

Chapter 21

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January 21st represented the end of my one year term of office as my troop's Senior Patrol Leader. I wasn't allowed to run for the office again. Mr. Clark appointed me to be the Junior Assistant Scoutmaster for our troop.

I originally expected either Paul Abbott or Mark Good would succeed me. Ed felt he was too busy preparing for quarterback next season. Jeremy wouldn't run since he was running the Venturer Crew this year. A couple weeks earlier Hal unexpectedly decided he wanted to run for SPL. Hal beat Paul with Mark coming in a distant third. Hal tried to get Jeremy to accept the position of Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, but Jeremy said no. Hal settled for having Paul be his assistant. It was for the best. Paul and Mark needed to get prepared to run the troop when my friends and I weren't in scouts anymore.

Football team members celebrated after the January School Board meeting. They approved construction of the new Stadium. The bid request would go out immediately. The contractor would be selected in February. Construction would begin by the end of March, weather permitting.

Ed and I got a hall pass from Coach Caffrey for our lunch period on Tuesday. It gave us permission to go to the middle school cafeteria. We wanted time to sit down and talk with Logan Mitchell, who quarterbacked the JV team last season. We needed him to make it to our film study sessions. We checked with the teacher on duty in the cafeteria so she knew why we were in the wrong cafeteria.

Ed and I got a few confused looks from the younger kids. Dave Mitchell (no relation to Logan) and Cody Stevens gave us a big hello when we passed their table. Ed and I spotted Logan sitting with some other JV and middle school football players.

We made our way over to Logan's table. I said, "Hey Logan, could we sit with you? We'd like to talk with you."

Logan looked shocked. "Huh? What do you want?" I had a couple of the kids slide down a seat on either side of Logan. Ed and I sat down on either side of Logan. Logan didn't look to comfortable.

"Relax Logan. We want to talk. That's all." I explained, "You know the film study sessions Ed and I run each Wednesday after school?"

"Yeah." He answered hesitantly.

Ed said, "Kyle and I wanted to talk to you and explain how important these sessions can be. They can help you a lot."

I asked, “Did you see Penn State play in the bowl game a few weeks ago?”

“Yeah.” Logan answered.

“You know Zack Hayes threw three touchdowns at the end of the game and that Zack went to high school here?”

“Sure. Everyone knows that.”

I continued, “You know Ed was first team all-state at quarterback this year?”

“No, I didn’t.” Logan replied.

Ed said, “I was. Do you know how I learned to play quarterback well enough to do that?”

“Uh... film study sessions?” Logan answered hesitantly.

“Exactly. Zack Hayes helped me learn how to break down film; how to read defenses. He helped me learn to do what I do now.” Ed said.

I asked, “Ed, how many colleges have sent you recruiting information?”

Ed smiled, “Twenty-three.”

I continued, “Ed is probably going to get a full athletic scholarship for college. Do you know how many tens of thousands of dollars that is going to save Ed’s parents?”

“No.” Logan answered.

“College can cost anywhere from \$40,000 to 100,000. An athletic scholarship would be worth a lot of money.” I said.

Ed continued, “Logan, Kyle and I want to help you learn how to be a top quarterback in our league. Zack Hayes taught Jake Kring and me. I want to help you learn what I was taught.”

I added, “Ed and I have busted our balls over the last two or three years to turn our team into one of the best in the state. We want Jake and you to keep this tradition of excellence going after we leave. That is why we want you to come to the film study sessions.”

Ed looked directly into Logan’s eyes. “What do you think? Do you want to be the best quarterback around some day?”

“Do you think it’s possible?” Logan asked hopefully.

Ed answered, “Sure. I wasn’t anything special three years ago when I was in eighth grade. Zack helped me. I worked hard, practiced and studied. I’ll help you do it too, if you are willing to put in the effort. What do you say?”

“I’d like to Ed. I’ll talk to my parents.” Logan answered.

“Good. We’ll see you tomorrow Logan.” I said.

Logan started asking questions about quarterbacking the rest of the way through lunch. Ed and I seemed to have made an impression on Logan. Ed and I exchanged high fives after lunch when we headed back to the high school side of the school complex.

Wednesday afternoon’s film study session was well attended. We had 23 guys ready to learn more about football and one very unhappy girl. Mom said that Liz couldn’t stay home alone when Andy and I were doing the film study. She sat in the back and tried to do her homework over all the noise we made. Logan asked lots of questions. He was paying attention.

I had a few bad moments as we watched the Greg Harrison score his touchdown in our game last fall over the Coventry Warriors. I looked around the room and saw a lot of the other guys trying to hide tears too. Ed, Jeremy and I were going to have to discuss this. We couldn’t have a bunch of football players crying every film session.

Penny and I settled into a nice routine now that her play was finished. We studied together after school most days. We frequently took advantage of no parents being home in the afternoon. It was great to be able to make love to your girlfriend regularly. It wasn’t unusual for Dave and Liz to work on homework downstairs while Penny and I made love in my room and Andy and Shannon did the same in his bedroom.

My scout troop went to the district Klondike Derby the last weekend in January. We camped out at Muddy Creek Park for the weekend. Saturday the senior scouts in our troop helped run stations. The patrols from the fifteen southern Lancaster County troops pulled “dog” sleds around the park and competed at the stations in first aid, knots, lashing, map and compass, and teamwork skills. Ed and I ended up running the lashing station for the day.

Andy’s Fox Patrol placed third among the 32 patrols that competed in our district’s derby. We headed back to our campsite after the awards ceremony Saturday afternoon. The patrols started dinner.

Our scoutmaster, Mr. Clark called me and the other assistant scoutmasters over to talk before dinner. Mr. Clark said, “I wanted to talk with you to discuss ideas for who will be the next troop guides. Any thoughts gentlemen?”

Mr. Good suggested, “What do you think of Troy Smith?”

I said, “I think Troy is doing a good job as patrol leader for the Flaming Arrows.”

Mr. Huber agreed with my assessment. Mr. Clark asked, “What do you think of Andrew Martin?”

Andy? I hadn’t thought he would be considered. Mr. Good said, “I think Andy would be good.”

Mr. Huber added, “Andy’s experience on camp staff last summer seemed to improve his leadership skills. I could see the difference when he got home from working at camp.”

“Andy has worked out well as patrol leader for the Foxes.” Mr. Clark said. “Kyle, do you think your brother would be up to the task?”

“Um.... I guess.” I hesitated for a few seconds. “Should we be looking at older scouts?”

Mr. Clark answered, “Normally the troop guides are 14-15 years old and in ninth grade. That fits Andrew doesn’t it?”

I admitted, “Yes, he fits. Would any of the other ninth graders be a better selection? What about Eric Connell or Devin Schreffler?”

Mr. Good said, “They haven’t been a patrol leader or assistant patrol leader. I think Eric’s too quiet. Can you imagine Eric working with the patrol you had two years ago Kyle.”

“No, I can’t. I guess you’re right about Eric.” I admitted.

Mr. Huber asked, “How many new scout patrols do you think we’ll have Charlie?”

Mr. Clark, who’s first name is Charles, answered, “It looks like two patrols. The pack has 13 second year Webelos.”

Mr. Good said, “That’s two patrols. So Charlie, is it Troy and Andy?”

Mr. Clark said, “I think so. Kyle, you seem to have reservations about your brother. Why?”

“I’m not sure if Andy is ready for such an important job.” I answered.

“I’ve heard that said before. Your brother Will said the same thing two years ago about you before you were appointed as Troop Guide. I think Andrew is ready. Kyle, would you get Troy and Andrew? I want to discuss this with them.” Mr. Clark said.

I got my brother and Troy. They spent fifteen minutes talking with Mr. Clark. Andy had a big grin on his face when he went back to his patrol for dinner. He accepted the job for the next year.

The temperature dropped down to twenty degrees Saturday night. Hal had the senior scouts visit every tent to check to make sure all the scouts had changed into clean clothes before bedtime and that everyone had sleeping bags and blankets to keep them warm overnight. It was a cold night, but everyone survived it. Hot chocolate tasted great first thing in the morning. Our Klondike Derby/Winter campout was a great success.

Mom called me downstairs on Sunday afternoon after I got home from the camping trip and had showered. She was part of the committee organizing our troop's banquet in two weeks. Mom went over the guest list to confirm the guests I wanted to invite when I received my Eagle award.

My list included my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. I insisted that we had to invite Justin and Sherry Baer, Matt Horn, Trent Wilson and Christian Hunsecker. I would have invited Zack Hayes too, but Ed Fritz had Zack on his guest list. Confirmations came in throughout the next week. The only people that couldn't make it from my guest list were my Aunt Patty and Uncle Scott and their kids.

The 1st of February brought changes to my rehab. Matt Horn finally felt my knee had improved to the point where I could do open chain exercises. I could do my entire weight lifting routine like I did before my knee injury. Matt teased me that I was also approved for all sex positions now. I was allowed to bowl and golf. The only restrictions were no running and jumping.

Ed, Jeremy, Hal and I decided to take our girlfriends bowling on Friday night, the night before our banquet. Penny, Lindsey, Kathy and Tammy approved of our plan.

Things improved slightly at the next film study session. The younger guys who didn't know Greg Harrison paid close attention as we reviewed our game with the Trojans. This was the game Ed missed when he had the flu. Ed complimented Jake on his performance as quarterback during the first three quarters of the game.

We got to the part where Jake got knocked out. The video showed me jogging over to the sideline for directions from Coach Caffrey and then calling the play in the huddle. We lined up and Adam Diem snapped the ball to me. I dropped back five steps. Andy had a step on the defensive back but I overthrew the ball.

Ed commented, "Nice Kyle."

On the next play the Trojans blitzed six people. I hadn't noticed that during the game last fall. I watched as Andy came open. Joey Keller slipped and the defensive end came loose. I streaked out of the backfield chased by two defensive linemen. I pulled away from them quickly and wasn't tackled until the strong safety hit me fourteen yards downfield.

Ed laughed out loud. Jake joined him. I scowled at them and growled, "What?"

Still laughing, Ed spit out, "You looked like a scared chicken on that play. Way to go Kyle."

I protested, "I made the first down!" I tried to keep from laughing along with the rest of my friends. "Hey, I did get better as the game went on."

We continued on with the remainder of the game. When we were done dissecting the plays on both teams Ed admitted, "You really didn't do too bad, considering you're a wide receiver."

"4 for 7 passing for 72 yards and a touchdown is pretty good. I went on-line after the game to check my QB rating. It was 132.1. How often did you beat that rating?" I protested.

Ed laughed and brushed that comment aside. He said, "I'm glad I got to see this video Kyle. I heard you tell me about it, but your description didn't do it justice. I think I'll stick to quarterbacking and you stick to catching the ball."

"Deal!" I said enthusiastically. I knew the teasing was all in good fun. It helped keep the mood of the group lighter than the previous couple of film study sessions. I hoped we could find some way to keep the spirit up in the future.

The group date on Friday night to the bowling alley with our girlfriends was an excellent idea. The eight of us ended up bowling six games that evening. We competed as couples. Hal and Tammy beat our asses. Ed and Lindsey came in a distant second. Jeremy and Kathy were a close behind for third. Penny and I took the rear. Even though we lost badly, Penny and I had fun.

I felt great while I was bowling. My knee was OK until the last game. It started to stiffen up a little. I still was happy to start to do normal things again instead of sitting on the sidelines and watching the way I had been doing for 3 1/2 months.

Will and Abby came home from Philadelphia on Friday night. They spent the day Saturday shopping for better furniture for their apartment. They were going to meet the family at the banquet.

On Saturday Mom and Dad were busy nearly all day helping with preparations for the troop banquet. I got to sleep in and relax until late afternoon. I showered and shaved for the evening. I was making progress at growing hair on my chin, cheeks and above my lips. I needed to shave nearly everyday now, unlike a year or two ago. The blond hairs were still too light for most people to see, but the little bit of stubble bothered Penny when we kissed.

I dressed in my newest scout uniform. I carefully rolled my troop neckerchief, put it on and added my merit badge sash. Mom and Dad were already at the church helping set up the room. I loaded up Andy and Liz in my Golf, drove three doors down the street and picked up Penny. I drove us over to the church.

The Fellowship Hall was really decked out for the banquet. Red and green streamers were strung across the ceiling. Gorgeous flower arrangements were in the center of every table. Penny and I wandered around the room looking over the displays. They had pictures from camping trips in the past few months. The banquet committee had a large cake decorated for the Eagle banquet. It had an Eagle emblem on one side and "Congratulations Ed Fritz, Hal Long, Kyle Martin and Jeremy North" on the other side. Granddad had to take a bunch of pictures of Andy, Liz, Will and me with the cake.

My relatives made a big fuss over me and Penny. Penny and I had a few minutes to talk with Justin and Sherry Baer. Sherry's belly was getting large. She still had another three months before the baby was due. Justin talked about the new house they had just purchased a couple days ago. It was only 1/2 a mile from his parent's home. Justin said they were planning to move in the beginning of March. Penny and I promised to help them when the time came.

Zack Hayes and I found a few minutes to talk before dinner started. Zack regaled Ed, Hal, Jeremy and me with his triumph at the Capital One Bowl. Zack told us about the time at the beach that the team had. He also hinted at all the girls that hung out with the team. Zack tried to be circumspect about his liaisons with the girls, but it sounded like he had a different one in bed every night.

Hal went to the front and held up the Scout Sign to call for quiet. He announced it was time for everyone to find our seats. The Rev said the blessing. The church ladies served a fruit cup appetizer, ham, turkey, stuffing, green beans, corn, and garden salad. As always, the church ladies outdid themselves with the meal.

Hal and Mr. Clark started the program after dinner. Mr. Huber handed out merit badges that the kids earned in the fall and winter. Mr. Clark asked me to help him hand out the rank advancements to the dozen scouts who advanced in the last few months. I was proud that the group included my brother Andy and his friend Eric Connell. Both of them earned their Life rank. They only had one more rank to go, Eagle. I was confident that the two of them would make it.

The lights in the room were dimmed when Andy, Eric and I had seats. Mr. Clark lit the candles at the front table for the Eagle presentation. The screen dropped down from the ceiling and the ceremony started.

Mr. Clark intoned, “I am the voice of the Eagle.

“I speak for The Eagles whose summit you have struggled so hard to reach.

“We remember well when you first came to the base of our mountain, and how you looked up with ambition and determination.”

The slide projector showed slides of Ed, Hal, Jeremy and me through our six years on Boy Scouts. The slides were cued to the script so the pictures fit what Mr. Clark was talking about. The Call of the Eagle Ceremony talked about the four of us earning our Tenderfoot our first summer in Boy Scouts. They showed a picture of the four of us at the pool at summer camp with Will life guarding in the background. We could never have been that small. The younger scouts giggled at our pictures.

They showed pictures of the four of us on our first backpacking trip on the Horseshoe Trail when we were eleven. The backpacks were impossibly big for us. It had been a hard five mile hike.

Mr. Clark talked about our climb to the summit of scouting, the Eagle rank. He described the metaphorical peaceful meadow we reached when we attained the First Class Rank at our second summer camp. They showed slides of me and my friends goofing around at the lake at the scout camp on my twelfth birthday.

Mr. Clark talked about us continuing to climb towards the Eagle summit. Slides of my friends and me hiking with younger scouts on a hike a couple years ago appeared on the screen. Mr. Clark continued, describing how the trail to Eagle got steep. He showed the four of us on a rock climbing trip last year.

Mr. Clark said, “And now, that you are standing at the summit of the trail, in the glory of sunshine and wind and cloud at the threshold of your goal, WE, your Fellow Eagles applaud you and welcome you, for you have done your climbing in a true Scout-like manner.” The slides showed us with younger scouts watching the eagles soar above the Pinnacle overlooking the Susquehanna River.

Mr. Clark said, “Would the Eagle Scout Honor Guard please escort the Eagle candidates and their families to the front.” Will escorted my parents, Andy, Liz and me to the front while Joe Baer, Justin Baer and Doug Chapel escorted the Fritzes, the Longs and the Norths.

Mr. Clark invited Joe Baer to the front to speak. Joe said, “I have the honor to give the Eagle Scout charge on this occasion of your elevation to the highest rank in scouting. The Boy Scouts of all nations constitute one of the most meaningful and significant

movements on world's history, and you have been found worthy of the highest rank in its membership. All who know you rejoice in your achievement. Your position, as you well know, is one of honor and responsibility. You are a marked man.

“As an Eagle Scout, you assumed a solemn obligation to do your duty to God, to country, to your fellow scouts, and others. This is a great undertaking. You will live up to these obligations and bring honor to yourself and your brother scouts. You can not fail and bring down the standard of all others. Your responsibility goes beyond your fellow scouts, to God and your country. America has many good things to give you and those who follow you, but these good things depend, for the most part, on the character and leadership abilities of her citizens. You come to help her in all she needs most. You are here to make her future greater.

“I charge you to undertake your citizenship with solemn dedication. Be a leader, lead only toward the best. Lift up every task you do and every office you hold to the highest level of service. By your doing so, all may live better.” Joe stepped aside and Mr. Clark stepped to the front.

Mr. Clark handed an Eagle Medal to Ed's mother. Mrs. Fritz grinned as she pinned the badge to Ed's uniform. The room erupted in applause. Ed beamed.

Hal's turn came next. Mrs. Long pinned the ribbon to her son's uniform while Hal teased about be careful not to stick him with the pin. The assembled crowd applauded loudly when she finished.

It was my turn. Mom was shaking a little as she took the medal from Mr. Clark. I understood. I was too. I whispered, “You've done this before. This should be easy.”

Mom answered, “It doesn't get easier with practice Kyle.” She grinned as she undid my shirt pocket button so she could pin the badge on me. It took Mom a couple seconds to fiddle with the clasp and finish pinning the badge on my chest. I straightened up and proudly displayed the Eagle badge on my shirt pocket to loud applause from my friends, fellow scouts and their parents.

This moment was the proudest of my life. I had worked for almost six years to achieve this rank. Two out of every one hundred scouts made it to the Eagle rank. I hoped I could live up to the charge Joe had given us a couple minutes earlier.

Focus shifted to Jeremy immediately. Jeremy's mom received the Eagle badge, wiped a couple tears from her eyes and pinned the badge on Jeremy's shirt. The applause for Jeremy was just as loud and long as it had been for Ed, Hal and me.

Mr. Clark thanked Joe Baer for his assistance. Mr. Clark then handed out commendations that had been received from our state representative, state senator, congressman, and U. S. Senators. He concluded by reading the letters we received from the President.

Mr. Clark called for all Eagle scouts in the room to congratulate us. He closed the Court of Honor with the Scoutmaster's Benediction. Ed, Hal, Jeremy and I were swamped by well wishers.

Penny gave me a hug and a kiss when we finally managed to meet. She stayed at my side as I accepted congratulations from the crowd. I finally got time to talk with Trent Wilson and Christian Hunsecker. I knew Trent had received his Eagle about a year ago. Christian's uniform still displayed the Life Badge.

I asked, "Are you going to finish Eagle sometime Christian?"

"Oh yes. I finished my project last month. I'm going to finish the write up next weekend. I plan to get my Eagle rank before summer." Christian explained.

Trent, Christian and I talked football for a few minutes. Christian asked how my knee was doing. He had noticed that I was limping. I explained about overdoing it the previous evening bowling with my friends. Trent, Penny and I talked about getting together for another double date. I thanked Trent and Christian for coming before they left.

Ed, Hal, Jeremy and I had to put up with a long photo session for the troop leaders so they could get our photos in the newspapers.

When the photo shoot was over Jeremy said, "This has been some night."

Ed said, "It was. I think it's been as special as the night we won the state championship."

Jeremy replied, "You're right Ed. Tonight's been awesome."

I added, "We've been friends forever. I'm glad we could get our Eagle award together."

Hal said, "You got right Kyle. The four of us together made it all possible."

The four of us shook hands and went to meet our families. Mom handed me cards people had given her for me. The biggest surprise of the night was inside all the congratulations cards I received. I didn't find out until I got home that most of them had cash gifts in them. I had no idea that people did that. The infusion of cash was welcome. I now had enough money to keep my girlfriend happy for a couple more months.

Before we left the church Penny pulled me aside for a quick word. "Can you come over tomorrow afternoon for a little Kyle?"

"Sure honey, what's up?"

“My parents are going away for long weekend next weekend to a bed & breakfast in Cape May. I have the house to myself.”

“Oh, we can have some fun next Saturday evening.”

“No Kyle. I want more than a few hours of fun. I’m working on my mom and dad to get them to allow you to stay overnight with me.”

“Really? Do you think this is a good idea Penny? You remember what happened two summers ago when we tried this, right?”

“I think I have mom convinced. I want you to help mom and me convince dad.”

“We can give it a try. What can it hurt to ask?” I said. “What time should I come over?”

“Come around 1:30, OK?”

“I you got it lover” I said. I gave Penny a kiss before she headed home with her parents.

I headed down the street for the Edwards’ house after church and lunch on Sunday. Penny must have been watching for me. She met me at the front door. “Good. I’m glad you’re here Kyle. I think mom and I have dad ready to talk about you staying overnight with me. Let’s go.”

I didn’t feel totally comfortable. I remembered how mad Mr. Edwards had been at me two summers ago. He didn’t speak to me for six months. I followed Penny to the living room. Mrs. Edwards followed us in and had a seat beside Mr. Edwards.

Penny started, “Daddy, I would like to have a sleep over next weekend while you and Mom are in Cape May.”

Mr. Edwards looked wary. Non-committally he asked, “How many girls do you have in mind? I don’t want you having a party here while we are gone.” He glanced over to his wife for confirmation. Mrs. Edwards didn’t indicate yes or no.

“It isn’t a group Daddy. I only want to invite one person to keep me company while I’m home alone.” Penny answered.

Mr. Edwards stared at me. “One person?” he said, laying the accent on ‘person’.

Penny redirected her father’s attention back to her. “I’d feel more comfortable if Kyle helped me look after the house Daddy.”

“Kyle?!?!” Mr. Edwards exclaimed. “No!” Mr. Edwards paused for a few seconds and then glanced over at his wife. He did not find support.

“Jim, you know Penny and Kyle are trustworthy and careful. I think it would be nice if Penny had company while we are away. It can get awfully lonely in this big old house. I can make the guest room available for Kyle.”

“Marilyn, are you sure about this? I don’t know if this is a good idea.” Mr. Edwards replied.

“I’d feel better if Penny isn’t home alone. Kyle can help look after things. I’ll make up the guest room. It will be fine.” Mrs. Edwards said soothingly.

Mr. Edwards’ face went blank for a few seconds then he stared directly into my eyes. I returned his gaze. After a few seconds Mr. Edwards said, “Are you going to take good care of my special girl?”

“Absolutely Mr. Edwards. Penny deserves the best. I’ll do my best to take care of her.” I promised.

“I have.... certain reservations about this Kyle. I remember the two of you sneaking around behind my back two summers ago. You took advantage of her back then. You broke her heart when the two of you broke up.” Mr. Edwards said.

“I hope Penny and I have grown up a lot since then. We did a poor job of communicating with each other back then. We are working at doing better talking with each other now. I think we can handle some bumps in our relationship now that we couldn’t handle two summers ago. I love your daughter and promise to do my best to look after her.” I said as sincerely as I knew how.

Mr. Edwards sighed. “I suppose you can help Penny look after the house next weekend. I expect the two of you to be on your best behavior.”

Penny squealed and gave her father a bear hug. “Thank you Daddy! Thank you! Thank you!”

I added, “I think my parents will probably call you to confirm these arrangements. Thanks you for trusting us Mr. and Mrs. Edwards. We appreciate your confidence in us.”

Penny and I headed out to the kitchen. We talked for a few minutes before I went home. The whole thing staggered my imagination. I was going to spend the weekend with my lover with her parent’s knowledge and permission.

I talked about my plans for next weekend with my parents when I got home. They spoke with Mrs. Edwards and then gave me permission to spend the weekend with Penny. It

was going to be great. It was President's Day Weekend, so we would have three whole days together.

Wednesday afternoon brought our next film study session. We were studying our regular season game with Central. I rubbed my left knee involuntarily as I watched Nick Zeimer and Christian Hunsecker fall on me on my final catch of the season. No wonder my ACL blew out. My foot had caught in the turf while I twisted and the two guys landed directly on my knee.

Ed noticed my reaction. He asked, "You OK Kyle?"

"I will be eventually." I straightened up. "THAT is not going to be my last play in football."

Our group went back to reviewing the Central film after that. I found out just how close to losing our team had come after I got injured. Christian dominated Nick Zeimer and Seth Vogel after I was gone. We were lucky that Central left enough time on the clock for Ed to score one more time at the end of the game. We brought the younger kids up to speed on how we had managed to beat Central.

Penny was busy Wednesday evening. I took advantage of this to prepare for Valentine's Day the next day. I headed for the florists and Groff's Drug Store. I bought half a dozen long stemmed red roses, a deluxe Valentine's Day card and a box of chocolate covered cherries. The candy was Penny's favorite. The two of us agreed to keep the gifts low key. Our real celebration of our love for each other would be our long weekend together.

Penny and I exchanged cards at the bus stop on Thursday morning at the bus stop. We exchanged our other gifts after school. Penny was delighted with the chocolates and the roses. Penny bought a gold chain with the number 87 on it.

I drove Penny, along with Andy and Liz, to school on Friday since I needed the car to get to rehab. I didn't pay much attention during classes during the day. I was too excited about spending the entire weekend with my lover. Penny met me at my car in the parking lot when our last class was over.

"Hey lover, how was seventh period?" Penny asked when she found me leaning against the hood of the Golf.

"It was good. Mr. Winters handed back my latest drawing. He gave me an A- on it." I answered as we hugged. We kissed for a few seconds. Penny put her hands on my shoulders and leaned back against my encircling arms.

Penny stared into my eyes. "I'm happy for you honey." We kissed again. Our tongues met and a tingle went down my spine. I squeezed Penny against my body. Penny

wiggled her breasts against my chest while our tongues tangled together. My cock responded to the feel of my lover. It was half way hard in seconds.

“Yeeecchh! Is that all you two ever do?” Penny and I broke our lip lock and both turned to look at our interrupter.

Penny grinned and said, “Hey Liz.”

“You’ve got lousy timing Liz.” I added. Penny and I pulled apart a little.

Penny said, “You’ll understand someday Liz, when you have a serious boyfriend.”

“Yeah, right. Like some guy will ask me out.” Liz answered.

“Hasn’t anyone asked you out yet?” Penny asked. “You know seventh grade boys can be a little shy sometimes.”

Liz answered, “I get asked to go steady about once a week, but it’s just Dave.” Liz meant Dave Mitchell, her long time friend and play-mate.

“What’s wrong with Dave?” I asked.

Liz explained, “Dave’s almost like another brother. He isn’t going to be my boyfriend.”

I asked, “Why not Dave?” I was more than a little surprised. I knew that Dave really wanted to be with my sister. I always thought the feelings were mutual.

“It would be like doing things with you or Andy. NO THANK YOU!” Liz declared.

Penny said, “Be patient. The boys in your class will figure out how special you are Liz. It just takes them some time to figure things out.”

Andy arrived. He grinned and asked, “What’s up?”

I answered, “We’re waiting on you.” The four of us loaded up in the Golf.

When we pulled out of the parking lot Andy asked, “Can you drop me off at Shannon’s? Her mom is away this afternoon. We’ve got a couple hours to scr...” I noticed in the mirror that Andy glanced at Liz. “Uh.... Well, be together. We don’t get enough chances, you know?”

Penny and I laughed. I said, “I remember how it was in ninth grade Andy. To the Phillips’ home.”

I dropped Andy off and headed for home. Penny and I had agreed that we would skip our usual time together after school and meet after dinner. I loaded up my overnight bag with

the things I needed for the weekend. I watched some TV until dinner time. I bolted immediately after dinner.

I arrived at the Edward's house before Mr. and Mrs. Edwards left for their long weekend. I helped Mr. Edwards carry the suitcases out to the car. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards gave Penny a hug and a good bye kiss when all the suitcases were loaded.

Mr. Edwards stared at the two of us as we stood side by side beside the car trunk. "You know I don't want any parties this weekend?"

"Of course not Daddy." Penny answered.

"At most Ed, Lindsey, Jeremy, Kathy, Hal and Tammy may drop by for a few minutes before we go to dinner on Saturday night." I gave Penny a quick kiss on the cheek. "We're taking our girlfriends out to dinner and a movie on Saturday night."

Mr. Edwards answered, "That will be all right I guess."

Mrs. Edwards added, "I have the guest room all made up Kyle." Mr. Edwards climbed in the car. I caught Mrs. Edward's wink before she climbed in to join her husband. She understood our plans for the weekend and approved. She's certainly a cool mom. Penny and I both waved to them as they pulled away.

I wrapped my arms around Penny and nibbled her ear lobe. "What do you want to do first?" I asked.

Penny wiggled loose. "Let's pace ourselves Kyle. We have three whole days together. Why don't we get our homework out of the way?"

I sighed. "I guess you're right." I gave Penny a kiss. We started back to the house. I asked, "Do you think we should spend one night in the guest room, just for appearances?"

"It might be a good idea. Daddy probably would be more comfortable coming home and seeing dirty sheets on that bed."

Penny and I headed inside. I took my bags upstairs to Penny's room. We spent a couple hours working on our homework. Pre Calc and Chemistry were both done by 9 pm. Penny and I had a bedtime snack. We were finishing our ice cream when Penny asked, "Do you want to take a bubble bath before bed tonight?"

"Mmm... That sounds like fun." I said as I remembered doing that with Penny two years ago.

We headed upstairs, undressed in Penny's room and headed to the bathroom, naked. We cleaned each other thoroughly and soaked in the bubbly water for almost half an hour.

Our touching and caressing finally made us excited. I was sitting in the tub with my hard erection trapped between myself and my lover. Penny simply rose up and carefully sat back down on my cock.

Penny and I made love slowly. Penny rose and fell on my cock while I caressed her smooth skin, especially her breasts. Penny rode my seven incher for almost ten minutes. The water was starting to cool. I reached between Penny's legs and played with her clitoris as she stimulated herself with my cock. She rode me for another minute or two before I brought her to climax by rubbing her clit. The sensations of her pulsing pussy made on my cock was enough to bring me off too. I thrust hard up into her body about three times before I shot gobs of gooey cum against the entrance to her womb.

I collapsed against the back of the tub and Penny rested against me. My cock deflated and plopped out into the luke warm water. I shivered for a second when my cock left Penny's warmth and hit the cool water. I kissed my lover's neck and helped her to her feet. We dried each other off and pulled on robes. The two of us went downstairs to lock up and make sure the house was secure for the night.

Penny and I went back upstairs to her bedroom. We pulled the sheets aside, dropped the robes and climbed in bed. We exchanged pleasure in the sixty-nine position until Penny came twice and I came in her mouth. We snuggled together and kissed while I recovered.

Penny asked, "How do you want to do this Kyle?" as she stroked my semi-erect cock. It hardened quickly.

"How about if we do it with your ankles on my shoulders?"

"Can we? I thought you hurt your knee again when we did that last time. Is it safe?"

"Matt Horn says I'm OK for that position now. My knee is getting better."

"Cool." Penny cooed. She rolled on her back and spread her legs wide to make room for me. I pulled her ankles on my shoulders and lined my cock up with her hole. I drove my cock smoothly into my lover's pussy until I bumped into her cervix.

"Aaahhh.... I love it when you..." I pulled part way out and thrust again. "Unnh" Penny grunted when I hit bottom again. "Yeah! I love it deep Kyle."

The bed rattled and bumped against the wall as I withdrew and drove my cock into Penny. Penny grunted each time I hit bottom and squealed as I pulled out again. We shared our bodies for ten or twelve minutes until I stimulated Penny enough for her third orgasm of the night. I continued working my cock in and out while Penny writhed and groaned through her climax. Penny never completely came down from that high while I continued stroking her. Her pussy spasmed around my cock as I screwed her. It took me a couple more minutes to approach my own climax. I increased the speed of my thrusts. Penny squealed, "JEEE-SUUSSS! Don't..... oooooOOOHHHH.... stop..."

I could feel my balls tighten and force my sperm from them. I drove my cock as deep as possible into my lover, bumping her cervix again. Penny grunted and climaxed for a fourth time in the evening. Her pussy squeezed and clenched around my hard invader.

I groaned, “Ohhhhh..... GOD!” and spewed my cum into my lover’s pussy. Penny’s hot vagina milked my cock for every single drop of cum I had. Squirt after squirt after squirt until I felt my cum and Penny’s juices run down my balls.

I collapsed on top of Penny, completely spent. Penny rolled us on our sides. We stared into each others eyes. After about thirty seconds Penny cooed, “No one has ever done that for me like you have Kyle. You’re the greatest.”

“You’re really special sweetie. I love you.” I answered.

We cuddled together, holding each other. I pulled the covers over us. Penny flipped on the TV. We held each other as we relaxed. Penny flipped the TV off when the news came on. We cuddled together and fell asleep.

I woke up early, before dawn, and needed to pee. I tried to quietly disentangle myself from Penny so I could take care of nature’s call. I thought I was successful until I climbed back into bed.

Penny rolled over towards me. “Good morning honey.”

“Good morning.” I answered. I gave her a kiss. “Did I wake you?”

“I was half awake already.” Penny answered. “What time is it?”

“It’s a little before 6 o’clock. We should get some more sleep.”

Penny rolled over so she was facing away from me. I spooned with her and wrapped my arms around her waist. I rubbed my hand against her chest. Penny wiggled her backside against my crotch. That got my cock’s attention instantly. I rubbed my growing erection between her butt cheeks. It only took Penny and me a minute of rubbing our bodies together to send our libidos into overdrive.

Penny scooted up the bed a little, reached between her legs and grabbed my hard rod. She positioned it against her opening and slid back down the bed impaling herself on my cock. We made love slowly in our sides, me thrusting my cock into her. I held her body tight against mine while we made love. Penny held her hands over mine. I lasted about ten minutes. I started to play with Penny’s clit when my orgasm was approached.

My orgasm overwhelmed me before I could bring Penny to climax. I crawled under the covers when I had drained my gooey semen into Penny. I licked around her clitoris and used two fingers in her pussy to bring her to climax. Penny licked my sloppy cock while

I worked on bringing her to orgasm. It took me a couple minutes to bring my lover to climax.

The two of us cuddled together and fell asleep quickly. Sunlight was flooding across the bed when I finally woke up. I glanced at the clock. It was after 10:30 in the morning. I took a quick shower, dressed and went downstairs. I started up the coffee maker and retrieved the morning paper from the porch. I was drinking my second cup (lots of sugar with a little milk) when I heard the shower go on upstairs.

I gave Penny a kiss when she came downstairs to join me in the kitchen. I made bacon and eggs for brunch for the two of us. I cleaned up the dishes when we were done. Penny and I locked up and went over to my house to let my parents know we were going to the mall. Penny's dad's birthday was in a week and a half. I helped her find a nice gift at Sears in the tools department.

Penny and I were home in plenty of time to shower and clean up for our night out with Ed, Lindsey, Jeremy, Kathy, Hal and Tammy. My friends arrived couple by couple. We had set things up that Ed and I would drive. Hal and Tammy hopped in my car while Jeremy, Kathy and Lindsey followed Ed next door. I pulled out on to the street and waited for Ed. I followed him to Millersville and the mall by the movie theater.

We had dinner at the pizza place that the football team used as the in-season hang out. We ran into Stacie Thompson and Drew McCormick there. We invited them to eat with us. The ten of us headed for the theater after that. I spent the movie with my arm around Penny's shoulder while she laid her head on my shoulder. It was a comfortable way to watch the movie. Penny and I enjoyed the movie tremendously.

Penny and I headed to bed when we got home. We shared our bodies just once that night, a subdued performance by our standards. Penny and I slept soundly through the night, spooned together. Penny's alarm woke us up at 7:30 in the morning. We planned to go to my church.

Penny made pancakes for our breakfast while I showered and shaved. We ate our breakfast. I did the dishes while Penny showered. We dressed in our Sunday best and headed for my church. Penny wanted to see what our services were like. We hopped in my Golf and headed for the church.

Mom was delighted when we slid in the pew with my family. She leaned over and whispered to us, "I was afraid you two were going to be heathens today, lost in the pleasures of the flesh."

Penny blushed. I whispered back, "I'm here to give thanks for the beauty of God's creations, such as my girlfriend." I gave Penny a quick kiss on the cheek. She blushed even more. Mom giggled.

I did my best to help Penny keep up with the order of the service. I'm Presbyterian and Penny's Methodist. Her services and mine were similar but not the same. The Rev gave an excellent sermon. The choir sang beautifully. Penny and I walked out holding hands when the service was over. The Rev greeted Penny warmly when I introduced her to him.

Mom intercepted Penny and me before we could leave church. Mom asked, "Do you two want to come to dinner with the family tonight?"

I looked at my girlfriend and asked, "What do you think?"

Penny nodded yes and said, "That would be very nice Mrs. Martin. Kyle and I will accept your offer."

"Thanks for inviting us Mom." I added.

Penny and I went back to her house, changed into everyday clothes and had lunch. I read ahead in the assigned reading for English after lunch. Penny studied the script for the next Drama Guild play. She needed to get ready for auditions next week. Later in the afternoon we watched a movie.

Mom had roast chicken and stuffing for dinner. It was great. Penny and I thanked Mom for dinner and headed back to her house. We settled in watching TV for the evening.

Penny and I made love again before we went to bed in the guest room. We had to keep appearances up for Penny's dad. Penny and I took full advantage of our day off from school on Monday morning. We slept until ten o'clock. Penny and I were playful when we got up. We ended up feeling each up and then sharing a shower. The shower led to another session of wet slippery sex under the shower.

We finally left the shower after two orgasms each and when the hot water ran out. We dried each other off, dressed and headed downstairs. Penny and I double checked the house to make sure everything was cleaned up and suitable for parental inspection. Penny's mom and dad were expected to return after lunch.

Penny made grilled cheese sandwiches for us while I warmed up soup for our lunch. Penny and I were finishing lunch when Penny asked, "You're going on the Venturer ski trip next weekend right?"

"What? Why would you think that? I can't ski yet. Matt Horn would have a fit if I even thought about skiing."

"Oooohh... who is going to keep me company?" Penny asked. She batted her eyes at me flirtatiously.

“You know I love skiing, but why would I go? I’d end up sitting in the lodge all day getting bored.”

“You know they have snow tubing, don’t you?”

“They do?” I asked.

“Sure. Why don’t you come? I’ll go tubing with you. We’ll have a blast.”

“Will my knee be OK?”

“Sure. All you have to do is sit in the tube and slide down the hill. How could that hurt your knee?”

I admitted, “I guess you’re right. I’ll do it if you tube with me.”

Penny smiled and said, “Sold! Let’s call Joe Baer and get him to add you to the list of people going on the trip.”

One phone call had fixed all necessary arrangements. Penny and I cleaned up the lunch dishes and hung out until her parents came home. Penny gave her mom and dad a big hug and a kiss.

Mr. Edwards asked, “Did everything go OK honey?”

“Of course Daddy.” Penny answered.

I grinned and added, “The fire company did a great job cleaning up things upstairs. The tree in the back yard is only slightly singed from the explosion. I’m sure it’ll grow back in the spring.”

Mr. Edwards laughed. “Thank you for keeping Penny company this weekend Kyle. I’ll send the bill for any of the ‘damages’ to your parents. I’m sure they will be happy to take the money out of your allowance.”

I shook hands with Mr. Edwards. “Seriously, thanks for trusting me to spend the weekend with your daughter.”

I gathered my things up while Mr. and Mrs. Edwards unloaded their bags. Penny helped me load my things in my car. I had left it parked in front of the Edwards’ house after church.

I gave Penny a hug and a kiss before I moved my car down the street to my house. I said, “I wish we could live like this all the time. I really envy Will and Abby. I guess this is what their life is like now.”

“This weekend was great. You know Penn does have a football team. Your grades and SAT’s are good enough to get in there.”

“I know. It’s tempting but I want to learn as much about football as I can while I’m in college. I think I’ll learn more and do better in football at a Division I college. We’ll just have to enjoy our time together while we are in high school.”

Penny answered, “We have almost a year and half. We’ll enjoy what we have and deal with college when the time comes. I love you Kyle.”

“I love you too.” I said. I gave Penny a passionate kiss. I drove home and unloaded my things.

The Venturer Crew ski weekend did turn out to be fun. Penny and I spent the whole day riding large tubes down the hill. We spent time with our friends at lunch and dinner on Saturday.

One surprise was how Heather Miller and my brother reacted to each other. Heather had sniped at Andy any time they were near each other since the break up last fall. This trip they actually talked civilly to each other. I could see how relieved Eric Connell and Sammy Hoover were by this development. Eric and Sammy had been caught in the middle of the bickering for months. Eric was Andy’s closest friend and Sammy was Heather’s best friend.

Penny and I did take advantage of the heated shower house very late on Saturday night after most of the crew fell asleep. Penny and I were slightly surprised when we bumped into Eric and Sammy heading for privacy at the shower house when we were done. It was fun to see how the two of them blushed when they bumped into us. We wished them well before we went back to our cabin.

Monday night was a big night for our scout troop. The night the second year Webelos joined Boy Scouts. Mr. Clark divided the thirteen new scouts into two patrols. I was pleased when Mr. Clark assigned Greg Harrison’s younger brother Gary to Andy’s patrol. Andy did a good job his first night as a troop guide. By the end of the evening his patrol was set and they picked their name. They were going to be the Hawk Patrol.

Chapter 22

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We had fun at the film study session in the afternoon on the last Wednesday in February. This week's game was the seventh game of the season, our blow out with Eastern. Jeremy, Ed and I taught the younger players about how we used our play selection to keep Eastern's defense off balance. We had used the deep pass in the beginning to spread out the defenders so Drew could run. When they put eight in the box (eight defenders close to the line of scrimmage) we used play action to freeze the line and linebackers and give Andy one-on-one coverage deep. We nailed them three times with deep passes, twice for Andy's touchdowns.

I made an announcement when we finished the session. "All of you know Coach Baer right?" Most of the group nodded. "He is moving on Saturday. He and his wife Sherry have promised soda and all the pizza we can eat for everyone who helps them move. I hope all of you can help out. We are meeting at the Baers at 10 am. If you need directions, take one of these sheets. If you need a ride, talk to Ed, Jeremy, Hal, Drew, Travis or myself. We'll pick you up in the morning and drop you off at your house when we are done in the afternoon. Could I see a show of hands if you can help Coach Baer."

Eight guys raised their hands, not counting Ed, Andy and Jeremy. I knew they were going to help. Patrick Jones, Logan Mitchell and Corey Brown all asked me to give them a ride. Patrick and Corey are freshmen. Patrick hoped to make varsity next fall as a free safety. Corey expected to play as linebacker. I agreed to get Logan at 9:35, Corey at 9:40 and Patrick at 9:45.

Friday morning Matt Horn announced it was time for some new exercises. Matt said I had done well building up my hamstrings and quadriceps. He tested my knees on the orthotron. I had 75% strength in my left knee. It was time to work on agility and balance. Matt had me practice hopping off an 18" high box and landing on two feet. Matt expected me to do this for a few weeks and then I could start jogging. I was anxious to get back to my normal life. My knee was a little sore by the end of rehab, but it felt like I was making progress.

I got up early on Saturday. I grabbed some breakfast and then went upstairs to wake Andy up. "Come on you lazy bum. Get your butt out of bed." I said as I shook Andy.

"Nooooo..." Andy moaned.

"You have to be over at Ed's house in twenty minutes. You owe Justin Baer big time of all the help he has given you in football this year. Get your ass out of bed." I yanked the covers off of Andy.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm getting up." Andy said as he sat up. "Why can't I get a ride with you?"

“You could, but I’m leaving right now. I have to pick up Patrick, Logan and Corey. I’ll see you at the Baers at ten o’clock.

My passengers and I met my friends at the Baers. I was pleased at the turn out. We had a dozen Venturers and fourteen guys from the football team. Jon and Amy Miller came to help. Joe and Barb Baer were there too. Jon’s sister Heather babysat Justin and Sherry’s son Billy, Joe and Barb’s kids Betty and Jeff and Jon and Amy’s son Brian. Brian, Betty and Billy were five. Jeff was three. Billy made a point of making sure everyone knew “I’m going to be six in thirteen days.” He insisted he isn’t a baby anymore. Billy and Brian were best friends. They got along well with Billy’s cousin Betty. Jeff followed along with what ever his big sister and cousin did.

Amy, Barb, Penny, Kathy and Tammy all helped Sherry get things packed while Sherry sat, watched and directed the packing. Sherry’s due date was nine weeks away. She needed all the help she could get.

Justin rented a U-Haul truck for the day. The big work gang had everything packed and loaded before lunch. Justin led the way to his new home. It was about a mile and half from his parent’s house. It was a modest, i.e. small, three bedroom house. It was probably about twenty-five years old.

Barb, Amy and Sherry had two coolers filled with sodas for us when we arrived at the new house. The pizzas came a few minutes later. We chowed down on our inducement to help with the move. It was delicious.

I noticed Eric, Sammy, Andy and Heather hanging out together. They seemed to actually to have fun. I would be nice if Andy and Heather would learn to coexist with each other. I always thought Andy and Heather made a good couple.

After lunch Jon and Joe took the U-Haul and a gang of Venturers over to the Jones’ house (Sherry’s parents). They were donating some old furniture to help Justin and Sherry finish furnishing their house. The rest of us carried all the furniture and boxes inside to the appropriate rooms and helped the Baers unpack. Everything was in place by 3 pm. Justin and his family were moved in and ready to begin life in their new house. Billy was delighted to finally have his own bedroom including a real bed. He had spent nights on a sofa bed since he out grew sleeping in a crib.

I loaded my riders in my car and hit the road. I felt good about all the help the team and the Venturers had given the Baers. We really did a good turn for them.

Penny’s audition went extremely well for the Drama Guild’s spring production of Peter Pan. Penny won the starring role of Peter. I thought it was hilarious that my sexy,

curvaceous girlfriend would be playing the perpetual boy. This was going to be interesting.

The exercising I did every day was finally starting to show. I only lost a couple of the pounds I gained since I hurt my knee but flab around my waist had disappeared. My abs stood out the way I expected. I needed to get the strength in my left leg up to match my right. I was anxious to start jogging again. Matt Horn had promised that I should be able to start before the end of March.

Penny and I headed to Manheim on the second Saturday of March to meet Ashley and Trent. Trent took us to a restaurant in Elizabethtown for dinner. We caught a movie afterwards.

In Boy Scouts Mr. Clark assigned me to help Andy and Troy teach their patrols the skills they would need to learn in the next year. Andy and I both spent a little extra time with Gary Harrison. It was the least we could do for him. Nothing would ever make up for losing his brother but we did our best to help him with the pain.

Our Easter vacation from school came much earlier than usual. We were off from school from March 17th to March 24th. Will and Abby decided to stay in Philadelphia for most of their spring break. Penny and I enjoyed our free time together for the week. We got together every afternoon. We watched movies a couple afternoons. We went shopping together at the mall another afternoon. We also enjoyed some recreation in my bedroom too. The week off was great.

Letters arrived for Andy and me from the Boy Scout Council office. They contained our summer camp staff contracts. Both of us were going to be Aquatics instructors for the summer. Ed was hired to work in the Pioneer (first year) Scout program area.

Will and Abby came home on Good Friday. Abby and the Hendricks family joined my family for Easter dinner. Abby surprised nearly everyone after dinner. She told us that she had accepted the position of Camp Health Officer for our camp this summer. Will explained that last year's Health Officer had decided not to come back. Mr. Holloway had mentioned that to Will, who suggested that he knew a pre-med student who might be willing to do the job. It took Will a week to convince Abby to do it, but she agreed.

I was impressed with my brother's thinking. It's a brilliant idea to bring your girlfriend along to scout camp for the summer. If only I could find some job at camp for Penny. That would be really sweet.

Our troop went camping at Camp Rodney down on the Chesapeake Bay the next to the last weekend of March. I had never been to this camp before. We stayed at a cabin at the bottom end of the camp. The cabin sat on top of a bluff overlooking the bay. It overlooked the sail base of the camp. They had sailing, motor boating and water skiing at this camp. I wish I had something like this at the boat yard at my camp. It was a beautiful spot.

Ed and I helped Andy and Troy teach their scouts knife and axe safety, how to cut or chop down trees, how to use an axe or hatchet to limb a tree and how to split wood for campfires or wood stoves. These new kids were extremely enthusiastic and excited about their first campouts. I enjoyed helping them earn their Totin' Chip Award. The kids were exhausted by dinner time.

We finished up our winter film study sessions on March 26th. We reviewed our first playoff game with Gov. Pinchot. We weren't going to play them in the regular season but could see them in the playoffs next year. They were one of the better teams in our part of the state.

Coach Caffrey joined our group at the end of the film session. He wanted to report on some decisions regarding the next season. The first thing was that the PIAA had approved us wearing a black patch with the number 82 on it to commemorate Greg Harrison's contribution to our team over the past three years.

Coach also let us know that construction on the new stadium was scheduled to start next Monday. Last week the school board decided to name the new stadium 'Harrison Field' in Greg's memory. It was a fitting memorial to a great teammate.

Ed, Jeremy and I talked with the guys at the film session about our spring passing drills. We were going to start the drills next week on Tuesday after school. The passing drills would be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays until the end of the school year.

Ed, Jake, Jeremy, Seth Vogel, Drew McCormick and I met after school on Thursday. The six of us were going to run the spring training. Ed and Jake would take turns running the varsity squad while the other worked with quarterbacks on the JV squad. Drew would spend time with the running backs. Jeremy and Seth would take turns with the varsity and JV linebackers and defensive backs. I would work with the receivers and defensive backs in both squads. I would coordinate things during practice since I wasn't allowed to participate yet.

Matt Horn laid out a new exercise program for me the following Monday. He said my leg was ready for straight ahead jogging. Matt took me outside for my first run. I was to jog 50 yards and then walk for 200 yards. Each day I was to add 50 yards to my jog. I was to cool down after each jog with a walk. The jog wasn't much, but at least I felt like I was making some progress.

I convinced Mom and Dad to let me drive to school everyday so Andy and I would have a ride home after our spring practices. I loaded my folding camp chair in the trunk before school. I wanted to be able to sit down if my knee started to hurt too much during practice. I wasn't used to standing and walking around for almost two hours without a break.

I counted heads as guys came in the locker room after school for our first practice. Thirty-three middle school and high school guys showed up. We divided up the group into two squads.

Ed, Drew and Seth Vogel organized the first squad, mostly varsity starters or back-ups. Jake, Jeremy and I organized the second squad. This group was mostly JV players and guys that were on the middle school team. Jake worked with Logan Mitchell and Garrett Houseman at quarterback. Jeremy worked with the defensive backs and linebackers to show them how we wanted the practices to run. I worked with the receivers and running backs.

Part way through practice Ed, Drew and Seth traded teams with Jake, Jeremy and me. I never did get to sit down during the hour and forty-five minute practice. The whistle my friends gave me last spring came in handy to keep practice moving along.

Jason Harting looked good in my wide receiver spot. He should have, he was our number three wide receiver for ten games last season after I got hurt. Pete Ellis was expected to start at tight end in the fall. He needed more work, especially on the crossing routes that Greg Harrison was so good at running. Pete's younger brother Cameron did a good job backing up Drew and Marcus at running back.

I had a surprise at practice. Brett Fulmer covered Jason for the first half of practice. Jeremy switched Dylan and Brett for the second half. Dylan couldn't cover Andy. That wasn't surprising. He couldn't keep up with Andy last either. Brett could almost match Andy step for step on the speed routes. His coverage technique wasn't very good, but he was fast. Brett's speed reminded of something I heard Zack Hayes and Coach Caffrey talking about when I started football three years ago. We can teach a kid how to play football but we couldn't teach him to be fast. Brett was fast. We would work on everything else he needed to know this spring and summer.

I used my break time in the middle of practice to do my day's jogging. I jogged the length of the field. My knee was OK when I was done. The first practice reminded me how much I wanted to get my rehab done so I could finally play football again. It was what I was meant to do.

I enjoyed watching Jake work with the first squad in the second half of practice. The guys looked a little rusty. That was expected. We hadn't played football for almost four months. I was satisfied at the end of the afternoon. We had made a good start to preparing to defend our state championship.

The Drama Guild was in full swing preparing for opening night on Friday, April 25th. Penny had play practice three days a week after school. We still managed to spend at least three evenings together after dinner to study each week. I helped Penny memorize her lines when I had free time.

Each week Matt Horn allowed me to jog a little further. The second week Matt said I could jog for a quarter mile, the third week I could go half a mile and the last week I was allowed to jog a mile. I was able to lift weights with Ed and Andy each evening and then start on the evening run with them. I walked back home when I reached the maximum distance for the week.

I bugged Matt each week about how soon I could participate in spring practice. Matt continued to tell me I wasn't ready yet. It was frustrating. Matt said I had a good chance of being ready some time in May. At least it looked like I would be able to get in some practice.

The Venturer Crew decided to go to French Creek State Park on the third weekend in April. The park has an excellent system of mountain bike trails. Justin Baer was going to set up an orienteering course in the afternoon. I talked to Matt Horn about the trip before I signed up for the trip. Matt said I could go as long as I stuck to straight bike riding. I wasn't allowed to do any tricks or jumps.

It was interesting to see who signed up for the trip at our crew meeting a couple weeks before the trip. It wasn't unusual for our crew to have a lot of couples. Heck, it was normal to have half or more of the attendees on trips to be couples. Penny and I were going, Ed and Lindsey, Jeremy and Kathy, Jake and Morgan, Eric and Sammy, Brandon McCafferty and his girlfriend of the past four months Cassie Nolt, along with Mark Good and his girlfriend of the past month Karen Reeser. The only kids going on the trip without their boyfriend or girlfriend were Andy, Paul and Heather.

Andy managed to talk Shannon into staying in a cabin on the ski trip in February. She wasn't impressed with the "dusty smelly" cabin or going outside to go to the bathrooms. When Shannon heard we were sleeping in tents she absolutely refused to go on the April trip. Paul didn't have a steady girlfriend. Heck, I don't think he had been on more than a few dates since he started high school two years ago. Heather's current boyfriend Nate Foster wanted to go on the trip, but couldn't. His cousin was getting married down in Virginia that weekend and Nate had to go to the wedding.

Justin Baer went along on the trip to help Joe and Barb. Not surprisingly Sherry elected to stay home. The baby was due in twelve days. She allowed Justin to go as long as he had his cell phone with him at all times. French Creek State Park was only about a half hour away from home. Justin's dad stayed "on-call" for the weekend just in case.

Our campsite was at the top of the hill in the group camping area. We had lots of privacy in our campsite. Every couple set up their own tent. Andy and Paul shared a tent. Justin and Heather each had a tent of their own. The sounds coming from our tents after bedtime were more intense than usual, with seven couples taking advantage of the privacy to share themselves with their partner.

Everyone grabbed their mountain bikes after breakfast and headed out for our first trail ride. I hung back near the back of the group. I didn't want to do something stupid to hurt

my knee on the weekend. We rode about five miles through the woods and hills of northern Chester County and southern Berks County. We headed back to camp in the middle of the morning for a snack and to get everyone hydrated. My knee started to hurt a little as we rode up the steep hill leading to our campsite.

I volunteered to stay back in camp when the group went out for a second ride and make lunch for the group. I grabbed my MP3 player and went for a walk before I started lunch. Justin went out during the second ride to set up the orienteering course for our group after lunch. He was back in time to help me get lunch ready. The bikers returned to camp around 12:30.

Our group had lunch and then went out on Justin's orienteering course. Orienteering is a cross between a foot race and a map and compass test. Unlike a normal race, there was no set course you had to follow. The map had eight control points marked on it. You had to get to all eight of them but you could take any route you wanted.

Jeremy suggested that we do the orienteering course as couples. Mark and Karen invited Paul to go with them. Heather suggested that she could go with Andy. Andy agreed immediately.

Justin started the teams off every five minutes. Justin decided the order by pulling names out of the hat. Jake and Morgan left first. Ed and Lindsey followed five minutes later. Jeremy and Kathy, Eric and Sammy, Mark, Karen and Paul all followed at five minute intervals after Jake and Morgan. Penny and I finally took off when it was our turn. Brandon and Cassie would follow us. Andy and Heather would go last. Andy and Heather passed time until it was their turn sitting at the picnic table talking, mostly about the Algonquin trip last summer.

Justin laid out a 3 mile long course with eight control stations. Penny and I jogged out of the campsite for the first control point. I warned Penny that we probably wouldn't have a great time. Matt Horn approved me doing orienteering, but I couldn't jog more than a mile and I was only allowed to jog on paved or smooth dirt roads. We would be at a disadvantage to all the athletes on the other teams. I just hoped we wouldn't place last.

We had no trouble finding the first marker. We passed Jake and Morgan when we got close to the second control. When we found the second control and used the punch to mark our scorecard I grinned and said, "It looks like we won't come in last in this race. We had a twenty-five minute head start on them."

"I know. I can't believe they had trouble finding this. This control was easy."

"It probably doesn't help that Jake wasn't in Boy Scouts. He probably doesn't have as much practice with a map and compass as me."

"You are pretty handy with them Kyle. I'm glad I'm with you."

Penny and I headed off for the next control. Jake and Morgan weren't anywhere to be seen when we came out on the road again. We found the third control easily. We passed Mark, Karen and Paul after we found the fourth control. The fifth control was on the far side of the lake. We saw Ed and Lindsey in the distance leaving the lake. They probably had just left the control point. Penny and I jogged around the lake. The control point was exactly where we expected it.

Control point six was the hardest to find. Penny and I searched the hollow where it was supposed to be for ten minutes before we finally found the marker. The last two control markers were easy to find. We had a third of a mile to go to get to camp, all of it on good roads and trails. I had done my mile of jogging already but my knee felt good.

I asked, "Honey, are you up for running back? My knee feels good."

"If you're sure you'll be OK, I can jog it."

"Let's do it!" I declared. Penny and I started off at a fast jog. When we turned the corner of the road onto the trail that led to our campsite we spotted Ed and Lindsey a hundred yards up the trail. They were walking. They turned back to look at us as we jogged closer.

Ed said, "What the hell?"

"What are you waiting for slowpoke?" I yelled as I jogged past. I looked back and grinned at my friend.

"Hell no! I'm not getting back to camp after a guy on one leg." Ed taunted. I could hear Ed running hard while he tried to catch me. I increased my pace.

"Kyle! Take it easy. Remember your knee." Penny called to me as Ed and I pulled away.

"Those two are too competitive." Lindsey said.

"I hope Kyle doesn't hurt himself." my girlfriend added.

Ed ran harder, trying to get ahead of me. I matched his pace. We ran up the hill. I tried to pass Ed but couldn't manage it. Ed couldn't get ahead of me either. We got to the picnic table in the middle of our campsite with Ed a half a step in the lead.

"Hah! I beat you." Ed crowed.

"If you don't count your twenty minute head start." I countered.

Ed asked, "What's my time for the course?"

Joe answered, “You guys aren’t done yet. The time doesn’t stop until the whole team is back.”

Ed yelled, “Hey, Lindsey, hurry up!” Ed turned to me and said, “I didn’t know you were able to run that fast yet Kyle. That was pretty good work.”

“I didn’t know I could run like that either. I haven’t run that hard since I got hurt.”

Penny and Lindsey walked into the campsite while we waited impatiently. When they reached his picnic table Joe announced, “Ed and Lindsey – your time is 114 minutes and 31 seconds. Penny and Kyle – your time is 94 minutes and 42 seconds.”

I said, “Cool! Did Penny and I beat Jeremy and Kathy?”

Joe chuckled. “You beat them Kyle. They aren’t back yet.”

“Really? Does that mean we are winning?”

“No. Eric and Sammy beat you two by almost seven minutes.” Joe explained. I hadn’t noticed Eric and Sammy sitting over by their tent.

Ed, Lindsey, Penny and I sat and talked with Joe and Barb for a few minutes until I realized Justin was missing. “Joe, where is your brother?” I asked.

“Ah, that’s right. You don’t know. Justin got the ‘call’ from Sherry. She is starting labor. He is driving to Lancaster as we speak.”

We sat and talked about the news while we waited for the rest of the crew to return. Andy and Heather arrived next, twelve minutes behind Penny and me. The rest of the group straggled in after them. Jeremy and Kathy were not in a good mood when they finally returned. They had spent over an hour looking for control marker number 3.

The group went out for another ride on the trails after everyone got hydrated. I decided to stay at camp. I had abused my left knee enough for the weekend. The group was gone for an hour. Jeremy had Brandon and Cassie start supper. Some of the group hung out by the campfire. Some of us hung out at the picnic table with Joe and Barb. Justin showed up about half an hour after the group came back from their ride.

Joe looked at his brother and exclaimed, “What the hell are you doing here?”

“It was a false alarm. Dad called me while I was driving through Leola. He’s taking Sherry home.” Justin explained.

Joe said, “I feel for you bro. I hated the waiting game. ‘Honey, do you still love me?’ ‘Honey, could you get me some pickles and peanut butter?’ ‘I’m ugly. I’m the size of a whale.’ I’m glad I don’t have to go through that again.”

Barb protested, “I wasn’t THAT bad.”

Joe looked at Barb. “You weren’t. I was exaggerating.” Joe looked back at Justin and me. He smiled and winked.

Wow. I thought I wanted kids when I grew up. I asked, “Justin, this sounds pretty hard. Are you are sorry you and Sherry are having another baby?”

Justin smiled. “No Kyle. I’m very happy that Sherry and I are going to have another child. The last couple months of pregnancy and the first few months after the baby is born are hard. It is worth all the pain in the end, but it is hard.”

I asked, “You don’t have any regrets then?”

“No. No regrets. I don’t even have any regrets that Sherry and I had Billy. It was difficult having a son when we were only seventeen. Even so, I wouldn’t change anything.”

“You gave up football, college, and all the normal things that teenagers do. You wouldn’t change that if you could?” Andy asked.

“No, I wouldn’t change a thing. Billy was a mistake and an accident. Sherry and I were careless. Even for all of that, I wouldn’t change anything. If I did then Sherry and I wouldn’t have Billy. He’s my son and I love him. I would do anything for him. Absolutely anything.”

Heather added, “I think my brother and sister-in-law would say the same thing. My nephew Brian was an accident too. They really love him.”

Justin answered, “I agree with part of what you said Heather. Jon and Amy would do anything for Brian, but he wasn’t an accident. Sherry and I had an accident when my condom broke. That is why we have Billy. Your brother and sister-in-law were being stupid. They had sex repeatedly without any protection. I hope all of you are being careful.” Justin waited for a response. No one said anything. “That’s enough of the sermonizing.”

Brandon and Cassie called everyone for supper. Penny and I were assigned to clean up after dinner. Our group relaxed in the evening around the campfire. Some of the group played poker. Most of us talked.

We made mountain pies later in the evening. They are small pies made from two slices of buttered bread with jelly or jam in the middle. They are baked in small metal clam shell shaped pie makers with long handles. The butter and the jam made them delicious when they are properly toasted in the pie maker.

Couple by couple, my friends headed to their tents. Penny and I were the next to the last couple to leave the fire. I was a little surprised. Andy and Heather spent all evening together talking and flirting. It was almost like the last sixth months hadn't happened.

Penny and I went to our tent, stripped down and made out for a few minutes. We ended up satisfying each orally before we shared our bodies with each other. It was an excellent lovemaking session.

Penny and I were cuddled together, cooling down from our lovemaking when we heard Joe yell, "Jesus! Andy! Heather! Go to bed. It is a quarter to twelve."

"Sorry Joe." "We're going." Heather and Andy answered. Penny and I fell asleep a few minutes later.

I woke up a little early the next morning. I pulled on shorts and a T-shirt so I could go the latrine before the rest of the crew got up. When I came back Joe, Justin and Paul were out of their tents.

Joe said, "It's time to wake everyone up. Paul, Kyle – help get the crew up."

"Sure Joe." "No Problem." Paul and I replied.

Joe, Justin, Paul and I went around shaking tents to wake the occupants. I shook and talked at each tent until the occupants told me they were awake, or at least until they grunted an acknowledgement.

I reached Paul and Andy's tent, shook it and said, "Andy, get out of bed...." I waited. "Andy...."

Paul laughed. "He's not in there Kyle."

"What?"

"He didn't come to the tent last night."

"Where in the hell is he?" I asked.

Paul just shrugged his shoulders. I found out where my brother had spent the night a minute later. Justin shook Heather's tent and got two replies, hers and Andy's.

About thirty seconds later Heather insisted, "Andy, just get out!"

"What's wrong Heather?" my brother asked meekly.

"Just leave now. I can't believe I...."

“I thought you wanted to...” Andy said.

“JUST... GET.... OUT!”

Andy came flying out of the tent as he pulled up his boxers. The rest of his clothes flew out of the tent after him. Andy gathered up his clothes. He tried to pull his pants up.

Heather’s outburst continued, “God! You are the most frustrating, infuriating guy... Arrrgghhhh!”

Andy stumbled away as he pulled his shirt on. I asked, “What the hell happened?”

“I... well, we... Ah, hell. I don’t know.”

“Andrew, how did you end up in Heather’s tent last night? Start at the beginning.”

“Heather and I did the orienteering course together yesterday. We had a lot of fun together. We hung out together last night and talked. It was great. It felt just like when we were going steady. When the fire started to die down last night Heather got cold. We snuggled together. I put my arm around her to help her stay warm. Things started to move kind of quick after that. We started kissing and then she wanted me to feel her up. Next thing she wanted me to come back to her tent for the night. We uh... you know...”

“Were intimate?” I offered.

“That’s a polite way to put it. I didn’t force Heather to do anything last night. What is Heather’s problem this morning?”

“I think she is having second thoughts about last night.”

By this time Barb was up. She took Heather aside to talk and then she talked with Andy. It was obvious, after the fact regrets aside, that everything had been consensual. Sammy and Eric read the riot act to both Andy and Heather. They told Heather that they would go out with Andy and his girlfriend if they wanted. That had nothing to do with the friendship they felt with Heather. They told Andy the same thing. Eric and Sammy were tired of being in the middle of what ever weird relationship Heather and Andy had.

Andy and Heather’s fight put a damper on the end of the trip. Otherwise the trip had been a great success. The ride home was quiet.

Heather confessed her infidelity to her boyfriend the next week. Nate dumped her. Andy hoped to keep the whole thing from Shannon. It only worked for a short time. Shannon ended up going to bed with another guy a couple weeks later. Andy and Shannon

mutually agreed it was time to break up. My brother's love life was in tatters. He tried to make up with Heather but she wanted no part of him.

Penn State concluded spring practice with the Blue and White game while we were camping over the weekend. The game pitted Phil DiStefano's Blue Squad against Zack Hayes' White Squad in a controlled scrimmage. Coach Bradley, the defensive coordinator, coached the Blue Squad. Coach Burton, the offensive coordinator, coached the White Squad. The Lancaster Sunday News contained a complete write-up of the game. The game turned into a shoot out between Phil and Zack. Phil managed to score last before the scrimmage was shut down. The final score was 38-35 with the Blue beating the White. The football writers speculated more about the brewing quarterback controversy at Penn State.

The Wolverines Drama Guild presented 'Peter Pan' the weekend after the Venturer Crew's mountain biking weekend. Penny had her below the shoulder length hair cut short a couple days before the play opened. It was shorter than mine. She donated her hair to a group that uses the hair to make wigs for cancer survivors.

I attended opening night with Ed, Lindsey, Jeremy, Kathy, Hal and Tammy. I couldn't get over the way my well stacked, curvaceous girlfriend was transformed into the perpetually teenaged boy Peter Pan. Penny played the role perfectly. She took her bows to thunderous applause at the end of the play.

The Drama Guild performed the play four times. Friday night and Saturday night the first weekend and Friday night and Saturday afternoon the second weekend.

April 30th marked the six month anniversary of my operation. Matt Horn tested my knee's strength and flexibility. He had me run some pass routes that included making cuts. My knee held up to it without problem. I was approved to start practicing football again! Matt told me I should wear my brace for the first couple weeks of practice until my knee got used to the stresses involved. After a couple weeks it was up to me whether I wore it or not. I should do whatever felt most comfortable. Matt cut my rehab sessions down to every Wednesday for the month of May.

I kept my news secret from my friends. The next afternoon I dressed like the rest of the group for practice. I strapped my brace on and headed for the field. Ed and Jeremy ran into me at the back door to the locker room.

Ed looked at my brace and then back at me. "Why in the hell are you wearing your that thing? You don't need it to stand on the sideline and yell at us."

"You're right, I don't for that. I do NEED it if I play football, at least for the next couple weeks."

"Play football?!?!" Ed exclaimed.

Jeremy's face broke out in a big grin. "Hey guys! Kyle's going to play football today!" My friends and teammates broke out in cheers. Ed and Jeremy slapped me on the back.

Ed declared, "This is DAMN good news! It's about time."

I answered, "You know I'll probably suck. I haven't done this for seven months."

"It's good to have you back Kyle. We'll work on everything you need to get back in top playing condition. We have all spring and summer to get you ready." Ed said.

We walked out to the field and waited for the rest of our teammates to join us. We divided the group up by squad. I had Jason Harting wait on the sideline while Andy switched out to split end and I took my normal flanker spot. We lined up the offense and defense.

Ed called for me to run a streak. Ed simulated the snap and dropped back. I ran as hard as I could down the field covered by Brett Fulmer. After dropping back seven steps Ed fired the ball. It flew over my outstretched hands past Brett and me. Brett kept with me step for step.

I trotted back to the huddle. Ed said, "You were a couple steps late Kyle."

"I know. My knee tests at about 90% of its normal strength. You'll have to account for that for awhile Ed."

Ed held up three fingers and called, "Three receivers." Ed put Jason Harting at the split end, Andy and flanker and me in the slot. Ed called for me to run a post route from the slot. Pete Ellis was going to help clear the coverage with a curl underneath my route.

Andy sprinted downfield pulling Brett Fulmer and the free safety with him. Jason pulled Dylan Masterson to the opposite side of the field. Seth Vogel covered me as I started off the line. Jeremy started after me too until he saw Pete come across in front of him. I sprinted as fast as I could diagonally across the field towards the corner of the end zone. After Ed had time for drop back five steps I turned to look for the ball. I saw Seth half a step behind me. I saw Ed cock his arm and fire the ball to me. He laid it out right in front of me. I ran through it, catching the ball in my hands. I turned up field and was caught by Brett Fulmer. I stopped and smiled when Brett tagged me.

Seth caught up. "Damn. I can't cover you and you're not even playing at 100%."

"Man, it felt good to catch a football." I said.

Seth sighed. "I'm glad we don't have to play our own offense in a real game. We have had trouble covering just Andy. I don't know how we will cover both of you now."

"You'll adjust and learn or you guys will be toast." I gloated.

I trotted back to Ed and exchanged high fives with him. “That’s the way it’s done Ed.”

“You know it.”

We did about 20 plays with three receivers. I sat out for awhile to let Jason and Andy get comfortable together. I went in at flanker and gave Andy a break. Ed and Jake switched. Jake went in at quarterback while Ed and I headed over to supervise the JV players. Andy took a break and Jonathan Landis, our number four receiver, went in for awhile.

The JV players were doing a good job. I reviewed some tips with the DB’s and receivers while Ed talked with Logan and Garrett. The players understood their responsibilities. I was optimistic that the JV guys would do well in the fall.

Andy and I went back in with Jonathan in a three receiver set while Jake quarterbacked. I concentrated on 10-15 yard precision routes instead of my usual speed routes. My weight was up to 190 pounds. I was big enough to catch balls over the middle. I didn’t give up too many pounds to the defenders as long as I stayed clear of a certain crazy 230 pound linebacker. Jeremy was one of my best friends but if I showed up in the middle of his defense carrying a football, he was going to take my head off.

The hour and forty-five minute practice flew by. It felt great to get on the field again and act like a real football player. Coaching is fun but I wanted to play football as long as possible first.

My knee felt a little sore in the evening after practice. I skipped the jog since I had already given my leg a good workout in the afternoon. The first of May was definitely a landmark day for me.

I went to the final performance of Peter Pan on Saturday afternoon. I stayed around after the performance was done. The cast and crew along with selected friends were invited to a wrap party afterward. Being the boyfriend of the lead actress had perks, including an invitation to the wrap party. Penny introduced me to everyone as her personal dialog coach. Mr. Hurley, the director of the Drama Guild, had a cookout for the group. We had music. Penny and I danced until well after dark.

Monday morning Ed greeted me in the hallway before class. “You aren’t going to believe who I talked with last night.”

“Who?”

“Coach Les Miles, the head coach of the LSU Tigers.”

“No shit! That’s cool Ed.”

“He wants me and my parents to come visit the campus this fall. He would like me to consider playing for the Tigers.”

Ed continued to fill me in on every detail of his talk with Coach Miles. I was happy for Ed. I wondered when or if I would get similar calls. The NCAA allowed coaches to make one phone call in May to soon to be high school seniors.

Ed wasn't the only being recruited. Jeremy broke his big news at lunch on Monday. Coach Charlie Weis of Notre Dame University called to talk with him about making an official visit in the fall.

Matt Horn quizzed me about how football practice had gone last week. He was pleased that I hadn't had any swelling or significant pain after I was finished with practice. He told me to keep practicing and not to push things too hard. I asked how soon Matt thought my leg would be back to 100%. Matt explained that getting my knee to 90% strength was the easy part. He expected it would take me another two months get back to where I was last fall.

My second and third practices went well. I didn't have the burst of speed I like before my injury. I concentrated on running precise pass routes and getting separation from the defenders since I couldn't beat them on pure speed. Coach Caffrey stopped by to observe the Thursday practice. He seemed pleased to see me back on the field.

Ed, Jeremy and Drew all continued receiving calls from head coaches and assistant head coaches recruiting them to attend their schools. The biggest name coach to call Drew was Coach Davis from Boston College. He was very interested in Drew's work.

Both Ed and Jeremy received calls from Penn State. The linebacker coach talked with Jeremy. He felt that Jeremy would be an excellent fit at Penn State. There is a reason they have nicknamed Penn State 'Linebacker U.'

Coach Paterno personally called Ed. Ed was polite but he wasn't interested. He explained, “I followed Zack Hayes as quarterback in high school. Following Zack is tough. I have absolutely no interest in trying to do the same thing in college.”

I waited with slowly increasing impatience for coaches to call me. The phone didn't ring. Zack Hayes did call on Thursday night. We talked about how school was going, how the team was practicing, and about the happenings around home. Zack quizzed me about my knee. I explained that I was back on the field practicing. Zack checked to make sure I was signed up for the Senior Camp next month. I assured him I was. The two of us talked about all the recruiting calls Ed, Jeremy and Drew were getting. Zack said that I should be patient. Teams knew about my knee problem. I thanked Zack for calling.

I finally received a call from a Division I college coach Friday night. It was from Coach Al Golden of Temple University. We talked for awhile. He told me about his plans to

resurrect the Temple program. He said he knew Temple wouldn't be my first choice but advised me to keep my mind open to the possibility. He would love to have a player like me on his team. I thanked him for the call but I didn't make any promises. I did see one good thing about going to Temple. It was near the University of Pennsylvania. Penny and I could maintain our relationship in college if I went there. Hopefully I could do better than a team that won only 4 of the last 46 games.

Penny went shopping on Saturday for her junior prom dress. The prom was one week away. Our school kept the junior prom fairly simple. The dance was semi-formal. I would be wearing a suit. Penny wanted to go out and buy a new dress. In the evening Penny and I went out with our gang of friends to play mini-golf in Strasburg. We stopped off at the ice cream shop in the center of town afterwards.

Sunday evening I received this e-mail:

=====
To: kmartin87@redroses.net
From: papabaer312@redroses.net
Time: May 11 11:31:05

Justin and Sherry Baer proudly announce the arrival of their son

Wesley Taylor Baer

9 pounds, 15 ounces – 24 ½ inches long

Mom and son are doing well. Dad is proud to announce that the Wolverines are set at one linebacker spot in fifteen years. Billy says he is happy he has a brother and not a 'dumb old sister.'

Born on May 11th at 5:13 am
=====

The e-mail included a picture of Wesley. I replied with my congratulations. I was in a good mood. I was happy for my friends. I had just hit send when Mom called. I had a phone call.

I picked up the upstairs phone and said "Hello?"

"Is this Kyle Martin?"

"Yes."

"Kyle, this is Coach Pete Carroll of the University of Southern California."

Holy cow! I had one of the top coaches in college football on the phone with me! I was dumbfounded.

“Kyle? Are you there? Kyle?”

“Oh... Sorry sir. I am surprised to hear from you.”

“You shouldn’t be Kyle. My staff has been tracking you for the past year. Your record is very impressive. 41 receptions for 788 yards and 15 touchdowns is an excellent record, especially in only five games last season.”

“Thank you.” I stuttered.

“Your high school runs the spread offense very well. What you are doing in high school is similar to what we do out here at USC. You would have a lot of fun and a lot of success playing for the Trojans. Do you have any interest in hearing more about our team?”

“Um, yeah... sure...” I spit out.

Coach Carroll proceeded to tell me all about his team, USC, and the things he could do for me and my football career. He also emphasized that USC was a top university in the country. I would be able to get a first class education there and have a lot of fun playing football at one of the best college programs in the country.

Coach Carroll was well informed about me. We talked for about five minutes about the injury to my knee, the ACL rebuild and my rehabilitation. I could barely contain my excitement as we talked. I assured Coach Carroll that I was expected to be 100% by then end of June.

Coach finished the call by asking if I would be interested in making an official visit to USC this summer. I assured him I would love to do that. I handed the phone over to Dad so he and Coach Carroll could make the arrangements. Dad set up the visit for August 15-17th.

I was a little disappointed that I hadn’t heard anything from Penn State. They had seemed quite interested in me last fall.

Abby and Will came home from school on Wednesday evening. They borrowed Joe Baer’s van on Thursday so they could go back to Philadelphia to pickup the rest of their things. There is one disadvantage to having an apartment with your girlfriend at college. You accumulate a lot of stuff over the course of a school year. Will and Abbey managed to cram nearly everything in our attic or in the Hendrick’s basement.

We had an unexpected visitor at practice on Thursday afternoon. A kid who looked to be about Andy’s age came over to watch us practice. The kid was about 5’-9” tall, dark

hair. He might weigh around 135 pounds. He wasn't dressed like most kids at our school. The jeans were normal enough but his shirt was a western cut checkered shirt. What really stood out were the cowboy boots. No one at our school wore them. I asked Andy if he knew the kid while Jason and Jonathan were on the field.

"Yeah. That's Mike. He moved here recently." Andy explained.

I went over to introduce myself. I said, "Hi. I'm Kyle Martin. What's up?"

He drawled, "Just watchin' y'all play." He had a distinct southern accent. He extended his hand to me and continued, "I'm Mike Johansen. I just moved here from Lubbock, Texas."

"Welcome to Pennsylvania Mike. Do you play football?"

"Do I play? You bet. I was a varsity cornerback last fall for my team. I was the only ninth grader to make varsity for the Westerners." Mike explained proudly.

"That's cool. Are you going to go out for football here?"

"As soon as someone tells me where to sign up." Mike answered.

"See Coach Caffrey. He's one of the gym teachers here."

"Thanks. I'll talk to him." Mike sighed. "I guess this will have to do. It ain't Texas football, but at least the football's shaped the same."

I bristled a little. "You do realize you are watching the defending state champions on the field, don't you?"

"Yes, that's what I understand." Mike said quietly. He shook his head a little. "Maybe I can help y'all."

"Two-a-days start in August. Talk to Coach Caffrey if you want to try out for the team."

Mike Johansen headed back to the school building. He didn't seem very impressed by us but he definitely had a high opinion of himself. Maybe he could help the team if he's as good as he thinks. I returned my attention to our practice.

Andy filled me in on Mike Johansen after practice was over. Mike's dad used to work for John Deere, the farm equipment manufacturer. He changed jobs and worked for Case New Holland now. That is why the Johansens moved to Lancaster County. Andy said in the two weeks he had gone to our school Mike had acquired a reputation for a big mouth and an ego the size of his beloved Texas.

I dropped Penny off at her house after school on Friday afternoon. Both of us had a lot to do before the Junior Prom that night. Mom had coordinated things with Mrs. Edwards. I had strict instructions exactly which corsage I was to buy at the florist so it would match Penny's dress.

I brought the corsage home and then went upstairs to shower and get dressed. I dressed in my best suit. Mom checked me over and Dad helped me tie my tie in a proper Windsor knot. I waited impatiently for the clock to reach a quarter to six. I hopped in the Golf and drove down the street three houses to get Penny. Mom and Dad followed on foot, camera in hand.

I knocked at the Edwards' front door. Penny greeted me wearing a breath taking low cut pink dress. Her parents were standing behind her. The dress emphasized Penny's cleavage to the point that she could be mistaken for Dolly Parton. I stood and stared at my girlfriend. Finally I came back to my senses. "Here, this is for you." I said as I handed her the corsage.

"This is perfect Kyle. It matches my dress perfectly."

"You can thank our moms. They made sure I bought the right thing." I explained.

"You look handsome Kyle."

"Thanks." I answered.

Mom interrupted. "Come on you two. We want to get pictures."

Penny and I dutifully posed in front of her house while our parents took enough photos to fill a whole scrapbook. It took us ten minutes to get away from our parents. I drove us to the restaurant where we were having our prom.

The Junior Class had rented the banquet room of the restaurant. We had a DJ for music. I escorted Penny into the banquet room. We found our seats with Ed, Lindsey, Jeremy, Kathy, Hal and Tammy.

The conversation flowed freely among the eight of us. The wait staff served dinner, which was delicious. The DJ set up and started playing the music. Penny and I danced most of the night, only occasionally sitting out a dance.

The PTA organized a post-prom activity to keep everyone busy and out of trouble. They had rented the bowling alley in Strasburg for the night. Penny and I got our gym bags from my car trunk and changed out of our good clothes. We carefully stored our good clothes in the back of my car and headed south for the bowling alley.

My friends, Penny and I spent the night bowling, snacking on the food the PTA provided, and talking. My knee was a little sore and my arm was ready to fall off from all the bowling. It had been a great evening. I drove Penny home around 7 am.

I made myself some breakfast after I dropped Penny off. I headed to the family room to watch cartoons with Liz. I headed back to the kitchen for more orange juice during a commercial break.

I overheard Dad and Mom talking as I approached the kitchen. Dad asked, “Where is our nearly grown son now? Did he go upstairs to sleep?”

Mom chuckled. “Our nearly grown-up son is watching cartoons with his little sister.”

Dad laughed. “Hmmm.... Yeah.” Dad laughed again. “Our nearly grown up son.”

I called out, “I heard that. I happen to like cartoons.”

Mom gave me a hug when I came into the kitchen. “You understand we were just kidding right?”

Dad added, “Last night you were behaving like an adult and now you are like a kid again. Hang on to that kid as long as you can Kyle.”

“I plan to Dad.” I poured myself some OJ and headed back to the cartoons.

After lunch I helped Dad with chores that Mom needed around the house. I finished up on the history term paper that was due next week. My brother got ready for a date in the afternoon. He asked Crystal Wagner to the movies. Dad drove him to the Wagners and then to the theater.

Penny and I got together after dinner to watch a DVD at my house. Penny and I cuddled together and watched the movie. That is the last thing I remember about the evening.

I woke up to the sound of someone knocking on my door. “Time to get up.” Mom called from the hallway. I opened my eyes and stretched. I bumped into something beside me.

“Penny, Kyle – Time to get up.” Mom called. I looked over. Penny rolled over and looked at me. Mom asked, “Are you two awake?”

“We’re awake Mom. Thanks for getting us up.” I gave Penny a kiss. I asked, “How did we end up here?”

Penny asked, “You don’t remember?” I shook my head no. “We fell asleep watching the movie last night. I was so tired that your mom called mine and arranged for me to sleep here.”

“I wish I hadn’t been so sleepy. I would have liked to enjoy sharing my bed with you.”

“We can do that later Kyle. What time is it?”

I looked over at the clock. “It’s 8 o’clock. I have to get ready for church.”

“I’ve got to go.” Penny got out of bed. She was wearing only panties and a bra. She dressed while I gathered things for my shower. We kissed before Penny left.

“I’m going to remember this weekend for the rest of my life Kyle. I’m glad we did this together.”

“You’re right. I’m glad we were together for our prom. I love you.”

“I love you to Kyle. See you tomorrow.” Penny left to go back home to her parents. I headed for the shower. I stripped down and stepped into the shower. I let the hot water pour over my body.

Dad was right yesterday morning. I was growing up fast. The seniors would graduate in two and a half weeks. I had three more weeks until my junior year was over. Time was flying by.

Chapter 23

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Zack Hayes stopped by to visit our practice after school on Tuesday. He greeted Ed, Jake, Andy and I warmly. Most of the other team members didn't know Zack except by reputation at our school or had only seen him on TV on New Years Day. They treated him as a minor celebrity.

I noticed that Zack watched me intently when I was playing. I had Ed send me on a couple deep routes so I could show Zack how my recovery was going. I hoped word would get back to State College that I was pretty much healed. I managed to catch both deep passes against Brett, but it was close. I sent Jason Harting in to play after my second deep catch.

I stood on the sideline observing with Zack while the team continued to practice. I asked, "What do you think?"

"You and Ed have really expanded this practice. I'm impressed by what you're doing here. How does your knee feel?"

"It's good. My therapist says I'm up to 95% strength in it. He figures it will be full strength in about another month."

"That's cool."

I asked, "Are you going to be around home for the summer?"

"Nope. I'm only here for a couple weeks. I'm signed up for a couple summer classes. Some of the receivers, Phil and I are going to work together this summer."

"Do you think you have a chance to beat out Phil for the starting job?"

"You've been reading too many newspapers. I have no chance at all. This coming year is Phil's year. I will help him all I can. My turn will come next year."

"So there isn't anything to the stories in the newspapers?"

"They have to write something. I'd never try to politic my way to the starting job. It's too important to keep our team together to do that." Zack explained. We watched practice for a couple minutes. Zack asked, "Are you going to the Seven on Seven Passing Camp like we talked about?"

"Yes, Dad has me signed up for it."

"Look me up when you get to campus. We can get together."

“Thanks Zack. That would be cool.” I answered. Ed called for three receivers, so I went back onto the field. Practice went smoothly. Zack spent the entire practice observing us. Zack and I talked a little when it was over. Some of the younger team members asked Zack for his autograph.

Wednesday after school Andy invited Crystal Wagner over to “study.” Crystal was average height for a freshman, about 5’-4”. My brother certainly has an eye for women. Crystal was well endowed, looking more like a Playboy bunny than a ninth grader. She dressed in a too tight T-shirt and tight jeans. Crystal’s shoulder length brunette hair was fluffed, teased and curled like she had just left the beauty parlor. She was all together quite attractive except... I thought she used too much make up. It’s personal taste, but I liked Penny’s “natural look” better.

Andy and Crystal actually did study at first. They spread their books out on the kitchen table beside Dave Mitchell and Liz. Penny and I had gone upstairs to my bedroom.

Penny and I stripped and lay down on my bed. We started kissing and making out. About five minutes later when we heard Andy and Crystal plop down on Andy’s bed in the adjoining bedroom. I was teasing Penny’s nipple with my tongue while I used a finger to spread her juices around her pussy. Our excitement at our coming intimacy grew as we touched and played. I insinuated one finger into her opening. Penny shivered.

“I need your tongue Kyle. Please?” she pleaded.

I repositioned myself between her legs, bent down and...

Someone knocked at my door. Shit! Who the hell is it?

“Kyle?” I sat up. Shit! It was Andy.

“GO AWAY!” I growled.

“I’m sorry. Kyle, I need your help.” Andy answered.

“We’re busy. GO AWAY!”

Andy continued, “Crystal wants to have sex. I don’t have protection.”

“GOD damn it Andy. Why didn’t you...” I snarled.

Penny interrupted my rant. “Shhh... It’s OK Kyle. You better help your brother.”

“Do you have any condoms?” Andy called softly through my locked door.

Penny sat up and pulled me up from between her legs. “Go take care of Andy. You don’t want a niece or a nephew, do you?”

“No.” I answered. I got out of bed.

“Can you help me Kyle?” Andy asked.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah! Hang on to your shorts. I’m looking to see if I have any.” I went through my sock drawer where I kept my condoms back when I still needed them. That had been when Julie and I had started dating. I found the old box in the back in the bottom of the drawer. It had two condoms in it. I retrieved them and went to the door.

I cracked the door open and handed them to Andy. Andy was standing there in boxer shorts. His cock bulged them out obscenely.

“You owe me brother.” I said as I handed them to Andy.

“Thank you Kyle. I’ll pay you back.” Andy answered. He hurried back to his room. I locked the door again and rejoined my lover in bed.

“Now, where was I when I was so rudely interrupted?”

“I think you were going to lick my clitty.” Penny suggested. She spread her legs wide for me. I went back to pleasuring my lover.

I used my tongue to bring Penny to her first orgasm. My tongue and two fingers applied to her G-spot brought a second. Penny demanded that I take her deep. I put her ankles on my shoulders and thrust my cock deep into my lover. We spent the next ten minutes making love to each other. I brought Penny to climax. Penny’s fire coaxed me to climax a minute later. I thrust hard and buried my cock deep in my lover. My cum splattered all over her pussy. I collapsed and rolled us on our sides.

Penny and I clung to each other and exchanged gentle kisses. The sounds of Andy and Crystal screwing in the next bedroom were obvious. We giggled when we heard Crystal squeal.

“I think Crystal just got the Martin treatment.” Penny said laughing.

“What do you mean by the Martin treatment?”

“You know I’ve slept with other boyfriends after we broke up the first time. I have had a chance to compare. You do things to me that the other boyfriends couldn’t do. I’ve

overheard Andy and Heather in Algonquin and listened to Andy next door when he was with Shannon. Your brother has it too. That's what I mean by the Martin treatment."

"I don't know if I'm anything special. I'm just trying to show you how much I love you." I explained.

"I know you do Kyle. I love you to."

Penny and I continued kissing. Penny slipped a hand down and started to play with my cock. I was ready to go again in a minute. Penny decided she wanted to be on top our second time. She had just sank down on my cock when Andy's bed started to knock against our common wall. Penny grinned as she rode my seven inch erection.

We brought each other to mutual orgasms about a minute after Crystal squealed again and things got quiet in Andy's room. I glanced over at the clock.

"It's time to get cleaned up honey. Mom will be home in fifteen minutes." I said. Penny and I wiped each other off and dressed.

Andy and Crystal were downstairs in the kitchen when Penny and I came down. Crystal was sitting on Andy's lap. The two were eating Mom's sugar cookies. Crystal was considerably more affectionate than when she arrived. Andy was eating it up. Penny and Crystal headed for home when Mom arrived from work.

Penny and I double dated with Trent and Ashley on Saturday. I drove Penny and myself to Manheim. Trent drove the four of us the rest of the way to Hershey. We went to Hershey Park together for the afternoon and evening. Trent and Ashley were kind of subdued. Their high school graduation was nine days away. They only had three more weeks together as a couple. Trent was going to the University of Delaware. Ashley was going to the University of Pittsburgh. Their two and a half year relationship was ending when Trent went to scout camp for the summer.

I kept thinking about what was happening to Trent and Ashley as Penny and I rode back to Manheim. What were we going to do next year? We would be in exactly the same situation.

As soon as Penny and I left Trent's house Penny said, "You're thinking about next year when we graduate aren't you?"

"How did you know?"

"I've known you most of your life Kyle. You promised me that we wouldn't worry about what we do after high school yet. We have another year together first. Right?"

“You’re right.” I admitted.

“We will see how things work out. Remember, when we split up for thirteen months and ended up a couple again. Who says that won’t happen when we are in college?”

“I guess.” I answered. I hoped she was right. Penny and I made plans to study for finals on Memorial Day after lunch. Our finals started in a week.

Crystal became a fixture at our house after school. She and Andy would study for awhile then head upstairs for a “study break.” Crystal was getting serious about Andy quickly. She clung to him when they were together. She constantly complimented Andy about everything he did. What was she going to do when Andy went to camp for ten weeks?

My final rehab session with Matt Horn was on May 28th. Matt tested the strength in my knee. I was up to 96%. Matt reviewed exercises he wanted me to do to get my knee to full strength. I made him promise to come see me play football in the fall. I thanked him for his patience and help over the last seven months.

The next day at practice I managed to beat Brett twice on streak plays. I also out jumped him for two more catches. I felt ready for anything on the football field.

Penny and I spent the first weekend in June studying for our finals. Both of us had excellent grades coming into the end of the year. We wanted to do our best. Both of us had a chance for straight A’s again this quarter. We did take Saturday evening off to go to a concert in the park in Lancaster with Ed and Lindsey.

Karl Weaver, Tim Showalter, George Reynolds and Nathan Yuninger came to watch our Tuesday practice near the end of the afternoon. This was their last day of classes and they wanted to say good bye to the team. Ed, Jeremy and I talked with them when practice was over. They made us promise to go back and win another state championship next season. We wished them good luck in college.

The high school seemed weird the next day. There weren’t any older kids in the school. It just didn’t seem right.

Our final spring practice was on Thursday. Logan Mitchell and Garrett Houseman both looked sharp at practice. They promised to work with their receivers over summer to keep the JV passing game strong. Jake was going to work a couple days a week with Jason Harting, Pete Ellis and Jonathan Landis. Our team should be in good shape when two-a-day football practice started in August.

The seniors graduated on Thursday night. Penny and I were invited to two graduation parties. Karl Weaver invited us to a picnic at the township park Friday night. George Reynolds’ parents were having a barbeque on Saturday afternoon.

All our finals were done by Friday afternoon. I felt comfortable about how I did on them. Penny was worried about Chemistry and Pre-Calculus. I reassured her that it would be fine.

Karl Weaver's picnic was fun. His parents had lots of good food. We spent the evening talking with Karl and our friends from the football team. Penny and I wished Karl good luck when he went to Millersville University in the fall.

George Reynolds' graduation barbeque was a blast. George's dad was a barbeque aficionado. He did racks of ribs, beef brisket and pork butt. The afternoon was a carnivore's delight. Most of the juniors and seniors on the football team were there. We ate and talked for half the afternoon.

Penny and I sat down at a table with Stacie Thompson and Drew McCormick. I asked, "What are you doing after high school Stac?"

"I'm going for pre-law at Dickinson College." Stacie answered.

Drew added, "I'm certainly happy about that. Carlisle is less than an hour away."

Penny asked, "Are the two of you staying together?"

"Do you really think I would let this guy go?" Stacie asked. She gave Drew a kiss. "I know a good thing when I have it."

"We're planning to put a lot of miles on our cars driving between here and Carlisle in the next year." Drew added.

What about next year? I don't think Dickinson has a football team, does it?" I asked.

Stacie explained, "They do have football. They're Division III."

Drew continued, "I don't plan to go there. I think I have a good chance at getting an athletic scholarship. I have visits lined up at Boston College, Maryland and Rutgers this fall.

Stacie added, "When Drew knows where he is going I'm going to apply to transfer there."

Drew continued, "Do you have any visits lined up Kyle?"

I said, "I have a visit set up to USC later in the summer."

Drew asked, "Is that all? I expected you would have more colleges after you than that."

I shook my head. “I think they are worried about my knee. I hope to get more offers when our season starts.”

Drew added, “I guess there are worse places to play than USC.”

Penny added, “I can’t think of a worse place for Kyle to go to college. I want to go to University of Pennsylvania. L.A. is 3000 miles away.”

I said reassuringly, “We’ll work this out in the fall Penny.”

George’s dad called that more ribs were up. Penny and I excused ourselves and went for more food. We decided to head for home when the party started to break up around 5 pm. Penny and I found George before we left.

I said, “Thanks for inviting us to your party George.”

“Hey, no problem. I’m glad you and Penny could make it.” George answered.

I added, “Good luck at Villanova.”

“Thanks Kyle. I appreciate everything you have done to help the past couple of seasons. I want to apologize again for that time at Zack’s party where Jack Steffy and I got you drunk. I’ve always felt bad about doing that to you.”

I waved my hand like I didn’t care. “That was a long time ago. You’ve proved the kind of person you are since then. I couldn’t have asked for a better teammate George. I am going to miss you.”

George and I shook hands before Penny and I left. Whoever was going to fill George’s linebacker slot had some big shoes to fill.

We had a full day of school on Monday and a half day on Tuesday. It was pretty pointless. The teachers were done teaching, finals were over and the students were definitely done learning. Nearly every class became a study hall.

Liz was ecstatic when she came out to my car when classes were done on Tuesday. She had a date! Logan Mitchell asked her to go to the movies with him on Saturday night. Liz said Logan told her that he wanted to ask her out since he saw her studying in the back of the room during our film study sessions in the winter. He finally got the nerve to ask her today since he wouldn’t see her again until September.

Penny and I took advantage of the half day of freedom from school to have an extended lovemaking session. Crystal came over after lunch to spend her afternoon in Andy’s bed. Liz was probably wise to have decided to go over to Dave Mitchell’s house for the

afternoon. Things were noisy and a little too stimulating for an unattached teenager between Penny and me; Andy and Crystal; and Will and Abby all making love in various place in the house.

Penny and I spent Wednesday afternoon and evening together just hanging out. Penny started her summer job with Dr. Chu at the Paradise Veterinary Clinic on Thursday. I used my free time on Thursday and Friday during the day to prepare for summer camp. I needed to buy a whole new set of scout shorts and shirts. I had outgrown the ones I used for the past two years. I took all the shirts to Grandma Martin for her to sew on the patches.

Penny and I went out Friday night with our gang of friends to play mini-golf outside of Strasburg. The eight of us went to the ice cream store in the middle of Strasburg when we were done. Ed and Lindsey sat at the table with Penny and me.

Penny asked, “Lindsey, how did you stand having Ed away for ten weeks last summer?”

Lindsey looked confused. “Kyle’s worked there before. You don’t remember?”

“Kyle was a CIT two summers ago. I only had to wait for half the season. I was half crazy that summer by the time he finally came home.”

“I depend on Ed’s daily e-mails to make it.” Lindsey answered. She gave Ed a peck on the cheek.

Penny looked at me and asked, “Am I going to get daily e-mails like two years ago?”

“You bet honey.” I answered quickly. I gave her a kiss. “I promise.” I was going to have to make sure I followed through on this promise. I didn’t need to make the mistake I made with Julie with Penny too.

Lindsey suggested, “We could do some girl’s nights out if you want Penny.”

“That would be nice.” Penny answered.

Penny and Lindsey made plans for a couple nights out while we were gone. Our friends wished Ed and I a good summer while we were at scout camp. Each couple drove home on their own.

On the way home I asked Penny, “Are you able to come over tomorrow night? You remember how my parents usually disappear for a couple hours after dinner the night before camp staff reports.”

“I was planning on it Kyle.” Penny answered. We were quiet for half a minute. “Kyle, do you think I could spend the whole night with you?”

“Hmmm... That would be cool. Do you think your parents would allow it? I know my parents would probably say OK.”

“Let’s try. They said yes last February. It can’t hurt to ask.” Penny said. We talked for a couple minutes about the best way to ask for permission. We decided to try my parents first and then to talk with Penny’s mom. We talked to my parents as soon as we got home from the ice cream parlor.

Mom and Dad quizzed us about what we wanted to do. They said they didn’t mind if we did this on special occasions. They didn’t want us to figure we could do this every weekend.

Penny and I went to her house and tackled her mother next. Mrs. Edwards insisted we had to talk to her husband before she would consider the request. Penny eloquently made our case. It took a lot of convincing, but Mr. Edwards finally acquiesced.

I spent most of Saturday gathering my things and packing. I stopped by grandma’s to see if she was done sewing patches on my new uniform shirts. She was. I was finished packing before dinner.

Will and Abby left for camp on Saturday morning. Abby needed to get the Health Lodge set up. Will had to get training from the Camp Ranger to run the pool filtration system. They needed to get some things set up for staff check-in tomorrow. I would drive Ed, Andy and myself to camp on Sunday.

Penny came over to eat dinner with our family. Liz was super excited during dinner. Mom and Dad were giving her and Logan Mitchell a ride to the movies. Tonight was her first real date. Mom and Dad promised to find a different movie so Logan and Liz could have some privacy.

Andy and I were pleased with the plans for the evening. Penny and I would have all the privacy we could expect for three or four hours until my parents got home with Liz. Andy planned to have Crystal come over as soon as Mom and Dad left with Liz. Crystal and Andy would have until 10 o’clock, when her dad would come to pick her up.

Penny and I took advantage of the time available to demonstrate our love for each other slowly. We cuddled and kissed for over a half hour without even getting naked. Penny teased me with a sensuous strip tease performance. I licked her pussy and clitoris until she squealed. She returned the favor by giving me a blow job that made me dizzy before she was finished.

We cuddled together in the afterglow of our first cums of the night. We finally were ready to join our bodies together. We used doggie style our first time. Penny was into it. She pushed her butt back against my cock as fast as I could thrust forward into her. Even though I had cum once in the night, Penny’s next orgasm was more than I could take when it came.

Penny shook when it hit her. Her pussy squeezed and clenched around my cock. I thrust a few more times during her climax before it was too much. I drove my cock deep into her and blasted my sperm against the entrance to her womb. I collapsed on her back, wrapping my arms around her as I came. My cock throbbed as it pumped my sperm into my lover.

Finally I was drained. I pulled out and flopped down on the bed. Penny rolled over and lay against me while we recovered. God! I was going to miss her.

We held each other, enjoying the warmth and comfort of each others touch on our naked bodies. We exchanged quick kisses as we recovered. Eventually the kisses escalated to deep kisses where our tongues danced with each other. My cock rose to hardness again.

Penny rolled on her back and pulled me on top of her. She reached between her legs and positioned my cock against her hole. I asked, "What did you have in mind honey?"

"Do me deep. You know how I like it Kyle." Penny answered. I pushed my seven inch hard-on into her hot passage and pulled her ankles onto my shoulders. I pumped in and out of her, slowly increasing my pace. Penny's coos turned to squeals and finally grunts as I worked my cock in and out with increasing fervor. Penny grabbed my ass cheeks and pulled on them to encourage me. I pounded into her for maybe thirty more seconds before she climaxed.

"AAAAaaaaaeiiiiiiiiiii" Penny wailed. Her pussy clasped and squeezed my rod. I kept thrusting as Penny rode her climax. I drove my cock in a few more times. The stimulation was too intense. I pushed it in deep until my knob bounced against the entrance to her womb. I collapsed on top of my girlfriend as I blasted jet after jet of sticky semen into her.

Penny let her legs slip off my shoulders while she wrapped her arms around me. I panted and lay on her semi-comatose. Penny rolled us on our sides. She gave my quick kisses on the neck, cheeks and lips while I recovered my wits.

"That was spectacular. I love you Kyle."

"Mmmm... you were great. I love you too."

We cuddled and talked quietly as we held each other. Penny and I needed to fit as much closeness in tonight as possible. It was going to have to last us for ten weeks.

The sounds of two teens doing the natural thing next door finally quieted. I guessed Andy and Crystal finally had satisfied their needs. We heard Andy and Crystal go downstairs a few minutes later.

Penny looked away from me for a second. “Kyle, I think we better get cleaned up before your parents get home.”

“Mmmm... OK” I said. My mind was still frazzled from our two couplings. “Do you want to go first?”

“Let’s shower together Kyle.”

I got out of bed. “You can wear my robe sweetie.” I handed it to her and grabbed my boxers. We walked to the bathroom holding hands.

The shower together started as a sensuous experience. I washed Penny gently. She rubbed the soap and her hands all over my body. When both of us were cleaned and rinsed we kissed. The kissing escalated to making out. It didn’t take long before our arousal led to us sharing our bodies with each other in the shower.

The two of us were clean, relaxed and happy when we finally emerged from the bathroom. Penny and I went down to the kitchen for ice cream and then went to the family room. Andy and Crystal were there. Andy was sitting in the couch cuddled with Crystal watching a movie. I took the easy chair and Penny sat on my lap. She leaned back against me while I wrapped my arms around her waist. It was a nice way to end the evening.

Crystal’s dad came for her just as the movie was ending. Andy and Crystal made quite a scene with their kissing during the prolonged good bye. Andy went upstairs to his room while Penny and I continued watching TV together until the 11 o’clock news came on.

Penny and I headed for bed. We found Mom and Dad were in the kitchen. I asked, “How did Liz’s date go?”

Dad answered, “She didn’t say much. I gather that it was pretty awkward.”

Mom added, “First dates can be difficult.”

“I know mine was a disaster.” I said.

Penny said, “Believe it or not, my first date was good. Chad Hurst was a complete gentleman. We had fun. We talked about his favorite subject, himself.”

“That sounds like Chad.” I answered.

“Would you like me to talk with Liz tonight?” Penny offered.

“That’s sweet. You’re welcome to if you would like.” Mom answered.

Penny and I said our good nights and headed upstairs. Penny knocked on Liz's door. "Liz, it's Penny can I come in?"

"OK." my sister answered. Penny opened the door and started in. I tried to follow.

Penny shooed me away. "This is a girl talk Kyle. I'll be over in a few minutes."

I headed back to my room. I stripped and got in bed and waited for my lover. Penny came back in a few minutes. She undressed and joined me, naked in my bed. Penny explained that Liz's date had been uncomfortable. Logan didn't talk a lot. They did enjoy the movie together. Fortunately Penny told her to be patient with boys.

Penny and I cuddled together in the dark and kissed. We made out for a couple minutes. Penny asked, "Do you want to make love again honey?"

"I don't know if I can. Let's just get to sleep." I suggested. We spooned together. I had my arm across Penny's side, holding her close to me. Penny fell asleep within minutes. I was still awake when I heard Mom and Dad going to bed. They stopped at my door and opened it to check on us. I pretended to be asleep.

I heard Mom say, "Aren't they cute together? They grow up too quickly."

Dad replied, "They do."

I fell asleep a few minutes later. I slept soundly until early morning. I woke up with a hard-on that was feeling way too good. Penny had it trapped between her legs. She was rubbing her legs together. I gently squeezed her breast that was under my hand.

I whispered in her ear, "Do you want to go for one more ride?"

Penny didn't answer in words. She released my cock, rolled me on my back and mounted me. I enjoyed the show as Penny boobs bounced as she pleased herself on my rod. The early morning light was just starting to light up my bedroom.

Penny pulled off and impaled herself on my cock for a few minutes before we heard someone come out of my parent's bedroom and use the bathroom. From the sounds of the footsteps it probably was my Dad. I shushed Penny while he was in the hallway.

Penny managed to stay quiet as she rocked back and forth on my cock until my Dad went back to his room. She giggled when his bedroom door closed. Penny increased her pace, pulling off and driving herself back down on my seven inches. I bucked my hips up to meet her down thrusts.

My bed was rattling and Penny was panting hard as she approached the tender agony. I reached down and played with her clitoris for a minute. That was exactly what Penny needed. She exploded. I desperately tried to keep Penny quiet while she shuddered and

moaned from her climax. She slumped down on my chest. I wrapped my arms around her and held her until she recovered.

Penny stared into my eyes and asked, “Did you cum yet?”

“No. Do you want to continue?” I asked, desperately wanting her to say yes so I could relieve the ache in my balls.

Penny kissed me and answered, “Keep going Kyle.”

I rolled us over so Penny was on her back. I stroked my cock into my lover’s pussy until I blasted my nut into Penny. I slumped down and rolled us on our sides. Penny held me tight to her body while I recovered from my climax. She pulled the sheet over us. We fell asleep in each others arms.

We woke to the sound of knocking at my bedroom door. “Kyle. Penny. It’s time to get up.” It was my Mom. “Are you awake?”

“Yeah. We’re awake Mom.” I answered. I gave Penny a good morning kiss. I said, “Good morning.”

“Good morning honey” Penny answered. She glanced at the clock. “Shit! I’ve got to hurry. Daddy expects me to be home in five minutes.”

I gathered her things while she got dressed. I kissed Penny when she was dressed and ready to leave.

“I’m going to miss you so much. I love you.”

“I love you too Kyle. I’ll e-mail you every day.” Penny promised.

“I’ll do the same.” I replied. I hoped it was a promise I could keep this time. Penny and I hugged and kissed one last time. She headed for the door.

Penny turned back before she opened it and looked at me. “I want to remember you exactly like this.” I was standing naked in the middle of my bedroom. My cock was erect again.

“I love you.” I answered as she left my room. Ten weeks without Penny was going to be a long time.

Chapter 24

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I headed for the shower after Penny left. I took a leisurely shower since I wouldn't have time to go to church that day. Ed, Andy and I were leaving at 11 am for scout camp. Andy was standing outside the bathroom door when I finished. I dressed in my scout uniform and went downstairs for breakfast.

Mom, Dad and Liz were getting ready to leave for church. Mom greeted me with a kiss and a hug. She said, "Have fun this summer Kyle. Be careful."

"I will be Mom. Remember I'll be home Friday afternoon before I go up to Penn State for football camp."

"I know." Mom said with a smile. "Is your brother up?"

"Andy is in the shower."

Mom went upstairs to say good bye to him. Dad and Liz went outside to warm the car up while they waited for Mom. She came downstairs and headed out. I made myself bacon and eggs. Andy joined me about fifteen minutes later.

Andy said, "It sounds like you and Penny had fun last night."

"We did."

"And this morning too."

"Oh, you heard that?" I asked.

"Yes, the noise woke me up."

"Sorry." I answered.

"It's cool Kyle." Andy said. He poured himself some cereal. "Crystal gave me some good news last night. She is going on birth control. When I get home in August I won't need to use rubbers anymore."

"That's good. What kind is she using?"

"I don't know. She didn't say."

Andy and I finished our breakfast and cleaned up after ourselves. We loaded our gear in the back of my Golf. Our set of weights went in first followed by our packs. There would be room in the back of the car for Andy and Ed's gear this year.

I organized my bags for my trip to Penn State's football camp while I waited for Ed to arrive. I wasn't going to have much time next Friday afternoon when I came home from camp before driving to State College for the weekend.

I had just finished a final e-mail to Penny when Ed knocked at the door. Andy and I headed out to the car to load everything up. We loaded all of Ed's things in the back seat with Andy. Ed and I climbed in and headed for Lancaster and scout camp. We stopped at Mickey D's for lunch on the way.

After lunch I asked Ed, "Did you and Lindsey get a chance to say a proper good bye last night?"

"We did. We told our parents we were going bowling. We actually went parking. We had a good evening. How about you and Penny?"

"She spent the night last night. I have a lot of good memories for late at night during camp." I answered.

Ed asked, "How about you and your girlfriend Andy?"

"Officially Crystal and I aren't going steady."

"Really?" I asked. "I thought the two of you were a couple."

"Not yet. I would have asked her a week ago if it wasn't for camp. I don't think it would be fair to ask her to go steady with me when I was going to be away for ten weeks. I know she would have said yes if I asked, but I didn't think I should ask her yet." Andy explained.

Ed said, "I guess that make sense."

Andy added, "Crystal and I did have a good time last night. I just wish her parents were as cool as the Edwards. It would have been nice if she could have stayed over last night like Penny."

Ed looked at me and said, "You are a lucky son of a bitch."

"I know that. Penny and I don't push our luck. We only do this on special occasions." I explained. The conversation shifted to camp and who was coming back for the summer.

We arrived at camp about fifteen minutes early. We checked in at the office and then parked my car down by the staff site so we could move our belongings into our tents. Ed and I moved into the same tent we had used for the last two years. Andy ran into Travis Hastings, his tent mate last year. They agreed to stay together again.

Trent Wilson arrived a few minutes after Ed, Andy and me. Trent moved into the empty tent beside mine. Trent, Ed, Andy, Travis and I headed to the health lodge for the medical check.

Andy led the way into the lodge. Andy greeted Abby with a hug and kiss. She checked his medical over and dismissed him. I stepped up next. I greeted her with a hug and a kiss too. “Are you settling in?”

“I think so.” Abby answered. She looked over my medical.

Trent whispered to me, “Jesus, are we supposed to kiss the nurse?”

I laughed. “No. Haven’t you met my future sister-in-law?” Trent indicated he hadn’t. I introduced Abby to Trent and Travis.

We headed over to the pool for our swim tests. Will greeted us when we got there. “It’s about time you guys got here. Kyle, Trent and Andy, I want you three to take your swim tests first. When you are done Andy, I want you to make out buddy tags for the staff as they finish the test. Kyle and Trent, you will help me run the tests.”

Trent and I ran Ed and Travis through the test. They left when they were done. They teased me about them having free time while I had to work. I reminded them that the Aquatics staff were the hardest workers in camp.

Justin Finnegan, Will’s Assistant Aquatics Director for the pool arrived about fifteen minutes later. Will took Justin to the filter room to review operations and maintenance of the equipment while Trent and I did swim tests for the rest of the camp staff.

I greeted all my friends on staff as we did the tests. Most of the guys I knew were back again. We finished the swim tests around 3:30. Will told us we had about fifteen minutes until we had to meet in the dining hall for staff orientation.

Mr. Holloway, the camp director, introduced the senior staff. Rob Young was back as the Program Director. Jerry McMichael was back running the Pioneer scout program for first year scouts. He was Ed’s boss. Aquatics was the only program area that had significant change in personnel.

The camp added 19 new CIT’s. Ten of last years CIT’s came back as paid staff this year, including Andy. Mr. Holloway had everyone introduce themselves. He went over his expectations for our work and behavior while we were at camp.

After dinner Mr. Holloway and Rob Young reviewed the Boy Scout Advancement system and how to teach merit badges. We finally had free time around 9 pm. Will, Ed, Andy, Trent and I retired to my tent for a weight lifting session and our three and a half mile run. I lagged behind a little on this run. I had only worked my way up to three miles at home recently.

Most of the staff spent the day on Monday setting up tents, dining flies, cots and picnic tables in the campsites. The Order of the Arrow workers had set up half of the camp the previous weekend. They helped a lot, but weren't able to do everything we needed to have camp ready for the first group of campers the following week.

Monday evening Mr. Holloway and Rob Young did a training session on how to teach scouts. Ed, Andy and I checked the staff lounge after we were done in the evening. The computers hadn't been set up yet so we couldn't check for e-mail from our girlfriends.

Tuesday after breakfast we went back to work setting up the last four campsites in the camp. We finished three of them before lunch and headed up the hill to the farthest out site to finish.

I was helping Trent, Dave Royer, Andy and Travis Hastings move a picnic table into the site. Dave and I were walking backwards carrying the front of the table while Andy and Travis carried the back across the campsite. I was backing up so I couldn't see where I was going. My left foot slipped into a gopher hole while we walked. I went down instantly. Dave couldn't manage the weight of half the table alone and dropped it. The table went down, the left table leg barely missing me. Dave, Andy and Travis all ended up on their asses.

Andy laughed and said, "Well, that was graceful."

I laughed with the other guys. I scrambled out from under the table and tried to stand. Shit! My ankle throbbed and I went down again.

Andy asked, "Are you OK Kyle?" Dave and Travis echoed his question.

"I'm not sure." I sat up and felt my ankle, the source of the pain. Nothing felt out of place. I carefully stood, keeping most of my weight on my right leg. So far, so good. I put a little weight on my left leg. It hurt, but not too bad. "I think I sprained it." I admitted.

Dave said, "You sit down for a few minutes Kyle." Dave turned to the work party finishing tents nearby. "Ryan, get over here. Help us with this table."

I hobbled over to the nearest tent platform and sat down. I massaged my ankle while the four guys put the table under the dining fly in the center of the campsite. The work crew finished setting up the campsite a few minutes later. Dave and Andy came over to check me out.

Dave asked, "How's your ankle?"

I answered, "I think it's OK. It is swelling a little but I'll be OK."

Dave asked, “Can you walk on it?”

“I’ll try.” I stood and gently put weight on the ankle. It didn’t feel too bad. I took a step. It hurt, but I could take it. “I’ll be OK.” I answered.

Dave said, “Good.” He yelled to the whole group, “Let’s go. Head back to the maintenance building. The Ranger has a few more things for us to set up this afternoon before the staff swim. Let’s move it!”

I started for the road. I wasn’t moving too fast. Dave asked, “Can you walk the whole way Kyle? I could give you a ride.”

“I’ll be OK.” I said. I limped after the work crew. Dave headed to the far side of the campsite for his truck. Dave was the Ranger’s assistant. He was one of only three camp staff members who were allowed to drive the camp trucks.

I didn’t get more than a hundred yards before I started to regret my bravado. My ankle started to throb. Fortunately Dave stopped in his truck before he passed me.

Dave asked, “Are you sure you don’t want a ride?”

“I’ll take you up on that offer.” I climbed in the truck. My ankle was really hurting now. “Maybe you better drop me off at the Health Lodge.”

“You got it Kyle.” Dave answered. He drove me down the hill to the Health Lodge. I thanked him and limped in to see Abby.

Abby came out to meet me in the waiting room as soon as she heard the front door slam. “Good grief! Did you hurt your knee?” she asked.

“No. My knee is fine. I stepped in a gopher hole while I was helping move a picnic table. I think I sprained my ankle.”

“Come in and have a seat on the exam table.” I followed Abby into her office and hopped up on the table. Abby pulled my shoes and socks off. She examined my left ankle and compared it with my right ankle. She had me stand and try to walk. I managed with only a little pain.

After a minute’s exam Abby said, “It’s not broken. You have some swelling. I believe you have a Grade II sprain. You have some stretching or slight tearing of these ligaments.” She indicated the ligaments on the outside of my ankle. “I’m going to wrap your ankle in an ace bandage. I’d like you to...”

I interrupted, “I know. Ice it. Elevate it and rest it. Is that right?”

“Yes. That’s exactly right.” Abby answered.

“Been there, done that.”

“I’ll want you to take a couple ibuprofens Kyle.” Abby took the tablets from the cabinet. I took them with a little water. Abby helped me get my socks and shoes on. She gave me an ice pack. I headed back to my tent to lie down and ice my ankle.

Trent, Andy and Ed checked on me after the staff swim was done. My ankle didn’t hurt too much. It was close to dinner time. Ed and I cleaned up and changed into our uniforms. After dinner Mr. Holloway, Rob, Abby and Will reviewed the camp emergency procedures for all sorts of possible situations. Abby reviewed basic first aid treatment for scouts if we had an accident in our program areas.

The training was over earlier than the previous evenings. Ed, Andy and I headed for the staff lounge. We set up the computers in the lounge and retrieved our e-mails from the past few days. All of us had several e-mails from our girlfriends. We sent off our replies to Lindsey, Penny and Crystal.

I lifted with Ed, Trent, Andy and Will. I skipped the run. My ankle was swelling again. I iced it down and rested on my bunk. I went to sleep right after Ed came back from the run.

My ankle swelled up over night. I wrapped it up with my ace bandage and limped through the day. Abby gave me more ibuprofen. It hurt, but it was bearable.

Wednesday was set up day for the merit badge program areas. Trent and I spent the day checking and cleaning PFDs, inspecting canoes and rowboats, and checking the oars and paddles. I reviewed my planned lessons for Canoeing Merit Badge with Trent in the afternoon. Trent went over his plans for Rowing Merit Badge. Trent wanted me to be familiar with teaching his badge in case he needed to have me cover for him some time.

Will had the whole aquatic staff down at the boat yard on Thursday. Trent and I reviewed skills and merit badge requirements with everyone. When that was done, Will, Trent and I tested the staff members on their skills on the water. All the guys did a good job.

My ankle was still a little sore but the swelling was gone in my ankle by Thursday. I decided to go on the run with the rest of my crew. I kept up the first mile but fell behind after that. I turned back while Will, Ed, Andy and Trent ran on. I ended up walking the last half mile to the staff area. I stopped off at the staff lounge to check my e-mail. I sent off the day’s message to Penny.

On Friday Will sent Kevin Forbes and Dustin Carter to learn the waterfront program. Kevin and Dustin were going to be our CIT’s next week. Kevin was going to help Trent next week. Dustin was mine. I had him demonstrate his canoeing skills in the morning. He seemed ready to handle things.

I stopped at the camp office before lunch. When I accepted the job I got permission to take off two weekends during the camp season. I needed to leave around noon to get to the football camp at Penn State by the 6 pm check-in time. Mr. Holloway told me to have fun this weekend. I promised that I should be back between 10 and 11 pm on Sunday night. I loaded a few things in my Golf and headed for home.

I grabbed lunch at the drive through at a Burger King in Lancaster on my way home. I showered and changed to regular clothes when I got home. I wanted to go over to the Edward's house to see Penny, but I knew she was working. Mom and Dad were at work too. I didn't know where Liz was. There wasn't any sign of her at home. I looked over the map and detailed directions Dad left me. He was worried about me driving to State College on my own. It was my first long distance trip alone. I loaded my sports duffle with my gear for the weekend. I left a note for Mom and Dad and headed west for Penn State.

Dad's directions were easy to follow for the first 45 minutes of my drive. Things got interesting when I got to Harrisburg. I followed I-283 north when I got to the Pennsylvania Turnpike interchange. Two miles further north was the dreaded Eisenhower Interchange. Dad's directions were perfect. He put me in the correct lane to follow I-83 north to I-81. Without Dad's help I'm sure I would have ended up in York or Hershey instead of continuing around Harrisburg. I had no trouble finding Rt. 322 when I merged onto I-81. The rest of the drive up 322 was easy.

I stopped off in Lewistown for an early dinner. It took me half an hour to get to State College. I turned off onto Park Avenue. The road looked familiar thanks to my fall visit. I passed the stadium and turned left onto University Drive. I drove a block south past Curtin Avenue and turned into the designated parking lot beside the Shields building. The directions I received told me to check in at the Intramural Building across the street from the parking lot between 5 pm and 6 pm. It was 5:15, so I was right on time.

I went inside. The registration table had four lines, organized by last names: A-F, G-K, M-R, S-Z. Four guys were in front of me in the M-R line. The line hadn't moved before two more kids joined me. The guy closer to me asked, "Is this your first time at a Penn State football camp?"

I answered, "Yes, it's my first time. How about you?"

"No. I came to Offense & Defense Camp last summer." He extended his hand to me. "I'm Bill Robinson."

I shook his hand. "I'm Kyle Martin."

The guy behind Bill extended his hand to me. “I’m Corey Owens.” I shook Corey’s hand. The three of us compared personal information. Bill’s a quarterback who is going to be a senior in the fall. Corey was a tight end. He’s going to be a junior. I told them about myself. The conversation turned to why we came to this camp.

Bill replied, “My team lost in the quarterfinals of the playoff to a hot shot team from Lancaster County. We’re hoping to pick up some tips to help us beat them next season.”

Corey added, “I can’t believe that we lost in triple overtime when their QB ran a naked bootleg.”

The light bulb came on over my head. I asked, “Where are you from?”

Bill answered, “Upper Moreland.”

I said, “The way you guys pursued to the ball told us that we could get you to bite on that play. And you did – you bit hook, line and sinker.”

Bill and Corey stared at me. Corey finally asked, “You play for the Wolverines?”

“You bet; at least for the first five games of the season. I tore my ACL in the fifth game. I was watching the game against you guys from the press box with the other coaches.”

Bill shook his head. “I have to hand it to you guys. You played a hell of a game.”

“You guys did too. We were incredibly lucky to have won. You guys had a great team too.”

“Thanks. We’ll just have to play again next year. May the best team win.”

I answered, “I agree. May the best team win.”

The four guys in front of me had finished registering. I gave them my name. They gave me a name tag, a packet of information and my room assignment. The card said “316 McKean Hall”. The registrar sent me to a group of guys gathered at the other end of the gym. Bill and Corey joined me in a couple minutes. We talked until the crowd grew to around twenty kids.

A guy who was obviously a football player came out to greet us. He was nearly my height and probably had at least 50 pounds on me. He was wearing a gray and blue T-shirt marked Penn State Football. He introduced himself as Peter Klein. He was one of our camp counselors. He asked us to get our bags and meet him in front of the IM building in a few minutes.

Pete led us down Curtin Road toward the center of campus when we met again. He took us to the right when we got to the nearest dorm rooms. We passed the first one, which

was marked as Pennypacker Hall. We followed Pete into the adjoining dorm. It had a sign on the side indicating that it was McKean Hall. Pete took us to the elevators.

He announced, “Guys with room assignments on the third floor, take the elevator and report to room 305. A counselor for your floor will get you your room keys and get you settled in. Good luck. If you are staying on the fourth floor, come with me.”

I asked Bill and Corey, “What rooms are you in?”

Bill said, “We’re both in 407.”

The elevator doors opened. Pete stepped in. Some guys followed him. I said, “I’ll see you guys in awhile I guess.”

Corey answered, “You bet. It’s good to meet you Kyle.” Bill concurred.

Seven other guys waited with me for the next elevator. We headed up to the third floor. I looked around as I got out of the elevator. Room 305 was beside the elevator. Our group had just turned towards the counselor’s door when he came out. He was Aaron Morano!

Aaron smiled when he saw me and said, “Hey Kyle! It’s about time you got here.”

“It’s good to see you. Are you the counselor?” I asked.

“You bet.” Aaron waved to us. “Come in my room. I’ll hand out your room keys.” We followed Aaron into room 305. He handed me a key. “You’re in 316, right?”

I took the key. “Yep. 316.” I confirmed. Aaron took names and handed out keys to the other seven guys.

Aaron announced, “It is 6:15 now. Move your things into your room. Some of you will find that your roommate is already here. Get comfortable. We will meet at the elevators at 7:15 tonight.” The group dispersed.

I hung out until the others left. “Aaron, is Zack around this weekend?”

Aaron laughed. “Wait a couple minutes. You’ll see him. He’s the other counselor for this floor. He went over to the IM Building to pick up the next group campers.”

“Cool. I’m going to move my things in. I’ll catch up with you guys in a little while.”

I went across the hall. Room 316 was just to the right of the elevators. I put the key in the lock. Someone inside called out, “It’s open. Come on in.”

I pulled my duffle bag inside. My roommate, presumably, stood from his bed and extended his hand to me. "I'm Chip Brinton. You must be my roommate."

I set my bag down and shook his hand. "I'm Kyle Martin. It's nice to meet you."

Chip was about 6'-1" tall. He was thin. He might weight 160 pounds. His brown hair was long enough to cover his ears.

Chip asked, "Where are you from Kyle?"

"Lancaster County, how about you?"

"We're almost neighbors. I'm from Unionville in Chester County."

"Unionville? I watched some game film of you guys. What position do you play?"

"Quarterback." Chip answered. Chip gave me a funny look. "Why would you watch film of us?"

"I blew out my ACL in the middle of the last season. My coach had me break down video for possible playoff opponents."

"Wow. That's planning pretty far ahead. What team do you play for?"

I answered, "I'm a captain on the Wolverines. We're from Paradise."

"I know you guys. I watched you beat Upper Moreland in the playoffs. Your game was on cable. You guys made a lot of fans in Unionville that day when you beat the Golden Bears. They knocked us out of the playoffs the previous week."

I explained, "We were very lucky that day. Any game that goes into triple overtime is too close for comfort. Do you know that Upper Moreland's quarterback is here?"

"Is he?"

I said, "He seems like a nice guy. We talked while we waited to register."

"I've met him too. He is a nice guy. But nice guy or not, Upper Moreland is the team that stands on our way. We DON'T like that team." Chip explained.

"I understand. For my team it's Central. They have dominated our league for two decades. We have only been competitive with them for the past couple years. In spite of them being our biggest rivals, I'm friends with a couple guys on their team."

Yes, that's exactly what I mean about Upper Moreland."

I started to unpack my things, putting them in the closet behind the desk. This room was laid out the same way that Zack's and Aaron's room last fall. You walk in the door and find the closet along the inside wall, a space for a chair, a desk and then a bed that extends to the far wall of the room. The far wall had a large window that faces other dorms. The two sides of the room were mirror images of each other.

Chip and I talked while I unpacked. It turned out that Chip had turned 16 last month and was going to be a junior in the fall. He had taken his team to the playoffs as a sophomore last season. I told him about myself. Chip seemed like a nice guy. I was lucky to have him for a roommate.

We had a knock at the door about 7:10 pm. Chip opened it. Zack Hayes stuck his head inside. "Hey Kyle. Glad you made it. Everything OK?"

"Things are good Zack. I'm surprised to see you working as a counselor."

"Coach Paterno needed some guys to do it and I could use the money." Zack answered.

"That's cool."

Zack said, "Everyone needs to meet Aaron and me at the elevators in five minutes. Bring the notebook that you were given at registration. You are going to have a class room session this evening."

"You got it Zack." I said.

"OK" Chip answered quietly. Zack closed the door and headed down the hall to the next room. Chip looked at me. "Can you believe that? That was Zack Hayes! He's the quarterback who won the bowl game against Auburn! I can't believe it!"

"Yeah, that was Zack. Why?"

"You know him?" Chip asked.

"Sure." I answered nonchalantly. I went on to explain how Zack went to my high school and was my friend and mentor. Chip was impressed, probably a little too impressed. It turned out that Chip's dad and uncle were both Penn State grads. His family were huge Penn State fans.

Chip and I grabbed our notebooks and headed for the elevators. I got another surprise. Chip and I were waiting for the group when Christian Hunsecker came around the corner with another guy wearing a Central Football T-shirt. Christian and I greeted each other. Christian introduced me to Caleb Sommers. Caleb was the young kid who was stuck quarterbacking Central in their last playoff game last season when the starter was suspended from school. He hoped to do better in the coming season.

Aaron and Zack took roll before we left. I had to stifle a laugh when Aaron called out “Winfield Ellsworth Brinton IV” and Chip answered “Yo.”

On the ride down in the elevator I teased Chip, “Winfield Ellsworth Brinton IV? It makes you sound like a snooty rich kid.”

“Now you know why I go by Chip.”

“So your family isn’t fabulously rich?” I asked.

“No. Mom’s a school teacher and Dad works in a bank in West Chester. We’re just an average family.” Chip paused for a couple seconds. “My great grandfather used to be rich. He lost all his money in the stock market crash in 1929.”

“That’s too bad. The name seems to be a bit pretentious.” I said.

“It is. It’s tradition in our family for the oldest son. Dad says it still gives us a few perks. My family came to Pennsylvania with William Penn when he founded the colony in the 1680’s. We were Quakers back then. All our family name gets us anymore is an occasional seat on a charity board and an invite to the local fox hunt.”

I said, “That’s a little more exciting than my family history. You go back a few generations and all you find is Mennonite farmers. You mentioned fox hunting, do you really do that?”

“I don’t. My dad goes occasionally. My granddad is a regular. He loves to ride with the hunt.” Chip explained as the elevator doors opened to a crowd of football campers. I spotted Greg Walker standing in the middle of the crowd trying to get order.

I pushed through the crowd. Chip followed. I tapped Greg on the shoulder. He turned and looked at me. I asked, “Hi Greg. Do you remember me? I’m Kyle Martin.”

Greg stared at me for a few seconds. “Yeah... yeah... you’re the kid Zack brought to the party last fall.”

I nodded yes. “It’s good to see you again. You played a hell of a game against Auburn. I was cheering the whole time it took you to carry the winning touchdown to the end zone.”

“Thanks, umm...”

“Kyle... Kyle Martin.”

Greg said, “Right. Kyle Martin. I’ll remember that name.” Greg whistled to get everyone’s attention. “Everybody. We need to head over to the Lasch Building for this evening’s introduction.”

About eighty of us followed Pete and Greg across Curtin Road, between Shields and Wagner buildings, through the tennis courts to the Lasch Building. Christian, Caleb, Chip and I hung together.

Our counselors took us to the auditorium. Everyone found seats. The Penn State coaching staff came in together and had seats at the front table in the auditorium. Coach Paterno welcomed us to the 7 on 7 Passing Camp. He introduced the coaching staff. He reviewed our schedule for the weekend. His introduction went about fifteen minutes. Coach Paterno had the defensive players move to another classroom where Coach Bradley would begin their instruction.

When all the defensive players left Coach Burton began our talk. He reviewed some of the basics of running pass routes. He handed out tests to the sound of loud groans from nearly everyone in the room. Coach Burton promised that all they were going to be used for was to identify our current knowledge level so the instruction could be tailored to our specific needs.

Coach Burton continued talking about how an offense can use various combination of passing routes together to influence what a defense did. He talked about how to read defensive coverages. The talk went on for about an hour. It was basic stuff to me, but it was very clearly presented. Coach Burton talked about how all the bits and pieces of information I knew influenced each other. It was worthwhile.

Christian, Caleb, Chip and I were heading out from the evening talk when Zack grabbed me. “Do you guys want to go downtown for a pizza before we go back to the dorms?” Zack asked.

I hesitated. “Uh... what do you guys think?” looking around at my friends. They agreed. Zack took us downtown to one of the pizza places on College Avenue. Zack kept us entertained with stories from the bowl game.

Chip hung on every word Zack spoke. He had a serious case of hero worship. Christian seemed to enjoy the talk about Penn State’s bowl game. I found out that night that he had been in the stands watching Zack and me when we first beat Central three years ago. Both of us had been in ninth grade at the time. He respected Zack without crossing over to adulation. He knew Zack first as a rival’s quarterback. Caleb didn’t say much of anything. He just absorbed everything we talked about. We got back to the dorm around 9:30 pm.

Chip and I hung out in our room until curfew. All kids had to be back in the dorm by 10:30. Zack and Aaron went around the floor for a bed check after that. Lights out was 11:00 pm.

I turned the lights out and climbed in my bed. Chip asked, “What time do we need to get up?”

“7 o’clock? Breakfast is at 8 and we have to be on the field at 9. Does that sound good?”

“Getting up at 7 sucks. It’s too damn early.”

I laughed. “Getting up at 7 am is sleeping late for me. I usually get up at 6 am. I have to lifeguard polar bear swims at 6:30 in the morning.”

“Polar bear swims? Where do you work?” Chip asked.

“The Boy Scout camp in Lancaster County.”

“You’re a Boy Scout? So am I.” Chip said excitedly.

We compared notes about our respective troops. Surprisingly his troop was even larger than mine. My troop has around 40 kids in it, larger than the normal 15-25 kids. Chip’s troop had 65 scouts. They were just as active, camping every month. They did high adventure trips just like us. Chip had gone to the Philmont Scout Ranch last summer. He told me about that back packing trip. I told him about our trip to Algonquin. Chip’s troop camped at the Horseshoe Scout Reservation. It was after 11:30 before we finally got quiet and went to sleep.

The alarm on my watch went off at 7 am as planned. I announced, “Chip, time to get up.” I got a groan in response. I got out of bed and grabbed my robe. “Let’s go, time to get up.” Chip rolled over and moaned. I grabbed my shower stuff. “Come on, out of bed.” I grabbed the sheet and yanked it off Chip.

I got an eye full. Chip had a hand down his boxers and was stroking himself. He turned bright red from embarrassment and pulled his hand out quickly. “Jesus, I’m sorry Chip.” I exclaimed as I beat a hasty retreat from the room.

I went down the hall and took a shower. Chip wasn’t in the room when I got back. I got dressed. I carefully wrapped the ace bandage around my left ankle to give it extra support that day. I hoped my ankle would hold up for the day.

When Chip came back to our room I said, “I’m sooo sorry man. I didn’t know.”

“I’m not mad Kyle. I was just...” Chip said. His face turned pink. “I just get so horny. I haven’t... you know...”

“I know Chip. I haven’t been with my girlfriend for a week. I need to take care of myself too.”

“A week? I was going to say I haven’t done it since I broke up with my girlfriend two months ago.”

“Oh. You definitely don’t have anything to be embarrassed about. I haven’t gone without for two months since ninth grade.” I replied.

The two of us finished dressing quietly. We headed downstairs and over to the Johnston Dining Hall with our meal tickets. We showed our tickets at the door, went through the food line, and found an empty table. I saw Bill Robinson and Corey Owens come out of the food line and look for a table. I stood up and waved to them. They came over.

“You can join us if you want guys.” I offered. Bill and Corey sat down at our table. I introduced Chip to Bill and Corey. I tried to keep a conversation going, but things were kind of awkward between Bill and Chip.

Zack and Aaron came by our table. Zack asked, “Can we join you guys.”

“Sure.” I answered. Thanks to Zack and Aaron the conversation turned to how Penn State’s season was going to go. Christian and Caleb joined us a couple minutes later. The group got along well when we focused on a topic we could agree on – Penn State football.

The eight of us headed back to our rooms to get ready for the morning session. We were due on the outside practice fields near Haluba Hall by 9 am. Chip and I joined the stream of kids heading for the practice field.

The coaches had us run drills and tests for the first hour. They gave us a fifteen minute break. The coaches split the campers into four offensive and four defensive groups. Chip, Bill and Christian all ended up in Group 4 with me.

The second session in the morning was more like I expected. Chip and Bill took turns throwing passes to the receivers and running backs in our group while defensive Group 4 players tried to cover us. Coach Adams, the Penn State receivers coach supervised our practice.

The session ran until lunch. Both Bill and Chip threw excellent passes. They had good spin and velocity. They arrived on time and on target. It was going to be a pleasure working with these guys.

My group of friends joined Zack, Aaron and me for lunch. We went back out after lunch and went back to passing drills. Coach Burton joined our group after lunch. So far my left ankle was holding up and wasn’t hindering my play. We also hadn’t run any routes that required me to make a cut.

I went on a couple streak routes while Coach Burton was watching. I beat the defender on the first play by a couple yards. Chip threw the ball a little short but I adjusted and caught the ball. On the second play Chip hit me dead on stride. The play would have been a sure touchdown in a real game. I caught Coach Burton smiling at the play.

Both Chip and I rotated out after that play. Chip was grinning when we met on the sideline. “You wouldn’t consider moving to Unionville would you? We could use someone with your speed on our team.”

I chuckled. “No, I’ll stay with the Wolverines Chip.” I answered. I thought for a few seconds. “I didn’t think I’d be saying this to anyone, but you are as good a quarterback as Zack Hayes was in high school or as Ed Fritz.”

Chip asked, “Who’s Ed Fritz?”

“Ed is starting quarterback on my team and my best friend.”

Chip was grinning. “Do you really think I’m as good as Zack Hayes?”

“You are as good as he was when he was in high school.” I explained. Chip got quiet. We watched as Bill ran the offense for the next ten minutes. Coach Burton called everyone together. The next topic he wanted to talk about was how to beat press coverage.

I lined up on the line of scrimmage opposite the defensive back. At the simulated snap I faked left and dodged to the right. At least that is what I tried to do. When I made the cut to the right my left ankle gave way. The DB knocked me on my ass. Coach Burton wasn’t smiling anymore. Chip fired the ball to Christian, who had gotten open.

Coach Burton shouted, “Run it again.”

At the snap I tried the same thing except I faked right and went left. My left ankle held up this time. I streaked downfield and caught Chip’s pass in stride. Coach Burton’s smile came back.

We repeated the drill a few more times. I found I could cut properly with my right foot but not my left. I had trouble getting off the line the last couple times because the defensive back had figured me out. He was anticipating my fake and jamming me hard.

Coach Burton sent in the next group of players. Christian, Chip and I gathered on the side line. Coach Burton asked, “Martin, you know you need to learn that fake in both directions, right?”

“I know. Usually I can make that cut. I sprained my ankle a few days ago. It’s still a little sore.” I explained.

“Has your knee is recovered from your injury last fall?” Coach Burton asked.

“My knee is fine. My ankle is a little sore, but that’s all.”

Coach Burton sent me back in. I tried to make most of my cuts using my right leg. I did OK but not quite as good as I wanted. I really wanted the Penn State coaches to see that I was back in shape and could perform like last September.

Practice was over at 5 pm. Chip and I headed back to the dorm with Christian and Caleb. We grabbed showers before dinner. We met Christian and Caleb. I knocked at Zack's and Aaron's door. They decided to come along with us.

After dinner we had an evening program. The offensive players met in the Lasch auditorium. The coaches went over types of defenses and how to recognize different types of pass coverages.

My friends decided to go swimming when the evening program was done. I wasn't enthusiastic. I was going to spend my whole summer at the lake and pool life guarding. Why would I want to go to a pool when I didn't have to work? I went anyway. I was glad I did. It was fun to goof around in the water with friends and not have to worry about guarding the swim.

Chip and I hung out with Zack and Aaron until bedtime. Chip was finally starting to get over the awe he felt around Zack. Zack was becoming just another guy instead of the big hero Chip had watched on TV during the bowl game. Chip and I headed to bed at 10:30 while Zack and Aaron made their bed check for the rest of the campers.

On Saturday all our practice had been against man to man coverage. Sunday morning the coaches had us practice against various zone coverages. They taught us how to find the seams in the zone. They showed us how to recognize whether the defense was in zone or man to man. I did well; I didn't need to make cuts as often or as hard as I did against man to man coverage. Chip and I had lunch with all the friends I made that weekend. Even though we had been together only two days, I was going to miss this group.

The defense mixed up coverages in the afternoon. We had to recognize the defense and adjust on the fly as we worked at catching passes. It was challenging, but I knew it would be useful in the future.

The coaches called each player over for a conference in the afternoon to discuss his strengths and weaknesses. I met with Coach Burton.

Coach Burton asked, "What do you think your biggest weakness is?"

"My speed." I answered. Coach Burton stared at me and arched his eye brow. I continued, "What I mean is I rely too much on my speed some times."

"That makes sense. Based just on what I saw this weekend, you need to improve your moves to get separation from the DB. Sometimes you were excellent, other times you couldn't break free."

“All of that was due to my sprained ankle. I felt good cutting off my right leg. I couldn’t do much cutting with my left.”

“That is the same leg that you had the ACL replacement in, correct?”

“Yes.”

“I think you need more work on facing zone coverages. You seemed hesitant at times Kyle.”

“We don’t see zone coverage in our league very often.” I explained.

“It is something that the best receivers in the state should know to recognize and exploit.”

“Do you think I belong in the category of the best receivers in the state?”

Coach Burton paused for a couple seconds. “That’s the question. I watched you last fall as a high school junior catch passes against a college cornerback. You beat him pretty consistently. He’s a very good cornerback too. Can you still do that this coming season? I can’t answer that. You have to.”

“My knee is completely healed. If I hadn’t hurt my ankle a few days ago, I would be playing just like you saw last September.”

“I hope that’s true Kyle.”

“Can I ask you a question Coach? If you can’t answer this one, I’ll understand. Just tell me that it’s against the rules and I won’t be mad.”

Coach Burton nodded and said “Go ahead.”

“I was surprised I didn’t hear from you or Coach Paterno last month. I thought you were interested in me coming to play for Penn State.”

Coach Burton explained, “We didn’t call because we weren’t in a position to offer you anything. You suffered a very severe injury last fall. You blew out your ACL and suffered significant damage to your medial collateral and lateral collateral ligaments. A lot of players do not ever recover fully from injuries like yours.”

“I worked my butt off at rehab. My knee is back.”

“Just the fact that you’re out on the field this weekend tells me that you worked hard at rehab. You need to understand college football Kyle. We have 21 athletic scholarships available this year. That isn’t enough to give to everyone that we want to recruit. Penn State athletics has an annual budget of \$61 million. The football program brings in a large portion of that money. Our success on the field brings us money for athletics,

increases interest in the university among prospective undergraduates, and brings in more contributions from alumni. It is essential that every recruit on scholarship contribute to the success of our program. We don't take chances with scholarships and hope someone will be ready to play."

I sighed. "That mean's you don't plan to offer me a scholarship, right?"

"I wish we could Kyle. I really hoped I would see you play like you did last fall. My reports on your recovery indicated that you were back to 100%. I haven't seen that this weekend." Coach Burton explained.

"Don't you believe Zack?" I asked.

"You're right, Zack is my inside source on your knee. Scholarships are too precious to trust to judgment of someone else, even a student I respect as much as Zack Hayes. The best I can offer this summer is to make you a preferred walk-on."

"What does that mean?"

"You would come to training camp with the team. We would help you get accepted to the university. You would stand a good chance of making the team."

"But I wouldn't have a scholarship." I asked.

"Not the first year. If you made the team and played well, the coaches would re-evaluate your status. If your performance warranted it, we could arrange for you to have a scholarship after that."

"You don't think I'm good enough to play for Penn State." I said.

"That's not exactly true Kyle. If I had to bet, I put down \$10... no, \$100 that you'll be playing at the same level as you did last September. I'd bet a \$100 of my own money on me needing to call you next October and offer you a scholarship. What I can't bet is a million dollars of the school's money on me being right about your knee. We play in one of the toughest conferences in college football. The margin between us and Ohio State and Michigan is so slim that the speed wide receiver we thought we had that can't play up to expectations could cause us to lose 27-24 instead of winning 31-27. Every player that we award a scholarship to must carry his weight. Do you understand?"

"I guess." I said hesitantly.

"Let me tell you what I have learned about you so far Kyle. Last September you were one of the best receivers in the state. I know you suffered a major injury that usually takes 8-12 months to heal, if it ever heals properly. The fact that you are running pass routes today is a minor miracle itself. It is a testament to your work ethic and endurance that you are here today. Walt Caffrey told me that when you got hurt you helped teach

the younger receivers on your team to take your place. He said it was like he hired another coach for the rest of the season. You have learned more about football in three years in high school than some of the young men on the Nittany Lions. You have speed, size, work ethic and football smarts. I hope you prove me wrong in the fall. I want to be able to call you with a scholarship offer in the fall when you demonstrate that you are back.”

“I guess we’ll see in the fall” I replied non-committally. Not worth a scholarship now! I wasn’t happy. I thought Penn State was my best shot. My plans needed to change and change soon. I rejoined the other players.

I was pissed off. How could they say I wasn’t good enough? I was a little too enthusiastic beating the jam when the cornerback tried to keep me on the line of scrimmage. I knocked him on his ass. I was determined to show them I was one the best receivers around.

By the time they put in new players I had calmed down a little. Chip joined me on the sideline. He asked, “What are you so mad about? Are you upset with Coach Burton?”

“I am mad! Well... I’m not so much mad at him as I am at how I’m playing.”

“What?? You’ve got to be kidding. How can you be mad about how you’re performing. You’re one of the best receivers here.”

“I expect to be the best. I haven’t been able to cut properly from my left foot. I can do better than this. I expect to do better. Coach Burton pointed that out to me. That’s what is wrong with me. Don’t you expect to play well?”

“Of course I do. I just don’t beat myself up when I don’t. Chill a little.” Chip suggested. Coach Burton called Chip over for his private talk. I stood on the sidelines watching the other players. Chip was right. One thing was definite. I was going show Coach Burton that this was a bad decision. Wait until real football started in the fall.

I went back in with Bill Robinson as quarterback. I told Bill to throw the ball my way whether I was covered or not. I was a maniac jumping for the ball over the defender. I caught most of the balls too. I don’t know if it helped but I was determined that nothing was going to stop me today.

The coaches called a halt to the practice at 4:30 pm. They brought the entire group inside to the auditorium for the closing to the camp. Coach Burton and Coach Bradley thanked everyone for their efforts over the weekend. Coach Paterno challenged everyone to put the skills learned this weekend to use when the fall season started. He concluded by thanking everyone for attending this camp.

We were dismissed to return to McKean Hall to check out with our counselors. Chip, Christian, Caleb and I walked back to the dorm together. We were crossing the parking area beside Shields Building when a man about my Dad's age waved to us.

Chip smiled and said, "It's my dad. I'll introduce you." We followed him over to Mr. Brinton. He added, "This is my roommate this weekend Dad, Kyle Martin."

Mr. Brinton extended his hand and I shook it. "Ells Brinton. It's nice to meet you Kyle."

"It's nice to meet you sir." I answered. Chip introduced Christian and Caleb to his dad. The five of us walked together to the dorm for check out. I lingered at the elevator when we got to our floor while Chip and his dad went to our room.

I asked Christian, "Are you going to have dinner before you head for home?"

"No. We're going to hit the road. We'll get something on the way home. How about you?"

"I'll get dinner here before I leave. Are you going to scout camp this summer?"

Christian answered, "Hell yes. This is my last year to go as a scout."

"I'll see you there." I turned to Caleb. "It's nice to have met you Caleb. I'll see you the end of October when we play."

Caleb answered, "It was good to meet you too Kyle. Good luck on your season."

"You too." We shook hands. Christian and Caleb headed down the hall to their room. I headed to my room to get my bags.

Zack was already there to do the check out for Chip. Chip and I promised to keep in touch by e-mail. We teased each other that we would meet in the semi-finals next December. Zack checked my side of the room and marked me down as checked out too.

Zack asked, "What are you doing for dinner?"

"I'm going to grab something before I leave town."

"If you wait a few minutes you can join Aaron and me." Zack said.

I waited in Zack's and Aaron's room while they finished checking out the rest of the campers. We headed downtown and grabbed a dinner at a sub shop.

When we finished eating Zack Asked, "What did you think of the camp?"

“I liked most of it. I didn’t learn a lot of new techniques but it helped me understand how all the things I knew fit together. I think it helped me that way.” I explained.

Zack said, “I’m glad you came. It’s been fun getting together. We really need to get out together on the football field again.”

Aaron protested, “Hey! You promised to behave this weekend. We can’t talk about that yet.”

“My bad. Forget I said that Kyle.” Zack said.

“It’s OK. I won’t report your recruiting violation.” I answered with a grin.

Zack laughed, “You wait until the gag comes off buddy. You’ll see just how persuasive I can be.”

We headed back to campus. Aaron, Zack and I completed our good byes in the parking lot before I headed for home. I hopped in my Golf and drove east. I did OK with the directions until I got to Harrisburg. I got mixed up when Rt. 322, Rt. 22, I-81, and I’m not sure which other roads all merged together.

I didn’t know I was going the wrong direction until I flew by an exit marked “TO PA. RT. 72”. I hadn’t gotten to Rt. 283 yet. I expected to see that sign when I was close to Lancaster AFTER I got on Rt. 283. I kept driving on. I didn’t have a choice. I pulled off at the next exit. The sign said it was Frackville.

I pulled into the Turkey Hill Market and studied the maps. I was somewhere north of Reading in Schuylkill County. I went inside and grabbed some iced tea. I used the phone to call home. When Dad answered the phone I asked, “What is the best way to get home from Frackville?”

All I got in response was laughing. “Dad!” I said, exasperated.

Dad finally calmed down enough to answer. “Frackville?” He laughed again. I heard him sigh. “OK Kyle. Where exactly are you?”

“I’m in the middle of Frackville at the Turkey Hill.”

“I know where you mean. Follow Rt. 61 south through Pottsville and Hamburg until you get to Reading. Follow Rt. 222 around Reading. It will take you to Lancaster. You know the way when 222 merges into Rt. 30.”

“Thanks Dad. I’ll see you later tonight.” I hung up the phone and hit the road. It took me another hour and half to get home but I made it without any more wrong turns. I dropped off my bag with my dirty laundry. I gave Mom a kiss and a hug. Dad got a hug.

He had to tease me again for getting lost on the way home. It was a quarter to ten in the evening. I didn't have much time before I had to leave for scout camp.

I stopped off at Edwards' house before I went back to camp. Mr. Edwards answered the door. He stared at me, obviously surprised. "Kyle, what are you doing here? Do you know what time of night it is?"

"I'm sorry it's so late Mr. Edwards. I took a wrong turn on the way home from State College tonight. I had promised Penny that I would stop by before I went back to scout camp tonight. Could I see her?"

Mr. Edwards frowned. "She is ready for bed Kyle. I don't think..."

I heard Penny's voice from upstairs. "Is that Kyle Daddy?"

Mr. Edwards called out, "It's too late for visitors..."

I could hear Penny running down the steps. Mr. Edwards frowned and sighed. "Come in Kyle. Make this quick. Penny has to get to work tomorrow morning."

"I do too. I have to be up at 6 am to lifeguard at the polar bear swim. I'll be quick."

I stepped into the entry hall. Mr. Edwards went back to the living room and his TV show. Penny got to the bottom of the steps and launched herself at me. We hugged and exchanged a quick but passionate kiss. We had to be discrete. Mr. Edwards was only fifteen feet away.

Penny declared, "God, I've missed you."

"I've missed you too." I replied. I described how my weekend went at Penn State. Penny told me about her week of work. Finally it was essential that I leave. I had to be back to camp before the Ranger locked the front gate at 11 pm. Penny and I hugged and exchanged a last kiss. It started discrete but then our tongues met. We pressed our bodies together while our tongues tangled with each other. We finally broke apart when Mr. Edwards loudly cleared his throat.

"I love you Penny" I declared.

"I love you too."

"One week down, eight to go."

"I'll write you tomorrow night." Penny promised.

"Me too." I answered. I gave her a last hug before I left.

The drive to camp was uneventful. I arrived at 10:45 pm. I parked in the staff parking lot and stopped at the office to check in. The office was locked and the sign on the door said to check in at the Health Lodge. Will was hanging out with Abby at the health lodge. I told them about my weekend at Penn State. Will told me that check-in went well this afternoon. We had 321 campers this week. The opening campfire went well too. Will told me that Andy had the sign-up list for Canoeing Merit Badge.

I headed back to my tent. Ed was just getting ready for bed. Ed asked, “How did the weekend go?”

“Pretty good. I learned some new things. I enjoyed meeting some of the other players.” I explained.

“Was anyone there that I know?” Ed asked.

“Christian was there. His quarterback, Caleb Sommers, was there too. Bill Robinson was there.”

“Who is he?”

“You know him. He’s the quarterback for Upper Moreland.” I answered.

“Oh.”

“Bill is a nice guy. We ate together for a couple meals. He’s a good quarterback too.”

“I noticed that last December.” Ed said.

“If you want to make all-state again Ed, you are going to have to keep improving your game. Bill’s learning more. My roommate for the weekend is dynamite too. He’s Chip Brinton. He plays for Unionville. They are the ones Upper Moreland beat last year to play us. He was a sophomore then. He’s going to be really, really, REALLY good.”

Ed asked, “Are you saying that you don’t think we can defend our state championship?”

“No! No, not at all. I think we’re going to have a great offense. Andy’s got the equivalent of 1½ years of experience. I’ll be back. Between Andy, Drew and me we are going to blow away most defenses. Andy can beat double coverage, I can beat double coverage; what are the other teams going to do? Put in six or seven defensive backs? Drew would love that. Think about how many yards he’ll gain on the ground if they concentrate on Andy and me. Jason, Pete and Ian will help out too. Who’s going to stop us?”

“I don’t know if anyone can Kyle. Why are you worrying about how I play?”

“All I am saying is we can’t play the same as last year. Our competition is improving. We either get better or they beat us. Does that make sense?”

“Yeah. It does.” Ed said.

“I have got to get cleaned up. It’s my turn to guard the polar bear swim tomorrow morning.”

“Be quiet when you get up, OK?”

“You got it buddy.” I answered. I headed over to the staff shower house, showered and cleaned up for the night. Ed was asleep when I got back to our tent. I lay down. It had been an interesting weekend. The football camp was cool. I made a lot of good friends. My anger at not being considered to be worthy of a scholarship had diminished a little. I was going to have to have a hell of a senior season if I wanted to get a top scholarship.

Chapter 25

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The first week of camp went well. Working with Trent everyday was a blast. My CIT, Dustin Carter, turned out to be an excellent teacher. I gave him a top write up at the end of the week.

Ed, Trent, Andy and I ran passing drills everyday after lunch. My ankle was fully recovered by Tuesday. Andy and I took turns catching passes while Trent tried to cover us. This year we didn't need to hide anything from him. He wasn't going to play us anymore.

Ed, Andy, Trent, Will and I lifted weights each evening after our duties were done. By the end of the week I was able to keep up with my friends on our evening runs out to the camp entrance. Ed, Andy and I stopped off at the staff lounge after our run each night to read e-mails from our girlfriends and send off our replies.

Saturday afternoon brought our weekend group of Cub Scouts. Trent, Dustin, Kevin and I spent the afternoon rowing the cubs around the lake. After dinner the Pioneer Scout staff ran a capture the flag game for the cubs. We did our opening campfire for them before they went bed. Trent, Andy, Ed and I tossed the football after the cubs went home before lunch on Sunday.

The Aquatics staff hung out at the pool and relaxed while the next week's troops checked in at their campsite, did the medical recheck with Abby at the Health Lodge and got their orientation at the dining hall. The first troop completed that process around 2:30 pm. We spent the rest of the afternoon doing swim tests for the scouts. We tested 277 scouts and leaders in just over 2 ½ hours.

Micah Knowles was my CIT the second week. He barely met the age requirement to be a CIT. He had finished eighth grade a few weeks earlier. He was small for his age. He worked hard for me but wasn't very good at teaching.

The second week was considerably easier than the first week. My classes were smaller. Trent and I reviewed our lesson plans with each other. Trent wanted to teach canoeing at least one week. He wanted me to know the program for rowing.

Tuesday was the first of July. I didn't imagine that would be significant in the morning when I got up. It was. I didn't find out why until after sixth period was over. I got a message from the camp office to stop by when the free boating was over. I had an urgent message to call home.

I reached Mom when I called home. The message wasn't really urgent. I had two phone calls from college coaches. Both hoped I would call back after dinner. One of the

coaches was Al Golden, the head coach of Temple University. The second message was to call Coach K. C. Keeler from the University of Delaware.

I teased Trent during dinner about his coach calling me. I tried returning both calls from the camp office phone between dinner and 7 pm. Will wanted me to help him with the BSA Lifeguard candidates then. I didn't reach either coach. I left them messages.

I received a surprise e-mail after my evening run. I received an e-mail from Zack Hayes in addition to my daily e-mail from Penny. Zack's e-mail said:

From: hayesr05@psu.edu

To: fastwr87@redroses.net

Date July 1 18:38:02

Hey Kyle

The gag rule is off. I wanted to share this with you.

Top Ten Reasons to come to Penn State:

10. They don't have Peachy Paterno ice cream anywhere but the Penn State Creamery.
9. They make your favorite, Mint Chocolate Chip, at the Creamery too.
8. Grilled Stickies – You had them, you understand.
7. Center County has a nice mix of the rural and cosmopolitan. Country boys like us fit in here.
6. Lasch Football Center provides excellent training facilities, academic tutoring and physical therapy. You won't find better facilities anywhere.
5. The Penn State Nittany Lions are committed to making sure you get a great education along with invaluable football experience. We have an 85% graduation rate.
4. State College is a lot closer to the University of Pennsylvania than Los Angeles. You can visit a certain veterinary student frequently when the football season is done.

3. In spite of his age, Coach Paterno is one of the best coaches in the country. I believe he has another national championship or two in him.
2. You and I have something special together on the football field. One year together wasn't enough. Let's add a couple more years as teammates.
1. Coach Burton has the best offensive mind in football that I have ever seen. With his offensive game plans he can make you a superstar.

Your buddy,

Zack Hayes

Wednesday brought another message to call the coach of the University of Connecticut. Mom said that Coach Golden had called again. The coach of the University of Pittsburgh left me a message to call on Friday. With my limited opportunity to use a phone in camp I hadn't been able to actually speak to any of the coaches yet. I didn't even have time to try to call any of them on Friday night. Between finishing merit badge cards, serving the barbeque and getting ready for the closing campfire I had zero free time that night.

Saturday morning after breakfast the aquatic staff reported to the pool for the weekly cleaning. Will assigned Andy and me to vacuuming the bottom. We were just starting when Andy asked, "Did you hear about Derek Hurley? Mr. Holloway canned him this morning."

"Where did you hear that?" I asked.

"Some of the guys were talking about it. Supposedly he snuck out of camp last night after the campfire to screw his girlfriend. That Ranger caught him when he was coming back to camp."

"Don't believe rumors Andy."

"He wasn't at breakfast. Where was Derek?"

"I don't know. Just let this be. If it is true, Mr. Holloway will let us know what is going on. Let's get back to work."

I doubted Andy was right. Derek was my age. He started out as a CIT the same summer as me. He worked in the Nature area. He was considered to be a good instructor. There wasn't any way he would do something that dumb.

Will dismissed the Aquatics staff around 11 am. The pool and shower house were cleaned to Will's satisfaction. Trent, Andy and I headed back to our tents to hang out until lunch time. Ed joined us when he finished checking the troop out of his campsite.

The dining hall was nearly empty as usual for Saturday lunch. The Boy Scouts had left and the Cub Scouts hadn't arrived yet. It was just the staff at the front tables. When we were done eating Mr. Holloway called for quiet.

He announced, "I have some difficult news to give all of you. Derek Hurley is no longer working on camp staff. He packed his things and left early this morning. The reason for his dismissal is personal between Derek and me. Please do not speculate or spread rumors about this unfortunate episode."

Andy nudged me in the side and said, "Told you." I nodded.

Mr. Holloway continued, "I want each of you to remember the Scout Oath. You have pledged to be morally straight. Each staff member is expected to set a good example for the campers. I want every one to remember the following: Possession or use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco are grounds for immediate dismissal. Leaving camp without authorization is grounds for dismissal. Entertaining a girl in camp is grounds for dismissal. Does everyone understand?"

Jon Stafford, one of the staff's jokers asked, "Exactly what do you mean by 'entertaining'?" Jon smirked as he asked.

Mr. Holloway gave Jon the 'eye'. The one that warned the unwary that they were treading on dangerous ground. "Let me explain it like this: If you and your girl are comfortable doing it in front of her parents, it is OK here. Remember a scout is clean in thought, word and deed. Let the Scout Oath and Law guide you." Mr. Holloway dismissed us.

Andy had been right. Derek must have done something stupid to get himself thrown out of camp. I thought back to the chance Julie and I took last summer. There but for the grace of God go I.

Ed, Andy and I talked with Mr. Holloway later that day and got permission to stay with our troop the next week while they were in camp. I was happy to see my friends and troop mates when they arrived on Sunday afternoon.

Andy happened to be stationed at the end of the pool where scouts started their swim tests. I was pleased as I watched my brother work. He was totally solicitous of the younger kids. He greeted each of kids in his patrol as they came through the line and promised to see them in a few hours when he was done with work for the afternoon. My brother was turning out to be a very good Troop Guide.

Christian's troop came through for swim tests about a half hour after my troop. Christian and I had a chance talk for a few minutes after he finished his swim test. Christian said he was going to join us for our nightly runs and our after lunch passing drills.

I moved my stuff up the hill from the staff area to our troop's campsite just before dinner. Ed, Andy and I ate with our troop while we stayed with them. I chose to eat at Andy's patrol's table. I wanted to keep an eye on Gary Harrison. Sometimes I shuddered when I looked at Gary. He was the spitting image of his brother. This was his first year in camp. Gary seemed to be having fun.

Andy and I headed out after dinner for Merit Badge sign-ups. Will had Andy working with Swimming Merit Badge this week. I had 79 kids sign up for my four Canoeing classes. The staff gathered for prepare for the campfire while my troop headed back to the campsite. The campfire came off without a hitch. The campers laughed like crazy when the Aquatics staff did the "Mortgage on the Cow" skit.

Ed, Andy and I helped clean up after the fire, stopped by to see Rob for any schedule changes for tomorrow and then headed up the hill to our troop site. We arrived in time for our troop's cracker barrel (snack). Ed and I stayed up for the Patrol Leader Council meeting that Hal and Mr. Clark ran. It was after 11 when that meeting was over.

The patrol leaders and the adults headed for bed. Hal, Jeremy, Ed and I stayed up for a little while to talk. Hal started off with, "You aren't going to believe the phone call I had last week."

Jeremy added, "It's totally shocking."

I asked, "OK. It's shocking. Who called you?"

"Greg Schiano, the head coach of Rutgers University." Hal answered.

Ed exclaimed, "What? You got to be kidding!"

"No, I'm not. He offered me a full athletic scholarship to Rutgers."

I said, "Hey man. That's great."

Hal continued, "It gets better. They want me to kick for them. They are willing to use the same arrangement I have with the Wolverines. I can play soccer too. They can't promise me that I will make their soccer team, but they will give me a try-out and let me play both sports if I make the soccer team."

Ed said, "Of course you're going to take the offer."

"Maybe. I scheduled an official visit for me and my parents in September. I'll probably accept it, but who knows? Maybe someone else will want me as a kicker too." Hal said.

Ed asked, “Do you still think football is a wussie sport? You remember – play for ten seconds then take the forty seconds off?”

“Yeah, I still do and I play the wussiest position of all. You guys take the ball down the field to the end zone. I come in and kick a PAT or field goal and then jog to the other end of the field and kick off. After that I get to sit for ten or fifteen minutes.”

I said, “I guess your parents are happy about this.”

“You bet. They’re delighted. They don’t have to pay for college.” Hal answered.

Our talk turned to my weekend at Penn State. I told them about getting to be friends with Bill Robinson and Chip Brinton. We finally went to bed around 11:30 pm.

I ended up quarterbacking for the week during our after lunch passing drills since Christian and Jeremy were added to our normal mix. I needed to be ready in case Ed and Jake went down during the season.

Tuesday was the 8th of July, my seventeenth birthday. I thought Will was done teasing me on my birthday when he didn’t make a big fuss last summer. Wrong! Abby, Andy and Will all got up to lead the song in the dining hall after lunch. I knew I was in trouble. Sure enough they called me to the front and made me stand on a chair in front of the whole camp while they sang “Happy Birthday” to me. The only good thing about this was that Abby gave me a hug and kiss when the song was done.

My friends teased me when we got together after lunch. The kids in my fourth period class teased me too. I did my best to accept it all with good humor.

I reported to the pool as usual after dinner to help with the quarter mile swim. Lifesaving Merit Badge students, BSA Lifeguard students and anyone who wanted to swim the Mile Swim on Thursday had to swim. It usually took us an hour to get everyone through the swim. We opened the pool for a night swim afterward. Will surprised me by giving me the rest of the night off.

I was leaving the pool when I saw her. Penny! My parents and sister Liz were about fifty feet behind her. A ran to her. We hugged and I gave her as passionate a kiss as I thought I could get away with. We pulled apart a little, still holding each other.

I stared into Penny’s eyes. “God I’ve missed you.” I said.

“I’ve missed you to.” She answered. She gave me another hug. “Happy Birthday.”

My parents came up to us. Reluctantly we separated. Mom said, “Surprise. Your Dad and I thought it was about time we were around for one of your birthdays.”

“Thanks for coming.” I answered.

“We brought ice cream and cake for the troop’s snack tonight. I hope you’re free this evening.” Mom said.

“Will gave me the night off.”

“I hoped he would be able to swing it. He thought it was possible.” Dad said. He looked around. “Is there somewhere we can sit down for a few minutes?”

“Sure. Why don’t we go over to the pavilion by the pool?” I suggested.

The four of us walked over to the pavilion and sat at one of the picnic tables. Dad said, “Your mother and I wanted you have this birthday gift right away.” He handed me a 10” by 12” gift wrapped box. I opened it.

I exclaimed, “My own cell phone!”

Mom said, “Your Dad and I thought it was time. I know how hard it is with all the coaches calling you this month.”

Dad continued, “We will pay for the calling plan for the next year. We have you set up with a 900 minutes a month plan. If you go over that amount, you pay.”

“Holy cow! 900 minutes a month, I don’t think that will be a problem.” I got up and hugged Mom. “Thanks Mom.” I gave Dad a hug too. “Thanks Dad.” I sat back down beside Penny.

Liz said, “I bought this for you.” She handed me an envelope with a card in. It was a Snoopy birthday card. It had a certificate in it for a ring tone download.

“Thanks Liz.” I said.

Liz asked, “Do you have somewhere to download it here?”

“Sure. We have computers in the staff lounge.” I answered.

Mom asked, “Will you have somewhere to charge your phone? We charged it before we came but you’ll need access to electricity in a day or two.”

I answered, “We’re not in the boondocks Mom. I can charge it in the staff lounge or at the shack at the boatyard.”

Mom said, “That’s good. What shall I tell the coaches who call home looking for you? When is a good time to call you here?”

I considered for a moment. “I guess between 1 and 2 pm or between 3 pm and 5 pm would be best.”

Dad asked, “Have you returned all the messages from the coaches that called this past week?”

“I returned the calls but wasn’t able to speak to any of the coaches yet.”

Mom said, “I’ll call them tomorrow morning and let them know how to get in touch with you.”

“Thanks Mom.” I said.

Dad said, “Your Mom and I need to get the ice cream and cake up to the troop site. Liz, you can help us. Kyle, why don’t you show Penny around camp?”

Mom added, “We’re going to serve ice cream and cake around 9:30 Kyle. Make sure you’re back to the campsite by then.”

“OK Mom, will do.” I said.

Mom, Dad and Liz headed off for the parking lot and my troop’s campsite. I showed Penny around the pool, the staff area, the dining hall and finally the boat yard. We walked together, my arm over her shoulder, her arm around my waist.

When we got to the deserted boat yard, Penny asked, “We have 45 minutes before we need to meet your parents. Is there anywhere we could get some privacy?”

“I wish honey. I really do.” I hugged Penny against my body. We kissed deeply. Penny squeezed me tight to her chest. The feel of her nipples pressing against my chest stoked my deprived and overactive libido. We kissed again. My cock started to harden. I broke the kiss.

Penny kissed my cheek and then kissed my neck a few times. THINK OF DEREK! Penny’s kisses felt great. My cock was fully erect. DON’T GET FIRED. Penny started nibbling on my ear. I stammered, “I.... I just.... can’t....” I pulled away from Penny.

“I can’t do this Penny.”

“Please...” She reached down and rubbed the bulge in my pants. “Just a little bit Kyle. What can it hurt?” Penny continued to run my erection.

“A guy got fired last week for this. We can’t do...” I shuddered as she grasped my cock through my shorts. “Please stop.” I pulled her hand away.

“Ohhh.... I miss you so much Kyle.” Penny exclaimed.

“I know. I miss you too. We have to wait until camp is over.” I said. “Let’s just sit at the picnic table and watch the sun set over the lake.”

“I really hoped we could do something tonight Kyle. It’s been so long.”

“I wish I could Penny. I like my job. I don’t want to get fired. Mr. Holloway, the camp director, is serious about that. We can cuddle and watch the sun set. Let’s behave.”

Penny slid against me. I put my arm around her. She laid her head on my shoulder. We spent the next half hour just sitting together talking about our summer. Penny and I headed up to my troop campsite at dusk. We stopped by my tent to pick up a flashlight on the way. Mr. Clark and Mr. Good were there with Ed and my Dad. The rest of the troop was at the pool for the night swim.

The six of us hung out until the troop came back from the pool. The kids were in their tents changing when Mom and Liz came up the hill with the ice cream. Mom had picked it up from the dining hall freezer where she had left it earlier in the evening. Mom and Mr. Clark set up the cake and ice cream while Hal and Paul rounded up the troop. Andy, Abby, Will and Trent arrived just as my friends prepared to serenade me with Happy Birthday.

I blew out the seventeen candles on the cake after the troop’s slightly off-key rendition of the song. Mom served the cake while Mr. Clark dished up the ice cream. Mom had brought my favorite, red velvet cake from the bakery in Bird-In-Hand. It was fantastic. Ten minutes later the only evidence of our snack was a trash can full of dirty paper plates, bowls and spoons.

All the soon-to-be eighth graders hung around Liz, fawning over her. I hadn’t seen her in a month. She’s definitely a teenager now. She was noticeably taller than in the spring. She’s my sister, but even I noticed how much her breasts had grown. Most of the guys her age noticed too, I caught them staring at her chest.

After my friends had given me their well wishes, Dad called our family together. Dad announced, “I wanted to talk to all of you about a family vacation. I talked with the staff at USC. I can bring the rest of the family to L.A. next month if I pay for the extra airlines tickets and hotel rooms. I’m including you Will and Abby. I’d like the whole family to have some fun together this summer.”

Will asked, “When is this trip?”

Dad answered, “We leave on Friday evening, August 15th.”

“That leaves Abby and me out. We can’t leave here until camp is packed up. The Camp Health Officer can’t leave until the staff leaves. Tentatively that is on August 20th. I

can't get away either. We hold staff swims every day after we finish the day's work packing up camp. I'm the only one in camp that is certified to run the pool this year."

I asked, "How long do you want to make this vacation?"

Dad said, "I thought Mom, Liz and Andy could do some touring while you and I visit USC. Go to the beach, visit Catalina, and go to Disneyland. You and I could join the rest of the family for more fun on Monday and Tuesday."

"Monday and Tuesday? I can't do that Dad. I have football practice then." I said.

"You missed the first couple days of practice last year. What difference would it make if you miss them again this year?" Dad asked.

I responded, "I wasn't a team captain last year. I'm supposed to set an example for the rest of the team. How would it look to the younger guys if I blew off the first couple days of practice?"

Andy added, "Kyle's right Dad. I need to get to practice too."

Dad seemed a little put out. "I don't see what harm it would do if..."

"Dad, you always preach that we need to fulfill our responsibilities. I'm one of the captains. I need to be at football practice. It's part of my job." I said.

Dad sighed. "I thought it would be nice to have a family vacation for everyone before all of you are grown."

Mom answered, "It might be a bit late."

Will said, "We'll be together for Labor Day Weekend at Cape Henlopen."

Dad said, "I know, but..."

I interrupted, "Just because Andy and I have to get home from L.A. doesn't mean the rest of you can't stay a few more days and have some fun."

Dad protested, "No! We can't do that. How would you boys get home? By yourselves? No!"

"Dad, it wouldn't be a problem. You get Andy and me to the airport, all we would need to do is find the right gate and get on the airplane. When we get to Philadelphia, we get our luggage and I drive us home. No big deal." I said.

Andy added, "We could do that Dad."

Dad responded, “No. You are too young to be flying across the country.”

“Dad, you didn’t have a problem with Julie flying from Nebraska last summer. I’m a year older than she was. It will be fine.”

Mom added, “You know Kyle is right Dan. It would be all right.”

Liz eagerly added, “We should do this Dad. The beach, Disneyland; we could have a lot of fun out there.”

Dad hesitated for a few seconds and bowed to the inevitable. “OK. You and Andy can fly home on Sunday evening.” Andy, Liz and I cheered. “You do realize that you’ll have to come to the airport to pick up your mother, sister and me on Wednesday night when we fly home.”

“That’s no problem Dad. I can do that.” I answered.

Andy asked, “I have one question Dad. Can I tour USC with you and Kyle? I’d rather do that than go to Disneyland.”

Dad said, “I’ll find out Andy.”

“Thanks Dad.” Andy answered.

The family talked about the trip for a couple more minutes before they headed for home. Will, Abby and Trent went back down the hill to the staff area while Ed, Andy and I went to the Patrol Leader’s Council meeting.

Dustin Carter approached me at lunch the next day. He asked, “You know how you, Trent, Ed and Andy toss the football around everyday after lunch? I noticed you added some more guys this week. Would you mind if I joined you?”

“We’re not just tossing the ball around Dustin. We’re all on our varsity high school football teams except for Trent. He’s on the University of Delaware’s team. We’re practicing passing routes and coverages. We’re pretty serious about this, I doubt you’d enjoy it.”

Dustin replied, “It would be good for me. I am... well, at least I expect to be varsity this year. Practicing pass coverages would be good for me.”

“What position do you play?” I asked.

“I play free safety.”

I asked, “What team do you play with?”

“The Drumore Tigers.”

“Drumore? I’ll guess we’ll see each other in the fall. I’m on the Wolverines. I know we play some time this September.”

Dustin asked, “Is it September? I don’t know our schedule.”

“The game is in September. Come over to the parade field after lunch. We can talk to the other guys and see if they mind if you play with us.”

“Cool! Thanks Kyle.” Dustin exclaimed.

The rest of the group decided to let Dustin join us when we practiced. He worked with Jeremy to provide over and under coverage for who ever I was throwing too. It wasn’t a big deal for either Andy or Christian. Both were used to being double covered in games.

Dustin worked with Jeremy to cover Andy while I quarterbacked. Trent and Jeremy gave Dustin some pointers to help him. But he did a decent job for the first time facing a receiver with Andy’s speed. It was more challenging for me to get the ball to Andy too. I was used to throwing the ball deep and letting Andy outrun Jeremy for the completion. Now I had to put the ball dead on target to avoid Dustin or Jeremy intercepting the pass. It was good practice for me in case we had another emergency like last year.

Practice was interrupted by the coach from the University of Connecticut calling me on my cell phone. I thanked him for calling me but indicated that I wasn’t really interested in his college. We played a few more minutes before my phone rang. I turned it off. The voice mail could take the message. I would call back during fifth and sixth period while Trent and I supervised the free boating.

Thursday afternoon I managed to return all the coaches’ calls. I was polite to them, but Division I-AA wasn’t what I was aiming for in college. I was about to give Coach Baglino of the University of Pennsylvania the brush off too when he asked me a question that made me think.

Coach Baglino asked, “Exactly how many Division I-A schools are offering you a scholarship?”

I admitted, “One.... well, actually none. Coach Golden would offer me one if I was interested but I like winning and...”

“So do I. My teams have won 72% of their games and we’re 18-12 over the last three seasons. We have a string of Ivy League championships extending back fifteen years. Kyle, the big boys are afraid of your knee. You may not have an option of going to a Division I-A school. You should take a good look at us. We are a perfect fit for you.”

“Why do you say that?” I asked.

“We have an explosive offense. We average 342 yards a game passing. A receiver like you would fit in here. Your grades and SAT’s are excellent. You could get accepted here without any help from football. You’re smart and I like that. Your brother is already a student here and is planning to get his Masters with us. Your future sister-in-law plans to go to medical school here. I even understand your girlfriend wants to attend Penn.”

I was shocked at just how much Coach Baglino knew about me. Hesitantly I admitted, “She does. She wants to be a veterinarian.”

“Perfect. We have the best veterinary school in the country. Does she have the academic skills to get into this school?”

“Penny’s SAT score beat mine by twenty points. She had straight A’s too except for a B in chemistry the first quarter. That was before the two of us started studying together all the time.”

“If she’s as good as you say, she’ll be coming to Penn next year. You should too. Your coach tells me that you’re exactly the kind of smart, hard working football player I like on my team. Family here, a girlfriend here, our strong academics; Penn’s a perfect fit for you. In four years would get an Ivy League education. With that, you can do anything in the world.”

“I don’t know. After I’m done playing football I plan to become a football coach. I think playing in a Division I-A program would be a big help.”

“I won’t say that it wouldn’t help, but big program experience doesn’t prevent you from being a coach. I graduated from Central Connecticut State 32 years ago. I’ve been coaching ever since.” Coach Bagnoli explained.

“That’s interesting Coach. I still think I want to try to get a scholarship with one of the major schools.”

“I can respect that Kyle. Can you promise me something?”

“What is it?” I asked.

“Promise me that you’ll consider Penn if you end up looking at Division I-AA schools.” Coach Baglino asked.

I smiled. “I can promise that Coach. I’ll keep Penn on the list if I go to a I-AA school. My girlfriend wouldn’t give me a choice anyway.”

“I appreciate that. I hope things work out for you next year Kyle.”

“Can I ask you one more question Coach? How did you find out so much about me? You know: my girlfriend, my brother and his fiancé and all of that?”

“I had a nice long talk with your mother this morning. She is a very nice lady.” Coach Baglino.

“She is. Thanks for your time Coach. I have to get back to work. I’ll keep your school on my B list of schools. Good Bye.” I said.

“Good luck son.” Coach Baglino before he hung up the phone. I thought a little more about attending Penn. It might be a good place to go to school. I certainly wouldn’t mind keeping Penny as my girlfriend.

The week of camp with my friends went too fast. Friday was here before I knew it. Half my troop showed up sixth period for the open boating. They remembered the water battles, swamping each other, and general goofing around they had on Friday afternoon the previous two Fridays at summer camp.

Will didn’t mind a little fooling around when he ran the boatyard, especially with kids he knew well. Trent didn’t appreciate it quite as much. It took Trent, Jamie, Tristan and I half the period to establish control again. I headed back to our campsite with the kids when the last period was done. I changed into my uniform and headed for the parade field to help serve the barbeque. I was busy getting merit badge cards ready for Will’s signature and with preparations for the campfire after dinner.

Ed, Andy and I enjoyed hanging out with our friends in the troop that evening after the campfire. We said our good byes before we went to bed well after midnight. Ed, Andy and I got up early and moved our things back to the staff area before breakfast. My troop was gone by the time the Aquatics staff had finished cleaning the pool after breakfast.

The calls from football coaches died down a little the next week. I received calls from Villanova, William and Mary, and Miami of Ohio. I thanked each coach for calling but indicated that I wasn’t interested in their school.

Trent and I made a great team at the boatyard. We had fun together and we made sure our scouts made it through their merit badges. I was going to miss Trent when he left in two weeks for college and football practice at Delaware.

Will called Trent and me in to talk on Wednesday night during the night swim. We had a lot of BSA Lifeguard candidates that week and weren’t needed to guard the swim. Will got straight to the point. He asked, “Who is the best CIT at the boat yard this summer?”

I looked at Trent. He looked at me and nodded to indicate I should answer first. I said, "That's easy. Dustin Carter was the best. It isn't even close."

Will looked at Trent. Trent said, "Kyle's right. Tristan is pretty good but Dustin is better."

I asked, "What's up Will?"

"Mr. Holloway wants me to pick one of the CIT's. We're going to offer him a paying job for the rest of the summer. We are going to be short handed when Trent leaves in August." Will explained.

I asked, "Who's going to come down to run the boat yard when Trent leaves? Is Justin?" I meant Justin Finnegan who worked the boat yard for three years with Will.

Will chuckled. "No. I need Justin here to run the pool. I can't spare him. Dustin will come down to help you. You're going to run the boatyard when Trent leaves."

"I'm only seventeen. Is that OK?"

Trent laughed. "I'm seventeen too, at least for a few more weeks."

"I'm going to run the boat yard?" I asked, incredulous.

Will answered, "Yes, you're going to be in charge. Can you handle it?"

"Yes. I won't disappoint you Will." I replied.

"I know you won't Kyle. You're ready for this." Will said.

Mr. Holloway and Will broke the news to Dustin after lunch on Thursday. He was ecstatic when he saw Trent and me before dinner. He thanked us for our recommendation. His family previously planned to the beach next week. Dustin would go and then would return to camp the following weekend.

Penny and Crystal e-mailed Andy and me daily. We always replied before we went to bed. Lindsey sent Ed e-mails daily too for the first half of the summer. She missed a couple days during Week 4 of camp. Ed didn't think too much about it.

Things went downhill during Week 5. He only received two e-mails all week. Ed took this better than I expected and much better than I would have taken it. The bomb finally dropped on Ed Sunday night as Week 6 started.

Ed started reading his e-mail then spat out, "DAMN!"

I asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Lindsey’s e-mail begins ‘Dear John’.”

I exclaimed, “Shit!”

Andy asked, “Why is she calling Ed John?”

“She’s dumping him.”

Andy answered, “Ouch! Sorry man.” as Ed continued reading.

I asked, “Does she say why?”

“She’s going steady with Kevin Armstrong.” Ed answered.

“Are you all right Ed?” I asked.

Ed sighed and leaned back in the chair. “Yeah, I guess. This solves the problem of what Linds and I are going to do when I go to college. I’m not totally surprised. We just didn’t have the same passion lately. I guess a year and half is a long time for couple high school kids to go steady.”

“I’ve never managed more than 9 months.” I said.

“I’ve only had...” Andy added before Ed and I interrupted with our laughter.

Ed said, “You don’t get to talk about how long you’ve had a girlfriend. What’s your longest? Fifteen minutes?”

“What is it? Like eleven girlfriends in two years?” I asked.

“Ten. Crystal and I aren’t going steady. Anyway, Shannon and I dated for five months.” Andy countered.

“Andy, Crystal has e-mailed you every day for the past seven weeks. She is your girlfriend whether you asked her or not.” I explained.

Ed went on to relate the remainder of the e-mail from Lindsey to Andy and me. Lindsey wrote a very gentle ‘Dear John’ e-mail, if there is such a thing. She apologized for handling things this way. She and Kevin started going to movies on Saturday nights a few weeks earlier. It was just as friends. Things went further one Saturday night. They ended up making out through most of the movie. Lindsey and Kevin couldn’t help themselves. Lindsey was sorry and hoped that Ed wouldn’t hate her for this. She said she valued their time together.

Ed finished his commentary with this bit of news. “I actually was considering breaking up with her when I got home. Things had gotten a little old with her. I guess this was just meant to be.”

I asked, “What are you going to do?”

“Play the field. I think the varsity quarterback probably can get some dates. Don’t you think?”

Andy and I agreed.

Week 6 was Trent’s last week at camp. Will assigned one CIT to the boat yard and sent Dustin back to work with us for the week. Trent had me teach canoeing the first period with Dustin observing. The next period Dustin taught and I observed and added anything Dustin missed. Third period I observed Trent teaching Rowing. Fourth period I taught Rowing while Trent checked on Dustin and me.

Dustin didn’t disappoint Trent and me. He proved to be an excellent teacher. I wouldn’t have any problem at all when Trent left. Dustin and I could handle whatever came our way at the lake for the final two weeks of camp.

Friday was bittersweet for me. I wanted Trent to do well at college so I was happy he was getting started with football camp, but I was going to miss him. I thought about Trent after I went to bed. In ten months I was going to be like him, done with high school and preparing for college.

Trent stayed around Saturday morning to help us clean the pool and prepare for the next week. Will called Trent into his office for a short talk before he left.

Trent came out of Will’s office and came over to me. He smiled and said, “I guess this is it Kyle.”

“Yeah. I know. Good luck at college. I’m going to miss you.”

“I’ll miss you too. If Coach Keeler asks, I tried to convince you to go to Delaware, right?”

“Right Trent. I’ll tell him you practically broke my arm twisting it. Now get out of here you Blue Hen. Knock’em dead down there.”

“Will do.” Trent extended his hand to me. I brushed it aside and hugged him. I whispered, “I’m really going to miss you.”

“Me too.” Trent answered. We separated. Trent headed for the parking lot and college. I really was going to miss my friend.

The last two weeks of camp went quickly. Dustin taught Canoeing while I taught Rowing. Will checked on us daily for the first few days. He stopped visiting as once he was satisfied that Dustin and I could handle everything at the boat yard.

Dustin got a crash course in pass coverage after lunch everyday. He had to cover Andy or me by himself while we practiced. We beat him most of the time but I could see him improve every day. Dustin joined Andy, Ed, Will and me in the evenings when we lifted weights and ran.

Mom called me during open boating on Wednesday afternoon of the last week to make sure that Andy and I knew the details for Friday. Mom promised to have our luggage ready for us when we got home. Our weekend would start then and promised to be a whirlwind of activity.

Will filled me in on Thursday night about how he planned to handle the boatyard Friday after lunch. Will decided to cover the last Rowing class himself and then help Dustin run the open boating for the afternoon. I made sure all my records for the week were complete so Will could finish for me. Andy and I packed most of our things on Thursday night before we went to bed.

When Dustin and I finished our third period classes Friday morning we shook hands as we parted. I said, “It’s been a pleasure working with you Dustin. I expect to see you on the field next month when our teams play.”

“I expect make varsity with all the help you guys gave me this summer. I’ll see you then.” Dustin answered.

“Aren’t you going to the closing staff dinner next week?”

“What’s that?”

“The camp staff goes out to a nice restaurant the last night before we go home. Usually it’s on Thursday night when we finish tearing down camp.”

“I didn’t know about it. Do you think I can get to it after football practice?”

“Sure. I plan to.” I answered.

“OK, I’ll see you there Kyle. Good luck in California.” Dustin said.

“Thanks.” I said. Dustin and I shook hands a final time. I headed for the camp office to check out. I met Andy there. Mr. Holloway wished us luck on our trip. He made us promise to come back to work at camp next summer. Andy and I headed to our tents for the last of our gear.

Ed was at my tent. Ed said, “Good luck at USC. I hope you get a scholarship offer.”

“Thanks Ed. I feel good about this visit. I’ll see you at school on Monday.” I answered. We shook hands.

Andy and I loaded our gear in my Golf and headed for home. We picked up lunch at Burger King on the way through Lancaster. We met chaos when we got home.

Mom greeted us at the front door. “Get your dirty clothes to the laundry room immediately. Get changed. We leave in fifteen minutes.”

Andy and I hurried to get changed and to get our laundry unpacked. Dad and Liz were carrying luggage to the mini-van. I grabbed my MP3 player and a couple books as I left my room. Mom and Dad ushered Liz, Andy and me into the mini-van. We headed for the airport and California.

We arrived at the airport in Philadelphia in plenty of time for our 5:35 flight to Salt Lake City and then Los Angeles. The afternoon was filled with hurry up and wait. Hurry to get to check-in and then wait in line. Hurry up to security and wait in line. Hurry to the gate and then wait for an hour until it was time to board the plane.

Our family had flown before but it had been quite a few years since the last time. I was ten years old when we took our last vacation together to Disney World. It was before Will started to work at scout camp. Our family settled for Labor Day weekends at the beach together after that.

I paid attention to everything Dad did on the flight out: where you go and what to do. I had to get Andy and me home on Sunday on my own. I didn’t remember security being so tough, but the last time I flew was before 9/11. Dad visibly relaxed when everyone was aboard our plane and we took off.

We had to change planes in Salt Lake City on the way. The captain announced that we arrived in Los Angeles at 8:23 pm, two minutes ahead of schedule. Mom and Dad led us downstairs to the baggage claim.

We met a middle aged man holding a sign marked “Kyle Martin & Family”. He introduced himself as Dennis Slutak, the Director of Football Operations. Mr. Slutak was average in height and had dark hair. He seemed to be a few years younger than Mom and Dad, probably in his early thirties. He helped us retrieve our luggage and get our rental car. Dad followed Mr. Slutak to our hotel.

The university put us up in the Radisson Hotel Midtown, across the street from the USC University Park campus. Mom and Dad had the center of three rooms. Andy and I shared a room on one side of them and Liz had her own room on the other side of them. Our rooms overlooked the campus.

It was after 10 o'clock when we reached our rooms. Our bodies didn't know the local time. It felt like 2 am to us. Mr. Slutak explained that Coach Carroll and Coach Sarkisian would meet us for breakfast at 9 am. We went straight to bed.

Mom woke us the next morning with a phone call. Andy and I showered and dressed for our day. Andy and I met Liz in Mom and Dad's room. We headed downstairs to the Expo Café to meet the coaches.

I recognized Coach Carroll the second I saw him standing by the front door of the Café. I walked up to him and extended my hand to him. I said, "Hi, I'm Kyle Martin." We shook hands. I introduced him to my family. He introduced Coach Steve Sarkisian, the assistant head coach for the team. Coach Sarkisian surprised me. He looked very young, at most the same age as Joe Baer. How had someone so young ended up assistant head coach at a school with a program like USC?

The hostess seated us at a large table. Coach Carroll, Mom, Dad and I made small talk during breakfast. The conversation confirmed what I already knew about Coach Carroll. He had stints as head coach of the Jets, the defensive coordinator of the 49ers and head coach of the Patriots before he came to the Trojans. I already knew about his national championships.

Coach Sarkisian played quarterback at Brigham Young University. He played in the Canadian Football League for three seasons before turning to coaching. He worked at a junior college for a season before Coach Carroll hired him to coach quarterbacks for the Trojans.

Coach Carroll glanced at his watch. I looked at mine too. It was a couple minutes after 9:30 am. Coach Carroll said, "I want to explain what we have planned for you today Kyle."

"OK"

"My team has a scrimmage today at 10 o'clock. I thought you could watch it to get a feel for the Trojan style of football. After that I'll introduce you to your guides for the campus tour in the afternoon. I have reservations at Ocean Avenue Seafood in Santa Monica for dinner. I hope you like seafood."

Everyone in my family did. We readily agreed that this sounded good. Coach Carroll continued, "We work hard on drills during the week to prepare for our season. Today is a break from the two-a-days. Our guys can have some fun this morning at the scrimmage,

relax in the afternoon and enjoy some camaraderie this evening. I believe fun is an important part of football. How does this sound Kyle?”

“Sure, it sounds good to me.” I answered.

Coach Carroll asked, “What about you Andrew? Do you still want to tag along?”

Andy grinned. “Absolutely. I know it’s too soon for me to worry about college, but it won’t hurt to look around early, will it?”

“Good. That’s settled. You’ll tour with your brother today. Mrs. Martin, what are you and your daughter planning?” Coach Carroll asked.

Mom answered, “We thought we’d tour Hollywood and maybe get in a little shopping.”

Coach Carroll said, “That sounds like a good plan.” He turned towards Dad and me. “Gentlemen, we need to get over to the practice field. I wouldn’t want the team to start without me.”

Dad, Andy and I followed Coach Carroll and Coach Sarkisian to their car. Mom and Liz were using our rental car today. The drive to the practice field only took a couple minutes. Coach Sarkisian excused himself. He needed to prep for the scrimmage. Coach Carroll explained that Coach Sarkisian and Coach Holt, the defensive coordinator ran the scrimmage. Coach Carroll joined us in the bleachers overlooking the practice field.

The two squads came out about five minutes later. The scrimmage began after a few minutes of organizing. Coach Carroll kept a running commentary of the plays that were being run. Everything looked really familiar. Our pro style offense in high school was similar to, but a slightly scaled down version of the offense USC was running.

Coach Carroll quizzed Andy and me about what plays were being run and what defenses were being used. Coach seemed pleased with our answers. Finally I asked, “Coach, why do you expect us to know your plays?”

“I talked with your high school coach Kyle. He tells me you’re quite a student of the game. I was curious exactly how much you have learned so far.”

I asked, “How am I doing?”

“Excellent for a high school student. Coach Caffrey tells me you plan to be a football coach when you are done playing.”

I answered, “Yes sir. I’d like to do that some day.”

“You’ve made a good start to that goal Kyle.” Coach Carroll replied. We watched the remainder of the scrimmage. Coach Carroll continued asking us questions as we watched. The scrimmage finished around 11:30 am.

Coach Carroll excused himself when it was over. He gathered his whole team together and led an impromptu review of the scrimmage. He complimented everyone for the efforts this morning and told them to relax and enjoy their afternoon off.

Coach led two players back to the bleachers when he was done. He introduced us to them. The first was their starting flanker, Alex Gutierrez, a junior. The second guy was Brady Rasmussen, second string sophomore quarterback and heir-apparent to Jared Dillard, USC’s Heisman candidate. They excused themselves so they could shower and change to street clothes. Coach Carroll kept us entertained with stories until Brady and Alex joined us.

We went across campus to a public cafeteria for lunch. Brady and Alex discussed their prospects against their conference opponents. Coach Carroll asked me to do the same for our opponents this season.

When I finished my analysis of our opponents Coach Carroll asked, “Are you personally ready to lead your team this fall? You suffered a terrible knee injury last fall. Are you ready?”

“That’s the question everyone has. I’m 100% Coach. I’m ready to pick up where I left off last fall.” I declared.

“Would you be willing to demonstrate that Kyle? Would you run some pass routes for us and allow our trainer to examine your knee?” Coach Carroll asked.

“Sure. I have nothing to hide. You don’t have a problem with that do you Dad?”

“No, that would be fine. It only seems fair that you know about Kyle’s knee if you are considering offering Kyle a scholarship.” Dad said. I was surprised that Dad would be that direct. I also noticed Coach Carroll didn’t even blink when Dad mentioned USC offering me a scholarship.

Coach Carroll smiled and said, “Good, that’s settled. Let’s head over to the practice field. I’ll call ahead a get a DB to meet us there.”

Andy asked, “Could I run routes too?”

Coach Carroll smiled at me brother. “Sure, why not.”

Our group headed over to the practice field again. Coach Carroll called ahead to arrange for defensive backs to meet us for our informal try-out. It looked like most of the coaching staff returned to watch me perform. Coach Carroll introduced me to them. I

was surprised at how young the coaches were. Coach Sarkisian was among the oldest and thought he looked kind of young when I first saw him.

Coach Carroll introduced Andy and me to Chris Mann and Erick Byrne. Erick's a red shirt freshman. Chris was a junior. Both played cornerback for the team. Coach talked with Brady, Chris and Erick for a couple minutes.

Coach had us start off with speed routes. We ran them a few times. Chris covered me and Erick covered Andy. Chris was almost as fast as me. I caught one pass on him, he knocked another down. Andy had more luck at getting separation. He had a step on Erick. Andy pulled two passes in too.

I caught Coach Carroll nodding to the d-backs. I knew something was up. Erick and Chris moved a little closer to us. I knew it was going to be a jam this time. When Brady simulated the snap I faked to the left and went right. Chris practically fell over before he recovered and chased after me. I caught the ball fifteen yards downfield. I looked back and saw that Andy hadn't gotten off the line of scrimmage.

I grabbed Andy and gave him a tip to help him get off the line on the next play. Andy got clear of his defender on the next play. Brady fired the ball to him. We continued running routes. Brady threw the ball to whoever got open first. I caught a few more than Andy. Chris and Erick managed to knock a few balls down.

My left knee felt good. I was confident that I could do anything I wanted on the football field. That was a feeling I hadn't had against good competition since last fall. On the next play I asked Brady, "I'm going to run a post route. Can you put the ball on my right shoulder about seven feet off the ground?"

Um, OK. How far down the field are you going to go?" Brady asked.

"Twenty-five yards." I answered. Brady nodded. Chris tried to jam me at the line on the snap of the ball. I dodged him and ran full speed down the field. I looked back towards Brady. Chris was half a step behind me. Brady launched the ball. I jumped as I reached twenty-five yards and snagged the ball beyond Chris' outstretched arms. I spun away from Chris when I landed and broke free of his tackle. I started running downfield when Coach Carroll blew a whistle to stop the play.

He called everyone over to talk with us. "Chris and Erick, thank you for helping out. Nice work Brady." Coach Carroll turned to me. "That was most impressive Kyle. How does your knee feel?"

"It's fine Coach." I answered.

"I'd like to time you on the 40 meter run. Would you do that?"

"Sure." I replied.

Andy piped up, “Can I run it too?”

Coach Carroll smiled and answered, “Sure, why not?”

Andy and I went down to the goal line while the phalanx of Trojan coaches lined up a few yards beyond at the 40 yard line. On the signal I sprinted as hard as I could for the group of coaches. Coach Carroll stared at his stop watch and shook his head as I completed the 40 meters. Dad had a big grin.

I trotted over to Coach Carroll and asked, “How’d I do?”

“4.38 seconds. I guess your knee is fully recovered.”

“It is. It feels great today.” I said.

Andy ran next. He managed to finish the 40 meters in 4.43 seconds. Coach Carroll asked Dad, “What do you feed these boys? I’d like to get it for my whole team.” The group laughed at Coach’s joke. Then he asked “Would it be all right if our trainer examined Kyle’s knee?” Dad and I agreed. Everyone trooped into the Trojan’s locker room. Coach Carroll introduced me to Rick DiVirgilio, the head trainer for the team. Mr. DiVirgilio spent about five minutes examining my knee.

“The surgeon who did this repair did excellent work. Kyle’s knee has no looseness. It has excellent lateral stability. He’s ready for football.” Mr. DiVirgilio pronounced.

Coach Carroll grinned at the announcement. Coach Carroll suggested that he and Coach Sarkisian take Dad for a tour of campus while Brady and Alex take Andy and me around for a student’s view of campus. We agreed to meet back at the Radisson at 4 pm.

We went to Alex’s dorm room first. It was small, similar in layout to the rooms I had seen at Penn State. I guess there isn’t much you can do with dorm rooms. It had the basic bed, desk and chair, and closet.

We continued on our tour. They showed me some of the Sciences buildings, the Engineering buildings, the campus bookstore, the Commons, and the Student Union. We made a stop at “Tommy Trojan”, a life sized statue of a Trojan warrior. We made a quick stop at the library.

When we were done there, Brady asked me, “What do you think so far?”

“It’s nice. The dorms look OK. The buildings we’ve seen so far look fine. The one thing I’m worried about is this.” I pointed towards all the tall buildings and highways around the campus. “Campus is in the middle of one of the largest cities in the country. I’m from a small town. Hell, I can look out the kitchen window at a cornfield on the neighboring Amish farm. How am I going to fit in here?”

Brady laughed. "I know man. I'm from Montana. I understand."

"I love camping, hiking, canoeing, and skiing. How am I going to do that here?" I asked.

Brady looked at Alex. "GO. Definitely a candidate for GO."

Alex grinned. "You're the one who lived there last year. I grew up in Santa Monica. The only trees I saw growing up were palm trees."

Perplexed, I asked, "Go? Where do you want me to go?"

Brady responded, "NO, not go somewhere. The GO House. You know, the great outdoors."

I said, "OK, and?"

Brady sighed. "I'll start from the beginning Kyle. USC has special interest housing. GO is the Great Outdoors special interest community. We... well, they have two floors of Pardee Hall. The housing is only for freshman. I lived there last year. They organize camping trips, hikes, mountain biking, and fishing trips for members of the house. It gives you a chance to meet people with similar interests to yours. Upper classmen are invited too. Our first trip is in a few weeks. We're doing a backpacking trip in the Sierras."

"That sounds promising. Do they ski too?"

"No. You could join the USC Ski Team for that." Brady suggested.

"Ski Team? I'm not that good. I ski for fun." I answered.

"The USC Ski Team is actually a club. They organize trips to Mammoth Mountain during the winter so members can get on the slopes. The team members can race, but it isn't mandatory."

"That sounds pretty cool. I guess if I can get outdoors sometimes I could learn to cope with living in the middle of the city." I said.

Brady said, "I have. You can too Kyle. Do you want to stop at Pardee? We can get a schedule of activities planned for the fall. You can get an idea of the kind of things we do."

"Sure, that's cool." I answered.

Pardee Hall is located on the east side of the library. The four of us went over Pardee Hall. A list of activities for the GO group was posted on the bulletin board. The

activities planned for this fall looked like a lot of fun. If I decided to come to USC, I definitely needed to get into that group.

Alex glanced at his watch when we left Pardee Hall. “It’s 3:30. You guys will want to get back to your room to clean up and change. I understand Coach Carroll is taking us to the Ocean Avenue Seafood Restaurant. It’s a very fancy restaurant.”

I said, “OK. Which way is my hotel?”

Brady laughed and pointed. “It’s right down there.” I looked where he was pointing. I could see the hotel half a block down the street from us. “Alex and I are going back to our dorms to change. We’ll meet you there at 4 pm.”

“All right. See you guys then.” I said

Andy added, “Thanks for taking us around campus guys.”

Andy and I walked down the block to our hotel. We checked with Mom and Dad before we went to our room. We cleaned up and changed into nice, but casual clothes. Andy and I met Coach Carroll, Coach Sarkisian, Brady and Alex at Mom and Dad’s room.

Coach Carroll loaded everyone up in a large van for the drive to Santa Monica. The restaurant was supposed to have an ocean view. I guess it did, sort of. I could see the ocean in the distance as we went into the restaurant.

Alex was right. This was a very fancy restaurant even though the sign out front said casual dress. The hostess seated us in a private dining room at a large table. Coach Carroll took a seat at the center of the table. He had me sit across from him. Coach Sarkisian, Brady and Alex sat to Coach Carroll’s left and my right. My family sat to my left.

Coach Carroll started things off with appetizers for everyone while we studied the menu. He ordered Shrimp Cocktail, Crab Legs, Calamari, and Popcorn Shrimp. Coach Carroll suggested, “If you like oysters, you have to have them here. Ocean Avenue is noted for the best oysters in town. What do you think Kyle?”

“Um... I don’t know. Would the Lobster be too much?” I asked.

Coach Carroll smiled. “Have the two pounder Kyle. You look hungry.”

Dad said, “Those oysters sound good. What would you recommend Pete?”

“Try the Oyster Sampler Dan. Try a little of each.”

Mom ended up with the Alaskan Crab Legs, Liz ordered the Crab Cakes. Andy made his choice the second he saw the Lobster & Filet Mignon. Brady had the Lobster too. Alex chose the Broiled Stuffed Shrimp.

We filled dinner with casual conversation. My lobster was excellent. Dad really loved oyster sampler. Everyone decided to live dangerously. We had desert. Coach Carroll recommended the Raspberry Crème Brule. He was right. It was fantastic.

The conversation turned serious after we finished desert. Mom, Dad and the coaches finished their wine. Finally Coach Carroll asked me, “What do you think of Southern Cal?”

“I liked the campus. I’m glad I came to visit.”

“That’s good to hear Kyle. I’ve been impressed by you today. Your size, strength, talent, speed and football knowledge are outstanding. I think you would be an excellent fit in our program. You are rated a three star recruit by rivals.com, based on the uncertainty about your knee injury. I watched you perform today. You’re five stars in my books. I am honored to be able to offer you a full athletic scholarship to the University of Southern California. This includes tuition, room and board and books and supplies for four years. Are you interested in becoming a Trojan?”

Wow! So this is what reaching your dream feels like. I took a deep breath and exhaled. “I’m interested Coach. Obviously I want to talk about this with my parents.”

“I understand completely Kyle. This is a big decision. Are you looking at other schools too?”

“Yes. This is my first official visit. I’d like to visit four or five schools before I make my decision. I hope I can decide by Thanksgiving. Is that a problem?”

“I’d love to have you commit to us today, but I understand. You visit the other schools. I think you’ll choose us after you have a chance to compare schools. We have won 84% of our games in the past few years. We consistently rank among the top five college football programs year after year. We are in the hunt for the national championship every year. You won’t find that elsewhere.” Coach Carroll explained.

“That is part of what attracted me to your team. I still have some questions.”

“What do you want to know?” Coach Carroll asked.

“How many wide receivers do you have on the team?”

“One other high school senior has verbally committed to us. With you and him, we’ll have eleven receivers when you start college.”

“That’s a lot. What are my chances of playing my first year?”

“That’s entirely up to you. Unlike some teams, I have no problem playing freshmen. I put the best players on the field, regardless of class standing.”

I said, “That’s fair.”

Coach Carroll said, “Dan, Sharon, do you have any questions?”

Mom and Dad spent the next twenty minutes quizzing Coach Carroll about USC, the dorms, the academic schedule, the health facilities, and the neighborhood. Coach Carroll patiently answered all their questions.

After awhile Brady leaned over and nudged me in the side. He whispered, “Some of the guys on the team are having a bonfire at the beach. Are you and your brother interested?”

“Sure. I’ll ask Andy.” I nudged Andy in the ribs. “Brady invited us to a beach bonfire. Are you interested?”

“Sure Kyle. Let’s do it.” Andy replied.

Brady tapped Coach Carroll on the shoulder and asked, “Some of the team is having a bonfire at the beach. I thought it would be nice if Kyle and Andy met some of the other guys.”

Coach Carroll asked, “You’ll look after them Brady?” Brady nodded yes. “No alcohol, right?”

“We know the guidelines Coach. No booze.” Brady confirmed.

Coach Carroll said, “Dan, Sharon, what do you think?”

Dad asked, “Do you boys need a ride there?”

I looked at Brady and Alex. Alex answered, “No, my roommate Ben can pick us up.”

I asked, “Can we go Dad?”

“All right. Remember your curfew is 11 o’clock.”

“You got it Dad.” Yep. We’ll be on time.” Andy and I chimed out, nearly in unison.

I said, “Thanks for everything Coach. Dinner was great.”

Andy and I followed Brady and Alex outside. Alex called his roommate on his cell phone. Ben showed up a few minutes later in an older Toyota Camry. Alex, Andy and I stuffed ourselves in the back. Brady rode shotgun. Alex introduced us as Ben drove to the beach. His full name was Ben Moore. He was starting left linebacker for the Trojans. Ben delivered us to the beach in about fifteen minutes.

Brady introduced Andy and me to the dozen team members hanging out at the beach, including Jared Dillard, the starting quarterback for the Trojans. Sports Illustrated was touting Jared for the Heisman this season. The guys were disappointed that USC was only ranked number three in the pre-season polls behind Florida and LSU. Notre Dame, and Ohio State rounded out the top of the rankings this season.

Jared quizzed me when he heard I had a friend at Penn State. Jared asked, “They have quite a quarterback controversy going on. Who’s going to be the quarterback; DiStefano or that new kid Hayes?”

I laughed. “You’ve been reading too many magazines Jared. Phil is the quarterback for the Lions. There isn’t any question who is quarterbacking them.”

“You seem pretty sure about that. Who is your friend on the team?” Jared asked.

I laughed again. “That kid Hayes. Zack and I played football together in high school. Zack is the one who says Phil will be the quarterback for the season. I believe him. By the way, that kid Hayes is going to be a junior academically this year.”

“Really? I didn’t know he was that old.” Jared replied. “I guess I’ll see who starts at quarterback when we play them at the end of October.”

I said, “I didn’t know you played them this season.”

“You should come see the game Kyle. We’re gonna beat their asses.”

“Right, sure. I’m going to get tickets to USC vs. Penn State. Those tickets probably sold out two years ago. As for you guys beating Penn State, I don’t know. I know it will be an interesting game.”

Talk turned to some of the other opponents that USC would face in the season. These guys were confident. They fully expected to be playing the BCS bowl for the national championship in January.

Andy and I enjoyed our evening. The guys were friendly. They kept trying to convince me that I should commit to USC. They wanted me to be a part of their team. The evening was a huge ego boost.

Around 10:30 Alex and Ben gave Andy and me back to the Radisson. We checked in with Mom and Dad and then headed to bed. We were going to have a long day tomorrow.

Dad woke us up at 7:30 on Sunday morning. We showered and packed our things. Coach Carroll and Coach Sarkisian come over for breakfast with my family. Coach Carroll encouraged Andy and me to try the Eggs Benedict. It was a spectacular choice. Coach Carroll thanked me for visiting this weekend before breakfast was over. He told me I could call anytime I had questions.

Dad checked Andy and me out of our hotel room and drove us to the airport. He parked in the short term parking garage and went through check-in with us. He stayed with us in the security line too.

When we were half dozen people from the security check Dad said, “I want you to remember all of this boys. After security, go straight to Gate B24. Check in at the desk. When you get to Philadelphia, pick up your bags downstairs at baggage claim. Go outside and catch the shuttle bus to Long Term Parking Lot B. Do you have the ticket?”

I held up the parking ticket. Dad continued, “Good. Head straight home from the airport. Here is Sixty dollars for meals while we are gone.” I took the cash. “Do you boys have any questions?” Andy and I shook our heads no. “Andrew – you have to listen to Kyle. He is in charge. You got it?”

Andy answered, “I got it Dad. We’ll be fine.”

“One more thing Kyle. It’s OK if you have a guest sleep over Monday and Tuesday evenings. Your mother cleared it with the Penny’s parents.”

“Wow, you’re serious?” I said. Dad nodded his head yes. “You and Mom are the greatest.” I gave him a hug. Andy did too.

As we stepped up to the security checkpoint Dad said, “Remember what time our flight comes in on Wednesday evening Kyle. I’m counting on you to pick us up.”

“No problem Dad. You fly in on Delta Flight 328 at 8:22 pm. Is that right?”

“You got it Kyle. Have a safe flight boys.” Dad said. We were already emptying our pockets onto the conveyor belt.

I said, “Love you Dad.” Andy added, “Love you.”

I watched Dad as we went through security. We waved good bye to him when we finished with security. Andy and I found concourse B and headed for Gate B24. We checked in at the desk. The lady told me the plane would start boarding an about an hour, at 12:40. Andy headed to one of the restaurants to grab some lunch. We were fortunate

that this would be our only meal at an airport. Lunch took a quarter of the sixty dollars Dad gave us for meals.

Andy and I had seats at our gate while we waited to board. Andy said, “I can’t believe you are allowed to have Penny stay over night with while Mom and Dad gone. At least Crystal and I can enjoy Monday night together.”

“No you can’t. We have scouts on Monday night.”

“Screw scouts. I need a good fucking.”

“Shhh.... Jesus, we’re in public here. Watch your language.”

“Sorry Kyle.”

I said, “We haven’t been to a scout meeting in ten weeks. You aren’t blowing off the meeting to be with your girlfriend.”

“Shit! It’s not fair. You get to sleep with Penny tomorrow night. Do you know how long it’s been since I got laid?”

“I’d guess it’s the same amount of time as me. Nine weeks, 13 hours, 27 minutes...”

“Yeah. Way too long.” Andy thought for a minute. “Kyle, could I invite Crystal over for dinner tomorrow night?”

I said, “That would be fine Andy.”

“Can I borrow your phone so I can call Crystal?”

“OK.” I handed my phone to Andy. He spent a couple minutes talking with Crystal. The conversation started to turn pretty mushy by the time the finished talking. It was arranged. I would pick up Crystal after we were done with practice tomorrow. I called Penny to confirm our arrangements for tomorrow night too. Penny would join Crystal, Andy and me for dinner.

The lady at the gate called for people to start boarding. Andy and I waited our turn. The stewardess came back to check on us since we were listed as “unaccompanied minors” on our tickets. She took one look at us and decided we could look after ourselves. The flight was supposed to be 6 hours long. We had a tailwind and arrived in Philadelphia fifteen minutes early. It felt like 7 pm to us. It was disconcerting when the pilot announced the local time was 10:56 pm. Andy and I reset our watches to the correct time.

We hopped on the shuttle bus when we finally found our luggage. I didn’t have any problems on the drive home. It was almost 1:30 in the morning when we finally got to

bed. The weekend had proved to be extraordinary. Tomorrow my last season of high school football would start.

Chapter 26

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Bzzzz.... Bzzzz.... Bzzzz.... Damn! It's too damn early to get up! I opened one eye and stared at the clock beside my bed. 6:30! Five hours of sleep just isn't enough when you have to go to two-a-days for football. I dragged my tired body out of bed, across the room and down the hall to Andy's room. I could hear his alarm buzzing too.

I called, "Andy?" Silence. I called his name again. Nothing. I went in Andy's room. He was dead to the world. I shook Andy and called his name until I got a response.

"uuunnnNNNNHHHHhhh...." Andy moaned.

"Time to get up sleepy head. You need to defend your state championship title."

"Oooohhhh.... I'm getting up Kyle." Andy moaned.

"Five minutes. I want to see you in the shower then. I want to be on time today. I've got to set the example for the rest of the team."

Andy sighed. "You got it Kyle."

I headed over to the bathroom. The warm water washed away most of my fatigue from the trip. Andy hopped in the shower right after I climbed out. I brushed my teeth, combed my hair and dressed for the day. I was starting my first bowl of cereal when Andy came downstairs. He finally looked awake. We finished our usual two bowls of cereal and headed for school in my Golf.

We arrived at the high school about ten minutes early. This was my fourth year playing football, so the scene had become familiar. Moms and dads were dropping off their sons. The older guys drove here, usually with a friend or two. The crowd gathered in the gym, waiting for the coaches to get things organized.

I found Ed, Jeremy and Hal together when I reached the gym. I went straight over to see them.

Ed asked, "How was USC?"

I answered, "Fantastic. Andy and I had a great weekend out there."

Jeremy asked, "Are you going to be a Trojan?"

"Could be. They offered me a full scholarship."

Jeremy grinned. “That’s fan-damn-tastic!” He slapped me on the back. “You’re going to take it of course.”

“I don’t know. I want to see some other schools first. USC is certainly going to be on my final list of schools.”

The three of us compared notes. Jeremy had an official visit to Notre Dame next weekend and one to Penn State later in September. Hal was visiting Rutgers in September and Maryland in October. Ed was set up to visit Florida in September, LSU in late October and Michigan in November.

We mingled with our friends, catching up on everyone’s summers. At 7:30 Coach Caffrey appeared followed by Drew McCormick. He headed straight for Ed, Hal, Jeremy and me.

Coach Caffrey grinned. “Good morning gentlemen. You know the drill by now when we start two-a-days. Jeremy, take this list of players, find them and take them out to Coach Fisher for the 40 meter run.” Coach handed Jeremy a list. “Ed, here is your list. Take them to Coach Graham for weigh-ins. Kyle, collect these players and report to Coach Wyndham for vertical leap. Drew, take these guys out to Coach Baer for the mile run. Take charge of your groups. Get things moving.”

The four of us split up, calling out the names of the people in our group. It took me about five minutes to find the thirty-five kids on my list. Andy was with me. I was surprised to find Dave Mitchell, Cody Stevens and Matt Sauder in my group too. They hadn’t played football before. Michael Johansen, the annoying kid who moved here from Texas last spring was in my group.

I led my group to the opposite end of gym to Coach Wyndham’s station. The guys started demonstrating their leaping ability. I moved over to talk with Dave, Matt and Cody. I asked, “What are you guys doing here? I didn’t think you played football.”

Dave answered, “We played pee-wee together a couple years ago. We quit because the coach sucked. We got sick of losing.”

Cody added, “Yeah. Football wasn’t fun anymore.” Matt nodded his head to confirm this.

I asked, “Why did you decide to go out for football now?”

David grinned, “You guys don’t lose all the time.”

Matt added, “Yeah. We first thought about it back at summer camp. We were watching you and Ed and Andy and your friends playing together after lunch. You were having fun. It got us thinking about it.”

Cody continued, “Here we are. We’re going to give it a try.”

I asked, “What positions do you guys play?” David said he was going to try defensive back or wide receiver. Cody played running back in pee-wee football. Matt thought he wanted to try for quarterback.

I tried not to frown when Matt told me that. He asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Ummm... You might want to consider another position Matt. Garrett Houseman has been working his butt off for the last six months learning that position. He’s pretty good for an eighth grader.”

Matt said, “I didn’t expect to beat him for the quarterback job. I want to be his back up and learn from him.”

“Oh, OK. I wish you guys had decided on this sooner. You could have joined us in the winter for our study sessions and passing drills in the spring.”

Dave asked, “Did you do all that when you started Kyle?”

“No. I didn’t go out for football until I was starting ninth grade.” I answered.

“We’ll manage. We are willing to work hard.” Dave answered.

It was Matt’s turn to jump, so we watched him. He made 27 inches. He was proud. Most of the guys did between 18 and 24 inches. Mike Johansen went next. He made 33 inches, which was pretty impressive.

Mike crowed, “That’s how we do it in Texas!”

Andy looked at me and rolled his eyes. I could see he was ready to say something. I indicated he should be quiet. We stood near the back of the line and let everyone else go ahead of us. Mike continued making comments about his record as he watched the kids fail to match his vertical leap. No one else made it over 30 inches.

Andy smiled when it was his turn. He used the chalk to place his standing mark. It was the highest standing mark on the wall. Andy crouched a couple of times to get ready and then exploded off the ground. His leaping mark was easily over a foot higher than the next best mark. Coach Wyndham needed the step ladder to get the tape measure high enough to read the result.

It was 38 inches, better than my personal best last year. I glanced at our Texan. He just stared in shock.

I took my mark when Coach was ready. My standing mark was just short of Andy’s. I warmed up with a few crouches and then exploded upward. No way was my little

brother going to beat me! My leaping mark cleared Andy's. I looked up at the wall when I landed. I had beaten Andy by quite a few inches. Coach Wyndham proudly announced 43 inches when he completed the measurement.

Andy asked, "How'd you do that Kyle?"

"I guess all my lower body strength exercises the last ten months helped." I answered.

Coach Wyndham directed, "Take your group out to see Coach Baer next for the run."

I led my group out to Justin's station. He greeted me with a high five. "Good to see you again Kyle."

"Good to see you too Ju... uh, Coach Baer." I said, barely remembering that I had to call Justin Coach Baer for the next four months.

"Will tells me you went to visit USC this past weekend. How was it dude?"

"Excellent. I'll tell you about it at lunch."

"Cool!" Justin answered. He switched personalities to 'Coach Baer'. "Send me half the group for the one mile run."

"You got it Coach."

I sent the younger half of my group to run the mile first. The rest of us hung out while we waited the six to nine minutes it took them to finish the mile. No one broke six minutes on the run. I recorded the times of the guys as Justin read the times when they finished.

The second half of the group lined up and took off when Coach Baer announced the start. I set a fast pace for myself. I wanted to push myself to be better. Andy, Brett Fulmer and Mike Johansen stayed with me through the first half. Brett slowed a little as we passed Justin the second time. We continued pounding out the yards.

On the third lap Andy, Mike and I started to lap the back of our group. I glanced at Andy. He looked at me and nodded. The two of us kicked into high gear and ran as hard as we could for the finish line. Mike struggled to stay with us for a few seconds and then slowed. Andy and I continued pumping our arms and legs in spite of the burn in our muscles.

I finally pulled ahead of Andy as we started into the last turn. I increased my lead with every step. Coach Baer announced 4:52 as I crossed the finish line. Andy managed a time of 5:07. Mike had 5:35. Brett recovered and almost caught Mike at the end with a 5:42. Coach Baer continued announcing and recording times as players came across the finish line.

Mike Johansen was ticked off. “I can’t believe I lost to them two!” He motioned towards Andy and me. “God damn it. I wanted to win!”

Coach Baer looked at him and said, “Chill dude. Chill.”

“I wanted to show y’all how good I am.” Mike protested.

Coach Baer smiled benevolently. “Just chill out. Your time was excellent. You’re over the 95 percentile for your age. Relax.”

“I wanted to beat the Martins.” Mike protested. I tried not to laugh. Andy watched the exchange with mild amusement.

Coach Baer said, “You weren’t going to beat Kyle. He’s the best sprinter and endurance runner on the team. He’s two year older than you too.”

“But the other Martin is my age.”

“Andy is 5 or 6 inches taller than you and has trained year round for the past two years. Just chill out. I am duly impressed that you came within seconds of their times. That is excellent work.” Coach Bear explained.

Mike finally relaxed a little. When Mike wasn’t looking Justin, uh Coach Baer shrugged his shoulders to me, indicating he didn’t think it was any big deal. I whispered back, “It’s good he wants to be the best. That will help our team.”

Coach Baer just nodded. He sent my group over to Coach Fisher for the 40 meter run. Coach had us line up single file at the goal line. We ran the 40 meters one person at a time. I went first. Coach Fisher announced 4.37 seconds after I crossed the line. Andy did it in 4.42 seconds. Mike had the same time. Brett managed a 4.44 time. Our team was going to have lots of speed on offense and defense this year.

Coach Fisher sent us back inside for weigh-in with Coach Graham when we finished the run. I was always curious about my team mates size and weight. That’s hard to judge just looking at them everyday.

Andy weighed in at 165 pounds this year. He hadn’t grown any from his 6’-5” height of last year. Mike Johansen was 5’-11” and 152 pounds. Brett Fulmer grew to 6’-0” this year. If only he could put a little weight on. He’s a junior and only weighs 146 pounds. The surprise, to me, was Matt Sauder. I knew he was growing, but Jesus. He’s thirteen and 5’-11” already.

Coach Graham teased me when I weighed in at 190 pounds. “You added 14 more pounds since last year. You thinking of going out for linebacker?” Or maybe lineman?”

“No. I’m happy where I am Coach.”

The coaches gathered all team members when all the groups finished the four check-in stations. We spent the rest of the morning stretching and doing calisthenics. We headed to the cafeteria for lunch.

Coach Caffrey concluded lunch with a talk to the whole team. Coach Caffrey reminded us that every other AAA football team in Pennsylvania would be looking for us this year. Excellence would continue to be our motto. Coach Caffrey also informed us that the new stadium beside our practice fields was not completed yet. The construction company was committed to doing anything it took to finish on time, ten days from now. The varsity team would practice in the new stadium after Labor Day, so it wouldn't seem quite so unknown for our first game.

We spent an hour in class room study with our position coach. We did tackling and fumble drills for our afternoon practice. Coach Caffrey ended practice with our traditional two mile run.

Andy and I grabbed quick showers at the gym locker room before we headed for home. I stopped off at Crystal's house to pick her up. Andy and Crystal spent the next five minutes of the drive home making out in the back seat of my car. I dropped them off at the house and drove the half mile down the road to the grocery store. I planned have spaghetti, salad and garlic bread for dinner.

Penny met me in the driveway as I gathered up my purchases. She was wearing a dress today, not her usual slacks and blouse. She looked great! I set the bags on the lawn and hugged her. "God, I've missed you so much honey." Penny declared.

Penny squeezed me with her hug. We kissed hard. My tongue met Penny's. They danced together for a long moment. We stared into each others eyes when we broke the kiss.

"God, I've missed you too." I sighed. "We don't have a lot time before I have to go to scouts. We need to start dinner."

"OK. I'll help you carry the groceries inside."

Penny and I proceeded inside. We began preparation of dinner with the ease of a couple who had done this many times before. Of course, cooking together was something we had done together many times in Venturers. Penny would handle browning the hamburger and warming the sauce. I started the pot of water to cook the pasta.

We could distinctly hear the deep pitched sounds of my brother moaning in ecstasy. Penny turned to me giggled and asked, "Are Andy and Crystal upstairs?"

“What do you think? They haven’t seen each other for nine weeks.”

Penny turned back to tend the hamburger. God, she looked good. I stepped behind her and wrapped my arms around her chest. I pulled her pony tail out of the way and nuzzled her neck, then kissed it. Penny squirmed.

“You look gorgeous today. What’s the occasion?” I asked. I breathed in deeply. The aroma of her perfume aroused me. My cock started to swell. I pressed my body against hers.

“Dr. Chu likes me to look pretty when I cover the reception desk. I do it once a week.” Penny pushed back against me while I caressed the underside of her breasts.

“I can’t wait until I get back from scouts. I need you so much.” I whispered into her ear huskily. Penny pushed back against my hard erection. She wiggled her backside against it when she realized what it was.

“MMMMmmmm... there it is. I’ve been dreaming about tonight for two months.” Penny murmured. She rubbed up and down against the bulge in my pants. I kissed my way up her neck and then nibbled on her ear lobe. She sighed. “Do you have to go to scouts tonight? I don’t know if I can wait another four hours.”

I circled my fingers around her nipples. “I wish....” Penny ground against my erection again. “I have to.... It’s been... ten weeks....” I groaned.

“I need your cock in me Kyle.” Penny purred. She turned around to face me. We wrapped our arms around each other and kissed. Electricity coursed through my body when our tongues met. I felt Penny’s nipples poke into my chest. She was as turned on as I was.

We heard Andy moan, “Ohhh... Crystal.” He groaned as he apparently came upstairs in his bedroom. Things became quiet upstairs but continued to heat up in the kitchen. That included the frying pan, where wisps of smoke started to rise.

“Shit! The hamburger.” I exclaimed. Penny and I separated. She stirred the meat.

“Not too much damage Kyle. I’ll watch this. Why don’t you get the salad ready?”

“OK.” I chopped the carrots, mushrooms and cucumbers and Penny minded the frying pan while we traded sexually charged comments to each other for a few minutes. We could hear that it was Crystal’s turn upstairs. Her higher pitched moans and squeals told her story.

I dumped the pasta into the kettle when the water boiled. Penny added the sauce to the browned hamburger. I wrapped the garlic bread in foil and put it in the oven. Crystal let out her familiar high pitched squeal when she orgasmed. Things became quiet upstairs.

I went back over behind Penny and held her as she stirred the sauce. “They’re preparing for round three, where Crystal gets stuffed with a big sausage.”

“Yes, it sounds like that. Lucky girl. I like sausages and I haven’t been stuffed in a long time.” She emphasized her point by rubbing against my erection again.

“You’re going to get it.”

“Promises, promises. You can’t do anything about it now.” Penny said as she rubbed against me again.

“You want to bet?” I asked. I ran my hands up her thighs until I reached her panties. I rubbed her cloth covered mons. Penny was leaking considerable amounts of her pungent juices.

“We shouldn’t Kyle.” Penny said. I pulled her panties down until they dropped to her ankles.

I ran my finger along her outer pussy lips, spreading her moisture around. I whispered in Penny’s ear, “I’m going to...”

“Can we?” She asked hesitantly.

“Turn down the heat on the sauce.” I pulled my shorts and boxers down and guided my rock hard cock up under my lover’s dress.

“One second Kyle. Let’s do this at the table. I don’t want to burn anything important.”

Each of us pulled one foot from the underwear at our ankles and moved to the table. Penny leaned over the table, presenting her backside to me. I pulled Penny’s dress up over her waist, lined up my cock and slid it into my lover. Her moist heat engulfed my rod. Penny shuddered as I drove it home. “Ooohhhh...” I whimpered. “I needed this.”

“Do it Kyle. Do it hard.” Penny begged. I obliged her. I pulled out and thrust in repeatedly. I had my hands on her sides to steady myself. Penny pushed back against me in time with my thrusts. We filled the kitchen with the sounds of my groin slapping into her ass along with our moans of passion. It only took a few minutes for we two sexually deprived lovers to approach climax.

Penny reached down to play with her clit as I neared my peak. Penny needed only seconds of rubbing before she stiffened, groaned and was swept away by her orgasm. Penny shimmied. I held her steady and continued thrusting into her spasming pussy. I came seconds later just as she came down from her climax.

I buried my cock in as deep as possible and unloaded weeks of frustration and many days worth of cum into my lover in powerful spurts. I laid my body down against Penny's back and wrapped my arms around her.

"God, I've missed you so much."

"I know Kyle."

We stayed in that position for half a minute. Reluctantly I stood up and pulled my cock out of my lover. I said, "We better get cleaned up. I don't hear Crystal and Andy upstairs anymore. They could come down soon."

Penny cleaned herself with tissues and put her panties back on. I pulled my boxers and shorts up and made sure my semi-hard cock wasn't too obvious. We checked each other quickly to make sure we looked OK. Penny said, "They'll never know. We look good."

Andy and Crystal strolled into the kitchen from the living room seconds later. Penny and I glanced at each other and shared our thoughts. That was too close!

Crystal asked brightly, "Do you need any help with dinner?"

My SPL instincts kicked in. "Crystal, why don't you gather all the vegetables and put them with the lettuce in the bowl on the counter. Andy, set the table. Penny, please get the garlic bread out of the oven. I'll finish the spaghetti."

Two minutes later we were seated at the table, ready to eat. Our dinner was simple. Everyone agreed it was delicious. Andy and I told our girlfriends about the trip to L.A. They filled us in on their summers. The conversation was as pleasant as the company. Twenty minutes later the four of us cleared the table and put the leftovers in the refrigerator.

I walked Penny to the door when it was time for her to go home. I said, "We'll be back from scouts between a quarter to nine and nine o'clock. I'll call you when we get home."

"I'll have my overnight things packed when you call. I'll see you then." Penny answered. I gave her a kiss before she went home.

Andy and I headed to our bedrooms to change for scouts. Crystal went along to help Andy. I was half dressed when I heard the two of them giggling. I banged on the wall and yelled, "Andy, get dressed. We only have twenty minutes to get Crystal home and get to scouts. Stop fooling around."

"Sorry Kyle." Crystal answered.

"I'll be ready in a minute." Andy added. The three of us left a few minutes later.

I dropped off Crystal and headed for the church and our scout meeting. I asked, “Did you have a good reunion with Crystal?”

Andy frowned and answered disgustedly, “No. Crystal is having her period now.” He paused for a few seconds. “God! I need to fuck!”

“Be patient. You’ll get your chance soon.” I said, trying to reassure him.

“Could Crystal spend the night tomorrow like Penny?”

“Would Crystal’s parents allow it?”

Andy chuckled grimly. “Yeah, right. ‘Fornication is a terrible sin.’ No chance at all.”

“That’s your answer. Penny is allowed to stay only because her parents allow us to stay together.”

“Damn! Mom and Dad will be home on Wednesday night. When are we going to be able to get together after that?” Andy asked.

“Their flight doesn’t come in until almost 8:30. I doubt we’ll be home before midnight.”

“Do I have to go to the airport with you?”

“I think I can find it on my own.” I answered.

“So I’ll have the house to myself Wednesday night?” Andy asked

“All yours loverboy.” I confirmed.

“All right!” Andy exclaimed. He paused for a second. “How’d you know Crystal calls me loverboy?”

“I overheard her.”

“Don’t tell me friends about, OK?”

“You got it...” I grinned evilly. “Loverboy.”

The scout meeting was cool. I got to see friends that I hadn’t seen since my troop was in camp. Andy reconnected with the kids in his patrol. I talked with Mr. Clark and Mr. Good. They were very interested in my visit to USC. I told them all about Coach Carroll and the Trojans. The hour and half went by quickly.

I called Penny on the drive home when I was a couple blocks away. She met us at the front door carrying her overnight bag. We went inside. I locked the doors and told Andy, “We’re going to bed now. Turn the lights out when you come upstairs.”

“You got it Kyle.” Andy replied. “I’m going to watch TV for awhile down here.”

“Good night Andy.” I said.

Penny added, “Good night.”

My lover and I headed for my bedroom. Our coupling before dinner took the edge off our urgent need for sex. Penny did a playful strip tease for me. We pleasured each other in the 69 position. Penny had two orgasms that way. I made love to Penny in her favorite position, the one with her ankles on my shoulders where I could penetrate her fully. She came again before I filled her with my semen. We finished the night with Penny on top riding my rod. We took our time in this position, enjoying the connection together. I finally used my finger to stimulate Penny to a last orgasm before I emptied my tired balls into her. We collapsed together, satisfied and worn out.

It was after eleven o’clock when I got up to check the house. Andy had turned the lights out the way I asked. I went back to bed and spooned with my lover. Sleep took me quickly.

I woke up the next morning still spooned against Penny. The morning sun lit the room. I glanced at the clock and chuckled. I was “sleeping in.” Half the summer at camp I had to get up at 6 am. It was 6:20 am. I had ten more minutes until I had to get up for football practice. I held Penny, listening to her breathe. I was totally contented holding my lover against my naked body. My morning wood was nestled in the crack of Penny backside. I definitely wasn’t at camp anymore.

My alarm clock roused me from my daydreaming. I moved Penny’s hair aside and kissed her neck. “Honey. Time to get up.” Penny stirred. “Honey?”

“Mmmm... good morning Kyle.” Penny said contentedly. I kissed the back of her neck again.

“Did you sleep well?”

“Yes. I wish we could do this every night.”

“I know. We have tonight.” I said.

“You and Andy take your showers first. I’m not in a hurry. I don’t have to leave for work until 8 o’clock.”

“Thanks honey.” I said. I hopped out of bed and headed straight to the bathroom, sans clothing. I beat on Andy’s door and yelled for him to get up too. The three of us completed our morning routines and met in the kitchen for cereal, toast and jam.

As we cleaned up the dishes I asked Penny, “Do you want to go to the fireman’s carnival tonight?”

“Sure, that sounds like fun.”

“I’ll ask Jeremy, Hal and Ed if they want to invite the girls. We can get our group together.”

Penny looked surprised. “You do know Lindsey and Ed broke up right?”

“Sure. I was sitting beside him when he read the Dear John e-mail. It’s no big deal to go stag with our group. Nobody had a problem with me last fall after Julie moved and before you and I got back together.”

“OK. This should be fun. What time do you think you’ll be done with practice?”

“We’ll be home around 4:30.”

“Good. I’ll see you then.” Penny said. She headed back to her house to check in with her mom before she went to work. Andy and I hopped in my Golf and headed for school.

The coaches started us off with calisthenics and stretching exercises. We moved on to drills to practice our fundamentals: blocking, tackling, and fumble recovery. Lunch followed the morning workout and then we moved into the classroom to review the playbook.

Hal, Jeremy and Ed liked the idea of taking our girlfriends to the carnival tonight. They called during lunch and made arrangements. Ed tracked down Holly Cox, who was at school with the cheerleading squad preparing for the season. Holly agreed to be Ed’s date for the evening.

Afternoon practice was more drills to sharpen our fundamental skills. I looked forward to Thursday when the coaches would break us up into squads and let us start running through our plays.

Crystal joined Andy, Penny and me for dinner again Tuesday night. We headed for the fireman’s carnival after dinner. Andy and Crystal met up with Eric and Sammy soon after we got there. They disappeared for the evening. Penny and I found Hal, Tammy, Jeremy, Kathy, Ed and Holly.

We hung out with our friends, ate too much junk food, rode the rides and wasted money on the ring toss, basketball throw and other games of chance. We had fun and the money went to a good cause.

Penny and I headed home around 9:30 pm. We heard Andy and Crystal in the family room when we got there. We went straight to my bedroom. We spent the next hour making slow gentle love to each other. This was how it was meant to be. Sharing our bodies and souls with each other without need to hurry or any care at who knows. Penny offered to ride along to the airport on Wednesday night to keep me company. I readily agreed.

I was a little melancholy on Wednesday morning when Penny packed her things. Who knows when I would be able to spend the night with Penny again? Probably not until the fall Venturer trip.

Practice was routine. I was pleased. My teammates seemed to concentrate and work hard at the drills. We would go far again this season if everyone kept their concentration on football. Andy and I ended up ordering pizza for dinner. Crystal's parents and Penny's parents both agreed that missing dinner at home three days in a row wasn't acceptable.

Andy was like a little kid on Christmas Eve. Crystal was done with her period and they planned to spend the whole evening together in our big empty house. Andy was desperate to make up for the almost ten weeks he hadn't slept with a girl. Our girlfriends showed up at our house as soon as they finished dinner, right after six o'clock.

Penny and I told Andy and Crystal to have fun. I warned Andy that we didn't expect to be back until nearly midnight. Andy promised to look after the house until we got home.

Penny and I took the family mini-van to the airport. We hadn't been on the road more than a couple minutes before Penny asked, "We've been so preoccupied the last two evenings I never got a chance to ask. How was your trip to California?"

I chuckled. "We have been kind of busy, haven't we?" Penny nodded. "The trip went real well. I was extremely impressed with USC. They offered me a scholarship at the end of the weekend."

"Does that mean you're going to go there?"

"I don't know Penny. I haven't made up my mind. I might."

Penny let that thought sink in for a few seconds. She sighed. "You would really go three thousand miles away for college?"

"I haven't decided yet. I want to visit some more colleges before I decide." I explained.

We rode on in silence for a couple minutes. Penny finally said, “I’ve have the early admission application for the University of Pennsylvania. I’m planning to apply there this fall.”

“Penn’s a good choice.” I said.

“If I can get in.”

“You’ll get in Penny. Coach Bagnoli said your grades and SAT’s will get you in.”

“Who is Coach Bagnoli and why does he know about my grades and SAT’s?”

“He’s the head coach at Penn. I talked with him last month. Mom talked with him before me and I think she was pretty talkative that day. Coach Bagnoli knew about Will and Abby attending Penn, he knew you wanted to go there too. The coach really wants me to attend his university. He told me my grades and SAT’s are good enough to get accepted at Penn without a football scholarship. You’re grades are as good as mine and you scored twenty points higher than me on the SAT’s. You’ll get accepted to Penn.”

Penny stared at me. “Do you think this coach would offer you a scholarship to play football at Penn?”

“I’m sure he would. Before you say anything, I need to tell you about what I’ve learned about coaching. I want to learn enough to be the best. One of the big university programs will help me learn more than I would at a smaller college. Succeeding in coaching also depends on who you know. I can make better and more contacts at one of the big schools. Now that I know I can get into one of the big football programs, I want to give myself the best chance as a coach.”

Penny asked, “You wouldn’t consider going to Penn with me so we can stay together?”

“I love you Penny. I’d love to find a way for us to stay together after high school. Would you be willing to go to USC with me? If you did, I’d accept Coach Carroll’s scholarship offer in a second so we could be together.”

“My best chance of getting in veterinary school is to go to Penn. They have 1300 applicants each year for 110 spots. 51% of the spots go to Pennsylvanians. Getting into veterinary school is hard. I want to give myself the best chance possible.” Penny explained.

“I understand completely Penny. One of the things I love about you is that you know what you want and you are going to go get it. Too many of our classmates are clueless about what they are going to do after high school. They’re like, ‘I guess I’ll go to college, maybe.’ ‘What do you want to major in?’ ‘Uh... I don’t know.’ I hate that. If you’re going to go to college, you need to know why in the hell you’re spending the time and money to go.”

Penny asked, “I agree Kyle. So what do we do now?”

“I think you had the right idea last fall. You said we should enjoy our time together and worry about what we do during college when that time comes. I love you totally. That is good enough for me right now.” I replied.

“Then what?”

“I don’t know. Maybe we’ll be mature enough to make a long distance relationship work. I’ve learned a lot since Julie and I tried to make it work a year ago. We could get together again after college. Who knows?”

“I guess.”

“I love you Penny. I don’t want be with anyone else. We can enjoy our senior year and then decide how to handle our separation during college next summer.”

“OK. I’ll try Kyle.” Penny answered. I could see Penny was thinking, so I didn’t say anything more. I stopped at the traffic light in Cochranville a couple minutes later. I leaned over and gave her a kiss.

“We’ll make this work somehow Penny. I promise.”

“That’s all I can ask Kyle.”

Our conversation moved on to mundane topics. Penny filled me in on her summer working at the Paradise Veterinary Clinic. I told her about working at scout camp. We talked about what we expected from our classes in school.

Eventually our conversation turned to our vacation plans. I asked, “Are you going to Raystown Lake with your family on Labor Day Weekend like you do most years?”

“No. My dad is so pissed about it. Niki is going on a trip with her boyfriend Adrian. Dad decided that we’re staying home on Labor Day.”

I asked, “Would you like to go to the beach with my family? I’m sure Mom and Dad would be happy to take you with us.”

“That could be fun.” Penny answered. It neatly fixed one of my worries. I received an e-mail from Rob Lang, my Labor Day weekend friend from West Virginia. He wrote to ask if my family was coming to Cape Henlopen. Rob said Alicia Randolph was asking about me. All I needed was to spend a weekend at the beach with Alicia tempting me to break my commitment to be faithful to Penny. If Penny went along, I knew I could resist temptation.

Penny and I arrived at the airport around 8:15 pm. We parked the mini-van in the parking garage and made our way to Delta's baggage claim. Mom, Dad and Liz appeared down the escalator twenty minutes later. We found the proper carousel for Delta 328. Eventually we tracked down all the luggage and hauled it out to the mini-van.

I turned the keys over to Dad, smiled and said, "You're officially in charge now. Penny and I will be in the back seat, enjoying being kids again."

"Problems?" Dad asked.

"No. It'll be nice not to have to worry about what's for dinner, to remember to lock up at bedtime, all those little things you and Mom do for us. I know I don't say it enough. Thanks for everything you do Mom and Dad."

Penny and I climbed in the back and cuddled together. The last thing I remember was Dad merging onto I-95 as we left the airport. Dad woke us up when we got home. I walked Penny to her house and then went straight to bed. It was almost midnight.

Liz decided to go out for field hockey. She rode along with Andy and me in the morning. Liz was going to get a ride home with another one of the girls when her practice was done before lunch.

Coach Caffrey sent the seventh and eighth grader's team and the JV team off to practice on their own. He split the varsity team into two squads. I ended up on White Squad 1, the starters. It felt great to finally play live football, eleven on eleven, after ten and a half months away from it.

Coach Rodgers worked a lot with our offensive line. We added two sophomores to our line, Brian Taylor at left guard and Adam Bell at right tackle, to replace graduating seniors from last year. Dan Fenstermacher went from back up center to right guard. If our team was going to have any weaknesses on offense, it was going to be the line.

Our only other inexperienced starter on offense was Pete Ellis, who had the unenviable job of replacing Greg Harrison at tight end. Pete would do OK even though we knew we wouldn't get as much production from him as we had from Greg. Andy, Drew and I would more than make up for the catches Greg made last year. Ed and I would do our best to try to replace Greg's leadership on the field and in the locker room.

Jeremy had his hands full on defense. Jim Griffin and Kenny Weaver filled the outside linebacker spots. He constantly instructed the two of them where to go and what to do. Travis Hall and Austin Herr made sure Jamie Adams, our new left defensive tackle, knew what to do. Our secondary was pretty much set. Dylan, Brett and Seth looked after Ryan Crawford, our strong safety. Ryan was sophomore, a little undersized and very smart. We expected him to do OK.

Coach Rodgers and Coach Baer gave me pointers on blocking. I worked hard to improve. I knew I would be more valuable receiver if I helped block downfield for Drew, Ian and Marcus on running plays.

Andy was in a much better mood on Thursday. He was positively mellow compared to the horny, frustrated kid I put up with earlier in the week. He said he and Crystal had an awesome night together when I went to the airport.

Coach Caffrey had the two squads scrimmage together in a simulated game in the afternoon. My White squad played the Red squad. I was matched up against Michael Johansen on some plays. He talked incessantly between plays. Ed and I didn't try any deep routes on Mike. We concentrated on timing plays. Mike managed to knock a couple balls down on me. I also caught some passes on him too.

Ed rode with Andy and me to the final camp staff dinner at a restaurant in Lancaster on Thursday night. I enjoyed seeing my staff friends one last time before school started. It seemed like a life time since I left camp, even though it was only six days ago. Los Angeles, USC and Coach Carroll, time with my girlfriend Penny and football practice; it had been a full six days.

Dustin Carter made a point of sitting with Ed, Andy and me. He was in a great mood. "I want to thank you guys for all your help this summer with football. My coaches were really pleased with the way I'm playing, thanks to your help. I know I'll make varsity. They've switched me from free safety to cornerback. I've been practicing with the first string. I might make it as a starter."

I replied, "Congratulations Dustin. That's good news. I guess Andy and I will see you on the field for our third game. Good luck."

Dustin answered, "I'm going to need a lot of luck if I'm going to cover one of you two."

We found out that the staff had finished packing up came after lunch that day. Everyone was leaving for home from the restaurant. We said our good byes after a lingering dessert. Everyone promised they'd see each other next summer. I followed Will and Abby home.

We practiced our plays and scrimmaged again at practice on Friday morning. Ed, Jake and I had lunch with Jason Harting and Jonathan Landis, our number 3 & 4 receivers, at lunch. They were griping about the morning scrimmage.

Jason said, "Damn, I hate that new kid from Texas. He's such a pain in the ass."

Jake added, "Johansen. I have to agree with Jason. What a motor mouth."

Jonathan said, “He’s always bragging about how he made starter last year as a freshman when he played in Texas. It’s Lubbock this, Lubbock that. I’m sick of it.”

Jake added, “He is a good corner. I’ve got to be careful with the ball on his side of the field. He picked me off twice this morning.”

Jason added, “I only caught one pass all morning.”

I answered, “You can handle this guy. Just remember what we worked on last spring. You guys will do OK.”

After our classroom session in the afternoon the White squad offense played the White squad defense. I was matched up against Brett and Seth most of the afternoon. I beat them consistently on deep passing plays. Our starting defensive line gave Ed and the offensive line some trouble. Coach Rodgers needed to do a lot more work with the offensive line.

Penny and I hung out at her house Friday evening. We watched a couple DVD’s. I told her that my parents liked the idea of her coming along with us to Cape Henlopen on Labor Day Weekend. Her parents agreed to allow it.

Saturday morning I slept in. It was the first time in months I was able to sleep as late as I wanted. Mom finally dragged me out of bed around 11:30 in the morning. After lunch Mom forced Andy and me to go shopping with her and Liz. It was time to get new clothes for school. Thankfully Mom let us get our pants, shirts, socks and underwear first. She told us we were free to browse around the mall on our own while she and Liz did their shopping. They expected they would need a couple hours to finish shopping. Andy and I arrived at our meeting place on time. Liz and Mom were a half hour late. That’s why I hate shopping with women.

We got home after 4:30. Andy and I made a beeline for the bathroom. We were taking our girlfriends to the movies for the evening. We picked up Penny and Crystal on the way to Millersville and the pizza place the football team used as our hangout on Saturday nights.

Andy and Crystal sat with some of the younger players and their girls. Penny and I joined Jeremy, Kathy Hal and Tammy at a table. Ed made it too. He hooked up with Holly Cox again. After an enjoyable dinner, we headed to the movie theater. We went to the latest Adam Sandler movie. Andy and his friends headed to a different movie. Crystal called home. Her dad agreed to give the two of them a ride home.

The movie was good, but very short. We left the theater before 9 o’clock. Penny and I decided to find a bit of privacy for some fun. Jeremy nudged me as we were leaving. He asked, “What are you two planning for the rest of the evening?”

“We’re going to find some privacy. Why?” I asked.

“Kath and I had the same thing in mind. Do you know of any places around here?”

“Sure. I know a place about ten miles south of here. You can follow us there.” I offered.

Jeremy looked stunned. “Uh... We’re not... uh, you know into... uh, groups Kyle.”

I laughed. “I’m not suggesting that. This spot is a couple acre meadow. There is plenty of room for privacy for more than one couple.”

“Oh. That’s a relief.” Jeremy said, finally smiling again.

Jeremy and Kathy followed behind Penny and me. We ended up at the field south of Lancaster where I had enjoyed the favors of a number of the cheerleaders a couple years ago. The place hadn’t changed. Jeremy and Kathy headed off to the south end of the field. Penny and I carried the blanket I always keep in the Golf down to the stream at the opposite side of the field.

Penny and I spent the next hour pleasuring each other. We brought each other off with our tongues and mouths. Penny wanted a good screwing doggie style. We ended the evening with Penny riding on top of me to our final climaxes of the evening.

We met Kath and Jeremy back at the cars. Kathy asked, “Where did you find out about this place? It’s great.”

“Let’s just say I found out a couple years ago. Some of the girls I went with back then taught me a lot. This place is one of the things I found out back then.”

Penny chuckled. “We get to enjoy some of the benefits of Kyle’s debauched past.”

“Hey! I wasn’t that bad. I would have preferred to continue going steady with you back then. You wouldn’t even talk to me.” I protested.

“I’m just teasing Kyle. I know now that it was a mistake to break up with you in tenth grade. We’re past that now.” Penny answered.

We kissed each other before heading for home. Jeremy followed me back to Lancaster. He turned off a couple blocks from my house to take Kathy home. Penny told me she was going to visit her grandparents tomorrow. I gave her a good night kiss before I headed home.

I spent Sunday afternoon relaxing and reading a book about Lincoln and his generals. I enjoyed every second of relaxation I could get. School started in a week. Our first game was in two weeks. I hoped to make some college visits during the weekends. My life was going to be very busy very soon.

I train year round to keep myself in top physical condition. Even I was starting to wear down during the second week of two a day practices. Our football team was starting to come together. I spent days practicing football and evenings relaxing with Penny.

One unexpected development disturbed my football life. Tuesday before lunch Coach Caffrey called Jeremy, Brett, Seth, Dylan, Ryan Crawford and Mike Johansen to his office. Dylan and Ryan looked upset when they came to the cafeteria. Mike strutted into the cafeteria, as if he owned the place.

I quizzed Jeremy. “What’s up buddy?”

“We’re shaking up the secondary. Dylan’s moving to strong safety, Ryan going to second team, Mike is taking Brett’s spot at cornerback and Brett is taking Dylan’s spot.”

“Wow!” was the reaction from our friends around the table.

Jake warned, “Ed, be careful where you put the ball when you throw to Kyle. Johansen has a good break on the ball. You under throw it a little and he’ll pick it off.”

Ed smiled and answered, “I can handle the kid. Don’t worry about it.”

“I’m not worried about some kid from Texas. I’ve played against the best cornerback in the state and held my own. I’ll do fine. Keep feeding me the ball Ed.” I said confidently.

“You got it.” Ed answered.

Ed and I found out what Jake was talking about on the second play of the afternoon scrimmage. Ed wasn’t off much on the throw. I slowed up to adjust to the location of the ball. Johansen cut in front of me and picked off the ball before I could catch it.

Johansen crowed, “It’s about time your coaches realized who the best cornerback on the team is. This is how it’s done in Texas. I’m gonna show y’all how to play football now!”

Ed adjusted to make sure balls to me went higher than normal. Johansen didn’t pick anymore off that afternoon. That didn’t stop his incessant chatter about how good he was, how they played football in Lubbock or how lucky our team was to have someone with his talent. I found out why Jason and Jonathan disliked him so much last week. I also found out that the kid could flat out play football. No one on our team had ever challenged me the way he did.

I kept my cool around him Wednesday and Thursday morning. He bragged about starting six games as a freshman last year on Lubbock’s team that usually had only juniors and seniors starting. Andy answered, “Big deal. I started ten games last season.”

I added, “Yeah. I started eleven games my freshman year.” That shut Johansen up for about two seconds. He went right back to bragging again. I had enough by lunch time. Ed and I prepared to put him in his place during the afternoon scrimmage.

We lined up for the first play of the afternoon. I said, “Tex, get yourself ready. The ball’s coming our way.” Johansen grinned at me.

Ed used a pump fake on the deep route. It gave me half a step on Johansen. Ed launched the pass over my right shoulder, away from Johansen. I caught it, spun away from Johansen, and ran into the end zone. I looked back at him and said, “That’s how the state champions of Pennsylvania do it Tex. What do you think about that?” He didn’t answer.

On the next play I ran a crossing route. Drew came out of the backfield running across the short zone in the opposite direction. Drew collided with Johansen a split second before Ed drilled the ball into my chest in stride. I sprinted for the end zone, trailed by Dylan, who had covered Drew until Johansen lost me. Touchdown!

“What did you think of that one Tex?” I challenged as we lined up again. “Get ready. The ball is coming our way again.” Johansen moved closer to the line of scrimmage and looked around nervously. Ed spotted that. He nodded to me. He wanted me to go deep on our buddy Tex.

Tex tried to jam me at the line but he missed. I took off downfield at top speed. He recovered and managed to keep with me, half a step behind. Ed launched a deep spiral to me that I caught in stride twenty-five yards downfield. I ran into the end zone.

I turned and looked at him, holding the ball out in his face. “Well?”

“I was supposed to have help deep.” He whined.

“You start treating your teammates with respect; maybe you’ll get more help.”

“But I...”

“You’ve spent the last two weeks telling us how great you are. You’re coming in and trying to play on the state championship team. You’ve got to shut up and learn if you’re going to fit in here.”

Mike bristled at my words and tried to answer defiantly. He couldn’t completely hide his hesitation. “I can do this!”

“Three touchdowns on the last three plays would argue otherwise. You have some potential but you can’t do this without the support of your teammates. You brag about starting as a freshman on your old team in Texas. So what? I helped turn our team from an average team into one of the best as a freshman. My brother started as a freshman and helped us win the state championship.”

Mike said, “You and your brother are supposed to be really good. You’re just trying to embarrass me.”

“We have other receivers in our league as good as me. Our biggest rival’s best receiver will do the same thing to you when the game counts if you don’t improve your play. Like I said before; shut up, listen and learn. The coaches and I want to help you. If you give them a chance, your teammates will help you. Do you got it?”

“Yes.” Mike answered.

“Good. We don’t want to hear more about your old team. Concentrate on your new team. You’ll do OK then.”

“Are you serious about us playing against another receiver like you?”

“Absolutely. Christian plays for Central, our biggest rivals. He can take over the game by himself if we’re not careful. Don’t expect to cover him. Coach usually pulls the normal cornerback and has me cover him.”

“You play cornerback?”

“Only occasionally.” I answered.

We cut our conversation short because Coach Caffrey was yelling, “Martin! Fritz! Get over here!”

I trotted towards Coach Caffrey on the sideline. Andy and Ed headed for him too. Coach waved off my brother. “No Andrew, I want ‘Coach’ Martin.”

Ed and I trotted to him and said in unison, “What’s up Coach?”

“I don’t recall putting those last three plays on the list to practice now. What’s up?”

Ed and I grinned. Ed offered, “We’re working on a little attitude adjustment Coach.”

I added, “Tex is learning the benefits of helping his teammates.”

“Tex?” Coach Caffrey shook his head. “Let’s stick to the plays I want to practice from here on out, OK?”

“Sure Coach.” “Yes Sir.” we answered.

“‘Coach’?” Coach Caffrey asked.

“Yeah?”

“What do you think of ... uh, Tex?”

“I think he’s got potential. He needs to listen more and stop comparing us to his team back in Texas. If he does that, he’ll be a good addition to our team.” I offered.

“Let me no how that goes. We can use someone with his speed in the backfield.” Coach Caffrey said.

“Will do.” I answered.

Practice went smoothly after that. Mike seemed to try to keep his comments to himself. He did OK with Seth backing him up when he tried to cover me. I still scored a couple deep receptions but he played better.

Friday after lunch the team voted for team captains. The results weren’t surprising. Ed and I were elected offensive co-captains. Jeremy was elected to be the defensive captain. Hal was elected as the special teams captain. Hal hadn’t been a lock, but he was the only senior on special teams.

My parents had tickets to go to the American Movie Theater Saturday night. Cody Stevens asked Liz for a date. Penny and I agreed to give them a ride to the dinner and the movies with us. Andy and Crystal originally planned to go to the movies too, but they decided to take advantage of our big empty house.

Liz was decked out in a nice dress. She looked like a regular young lady. Cody’s usually tousled hair was slicked back. He wore dress khakis and a button down shirt. It was quite a change from his usual haphazard appearance.

Liz and Cody hung with us at the pizza place where we met our friends and teammates. Cody talked about how much fun he was having playing football. His coach moved him up to number two tailback yesterday.

When we got to the movie theater I warned Cody, “Treat me little sister right tonight.”

Cody grinned and said, “You bet Kyle. I like Liz.”

They headed for their movie. My friends, Penny and I headed to ours. We enjoyed our movie. Liz and Cody met us in the lobby when our movie left out. I gave Liz and Cody a minute of privacy when we dropped him off at his house. I did steal a glance and see him give my sister a fairly chaste kiss before he went inside. Liz enjoyed her date. Mom and Dad were acting lovey-dovey when Liz and I got home. They tried to hustle us off to bed.

I don't usually like to think about it, but I expected Dad was going to get lucky tonight. I hurried Liz upstairs to give Mom and Dad some privacy. Liz confided that she enjoyed her date with Cody. She hoped he would ask her out again.

Andy showed up in my bedroom as I was changing for bed. I was down to my boxers when he came in. I asked, "How was your night?"

"Fantastic! Crystal was insatiable tonight. We did it three times. She would have done it again if we hadn't run out of time. I love fucking without rubbers. It's the greatest!"

"You and Crystal are safe, right?" I asked.

"Of course. Crystal started taking the pill while we were at camp."

"That's good." I answered.

"I'm going to remember this night for a long time!" Andy declared. "Good night Kyle." Andy headed back to his room. I shucked my boxers and hopped in bed. My brother had no idea how true his words would be.

(To be continued)