and replies, “someone over there knows exactly what they’re doing.”

Mark continues, “so, I set the markers into the concrete curb.” Proud of his work, Mark explains, “I drilled a two-inch hole into the curb. I bent the end of each rod to 90 degrees, and set the markers in fresh concrete. And, I put yellow stain in the concrete, so it will be stained forever. Those markers are never coming out. And, even if they managed to remove them somehow, the concrete is still stained.” Officer Hayes laughs, and replies, “I bet that really ticked someone off.”

Knowing exactly who would be ticked off, Mark replies to Officer Hayes, confidently predicting, “yeah. Brad Evans. He’s probably behind all this.” Richard asks Braden, “this Brad Evans character. Isn’t he the guy whose phone number was on one of the McCutchen brothers when you busted him?” Braden replies, “yeah. That’s the guy.” Mark adds, “after the divisional meet, I saw Todd McCrutchen, Brad Evans, and Mayor Jamieson talking at the Dogpatch University bench with their coach.” Thumbing through his notebook, Officer Hayes asks, “why does that sound familiar?” Eddie replies, “I told you about that a while back.” Finding the page in his notebook on the mayor, Officer Hayes replies, “that’s right. Here it is.”

Officer Hayes asks, “is there anything else?” Mr. Frazier comments, “over at the high school, Mr. O’Brien is back to failing athletes again. Karen Corey, one of the team assistants, mentioned that O’Brien failed two track athletes and a basketball player last Fall. That would keep them from competing during the next quarter. Barbara thinks it’s because she cut O’Brien’s other son from the track team. But, it may go deeper than that.” Officer Hayes asks, “what’s this O’Brien character’s kid’s name?”

Mr. Frazier replies, “Matt O’Brien. I hear he’s no better than Jimmy O’Brien.” Paula comments, “it must run in the family.” Officer Hayes looks through his notebook, and mentions, “why does this sound familiar? Here it is. Eddie told me about this Mr. O’Brien character failing athletes a little while ago.”

Officer Hayes asks, “is there anything else?” Provost Leighton replies, “I believe that’s about it. As I mentioned, none of these items are alarming in themselves but, when put together, it certainly raises a red flag.” Officer Hayes tells the group, “this one isn’t hard to put together. For once, I have it all figured out. I know what’s happening but, as of yet, I don’t have any direct evidence.” Mark asks, “what’s going on?” Officer Hayes explains, “this Brad Evans character and this McCutchen family are clearly involved in some illegal activity with Mayor Jamieson. My first guess would be they’re back to gambling. And, the heat has been turned up because this Scott McCutchen, Senior has a for-sale sign in front of his house.”

As Officer Hayes is getting ready to leave, Kathy asks him, “how do you like your new house?” Officer Hayes smiles, and replies, “I got so much space, I don’t know what to do with it. The kids took over the den. And, they like the bigger back yard.” Kathy replies, “which one?” Officer Hayes asks, “what do you mean?” Kathy replies, “the back yard, or the schoolyard?” Officer Hayes laughs, and replies, “oh, you mean the Frisbee field. They’ve already discovered that. Oh, and get this. I convinced the school board to put a gate on the fence in our back yard. My reasoning was that, if an officer was needed at the school, and I was home, I could walk right over. Now, the kids can go right through the gate, and into the schoolyard.” Kathy replies, “wow! That’s awesome.”

Officer Hayes heads out, knowing the answer, but not knowing the question. Braden heads out, and will keep Jeff McCutchen under close surveillance. Eddie, joined by Mark, heads to the service station, where they will start talking about the plans for the property behind the service station. And, Mr. Frazier heads back to his office, knowing that he has made some serious waves in the division’s track and field sport.

A week later, on Monday, the team is assembled on the bleachers, awaiting the coaching staff to arrive before they head out to practice. During the wait, Eddie mentions to a few tribe members, “did anyone ever notice that the State of New York looks like an automatic transmission?” Mark asks, “really, bro?” Eddie replies, “yeah. The right side looks like a torque converter, and the left side looks like the gearbox.” Bobby B. tells Eddie, “only a mechanic would notice something like that.” Mark agrees, stating, “yeah. Only a mechanic would notice that.”

Eddie tells Mark, “mechanics notice a lot of things.” Messing with Eddie, Bobby B. asks, “oh, yeah? Just what have you noticed?” Eddie tells Bobby B, “I’ve discovered the weakest part in every automobile ever made.” Boastfully, Bobby B. asks, “oh, yeah? Really, bro? What part is that?” Eddie replies, “in every case, the weakest part of the automobile is the nut holding the steering wheel.” Braden, Mark, and a few others laugh, but Bobby B. quite seriously asks, “how do you know that’s the weakest part?” Mark comments, “that one flew over his head at ten-thousand feet.” Bobby B. thinks about Eddie’s answer for a moment, and admits, “okay! You got me with that one!”

Mr. Frazier walks in with Dr. Bonamo and Provost Leighton. Placing a few papers on the small lectern, Mr. Frazier is unusually quiet for more than just a moment. Mr. Frazier announces, “we have several athletes who have qualified for the Olympic tryouts. They are Edward Bogenskaya in the 100-meter dash. Mark Svoboda in the 200-meter dash. Axel Braden in the 400-meter dash. Edward Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Axel Braden, and Eric Johnson in the men’s 4 by 400-meter relay. Katarina Karakova Bogenskaya, Paula Giovani Svoboda, Erika Gabriel, and Karen Corey in the women’s four by 400-meter relay. Gary Mitchell in the fifteen-hundred meters. Adekunle Akinmola in the fifteen-hundred meters. Darryl Stone in the fifteen-hundred meters. And, Robert Bradshaw in the shot-put. I have been looking forward to making this announcement for a long time! Everyone I have mentioned has the drive and ability to take home an Olympic gold medal!”

Quite unexpectedly, Mr. Frazier picks up the lectern, hurling it against the concrete wall, breaking the lectern to pieces. Mark whispers to Eddie, “oh, shit.” Mr. Frazier momentarily turns around with his back to the athletes. Braden whispers to Johnson, “I ain’t never seen him this mad before. I wonder what happened.” It’s anyone’s guess what made Mr. Frazier so furious. But, the team is about to find out.

Mr. Frazier exclaims, “and, none of them will be competing! They will be sitting home watching the Olympics on television along with the rest of us! On Friday, the President of our country has declared that this nation will be boycotting the Summer Olympics!” Mr. Frazier pauses as the team groans, then exclaims, “the reason for this boycott is to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And, according to the President’s own national security advisor, the CIA’s intervention in Afghanistan preceded the Soviet invasion! The decision of this President’s administration to intervene and destabilize Afghanistan is the reason the Soviets are intervening in the first place! Now, let me ask this. What part of not going to the Olympics will change the Soviet’s mind? Nothing! They don’t want us at the Olympics! They’ll only win more gold medals in our absence!”

Mr. Frazier pauses again, and exclaims, “this President is using every athlete who has trained for years, and has been looking forward to the Olympics, as a pawn to make his statement! This is because this President does not exhibit the one and only one characteristic that will determine whether you succeed at anything you do!” The team exclaims in unison, “no fear!” Glad that his team understands, Mr. Frazier exclaims, himself, “exactly! No fear!”

Mr. Frazier continues, “to use private citizens who have trained a lifetime for this event as an instrument to fulfil his political agenda is an outright disgrace! I’ll also mention that this coward of a President lacks any tactful and meaningful negotiating skills! And, that is the exact reason this President issued his decree to boycott the Olympics! The Olympics are none of his business!” Many team members clap and cheer, clearly telling their coach they are behind him 100 percent.

Mr. Frazier then poses the question, “if this President claims to lead the world by example, where is his Olive branch?” Braden, who shares the coach’s anger, exclaims, “somebody ought to shove it up his scrawny ass!” Although the President delivered all potential Olympiads a severe blow by his decree, the team applauds Mr. Frazier’s interpretation of the President’s action.

Not everyone was clapping and cheering. Hearing the news, Eddie holds his head in his hands, looking down. Mark sits on the bleachers with his legs crossed, staring out into space. Braden and Johnson look as if they’re about ready to take someone apart. Darryl Stone, who has been working out with the team, gets up and walks toward the locker room. Kathy and Paula, standing alongside Provost Leighton, trying to maintain their composure, give each other a hug. Erika gives Bobby B. a hug. Karen shows her tears. The potential Olympiads are clearly upset and distressed by Mr. Frazier’s announcement. And, who wouldn’t be? Years of work have gone to waste because one man wants to prove a point.

Mr. Frazier then announces, “our divisional meet is coming up shortly. At the divisional meet, I want this team to take all the gold medals. In addition, I want all of you, especially those I’ve mentioned, to deliver a performance that is far superior to those who will win the gold medal at the Olympics this Summer! In doing so, you will nullify their gold medal! You will embarrass this coward they call the President in front of the entire world!”

Mr. Frazier then announces, “we’re now going to go outside and practice. Hold on. Wait a minute. I’ve changed my mind! When this divisional meet comes, I want this team to take all the medals, not just the gold ones! I want you to kick the asses of the other teams so hard that we make the national news! And, if this President has made you

angry, channel that energy into your legs! Now, let's hit the track and get to work!" The team heads out to the track, where the talk on the way will be about Mr. Frazier's announcement.

During the practice session, Mr. Frazier has various athletes try different events. This is in order to identify any otherwise undiscovered talent that will fulfil Mr. Frazier's goal of the team taking all the medals in the upcoming divisional meet. Among those trying different events are Braden in the hammer, Karen in the distance races, Mark in the discus, and Johnson in the high jump. Johnson could easily win an award for being the team's all-around athlete, and is proficient at any track and field event.

During the time trials, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "I'm really sorry about the lectern. You can deduct the cost of a new one out of my paycheck." Provost Leighton replies, "George, don't worry about the lectern. It was a rickety piece of junk anyway. Whatever the cost of the lectern, it was well worth it for the team to see your energy. From what I'm seeing, they look like they stand a good chance of taking all the medals. And, don't worry. I'll get you a new lectern." Mr. Frazier replies, "thank you. By the way, I really liked that old rickety thing. Maybe I'll take it home and fix it. Yeah, I'm going to do that." Provost Leighton asks, "why?" Mr. Frazier replies, "because it reminds me of some of the guys on this team. You pick up the pieces, put them back together again, and move on."

Mr. Frazier confesses, "I really feel so bad for these guys. I know how much work they've put in over the years. All the medals and trophies they've won over the last decade can't compare with one Olympic medal, even a bronze medal. And now, they've all been denied the chance to try. I've been there, Athena. It's worse to be denied the chance to compete than competing and losing. But, to be denied the chance to compete by someone's stroke of the pen is a very severe blow." Provost Leighton replies, "I couldn't agree more, George. And, this is a double blow to Eddie. Dean Grimsby essentially denied Eddie the opportunity to compete two years ago." Informing Provost Leighton of something she is potentially unaware of, Mr. Frazier explains, "we might as well call it a triple blow. When Eddie was in high school, the principal, Mr. Crum, prevented Eddie from competing for part of his senior year." Provost Leighton replies, "that's right! Kathy once told me about that, and how the principal tried his hardest to keep certain athletes on the track team from competing."

After an energetic morning workout, practice comes to a close, and the athletes head to the locker room. Mr. Frazier asks the other coaches to stay for a few minutes when they meet privately to discuss the results of the event cross competition. Mrs. Owens, a graduate student and

events coordinator for the track team, will be receiving her Ph.D. in mathematics this semester. During the meeting, Mrs. Owens, along with Kathy, are charged with the task of evaluating the team's statistics, comparing them with the opposing teams, and developing a winning strategy in each event. At the same time, Mrs. Owens and Kathy must be careful to not over or under utilize any particular athlete during the meet.

Following the meeting, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton continue their earlier conversation. Changing the subject to politics, Provost Leighton mentions, "you know, George, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure this President never gets reelected." Mr. Frazier agrees, telling Provost Leighton, "I'm definitely with you on that one, Athena. And, I don't think it will be hard to convince the team. Some of them will be graduating soon. They'll quickly find out how much house they can buy at an 18 percent interest rate." Provost Leighton replies, "that, in itself, will essentially make the President unelectable in the upcoming election. Not even his own party would be foolish enough to put him up again. The other party would easily win." Mr. Frazier laughs, and suggests, "that would be like putting McCutchen up against Eddie."

Provost Leighton mentions, "the next Olympics are four years away. When I made the Olympic team as an alternate, waiting four years to the next Olympics seemed like a very long time. Honestly, George, I didn't think I could keep up the training, teach at the University, and raise a family all at the same time." Mr. Frazier replies, "I know what you mean, Athena. When I got back from the games, I started looking for a job while I was getting my teaching certificate. I still trained, but nothing like before the games."

Provost Leighton then reveals, "ever since seeing the Olympics on television when he was in middle school, Darryl had his heart set on going. He may have walked out today but, I can assure you, he's not going to give up." Mr. Frazier informs Provost Leighton, "Darryl has been training closely with Mitchell for a while now. He's got the knowledge, the drive, and the ability. He can do it."

Provost Leighton mentions, "you know, George, every one of our athletes are where they are today because of every decision they've made for their entire lives. And, I'll venture to say that, for most of them, of all the decisions they've made, increasing athletic performance was high on the list." Mr. Frazier replies, "I'd have to agree, Athena. The sacrifices these guys have made over their lives are enormous."

Provost Leighton asks Mr. Frazier, "did I ever mention to you how Darryl convinced us to let him play the drums?" Mr. Frazier replies, "no. I can't say that I've heard that one." Provost Leighton explains, "ever since he was a kid, Darryl wanted to play the drums. When Darryl was in sixth

grade, he ran across a magazine article at the public library. In the article, it was explained how one's intellectual ability can be improved by playing the drums. The theory behind it was that, with two hands and two feet moving synchronously to crank out the beat, as Darryl calls it, communication speed between the left and right side of the brain improves tremendously. So, Darryl took all this to mean that he'll get better grades if he got to play the drums. And, he had a very convincing argument. So, we got him a really nice Slingerland drum set, which he still has today." Mr. Frazier comments, "playing the drums probably helped him on the track too. His handoff timing is impeccable." For the remainder of the morning, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton have a long conversation, catching up on life since the Olympic tryouts many years ago.

A week later, after practice one day, as the athletes are headed to the locker room, Eddie tells Leslie, "hey! I got your Dune Buggy finished!" Leslie exclaims, "really? Is it here now? Can I see it?" Eddie mentions, "you sound a little excited!" Leslie replies, "yeah! I am! I was hoping that it would be ready for the Summer, because I want to hit the beach!" Eddie explains, "I would have had it done sooner, but I've been training a lot." Leslie energetically asks, "can I see it?" Eddie replies, "yeah. It's out in the parking lot. Me and Kathy dropped it off last night. I'll meet you after we get dressed." Leslie replies, "you got it!"

After changing, Kathy and Leslie meet in the hallway, waiting for Eddie. While they are waiting, Kathy tells Leslie, "Eddie has built nine of these. Yours is number nine." Leslie asks, "what made Eddie decide to start building Dune Buggies?" Kathy explains, "when me and Eddie were on our honeymoon, we rented a Dune Buggy on the beach. Ever since then, I wanted one. Then, when Paula saw mine, she wanted one too. Then, it was one after another." Leslie replies, "they're all so beautiful." Eddie comes out of the locker room and asks Leslie, "are you ready?" Leslie replies, "am I ever!" Eddie tosses the keys to Leslie, and tells her, "let's go."

Approaching the Dune Buggy, Leslie exclaims, "wow! It looks so beautiful in the sunlight." The metallic silver Dune Buggy has a gold racing stripe down the center, with gold-colored aluminum wheels matching the racing stripe. Eddie explains, "Vinnie, at the body shop painted the racing stripe to match the wheels." Leslie exclaims, "whoever this Vinnie guy is, he did a really great job!"

Eddie and Kathy show Leslie the details about the Dune Buggy. Once they are done, Kathy and Leslie take the Dune Buggy for a ride. Eddie tells Kathy, "I'm going to head off to work." Kathy tells him, "we'll be back in a minute. Wait for us." Eddie replies, "okay," and hangs around,

looking at the other Dune Buggies that he's built, thinking he's done with building Dune Buggies for a while.

When they return, Leslie tells Kathy, "okay, so now I have to get you guys a check." Kathy replies, "just bring it sometime soon. The bill, and everything you need to register it, is in the toolbox trunk. You might want to get it out of the trunk and keep it with you." All excited, Leslie tells Kathy, "I'm going out and getting pizza for dinner! Just because I can!"

Braden rides by, patrolling the campus on his bicycle. Stopping to see Leslie's new Dune Buggy, Braden exclaims, "so this one is your Dune Buggy? I saw it here this morning, and I was wondering whose it was." Leslie replies, "yeah! It's mine! Eddie just finished it." Braden exclaims, "that's a mighty fine-looking Dune Buggy!"

Leslie asks Braden, "how come you're riding a bicycle?" Braden explains, "it's part of my workout. After practice, I ride around campus until lunch. Then, I head to class. On the weekends, I do about half my shift on the bicycle and half in my patrol car." Leslie exclaims, "that must be some workout!" Braden admits, "I had to step up my training when Eddie beat me last Fall in my race." Leslie replies, "wow! I'm going to start stepping up my training too!"

Eddie tells Braden, "tell her how you talked the chief into letting you patrol the campus on your bicycle, bro." Braden laughs, and replies, "you're really gonna like this one! Back in the Fall, I asked Chief Toledo if I can patrol the campus on a bicycle. He told me that I couldn't get anywhere on campus fast enough. I didn't believe that for a minute. So, I told him that I can get across campus faster on a bicycle than he can in a squad car. He took me up on that challenge. So, we raced from the parking lot at the stadium all the way to the dorms. I kicked his ass! When he got to the dorms, I had the bicycle up against a tree, and I was sitting on the grass up against the tree, with my legs crossed, waiting for him to show up. Ever since then, he lets me patrol the campus on a bicycle as long as there's another officer on duty." Leslie laughs, and exclaims, "I wish I was there for that race!"

Eddie, Kathy, Braden, and Leslie talk for a while, but Braden has to get back to work, and the women have to get to class. On his way out, Eddie tells Kathy, "now that the shop is empty, it's on to the next project." Kathy asks, "what's the next project?" Eddie replies, "I don't know yet. I'll have to think of something." Kathy tells Eddie, "I'll think of something for you."

The end of the semester brings with it the twelve-team divisional meet. Meeting in the arena before the team heads out to the field, Mr.

Frazier makes a few last minute announcements, telling the team, “over the past few weeks Dr. Bonamo, Coach Leighton, Mrs. Owens, Kathy, Paula, and myself have met several times a week comparing your individual performance statistics with what we know of the competition. We believe that we have optimized each event assignment.” Mr. Frazier then raises his voice, and exclaims, “we have the potential to take home every medal today!” Hearing the news, the team cheers, also believing that they have the potential to win all the medals in today’s meet. Mr. Frazier continues, “but, in order to win all the medals, every single one of you are going to have to deliver the best performance of your lives!”

As he often does before a meet, Mr. Frazier quotes his favorite Bible verse, “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!’ Mark my word! There is only one winner! One winner! Today, you have the opportunity to show the world that you are the winners! And, remember! This is your Olympics! You are running today to show the President that he made a very big and costly mistake!” The team again cheers wildly, ready for today’s competition.

Before the team heads out to the track for today’s meet, Mr. Frazier addresses his team, “in our last meet, as a team, we did not perform quite as well as we could have. Some of you, as always, delivered a world-class performance. A few others, according to our statistics, could have done much better than you did. Before we get out on the track today, some of you need to hear what I am going to say. Much of what you are about to hear I have said before. You may have heard what I am going to say several times but, this time, I want you to listen and take it to heart.”

Mr. Frazier reminds his team, “the divisional meet is your Olympics. Is there any reason why this team can’t walk away with the gold medal in every event? No! There’s not! There is absolutely no reason why we can’t walk away with all of the gold medals! In fact, there is no reason why we can’t walk away with all the medals! If you’re up against someone who has beaten you in the past, do something! Mess with their head! A little psychological warfare might just be the difference between winning and losing! We, as a team, are going to have to do everything we can if we are going to emerge as the clear and undisputable winner of this year’s divisional meet!”

Mr. Frazier exclaims, “let me remind you again of something we all need not forget. In any race, there is only one winner! In the Bible, in the book of First Corinthians, in chapter 9, verse 24, the scripture reads, ‘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 may win.’ Make no mistake about it! There is only one winner! Whoever comes in second place is the first loser! If you come in second place, learn something! Work harder, learn

from the situation, and figure out what you need to change to do better next time!”

Conceding the point that second and third place are worth something in a track meet, Mr. Frazier explains, “and, yes, I understand that they give medals for second and third place. That is how they keep score. Honestly, though, where in the world did that ever come from? But, that’s how they’ve organized track and field in the world. So, we have to play by their rules. So, if you come in second place, your goal is to come in first place next time! If you come in third place, your goal is to come in second place or better! If you did not place, learn whatever you can from those who did! And, if you were the winner, you’d better not let your guard down because there are dozens of athletes out there who want to knock your ass off the first-place tier! If you came in first place, understand this! Your competition does not like you! They may act like they like you, but they don’t. Remember this. When they are training, they are training so that they win, not so that you win!”

Rehashing one of his favorite stories, Mr. Frazier tells his team, “many of you have heard this before, but some of you need to hear it again. When I was in my early teens, it was very stormy outside, and my father was watching a track meet on television. As you know, track was my sport, so I watched along with him. I remember that day quite well, as if it were yesterday. My race, the 100-yard dash, came up. I carefully watched what the runners did before they got into the blocks. I watched them as they were waiting for the gun. I watched very carefully when the gun went off and they left the blocks. And, I watched every step as they raced toward the finish line.”

Explaining when he first heard that there is only one winner in any race, Mr. Frazier continues, “once the race was over, it was clear to my father and I 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 third place, 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 give medals for second and third place.’ He replied, ‘so what. They still lost.’

My father wanted to teach me a lesson, so he told me, ‘George, go and get your Bible.’ I returned with my Bible, and my father told me, ‘open your Bible to First Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 24, and read it to me.’ 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 may win.’ My father looked me straight in the eye, and said to me, ‘George, there is only one winner. Everyone else is a loser. It’s that simple.’ I saw the deep

conviction in his eyes when he told me that. His conviction was unmistakable! There is only one winner!

My father didn't stop there. He asked me, 'George, when you play football in school, and your team loses, do you go around boasting to everyone that your team came in second place?' Before I could answer him, he told me, 'of course you don't! Second place is nothing to be proud of, especially if there are only two teams playing!' If there are two runners in the race, or eight, there is still only one winner! There are many professional football teams. Only one team wins the Super Bowl! There are many professional baseball teams. Only one team wins the World Series! No one ever boasts about coming in second place!"

Explaining the value of time, Mr. Frazier tells his team, "there are 365 days in a year, 7 days in a week, and 24 hours in a day. No one can tell me there isn't enough time to train. How valuable is your time anyway? What is the value of one year? If you really want to know the value of one year, ask anyone who has been in prison for a year. What is the value of one week? If you want to know, ask a family who is looking forward to a well-deserved one-week vacation at the beach. What's the value of one day? Ask someone who is not expected to live more than a day or two. What's the value of one hour? Ask someone who flew into town, and can only see his wife for one hour before he has to fly out again. What's the value of one minute? Ask a football player whose team is down by six points with one minute left to play in the fourth quarter. What's the value of one second? Ask the runner who comes in second place in the 1,500-meter run. And, what's the value of one-hundredth of a second? Ask the runner who came in second place in the 100-meter dash."

Addressing a common problem with collegiate athletes, Mr. Frazier explains, "for some of you, the reason that you do not win has nothing to do with your training or abilities. The reason you do not win is because of that thing between your ears they call a brain! Someone has programmed your brain, and told you that you can't win. What bothers me is that some of you actually believe it! Why are you listening to what they have to say? If you convince yourself that you cannot win, no matter who or what you are up against, you will never win! Your competition on the track is nothing compared to your own mental obstacles! Get this through your head! The clock that's timing you and the person running next to you is nothing compared to your own mental obstacles! Do not, and I repeat, do not let yourself get in the way of achieving your goals!"

Addressing the subject of success, Mr. Frazier explains, "I am now going to tell you how to succeed at anything you do because some of you seem to have forgotten it. Whether it is on the track, in the classroom, or at your job when you graduate, the one principle leading to success is the same! Most of you have already heard this. If you forget anything else I

say here today, remember this.” Mr. Frazier pauses for a moment, then exclaims, “the one, and only one, attribute that will determine your success at anything you attempt is you must attack the challenge you face with no fear! Did you hear that? No fear!”

Citing a few examples, Mr. Frazier orates, “they said no one can run a mile faster than four minutes. Roger Bannister did not believe that for a second! They said a man is physically incapable of running 100 meters in less than ten seconds. Jim Hines did not believe that for a second! No one thought that the shot-put could be thrown farther than 22 meters. In 1976, Aleksandr Baryshnikov threw the shot-put using the discus technique, and did exactly what everyone said could not be done! They said no one can run 400 meters in less than 45 seconds. Otis Davis did not believe that for a second! They said no relay team is capable of breaking three minutes in the 4 by 400-meter relay. Robert Frey, Lee Evans, Tommie Smith, and Theron Lewis did not believe that for an instant! What’s stopping you? What’s in your way? Whatever is in your way, if you want to win, you must get rid of it!

What do all these athletes I just mentioned have in common? These athletes have in common the one, and only one, attribute that will determine your success at anything you do! They attacked the challenge they faced ahead of them with no fear! Roger Bannister. No fear! Jim Hines. No fear! Aleksandr Baryshnikov. No fear! Otis Davis. No fear! Robert Frey, Lee Evans, Tommie Smith, and Theron Lewis. No fear! If you are to win, you must do the same! You must attack the challenges you face with no fear!”

Mr. Frazier then asks the athletes, “I have a question for all of you. Who is the fastest sprinter in our division?” Eddie raises his hand, as a few athletes answer, “Eddie.” Mr. Frazier chuckles, and informs the group, “well, maybe he is, and maybe he isn’t. It depends on what race he’s running.” Getting very serious, Mr. Frazier continues, “but, I can tell you this. All of you seem to agree that Eddie is the fastest sprinter in the division. Anyone who steps onto the track and is up against Eddie has already been preprogrammed to believe that they will be up against the fastest sprinter in the division! If anyone believes Eddie is the fastest sprinter in the division, when they step onto the track next to him, at best, that makes them second best! They’ve already lost! When you believe that you are better, faster, and stronger than your opponent, then you will win!”

Reminding the team of Eddie’s high school career, Mr. Frazier explains, “speaking of Eddie, when Eddie was a freshman in high school, Eddie won the silver medal in the 40-yard dash at the State invitational meet. During the following three years at the invitational meet, Eddie won the gold medal in the 40-yard dash. And, Eddie won the gold medal in the

100-yard dash at the Spring State invitational meet for four consecutive years! But, here's what you may not know. Eddie put all his gold medals in a box, where he couldn't see them. Left out on his dresser was Eddie's silver medal, where it served as a constant reminder to train harder. Second place was not acceptable to Eddie! Second place should not be acceptable to any of you either!"

Specifically addressing the seniors, Mr. Frazier tells those who will be running in their last divisional meet, "now, for some of you, this is the last season you will be running for this University. Congratulations to all of you who are graduating this year. In a sense, you will be crossing another type of finish line in just a few weeks. Over the last four years, you sat in classrooms, did homework, took tests, performed lab experiments, solved problems, wrote papers, and did whatever else they have you do around here. When you've taken enough classes and passed enough tests, what do they do? They give you a piece of paper, called a diploma, that tells you that you've taken enough classes, and passed enough tests! For all the work that you've put in over the last four years, you will receive a degree in the field of your choice. For some of you, that degree will be in exercise science. For others, your degree may be in science, the arts, communications, mathematics, history, or some field that you plan to work in when you graduate."

Addressing the seniors regarding what they have done in the classroom for the last four years, Mr. Frazier explains, "regardless of your chosen field, I will share with you today exactly what you need to know to succeed when you graduate and hit the working world. But first, let's back up a little bit. There are only three types of degrees offered by any college or university. Those three degrees are a degree in memorization, a degree in problem solving, or a degree in the arts. A degree in history is nothing more than a degree in memorization. A math degree is nothing more than a problem solving degree. A degree in music is one example of a degree in the arts. Many degrees, however, are a combination of the three types of degrees that I just mentioned. The only difference in the three types of degrees are the field of study in which you memorized information, solved problems, or developed your artistic skill. That would be the name of your degree that you will see on your diploma when you graduate in a few weeks."

Mr. Frazier then exclaims, "nothing they teach you at this University will determine whether you succeed when you graduate!" Mr. Frazier continues, "you already know how to succeed at anything you do once you graduate! I told you just a few minutes ago! Whether it is in sports, in the classroom, or at your job when you graduate, the one principle leading to success is the same! You must attack the challenge ahead of you with no fear! No fear! What have I been telling you all year? Whether it is on the track or in your job, the same principle leading to success is

the same! You must attack the challenges you face with no fear! That includes the challenges you will face in the divisional meet today, the challenges you face when you graduate, and anything else you do in your life!”

Moving on to the subject of success, Mr. Frazier continues, “now, when you graduate, society has programmed you that you measure success by how much money you earn. You don’t measure success by how much money you earn! You don’t measure success by what kind of car you drive! You don’t measure success by the size of your house! It is of no value to wake up in the morning and drive to a job you hate. It is of no value to drive a luxury car when you really want to drive a Jeep or British roadster. It is of no value to live in a mansion in the suburbs when you really want to live in a bungalow at the beach. The only measure of success is how well you follow your passion and do what you love!”

Addressing the subject of passion, Mr. Frazier explains, “when you watch a professional football game, every player on the field has been told at one time or another that they’ll never make it in the NFL. The same holds true for any sport, such as basketball, baseball, boxing, and so on. When you listen to music, every musician was constantly told that they will never make it in that industry. Some athletes, musicians, or whatever, have deliberately chosen to ignore all the negative talk, follow their passion, and chase after their dreams and goals. They are the ones who succeed! They have followed their passion, and attacked the challenges they were facing with no fear!”

Giving a real life example, Mr. Frazier tells his team, “I mentioned earlier to you that whoever comes in second place is the first loser. I am going to take that premiss and apply it to the real world that a few of you will be entering in just a few weeks. Some of you, when you graduate, will be in the sales field. If you put together a sales presentation, and get the customer to sign the sales contract on the dotted line, congratulations! You won! You came in first place! Now, let me ask you this. What does the salesman who comes in second place get?” Mr. Frazier pauses for a few seconds, then exclaims, “nothing! Absolutely nothing! In sales, there is only one winner! Second place counts for absolutely nothing! Do you finally get it? There is only one winner! The winner puts food on the table! The loser winds up flipping burgers at a burger joint!”

Wrapping up his presentation, Mr. Frazier finishes, “now, we’re all going to head out to the track. When you get out there, I want you to perform as if you are the salesman competing for that contract. I want you to perform as if track and field is your passion. I want you to perform as if first place is the only thing that matters. And, remember, there is absolutely no reason why we, as a team, can’t walk away with all the medals.”

Concluding his speech, Mr. Frazier asks his team, “before we head out to the track, are there any questions?” Mark asks, “is that Nachlobrocklin guy running today?” Mr. Frazier replies, “yes. But, as we saw in the meet a few weeks ago, he’s no longer any serious competition.” Julius Bailey, now a sophomore, asks, “will we be running in back to back events?” Mr. Frazier explains, “generally, no. With one or two exceptions, we have assigned your events to prevent that from happening. But, those who were assigned to back to back events can handle it.”

With no more questions and the team having renewed energy and motivation, Mr. Frazier concludes, “we are now going to walk out to the track, and show the world what you can do! We have the ability to take all the medals! Just remember, no one in the world is better at your event than you are! Let’s get out there and show them!” Mr. Frazier, along with the other coaches, walks toward the exit, and the team follows.

Outside, at the University’s stadium, the stands are full today, including many reporters from the news media. Overflow seating has been added to the lawn area at the far end of the track. Someone has put the word out that, not one, but two world records might be broken in this meet, although no specific details were given. It’s anybody’s guess who or what event the person leaking information to the press was referring to. Everyone will have to wait to find out, including Mr. Frazier, who heard of the rumor through the grapevine.

Last to arrive at the venue, the University team settles in at the team bench area. The athletes and coaches from the competing teams wonder why attendance is at an obvious record high. The television cameras set up in the stands and in the infield of the track just outside the red zone attest that something special may happen here today. Even Angela Meadows, with the help of a few others who work at the campus radio station, will be broadcasting the meet live.

As they are stretching and warming up, Hoffer mentions to Eddie and Mark, “I’ve never seen so many people at a track meet before.” Looking around, Eddie replies, “me neither.” Looking over at another team’s bench, Mark sarcastically mentions, “oh, wonderful. Look who’s here.” Eddie glances over to where Mark is looking, seeing Nachlobrocklin. Eddie tells Mark, “Mr. Frazier said he’s nothing this year.” Mark replies, “I just don’t want him to start anything today. I’ve had enough of him.” Hoffer admits, “it’s my fault he’s here. I should have broken his legs.” Eddie laughs, remembering the condition in which he left Andy Goldstein at the service station and Vio Otto after breaking into his home. Talk among the athletes suddenly quiets down when the call is made for the men’s 100-meter preliminaries. The three sprinters head over toward the starting line, more ready than ever.

Passing by the finish line on the way to the starting line, Eddie sees Angela Meadows standing under the campus radio station's tent behind a corded off area broadcasting the meet. Eddie stops for a moment and talks with Angela, who happens to be live on the air.

Angela energetically asks, "so, Eddie. There's a lot of excitement going on here today! Can you give us a hint of what we are expected to see as the events unfold?" Eddie replies, "right now, Me, Mark, and Hoffer are going to win this heat in the preliminaries. The final is where it's going to happen. Watch that race closely. We're going to win that too. And, when the women are up, it's going to be a fight between Karen Corey, Erika Gabriel, and Michelle Harris." Angela announces to her listeners, "there you have it, my listeners. Hopefully, I'll get to speak with Eddie again during this meet, when he will give you an update!" Eddie gives Angela a thumbs up, signaling to her that he will be available to speak with her.

Headed to the starting line, Eddie jogs by other broadcasters, who desperately try to speak with him, but are instead ignored. The other broadcasters in the corded off area wonder why Angela is so special that she got chosen to interview one of the contestants.

At the starting line, Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer, in the first heat, look over their competition. Another runner in the first heat, who catches Mark's eye, stands tall and tells Mark, "I'm Allen Madison." Never missing an opportunity to mess with someone, Mark replies, "is that supposed to mean something to me?" Quite surprised at Mark's response, Madison replies, "it should. I'm Allen Madison!" Mark looks at Madison like he is from a different planet, then tells Eddie, "not another one of those." Madison walks away, and stands behind the blocks in lane one, suggesting he is not as good as he thinks he is.

With the runners in position, the Starter announces, "on your marks." Kathy and Paula pay close attention, wondering what kind of competition their guys are up against. The Starter announces, "set," as those in the stands get very quiet. The gun is fired, and all eyes are on eight of the fastest men in the stadium. At 50 meters, it is clear that Eddie, leading the pack, has been training quite a lot. Mark and Hoffer are in second and third place respectively. At the finish, Eddie crosses first, Mark second, and Hoffer third, a finish that is surprising to no one. Looking up at the scoreboard, Eddie sees his, Mark's, and Hoffer's times, and exclaims, "yes!" Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer exchange high-fives, and head back to the bench.

At the University's bench, the coaches exchange high-fives, knowing that they will win the gold, silver, and bronze in the 100-meter final. Mr. Frazier exclaims, "these guys were clocking!" Kathy cheers, "way to go,

Eddie!” Paula jumps up and down, knowing Mark had an excellent run. And Tessa, who is up in the stands today, cheers for Hoffer.

When the call is made for the women’s 100-meter dash, Eddie points out Angela to Erika, Karen, and Michelle, and tells them, “if you want to be on the radio, stop by the radio station’s tent on the way to the starting line, and talk to Angela. She’s live on the air.” Erika, speaking for the women, replies, “we’re going to do that.” Karen replies, “yeah. Being on the radio will really energize me!”

Erika, Karen, and Michelle take a detour on their way to the starting line, and head toward the radio station’s tent. Not missing a beat, Angela announces over the air, “now that the men have been narrowed down to the eight finalists, it’s now the women’s turn.” Already receiving a list of who is running in each event from Kathy, Angela, seeing the women approaching, announces, “with me now are Erika Gabriel, Karen Corey, and Michelle Harris, who are about to run their preliminary heat in the women’s 100-meter dash. The men did a great job in their event. Karen, can you tell us how it’s looking for the women?” Karen replies, “we all put in a lot of work this season, and we’re at our best. We’re definitely ready!” Angela asks, “Erika, how is it looking for the competing teams?” Erika replies, “there are a few good runners out here today. They’ve been working really hard too, but we’re confident we’ll beat them.” Angela asks, “Michelle, who is going to win?” Michelle exclaims, “we are! No doubt about it!” Angela, as confident as the runners, announces, “good luck, and we’ll see you all in the final!”

Once the first heat of women is lined up and ready to go, the Starter announces, “on your marks,” shortly followed by, “set,” as the runners get into the “set” position. The gun is fired and Erika, Karen, and Michelle all let out a primal scream in unison, joined by number 1083 from a competing team, who adopted the primal scream from Kathy. Karen quickly claims the lead, closely followed by Erika and Michelle. Number 1083, Allison, is giving Michelle a run for her money. At the finish line, Karen crosses first, marginally beating Erika. Michelle takes third place in this heat, and Allison, from an opposing team, finishes in fourth place.

At the bench, the three women receive high-fives and congratulatory hugs from everyone around. Mr. Frazier is ecstatic, partially because the team is performing well so far, and partially because the energy level in the stadium is remarkably high. Provost Leighton is ecstatic because, based upon statistics, she recommended putting up Michelle in this event, even though Leslie Collins, who will be running the 200-meter dash, is slightly faster.

After a few more events, the call is imminent for the 400-meter dash. Kathy tells Braden to go over and talk with Angela at the radio station’s

tent. Braden walks over, seeing Angela, who is not on the air at the moment. Angela yells out, "Axel Braden! Are you about to run?" Braden replies, "yeah! I'm gonna win the 400-meter!" Angela tells Braden, "I'm not on the air right now. Can you go live with me?" Braden replies, "yeah. No problem." Angela tells Braden, "hold on for a minute," as she radios the studio, informing them to switch over to her at the next opportunity.

Angela tells Braden, "okay, we'll be on the air in a moment. Oh, and by the way, we're on a five-second delay. So. if you use the word 'shit,' they'll bleep it out, but 'ass' is okay." After a brief pause, Angela announces, "okay, we're on the air in five, four, three, two, one. Hello again, everybody! This is Angela Meadows broadcasting live out here at the University stadium where I am at the divisional track and field meet. With me right now is Axel Braden, who is about to run the 400-meter dash for the University. Axel, what is going to happen on that track?" Braden replies, "I'm gonna get in the blocks and, when that gun goes off, it's gonna be the biggest ass kicking of this meet! My job is to kick their ass! Their job is getting their puny little asses kicked!" Angela announces, "Axel sounds very confident! Axel, do you think you'll set a personal record today?" Braden replies, "I'm gonna be running to break every record I can! I'm the master of the track, and ready to attack!" Angela announces, "I just heard the call for the 400-meter dash. Good luck, Axel! And, my faithful listeners, I will be broadcasting this event live in just a few minutes, so hold tight. Don't go anywhere." Braden heads to the starting line, as Angela informs her listeners who else is running in this heat.

Tensions rise, as the first heat of the 400-meter dash is about to get underway. The word around the stadium is that Braden is unbeatable, making Braden the number one target to beat today. Braden, the favorite, is in lane one. Also running in this race for the University is Johnson and Bull, in lanes two and three, respectively.

With perfect timing, Angela announces, "okay, everybody, we're about to begin. The runners are set in the blocks, and the gun is fired! Our man, Axel Braden, is quickly out in front, giving his competition a lesson in running! Going into the curve, wow, Axel Braden is widening his lead! Eric Johnson is the only one keeping up with him. Running Bull is currently in third place. And, yes, everyone, Running Bull is his real name. Axel is now in the back straightaway, and even the field athletes have taken a break to watch this race. I have come prepared today, ladies and gentlemen, and borrowed a stopwatch from the track team. At the 200-meter mark, Axel's time is about 22 seconds. That is fast! Into the final curve, Axel has a significant lead. Eric Johnson is tightly maintaining his position in second place, and Running Bull is in third place. This is now a three-man race! Here we go, into the final 100 meters. Just as Axel Braden told us a few minutes ago, he is the master of the track. And, the

master of the track just crossed the finish line winning this race just as he predicted!”

With the results posted, Angela announces, “okay, my listeners, I have the times that have been just posted. Axel Braden’s time is 43.75 seconds. Eric Johnson’s time is 44.98 seconds, and Running Bull’s time is 46.17 seconds. Wait! Hold on, everyone! There is a big commotion going on over at the University’s bench! Let me see what this is all about.”

As Kathy is running over to the radio station’s tent to inform Angela of the news, not missing a beat, Angela announces, “I have with me now Kathy Karakova Bogenskaya, who will let us all know what is going on.” Kathy runs up, exclaiming, “Braden broke the record! Braden did it!” Not knowing what record Braden broke, Angela asks, “what? What record did Axel Braden break?” Kathy exclaims, “Braden broke the world record!” Quite surprised, Angela announces to her audience, “did you hear that, everyone? Axel Braden, with a time of 43.75 seconds in the 400-meter dash, has broken the world record!”

Not even knowing that he broke the world record in the 400-meter dash, Braden walks off his run, heading back to the team bench with Johnson and Bull. Intercepting the group, Kathy yells out, “yo, Braden! Come over here!” Seeing Braden jogging over to the radio station tent, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton join the party, jogging over to congratulate Braden. Kathy exclaims to Braden, “you broke the world record!” Mr. Frazier gives Braden a victory hug. Not knowing what to say, Braden exclaims, “I broke the record? I broke the record!” Mr. Frazier exclaims, “you were clocking!”

While all the reporters are trying to get to Braden, Braden moves over toward Angela, who asks Braden, “Axel Braden, you just broke the world record! Tell our listeners how you feel!” Braden replies, exclaiming, “I feel good! And, I ain’t done yet! I’m just getting warmed up! We got a few more races, and we’re gonna kick some more ass today!”

Angela tells Mr. Frazier, who is standing with Braden, “coach, these guys are impressive! You must feel like you’re on top of the world right now.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I think the whole team is on top of the world right now! These guys have put in a lot of work, and some of them have been running together for years. Braden is an amazing guy, and you’ll be seeing a lot more from him today! The day is only beginning!” Angela announces, “there you have it, listeners! Axel Braden, running for our University, just broke the world record in the 400-meter dash!” Angela continues broadcasting, but the coaches and athletes have to get back to the bench, as more events are coming up.

A few more events are run and the University team, thus far, has attained their goal of winning all the medals. With a break from their events, Eddie heads over to the field area to get his discus throws in. Mark, throwing the hammer this year, and Johnson, throwing the javelin, join Eddie. Eddie finds out that Bobby B. has already won the shot-put with an outstanding throw of 21.13 meters. Mendenhall has taken second place, and Cinquegrana has taken third place. The University has swept the high jump event, with Akinmola taking first place. The long jump and triple jump is still underway, events in which the University looks strong.

Right before lunch, as usual, is the 100-meter dash final. The call is made, and Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer head to the starting line, more energized than in previous meets since Braden has broken the world record in the 400-meter dash. Once again, they are up against Major Nachlobrocklin, who is accompanied by two handlers whose job it is to keep him under control. Seeing Nachlobrocklin, Mark comments, "oh wonderful. He made the final." Eddie replies, "just ignore him. He's not going to win anyway." Hoffer tells Mark, "he hasn't attacked Eddie yet." Eddie comments, "before he attacks me, he should talk to the Chuckie, Goldshit, and some guy named Vio Otto."

As Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer are on their way to the starting line, Kathy again walks over to the radio station tent, where Angela is on the air. Seeing Kathy walking up, Angela tells her listeners, "I am again joined by Kathy who is one of the coaches for the University team. Kathy, what can we expect to see in the men's 100-meter final?" Kathy announces over the air, "Eddie Bogenskaya is the number one seed, Mark Svoboda number two, and Jimmy Hoffer number three. If history repeats itself, they will finish in that order." Angela asks, "how about the other teams, Kathy? Do they stand a chance?" Kathy confidently replies, "no. Not at all, Angela." Angela announces, "so far, my listeners, the University has taken first, second, and third place in every event. It looks like the finalists are getting behind the blocks and we're about to get underway."

Angela announces, "the runners step into their blocks. From where I'm standing, 100 meters looks a long way away. The runners are set, awaiting the gun. The gun is fired and, from where I'm standing, the runners are rapidly approaching. We're about halfway through the race, and it looks like Eddie Bogenskaya is in the lead, and Mark Svoboda is in second place. Here they come! In lane four, Eddie wins! Mark Svoboda, in lane five, is the first runner-up, and Jimmy Hoffer, in lane three is the second runner-up! The times are in, and Eddie Bogenskaya ran 100 meters in 9.93 seconds!" Seeing Eddie's time, Kathy jumps up and down, cheering wildly.

Looking up at the electronic scoreboard, Eddie, seeing his time of 9.93 seconds and, throwing his fist into the air, exclaims, "yes!" Running from

the radio station's tent, Kathy gives Eddie an enormous hug, telling him, "you did it! You did it!" Eddie and Kathy head back to the team bench. Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, and Paula run over to the bench, and congratulate Eddie. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer again exchange high-fives, and head over with their coaches to the University's radio station tent.

Another reporter, who breached the corded off area, attempts to approach Eddie, but is blocked by his coaches. The reporter yells out to Eddie, "Eddie, can you give us a moment?" Eddie ignores the reporter, as he heads over to the University's radio station tent to speak with Angela. The reporter, who is now irate, tells Eddie, "what are you wasting your time talking to her for? We're a major radio station!" Eddie distinctly recalls when Kathy relayed to him that Angela told her that the commercial radio stations look down on the campus radio station because it is run by students. Eddie stops, and tells the irate reporter, "when Angela is on your turf, you guys shove her aside because she works at a college radio station. This is her turf. I'm sure she'd be glad to let you put her on the air."

Earlier, before the meet began, Kathy, knowing that Angela will be broadcasting the meet live, put the word out to the team to only speak with Angela. Today, the team has brushed aside the other reporters just like the campus radio station has been quite often brushed aside by the mainstream media.

Hearing what Eddie said, the University radio station manager, who is also a student, tells the irate reporter, "if you'd like, we'll let you rebroadcast our signal, or tap into our audio feed." With little choice in the matter, the commercial station's onsite management instructs the engineers to make the connection. The broadcast engineers tap into the University's audio feed, and Angela will be broadcasting live on the air over three commercial radio stations in addition to the University's station.

While other reporters are still trying to get close to Eddie, Angela energetically announces to her listeners, "I am standing here with Edward Bogenskaya, who has just broken the world record in the 100-meter dash, earning the title of the fastest man in the world! Did you hear that, everyone? Eddie Bogenskaya just broke the world record in the 100-meter dash! Eddie, congratulations on your enormous victory here today!" Eddie replies, "thank you, Angela. I want to thank my coaches for all the work they've put into our team, and all my teammates who also put in a lot of work for this meet today."

Angela tells Eddie, "Eddie, you are the fastest man in the world! What does that feel like?" Eddie replies, "really good! Our team has a big goal out here today, and we're on our way to making it." Unaware of the

team's goal, Angela asks Eddie, "a big goal? Please share with our listeners what the team's goal is today." Eddie explains, "our President decided to boycott the Olympics. So, this is our Olympics. My goal was to beat whoever it is that will win the gold medal at the Olympics in July. That was also Braden's goal in the 400-meter dash. And, that will be our goal in the 4 by 400-meter relay later today. Our coach, Mr. Frazier, would be glad to talk to you more about the Olympic boycott." Mr. Frazier smiles, desperately wanting to get his opinion known regarding the boycott.

But, Angela's interview with Mr. Frazier will have to wait. The finalists in the women's 100-meter dash are headed to the starting line, where Erika, Karen, and Michelle will be fighting it out for the gold medal. Having the best qualifying time of the day, Karen is the favorite in this event. But, Erika is not to be underestimated.

The finalists get behind the blocks. The Starter announces, "on your marks." Angela announces, "okay, my listeners, we're about to get started. The women are in the blocks and it looks like they're ready to run. The gun just went off, and, the women are rapidly approaching. From where I'm standing, it looks like Karen Corey and Erika Gabriel are tied for the lead. Here they come! I believe Karen is now in the lead. Yes! Karen is going to win this! In lane four, Karen crosses the finish line first, followed by Erika! Taking third place is Michelle. Our University has again swept an event, winning the gold, silver, and bronze medal in the women's 100-meter dash!" Karen, Erika, and Michelle exchange high-fives, have a group hug, and head toward the radio station's tent.

With the three medalists in the women's 100-meter dash standing with her, Angela boldly announces to her listeners, "I am standing here with three of the fastest women in this country. Congratulations Karen, Erika, and Michelle! That was an awesome performance! Karen, tell us what's going through your mind right now." Karen replies, "wow! A whole lot. We have a few more events to go, and we're really strong so far. We put in a lot of work this year, and our coaches have worked really hard. I mean like, wow! That was an awesome race!"

Knowing where her parents are seated, Karen waves to them, as Angela asks Erika, "Erika, you won the women's 400-meter dash just a little while ago. Your relay team won the gold medal in the 4 by 100-meter relay earlier today. And now, you just took second place in the 100-meter dash! What's going through your mind?" Erika replies, "right now, the 4 by 400-meter relay. We're really looking forward to winning that race too!" Angela replies, "that's really awesome! And, my listeners, we'll be right here to broadcast that event to you as it happens on the air."

Turning toward Michelle, Angela asks, “Michelle, you’re having an awesome day too! What’s going through your mind?” Michelle replies, “yeah. It’s really been an awesome day for all of us. The morning was really great. We’ve put in so much work this year, and it’s really great to see it paying off!” Knowing that the team now has a short break and probably wants to get some lunch, Angela announces, “thank you guys so much for stopping by. And, congratulations on your awesome victory out here today!”

With the officials taking a short lunch break, Angela announces, “okay, everyone. We’re going to take a half-hour break and go back to the studio. We’ll resume our live coverage of this year’s divisional track meet in approximately a half hour.” Karen, Erika, and Michelle head back to the bench, now having a short break. Angela heads to the University’s cafeteria to get some lunch.

Number 1083, Allison, from a competing team, finished the 100-meter dash in fourth place. Hoping to do better this year, Allison suspects the training at her university is deficient compared with that of Kathy’s University, whom she spoke with last year after the 100-yard dash final. Seeing that Mr. Frazier and the University is stealing the show, Allison discreetly walks over to Kathy, and whispers to her, “what are the chances that I can transfer to your university, and run for you guys?” Kathy hands Allison her card, bearing her title of “Coach / Recruiter”, and tells Allison, “call me.” Allison smiles, slips the card into her sports bra, and heads back to her bench, where she will get told that she should have tried harder.

Concluding that Angela has been granted exclusive interview rights with the University’s athletes, other commercial radio stations have also tapped into the University’s audio feed. One television station has come to an agreement with Angela to videotape her interviews, which will be broadcast on the evening news. Angela, who is graduating this semester, is perfectly okay with the arrangements, hoping that an outstanding job offer is in her future.

As the morning wraps up, the University’s team has won all the medals thus far, sans the silver and bronze medals in the relays since only one entry per team is customarily permitted. But, the field events are far from being over. With two world records broken in one meet, the talk among the other teams centers upon how Mr. Frazier and the University team managed to pull this off. To the other teams, it looks like Mr. Frazier and his wrecking crew are not done yet. And, in the stands, the spectators are keenly aware that they are getting their money’s worth.

Over lunch, Todd McCutchen and Brad Evans walk by the University’s team bench. When they pass by, Mark yells out, “yo, McCutchen! Your

hair grew back! See? It's the Prickly Sea Spider bite, just like I told you!" Evans tells McCutchen, "just ignore him." Mark replies, "yeah, junior! Ignore me! I've been right all along!" Taking Evans' advice, McCutchen pays Mark no attention, finally learning that any conversation with Mark will get him absolutely nowhere. But, McCutchen learned a bit too late. McCutchen, now a senior, is in his last year of eligibility. That would make today the last track meet of his career.

With a break in the action, Dr. Bonamo walks over from the field area, and asks Mr. Frazier, "how are we doing?" Giving the good news, Mr. Frazier replies, "so far, in the individual events, we've won all the medals. In the relays, so far we've won all the gold medals." Dr. Bonamo informs Mr. Frazier, "over in the field area, we have a lot of the events locked up. It's looking good. Really good." Mr. Frazier gives Dr. Bonamo a high-five, telling him, "great! I wonder what the other teams are talking about." Dr. Bonamo laughs, and replies, "a lot of these schools have a very liberal ideology. They're probably talking about limiting the number of medals any team can win." Mr. Frazier tells Dr. Bonamo, "after this meet, they're going to be coming up with some ridiculous rules."

The first event up after lunch is the 1,500-meter run. Mitchell, Akinmola, and Davidson head to the starting line. Mitchell is unusually quiet today, and no one knows why. Mitchell was equally as quiet during the 4 by 800-meter relay, in which the team won the gold medal earlier today. Mitchell and Akinmola will again be fighting it out for the gold medal. Mitchell, based upon his performance in the regular season meets, is today's favorite by a slight margin. Akinmola has also improved, as has Davidson. Just to make the race interesting, or perhaps not, Todd McCutchen, running for Dogpatch University, is in this event.

Returning from lunch, Angela gets back on the air, announcing, "okay, my faithful listeners, we are back for an action packed afternoon down here on the track. Up next is the 1,500-meter run, where Gary Mitchell, Adekunle Akinmola, and Tom Davidson will be representing our University. And, yes, I've practiced pronouncing Adekunle Akinmola's name all morning. Adekunle is originally from Nigeria, and moved to this country several years ago. With me now is Kathy Karakova Bogenskaya, who is joining me for this race. And, it looks like we're ready to go. There's the gun, and the runners are fighting it out from the very start!"

Angela announces, "the race has barely started, and Mitchell has taken the lead, with Akinmola right behind him! From where I'm standing, it already looks like a sprint to the finish! Kathy, please tell our listeners what is going on right now on the track." Kathy announces, "Mitchell is setting the pace, and Akinmola is happy with that for now. After the first 200 meters, they'll all settle in, and keep up the best they can with the pace setter. Akinmola is following Mitchell closely right now, and gaining

an advantage through drafting. Mitchell does not like that, and is picking up the pace, trying to lose Akinmola.” Angela announces, “we’re not even one lap into this race, and there is quite a spread on the track already.” Kathy replies, “that’s right, Angela. Runners have different strategies. Right now, they’re all running their own race. They’ll make adjustments throughout the race to attain the best possible outcome.”

Approximately halfway through the 1,500-meter run, Angela announces, “we’re just entering the third lap, ladies and gentlemen, and Akinmola is losing a little ground to Mitchell. Davidson is still holding his own, following a few meters behind Akinmola. Kathy, give our listeners some insight into what is going on right now.” Kathy explains, “Mitchell does not want Akinmola drafting off of him, otherwise Akinmola will have a lot of energy left at the end of the race and pass Mitchell. Right now, both of them are running flat out. Davidson is running his own race. Behind Davidson, we have two runners chasing him down. And, we have a pack of runners a pretty good distance behind those two guys. And, far behind the pack is Todd McCrutchin, who used to run for our University.” Angela announces, “I can’t believe these guys can keep up this pace for this long!” Kathy replies, “they’ll keep it up until there are 200 meters left. Then, they’ll all pick up the pace a bit.”

As the frontrunners are well into their third lap, Angela announces, “the field of runners is really beginning to spread. Some of them are closing in on Davidson, in third place. Will they be able to catch him, Kathy?” Kathy announces, “it’s not likely, Angela. The fourth place runner has too much distance to make up. Even if he did get close to Davidson, Davidson would pick up the pace a bit. And, right now, Angela, Akinmola is closing in on Mitchell!” Angela announces, “I see that!” Kathy and Angela discuss more of the race strategy as they are waiting for a runner to make a move.

Unexpectedly, Angela announces, “and, my listeners, we have a man down on the track!” Kathy interjects, “that’s Todd McCrutchin who went down! McCrutchin, who was in a very distant last place, was apparently way over his head in this competition.” Angela exclaims, “Mitchell is passing by McCrutchin! And, here comes Akinmola! They’re just running around him, as the paramedics rush to the scene!” Kathy explains, “that’s right, Angela. They’re not going to stop the race because someone drops out. And, as a courtesy, the other athletes try not to run over a runner when they’re down.” Kathy and Angela, both having fun giving the play by play, are trying not to laugh at Kathy’s last comment, but neither are too successful.

With Mitchell now having 200 meters to go, Kathy announces, “after passing McCrutchin, Mitchell just made a move! With 200 meters to go, he’s really picking up the pace!” Angela announces, “where do these guys

get all this energy? Mitchell is widening his lead over Akinmola. And, Akinmola is even picking up his pace! But, it doesn't look like Akinmola is going to catch Mitchell." Kathy interjects, "that's correct, Angela. But, they're racing the clock at this point. They both have something to prove."

Angela announces, "and, here they come, approaching the finish line, where I have a bird's eye view. Mitchell crosses the finish line first, winning the 1,500 meters! Akinmola crosses the finish line second and, right behind him, Davidson takes third place! We're now waiting for the times to be posted on the electronic scoreboard. And, here they are! Mitchell's winning time is 3:34.23! Kathy, you're the expert. Just how good is Mitchell's winning time?" Kathy energetically announces, "that's about two seconds off the world record!" Angela exclaims, "did you hear that, everyone? Gary Mitchell's 1,500-meter time is two seconds off the world record! There is certainly a lot of action going on down here at the track today!"

Kathy waves Mitchell over to the radio station's tent, as Angela announces the second and third place times. Mitchell walks over, not even remotely recovered from his run. Angela announces, "I have here with me Gary Mitchell, who just ran the 1,500 meters in 3:34.23, which is about two seconds off the world record! Congratulations, Gary, on a great performance!" Mitchell exclaims, "thank you! Wow! Two seconds! That's better than I thought!" Angela reassures Mitchell, "that's what I hear! Two seconds off the world record!" Mitchell looks over at the scoreboard, and exclaims, "wow! The race was closer than I thought!" Angela continues to interview Mitchell, as the women are called to the starting line for their 1,500-meter run, which Dagmar Kramer, running for the University, is expected to win.

But, before the women run, an ambulance drives up to the track to transport Todd McCutchen to the hospital. McCutchen, who collapsed during the last half of the race, was found by the paramedics to have a cardiac dysrhythmia. McCutchen has had this medical problem in the past, but his father blamed it on the stress that Mark supposedly inflicted upon Todd. With Mark, and the University's track team, out of the picture for the last year, McCutchen's medical condition clearly has another cause. Mark would suggest that McCutchen's health problems are all caused by a Prickly Sea Spider bite.

At the team bench, Mark cannot help to comment, "it looks like McCutchen is out for the rest of the season." Eddie tells Mark, "today is

¹ At the time of the storyline, the world record in the 1,500-meter run was 3:32.03, held by Sebastian Coe.

the end of the season.” Mark replies, “well, maybe he won’t be back next year.” Eddie informs Mark, “he’s a senior. He’s not coming back next year either way, bro.” Mark replies, “oh, yeah. I forgot about that.” Eddie tells Mark, “Nachlobrocklin is gone after this year too. You’re not going to have anyone to mess with.” Mark replies, “yeah, I do. That Allen Madison guy. He seems kind of conceited. I’m going to mess with him.” Imitating Madison, Eddie stands up, and tells Mark, “I’m Eddie Bogenskaya.” Mark laughs, and tells Eddie, “yeah, that guy is going down.”

Mitchell returns to the team bench, where he receives a generous supply of high-fives, fist bumps, and congratulations from his team members. Eddie tells Mitchell, “you did it, bro!” Mitchell replies, “but, I didn’t break the record. I would have gotten a better time if McCrutchen didn’t block the inside lane when he went down.” Eddie tells Mitchell, “yeah, but, either way, no one’s going to beat your time this Summer.” Mark comments, “we’ll have to wait and see.”

With an awesome idea, Eddie suggests, “so now, I’m thinking about having a two-week watch the Olympics party at my house.” Mark laughs, and replies, “that’s going to be way too much pizza, bro.” Overhearing the conversation from a few feet away, Kathy yells out to Mark, “there’s no such thing as too much pizza!”

As the women’s 1,500-meter run is about to start, Mr. Frazier stands with Angela at the radio station tent, where Angela asks, “Coach Frazier, there’s been a lot of talk about several nations, ours included, boycotting the Olympics this Summer. Can you please share with our listeners your thoughts on the boycott of the Olympics?” Mr. Frazier has been waiting for this moment, now having the chance to be heard.

Knowing that his interview with Angela is being re-broadcasted over several commercial radio stations and that there is a television camera in front of him, Mr. Frazier explains, “Angela, many of these athletes have trained their whole lives to get where they are today. This President is using these athletes as pawns to make his statement. And, he is doing so in a very tactless and devious way. To use private citizens who have trained a lifetime for an event as an instrument to fulfil his political agenda is an outright disgrace. The Olympics, quite frankly, is none of his business. This President claims to lead the world by example. But, by boycotting the Olympics, it is evident that the President lacks any tactful negotiating skills. Our President is totally disrespected by the international community. And, the President is too much of a coward to confront the Soviets directly on the issue of Afghanistan. This President always talks about peace. Where is his Olive branch, Angela?”

During Mr. Frazier’s interview with Angela, a representative of one of the other radio stations that is broadcasting Angela’s interview holds up a

handwritten sign that says to Angela, “keep going!” Apparently, Mr. Frazier’s discussion of the hot topic has some material in it that could dramatically boost ratings. Seeing the sign, Angela discreetly returns a thumbs up gesture, and continues her interview.

Moving right along, Angela asks Mr. Frazier, “if our country does not participate in the Olympics this Summer, coach, how will that affect the outcome of the Olympic games?” Mr. Frazier explains, “first of all, if all the nations do not compete, the competition will be severely tainted. What our guys are out here to prove today, Angela, is that they are faster and better than those who will medal in the Olympics this Summer. You’ve already seen Axel Braden and Eddie Bogenskaya break the world record in the 400-meter dash and 100-meter dash here today! Let me ask this. If the Olympic gold medalists this Summer are not as fast as Eddie Bogenskaya or Axel Braden, how is that an accomplishment? It’s not! If these guys are prohibited from competing, the medalists in the Olympics are not up against the best! They may win a medal, but they are certainly not worthy of the title.”

Angela continues, and asks Mr. Frazier, “will you share with our listeners what we can expect to see later today?” Mr. Frazier reveals, “the 4 by 400-meter relay team of Eddie Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, and Axel Braden are out to break the world record in that event later today. They believe they can do it. These four guys have been running together since middle school. This relay team has never lost a race! Never! They’re not about to start losing today! And, based on our time trial information over the last few weeks, they have a very good chance of breaking the world record in that event!” Angela replies, “wow! That would be three world records in one college divisional meet. In itself, that would probably be some sort of record!” Mr. Frazier agrees, telling the listening audience, “you might be right about that, Angela!”

Angela announces to her listening audience, “while Coach Frazier and I have been discussing the Olympics, the women’s 1,500-meter run has been underway and is about to finish. Coach, please tell our listening audience what you see on the track right now.” Mr. Frazier announces, “Dagmar Kramer, who is the number one seed, is out in front. Behind her is Amber Amy, who is the number two seed. In third place, at the moment, is Amanda Drake who, in addition to being an excellent distance runner, is also one of our top notch sprinters. We’ve now got about 100 meters left to go. Dagmar will win, but it will be interesting to see if Amanda catches Amber.” Mr. Frazier, knowing his team well, is quite confident in his predictions.

Now getting the names of the competitors down, Angela announces, “Amanda is slowly gaining on Amber. As the runners are approaching the finish line, it appears that, just as Coach Frazier predicted, Dagmar will

definitely win this. And, we have a winner! Dagmar wins the women's 1,500 meters! But, hold on! Amanda is chasing down Amber, but Amber is picking up her pace. Amanda picks up her pace even more! Will Amanda catch Amber? Amanda is closing in and, at the finish, it's Amber taking second place, two steps ahead of Amanda, who takes third place! Congratulations, Coach Frazier! Your team did it again!" As he is looking up at the scoreboard for the times, Mr. Frazier tells Angela, "thank you! Thank you!" Letting the winners have their moment on the air, Mr. Frazier steps over to the team bench as Angela interviews Dagmar, Amber, and Amanda.

Over at the team's bench, the men's 4 by 400-meter relay team members are taking turns on the massage table, getting their illiotibial bands and hamstrings worked on by Valeriya, the massage therapist who has worked extensively with the team in the past. Mr. Frazier has spared no expense making sure his team is in optimal shape for this meet, all on the University's tab. And, in between Valeriya working on the athletes, Kathy sneaks on the table to get a quick massage for herself.

While Johnson is on the massage table, Mark scans the stands, looking for someone he may know as he often does during a meet. Spotting Mr. Zunde, Mark tells Eddie, "hey! It looks like Mr. Zunde is here today! He's sitting with Miss Amherst, Barbara, and Mr. Harris." Braden asks, "is there any sign of Chuckie?" Mark replies, "I hadn't seen him, or that Goldshit guy." Eddie informs Mark and Braden, "Goldshit is out of commission for a while. He won't be moving too fast anymore." Mark laughs, and replies, "oh, yeah. That's right. I forgot that you kicked his ass." Eddie replies, "yeah. I kicked his ass enough for all of us, bro." Braden exclaims, "that's one ass kicking I wish I was around to see!" Mark also mentions, "the mayor is in the stands too. I wonder what he wants." Eddie replies, "for some reason, that guy really bothers me."

At the end of the day, the call is made for the final event of the afternoon, which is the men's 4 by 400-meter relay. The University's women have already won the gold medal in their 4 by 400-meter relay event. Now, it's the men's turn. As the team is headed to the starting line, Braden exclaims, "this is the final ass kicking of the day! We're gonna win all the medals!" Johnson, who graduates this year, comments, "this is my last race. I ain't losing this one!"

Twelve teams will compete in two heats of six. The first heat brings the higher seeded teams, including Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson, who are assigned to lane one. While they are waiting to be told to get into position, Mark catches Nachlobrocklin walking up with his two handlers, and the rest of his relay team. Mark walks over and tells the Head Timekeeper, "that crazy guy is back. Please keep him away from us." The Head Timekeeper assures Mark, "we have our eyes on him."

Mark walks back to his group, where Braden is still informing the world how he is going to kick ass in this race.

As they are waiting for the event to begin, Braden is heard exclaiming, “the final ass kicking is about to get underway! Gonna kick an ass, and land it in the grass! The chief ass kicker is hot, and McCrutchen’s smoking pot! This race we’re gonna win, and then I’m gonna grin!” Braden continues his rants, which apparently bother Nachlobrocklin to a disproportionate extent. Being held back by his handlers, Nachlobrocklin yells back to Braden, “whose ass are you kicking? I can tell you this! It’s not mine!” Nachlobrocklin’s handlers tell him to calm down, and focus on the race. Ignoring his handler’s advice, Nachlobrocklin exclaims, “he’s messing up my race! He’s messing it all up.” Braden, not quite as refined as Mark when it comes to messing with someone, looks over at Nachlobrocklin, yelling back, “shut your puny ass up, junior!”

Seeing Nachlobrocklin’s temper tantrum, Mark laughs and tells his relay teammates, “that guy is a real basket case.” Johnson comments, “it doesn’t take much to set him off.” Mark replies, “ain’t that the truth. Watch this.” Mark stares at Nachlobrocklin, who doesn’t take much time to respond by yelling, “that other guy is looking at me! They’re all messing up my race!” Mark tells Johnson, “see that? What a moron.” Fortunately, Nachlobrocklin’s handlers are able to keep him physically under control. Emotionally, however, is a different story.

Not wanting his acclaimed 4 by 400-meter relay team to be affected by Nachlobrocklin’s childish behavior, Mr. Frazier jogs over to the starting line. Mr. Frazier asks, “is that guy bothering you guys?” Mark replies, “no. But, he’s getting my adrenaline levels up!” Braden exclaims, “his ass ain’t bothering me none! I’m gonna kick his scrawny ass, and then we’ll see what he has to say!” Eddie tells Mr. Frazier, “he’s not bothering me either. He’s kind of funny to watch, though.” Johnson tells Mr. Frazier, “it sounds like he’s going to self destruct.” Mr. Frazier replies, “just make sure you guys aren’t around when he does.”

Wondering what is going on, the Head Timekeeper walks up to Mr. Frazier, asking, “is there a problem?” Mr. Frazier replies, “there better not be.” Pointing to Nachlobrocklin, Mr. Frazier explains, “that guy has started something with my athletes several times in the past.” The Head Timekeeper replies, “believe me. I know. It’s not only your team. It’s quite a few of the other teams too.” Mr. Frazier informs the Head Timekeeper, “my guys, here, stand a really good chance of breaking the world record in this event. That guy, over there, whatever his name is, had better not interfere with them.” Knowing the skill of the four guys on the track, the Head Timekeeper replies, “I can fully understand that, sir.” The Head Timekeeper then whispers to Mr. Frazier, “during the indoor divisional, I thought your guy took him out for good.” Mr. Frazier laughs,

and whispers back, “if it was Eddie or Braden, trust me, that guy wouldn’t have been so lucky.”

As the race is ready to get underway, Mr. Frazier heads back to the team bench, located close to the transition zone and finish line. Using the order that has brought the fastest times this year, Mark gets behind the blocks with the other lead-off men. The Starter announces, “on your marks,” followed by, “set.” The gun is fired, and the lead-off men are out of the blocks. Johnson gets right onto the track and enters the transition zone, expecting to see Mark in about 45 seconds.

At the radio station tent, Angela calls the play by play, announcing, “the final event of today’s divisional meet, the men’s 4 by 400-meter relay is now underway! Mark Svoboda has just left the blocks, and already has an amazing lead! And, my viewers and listeners, I am told that these guys from our University are after the world record in this event. So, stay right where you are. From what I hear, this race should be over in about three minutes.”

On the track, Mark passes the baton to Johnson with the flawless handoff this relay team is known for. Angela announces, “in first place after the handoff, Eric Johnson is really moving around the track! Eric is going around the curve and into the back straightaway. From what I can tell, he has a fifteen or twenty-meter lead over his closest opponent, and his lead is widening. These guys are not messing around! And, right now, Eddie Bogenskaya, the fastest man in the world, gets onto the track, waiting for Eric to deliver the baton.”

Johnson hands off to Eddie, who fully intends to break another world record today. Angela announces, “Eric Johnson hands the baton off to Eddie Bogenskaya, who broke the world record in the men’s 100-meter dash earlier today. Eddie is running like he’s after another world record!”

As Angela is calling the play by play, Braden gets on the track, exclaiming, “here it comes. My baton is on it’s way! It’s time for me to kick ass!” Angela announces, “as Eddie comes around the final curve, I can hear Axel Braden clearly describing the anatomical location where his foot will land! And, that specific anatomic location, ladies and gentlemen, is gracefully referred to as the buttocks.”

Eddie flawlessly transfers the baton to Braden, who is now in high gear. No longer talking, Braden’s legs are now doing all the work. Angela announces, “Axel Braden has the baton, and just left the transition zone. I’m standing here, waiting for the next team to hand off, wondering when they’re going to show up. And, here they are. According to my stopwatch, the second place team is about twenty-two seconds behind the leader. That’s a lot of ground to make up. Okay, listeners, I know this is

going to be a great run because the coaches and the team are already celebrating!” Angela continues announcing the play by play, as Braden runs his leg. As Braden approaches the finish line, Angela announces, “Axel is sprinting toward the finish line, racing the clock. And, Axel Braden, and the University’s 4 by 400-meter relay team has taken first place!”

The times are revealed, and Angela announces, “the times were just posted, and the winning time is 2:56.02. Congratulations to the University’s 4 by 400-meter relay team!” Provost Leighton walks over to the radio station tent, as Angela announces, “I have Coach Leighton joining me right now. Coach, today has been an awesome day out there on the track for the University! Please share your thoughts with us.” Provost Leighton replies, “Angela, it really has been an awesome day. And, we have just witnessed another world record being broken here today! Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, Edward Bogenskaya, and Axel Braden have beaten the world record by about one-tenth of a second.” Surprised herself, Angela exclaims, “did you hear that, my listeners? That’s three world records broken in one track meet by the same team!”

Angela continues to interview Provost Leighton, summarizing the meet for the listening audience as the second, and last, heat of this event is run. Knowing that she is being broadcast on several commercial radio stations and one television station, Provost Leighton takes this opportunity to inform the listening audience of the various programs offered by the University. Provost Leighton also takes this time to give a run down of the sports opportunities offered by the University to qualified athletes.

After taking their victory lap together, Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden return to the team bench, where they receive high-fives, fist bumps, hugs, and congratulations from the team members. For anyone who had their doubts about the caliber of the University’s track team, today, all their questions have been answered. With an unprecedented victory, the team has great cause for celebration.

The end of the meet brings the awards ceremony, which Mr. Frazier and the rest of the coaching staff have been looking forward to. Several of the other divisional teams, winning nothing, have already packed up and are headed home. The Meet Announcer introduces today’s officials, and recognizes the coaches and athletes for their participation today. While a few brief administrative announcements are made, the first, second, and third place tiers are put in place. Mr. Frazier lets his team in on a secret, which is that the administrative announcements just fill a gap while the three tiers are being put in place.

Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer are called to the stage first. The Meet Announcer announces, “the gold medal in the 100-meter dash, setting a new world record of 9.93 seconds, goes to Edward Bogenskaya.” The crowd cheers wildly, knowing that they’ve witnessed history today. Eddie waves to the crowd, finally reaping the reward for the work he has put in all these years. The Meet Announcer announces, “the silver medal in the 100-meter dash goes to Mark Svoboda, and the bronze medal goes to James Hoffer.” The winners are draped with their medals, and wave to the crowd.

As the awards ceremony continues, there is constant traffic from the University’s bench to the stage. Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton stand together, ecstatic to reap the rewards for their work. Officer Richard Hayes walks over, and tells Mr. Frazier, “it looks like you had a great day, coach!” Mr. Frazier replies, “we did! These guys really put in a lot of work over the last two years. Today, they’re seeing that it paid off. And, now that Paxton, Grimsby, his gambling team, and the McCutchen brothers are gone, we finally have no rigging of the races.” Officer Hayes informs Mr. Frazier, “this McCutchen character they carted off earlier, I hear he’s in the ICU.” Mr. Frazier replies, “he’s a senior this year. Thankfully, we won’t be seeing any more of him.”

As Mr. Frazier and Officer Hayes are conversing, the Meet Announcer calls Braden, Johnson, and Bull to the stage. The Meet Announcer announces, “the gold medal in the 400-meter dash, setting a new world record of 43.75 seconds, goes to Axel Braden.” The crowd again cheers wildly, as Braden, standing on the first place tier, kicks his foot, mimicking the action of kicking someone’s ass. The Meet Announcer announces, “the silver medal in the 400-meter dash goes to Eric Johnson, and the bronze medal goes to Running Bull.” The winners are draped with their medals, then return to the team bench.

Over at the radio station’s tent, Angela is broadcasting the awards ceremony live. Mixing the Meet Announcer’s audio feed with Angela’s commentary of the events, the producer manages quite well getting the two audio streams to meld perfectly. The Production Manager of the television station, also broadcasting Angela’s audio feed with their video, watches Angela carefully as she eloquently broadcasts the ceremony with expert precision and timing. The professionals from the commercial stations quickly realize that Angela is far more skilled than they originally thought.

The end of the awards ceremony brings Eddie, Mark, Johnson, and Braden to the stage again, receiving the gold medal in the 4 by 400-meter relay. The Meet Announcer announces, “the gold medal in the 4 by 400-meter relay, setting a new world record with a time of 2:56.02, goes to Edward Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, and Axel Braden. I am

also informed that these four guys have been running this race, or its English equivalent, together since the sixth grade, and they have never lost a race!" Surprised to hear that this relay team has never lost a race, the crowd cheers. The second and third place teams are announced, and the teams are draped with their medals.

With the awards ceremony over, many of the spectators come down from the stands to meet up with the athletes. Joining the team is Mr. Zunde and Miss Amherst from Northside High School, Barbara, who now coaches the Northside High track team, Mr. Harris from the middle school, Mr. Frazier's wife, a few of the University's administrators, and the parents of many of the athletes. And, Officer Richard Hayes, who has taken an interest in track and field, mingles with the group.

Mr. Zunde makes his way to each of the University's athletes, congratulating everyone on their fine performance. Coming to Eddie, Mr. Zunde tells him, "that was quite the spectacular performance out there today. You guys were quite impressive." Eddie smiles, and replies, "I made my goal. I've been after that record for a year. I just hope it was good enough for the Olympic gold medal." Mr. Zunde asks, "the Olympic gold medal? Our President has boycotted the Olympics this year." Eddie explains, "yeah. But, this was our Olympics. We were all out to run times today that beat the times this Summer. And, since we don't know what those times will be, we got out there and gave it all we had." Mr. Zunde replies, "I don't believe anyone has broken ten seconds recently in the 100-meter dash. I suspect that you would win the gold medal were you competing." A few other athletes, including the rest of the 4 by 400-meter relay team, walk up to Mr. Zunde, and join in on the conversation.

Mayor Bradford Jamieson comes down from the stands and tries to mingle with the team. Most team members, not knowing who he is, give him no attention. Mark, knowing exactly who he is, whispers to Eddie, "I wonder what the mayor wants." Eddie replies, "I don't know. But, Richard apparently wants to know." Officer Richard Hayes takes some time to speak with the mayor. Little does the mayor know that Officer Hayes is likely conducting an investigation, secretly, of course.

Mr. Zunde walks aside with Johnson, telling him, "I have some good news for you." Knowing what this is about, Johnson asks, "really? What's that?" Mr. Zunde explains, "as I expected, Mr. Hesse has decided to retire this year, which opens up a position for a physical education instructor at the high school. Your application has been approved, so the district will be making you an offer immanently. The position will be at the high school, where I'm sure Barbara will be glad to have you as her assistant track coach." What Mr. Zunde does not tell Johnson is that Mr. Zunde, himself, has approved Johnson's application. Johnson replies, "awesome! When I get the offer, I'll take it!" Mr. Zunde smiles, telling Johnson, "good.

I'll be looking forward to it." Johnson was hoping to get a job with his former high school, but Eddie already knew for certain that would happen someday.

Mr. Harris, the track coach at the middle school, congratulates Mr. Frazier, giving him a high-five, and telling him, "I knew these guys were good when they were in middle school. But, I never thought I'd see them break three world records in one meet!" Mr. Frazier replies, "these guys are amazing! They never cease to amaze me. I'm just wondering what's going to happen next year." Mr. Harris comments, "it's just a shame that they won't be at the Olympics this Summer." Agreeing with Mr. Harris, Mr. Frazier replies, "yeah. That's a real sore point with some of them right now." It's also a sore point with Mr. Frazier, who will be on the evening news tonight when his interview with Angela will be broadcast.

Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Harris, "and, it looks like Michelle had a great day out there too!" Mr. Harris reveals, "she's been training hard. She showed me her gold medals just a while ago. I've never seen her so happy." Mr. Frazier informs Mr. Harris, "just wait until next year. If I am correct, she'll be among the fastest women in the country."

Walking over to their daughter, who is celebrating with her 4 by 400-meter relay team, Karen's parents have come down from the stands, along with Karen's Aunt Jeannie. Karen steps aside, and her father gives her a hug telling her, "congratulations! I never knew my daughter can run so fast!" Karen replies, "thank you! I tried really hard." Karen's aunt tells Karen, "you were awesome out there, girl! I am totally impressed!" Karen and her father talk for a few minutes, then Karen's father, knowing that this is a special time for Karen, lets Karen get back to the celebration with her teammates for the moment.

Karen's mother, Phyllis, on the other hand, stepped away from the conversation to give Kathy a piece of her mind. Admonishing Kathy, Karen's mother exclaims, "you had no right to build her up, making her think that she was going to the Olympics! This has got to be the biggest let down of her life!" Kathy tries to explain, telling Phyllis, "hold on! With the time Karen and Erika ran in the 4 by 400 relay, she would have won the gold medal at the last Olympics!" Karen's mother tells Kathy, "oh, stop it already!"

Overhearing the conversation between her mother and Kathy, Karen walks over and tells her mother, "no! You stop it already! And, leave Kathy alone!" Kathy tells Karen's mother, "you have absolutely no idea how good your daughter is at track, do you?" Karen's father, also catching wind of the argument, walks over and tells Karen's mother, "oh, Phyllis! Cut it out already! Karen had a great day! Don't spoil it for her!"

Now outnumbered, Phyllis bluntly replies, “fine. I’ll just leave then.” Karen replies, “go ahead. Leave. Just like you did on Christmas that one year, when you packed your suitcase, and walked down the street in the snow, and dad had to chase after you!” Apparently, Karen hit a nerve, causing her mother to cry, and walk away. Karen’s father gives Karen a hug, telling her, “you did great today. I’m so proud of you. Let me go chase after her.” Karen replies, “okay. I love you. I hope she calms down.” Karen’s father leaves, chasing after Phyllis as he has had to do many times in the past.

When Karen’s parents are gone, Kathy asks Karen, “what was all that about her leaving on Christmas?” Karen explains, “it was the year I got my radio. On Christmas morning, I was so happy to get it. So I was listening to my radio with my earphones. Then, my mother said something to me, but I didn’t hear her, so she started yelling. And, then she said, ‘apparently, I don’t matter to anyone around here anymore.’ So, she packed a suitcase, and walked down the street in the snow. My dad chased after her, and they had an argument in the middle of the street. Then, someone came out of their house and asked my mother if she needed any help. I guess she realized what a fool she made of herself, and she came home.” Kathy replies with a sigh, “that’s just too bad.” Karen tells Kathy, “I really hope I was switched at birth.” Kathy asks, “why?” Karen replies, “because, I don’t want to grow up acting like her.” Kathy and Karen join the rest of the group, where the tone is a little more upbeat.

As Karen is mingling with her teammates, Kathy thinks back to her life when she was in middle school and high school, comparing it with the glimpse she got of Karen’s upbringing. Kathy remembers how much her parents love her and, in the home she grew up in, there was no fighting or bickering. Karen, on the other hand, constantly strived to avoid the unpleasant stressful atmosphere she was subjected to by her mother.

Mr. Zunde walks over to Kathy and Paula, and tells them, “walk over here with me for a moment.” Mr. Zunde, Kathy, and Paula walk away from the crowd, where they can have a private conversation. Mr. Zunde explains to Kathy and Paula, “Miss Paterno is getting married, and moving away, leaving a position open at the elementary school. And, Mr. Coleman has taken a position in the school district where he lives. I can’t say I blame him. He was commuting about an hour in each direction. So, there is an opening at the middle school for a physical education instructor who will also teach health classes. I know both of you have applied, and Noreen wants to extend an offer to both of you.”

Kathy exclaims, “wow! Talk about a dream come true!” Paula exclaims, “yeah! Seriously!” Mr. Zunde smiles, knowing that Kathy and Paula both wanted to be physical education instructors in the school

district in which they grew up. Mr. Zunde tells Kathy and Paula, “now, the hard question. Which one of you gets which position?” First to reply, Kathy tells Mr. Zunde, “I’ve always wanted to teach at an elementary school.” Paula quickly responds, replying, “good, because I’d rather be at the middle school.” Mr. Zunde replies, “that was easy. I’ll let Noreen know.” Kathy and Paula thank Mr. Zunde for the good news, and everyone gets back to the celebration.

Over at the radio station tent, Angela and her crew, having a long day, pack up their equipment. Bob Schneider, the Production Manager for the station televising the meet, walks over to Angela, and asks her, “do you have a moment?” Even though it’s the end of a busy day, Angela replies, “sure! What’s up?” Mr. Schneider, who found out from Kathy that Angela is graduating with a master’s degree this semester, tells Angela, “I spoke with my Program Manager a few minutes ago over the comm link to the station. He watched the entire meet, and was very impressed by your presence over the air. He wants you to come down to the station for a job interview.” Blind sided by what she is hearing, Angela replies, “wow! I really wasn’t expecting this today!” Mr. Schneider asks, “so, do you think you can come down to the station and talk with us?” Angela replies, “sure! I’d love to!” Mr. Schneider whispers to Angela, “I shouldn’t say this, but he was quite impressed with your presence over the air. He really wants to hire you.” Glad to hear that Angela is receptive to talking, Mr. Schneider talks with the station’s Program Manager over the communication link, and sets up the time of Angela’s interview with the station management.

With everything winding down, Kathy announces to everyone that the celebration will continue at the pizzeria, as it has for the last eight years. This year, Kathy invites Angela, asking her, “hey! We’re going out for pizza. Do you want to join us?” Angela sighs, and replies, “I can’t. I have to climb the tower and change a light bulb before it gets dark.” Knowing that Angela is pulling her leg, Kathy replies, “that’s okay. The pizzeria delivers. I’m sure they’ll deliver to the top of an antenna tower.” Angela laughs, and tells Kathy, “I’d love to join you guys!” Kathy tells Angela, “you can ride with me.” Angela replies, “you got a deal, especially since I have no idea where you guys are going!” The team, and Angela, heads out to the pizzeria, celebrating today’s unprecedented victory.

On the Monday morning following the divisional meet, Mr. Frazier addresses the team from behind the lectern he destroyed, and subsequently restored, telling everyone, “good morning! I think we had a really good meet this weekend! What do you think?” Everyone on the team responds with cheers, whistles, clapping, and every positive gesture imaginable. Mr. Frazier continues, “in the individual events, we took every single medal! And, in the relay events, we took the gold medal in every event! And, we took the gold and silver medal in every field event, and

the bronze medal in half the field events! You guys have set a new standard! Some of you have set a standard higher than the Olympics!" The team cheers again, quite impressed by their own performance.

Mr. Frazier then tells the team, "now, for some interesting news! Some other universities are going to fire their coaches! I know this because one of them has applied for a position at this University. He can't even coach his own team! Why does he want to come here?" The team laughs, now fully understanding Mr. Frazier's unusual sense of humor that he partially inherited from the tribe. Mr. Frazier laughs, and tells the team, "what happened over the weekend is their problem. I really wonder what they're going to do about it." Mr. Frazier congratulates the team again, and moves on to today's agenda.

Mr. Frazier then tells the team, "Mrs. Owens, our events coordinator and team statistician, will be graduating this semester with a Ph.D. in mathematics." The team cheers for Mrs. Owens, who has been working with the team for eight years. Mr. Frazier continues, "Dr. Owens, as she will now be known as, will return to the University this Fall and be teaching mathematics. The good news is that she will be still working with us on compiling and analyzing statistics, and helping myself and Coach Leighton in assigning events."

Behind the scenes, Mrs. Owens calculates the expected performance of each event based upon various assignments. For the relay teams, using past statistics, Mrs. Owens predicts the relay team performance based upon who runs in each event and in which leg. The final result, which is based upon the calculated outcomes, is how the team will perform in any specific meet. Most recently, Mrs. Owens has been using a computer to predict the outcome of every event using every combination of the University's athletes. This is exactly why Mr. Frazier has been meticulously collecting statistics on the competition's performance.

Mr. Frazier then announces, "at the end of the academic year, we all customarily try different events, reevaluating our skill set as a team. We will all begin that exercise today. If you are a senior, you can hang around, take the day off, or get a workout in with the team. During the next week, as we did last year, we will all be running time trials in every event. And, feel free to try some of the field events. Mark did that last year with the hammer, and this weekend he walked away with the gold medal in that event. Okay! Everyone head outside and we'll start working!"

During the walk to the track, Kathy asks Karen, "are you working at the Summer day camp again?" Karen replies, "I am! And, so is Amber. Thank you so very much again for getting me that job." Kathy replies, "that job is really fun. And, it pays pretty well." Karen informs Kathy,

“and, I used Provost Leighton’s little secret, and took a one-hour physical education course, so I can stay in the dorms this Summer!” Kathy replies, “that’s awesome!”

Karen tells Kathy, “oh! And, I see what you meant when you said Mrs. Jensen is a space cadet. Half the time she called me Kathy and she called Amber Paula.” Kathy laughs, and replies, “I’m sure that’s only the beginning.” Karen explains, “yeah. That’s the truth.” Karen then tells the story, “get this one. We were going on a field trip to the beach, and we had some SPF 45 sunscreen for the kids. So, I was loading the bus and I told Amber, ‘put the 45 on for everyone. They’ll make a mess if they do it themselves.’ So, Mrs. Jensen asks, ‘why are you taking records to the beach?’ I looked at her and asked, ‘what?’ So, she said, ‘45 RPM records. Why are you putting them on for the kids?’ So, I told her, ‘SPF 45 sunscreen, not 45 RPM records.’ So, she just said, ‘oh.’” Kathy laughs, telling Karen, “that sounds just like her!”

Kathy then offers, “if you want, you can work out with me and Eddie again over the Summer.” Karen replies, “I’d really love to! Thank you so much for asking!” Kathy suggests, “maybe we can get some of the other team members to join us, like Erika and Tessa. I bet they’ll like to join us.” Karen energetically exclaims, “that would be awesome! Then, we can go out and get pizza together.” Kathy replies, “your mom was right.” Surprised at Kathy’s remark, Karen asks, “what do you mean?” Kathy laughs, and replies, “I ruined you. You’re eating pizza now.” Karen laughs, telling Kathy, “that’s funny. But, it sounds like something she would say.”

Once everyone is at the track, Mr. Frazier announces, “you’ll all be running the 100-meter dash first. I want 100 percent effort out of everyone today.” Pointing over to the shot-put crew, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “even you guys! We’re going to finally see what Bobby B., Mendenhall, Cinquegrana, and Greene have under the hood!” Bobby B. laughs, knowing that his 100-meter time is good, but not good enough for competition. Mendenhall and Cinquegrana are graduating this year, and have attended practice today just for fun. It’s not likely either of them are going to be trying very hard.

While the time trials are underway, Kathy asks Paula, “do you really want the position at the middle school, or are you just taking it because I wanted the one at the elementary school?” Paula replies, “I really want it. I really like our middle school. High school wouldn’t have been too bad if it wasn’t for Mr. Crum. I was hoping that you wanted the one at the elementary school.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I always wanted to be a gym teacher in an elementary school. But, I never thought the path to get there would be so hard.” Recalling all they’ve been through in the past, Paula replies, “yeah, seriously. I know what you mean.” Kathy comments,

“maybe life will get easier now.” Paula laughs, and says, “yeah, right. You seriously don’t believe that, girl, do you?” Kathy calmly replies with a long and drawn out, “noooooo.”

Mark, sitting on the bench with Eddie, mentions, “hey. There’s the shot-put team ready to break your world record in the 100-meter.” Eddie glances over at the starting line, and tells Mark, “my moment of glory is coming to an end. Those guys look fast.” Standing behind the blocks, Bobby B., Fabio Cinquegrana, and Pete Mendenhall look like they’re not messing around. Joining them is Shawn Greene, a freshman shot-put and hammer thrower. Greene, who took third place in the hammer throw in the divisional meet, looks promising in the field events.

Calling the play by play, Mark announces, “here we are, ladies, gentleman, and not so gentle men, for the 100-meter dash to determine the world’s fastest shot-put man. Lined up are Bobby B., Cinquegrana, Mendenhall, and Greene. Bobby B. looks determined to win this, Eddie, but what’s that I hear? Cinquegrana is telling Bobby B., the shot doc, that he’s finally going down.” Eddie sits back, wondering what the field guys can deliver on the track.

The Starter announces, “on your marks,” as Mark announces, “the five-star sprinting team is getting into the blocks. The Starter gets the runners set. What’s this I see? A Lane Judge is coming over to help Mendenhall get properly positioned in the blocks. Eddie, from what I see, I don’t think Mendenhall has ever run before!” Eddie interjects, “there’s a first time for everything. Hopefully, he’ll run toward the finish line.”

The gun is fired, and Mark announces, “they’re off! Right out of the blocks, Bobby B. commands an instantaneous lead, leaving the rest of the shot-put team in the dust. This is serious business! Cinquegrana steps up the pace, and is chasing down the shot-doc. Greene is in third place, carefully reevaluating his race strategy. And, can you believe it? Mendenhall is actually running in the right direction!”

As the runners approach the finish line, Mark announces, “and, here it comes, the long awaited finish that we thought would never get here. And, yes! Bobby B., the shot doc, crosses the finish line which looks like one for the record books! Coming in with a time in the fifteen to twenty-second range, Bobby B. lays claim to the title of the fastest shot-putter in the University! Cinquegrana finishes second, being pushed hard by Greene. And, can you believe it? Mendenhall finally makes it to the finish line before practice is over!” Coming in first place with a time in the mid seventeen-second range, Bobby B. takes a victory walk and heads to the bench, joining Eddie, Mark, and a few others.

After a busy morning out on the track, Mr. Frazier blows his whistle, signifying the end of practice. Everyone was surprised at Bobby B. running the 100-meter dash in 17.6 seconds, beating out both Mendenhall, Cinquegrana, and Greene. Dismissing the team, Mr. Frazier heads to his office with Provost Leighton as the athletes head to the locker rooms.

Toward the end of the week, in the evening after dinner, Eddie asks Kathy, “what’s wrong with us?” Kathy asks, “how do you mean?” Eddie replies, “we haven’t been to the beach in a long time.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! What’s wrong with us? Let’s go!” Eddie asks, “now?” Kathy replies, “there’s no better time than the present.”

Eddie and Kathy get dressed for the beach, find their towels, and are ready to go. Eddie asks, “which beach are we going to?” Kathy explains, “we’re going to our beach. If I’m not mistaken, we can tell the portal to take us directly to the beach, and the portal will come with us.” Eddie points out, “having a slab of marble just show up on the beach will be kind of obvious.” Kathy replies, “oh, yeah. I forgot about that.” With a stroke of genius, Kathy exclaims, “hey, I know! We can have the portal take us directly to the sand dunes! No one ever goes to the sand dunes.” Eddie agrees, telling Kathy, “that should work. Let’s go for it!”

Eddie and Kathy enter their backyard portal, stating, “take us to our beach, today, at noon, in the sand dunes.” Eddie and Kathy are transported to their beach, in their favorite spot, among the sand dunes. Kathy exclaims, “awesome! We have a beach in our back yard!” Eddie asks, “why didn’t we think of this before?” Kathy replies, “because we’ve been too busy training.”

Eddie and Kathy walk out from among the sand dunes, finding a deserted place to lie out in the sun for a while. As they are catching some rays, Kathy asks Eddie, “what do we usually do at the beach? I forgot.” Eddie replies, “lay in the sun, ride waves, get pizza for lunch, and occasionally run in the sand. And, when Mark and Paula are with us, you and Paula end up chasing each other for some reason.” Kathy replies, “oh, yeah.”

Out of the blue, Eddie asks, “would you know when the high school State invitational meet is?” Kathy replies, “I think it’s next weekend. Why?” Pointing to a group of runners running down the beach, Eddie tells Kathy, “look who’s headed this way.” Kathy sits up, and asks, “what’s he doing here?” Brad Evans, now coaching the Centerville High School track team, is running down the beach with what appears to be a few high school athletes. Eddie replies, “maybe they’re going to try to win fair and square for once.” Kathy lays back down, and tells Eddie, “that’s not happening.”

Eddie watches, as Evans and his trainees run down the beach. Mentioning something to his team, Evans points over toward Eddie and Kathy. Eddie wonders what Evans is telling his team, but he decides that it doesn't matter. Eddie lays back down, enjoying the beautiful sunshine. Eddie mentions, "I wonder if they think they're going to win something this year." Kathy replies, "I don't know. But, when we get back, I'm letting Barbara know what the competition is up to." Eddie and Kathy lay back and relax, talking about their day.

Kathy asks, "how was your day?" Eddie replies, "it was a really easy day. Richard came by the station at lunch. He's still trying to figure out what's going on with the mayor and the McCrutchen family. Richard also said that he found out today that Goldshit is out of the hospital." Kathy replies, "that's not good. That means he's back on the streets." Eddie tells Kathy, "not quite. Richard said that the judge set the bail very high, and gave Goldshit a choice. He can either go to jail, or go to drug rehab. So, Goldshit went to drug rehab, just to get out of going to jail."

Twenty minutes later, Evans and his group return, headed for the parking lot. This time Evans, and his team, gets a little too close to Eddie and Kathy, who are still relaxing in the sun. As he is passing by, Evans intentionally kicks sand onto Kathy, causing her to abruptly sit up. Kathy yells out, "you asshole!" Eddie, who also got sprayed with sand, quickly stands up, and chases Evans. During the chase, Kathy stands up and yells out to Evans' running partners, "you guys are next!" Evans' running partners back off to a safe distance in case Eddie makes good on Kathy's promise.

No match for Eddie, Evans is caught within 50 yards. Dragging Evans to the water, Eddie tells him, "that was your biggest mistake yet, junior." Evans repeatedly exclaims, "let me go!" Eddie quietly replies, "I will, in a minute." Now at the shore, Eddie kicks Evans behind his knees, causing him to fall to the ground. Quickly grasping Evans' ankles, Eddie spins him around, trying him out as a hammer. Hurling Evans into the ocean, Eddie lets out a primal scream. Surprisingly, so does Evans.

Evans gets out of the water and, holding him in an arm lock, Eddie escorts Evans back to the towels where Kathy is now standing. Eddie punches Evans in his mid section, causing him to fall to the ground. Kathy gives Evans a swift kick in the ass, yelling out, "you piece of shit!" With a disproportionate response by Eddie, Evans will likely never kick sand at Eddie and Kathy again. Eddie instructs Evans, "I want you to report this to the police, junior." Evans exclaims, "you can be sure I will, asshole!" Eddie replies, "good. I'm really looking forward to it."

Eddie whispers to Kathy, "let's get out of here. We can come back to a different time." Kathy agrees, replying, "yeah. Seriously." Eddie and

Kathy run back to the portal, disappearing from the beach, and arriving safely in their back yard. Kathy asks Eddie, “how did you tell him to call the police?” Eddie laughs, and replies, “we told the portal to bring us to the beach at noon. At 12:30 today, I was finishing my lunch, and talking to Richard at the service station. And, you were in class.” Kathy laughs hysterically, exclaiming, “the perfect alibi.”

Done with the beach for now, Kathy tells Eddie, “I’m kind of done with the beach for today. Let’s go to bed early.” Eddie and Kathy head inside, and will plan a beach trip on another day, hopefully not running into Evans any time soon.

While Eddie and Kathy are preparing to enjoy their Summer, Officer Hayes is still busy, trying to piece together parts of the new puzzle he was handed this past year. With indirect evidence that organized gambling is still occurring, affecting collegiate and high school sports, Officer Hayes is searching for anything that might constitute a clue. Half of Officer Hayes’ problem is identifying pieces that are actually part of the puzzle. What the officer has found is that pieces involving certain people, while they do not seem to fit the puzzle, may later turn up to actually be valuable.

After handling a routine complaint at a liquor store in the town behind the high school where Eddie and Kathy live, Officer Hayes is questioned by the store owner regarding his business license. The store owner asks Officer Hayes, “while you’re here, can you tell me why my business license fee has tripled?” Officer Hayes tells the owner, “you’ll have to take that up with the business license office. I have no control over that.” The owner explains, “I did. But, they insist that there’s nothing wrong. They added an environmental impact fee that we never had to pay before.” Hoping to get some information, the store owner asks Officer Hayes, “can I show you something?” Officer Hayes replies, “sure,” as they walk back to the office.

The store owner shows Officer Hayes two bills that were paid in order to obtain his yearly business license. One bill, for the actual business license, was for the amount shown on the business license itself. The other bill, approximately twice that of the business license fee, is for an “environmental impact fee”, stating it must be paid by a separate check. Examining the two bills, business license, and two cancelled checks, Officer Hayes explains, “there’s obviously something here that I don’t understand. I have no idea what this environmental impact fee is. Let me suggest this. Take copies of your paperwork downtown to the business license office, and give them another chance to clear this up. If they don’t clear it up, give me a call, and we’ll open an investigation.”

Officer Hayes requests copies of the pertinent documents, which the store owner is glad to provide. Obviously either a clerical mistake or fraud, Officer Hayes hopes the problem can be easily cleared up by the

store owner. Unless a crime has been committed or a law broken, there is not much Officer Hayes can do at the moment. But, Officer Hayes is not stupid. What he heard today from the store owner might just be another piece of the puzzle he is trying to solve.