

Eddie, The Collegiate Senior

Chapter Six The Spring Track Season

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On the first day back from Spring break, the team meets in the arena, ready to get back on the track. The team's first meet is in one week, which will have the top four teams in the division from last year competing against each other. Clearly a high profile meet, the results will be somewhat indicative of what can be expected for the remainder of the season. Two other four-way meets will also be held on that date. In one of those meets, the middle ranked four teams will be competing against each other. In the third meet, the four lowest ranked teams will be competing, and fighting it out to avoid the infamous title of the worst team in the division. That title, as it has in the last five years, will likely go to Dr. Gable's team.

Walking into the arena where the team is already seated, Mr. Frazier scans the bleachers as he shuffles through a few papers. Seeing Harry Dulaney sitting on the bleachers, Mr. Frazier is thinking of the fastest way imaginable to cut him from the team. So is Provost Leighton, who is looking over the performance records from the indoor season with Dr. Owens. Dr. Zunde walks in last, and stands alongside the other coaches.

Mr. Frazier greets the team, announcing, "good morning. Congratulations again on a great indoor season. Let's see if we can carry your stellar performance over into the outdoor season!" The team cheers and claps, indicating to Mr. Frazier that they are ready for the challenge. Mr. Frazier continues, "there are eleven teams in this division that are not very happy with you guys. And, there are a few coaches who aren't very happy with me either. That is because we win! Next weekend, when we take first place in the four-way meet, the other teams will be battling it out for the title of the first loser! Look at what they have to look forward to! How can that be motivating?" The team cheers as if they have already won the meet.

Mr. Frazier continues, “today, I want to specifically address our seniors. But, this will eventually apply to all of you, so listen up. I have known many of you now for eight years. For many of you, this will be your last year competing at the collegiate level. Listen to me carefully. If you are a senior, you have taken enough courses and passed enough tests to get a diploma that tells the world that you have taken enough courses and passed enough tests to get that diploma! The problem is that piece of paper that they call a diploma will get you absolutely nowhere in life unless you have the drive to succeed!”

Mr. Frazier then elaborates, announcing, “let me ask you this. What is harder to obtain? A diploma, or a gold medal in the 100-meter dash? A diploma or a gold medal in the 400-meter dash? A diploma or a gold medal in the 1,500-meter run? I hope you get the picture. You can literally sleep your way through most universities and get a diploma! You cannot sleep through your training here and expect to win! And, you cannot sleep your way through the rest of your life, and expect to succeed!”

Making a parallel, Mr. Frazier explains, “your diploma is your ticket to the track of the working world. But, your diploma is absolutely no guarantee that you will succeed! What have I been teaching you for the last few years? In a race, there is only one winner! One winner! If you come in second place, congratulations! You are the first loser! You must attack your opponent with no fear! Who here has not heard me say this over and over again?” The room falls silent. Everyone on the team has heard this from Mr. Frazier many times.

Citing one example of what he is trying to get the seniors to understand, Mr. Frazier explains, “now, some of you, when you graduate, will be in sales. If you are working with the customer, and get them to sign the sales contract, congratulations! You won! You came in first place! Instead of getting a gold medal, your reward is your commission. Let me ask you this. What does the salesman who comes in second place get?” After a few seconds of silence, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “nothing! Absolutely nothing! This is exactly what I’ve been trying to get through to everyone! Second place, in the working world, will get you absolutely nothing! In sales, there is only one winner! And, on the track, there is only one winner!”

Citing another example, Mr. Frazier explains, “if you are graduating, and are expecting to land a white collar job, you will be up for promotion someday. If you have nine coworkers, and only one person will be promoted, there will be nine losers, and only one winner! I can assure you this. The winner who receives the promotion will demonstrate the trait of having no fear! The winner will demonstrate confidence! The winner is someone who will not settle for second place!”

Continuing with his discourse, Mr. Frazier tells the team, “when you applied to this university, why were you picked? You were picked because you are a winner! When you apply for a job, why would a prospective employer pick you over the other candidates? They will pick you for your high confidence level! They will pick you because you demonstrate no fear! In a job interview, you may be asked, ‘do you think you are a good fit for the position?’ Do you seriously think you would get the job if you reply, ‘well, I don’t know. I’m not so sure.’ Of course you won’t! If you confidently answer, ‘I don’t think you’ll find a better candidate than me,’ then you will get somewhere!”

As he often does during a team meeting, Mr. Frazier quotes his favorite Bible verse, stating, “in the Bible, First Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 24, 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 win!’ There is only one winner on the track! In many instances, in business, there is only one winner! Never be satisfied with second place!”

Mr. Frazier continues giving advice to the seniors. During Mr. Frazier’s address, Provost Leighton whispers to Dr. Zunde, “I should have Mr. Frazier give the commencement address at graduation this year.” Dr. Zunde replies, “George certainly has a way to motivate the team. The business world is no different. Like he said, it’s the same drive to succeed that leads to success on the track and in business.” Provost Leighton whispers, “George’s presentation is certainly a whole lot more eloquent and motivating than some of the intellectual nonsense I’ve heard over the years.”

Recalling the indoor season’s accomplishments and defining goals for the upcoming season, Mr. Frazier continues motivating the team for another ten minutes. As he is finishing up, Mr. Frazier announces, “I almost forgot. This year, I understand that there is a new policy. I am told that everyone will have to undergo a drug test if you are to compete in intercollegiate athletics. The authorities will be testing you for performance enhancing drugs and various recreational drugs.” Provost Leighton whispers to Dr. Zunde, “I wasn’t aware of such a policy change.” Dr. Zunde replies, “neither was I.” Mr. Frazier concludes, “so, if you are taking illicit drugs, do not embarrass me by failing your drug test!”

Mr. Frazier then instructs the team to head out to the track. As the team walks outside, Provost Leighton asks Mr. Frazier, “what’s this I hear about a new drug policy? I haven’t heard about that.” Mr. Frazier laughs, and replies, “there is no new policy. I made that up. And, Dulaney just headed to the locker room.” Provost Leighton laughs, and tells Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde, “well, that was certainly an interesting way to cut him from the team.” The coaches join the team as they all begin preparing for the first meet.

On the track, wanting to see exactly where everyone's performance level is, Mr. Frazier organizes a few time trials. After running their heat, Eddie and Mark walk over to the field area, planning to throw a few field implements. On the way, Eddie mentions to Mark, "it's really not the same without Kathy and Paula here." Mark replies, "yeah. I know what you mean. They really liven everything up." Seeing Bobby B. with a hammer in his hand, Eddie suggests to Mark, "let's go mess with Bobby B." Mark replies, "that sounds like a plan."

Eddie and Mark arrive at the launching area, where Dr. Zunde tells them, "why don't you guys take a few throws with the hammer first." Eddie replies, "I think I will. Someone has to show that amateur how it's done." Eddie, of course, was referring to Bobby B., who turns around and tells Eddie, "the hammer is the one with the long wire attached to it." Eddie replies, "really? I thought we were throwing construction hammers today." Mark comments, "I left my hammer in my truck. I guess I'll have to use theirs." Dr. Zunde laughs, now knowing that today will be quite interesting.

Eddie takes hold of the hammer, and asks Bobby B., "which way do I throw it?" Bobby B. replies, "any which way you want. It doesn't matter," which is partially true. The safety cage will catch the hammer if it is inadvertently launched in the wrong direction. Eddie gets onto the pad, recalling the day when Giuseppe Vio Otto broke into his home. Visualizing Vio Otto coming around the corner, Eddie places the hammer into motion. Into a powerful spin, Eddie exclaims, "Vio Otto" as he releases the hammer. The hammer soars through the air, landing far into the red zone. Seeing where the hammer landed, Dr. Zunde comments, "that about wraps up the season in the hammer."

Courtney, the team assistant driving the golf cart today, retrieves the hammer, and delivers the measurement, which comes in at 78.50 meters, or 257 feet, 6 inches. Dr. Zunde calmly comments to Eddie, "that was a very good throw. If you threw it about two meters farther, you'd be right at the record." Eddie yells out to Bobby B., asking him, "yo! Did it go in the right direction?" Realizing that Eddie is now number one in the hammer, Bobby B. replies, "yeah. That was a lucky throw! You had the wind behind you!" Mark takes hold of the hammer next, also hoping to get in a good throw.

Eddie heads over to the discus pad to see what he can do. Holding up the discus, Eddie yells out to Bobby B., "hey! It looks like the shot-put got ran over by a tank! It's been flattened out!" Everyone around wonders what has gotten into Eddie today. He's not taking anything seriously at all, and performing quite well. Getting on the discus pad, Eddie patiently waits for Mark to complete his hammer throw. Once Mark's measurement is taken, Eddie gets ready to make his discus throw.

Eddie goes into the wind up. Dr. Zunde watches carefully along with the other field athletes. Into the spin, Eddie lets out a loud primal scream as he releases the discus. The discus flies through the air, finding its resting place a little farther than anyone ever expected. Seeing Eddie's throw, Dr. Zunde comments to Bobby B., "it looks like I don't have much work to do this year."

Courtney retrieves Eddie's discus, and delivers the measurement, which comes in at 69.80 meters, or 229 feet. Mark's hammer throw comes in at 75.48 meters, or 247 feet, 7 inches. Mark, however, never had the benefit of being ticked off by Giuseppe Vio Otto, as Eddie once was. Dr. Zunde calmly comments to Eddie and Mark, "you guys must have been practicing. Those were very impressive performances." Mark replies, "we've been hitting the weights more this year. Eddie built a gym behind his service station. We all work out together occasionally."

The rest of practice goes very well for the team. All indications are that, in the upcoming meet, all the medals have already been claimed. On the walk back to the arena, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, Dr. Zunde, and Dr. Owens, "this is going to be our best season yet. I'm wondering what's going to happen next year when some of these guys graduate." Dr. Owens offers, "when I enter the statistics into the computer, I can run that simulation for you. The simulation will give you our expected performance based upon the stats we have on the other teams versus our team, sans their and our seniors." Mr. Frazier replies, "perfect! I'd really like to see that." Dr. Owens tells the coach, "I'll have it for you tomorrow morning."

Also preparing for the first meet of the Spring season is Mayor Jamieson, who has been waiting patiently for the training session to end so that he may speak with Axel Braden. As Braden comes out of the locker room, Mayor Jamieson pulls Braden aside, asking, "do you have time to talk?" Braden replies, "yeah. What's up?" The mayor suggests, "let's go somewhere private." Braden replies, "I know just the place." Braden takes the mayor to an area behind the student center where they cannot be seen or heard.

The mayor asks Braden, "have you given any further consideration to my offer?" Braden replies, "yes, sir. My wedding is coming up, and I still don't know how I'm gonna pay for my part." Putting a generous offer on the table, the mayor suggests, "how does five-thousand dollars sound if you come in second place in the 400-meter race?" Braden is silenced, which is quite a miracle in itself. Braden then tells the mayor, "you got a deal! That's gonna give me and Wendy the best honeymoon I can imagine!"

Braden and the mayor shake hands, sealing the deal. Mayor Jamieson writes the check, and hands it to Braden. Braden mentions to the mayor, "ain't no one gonna believe it if I don't win that race on Saturday. When I leave the blocks, I'm gonna have to pretend to trip and stumble, or something. They'll believe that." The mayor replies, "that's really good thinking. I'm impressed." The mayor heads out for the day, planning to make a huge fortune with the inside information he has orchestrated.

What Mayor Jamieson does not know is that Braden and Wendy have found a house in the town in which they grew up, and will be closing on it soon. And, best of all, they will be paying cash, using the money Braden made in the stock market following Eddie's advice. What else the mayor does not know is that the five-thousand dollar check will be turned over to Officer Hayes as evidence, and will never be cashed.

The day of the four-way meet arrives, which is held at the University's stadium. In the stands today is Mayor Jamieson, who wants a front row seat when payday arrives. The mayor has purchased another document with inside information from Mr. Finley, which will represent the likely outcome of the meet. Except for, perhaps, the results of the 400-meter dash, which Mayor Jamieson has negotiated, himself, as a side deal.

Also in the stands today is Officer Hayes, who is very interested to see the outcome of the 400-meter dash. And, down on the field is the undercover officer playing the part of Jackson Finley. Mr. Finley's two bodyguards, Tony and Dino, are in the stands, seated a few rows behind Mayor Jamieson. They will be keeping the mayor under close surveillance. And, sitting alongside the team on the University's team bench, by special invitation, is Kathy and Paula.

The meet gets underway with the call for the 100-meter dash preliminaries. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer head to the starting blocks, whose presence suggests to the opposition that the event is already over. As the contestants are getting ready, Mr. Finley walks over to Mr. Frazier, striking up a conversation. The conversation is purely for the benefit of Mayor Jamieson, who is sitting in the stands. Mr. Finley clearly wants the mayor to know that he is present, giving the impression that, as in each meet, he calls the shots.

Kathy and Paula watch the 100-meter dash from the bench as the gun is fired. Kathy yells out, "go, Eddie!" Paula yells out, "go, Mark!" If Tessa was present today, she would be cheering for Hoffer. But, Tessa is on the other side of campus, competing in a swimming meet at the moment. At the finish line, there are no surprises. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer have all earned the right to compete in the 100-meter dash final.

Later in the morning, the call is made for the 400-meter dash. Mr. Frazier walks over to Braden, Hill, and John, telling them, “good luck. Give it your best!” The three runners head to the blocks, expecting to sweep the event. Mr. Finley again walks over to speak with Mr. Frazier, which goes relatively unnoticed by everyone in the stands, except for Mayor Jamieson.

As the first heat of the 400-meter dash is about to get underway, Braden, the world record holder in this event, waves to the crowd, giving the distinct impression that he is out to win. Braden clearly displays his confidence, chanting and dancing as he approaches the blocks. Braden, the favorite in this race, gets behind the blocks in lane one. In lane two is John, and in lane three is Hill.

The runners get set in the blocks, and the gun is fired. Braden is off to a great start, leading Mayor Jamieson to conclude that his insider, Braden, has changed his strategy. Going into the first curve, Braden is in the lead. In the back straightaway, Braden still has a significant lead. John is in second place, but Hill is about to argue that point. Coming out of the final curve, Hill pulls slightly ahead of John. At the finish line, Braden, the master of the track, crosses the finish line first, winning the race with a time of 44.03 seconds. In what appears to be a tie, Hill takes second place, and John takes third place.

Braden jogs off his run, waving to the crowd, glancing up into the stands where Mayor Jamieson is seated. The mayor, however, does not see Braden. The mayor is too busy having a temper tantrum, hammering his fist into his knee and mumbling obscenities. A videographer, working for the police department, catches Mayor Jamieson’s reaction to Braden’s victory on tape, which will later be used as evidence against him in court.

The rest of the meet goes well for the University. Winning the gold, silver, and bronze medal in every event, Mr. Frazier is confident that he will have a winning season. At the bench, the team celebrates their victory as the medals are distributed. And, during the ceremony, off to the side, Braden is fitted with a wire by Officer Hayes, who fully expects Braden to have an interesting encounter with Mayor Jamieson sometime before the afternoon is over.

After the closing ceremony, Mayor Jamieson comes down from the stands, seeking out Braden. Braden, intentionally making himself available, is expecting the mayor’s arrival. As sure as the sun rose this morning, Mayor Jamieson, finding an opportune moment, walks over to Braden, angrily telling him, “you were supposed to lose the 400-meter race! What happened to second place?” As he was instructed to reply, and acting a bit on the dumb side, Braden answers, “I’m sorry about that. There’s been a change in plans. My other boss, Mr. Finley, told me I had

to win today.” The mayor exclaims, “what? Mr. Finley? Do you work for him?” Braden replies, “yeah. In a way.” Mayor Jamieson hastily asks, “when did you start working for Mr. Finley?” Braden explains, “I worked for him a few years ago, but I got out. Nobody knew about it. He told me that he needs me back in the loop.”

Sweat begins to fall from the mayor’s face as he paces back and forth, trying to figure out what to do or say next. Trying to come to his senses, Mayor Jamieson asks Braden, “do you have any idea how much this is going to cost me?” Braden replies, “I don’t know. But, they tell me nobody double crosses Mr. Finley.” Now off script, Braden then offers, “if you want, I’ll give you your five-thousand dollars back.” Mayor Jamieson exclaims, “I don’t want my five-thousand dollars back! That’s a drop in the bucket compared to what I have to pay out!” Adding to the evidence pile, Braden wants to smile, but he can’t for obvious reasons.

Mr. Finley, accompanied by Tony and Dino, walks over to Braden and Mayor Jamieson. Opening his vest and displaying a gun, Mr. Finley announces, “we’re all going for a walk. Follow me.” Mr. Finley leads the way. Braden and the mayor follow Mr. Finley. Tony and Dino follow behind the mayor, as they all head to Mr. Finley’s limousine. The mayor, as he is sweating profusely, asks, “what’s this all about?” Mr. Finley stops, turns around, and replies, “there will be no questions until I say there will be questions. Am I understood?” The mayor nods and wipes his forehead, suspecting that he might be in some sort of trouble.

Mr. Finley and his entourage get into his limousine, with Mayor Jamieson reluctantly joining them. During the drive, and still acting a bit dumb, Braden asks, “is someone gonna tell me where we’re going?” Mr. Finley replies, “you’ll find out soon enough.” Fully aware of the plan, Braden knows exactly where the limousine is headed. On the way, Braden requests a glass of water, which Mr. Finley is glad to provide for him. Braden asks, “do you got anything else in that refrigerator?” Mr. Finley tells Braden, “please, help yourself to whatever you want.” Braden is happy to get a few freebies on the way. Not much else is said during the fifteen-mile car ride, worrying Mayor Jamieson even more.

The limousine drives into the parking lot of a marina. Mr. Finley gets out, instructing everyone, “please follow me.” Walking up to a boat, Mr. Finley tells everyone, “we’re all going for a boat ride.” As they enter the 50-foot yacht, the captain tells everyone, “please, watch your step.” Mayor Jamieson asks Mr. Finley, “can you tell me where you’re taking us?” Mr. Finley replies, “you just got on a boat. You’re going on a boat ride. Please, make yourself comfortable.”

Braden takes a seat, sitting back, waiting to see what happens next. Braden made it known that he wished he was along on the ride when they

took Dean Grimsby away. This trip is not going to be too much different. The Mayor is at a loss to understand why Braden is so relaxed. The mayor concludes that Braden is just a really dumb athlete, and doesn't understand the kind of people he is dealing with.

The boat leaves port, and Mr. Finley announces, "I want to know what's going on here." Neither Braden nor Mayor Finley answers the question, prompting Mr. Finley to announce, "wow! No one knows. That's surprising. Let me get more specific. Mr. Braden, did Mr. Jamieson pay you five-thousand dollars to come in second place in the 400-meter dash?" Braden replies, "yes, sir. Five-thousand dollars." Mayor Jamieson cannot figure out how Braden could be so stupid as to answer Mr. Finley's question with such honesty.

Mr. Finley asks Mayor Jamieson, "did you pay Mr. Braden five-thousand dollars to come in second place in the 400-meter dash?" Evading the question, the mayor replies with a quiver in his voice, "I was trying to get Braden on the inside for you." Mr. Finley reminds the mayor, "my question was, 'did you pay Mr. Braden five-thousand dollars to come in second place in the 400-meter dash?' Please answer my question either yes or no." With his hands now shaking, the mayor reluctantly replies, "yes. But, I was making a little side deal to get him on the inside. I was doing it for you!" Mr. Finley hammers his fist on the table, exclaiming, "your little side deal could have cost me tens of thousands of dollars!" Mayor Jamieson now fully understands Mr. Finley's concern.

Mr. Finley then explains to Mayor Jamieson, "let's get something straight. I run the show around here, not you. You screwed up. Am I clear?" The mayor replies, "yes, sir." Now that it is clearly understood who is the boss, Mr. Finley tells the mayor, "I am going to ask you a few questions. I suggest you answer them. Am I understood?" Mayor Jamieson replies, "yes, sir." Tony takes a seat behind the mayor, where the mayor cannot see him, ready to take notes.

Beginning his question and answer session, Mr. Finley asks Mayor Jamieson, "tell me. Who are the principals in your organization?" Mr. Finley replies, "I'd really rather not reveal that information." Mr. Finley gives the mayor a long hard stare, and snaps his fingers. Tony and Dino stand up, as Mr. Finley points to a cement block laying on the deck. Braden sits back, relaxing, wondering what is going on. Dino forces Mayor Jamieson's feet through the holes in the cement block, and handcuffs his feet together. The mayor puts up a bit of a struggle, but to no avail. Now extremely worried, the mayor begins to sweat profusely. Out on a boat, cement blocks are used to ensure that someone sinks to the bottom of the ocean where they'll never be found, and not for building.

Giving Mayor Jamieson some advice, Mr. Finley calmly informs the mayor, “let’s get something straight here. I ask the questions, and you answer them. If you don’t answer my questions, the next thing on the agenda is Tony and Dino, here, are going to give you a swimming lesson, if you know what I mean. Now, who are your main men?” Trying to recover from his panic attack, the mayor replies, “okay, okay. At the top, there’s Scott McCutchen, Brad Evans, and a few people at Northside High School.” In absolutely no rush for time, Mr. Finley replies, “good. Now, we’re getting somewhere.”

Mr. Finley instructs Mayor Jamieson, “tell me who at Northside High School is involved in your gambling organization.” The mayor asks, “why do you want to know that?” Mr. Finley pauses for a moment, shakes his head, and replies, “I really hope you can swim. We’re two miles from shore. It’s a long way back, if you even make it.” Even Mayor Jamieson knows he will never make it back to shore should he be thrown overboard.

Mr. Finley snaps his fingers, prompting Tony and Dino to stand up and grab the mayor by the arms. Mr. Finley tells Mayor Jamieson, “it was nice meeting you.” Tony and Dino lift the mayor off his seat. The mayor, now in fear for his life, immediately exclaims, “okay! Okay! I’ll tell you!” The mayor is allowed to sit once again. Off script, Braden advises Mayor Jamieson, “it sounds like to me that your ass had better be answering his questions. It don’t look like to me that these guys are messing around.”

Mayor Jamieson is now totally convinced that Braden is nothing more than a really dumb athlete. Believing that Braden is also in trouble with Mr. Finley, Mayor Jamieson completely forgets that Braden is also a police officer. But, Mayor Finley is in the middle of an amygdala hijack¹, and is operating in fight or flight mode. When in fight or flight mode, logical reasoning is displaced by survival instincts.

Following another pause, Mr. Finley asks, “now, where were we. Oh, yeah. Who at Northside High School is involved with your organization?” Now very cooperative, Mayor Jamieson replies, “at the high school, Shapiro is at the top. And, there’s O’Brien, Harrison, and Ryan.” Mr. Finley asks, “is there anyone else at Northside High School?” The mayor replies, “not that I have knowledge of.” The mayor’s last answer is a lie. Barbara has discovered that other teachers at the high school are also involved in rigging events by failing athletes, all under the direction of Mr. O’Brien.

¹ Amygdala Hijack: An immediate and very disproportionate emotional response to a perceived threat. I.e., inappropriate engagement of the fight or flight mechanism.

Mr. Finley asks Mayor Jamieson, “how does Brad Evans fit in?” Sounding very stressed, Mayor Jamieson replies, “he’s my main man in the field. He finds agents, and makes deliveries.” Clearing up the mayor’s vague answer, Mr. Finley asks, “so, Evans is a runner? He transports cash to and from the bookies?” The mayor replies, “yes. He also does a few other jobs for me.” Mr. Finley asks, “like what? What are you talking about? Give me an example.” Mayor Jamieson replies, “he’s a scout. He spies on teams for me.” Mayor Jamieson’s answer regarding Evans’ role is exactly what Mr. Frazier has discovered. No mention is made of Dr. Nicholson, which is puzzling to Mr. Finley.

Mr. Finley announces to Tony and Dino, “Mr. Jamieson sounds like he has decided to cooperate.” Mr. Finley snaps his fingers and, pointing to the cement block on Mayor Jamieson’s legs, tells Tony and Dino, “please, make the mayor a little more comfortable.” Dino removes the handcuffs from the mayor’s legs, and Tony removes the cement block, placing it back in the corner of the deck. Braden sits back, relaxing and enjoying the show.

Thinking he is now off the hook, Mayor Jamieson asks, “why all these questions?” Acting disgusted that the mayor has the nerve to ask anything at all, Mr. Finley pauses and, using the mayor’s belligerence to his advantage, replies, “have you forgotten who asks the questions here?” Mayor Jamieson is abruptly silenced, quickly realizing that he is lucky to still be alive.

Mr. Finley asks Mayor Jamieson, “let me ask you a question, and I suggest you answer me. What do you know about a guy named Giuseppe Vio Otto?” The mayor immediately replies, “why do you want to know about him?” Hammering his fist on the table, Mr. Finley exclaims, “answer me!” Fearing that he will be wearing a cement block again, the mayor answers, “he worked for me.” Looking puzzled, Mr. Finley asks, “what exactly did Vio Otto do for you?” Mayor Jamieson replies, “he pulled off a couple of jobs for me.” Getting frustrated, Mr. Finley tells the mayor, “define ‘jobs’.” The mayor replies, “he did a few break ins for me. But, Eddie Bogenskaya took him out of commission.” Quickly making up a story to fit the script, Mr. Finley explains, “we thought Vio Otto was after information about the Spring track meets, which was in Eddie’s possession.”

Putting his feet up on the table, Mr. Finley informs the mayor, “and, now that I’m thinking about it, Gerhard Zunde’s house was also broken into. He also had information about various track meets as well. There seems to be a pattern here.” Without being prompted, Mayor Jamieson explains to Mr. Finley, “Frank Glooma pulled off that job. That one didn’t end too well either. Glooma and Vio Otto both worked for me. I can assure you, sir. Glooma and Vio Otto weren’t after any confidential

information. They were after valuables, like jewelry, stuff that can be pawned, or sold out of the trunk of a car. Evans also did a few jobs for me.” After a long pause, Mr. Finley replies, “small time crooks. I see.”

Braden is surprised at how easy it is for Mr. Finley to extract a full confession out of Mayor Jamieson. The cement block could have something to do with the mayor’s level of cooperation. Or, it could be that Mr. Finley, along with Tony and Dino, represent a threat level far beyond what the mayor can handle. Not being able to see land could also be part of the mayor’s forthcomingness with answers. Still puzzling the mayor is Braden, who is sitting back as if he is on vacation on a cruise ship.

Staring out into space, and thinking, Mr. Finley tells Mayor Jamieson, “I don’t know what I’m going to do with you, Mr. Jamieson.” The mayor, shaking in his boots, takes Mr. Finley’s statement as bringing into question whether he will live or not. Mayor Jamieson stupidly suggests, “I could just get out of gambling, and we can all forget about the whole thing.” Mr. Finley replies, “I didn’t ask for your suggestions. I’m going to think about this on the way back to shore.” The good news is that Mr. Finley’s statement suggests to Mayor Jamieson that he will still be alive once they get back to shore.

Mr. Finley tells Dino, “tell the captain to bring us back into port. And, tell him to take the long way. I’m in no rush.” No longer thinking that he is safe, Mayor Jamieson takes Mr. Finley’s statement, “tell him to take the long way,” to be some sort of coded or secret message. While the mayor is panicking, Mr. Finley, along with Tony, Dino, and Braden, is appearing to enjoy the boat ride. So, Mr. Finley decided that everyone should have an enjoyable afternoon, so he is taking the long way back to port. Tony and Dino get some food out of the refrigerator, and the feast begins.

Braden sits back and relaxes in his seat, enjoying the good food. Watching the waves and seeing the distant shoreline, Braden is very relaxed. To Braden, the relaxing late afternoon cruise goes by quickly. For Mayor Jamieson, however, each second ticks away as if it were an hour. The mayor is very concerned about his future, or whether he will even have one.

Braden walks to the bow of the boat, wanting to take a look around. He is followed by Tony, only for the reason of giving Mayor Jamieson the impression that no one walks around the boat without an escort. Braden mentions to Tony, “it’s really beautiful out here.” Tony replies, “I know. We’re finished with business, so enjoy the rest of the ride.”

Braden whispers to Tony, “that guy really snapped.” Tony whispers back, “with these white collar guys, like the mayor, or Grimsby, when you

take them out of their element, they chirp like a songbird. With a guy like Jamieson, if you question him down at the station, you'd get nothing out of him. He'd be screaming for an attorney. Out here, no one will hear him." Braden whispers to Tony, "at least, now you guys have a list of who else is involved." Tony whispers back, "the names he rattled off are mostly the little guys. The higher ups, like Shapiro, will probably get a plea bargain if they testify against Jamieson. But, they'll all do some time." Braden replies, "that's good to hear." Tony and Braden hang out at the bow, enjoying the scenery.

The sun begins to set. The captain drives into port, docking the boat. Seeing land gives a great sense of relief to Mayor Jamieson, who thought, at one point, he would be lying on the bottom of the ocean. Mr. Finley disembarks, followed by Braden and Mayor Jamieson. Tony and Dino disembark last, following the rest of the group very closely.

Arriving at his limousine, Mr. Finley tells Mayor Jamieson, "I hope you enjoyed your afternoon. I have someone I'd like you to meet." The chauffeur opens the door to the limousine, and Officer Richard Hayes steps out. Officer Hayes asks the undercover officer playing the part of Mr. Finley, "did you enjoy your afternoon?" Mr. Finley replies, "we did. It looks like this case will be closed fairly easily." The boat captain, who is also a police officer, has alerted Officer Hayes ahead of time, by radio, that the operation was a success. If the operation had not been a success, Officer Hayes would have moved on to plan B.

Putting together the events of the afternoon, Mayor Jamieson exclaims, "you guys set me up! I demand to speak to an attorney!" Officer Hayes replies, "you'll get that chance, but I haven't arrested you yet. So, please calm down." Trying to justify himself, Mayor Jamieson points to Braden and exclaims, "how about him? He took a bribe!" Officer Hayes laughs, and replies, "Officer Braden was part of our undercover operation. The check you wrote to him is in the evidence room."

Now that the cat is out of the bag, Braden repeatedly points to his chest, raising his voice, telling Mayor Jamieson, "I'm the chief ass kicker! I ain't blowing no race for no one! Not even your flimsy ass! No one is ever gonna say they beat the chief ass kicker! No one's kicking my ass!" Mayor Jamieson now clearly understands why Braden has been so calm during the boat ride.

The undercover officer playing the part of Mr. Finley collects the wires from Braden, Tony, and Dino. Officer Hayes arrests Mayor Jamieson, who continues to complain that he's been set up. The mayor is handcuffed, read his rights, and placed in the cage of Officer Hayes' police car.

Dino pulls Braden aside, and tells him, “when this case goes to court, they might ask you to testify. If they question you about a cement block, you never saw a cement block. You saw a concrete block. If they question you about a concrete block, you never saw a concrete block. You saw a cinder block.” Braden laughs, and replies, “I get it! Whatever they call it, I call it something else. So, I never saw it.” Dino replies, “exactly.” Dino also points out, “while all this was recorded today, if you remember correctly, nothing was ever said about a cement block. The block was just pointed to and fingers were snapped.” Braden tells Dino, “I noticed that. Mr. Finley just snapped his fingers, and you guys knew exactly what to do.” Stating the obvious, Dino replies, “we’ve done this a few times before. We took Addison Grimsby on a similar trip. Let’s just say he didn’t enjoy the afternoon.”

Officer Hayes drives off, hauling Mayor Jamieson off to jail. Braden gets a ride back to campus in the limousine. On the way, the undercover officers and Braden stop and get dinner, and a rather nice one at that. Over dinner, Braden learns a lot about undercover operations. And, Mayor Jamieson, now in jail, also learned a lot about undercover operations today.

Monday morning, bright and early before working hours at the service station, Eddie and Bobby B. are discussing the weekend’s meet. Bobby B. still cannot believe that Eddie won the gold medal in the hammer. But, Eddie has been working out in the gym that he has been building behind the service station. So has Bobby B., who will be stepping up his workouts in the next few weeks. Bobby B. is not about to let Eddie beat him in the hammer throw during the Spring divisional meet.

With news that Vinnie has found a suitable engine for Bobby B’s. Volkswagen Bus, Bobby B. gets to work, removing the engine from the Bus he purchased a while ago. And, while Bobby B. is working, Eddie is performing a tune-up on his MGB.

Bobby B. yells over to Eddie, “hey! Can you help me with this?” Eddie walks over telling Bobby B., “I thought you were doing all the work.” Bobby B. replies, “I am. I disconnected everything. Can you check it for me before I drop the engine?” Eddie jokingly replies, “yeah. But, why? If you drop the engine, and there’s still a hose or wire still connected somewhere, it will just break.” Thinking about Eddie’s answer, Bobby B. comments, “oh, yeah. I guess.” Eddie checks over Bobby B’s. work, and tells him, “it looks good.” Getting a bit worried, Bobby B. asks, “what happens if something is still connected?” Eddie tells Bobby B., “don’t worry about it. Just fall off that bridge when you come to it.”

As Eddie and Bobby B. are opening up, Officer Richard Hayes drives into the service station, but not in his patrol car. Officer Hayes pulls up to

the pumps, needing gas for his automobile and lawn equipment. Eddie walks out and asks, "did you get a day off?" Richard replies, "I got three days off. I put in over 60 hours last week, including Saturday at the meet. Chief Gabriel told me to take three days of comp time, so I jumped on it. The pool is almost finished, and I'm going to be getting the yard ready for Summer." After filling his gas tanks, Richard, Eddie, and Bobby B. sit in the office, and talk for a while.

Eddie asks, "I heard you guys busted Mayor Jamieson. How did that go?" Richard replies, "we did. That guy tweeted like a songbird. The undercover guys did a great job. They took this Jamieson character out on a boat a few miles offshore, and had him convinced that, if he didn't talk, he'll become part of the ocean floor. This one wasn't too hard to put together." Eddie tells Richard, "I hear Braden had a nice afternoon. But, we ran relay drills this morning, so I didn't get to talk to him too much." Richard replies, "yeah. He really wanted to be in on that operation. I hear he really enjoyed the afternoon."

Eddie asks, "so, who else was involved?" Richard replies, "you'll never believe this. At your old high school, there's Shapiro, O'Brien, Harrison, and Ryan. We'll be taking them in soon. We left them out there after we busted Maurice Crum, simply to see who they connect with. Oh, and this Scott McCrutch character, the father, is being taken in this morning, probably as we speak. He's been under investigation for a few years. We got enough on him to put him away for a while." Even Officer Hayes calls the McCutchens McCrutchen now.

Eddie asks, "how about Brad Evans?" Richard laughs, telling Eddie and Bobby B., "this Brad Evans character. I tell you, that guy is a real piece of work. He was not only involved in gambling, but was supplying his high school track team with drugs. They're taking him in this morning too." Eddie asks, "is that who McCrutchen got his drugs from?" Richard replies, "we think so. A guy on Evans' high school team landed in the hospital for the same reason, with the same combination of drugs." Bobby B. comments, "you'd think they'd train more instead of taking drugs." Richard replies, "you'd think. But, no. They don't."

Proud of the police department's work, Richard then tells Eddie and Bobby B., "you'll never believe this! This Giuseppe Vio Otto character, and this Frank Glooma were working for Mayor Jamieson, breaking into houses." Eddie exclaims, "no shit?" Richard replies, "the undercover officers managed to get a full confession out of him." Eddie replies, "good. At least those guys will be off the streets for a while." Richard replies, "not exactly. This Glooma character has been discharged from the hospital, and has been released on bail. Vio Otto is a different story. He's in a wheelchair. They're both just lucky to be alive."

Richard then explains, “this Mayor Jamieson character was charging the businesses in the area an environmental impact fee. The checks were made payable to a company called ‘Environmental Impact’, and were deposited into a personal account of the mayor. Can you believe that? This character opened a business called ‘Environmental Impact, Incorporated’. So, all that money that looked like it was going to the government was actually going into his pocket.” Eddie asks, “seriously? How did he get away with that?” Richard replies, “he had someone on the inside working for him.” Richard then informs Eddie, “all that money, or what’s left of it, will have to be returned. We’ve locked down all of his bank accounts.”

Richard then reveals, “this Jamieson character is about as dumb as they get. He’s so dumb, he doesn’t have the brains to figure out how dumb he really is. He left trails everywhere. After your lunch meeting with the mayor and the undercover officers, the officers went to the bank with Jamieson to get the cash for the list that the undercover officers sold to him. This clown actually withdrew the money from the ‘Environmental Impact, Incorporated’ bank account. But, get this. He wrote the check right in front of the undercover officers! The check had the company name right on it.” Eddie laughs, commenting, “yeah. That guy sounds really dumb.”

Richard reveals, “it gets worse. We’ve seen this Jamieson character eating lunch a few times with Addison Grimsby. We think Grimsby is trying to leave the country. But, his bank accounts have been locked down. So, he has no money. We think Grimsby was using Jamieson to start up another gambling ring so he can make a fortune and leave the country before he stands trial.” Eddie asks, “why don’t you take Grimsby in again?” Richard replies, “because, with this Jamieson character now out of the picture, Grimsby will lead us to the next gambling ring.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “that’s really ingenious.”

Eddie informs Richard, “by the way, Jimmy O’Brien bought a new BMW.” Richard’s eyes open wide, and asks, “oh, really?” Eddie replies, “yeah. How much do you want to bet the money came from gambling?” Richard replies, “I’m sure it did. Good for him. That character’s going to need some good transportation when he’s visiting his father in jail.” Bobby B. laughs, mentioning, “maybe Mr. O’Brien and Mr. Crum will be cell mates.” Richard laughs, replying, “we can only hope.”

Richard informs Eddie and Bobby B., “from the looks of things, your town is going to need a new mayor.” Not quite familiar with politics, Bobby B. asks, “how do we get a new mayor?” Richard explains, “a special election will have to be organized. Then, they’ll set a date, and people show up to vote.” Eddie asks, “how does someone run for mayor?” Richard explains, “once the special election is approved, they’d have to

file an application with the board of elections.” Eddie tells Richard, “I want to run for mayor.” Richard assures Eddie, “if you run, I can assure you. The police department will endorse you.” Eddie nods his head, and replies, “I’m thinking about it.”

Checking the time, Richard says, “well, I guess I’d better get home and get to work. The more I get done today, the less I have to do for the next two days.” Eddie replies, “yeah. Me too.” As he is leaving, Richard peers into the service bays and, seeing a Volkswagen Bus, asks, “is that another Bus conversion?” Bobby B. replies, “yeah. This one is mine.” Richard comments, “it looks good. I really like the yellow.” Richard heads home, and Bobby B. and Eddie get to work, pushing Bobby B’s Bus out of the service bay.

Near the end of Spring semester, the day of the divisional meet arrives. This is Eddie’s last track meet of his college career. After today, for Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Bobby B., it’s off to the working world, sometimes called the real world. The good news is that they all have jobs. After this year, Mitchell will be attending graduate school while Amber finishes her undergraduate degree. And, next year, Mr. Frazier has a lot of work ahead of him. Winning all the medals in the divisional meets over the next two years, according to Dr. Owen’s current statistics, is slightly out of reach. But, winning all the gold medals is a distinct possibility. And, to Mr. Frazier, the gold medals are the only ones that really count.

The University’s team confidently walks out from the arena to the outdoor stadium. Yet again, the team is expected to win all the medals. The other team’s athletes know this, and they are worried. The University’s athletes don’t care that the other teams are worried. The other team’s coaches know that they will likely walk away with nothing today, and they don’t like it. Mr. Frazier has no sympathy for them. The administrators of the other universities are losing money because one team now dominates the division. Provost Leighton’s response to them is to simply deal with it.

In the stands today is the president of the University, President Caldwell. Sitting in the VIP box, President Caldwell is joined by the University’s athletic director, Dr. Karakova, former Coach Herndon, the admissions director, Mr. Gerald Rosenberg, the new Dean of Students, Dr. James Beckman, and a few other administrators. Officer Richard Hayes is also attending the meet today, but not in an official capacity. He is seated with his family. Johnson and Barbara, and a few members of the Northside High School team are also here to see the meet. Barbara figures that, with the State invitational meet coming up next weekend, seeing a collegiate divisional meet may raise the team’s energy level. And, of all people, Addison Grimsby, the former Dean of Students, is spotted in the stands by Mark.

Just as the team gets settled at their bench, the Meet Announcer makes the requisite introductory announcements. This means the 100-meter dash preliminaries are imminent. During the regular season, Mr. Frazier had John, Davida, and Running Bull run the 100-meter dash in one particular meet, where they have successfully won the gold, silver, and bronze medals. This was Mr. Frazier's way of putting the word out that, when Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer graduate, the show is not over. But, today is Eddie and Mark's day.

As they warm up, pointing to the stands, Eddie tells Mark, "after today, we'll be up there." Mark replies, "maybe we can try out for football." Eddie laughs, and suggests, "yeah. That would be really funny." Mark points out, "I'm glad I have a job that will sort of keep me in shape." Eddie replies, "yeah. Me too. And, the gym behind the service station is almost finished." Mark mentions, "I thought that was going to be a storage building." Eddie replies, "it was. But, for now, I changed my mind. Come over and work out with me and Bobby B. some more in the mornings." The call for the 100-meter dash preliminaries is made, and Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer walk to the starting line.

Seeing his rival, Mark announces to Allen Madison, "hey! I'm Mark Svoboda." Eddie announces, "I'm Eddie Bogenskaya." Catching on, Hoffer announces, "I'm Jimmy Hoffer." Mark tells Madison, "we're taking this race. I'm glad you could show up to watch." Knowing that he is completely outclassed, Madison says nothing in return. As the first heat steps behind the blocks, Madison mumbles, "these guys really think they're something," to those around him.

Once the runners are in position, the Starter announces, "on your marks," followed by, "set." The gun is fired, and Eddie, the world record holder in this event, takes the lead. At 50-meters, Mark and Hoffer are in second and third place respectively. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, Mark second, and Hoffer third. Madison, finishing in fifth place, may or may not make the final. Looking up at the scoreboard, Eddie sees his, Mark's, and Hoffer's times, knowing that they are still untouchable in this division. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer exchange high-fives, and head back to the bench.

Returning to the bench, Eddie and Mark are told by Mr. Frazier, "great run! You guys should go over to the field area and check in. Try to get those events under your belt as early as possible. It's going to get hot out here later." Eddie and Mark head over to the field area, where the action is about ready to begin.

When it is hot outside, Mr. Frazier often has the team members sit in the school cafeteria with a team assistant, where it is air conditioned. When their events are coming up, another team assistant contacts them

by radio. They are then given a ride in the golf cart to the stadium. It makes no sense for anyone to overheat before their event.

On the way to the field area, Eddie asks Mark, "I wonder how hot it's going to get today." Mark replies, "hot enough to go in the pool after the meet." Joking around, Eddie quickly replies, "that's a good idea. I'm glad I thought of it." Pointing to the shot-put pad, Eddie mentions, "there's the shot-put, sitting in the dirt again." Mark replies, "we should have a talk about that with Bobby B. He's mistreating that thing again."

Without warning, Dr. Zunde yells out to Eddie and Mark, "watch out! Watch out!" Dr. Zunde runs over, but is about fifty feet away. Eddie and Mark abruptly turn around, seeing two attackers wielding knives about to come down on Eddie and Mark. Mark intercepts one attacker's arm, disarming him, throwing the attacker to the ground. Quickly avoiding the other attacker, Eddie comes up behind him, placing him in an arm lock, dislocating his shoulder. Eddie exclaims, "not this shit again!"

Eddie tells Mark, "hammers." Mark replies, "you got it, bro!" Eddie quickly grabs one attacker by his ankles, spinning him around using the hammer technique. Eddie releases the attacker, anxiously watched by everyone in the stadium. The attacker soars through the air, landing in the red zone, then rolling a few feet. Clapping and cheering is heard coming from many spectators in the stadium, presumably from those who were aware that an athlete was being attacked. Hearing the cheers, Mark is now energized.

Now, it's Mark's turn. Mark grabs the other attacker by his ankles and, also using the hammer technique, spins him around. Releasing the attacker into the air, Mark lets out a loud primal scream. Flying through the air, Mark's attacker soars through the air, landing in the red zone a few feet shy of Eddie's throw. Eddie tells Mark, "I won." Mark is quick to reply, "yeah, right. My hammer was a whole lot heavier."

Eddie and Mark walk over to the bench, acting as if nothing happened. Bobby B. tells Eddie and Mark, "those throws really sucked. They only went about 30 feet." Eddie replies, "it was a warm-up, bro." Eddie then asks, "I wonder who those guys are." Mark replies, "I don't know. I wasn't paying attention. Let's go and take a look."

Dr. Zunde and several meet officials surround the attackers, who are still laying on the ground. One official, rudimentarily checking vital signs, delivers some good news, announcing that both attackers are still alive.

As Eddie and Mark are on their way out to the field area, Kathy and Paula, who are sitting with the team today, run up to join Eddie and Mark. Kathy exclaims, asking, "are you guys okay?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I'm

okay.” Mark replies, “yeah. Now, I’m all fired up!” An event like this gets Mark’s adrenaline levels up, leading to better performance. Mark tells Kathy and Paula, “we’re going to see who those guys are.”

Walking up, and seeing his attacker lying on the ground, Eddie comments to the officials, “that hammer should be taken out of service. It looks badly damaged.” Mark tries not to laugh, but is not too successful. Laying on the ground is a five-foot, six-inch guy who weighs about 130 pounds. A few feet away, another guy lies on the ground, not in any better condition. The paramedics drive up, who are always on site during a meet, and attend to the attackers.

Officer Kevin Morrison of the campus police department rushes over to evaluate the situation. Regarding Eddie’s attacker, Officer Morrison asks, “does anyone know who these guys are?” Dr. Zunde replies, “yes. This one’s name is Frank Glooma. I know him quite well. He paid me a visit one day at my home without an invitation.” Eddie whispers to Mark, “oh, shit. That’s the guy who broke into Mr. Zunde’s house.” Dr. Zunde then announces, “get that pile of shit out of the red zone so we can get on with the meet.” Mark suggests, “why don’t we just leave them there.” Dr. Zunde replies, “that’s not such a bad idea.”

Referring to Frank Glooma, Dr. Zunde advises the paramedics, “that one has got a few steel plates in his chest. And, his ribs, what’s left of them, are wired to the plates. And, I think you’ll find his cranium to be empty.” Seeing the surgical scars, one paramedic mentions to another, “that guy is not joking. His chest has been extensively cracked open.”

Overhearing the paramedic’s comment, Dr. Zunde tells the paramedics, “I’m not joking. I threw a discus at that idiot last Christmas. I was hoping to knock some sense into him. I guess I didn’t throw it hard enough.” Dr. Zunde has absolutely no sympathy for Glooma. Glooma pulled a gun on Dr. Zunde when he broke into his house.

Walking over to Mark’s attacker, Mark exclaims, “oh, shit! Not that guy again!” Eddie laughs, and asks Mark, “can this get any worse?” Lying on the ground unconscious is Mayor Bradford Jamieson, who is out on bail. Eddie tells Mark, “he doesn’t look too good. He’s bleeding all over the ground.” Mark tells Eddie, “I guess that’s why they call it the red zone.”

Everyone watches as the paramedics work. One paramedic, working on Frank Glooma, announces, “please, everyone step back! It looks like he has a broken neck. We’ve got to move him fast.” Dr. Zunde tells the paramedic, “that would be his problem, not mine. He’s holding up the meet. Now, get these idiots out of my stadium.” It is now no secret to anyone where Dr. Zunde stands on the matter.

Dr. Zunde, Eddie, Mark, Kathy, and Paula move off to the side, and discuss the situation. Having no problem expressing her opinion, Kathy tells everyone, "I hope his neck is broken. I'm really getting sick of these people." Paula replies, "yeah. I know, right?" Dr. Zunde mentions, "I wonder what that was all about." Eddie surmises, "according to Braden, that guy worked for Mayor Jamieson, breaking into houses. I guess they're both trying to get back at me for when I helped Officer Hayes and the undercover officers bust the mayor." Dr. Zunde replies to Eddie and Mark, "it appears that you guys took them both out of commission for a while."

The paramedics working on Mayor Jamieson have an equally bad situation. When the mayor landed on the ground, his jaw clearly broke, and he bit off part of his tongue. Since the mayor is unconscious and unable to communicate, he must be moved in a way assuming multiple spinal fractures. And, at the same time, the paramedics must stop the profuse bleeding.

After speaking with the paramedics, Officer Morrison walks over and asks Dr. Zunde, "what's the scoop on Frank Glooma?" Dr. Zunde replies, "he broke into my house right before Christmas. I threw a discus at him. And, he apparently worked for Mayor Jamieson, breaking into houses. Officer Braden can fill you in on the details." Officer Morrison informs Eddie and Mark, "we're going to need you guys to come down and make a statement." Eddie replies, "yeah, I know. But, I have a meet right now." Mark replies, "yeah, me too. Can we do it later?" Officer Morrison replies, "sure. No problem. I saw the whole thing. I'll write up my report during the meet." Eddie and Mark head to the field bench with Dr. Zunde, joined by Kathy and Paula.

Handing the paramedics his card with the case number on it, Officer Morrison informs the paramedics that Glooma and Jamieson are under arrest. When Glooma and Jamieson are released from the county hospital, they will then be transported to either the campus or county jail. Officer Morrison will work those details out with the county police department after the meet. But, for now, Officer Morrison gets back to work, hoping the rest of the day goes a little better.

While the commotion was going on in the field area delaying the start of the field events, the track events were moving along in full swing. Now that the field events can be started, Kathy and Paula head back to the team bench to fill Mr. Frazier in on the details of what happened. Stopping at the track to let the 400-meter dash finish, Kathy tells Paula, "it looks like Braden won again." Looking up at the scoreboard and seeing Braden's time, Paula comments, "not bad."

Eddie is called for his first attempt at the hammer. Still full of adrenaline, Eddie takes hold of the hammer, recalling how Giuseppe Vio Otto attempted to break into his house, and now, Frank Glooma tried to stab him with a knife. Eddie is cleared to launch, and steps onto the pad. Going into the spin, Eddie channels every last bit of energy he has into the hammer, yelling out, "Glooma," as he releases it. Surging through the air, the hammer lands just beyond the 80-meter mark.

Silence comes over the stadium as the measurement is taken. Once the measurement is delivered to the Head Field Judge, a special announcement is made by the Meet Announcer, who announces, "in the hammer throw, with a throw just short of the current world record² of 81.66 meters, which was set just hours ago, Edward Bogenskaya threw the hammer 81.53 meters. Please congratulate Edward on his significant accomplishment here today." Everyone in the stands claps and cheers, knowing that Eddie's throw just took the gold medal in today's competition.

Eddie takes a seat on the bench, where he is congratulated by his teammates and Dr. Zunde. Dr. Zunde tells Eddie, "that was an awesome throw. Yesterday, that would have been a world record. One of the Field Judges mentioned that some guy in the Soviet Union broke the record earlier today." Eddie jokingly replies, "I've been robbed!" Dr. Zunde tells Eddie, "fortunately, you weren't robbed by Frank Glooma."

Eddie replies, "I should have thrown the hammer at Glooma." Dr. Zunde tells Eddie, "he would not likely survive being hit by the hammer." Eddie asks, "why not?" Dr. Zunde replies, "the disc weighs 2 kilograms. The hammer weighs about 7.26 kilograms. That's about three-and-a-quarter times the weight of the disc. In competition, they are both thrown about the same distance. The hammer would hit him with more than three times the force as a discus." Eddie exclaims, "ouch! That would hurt." Dr. Zunde replies, "to say the least." Eddie comments, "well, at least, he survived being thrown as a hammer."

Eddie completes his other two attempts at the hammer, and gets his discus throws in. Mark gets his hammer and shot-put throws in, and attempts to usurp Bobby B.'s title of the shot-doc. That is unlikely to happen but, since this is the last meet of their collegiate career, Mark takes the opportunity to mess with the world record holder in the shot-put. Bringing up ancient history, Mark even points out multiple deficiencies in Bobby B's treatment of the very special steel ball.

² At the time of the storyline, the world record in the hammer throw was 81.66 meters, held by Sergey Litvinov of the Soviet Union.

Right before lunch, the call is made for the 100-meter dash final. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer head to the starting line. Knowing that the University will sweep the event, Eddie and Mark are more relaxed than usual. Once again, they are up against Mark's current rival, Allen Madison, who, running in lane one, barely made it into the final.

As Eddie approaches the starting line, Madison asks him, "hey! How come you kicked the shit out of that guy before?" Not wanting to be distracted before the race, Eddie nonchalantly replies, "I had nothing better to do." Madison asks, "is he all right?" Stepping into the conversation, Mark informs Madison, "hey, junior! Did they look all right to you? They were both unconscious! They carried them away in an ambulance!" Madison curtly tells Mark, "hey! Nobody asked you!" Mark tells Madison, "who says I was even talking to you? So, shut up!" Mark's convoluted response frustrates Madison, who tries to speak, but is tongue tied. Like many other athletes in the meet, frustration reigns because Madison knows he has a slim to none chance of winning anything today.

The eight finalists line up, with one finalist now very distracted. The Starter announces, "this is the final for the 100-meter dash. Good luck to all of you. On your marks." The finalists get themselves positioned in the blocks. Madison looks over at Mark, who pays him no attention. The Starter announces, "set." The gun is fired and the runners are out of the blocks.

At ten meters, Eddie and Mark are in the lead, with Hoffer barely a step behind Mark. After twenty-five meters, Eddie breaks away and takes a clear lead. At 50 meters, the race is essentially over. At the finish line, Eddie wins the gold medal, Mark wins the silver medal, and Hoffer wins the bronze medal. And, not any better than in previous races this year, Madison finishes near the end of the pack.

Looking up at the electronic scoreboard, Eddie, seeing his time of 9.98 seconds, is happy. Not quite setting a new record, Eddie's time is more than good enough for the gold medal. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer exchange high-fives, and head back to the team bench. On the way, Eddie tells Hoffer, "next year, bro, this race is all yours." Hoffer, who just ran 100 meters in 10.25 seconds, reminds Eddie, "I graduate this year." Eddie replies, "oh, yeah. I forgot about that. We took a year off, so we're all seniors now." Mark comments, "I forgot about that too." At the bench, Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton congratulate the winners.

Up next is the women's 100-meter dash final. This year, for the University, Karen, Erika, and Allison have made the final. Allison, a transfer student, has seen a lot of improvement this year with the change in training protocol. The women head to the blocks, planning on sweeping the event.

The women get in position behind their blocks, and are ready to go. The Starter announces, “on your marks,” followed by, “set,” as the runners get into the “set” position. The gun is fired and Erika, Karen, and Allison let out a primal scream that echoes throughout the stadium. Karen, the favorite in today’s race, quickly claims the lead, closely followed by Erika and Allison. At 50 meters, much to everyone’s surprise, Karen claims a significant lead. At the finish line, Karen crosses first, beating Erika by a few meters. Allison takes third place in this heat, finally earning the medal in the 100-meter dash that she has been seeking for more than two years. Looking up at the scoreboard, Karen sees her time of 10.88 seconds, has reason for celebration. Karen has just tied the world record in the women’s 100-meter dash.

Following a victory lap, the women return to the bench, where they receive high-fives and congratulatory hugs from all those around. Mr. Frazier is ecstatic that a world record has been tied. Provost Leighton is extremely happy, as she is largely responsible for today’s lineup in this event. And, Karen waves to her father, former babysitter, and aunt, who are in the stands today.

During the half-hour break for lunch, Kathy and Eddie eat lunch at the University’s cafeteria together. Shifting the conversation from today’s meet to politics, Kathy asks Eddie, “have you heard any more from Mr. Davies?” Eddie replies, “yeah. He said that only one other person is running. And now, it’s past the deadline. So, no one else can get on the ballot.” Kathy gives Eddie a high-five, exclaiming, “you’re going to be the new mayor!” Eddie mentions, “the other guy running is like the town’s controller, whatever that is.” Kathy replies, “oh, you mean the comptroller. The comptroller is government’s equivalent of the chief financial officer of a corporation.” Eddie comments, “so, the guy is pretty much an idiot.” Kathy asks, “how do you know?” Eddie replies, “he should have caught all the illegal stuff that Mayor Jamieson was doing.” Kathy replies, “either that, or he was in on it.”

Mark and Paula walk up, joining Eddie and Kathy. Taking a seat, Mark asks, “what’s up?” Kathy replies, “we’re talking about politics.” Paula exclaims, “no way, girl! You are not!” Kathy replies, “seriously, we are! Only one person is running against Eddie.” Paula exclaims, “that’s good news!”

Mark tells Eddie, “now I know who to complain to.” Eddie asks, “what’s your complaint, bro?” Mark replies, “the guy living next to me leaves his trash cans at the road for a whole day after they pick up the trash.” Eddie advises Mark, “so, fill up his cans with trash. Dump your shit in his trash cans when you get home from work.” Paula laughs, and exclaims, “I’m going to do that! I’m dumping my yard trash in his cans!” Eddie tells Mark and Paula, “see that? Problem solved.” Lunchtime comes to an end,

and, with the 200-meter dash coming up right after the 1,500-meter run, the group heads back to the track.

Once the entire team is together, Mr. Frazier announces, “congratulations! We’ve all had a great morning, and we won all the medals so far!” The team cheers, likely worrying the other teams. Mr. Frazier then informs everyone, “as I expected, it’s getting very hot out here. I want everyone to head inside, either in the arena or the cafeteria, who doesn’t have an event coming up in the next half hour or so. The team assistants will bring you out right before your event. And, whatever you do, don’t fall asleep!”

Provost Leighton informs the team, “it’s important not to get overheated before the race begins. If you guys haven’t noticed, the other teams are hanging out in the tunnels to stay cool.” One team member asks, “why don’t they hang out in the cafeteria?” Mr. Frazier laughs, and replies, “don’t ask me. They went to the cafeteria to eat lunch. Maybe they like the heat.” Eddie comments, “they’re just dumb. We figured that out in ninth grade during State.” Mr. Frazier smiles, and replies, “I remember that! And, we brought that huge fan and a lot of ice.”

The first event in the afternoon is the 1,500-meter run. Mitchell, the number one seed, is very confident. So is Akinmola, who already won the gold medal in the high jump earlier today. Mitchell, Akinmola, and Davidson head to the starting line. This year, both Mitchell and Akinmola are unusually quiet before today’s race. Arriving at the starting line, Davidson comments, “we have some new guys here this year.” Akinmola replies, “that’s because the other guys couldn’t win.” Mitchell confidently comments, “neither will these guys.”

The contestants line up, many of them already sweating before the race begins. The Starter announces, “set,” and, in five seconds, the gun is fired. Akinmola sprints as if he is running a 100-meter dash, quickly procuring the lead. Not knowing what just happened, Mitchell keeps pace. By 100 meters, there is already a spread of runners on the track. Akinmola and Mitchell are far in the lead and, for the moment, Davidson leads the other group of runners.

At the team bench, Kathy comments to Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton, “Akinmola is going to win the 1,500 meters today.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I don’t know about that. Mitchell’s stats have been consistently better this year.” Wanting resolution on the difference of opinion, Provost Leighton asks Kathy, “please explain why you think Akinmola will win today.” Kathy explains, “it’s already over 90 degrees out here, so everyone is probably not going to run at their best. In the 4 by 800-meter relay earlier, Akinmola ran his usual time, but Mitchell was a little slower. As the temperature goes up, Mitchell’s performance goes down, but

Akinmola's performance actually goes up slightly. And, Akinmola is from Nigeria. There is no Winter there." Provost Leighton replies, "interesting."

As Akinmola crosses the 800-meter mark, Mr. Frazier looks down at his stopwatch, commenting to Provost Leighton, "Akinmola is right on track. Kathy might be right." Overhearing Mr. Frazier, Kathy confidently proclaims, "of course I'm right!" Also, at 800 meters, Mitchell shows no unusual signs of fatigue.

At 1,200 meters, Mitchell is struggling to keep up with Akinmola. Mitchell knows that, if he begins to lose ground, he will also lose the benefit of drafting. Akinmola knows this too, and suddenly sprints for about 50 meters, conveniently losing Mitchell. Now a cat and mouse game, Mitchell attempts to make up the lost ground. When Mitchell gets close to Akinmola, Akinmola sprints for a few more meters.

At 1,400 meters, both Akinmola and Mitchell sprint to the finish line. With eight meters now between them, Mitchell has an enormous amount of work to do. As the frontrunners approach the finish line, the crowd cheers but, for whom, it is not known. At the finish line, Akinmola crosses first, leaving Mitchell ten meters, or a little more than one second, in the dust. Davidson takes third place, sweeping the event for the University. Akinmola takes a victory lap, not phased in the least by the heat.

At the bench, Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, "it looks like you were right." Kathy replies, "of course I'm right." Mr. Frazier is intrigued by Kathy's confidence. Provost Leighton curiously asks Kathy, "suppose Darryl was in the race. What would you see happening?" Kathy replies, "if he had the right strategy, Darryl could have won." Provost Leighton asks, "please, explain." Kathy explains, "Darryl isn't affected by the heat as much as Mitchell. If he drafted off of Mitchell for the whole race, and let Mitchell and Akinmola play their games, if he made a move at 1,300 meters, he probably could have won."

Kathy goes on to explain, "if this was an indoor meet, or the temperature was 65 degrees out here, Mitchell would have won. Akinmola and Darryl would have fought it out for second place. But, out here, it's what? Ninety something degrees already, and humid. Some people are more affected by adverse weather conditions. Akinmola is not one of them."

Recalling how well certain other team members performed in the mile, Provost Leighton then asks Kathy, "what would you see happening if Eddie, Mark, and Braden were in the race?" Kathy explains, "Eddie and Mark work in the heat all day long. And, they train at the beach all Summer. Either Eddie or Mark probably could have beaten Akinmola or, at

least given them all a run for their money. As for Braden, that's a different story. His mind overrides the temperature." Provost Leighton and Mr. Frazier both laugh, knowing Kathy's assessment of Braden is correct.

Kathy tells Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton, "if you guys want, I'll give you a copy of my master's thesis." Provost Leighton asks, "what was your research topic?" Kathy replies, "the title is, 'Environmental Factors in Exercise Tolerance and its Effect on Reactive Deconditioning Syndromes in Well Conditioned Athletes'. It's about how environmental factors affect performance." Provost Leighton asks, "that sounds very interesting. What made you research that topic?" Kathy explains, "I thought of the topic long before you guys started coaching this team. Are you sure you want to hear it?" Now curious, Provost Leighton replies, "sure." Mr. Frazier replies, "I'm all ears."

Kathy explains, "when Eddie tried out for the track team the year before he was a freshman at the University, Todd McCrutchin called Eddie's training sled a piece of shit. Eddie got really ticked off. So, Eddie yelled at McCrutchin and told him that his problem is, when he runs, the temperature has to be between 68 and 72 degrees, it has to be 50 percent humidity, and the wind can't be more than like two miles per hour. Then, he told McCrutchin that he won't run in the rain because he'll get wet."

Paula exclaims, "and his blankie! That was so funny! I remember that!" Kathy continues, "that's right! Eddie told McCrutchin, 'and, when it's snowing, you cuddle up in your blankie.' But, Eddie didn't stop there. Eddie told McCrutchin that, when it's 80 degrees out, he passes out from heat exhaustion. And, if it's 60 degrees, he's shivering and looking for a heater. Okay, so, here's how I got the idea for my thesis. Eddie told McCrutchin that he should be dragging the training sled on the sand track, in the heat, cold, rain, and snow! And, when it's hot outside, Eddie told McCrutchin that he should be wearing sweat pants, and, when it's cold out, he should be running in shorts." Mr. Frazier laughs, and comments, "that sounds just like Eddie." Provost Leighton tells Kathy, "I'd love to read your thesis sometime." Kathy tells Provost Leighton and Mr. Frazier, "I'll get you guys a copy."

Eddie, Mark, and John walk up, announcing, "we won!" Mr. Frazier replies, "I saw that! Congratulations!" Sweeping the 200-meter dash, the group receives high-fives and congratulatory hugs. After catching up, Mr. Frazier tells them, "head back inside. I don't want you guys to overheat. We'll call you when the relay starts." Eddie and the others hate to miss watching the meet, but Mr. Frazier has a point. The paramedics have already treated several athletes for heat related issues today. And, most of all, the team wants to win.

The last event of the day is the men's 4 by 400-meter relay. Today, Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Hill will be running in this event. Mr. Frazier is putting Hill in this event because, next year, Hill is expected to be the team's best 400-meter guy. The call is made, and the relay team heads to the starting line. The entire team is now at the bench, ready to celebrate when Braden crosses the finish line a few minutes from now. Winning the medal in every event and the gold medal in each relay race thus far, meeting the once thought impossible goal is right around the corner.

Waiting for the event to begin, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "Athena, I really can't wait to see what their complaint will be during the coaches meeting next Fall." Provost Leighton replies, "if this year was any indication, it should prove quite entertaining. And, if you think Dr. Gregory was bad this year, just wait until next year." Mr. Frazier asks, "what's up with him, anyway?" Provost Leighton explains, "his son is on his team. He came in fourth place in the 400 meters today." Mr. Frazier repeats, "fourth place. That explains it all." Since coming in fourth place at the Olympic trials many years ago, Mr. Frazier detests any thought of coming in fourth place.

Mr. Frazier asks, "how did you find out about this?" Provost Leighton replies, "his son applied for a transfer. Gerald brought it to my attention last week. I told Gerald to deny it." Agreeing with Provost Leighton's decision, Mr. Frazier comments, "accepting him can only spell trouble anyway." Provost Leighton informs Mr. Frazier, "next year, in the 400-meter dash, we have Hill, John, Bull, Davida, and a few others who can beat him. So, he'll essentially be a non contender in the divisional meets." Mr. Frazier replies, "Gregory and his son should already know that. The next thing that's going to happen is Dr. Gregory is going to apply for a position at the University." Provost Leighton replies, "that will be denied too. I'll take the pleasure of denying that one myself."

The sound of the gun immediately draws Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton's attention to the track, where Mark is running his last event of his college career. While Mark is exiting the first curve, it is apparent to all that he has the lead. While Mark is on the back straightaway, Mr. Frazier asks Provost Leighton, "do we have any other athletes besides Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. who don't attend formal classes?" Provost Leighton replies, "no. And, that's good. Dr. Gregory, and the rest of them, will certainly be looking under every rock for some little reason to disqualify us." Mark hands off to Hill, and Mr. Frazier, knowing that Hill will likely be his best 400-meter guy next year, starts his stopwatch.

Hill has been handed a generous lead. Mr. Frazier asks, "Athena, is there anything about our sports programs that's not squeaky clean?" Thinking for a moment, Provost Leighton replies, "Larry Morris, the football coach, has a few players who have been suspected of cheating.

But, we've addressed it internally, so that shouldn't be too much of a problem." Hill, delivering roughly a 46-second 400-meter leg according to Mr. Frazier's stopwatch, hands off to Eddie.

Perceiving an immediate change in Mr. Frazier's countenance, Provost Leighton asks Mr. Frazier, "George, do you have a concern?" Mr. Frazier replies, "yes." Pointing to the other team's benches, Mr. Frazier tells Provost Leighton, "take a look. Their benches began emptying out a while ago. And, take a look over there. Nicholson is sitting there on his bench with his head hanging down, examining his shoe laces." Provost Leighton comments, "they're certainly not going to be happy next year." Mr. Frazier replies, "they're not happy now. Half of their team has already gone home!" Dr. Zunde joins Mr. Frazier and Provost Leighton as Eddie hands off to Braden.

Dr. Zunde comments, "congratulations! We did it! We took all the medals." Commenting from his conversation with Provost Leighton, Mr. Frazier agrees, telling Dr. Zunde, "we did! And, the other teams are not the least bit happy. Half of the athletes have already left." Dr. Zunde replies, "that would be their problem, not ours. If they would get out there and train instead of worrying about why we're winning and they're losing, they wouldn't have this problem today. It's up to them to change what they do. We can't do that for them." Braden approaches the finish line, taking the gold medal in the 4 by 400-meter relay.

At the bench, the team celebrates, exchanging high-fives, fist bumps, and congratulatory hugs. Achieving today's goal, Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, and Dr. Zunde also exchange high-fives, fist bumps, and hugs. It is difficult for the other teams not to notice the widespread celebration at the University's bench. Wishing that, somehow, they too could be part of the celebration, many athletes from the other teams vow to step up their training over the next year. Many athletes walk away, wondering what training secrets, if any, are known by Mr. Frazier and his coaching staff. If any of the other team's athletes or coaches were present at just one of Mr. Frazier's motivational talks at the beginning of the season, they would quickly understand.

The 4 by 400-meter relay team returns to the bench, where the celebration is not over. Receiving high-fives from his teammates, Eddie searches for Kathy. Finding her, Eddie gives Kathy a big hug and kiss. Kathy whispers to Eddie, "you did it! You won! And the team won all the medals!" Eddie replies, "that was my last race in college. But, I'm not upset like I was after State my senior year in high school." Kathy replies, "good, because you're the best!"

The awards ceremony begins, which is the high point of the team's season. Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer walk up when called to receive their

awards for the 100-meter dash. Karen receives a special award for tying the world record in the women's 100-meter dash. As the awards ceremony continues, Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton, and Dr. Zunde stand behind their team's bench, watching as, one after another, the athletes head to the podium.

Mr. Frazier also takes note as several of the other teams disrespectfully pack up and leave during the ceremony. Dr. Nicholson, at Dogpatch University as Mark calls it, is among them. Provost Leighton takes notice and, should Dr. Nicholson so much as make a peep during the coach's meeting next year, Provost Leighton will remind him of his outright disrespect.

Once the awards ceremony is over, many of the spectator's family and friends come down from the stands to meet with the athletes. Today, Officer Hayes and his family get to meet the team. Johnson and Barbara come down from the stands, bringing with them several members of the Northside High School track team. And, Karen's parents and aunt come down to join the celebration. Eddie's and Mark's parents also join in with the celebration.

Officer Hayes greets Eddie, telling him, "this was a great meet. And, I actually got to watch with my family. I didn't have to work today." Eddie replies, "that must have been relaxing." Officer Hayes replies, "it was. But, I was tempted to come down and help out when those two characters tried to attack you and Mark." Eddie replies, "yeah. That was Frank Glooma and Mayor Jamieson." With an expression of shock, Officer Hayes replies, "you're joking, right?" Eddie replies, "no. They had knives, so we decided to finish them off." Officer Hayes comments, "these characters, when do they ever stop?" Eddie guesses, "probably when their heart stops beating."

Now curious for the details, Officer Hayes asks, "what happened to them?" Eddie explains, "they say Glooma has a broken neck. And, I heard that, when Mayor Jamieson came in for a landing, he broke his jaw and bit part of his tongue off." Officer Hayes exclaims, "ouch! That must have hurt!" Eddie points out, "that's going to make it really hard for him to testify in court." Officer Hayes replies, "add attempted assault with a deadly weapon to his other charges, and that character will be out of jail when his sun is about to set." Not having one bit of sympathy for Mayor Jamieson, Eddie replies, "good. That guy is dangerous."

Kathy walks over, and Officer Hayes' daughter, Cindy, exclaims, "hey! You're my gym teacher!" Kathy replies, "yes, I am. How are you doing, Cindy? Did you have fun today?" Cindy replies, "yeah. How come you're here?" Kathy replies, "I'm here because my husband, Eddie, ran in the track meet today." Eddie tells Cindy, "hi. I'm Eddie." Cindy exclaims,

“wow! You’re big!” Kathy tells Cindy, “Eddie ran in a few races and threw the discus and hammer today.” Cindy asks Eddie, “why do you throw a hammer?” Eddie replies, “well, it’s not really a hammer.” Cindy asks, “then, why do they call it a hammer?” Getting out of explaining the details to the second grader, Eddie tells Cindy, “your gym teacher will explain that to you.”

Kathy tells Cindy, “honestly, Cindy, I don’t know why they call it a hammer. But, the hammer is a very heavy steel ball, connected to a cable, with a handle attached to the other end of the cable.” Cindy informs Kathy, “I know why they call it a hammer.” Kathy replies, “tell me, Cindy. Why do they call it a hammer?” Referring to Kathy’s description of the hammer, Cindy replies, “because all that took way too long to say.” Cindy made a great observation. Calling the apparatus a hammer is a whole lot easier than calling the hammer a very heavy steel ball, connected to a cable, with a handle attached to the other end of the cable.

Cindy then asks, “can I see it?” Kathy replies, “you sure can, if it’s okay with your mom and dad.” Officer Hayes’ wife, Sandy, tells Kathy and Cindy, “sure. Let’s go over and look at the hammer.” Kathy, Sandy, and Cindy walk over to the launching zone, where the field implements are being gathered by the University’s team assistants. Truth is, Sandy wants to see the hammer too.

Kathy asks Courtney, the team assistant, “Cindy would like to see the hammer. Is that okay?” Courtney tells Cindy, “hi. You must be Cindy.” Cindy, pointing to her mom and Kathy, happily replies, “yeah, and this is my mom, and this is my gym teacher.” Courtney takes the hammer out of the trailer behind the golf cart and, placing it on the grass, tells Cindy, “here you go. One hammer for the girl.” Trying to lift the sixteen-pound ball, Cindy exclaims, “wow! That’s really heavy.”

Taking the discus out of the trailer, Kathy tells Cindy, “this is the discus. It’s a little lighter. I used to throw the discus.” Cindy asks, “can I see it?” Kathy replies, “sure,” and hands Cindy the discus. Kathy then asks Cindy, “do you want me to throw it?” Cindy replies, “yeah! Can you?” Seeing a Field Judge, Kathy asks, “hey. Can I throw the discus for Cindy? She wants to see how it’s thrown.” Recognizing Kathy from many previous meets, the Field Judge replies, “I don’t see why not. The red zone is vacant.” Kathy replies, “thank you so much.”

Kathy leads Sandy and Cindy over to the discus launching area. Kathy shows Cindy where to stand to watch, and Kathy gets on the discus pad. Going into the wind up, and into the spin, Kathy releases the discus, letting out a primal scream. In awe, Cindy exclaims, “wow! That was really cool!” The discus soars through the air, coming to rest far beyond the winning throw for the women today. Kathy asks Cindy, “how was

that?” Cindy exclaims, “that was really, really, really good! You threw it really far!” Kathy tells Cindy, “now, I have to run out there and get it. I’ll be right back.” Kathy runs out into the red zone to retrieve her discus.

Kathy returns with the discus, placing it back in the trailer. Kathy tells Courtney, “thank you so much. I hope I didn’t keep you.” Courtney replies, “no problem. Cindy might be one of our future discus throwers.” Kathy replies, “you never know.” With Cindy all excited that she got to see her gym teacher throw the discus, Kathy, Sandy, and Cindy then walk back to the group.

Karen’s parents and Aunt Jeannie come up to meet Karen. Karen poses, holding one arm out to her side, proudly announcing, “you are now looking at the fastest woman in the world!” Karen’s father tells her, “congratulations! I saw they gave you a special medal!” Showing her father her medal, Karen replies, “yeah! They did! Take a look!” Karen’s father and Aunt Jeannie give Karen a hug, and look at the medals she has won today. Jeannie tells Karen, “you did awesome out there, girl!”

Karen’s mother, Phyllis, whom she now calls her former babysitter, whispers to her husband, “I wish she’d stop exaggerating.” Overhearing the whisper, Jeannie firmly replies to Phyllis, lecturing, “Phyllis, Karen has not exaggerated in the least bit. She just tied the world record in the 100-meters, making her the fastest woman in the world. The record was set four years ago, and the woman setting that record hasn’t surpassed or equaled it since. That would make Karen the fastest woman alive in the world right now.” Phyllis crudely replies, “whatever. It still sounds like she’s exaggerating to me.” Hearing her mother’s sarcastic response, Karen tells Jeannie, “what do you expect out of a former babysitter?” Karen’s mother tells Karen, “just shut up, already!”

Karen bluntly tells her mother, “why don’t you just go home. You never wanted to be here to begin with.” Karen’s mother replies, “oh, stop it already!” Mimicking her mother, Karen says, “oh, stop it already.” Karen’s father tells his wife, “oh, Phyllis, that’s enough! Cut it out already!” Phyllis replies, “fine. I’ll be waiting in the car.” Phyllis stomps off, once again playing the victim. Karen’s father gives Karen a hug, and tells her, “let me go chase after her. Congratulations, again! You did really good out there today.”

Karen’s aunt tells Karen, “I really don’t know what her problem is. She was complaining about the heat during the entire meet.” Karen replies, “it’s the same problem she’s had for the last 21 years.” Jeannie tells Karen, “don’t worry about her. You did great out there today!” Karen tells Jeannie, “hey, I want you to meet my coaches.” Jeannie replies, “sure! I’d love to!” Karen and Jeannie walk over to the University’s coaching staff, who are talking with Dr. Bonamo.

Meanwhile, Johnson, Barbara, and the high school team mingle with their former teammates. After today's meet, the high school team members realize that, at the next level, they will have to step up their game if they want to compete in college. This was exactly Barbara's goal, which was to motivate the team to perform better at the State invitational meet next weekend.

At the end of the day, the team decides to head out to get pizza. Today, being the last meet of many of the team member's track career, will certainly be a big celebration. After the semester is over, Eddie and Kathy plan to take a bit of a break, and go on vacation somewhere. Mark and Paula, too, are planning to take a break. But, for now, it's off to the locker room to change, then to the pizzeria and, later in the evening, to Eddie and Kathy's pool.

Many of the team members get in their Dune Buggies to head out to the pizzeria. Today, however, Kathy did not drive her Dune Buggy. Instead, Kathy and Eddie get into Kathy's Volkswagen Bus, giving a few other team members a ride to the pizzeria. Watching as Kathy gets into her yellow Volkswagen Bus, a tear comes to the eye of Provost Leighton, who is getting into her Jaguar a few parking spaces over. As the parking lot clears out over the next thirty minutes, Provost Leighton, is the last to leave.

Two days after the divisional meet, on a Monday, Eddie drives into work, finished with his college career. Quickly discovering the power is out in the area due to a huge thunderstorm overhead, Eddie is glad he had an emergency generator installed last Summer when Mark built the storage building. Eddie walks inside, opens up the station, hoping no one comes in for gas until the storm passes.

Two hours later, during a lull in the storm, Bobby B. finally rolls into work on his motorcycle, wearing as much rain gear as he can fit over his clothes. Bobby B. walks into the office, where Eddie is sitting back and relaxing. Eddie jokingly tells Bobby B., "I'm glad you could show up to work this week." Bobby B. replies, "it was storming out." Eddie tells Bobby B., "it sounds like to me that you'd better step up the work on your Volkswagen Bus." Bobby B. replies, "Erika missed two classes today because of the rain." Eddie tells Bobby B., "now, it sounds like to me that you'd better get working on Erika's Bus." Bobby B. agrees, and tells Eddie, "yeah, I need to do that."

Realizing that he has two open air vehicles, his motorcycle and Dune Buggy, Bobby B. wastes no time getting to work on his Bus. Eddie comes back into the service area, checking Bobby B's. work. Eddie mentions, "Paula wants a Bus now, too. And so do Braden and Wendy. Actually, it's Wendy who really wants one." Bobby B. asks, "are you going to build one

for them?" Eddie replies, "no. We are. I want to get into the Volkswagen Bus modification business." Bobby B. smiles, and tells Eddie, "yeah! I can help with that." Eddie replies, "good. Because, Mark is out looking for a Bus right now."

Seeing that Eddie's Service Station is the only business in the area with power, Officer Richard Hayes drives into the station, hoping to get a cup of hot coffee. Walking into the service area, Richard asks, "what's up?" Eddie replies, "what's up?" Richard replies, "Cindy was really happy to watch Kathy throw the discus on Saturday. Now, Cindy wants a discus." Eddie suggests, "I'd start her off with a Frisbee." Richard tells Eddie, "what I'm afraid of is that she's going to find my hammer, and start throwing it around the yard." Bobby B. tells Richard, "it sounds like you have a future track star on your hands." Richard replies, "believe me. I can see that coming from a mile away. That's all I heard about for the rest of the weekend."

Richard asks Eddie, "hey. Can I get a cup of coffee?" Eddie replies, "sure," as they all walk into the office together. While Eddie doesn't drink coffee, he always has a pot made in the morning for the customers, along with a few bagels with cream cheese. Richard helps himself to a cup of coffee and a bagel, and takes a seat. Eddie casually mentions, "I wonder how long the power is going to be out." Richard confidently replies, "all day. The power crews can't work when the lightning is this bad. It's way too dangerous."

Richard then announces, "you'll never guess what's happening right now." Eddie replies, "I'll take a guess. Everyone's taking a break? I hear the crime rate drops in storms." Richard agrees, telling Eddie and Bobby B., "well, that does happen. No one comes out in a storm like this, not even the thieves. And, I hear another storm is on its way this afternoon. I haven't seen it this bad in a while." A cold front moved in from the North and, with all the heat and humidity that was around over the weekend, severe thunderstorms and rain are expected all day.

Eddie asks, "so, what's happening right now?" Richard explains, "after what happened at the track meet Saturday with these Jamieson and Glooma characters, Chief Gabriel decided to clean up the streets. We're taking in everyone we know who was involved in the gambling ring. The three McCutchen characters, Scott, Junior, Todd, and Jeff, are on the list. So is that character who works in the burger joint downtown." Eddie asks, "Jimmy O'Brien?" Richard replies, "yeah. That's the guy." Eddie replies, "wow! Jimmy O'Brien! That's just too bad. Now, I don't have anyone to mess with." Bobby B. comments, "there's always the Chuckie." Richard replies, "that Charles Black character is a psychopath. You don't mess with psychopaths. You lock them up." Richard then explains, "in total,

we're taking in about two dozen people today. We've focused on those who are likely to start up another ring."

Now curious, Eddie asks, "why did you take in Jimmy O'Brien?" Richard replies, "he was a bookie. And, also because I don't really like that character. Right now, the guys over at the health department are putting that burger joint under a microscope. With any luck, they'll shut the place down." Eddie replies, "wow! What happened?" Richard explains, "an officer went into that place for lunch last week, and ordered a burger. He saw this O'Brien character intentionally drop the burger patty on the floor before he put it on the bun. And, guess whose tray that burger landed on?" Eddie replies, "wow!" Richard continues, "so, the officer just walked out. As I said, I just don't like that character. We're also taking the manager of the burger joint in. He was working for this Jamieson character, and taking bets. It's no wonder that burger joint is so unfriendly to cops."

Richard then explains, "the least the health department will do today is to make them throw away all their food." Not knowing about commercial food safety protocols, Eddie asks, "how can they do that?" Richard explains, "the power is out. The freezers will get above freezing. When that happens, the food has to be disposed of. And, the good part is the guys at the health department sit there and watch as the employees dump the food into the dumpster."

Bobby B. asks, "what's to stop them from taking the food back out of the dumpster?" Richard replies, "nothing. And, they will. But, the health department marks the packaging with a permanent marker. And, the department will have someone sitting in the parking lot, watching them. He'll get a few photographs. When those clowns bring the food back inside, the health department will pull a surprise inspection. They'll find the food from the dumpster, and revoke their food service permit. Then, they'll have to reapply for their permit. That will take months." Eddie comments, "it sounds like the health department is having their own sting operation today." Richard replies, "there's not much else to do on a stormy day, like today."

Out of the blue, abruptly changing the subject, Richard tells Eddie and Bobby B., "you'll never guess what we found when we searched Mayor Jamieson's house." Eddie replies, "this has got to be good." Richard explains, "this character kept a record of who attended church at several churches. We ran a cross check of the names on his list against unresolved break ins. Many of the houses on his list were broken into on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening." Eddie exclaims, "wow! Kathy was right!" Richard comments, "this Jamieson clown will be put away for a long time, along with Vio Otto, Glooma, and Evans." Eddie sighs, and mentions, "it's just too bad that Evans wasn't the one who broke into my

house.” Richard reassures Eddie, “Evans will get what’s coming to him. They always do.”

With his radio somewhat silent this morning, Richard peers into the service area and asks, “how’s the Bus coming along?” Eddie replies, “after Bobby B. rode his bike here in the rain, he’s really motivated to get it finished faster.” With more time on his hands than usual, Richard asks, “can I take a look at it?” Eddie replies, “sure. Let’s go back and take a look.”

Walking into the service area with Richard, Eddie tells Bobby B., “hey! We’re going to take a look at your Bus.” Bobby B. replies, “sure. No problem.” Bobby B.’s Volkswagen Bus, which is lifted, is easy to inspect from underneath. Eddie shows Richard the Porsche 930 drive train, an a few modifications that were made, thus allowing it to fit. Also pointing out the reinforcement to the structural components, Eddie informs Richard that Kurt Richter, a Georgia Tech engineer, designed the modifications. Coming to the front of the Bus, Eddie points out to Richard that, because the Volkswagen Bus is cab-forward³, installing the front end from the 930 was a more difficult task to engineer than installing the engine. But, Eddie assures Richard that Kurt has solved that problem.

Richard asks, “so, how does Kathy’s Bus perform?” Eddie replies, “it does zero to sixty about as fast as the 930. I timed it at 5.1 seconds. The 930 does zero to sixty right at five seconds flat. The bus weighs a little less than the 930, but it’s a lot less aerodynamic. I have no idea what the top end is. But, Kurt estimates it will do about 140 miles per hour. And, it handles like a dream. And, the weight distribution is nearly a fifty-fifty ratio.” Richard carefully looks over the Bus and the workmanship.

Eddie mentions to Richard, “I think we’re going to get into the Volkswagen Bus modification business.” Richard tells Eddie, “maybe I’ll have you build one for me. Sandy would really like one of these. But, I see your point. Once you load this down with two adults, three kids, and a bunch of luggage, getting to sixty miles an hour is asking a lot.” Eddie offers, “we can do that if you want.” Richard replies, “thank you. I’ll talk to Sandy about it.”

After an interesting morning conversation, Richard gets back on the road, hoping to stop by again a little later for another cup of hot coffee. Eddie and Bobby B. get back to work on Bobby B.’s Volkswagen Bus, again hoping that no one comes in for gas. And, the thunderstorm Richard

³ Cab-Forward: Automotive term. The driver and steering wheel are situated in front of the front wheels of the vehicle.

alluded to earlier can be heard approaching from the North. And, for everyone else in the town, it's not likely their power will be restored anytime soon.