

Eddie, The Collegiate Senior

Chapter Seven Athena's Story

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The students, now finished with classes and final exams, are packing up their worldly possessions, many of them preparing to go home for the Summer. Some will stay around over the Summer, taking classes to either catch up, get ahead, or simply because they like the university atmosphere. Many of them will hang around an extra day or two, for they have graduated and will receive their diploma. Among the graduates this year are Eddie, Mark, Braden, Mitchell, and Bobby B. Akinmola, who was granted a dual enrollment so he can run track at the University, will be graduating from seminary this semester.

Early Friday morning, Mr. Frazier sits quietly in his office reviewing the season's statistics. More specifically, Mr. Frazier is evaluating next year's team. Losing nine athletes in the world class performance category, Mr. Frazier can no longer expect to win the gold, silver, and bronze medal in every event. But, with Mr. Frazier, losing is not an option. And now, losing is not an option for Provost Leighton either, who finds much more satisfaction in her job as the assistant track coach than in her administrative position.

Mr. Frazier is not one to sit in one place for a very long time, especially behind a desk. Taking a break from sitting in his office for two long hours, Mr. Frazier decides to go for a walk outside and get some fresh air. Thinking that a change in scenery will help stimulate his mind, Mr. Frazier heads straight to the outdoor stadium, the venue where history was made over the last few years. Perhaps the answer he is searching for may be found there.

Walking through the tunnel to the stadium, quite unexpectedly, Mr. Frazier sees the University's maintenance staff, who are in the process of setting up the stage for graduation. Since the weather is expected to be beautiful on Saturday, graduation will be held outside on the track. And,

the added benefit is that the outdoor stadium will hold many more visitors than will the University's basketball stadium.

Standing alone along the railing, watching as the workers set up the stage, Mr. Frazier thinks back to earlier this academic year when he attended the annual divisional coaches meeting. Wondering what kind of sarcasm will be in store for him next year during the meeting, Mr. Frazier is looking forward to the confrontation. The head coach also realizes that, in order to be as competitive as the last two seasons, something will have to change. Mr. Frazier deeply contemplates what that change will be.

Walking up and interrupting Mr. Frazier's thoughts, the crew chief, a guy named Ronald, who has his name embroidered on his shirt, tells Mr. Frazier, "sir, this area is off limits at the moment. You'll have to leave." Mr. Frazier asks, "why?" The crew chief replies, "please don't argue with me, sir. This area is off limits. You will have to leave." Confounded how asking 'why' can be construed as an argument, Mr. Frazier walks about fifty feet away, and again stands along the railing as the worker gets back to his business.

The crew chief, seeing that Mr. Frazier has not left, approaches again, and tells Mr. Frazier, "sir, I told you that you'll have to leave." Not in the mood for an argument today, Mr. Frazier authoritatively replies, "I heard you. This is my track, and I am not going anywhere. So, deal with it. Right now, I am doing what this University pays me to do. Now, I suggest that you get back to doing what this University pays you to do. And, I can assure you, sir. Bothering me is not in your job description." The crew chief, wondering who the guy is that immediately assumed all authority over him, backs down and gets back to work. Mr. Frazier also gets back to work, contemplating his key strategical moves for next year's track season.

A while later, also walking out into the stadium is Provost Leighton. Walking over to Mr. Frazier, Provost Leighton asks, "what brings you out here on this beautiful day, George?" Mr. Frazier replies, "I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to do next season as far as the event assignments go. I suppose that I have all Summer to think about it. But, there's no better time than the present when everything is still fresh in my mind." Athena tells George, "I saw you standing out here from my office, so I thought I'd take a break." George replies, "that's what I was doing. Taking a break. Sitting in my office, I was coming up with absolutely nothing. And, I'm not doing too much better out here."

Athena then mentions, "I know what you mean, George. I should have just called in sick today." George asks, "why? Are you okay?" Athena explains, "I'm fine. Thank you for asking. It's just that, at the end of

every semester, everything suddenly becomes an emergency. Certain professors haven't gotten their grades in on time for students who are walking¹ tomorrow. And, it's the same professors every year. Students want to graduate who haven't earned enough credits. Students contest failing grades that are preventing them from graduating. The list is endless." Agreeing with Athena, George replies, "I can definitely see why you'd want the day off."

George then shares, "I really wish I had the foresight that Kathy has, seeing what will happen on the track before it goes down." Athena replies, "Kathy has quite a remarkable gift. And, what's amazing to me is that she's always right." George replies, "I know. She's quite a unique individual. I've never met anyone like her. When I coached high school, she was the heartbeat of the team. It was the same when she ran for us here."

Athena asks, "so, tell me, George. What's your concern for next year?" George replies, "the shoes of nine world class athletes are hard to fill. Losing them all at once is hard to swallow. But, I knew this day was coming. I just don't have an answer, Athena. I just don't see how we're going to walk away with all the medals again next year." George has apparently set the bar extremely high for himself and the team. Athena reminds George, "if I remember correctly, George, only one person wins the race. Only the gold medals count. The first loser is the one who walks away with the silver medal." George smiles, and tells Athena, "thank you for reminding me. All the gold medals! That, we can definitely do!" George feels as if a huge weight was just lifted off his shoulders.

Athena tells George, "this is confidential, but, I am putting together a proposal that I believe will help our track team immensely in the future." Now curious, George asks, "what proposal is that?" Athena explains, "my proposal has two parts. The first part will clearly benefit our current track team. I can get that part passed with the stroke of three pens, one of which is mine. The second part of my proposal would, in a way, train the future members of the track team before they arrive at the University. The goal is to bring them up to a highly competitive level before they even join the team." George tells Athena, "if you can share the details with me, I'm all ears." Athena smiles, and replies, "I'd love to."

Athena then explains, "the first part of my proposal brings several new physical education classes to the curriculum. The first class would be a class on track offered at the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior level. The other class would be a class on the field events, offered at the

¹ Walking: (*College Slang*) Walking up to receive their diploma. I.e., graduating.

same four levels. Technically, there will be only two new classes. All of the track classes would meet together, as would all of the field events classes.” George replies, “I like that idea, Athena! They’d all get an extra training session in during the day.” Athena also points out, mentioning, “and, we might find someone who qualifies for the team among the general student population.”

Athena continues, “now, here’s my ultimate plan, George. High school students receive college credit for taking advance placement classes and passing a standardized test. Most often, these courses are in their core curriculum. Some students are granted a dual enrollment status, where they take college classes and earn college credit while they are still in high school.” George smiles, and comments, “I think I have an idea where you’re going with this.”

Athena continues, explaining her ultimate goal, “the second part of my proposal is to extend the classes eligible for dual enrolment to include the new physical education classes I described. For example, if Mr. Johnson and Miss Wyngate at Northside High School have students who are pursuing a track scholarship or want to run in college, we can grant them a dual enrolment status, giving them college credit for training with our team in the physical education classes. They would receive college physical education credit, which, I might add, is required by most colleges and universities. So, even if they decide to go elsewhere, the credits will transfer. And, as an added benefit, with our training, the high school students will likely perform better in their own meets.” Suddenly jubilant, George exclaims, “I like that idea! We can get their skill level perfected long before they even enter college.”

George then laughs hysterically, prompting Athena to ask, “what’s so funny, George? I must have said something to make you laugh.” George explains, “if the University does offer those classes to high school students, I can’t even begin to imagine what Dr. Gregory, Dr. Nicholson, and the rest of those clowns are going to say next year during the divisional coach’s meeting.” Athena laughs, and tells George, “now that you mention it, I can’t wait myself!”

Understanding the character of his competition, George mentions, “they’ll all try to make a rule against it.” Athena assures George, “they can’t. Offering classes in track and field in the dual enrollment category falls under the jurisdiction of the University’s academic program, not the athletic program. If they even attempt to disallow it, they’d have to completely eliminate dual enrollment. I can assure you. That is never going to happen.” George smiles, and tells Athena, “then, we can get a one or two-year advance on recruiting athletes.” Athena replies, “that’s the plan.”

Athena explains, “here’s my problem, George. You’re really the only one qualified to teach the class.” Interrupting, George tells Athena, “I’d love to teach the class, Athena! Sign me up.” Athena smiles, and continues, “the University will certainly compensate you for taking on the additional responsibility. And, I’m not sure whether you know this or not, but you’re now very well known in the track and field circle. There’ll probably be a waiting list to get into the class if you were to teach it. What that means is that we can be very selective of whom we accept into the program.”

George asks, “how can we be assured that the high school students would want to attend this University and run for us when they graduate?” Athena replies, “we have absolutely no assurance at all. But, as you always say, ‘who wants to be part of a losing team?’ When they see what we have to offer, it’s not likely they’d want to go anywhere else.” George likes Athena’s plan, and is fully on board.

Now curious of how easy or hard it is to get Athena’s plan approved, George asks, “you mentioned three signatures were needed. Whose signatures are those?” Athena replies, “mine, Dr. Karakova, and President Caldwell.” George replies, “I’d hate to sound presumptuous, but I don’t see why either of them wouldn’t approve it.” Athena smiles, and whispers, “they will, George. They will.”

Contemplating what Athena said earlier, George mentions, “you know, Athena, Kathy might be open to helping out in teaching the class. She’s having a baby in September, and is probably not going to return to teaching at the elementary school. Part time might work out better for her, if she’s open to it. And, we’re funded for two assistant coaches and a field events coach, so one position is still open. If I can, I’d love to get her back here working with the team in some capacity.” Athena replies, “if that can be worked out, I think we’d all benefit. And, that reminds me, George. We need someone to fill Gerhard’s position. Gerhard only took the position for a year.” George informs Athena, “Dr. Bonamo might want to come back. He doesn’t want to teach class anymore, but he’s still open to coaching. And, when I spoke with him after the indoor divisional meet, he didn’t seem too happy with where he is.” Athena replies, “good. We’ll keep him under consideration.”

Now more at ease, George tells Athena, “hearing your plan, Athena, I think I’ll sleep a lot better tonight.” Reassuring George, Athena admits, “it shouldn’t be too hard to get the proposal through. I’ve already spoken with Dr. Karakova, and he indicated to me that he will fully support the proposal. And, President Caldwell, with his background in athletics, will likely support it. The problem, as always, is where the funding will come from. But, honestly, George, the tuition that the students pay should more than cover any expenses in running a physical education class. The

overhead in such a class is minimal. And, over the last two years, the track and field program at this University has significantly raised alumni contributions.”

George asks, “so, what’s your story, Athena? You heard mine last year.” Athena replies, “oh, George. You don’t want to hear my story. It’s a complete and total mess.” George replies, “try me.” Athena tells George, “let’s go up in the stands, and take a seat.” George and Athena walk up into the stands, a place where they are rarely seen. Taking a seat in the administrators area where the seats are more comfortable, George is about to hear what no other person working at the University has ever heard.

Athena begins, telling George, “where do I begin? Let’s see. Last year, during the holiday party, my first number was *Rock and Roll Lullaby*. My mom and dad got married right after they graduated high school. I never met my dad. He died before I was born. What’s odd is that they never found out why he died.” George replies, “oh, Athena. I am so sorry.”

Athena continues, “mom raised me alone, hence my first number, *Rock and Roll Lullaby*. She was just eighteen when I was born. After dad died, mom couldn’t afford their apartment any longer, so she moved into a van. Dad used the van for work. My mom and I lived in the van, a yellow one, very similar to the color of Kathy’s Volkswagen Bus. It was the only choice she had. There were windows in the van, so I got to see the moon and stars at night. When I saw Kathy’s Volkswagen Bus after the Spring divisional meet, it brought back many of those memories.”

Describing her life living in the van, Athena shares, “mom would drive around in the evenings, trying to find a safe place for us to spend the night. For a few years, a guy named Bill in a service station would allow her to park the van inside the garage at night. I knew him as Uncle Bill. Bill didn’t expect anything in return, but mom cleaned the office and restroom for him after he left for the day. One of the earliest things I remember was getting a bath in the sink in the restroom. She would do anything she can to earn money, but I suppose living in a van wasn’t too expensive.” George compassionately tells Athena, “that must have been really hard on your mom.” Athena replies, “she claims it wasn’t. But, I’m not sure she ever knew what was considered to be a normal life. It was the only life after high school that she knew. She knew of no other way.”

Athena goes on, describing her early life, “in the Spring and Fall, mom would often drive to the beach, where we would spend the night in the van. It was very safe there. Before bedtime, mom would give me a bath in the ocean. I would help her carve out a makeshift bathtub in the sand near the water. The waves would come in, and fill up my bathtub with water. Mom would wash me in our bathtub. I remember she had a few

natural sponges, which she found on the beach. And then, she would take me into the ocean, and rinse me off. After I was rinsed off, she would hold me, and spin me around, telling me, 'spin cycle'. Then, it was bedtime. I remember hearing the waves crashing when I was going to sleep. I slept so good at the beach." George is very surprised at what he is hearing, and is speechless.

Athena then explains, "when I started school, mom was able to get a part time job during the day. She was there every day after kindergarten in the van to pick me up. All the other kids thought she was driving me home but, when I got into our van, I was home. When I was in first grade, mom saved up enough money, and was able to rent a basement apartment. We had one bedroom, a bathroom, and a small kitchen. I thought that apartment was so big!" George comments, "I guess, compared with a van, it was." Athena mentions, "what I thought was so cool were the drapes in our apartment. The drapes were shower curtains."

Athena then tells George, "fast forward to fifth grade. It was a warm Spring day and they were having field day. I won the 50-yard dash, and got a plastic gold medal on a red, white, and blue ribbon. The medal has the word 'winner' on one side, and a star on the other side. When mom picked me up from school that day, I was so excited, and showed her my medal. I still have that medal today. Mom was so proud of me, that she took me out to eat dinner at a restaurant that evening. That was the first time I ever ate in a restaurant. In retrospect, she probably spent all the money she made that day on dinner." George smiles, and tells Athena, "you won the gold medal! You were the only winner!" Athena smiles, and proudly replies, "I was!"

Athena continues, "that Summer were the Olympic games. I watched with my mom, who wanted me to see the track and field events. I remember mom telling me, 'Athena, I don't have enough money to send you to college. If you can run fast enough, you might get to go to college free.' When we watched the 100-meter dash together, I went and found my field day medal, and wore it during the race. After the race, I remember naively asking my mom, 'am I almost as fast as they are?' With sadness in her voice, she replied, 'no, Athena. You'll have to practice for years to run that fast. But, you can do it. I know you can.'"

Pausing for a moment, trying to conceal her emotions, Athena continues, "now, all excited after her telling me that I can do it, I told her, 'show me how!' She asked, 'now?' I told her, 'yeah! Right now.' So, mom took me outside, and showed me how to run laps around the house. So, every day, I ran laps around the house after school, and she would time me. It wasn't long before I started running around the block."

Moving forward to the next school year, Athena explains, “the next year, when I was in middle school, I tried out for the track team. Back then, there was no girls’ team, so the girls, if they even dared to try out for the team, had to run with the boys. When I came home that day and told mom that I made the track team, she was so happy. I didn’t win anything during that year, but I was in sixth grade, running against eighth grade boys. By the time I was in eighth grade, I was beating all the guys.” George tells Athena, “it sounds like you put a lot of training in.” Athena replies, “I did. But, it was nothing compared with what was about to come in high school.”

Moving forward to high school, Athena continues, “when I was a freshman in high school, on the weekends, I would run to the track, run laps, and run home again. In high school, I never lost a race to the girls. Some of them were ticked off, being beaten by a freshman. I trained hard. Then, as the years went by, I started beating the guys. The guys would get really ticked off when I beat them, which made me train even harder.” Athena stares out at the track, and is silent for a moment. Composing herself, Athena tells George, “right there, on that track, during my senior year, I won State. I set the girls’ State record in the 100-yard dash and in the 220-yard dash, and beat all the guys I was running against.”

Backing up a bit, Athena then explains, “I applied to this University during my senior year. I walked into the admissions office, handed in my application, and boldly asked the clerk, ‘can I have a track scholarship, please?’ The clerk told me that I would have to speak to the track coach about a scholarship. So, I asked her, ‘who is he, and where can I find him?’ She didn’t know, but she was nice enough to find out for me. She handed me a piece of paper on which she wrote, ‘Dr. Braun. Phys. Ed. Building’. So, I went right over to see Dr. Braun.” George comments, “that was very bold, just walking in and asking for a track scholarship!” Athena laughs, and replies, “I know. But, if I couldn’t get a scholarship, there’s no way that I would be able to go to college. So, I pressed the issue, perhaps a bit too hard. But, I had to try.” George thinks of how he always said that you must attack your challenge with no fear.

Athena continues, “so, I immediately went to see Dr. Braun. I’ll never forget that day. I spent nearly a half hour searching for the physical education building, and I finally found it. I knocked on his door, and he told me to come in. Not recognizing me, he asked, ‘what can I do for you, young lady?’ Getting right to the point, I told him, ‘I want a track scholarship. What do I have to do to get one?’ So, we talked for a few minutes, and he told me to show up at track practice tomorrow morning at seven o’clock.” George comments, “seven o’clock. Apparently, that’s one thing that hasn’t changed.”

Athena explains, “so, I skipped school the next morning, and mom took me to track practice here at the University. Dr. Braun asked me what distances I ran, so I confidently told him, ‘the 100-yard dash or any sprint.’ Dr. Braun immediately yells out, ‘Veda! Get over here, now!’ I had no idea who Veda was, but I thought to myself that someone with the name ‘Veda’ sounds like she is very fast. He told Veda and I to warm up, and told me I would be racing Veda. So, Veda and I raced, and I beat her in the 100-yard dash, and in the 220-yard dash. I later came to find out that Veda was the fastest woman sprinter on the team.”

Athena continues, “after I won both of those races, Dr. Braun told Dr. Jensen to take over for him. Dr. Braun then brought me over to the admissions office. On the way, he asked me all about my training.” George tells Athena, “wow! That must have been the best day of your life.” Athena replies, “it was certainly one of them. But, the best part is coming up.”

Recalling the events of one day that Athena will never forget, she further explains to George, “at the admissions office, Dr. Braun talked with the admissions director, who reviewed my application and talked with me. I was then asked to leave the room for a moment. The adults always kick the kids out of the room when the good stuff is coming. I stood outside the closed door and listened carefully, hoping to hear something. I heard Dr. Braun tell the admissions director, ‘I don’t care what you do or how you do it, find the money to give Athena a track scholarship. And, make sure she gets admitted. I don’t want to lose this one. She just creamed my number one sprinter.’ Hearing what Dr. Braun said was the best moment of my life.” George smiles, and exclaims, “that’s awesome, Athena! You must have felt really great after that!” Athena tells George, “I did. At that point, I knew I was in. Two weeks later I got a letter in the mail, telling me that I was admitted to the University and I got a full scholarship to run track.”

With an interesting twist to her story, Athena tells George, “after track practice that day, I went to school. That afternoon, I got called to the assistant principal’s office for cutting class. He didn’t believe me when I told him where I was or why I was there. And, get this, George. He told me I would never get a track scholarship, and told me that I’d have to make up better excuses than that if I was going to cut class. He gave me three days of detention for cutting class. The next day, mom brought me to school, and had a talk with the assistant principal. She told him exactly where I was on the prior day, why I was there, and that I will not be going to detention. All I heard was a constant stream of ‘yes ma’am, yes ma’am out of the assistant principal.” George laughs, and tells Athena, “that sounds exactly like Mr. Crum, the former principal at Northside High.”

Athena tells George, “you know the rest of my story, and how I was undefeated in college. Then Darryl came along, and I started training for the Olympics. After that, it was off to graduate school.” George replies, “I remember you telling me about that.” Athena adds, “once I started teaching, I got out of the track circuit. To be honest, in a way, I like coaching far more than my administrative duties here at the University. So, with a bachelor’s degree in Exercise Science, a master’s in business administration, and a doctorate degree in finance, my favorite two hours of the day are between seven and nine a.m.”

Suddenly remembering her past, Athena tells George, “you know, George, I always wanted to be a gym teacher.” George asks, “why is that?” Athena explains, “when someone is in high school, they see, at best, perhaps 1 or 2 percent of the job opportunities that are available to them when they graduate. For example, you know what your dad did for a living. If your mom worked, you know what she did. You may have known what your friend’s parent’s did. And then, there’s the doctor, nurse, teacher, policeman, fireman, grocer, and so on. When I was in high school, and looked around, the only people that I saw who were really happy were the gym teachers.” Unknown to Athena, Kathy echoed the same sentiment four years ago.

Recalling last year, when she told Mr. Frazier that Darryl always wanted to play the drums, Athena explains, “ever since Darryl was a kid, he always wanted to play the drums. If that’s what he really wants to do, then why not? There’s no sense in guiding him into an occupation where he won’t be happy. For me, it was physical education. For my husband, it’s finance. For Darryl, it was playing the drums.” George points out, “as they always say, you can’t put a round peg in a square hole.” Athena replies, “I couldn’t agree with that more, George.”

Backtracking to an earlier subject, Athena tells George, “so, as I mentioned earlier, I should have called in sick today. After all I’ve been through my entire life, honestly, George, I’m sick of hearing crap, such as, ‘I overslept, and missed my final. Can I still graduate?’ My answer to that one is, ‘yes. You can graduate next semester, after you clear up your incomplete.’ I can’t even imagine any of that kind of nonsense coming out of the track team.” Drawing a parallel, Athena tells George, “can you imagine Eddie saying at a meet,” and now mimicking the tone of a disgruntled student, “hey. I missed my preliminary heat. Can I just run in the final?” George laughs, knowing that would never fly in any sport.

George asks, “does that really happen a lot?” Athena replies, “a whole lot more than you think. The students get desperate, and appeal up the chain. And, their parents call, and remind us how much money they’ve paid to the University over the last four years. Normally, the dean entertains those problems. But, some students believe they have special

privileges because their parents donate large sums of money to the University. So, those parents start at the top of the chain. When their parents raised them, they constantly told them that they are special. And, the parents think that, because they donate money to the University, the rules do not apply to them.” Athena sighs, and comments, “what I do and what people think I do are two completely different things.”

Now on her favorite soapbox, Athena asks George, “do you want to hear something else?” George replies, “sure. Go for it.” Athena explains, “it’s not only the students and the parents, it’s the faculty too. As sure as the sun rose this morning, when I get back to my office, there will be a message from some professor who needs an extension getting their grades in. And, they’ll be a message left by some faculty member who is supposed to be attending graduation in an official capacity tomorrow, but their mother died for the seventh time. What’s really sad, George, is that the students make up better stories than the faculty.” Athena sighs, and tells George, “as you can probably see, our morning training sessions with the team are now the high point of my day.” George replies, “you’ll never hear any of that crap coming out of the team.” That’s because George Frazier would never put up with it.

When George informed Athena that he needed an assistant coach, and did not know the procedure to find an assistant coach, Athena’s response was, “put your request in writing, and I’ll be there on the first day of practice to be your assistant coach. That is, if you’ll have me.” George energetically replied to her, “Athena, I’d love for you to help!” Athena was elated to join the coaching staff, quickly realizing how dearly she missed the sport she discovered when she was in the fifth grade. Since joining the coaching staff, Athena’s competitive spirit has been rekindled, bringing her back to track and field, where she knows she belongs.

Hearing Athena’s story, George asks, “may I ask how your mom is doing these days?” Athena replies, “she’s doing very well. Thank you for asking. She is still working. Once I was able, I bought her a house. My mom doesn’t have very much, but she doesn’t want or need much.” Athena gets a little emotional, and tells George, “she still has the van we lived in for six years. She refuses to part with it. The engine barely runs, but otherwise the van is in excellent condition. She keeps telling me that she’s going to take me to the beach again someday in her van. But, I’m afraid the van wouldn’t even make it to the beach.” George suggests, “Eddie can probably get her van running like new.” Athena pauses, smiles, and exclaims, “why did I not think of that myself? I’m going to call Eddie sometime next week.”

George and Athena walk down from the stands and onto the track. Seeing the workers almost finished, Athena walks over to the crew chief with George, and instructs the crew chief, “before you leave, will you

please have the workers cover the track with the tarp. I don't want the track getting damaged with all the people that will be here tomorrow." The crew chief rudely replies, "that wasn't on our list, lady." Athena firmly tells him, "then put it on the list. I want the track covered with the tarp." The crew chief tells Athena, "I'm not sure I can do that. It wasn't on the list." George can clearly see that Athena is getting ticked off by the crew chief's poor attitude.

Stepping into the conversation, George firmly tells Ronald, the crew chief, whom he had a run in with earlier, "I strongly suggest that you get this track covered with the tarp. As I told you earlier, this is my track. If you don't cover my track, there will be no graduation here tomorrow. And, when they ask why no one is allowed in the stadium because the track is not covered, take a wild guess whose name will be coming up." The crew chief replies, "yes, sir. Yes, sir. We'll get right on it." The crew chief walks back to the stage, and yells out to his workers, "before we knock off, we need to get the track covered with the tarp. Let's get moving!"

As they are walking away, Athena asks George, "did I just miss something back there?" George tells Athena, "apparently, they don't know who you are." On the way out of the stadium, George explains his earlier run in with the crew chief, which Athena finds quite amusing.

Returning to the plaza outside the indoor arena, George tells Athena, "I'll guess I'll see you tomorrow morning." Athena replies, "I'm looking forward to it." Feeling much more confident about next year's track season, George heads inside to gather up his stuff before he heads home early for the day.

Athena walks into her office, finding nearly a dozen urgent requests on her desk requesting some form of deviation from the University's policy regarding graduation. Most of the requests are from students whose parents donate a lot of money to the University, and think they are somehow granted special privilege. Briefly glancing over the requests, Athena walks out of her office, hands the requests to the secretary, telling her all the requests have been denied.

Walking back into her office, Athena closes the door. Sitting in her chair, Athena looks out toward the stadium as the workers place the tarp over the track. Athena thinks to herself that, if she and her mother were able to live for six years in a van, waking up in time to take a final exam shouldn't be too difficult a task.

Right before lunch, the secretary knocks on Provost Leighton's door. Provost Leighton tells her, "please, come in." Handing the provost a note, the secretary tells the provost, "we have a problem, ma'am." Reading the

note, the provost gets the news that the commencement speaker has a dire emergency, and will not be able to give the commencement address at the graduation ceremony tomorrow. Not surprisingly, a look of great disappointment comes over Provost Leighton's face.

Provost Leighton asks the secretary, "when did this news come across?" The secretary replies, "just now. His wife called from the hospital. He's not doing very well. They're not even sure if he's going to make it." Now even more upset, Provost Leighton tells her secretary, "please call the hospital later this afternoon and see how he's doing. And, please send a get-well card and flowers." The secretary replies, "yes, ma'am."

Now, with the responsibility of finding a new commencement speaker for tomorrow's ceremony by the end of the day, in frustration, Provost Leighton tells the secretary, "what else can go wrong today? Let me start working on this." The secretary, seeing that Provost Leighton is very upset, offers, "if there is anything you need me to do, ma'am, please let me know." The secretary leaves and closes the door. Provost Leighton crosses her arms on the desk, lays her head in her arms, and begins to cry.