

Lost and Found

Part 3

By Douglas Fox

Chapter 21

I wasn't surprised that campus was nearly deserted on a Sunday morning during the summer semester. I parked my car in the lot near Pollock Commons and headed inside to the housing office to sign in and pick up my room key. I moved my Golf over to the parking lot closest to Hartranft Hall to unload.

I parked beside a true classic automobile, a 60's era bright orange Ford Mustang convertible. I looked it over before I carried my first load inside. The car was immaculate. Someone had taken great care to restore this car to its original glory.

I stopped in the first floor of Hartranft and grabbed one of the carts so I could move my things up to the fourth floor. I was loading up my cart when Jay Nicholson walked up to me.

"Hey man, it's great to see you!" Jay gushed. We high-fived, and did a hand clasp, shake and knuckle bump in greeting.

"I'm glad to see you too," I replied.

"Did you have lunch yet?" Jay asked.

"Yeah, I replied. "I ate at Mickey D's in Lewistown on the way here."

"We'll catch up at dinner," Jay said.

I started loading my cart again. I noticed Jay pop the trunk of the orange Mustang beside my car.

"This is your car?" I asked incredulously. "You have this great ride?"

"Yep," Jay confirmed. "It was a piece of junk when I bought it in high school. My dad has been helping me restore it for four years. We finished it earlier this summer. What do you think?"

"It awesome man," I answered. "I can't believe you have such a nice car. You're a lucky guy."

Jay loaded his cart up with things from his trunk. I finished loading the cart with the first load of my things. Jay and I wheeled our carts over to Hartranft and took the elevator to the fourth floor.

Jay was in room 413 again. I was in 407. I unlocked the door and pushed the cart inside. Damian's part of the room was empty. He hadn't made it back to school yet. I unloaded the cart and headed back to the elevator for another load.

I was facing the elevator waiting for it to arrive when I heard a familiar voice behind me.

"Hey Kyle, welcome back!" I recognized the voice. I turned to see Anders Voight standing behind me.

I greeted my friend warmly and then asked, "What the hell are you doing in the dorm this afternoon?"

"Me?" Anders replied with a sly grin. "I'm the Welcome Wagon." I looked at him blankly. Anders explained, "I'm the resident assistant. I'm in charge of you clowns this year."

"RA? Are you kidding?" I asked. "Why aren't you over in Nittany Apartments like most of the juniors and seniors?"

"I still get a private room," Anders answered. "...and they pay me too. I can't beat the offer. Anyway, my roommates graduated last spring. I didn't feel like breaking in new roommates."

I remembered that Anders had roomed with Jeremiah Nowak, Derek Whitaker and Gerry Oliszewski last year. Anders and I talked for a couple minutes about our summer activities before Anders had to get back to work helping Tony King with a room key problem. I headed downstairs to my car for another load of my things.

Damian arrived with his dad as I was unloading the final load of things from my car. Mr. Thompson was very cordial when we met. I helped Damian and his dad move his things in from the parking lot. They invited me to get ice cream with them at the Creamery. I met them there after I took my car to the East Parking Deck.

I enjoyed spending time with Damian's dad while we had our ice cream. He was a funny and entertaining guy. I could see where he would be very successful dealing with customers at his restaurants. He told us some tales about his exploits as an undergrad here at Penn State. He warned Damian that the stories were not to be repeated in front of his mother. Mr. Thompson headed home to Erie around three o'clock.

Damian and I headed over to the player's lounge at the Lasch Building to find out who was around. We ran into a lot of our friends at the lounge. We spent our time swapping

stories of our summers. The guys teased me for missing the Lift for Life cancer fundraiser event early in July. I explained that I didn't have any time off from my job at scout camp.

Chip Brinton, David McCall, Jared Cantrell and more guys I didn't recognize came in awhile later. After we greeted each other, Chip introduced me to his roommate, Matt Frye. Matt's a cornerback from Milford, Pa. Chip introduced me to Jared Gray, our new back-up kicker and his roommate Bruce MacCauley. I remembered Bruce from his visit last fall after he was introduced. Bruce was a wide receiver. They introduced me to Joe Ricci, a linebacker from Media, Pa. All the new guys with Chip were rooming on fourth floor Hartranft – Chip and Matt in 411, Jared Gray and Bruce in 402. David and Jared Cantrell were on the third floor in room 317.

When the introduction were done I asked, "You guys have free time now?"

"Yeah," Chip answered. "There isn't anything on the schedule until dinner time."

"Did you get playbooks last night?" I asked.

"Yeah, sure," half a dozen guys answered at the same time.

"Do you know everything in them?" I asked, staring straight at Chip.

"No, of course not," he answered defensively. "It's six inches thick. I can't learn all that overnight."

"It doesn't sound like you have free time," I replied. "This isn't high school anymore. In a couple days the coaches will expect you to run those plays in practice. You damn well better know what is going on. Coach Burton and Coach Schroeder won't spoon feed the plays to you."

"The rest of the guys here are relaxing?" Chip answered. "What's wrong with us having down time?"

"They rest of us already know what's in the playbook," I countered. "Except the ten or twenty new plays I expect we'll get from the coaches tomorrow or Tuesday."

JT Hill overheard us. He stood up and came over. "Listen to my little buddy here. It's part of what it takes to play here." JT may not actually be taller than me at 6'-2" but at 295 pounds he does make me look small.

"C'mon guys," Chip conceded. "Maybe we better go back to our rooms and study." The freshmen headed out of the lounge.

"Weren't you being a little hard on the new guys?" Damian asked after they left.

“I don’t think so,” I explained. “I have high expectations from Chip Brinton and the other guys. I think it’s useful for them to understand how much work they need to do.” Turning to face Damian, I asked, “What did you do that first Sunday afternoon last summer?”

“Um, GJ and I spent the afternoon in our room trying to understand the playbook,” he admitted.

“So did Christian and me,” I replied.

Damian and I hung out with our friends, enjoying a fun afternoon. We beat a few guys when we teamed up for a foosball tournament. Damian and I got trashed when we took on Karol and Cuch in pool. Damian and I went back to our room after that, around a quarter after five in the afternoon. We killed time organizing our things until it was time to head to the Training Table for the first team dinner.

Jay and Shawn Byrd stopped by our room about 5:45 to see if we were ready for dinner. Damian, Jay and I travelled our floor, picking up our usual dinner gang. Jay found Christian and GJ in room 410. Trevor Conwell and Tony King were down in 418 this year. We ran into Anders with the six freshmen living on our floor when got to the elevator. Our big group headed to Pollock Commons together for dinner.

I ended up beside Chip in line for food. “I hope you don’t think I was being a hard-ass this afternoon when I chased you and the other guys out of the player’s lounge,” I said.

“I didn’t think that,” Chip replied.

“You have no idea how much work it is to play Division I football,” I explained. “I want you to do well.”

“I’m beginning to see that,” Chip replied. “How long did it take you to learn everything?”

“Learn everything?” I answered, laughing. “I’ll let you know when I’m done learning it.” I saw from the way Chip’s face fell that I needed to clarify myself. “I expect that the coaches will hand me a bunch of new plays to learn tonight, or maybe tomorrow. I learned most of the book in about nine months. I took it home this summer and committed the rest of it to memory while I was at scout camp.”

“I knew this would be hard,” Chip admitted. “...but I didn’t think it would be this difficult.”

“If you work at it every day, you’ll get there Chip,” I answered. “If you find yourself being overwhelmed, come talk to me. I’ll be glad to give you some tips. You can go into see Coach Paterno too. He helped me get myself organized last year so I could get my school work and my football done without harming either.”

“That’s good to know,” Chip said. “I guess Coach Paterno is still active with the team?”

“He helps out with counseling and academics,” I replied.

“That’s cool,” Chip responded. “I’m glad Coach Paterno is still involved.”

We reached the head of the line and started selecting our dinner entrees. “Make sure you eat up Chip,” I teased. “You don’t want to get hurt when one of those Big Ten linemen catch you. I can just see you in a few years when Michigan’s William Johnson is chasing you. William’s a big boy. I think he is around 330 pounds.”

“I can out-run someone that size,” Chip answered as he grabbed a salad.

“You would expect so…” I replied. “…but you’d be surprised. William is fast.”

“I see you put on the ‘freshman fifteen’,” Chip teased as he poked my side. He didn’t find the usual flab that the freshman fifteen produces.

“I put on about twelve pounds in the last year,” I agreed. “It’s all muscle. The trainers will get you on a program to get you nice and buff.”

“That’ll be good for getting chicks,” Chip answered. “Are you still with that girlfriend you had in the spring?”

“Kelly?” I replied. “Very definitely. Why look around when you already have the best girl in the world?”

“I’m not sure I’ve done enough research yet to declare any girl the best in the world,” Chip replied. “I think I have a lot more studying to do before I reach a conclusion like that.”

“You enjoy your research,” I answered. “Just remember what is paying for you to be here. Football and academics come first.”

Chip gave me a wink and said, “Thanks dad, I already know why I’m here. I have goals for myself.”

“Good for you,” I agreed. We followed the crowd of players to open tables. The guys in the lead of our group, my fellow sophomores, filled up the first table easily. Christian and I had a seat at the next table. Chip, Matt, Jared Gray, Jared Cantrell, Joe Ricci and David McCall joined us.

Christian and I got to know the freshmen better over dinner. Of course we knew Chip quite well from his visits and our time together at football camp. Matt Frye was in awe of this huge crowd of football players. Matt played for little Milford School District. He

explained that they had thirty-two varsity players on the team last fall. The Eagles were PIAA Class AA. Everyone played both ways, offense and defense. Matt was a wide receiver in high school in addition to playing cornerback.

I commented that at 6'-0" tall and close to 200 pounds, he must have been one of the biggest guys on his team. Matt laughed and explained that he was what his parents called "a late bloomer." He had grown nearly four inches and added twenty pounds since football finished last fall. He had out-weighed some of the linemen and linebackers last fall before he hit his growth spurt.

The coaches kept him at cornerback last fall because of his speed. Matt bragged he had 4.4 speed in the 40. He also ran track in the spring, making the state playoffs. I didn't bother to inform him that I still held the state record in the 100 meters. No one beat my record this past spring.

Joe Ricci's experience in football was quite different. Joe played for the Strath Haven Panthers, a perennial football powerhouse in southeast Pennsylvania. His fans back home were expecting him to carry on the tradition started by Strath Haven's last big star, Dan Conners. Dan, of course, was the stand-out linebacker for the Carolina Panthers in the NFL now. Joe certainly had the size to keep up with Conners. He was 6'-5" tall and weighed close to 250 pounds. He was going to be an excellent addition to our linebacking corps.

At 5'-10" and maybe 180 pounds, Jared Gray looked the part of a kicker – small. He was from another powerhouse AAA football team, the Pottsville Crimson Tide. I told Jared that I knew his team and that I had played them a few years ago in the playoffs. Jared had been in the stands at that game and teased me about my team losing to his. Hopefully Jared would help Andrew Perkins fill Cooper Barnes very capable shoes this fall.

I enjoyed getting to know my new teammates over dinner. The guys seemed like they would carry their weight in a year or two when they learned our playbook. Zack, Karol, and Jake quieted the crowded dining room when dinner was done. It was time to start indoctrinating our new recruits into the Nittany Lion ways.

Our captains called the twenty freshmen up to the front and quizzed them about their knowledge of Penn State lore. They failed the quiz miserably. Zack demanded that they sing the alma mater for the rest of the team. Jared Cantrell and David McCall attempted to lead the group in it, without success. Jake Washington instructed the recruits that their supper on Monday depended on being able to perform the alma mater to the satisfaction of us upper classmen.

Coach Burton reminded everyone that we had a team meeting at seven o'clock in the auditorium in the Lasch Building. We had about twenty minutes to get over there. There was a mass rush to get rid of our supper dishes and get to the Lasch Building. My friends and I followed the crowd as it made its way up the road to our meeting.

I settled in between Jay and Damian when we found seats in the auditorium. Coach Burton took the stage two minutes before seven and called for quiet. The lights went down and clips from the last season came up on the screen.

Coach Burton didn't start with our best work. He started off with a clip of Zack throwing an interception early in the season. He showed Shawn O'Conner getting stuffed by the defensive line when we played Purdue in the rainstorm. I made the "lowlights" reel when Coach showed me turning the wrong direction on a pass route against Ohio State and causing Zack to throw another interception.

"Ranked #8 in country today," Coach Burton intoned. "Maybe with good cause. We had some issues last season on offense, but we found ways to fix them." Coach showed a clip of Anders Voight bulling his way into the end zone on a crossing route mid-season last year. The next clip showed me skittering through Northwestern's special teams coverage and carrying the ball into the end zone when I scored on a punt return.

The crowd started to get revved up as the clips continued. They showed Zack and me combining for one of our touchdowns against Michigan State, followed by Evan's TD catch the same game. They showed, Anders, Evan, me, Aidan and Christian all catching passes on the way to our Rose Bowl win. He concluded the clips with my final touchdown to clinch the win against USC on January 1st.

"We fought through adversity and improved our offense last season with hard work and study. The offense excites me this season. We have the potential to have the most explosive offense in my time with the Penn State team," Coach Burton explained.

Coach went on to explain how he had seen Todd Blackledge and the 1982 national championship team play on his recruiting visit to the university. We had the potential to be better than them offensively. He added that we could be much better than the 1986 national championship team he was a part of. He allowed that we could be better than undefeated 1994 team led by Kerry Collins and perhaps Phil DiStefano's undefeated national championship team from two years ago. Coach Burton predicted that we would score a lot of points this season, if all of us played to our potential.

Coach briefly reviewed his outlook on our special teams. He expected us to maintain the high level of play that we had last season.

The lights dimmed again and Coach showed us more video clips. The first one was of Aaron Morano intercepting a pass and running it back for a touchdown. "Aaron Morano, All-American cornerback," Coach intoned in his best NFL Films imitation. "Gone!" The next clip showed Pete Klein slashing through a defense and dropping the ball carrier to the ground five yards in the backfield. "Peter Klein, All-American outside linebacker – gone!"

Coach showed a series of clips of Antwaan Booker, sacking the quarterback, manhandling offensive linemen and in general creating havoc in the backfield of our opponents last season. “Antwaan Booker, Outland Trophy winner and All-American defensive tackle – gone!”

“The pundits say we are going to be weak on defense this season, with good reason,” Coach Burton said. As the lights came up he continued, “Each of you on defense will need to step up your game a couple notches to cover for the absence of this men. Who will be our next All-Americans?” I noticed Coach fix his gaze on Jake Washington for a moment as he spoke. “Who will live up to that legacy?” Coach asked as he stared at Karol Zizka. “Do we have the talent to cover these losses?” Coach asked as he turned his attention to Dom “Cuch” Cuchiella. “Who will rise to the occasion? Elevate your play so you do not let your teammates and university down.”

Coach posted the current depth chart up for the team to see. There weren’t any surprises on offense. I was listed first at the slot position and second at the weak side wide receiver position behind Anders Voight. Hassan Jackson had the top spot on the strong side, followed by Aidan Nagy and Christian Hunsecker. Tanner Riggs and Alex Majerowicz backed me up in the slot.

I was pleased to see confirmation that my friend Trevor Conwell was starting at defensive end. He had earned the promotion in the spring. I was surprised to find Josh Bruno and Brendan Hayden were promoted to starters at outside linebacker. That was excellent work for sophomores.

I noticed the freshmen shifting in their seats like they thought the meeting was nearly over. I smiled to myself. I knew better.

Coach Burton was only beginning. He discussed our training schedule for the next three weeks, personal conduct expected of all team members, our drug and alcohol policy, our sexual conduct policy, and how to handle personal confrontations. This had been a concern when some hot-heads had let a sidewalk dispute escalate into a confrontation a few years ago. Coach Burton cautioned us to just walk away from a fight off the field. We had nothing to gain and everything to lose if we confronted unruly fans. None of us needed to visit the inside of a police station and jeopardize our careers or the university’s national standing.

Coach Burton reminded us that we were STUDENT-athletes, not simply athletes. The university was rightly proud of our 80% graduation rate among football players. We had to keep up with our studies while we learned to perform on the football field.

The formal meeting finally ended around 8:30 pm. We met briefly with our coordinator. Coach Schroeder handed out updates to our playbooks, as I expected. I had about twenty-five new plays to learn in the next few days before we started practicing.

Zack Hayes invited Jay and me to stop by his apartment after the meeting. He was inviting friends over to relax and shoot the bull for awhile before bedtime. I enjoyed the stories and tall tales we told each other while we relaxed and enjoyed some beer together. Jay and I headed back to the dorm around 11:00 pm.

A summer of getting up early made it easy for me to make the team's eight o'clock breakfast. Damian wasn't nearly as alert as he staggered to breakfast with me. We went back to our room and changed into our training clothes left over from last year. A year of working out on Coach Collins' training plan had done its job. Damian and I both filled our clothes to nearly bursting. Thankfully we would be issued new clothes this morning. We grabbed our playbooks and a gym bag of things for our lockers at the Lasch Building and headed out for practice.

Anders Voight had all the freshmen gathered together at the elevator when Damian and I headed out. My buddy was taking good care of his charges. Damian reminded the freshmen that being on time for Coach Burton meant arrive five minutes before the appointed time. Damian and I dropped our bags off at our lockers and then joined the group outside on the practice fields.

The big crowd of players milled around while we waited for the coaches to arrive. Coach Burton told us last night that this year's Nittany Lions had 109 people on the team. Coach Burton, his coordinators and other assistants came out the door from the Lasch Building at six minutes before nine. Our season was officially beginning.

Things started off with warm-up exercises. The coaches split us up into four groups after that so we could take care of assorted tests and housekeeping functions that morning. I was assigned to the group that Karol Zizka was leading. We went inside to the locker room and equipment room first.

Larry Fitzgerald, our equipment manager, issued us the necessary equipment, towels and clothing for the next three weeks of practice. He called the freshman over to pick their jersey numbers.

Chip was ebullient when he returned. "I got to my number!" he crowed. I remembered that Chip wore number 9 when I saw him play in the past. I congratulated my friend. I understood how nice it was to keep the number you were used to. The freshmen looked around the locker room until they found their lockers.

Karol led our group outside when we were done with equipment. Our next stop was testing speed. The coaches ran the group through the 40 yard run, the 100 yard run and the mile run. I was pleased when I matched my best time ever in the 40 – 4.30 seconds. I beat last year's 100 yard time by 0.02 seconds with a time of 9.59 seconds. I improved on last year's mile run time. I did it in 4:42. My year of work-outs was paying off.

Karol took us to the next set of drills that tested agility and leaping ability. I was still able to reach 43 inches in the vertical jump. That was a useful skill when it came time to out-jump the defensive back for possession of the football.

Our final station for the morning was inside in the weight room. Paul Collins, the conditioning coach, weighed and measured us and then tested our physical strength. I was still 6'-4 1/2" and weighed in at 208 pounds. Paul was delighted at my strength. He didn't expect that he would need to make many changes to the training program he gave me last winter.

The group headed to the Training Table for lunch and then to offensive or defensive team meetings for an hour. The coaches had us do ninety minutes of stretching and agility drills in the afternoon. They dismissed us around four o'clock. The team dinner was at six o'clock. My friends and I showered in the locker room and changed into clean clothes before we headed back to the dorm room.

The freshmen did a credible job singing the alma mater under David McCall's and Jared Cantrell's direction. The rest of the team allowed them to have supper. I was pleased when Coach Burton announced the fastest members of the team after dinner. I beat everyone with my 4.30 second 40. David McCall was second with 4.31 seconds. Shawn Byrd came third with 4.33 seconds. Half a dozen more guys were within 0.02 seconds of Shawn's time.

We spent half the evening in position meetings before the coaches finally gave us time off. Most of the team headed for the weight room to get some light training in before bedtime.

Tuesday brought more drills and conditioning exercises along with meetings. Kelly commiserated with me when we IMed later in the evening. Both of us were counting down the days until we were reunited.

Football and conditioning drills continued into Wednesday morning. After lunch we finally started practicing plays. I worked with Zack and the first team most of the time in the slot. Occasionally I was sent to Jay and Glenn to work at the weak side receiver spot with the second team. The ninety minute afternoon practice was a walk through without pads. I enjoyed it anyway. It felt like we were really doing some football work. Thursday, Friday and Saturday brought more of the same – drills, walk throughs and meetings.

I went in to see Coach Burton after Friday's practice. I nearly forgot my promise last May to try to get tickets for the Phillies' Chase Utley to bring his nephew to one of our games in the fall. After confirming that I hadn't done anything improper like exchanging favors for these tickets, Coach Burton agreed to arrange to get him and his nephew access to a university box for either the Illinois or Michigan State games. I sent off a letter to the Phillies second baseman that evening inviting him to be the university's guest at one of the games.

I received e-mails from Jeremy, Ed, Hal, Jake and Drew over the weekend. Their first week had been similar to mine. Ed had excellent news from Coach Meyer. He was in the running to back up Elijah Carter, Florida's Heisman hopeful and starting quarterback. I fired off an e-mail congratulating Ed. Jeremy's news was good too. He was practicing with the first string at Notre Dame as the weak side linebacker.

Zack Hayes and his roommates invited some of the team for a quiet party on Saturday evening to help everyone unwind. We had some beers and munchies while we hung out and talked. Zack made sure the freshmen were invited. He wanted the new guys felt like a part of our team.

Monday morning we received pads, helmets and game uniforms. It was time for some hitting! I worked with the Zack Hayes and the first string in the morning. I made some good catches when it was my turn. I split time during the afternoon practice between the first string and the second string. Surprisingly, I had more luck catching passes against the first string defense than the second string. David McCall was lined up on me when I played the second string. His speed cut down my possibilities a lot.

Tuesday afternoon was our first special teams practice. I took about a third of the punt returns. My blocking looked a little ragged, but that was to be expected. About half the members of the return team were freshmen. They would need time to get their assignments down. Christian Hunsecker and Jared Cantrell took the remainder of the punt returns in practice. They did a good job with their returns.

Tanner Riggs and David McCall split the kick returns with me. Tanner looked solid on the returns. David had trouble adjusting to the ball. I found out that Jared Gray, our new kicker, had a strong leg. He booted a couple kick-offs into the end zone. He would be a good back up for Andrew Perkins.

The first string offense improved as the week's practices continued. Zack perfected his timing with Hassan, Anders, Evan, Shawn and me. We could beat our first string defense deep consistently by the end of the week. That was good for our offense but not so good for our team. The other Big Ten teams would test our defense deep too.

Saturday afternoon's scrimmage went well from me and my friends on offense. I made six catches for 142 yards and two touchdowns in the three quarters I played in the game.

Our offense was nearly unstoppable. It wasn't surprising. Except for me, everyone on offense had been playing together for at least a couple years. Zack Hayes was in complete command in the huddle. Everyone knew their responsibilities and executed them properly. All the parts of our offensive machine meshed and functioned as one.

The afternoon felt perfect. You could feel the joy at playing football that all of us shared in that huddle. The last time I had this same feeling was three years earlier when I was in eleventh grade and our team was on its way to winning the state championship. The

feelings of camaraderie and trust were there just like with Ed, Drew, Greg, and my high school teammates that year before I blew out my knee.

The downside of this was that the first string offense thrashed the first string defense thoroughly. They were going to have to improve their game this summer if they were to do their job in the fall.

I was in a good mood when I was finishing dressing after my shower that afternoon. Ryan Reynolds, one of our grad assistants, came out and collared Anders and me.

“Coach Burton wants to meet with the two of you at 8:30 Monday morning in his office,” Ryan explained.

“What up?” Anders asked.

“Anything to worry about?” I added.

“You guys know as much as I do now. I’m just the messenger,” Ryan replied.

Anders and I talked about what the coach might want, but neither of us had any idea. Anders and I finished dressing and then headed back to Hartranft Hall. The coaches had given us the rest of Saturday night off. Some of the guys from our floor decided to go downtown for dinner.

Trevor, Tony, Damian, Chip, Jared Gray, Anders, Christian, GJ and I headed for the Penn State Diner. Our group decided to catch a movie after dinner. There weren’t any big parties planned for the evening since we were decidedly short on females this weekend. We headed over to Zack’s apartment for a few drinks and to relax after the movie. Real Saturday evening fun would have to wait another week until the rest of the students came back to campus. Freshmen would start arriving on Wednesday and Thursday. The rest of the students came back on Friday and Saturday.

Sunday was the one day of the week we got to rest. Damian and I slept until eleven in the morning. Damian and I went for a swim after lunch then headed for the player’s lounge at the Lasch Building. We played some pool (badly); foosball (we dominated) and finally NFL Football on the XBox in the lounge. Damian and I were embarrassed by our poor showing. I simply don’t have enough time on the computer to be good at the game.

Anders and I showed up at the reception area promptly at 8:25 on Monday morning to see Coach Burton. Coach Burton showed us into his office. Coach Schroeder and Coach Adams were already seated at Coach Burton’s couch. Coach indicated that we should have a seat.

“Thank you for coming in gentlemen,” Coach Burton said after we were seated. “I’ll get straight to the point. I called the two of you in to discuss some changes we plan to make in the lineup.” Coach paused a few seconds and observed us. Neither of us reacted. “Kyle, we are putting you in at split end on the depth chart. Anders, you will take over in the slot. Is that understood guys?”

“OK” I replied. A shiver ran down my spine. I was going to be a starter.

“What ever you say Coach,” Anders said. “You tell me where to line up and I’ll do it.”

I looked over at my friend. I was surprised to see Anders smile when he answered Coach. I was pleased with my own success, but I felt sad at the same time. Anders had always helped me with anything I needed in the past year. Why did my success have to come at his expense?

Coach Burton smiled and stared at me. I glanced over at Coach Adams and Coach Schroeder who were staring at me too. What did they want? What was going on?

“Coach, can I ask a question?” I asked politely. “Why are you making this switch?”

All three coaches burst out laughing. Coach Adams held his hand out. Coach Burton and Coach Schroeder each handed him a dollar.

“What?” I asked, totally confused now.

“Ten seconds,” Coach Burton replied. I looked at him expectantly, still perplexed. “I would have sworn you would ask ‘Why?’ sooner than that. The three of us had a bet. Paul won.”

“I’m sorry I’m such a nuisance asking why all the time,” I replied.

“It’s OK Kyle,” Coach Burton said. “You keep us on our toes. I want you out wide where we can do more things with your speed. Both of you are very good working the middle of the field. I think we’ll get some interesting match-ups this way.”

“So I won’t be in the middle anymore?” I asked.

“No, you’ll see action there too,” Coach Burton explained. “I want our opponents in the Big Ten to look at our depth chart and assume they will always find you outside. The first three or four games will confirm that impression. When we hit the heart of our Big Ten schedule, our opponents are going to suddenly find you blazing through the middle of their defense, getting more mismatches. Does that explain what we’re planning?”

“Yes coach,” I replied. “Thanks for explaining it to me.”

Anders and I excused ourselves and headed for the locker room to get ready for the morning practice.

"I'm really sorry man," I apologized to Anders. "I never expected to take your starting spot."

"No sweat man," Anders replied. "It's always been a matter of time until they named you a starter."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"There was never any question that you'd be a starter with the talent you have," Anders explained. "The only question was when the coaches were comfortable with your knowledge of the offense. I guess they're comfortable now."

"It isn't fair," I said. "You know the offense better than me. Hell, you helped me learn a lot of it. How's this going to look for your future? Scouts in the NFL won't be very impressed if you can't make starter in four seasons."

"My future in the NFL?" Anders said, laughing. "I'm not fast. You know that. I'm big by college standards but not by NFL standards. I weigh 198 pounds. I can push around college defensive backs, but I'll never make it against NFL backs. I'm slow and too small for the NFL. My 'NFL future' is to sit in an easy chair and cheer my more talented college friends when they play on Sundays. That includes you in a few years."

"I don't know about that Anders," I protested.

"You have 4.3 speed and weigh what? 210 pounds?"

"208 pounds," I confirmed.

"You have an NFL future," Ander countered. "You've got size and speed like Moss and T.O. You have a NFL future. They'll be all over you in three years when you're available in the draft."

"I'm not counting on that," I replied. "I learned not to plan too far ahead a few years ago when I blew out my knee."

"That's smart Kyle," Anders agreed.

"The future I'm planning for in football is to coach," I explained. "Playing is just a bonus that will help me with my future career. Anyway, I'm sorry I stole the job I think you deserve."

"I listened to you all spring say how happy you were to play in the slot," Anders said. "You said, 'I'll be on the field for over half the plays. The slot is almost the same as

being a starter in our offense.’ I believe you were right. I’ll be fine with being the slot receiver.”

“I owe you for all your help,” I replied. “You helped me steal your starting spot.”

Anders stopped in the hallway and clapped me on the shoulder. “You didn’t steal my spot, you earned it Kyle,” Anders explained. “This isn’t something you should apologize for. You should celebrate this. You’re a starter now!”

“OK” I agreed. I still wasn’t comfortable with taking Anders’ place. Anders seemed fine with it. I promised myself to try to always remember his selfless attitude. Put your team first. That was another lesson I needed to learn from my friend.

Zack Hayes gave me a big smile and a thumbs-up when I got to the locker room. Obviously Zack knew this was coming. Hassan, Evan, Shawn and JT, other seniors starting on our team, made a point of congratulating me that morning. My fellow sophomores all made a big deal about my promotion too. Max Rosen, Aidan Nagy and Alex Majerowicz, all juniors, made a point of ignoring me that morning. I didn’t blame them. It’s embarrassing to be passed over by a younger, less experienced player like me.

Coach Burton, true to his word, put me in at the slot almost as much as at split end in the day’s two practices. Things really didn’t feel different for me during practice.

Tuesday was Penn State Media Day. I was one of about twenty-five team members asked to be on the field after lunch. Reporters from papers and TV stations from all over Pennsylvania showed up to interview us. I did interviews with all the Harrisburg, York and Lancaster TV stations as well as both Lancaster papers, the Lebanon paper and the Philadelphia Inquirer. I had fun answering all the questions, though they did get repetitive after awhile.

Kelly reported her travel plans on Tuesday night when we IMed. She begged her dad to take off from work on Friday so she could come that day. He agreed. She would arrive around lunchtime. I was working from 8 am to noon at the Natatorium to help with freshmen swim tests and would have time to meet her after that. I had practice at 1:30 pm, so we would have little time together that afternoon. All dorm residents had house dinners and orientation that evening.

We noticed traffic pick up around campus during our Wednesday morning practice. The freshmen were arriving that day. Damian and I found our floor crowded with befuddled freshmen and their parents when we stopped by our room after morning practice and before our lunch.

It was nice to see all the pretty freshmen girls wandering around campus. More than a few of my friends checked out the talent, looking for prospects for parties this fall. I wondered if Damian would manage to find himself a nice girl like I had.

Coach Burton had the team switch to our normal afternoon practice schedule on Thursday. The freshmen on the team needed time to do the normal orientation events to get ready for classes.

I met with Dr. Henderson, my advisor, on Thursday morning. He reviewed my class schedule with me. He made a point of reminding me to concentrate on my studies this fall. He didn't want me getting into academic trouble because I was wasting too much time on something frivolous like football. I assured him that I would do well this fall.

On Friday morning I went in and spent the morning working as a lifeguard at the outdoor pool while we did swim tests for the incoming freshmen. College swim tests are just as boring as scout swim tests. They just take longer. It wasn't much fun but it was going to be nice to put roughly forty dollars in my bank account.

Kelly called me as I was leaving the Natatorium. She and her dad were on the Mount Nittany Expressway now and would arrive on campus in fifteen or twenty minutes. I told her I was going back to my room and would meet her at Pollock Commons by the housing office.

We made quite a scene hugging and kissing when we met at the end of the check-in line. Bill Sr. was correct but cool to me when he greeted me. I hung out with the O'Keefes until Kelly finished checking in and getting her room key. Kelly and I walked over to Beaver Hall while Bill moved the car closer. Housing switched Kelly and Jen down the hall a couple rooms this year. They were staying in room 313 this year. The three of us spent about forty-five minutes moving all Kelly's things into her room.

Kelly stayed in her room to unpack when Bill and I headed downstairs to the car for the last two boxes.

When we were alone in the elevator Bill said, "My wife and I were extremely disappointed with your behavior in June Kyle. We expected better from you."

"May I speak honestly sir?" I asked.

"You may," Bill answered.

"You and your wife probably had unrealistic expectations of Kelly and me," I said. Bill started to interrupt. I waved him off. "Please hear me out sir. June wasn't the first time I was intimate with your daughter, nor was I the first man she was intimate with. This is the twenty-first century. Something like 85-90% of men and women our age are sexually active. No one in my circle of friends or Kelly's circle of friends is a virgin. No one."

“How do I know you care about my daughter’s welfare and happiness?” Bill asked.
“That you’re serious and aren’t simply using her?”

“If sex were all I wanted Bill...” I explained. “I’ve had my share of one night stands. If that was all I wanted, I’d be long gone by now. I love Kelly. I plan to continue seeing her... and making love to her in the future. Your daughter and I understand about the body’s cycles. We’re careful to make sure Kelly doesn’t get pregnant.” I looked Bill square in the eye. “I want you to understand something. If the worst happens and Kelly gets pregnant, nothing you say will stop me from marrying your daughter.”

I didn’t blink when I said it and neither did Bill.

“You believe this relationship with my daughter is serious?” Bill asked. “Do you intend to marry her some day?”

“We’re only nineteen,” I responded. “Kelly and I have talked about our long term future. We hope our relationship grows and that we can talk about marriage when we finish college. The two of us are serious about that.”

“I guess that is the best you can do for assurances right now,” Bill said. “I hope the two of you make this work.”

“So do I Bill, so do I,” I answered. Bill shook my hand before we got off the elevator. He was friendlier after we had our chat. Bill, Kelly and I grabbed some lunch at the dining hall before Bill headed back to Pittsburgh. Kelly had a meeting with her advisor after lunch and I had practice, so we kissed and promised to get together later in the evening after the dorm orientation sessions were finished.

Coach Burton kept Friday’s practice light. We prepared for the morning scrimmage and then broke into position groups to meet with our assistant coaches for half an hour. Everyone was cleaned up and back to the dorms in plenty of time for the 4:00 pm house meetings.

Anders convened our house meeting in the open area by the elevators on our floor. He greeted everyone and welcomed them to fourth floor Hartranft. He explained that we had fifty-six people living on our floor at the moment – fifty-two in rooms and four persons in the study room.

I was surprised to see Joel Peterson and Cameron Miller at our house meeting. I knew they wanted to move into the Omega Chi Epsilon frat house last spring. I gave them a wave when they spotted me across the hallway.

Anders began his welcome speech. “For those of you new to Hartranft, you are rooming with some of the football team. Eighteen freshman and sophomores, plus myself are members of the Nittany Lions squad. This includes our starting left defensive end, Trevor Conwell.” Trevor gave a small wave to the crowd to acknowledge his

introduction. “Weak side linebacker, Josh Bruno lives with us.” Josh waved his acknowledgement. Our “Starting split end Kyle Martin lives with us too.” I acknowledged by nodding my head to the group. Anders started on with his speech but I interrupted him.

“Anders is being too modest,” I explained. “He’s the slot receiver on the first team and is one of the keys to making our offense go.”

“Kyle is exaggerating,” Anders responded. “Anyway, those of you new here, don’t put the football players on a pedestal. We aren’t anybody special.”

“Yeah,” Cameron called out. “They stink just as much as the rest of us in the morning before they take showers.”

“Thank you, uh...” Anders replied.

“Cameron,” my friend answered.

“Thank you Cameron,” Anders said. “Continuing on...” Anders had everyone in the house introduce themselves, tell us where they were from and what we were majoring in. I recognized a few of the other sophomores in our group. The remainder of the group were freshmen.

The whole group headed for Pollock Commons and the dining hall when this was done. Residential Life had set up different sections of the dining hall, one for each house. Anders insisted that last year’s residents had to sit with freshmen during dinner. Damian and I joined a couple of the new guys. They introduced themselves as Reed Davis and Elliot Hawkins. They roomed down at the end of the hall in room 401.

Elliot was a stocky, sandy brown haired guy from Ebensburg. He was majoring in aeronautical engineering. Reed was a short, thin kid from Scranton. He looked like the stereotypical geek, complete with the short hair and thick unstylish glasses. The stereotype wasn’t far off the mark. Reed was a computer science major.

Elliot peppered Damian and me with questions about football. He had lettered three years as an offensive tackle for the Central Cambria Red Raiders. Surprisingly Reed was knowledgeable about football too. He had worked on his high school’s video crew, taping practices and games for the team.

After dinner Anders talked about housing policies in the dorm, alcohol and drug abuse, hazing, sexual harassment and no means no. It took Anders about an hour to cover all the information he was required to give us. It was pretty much the same as last year’s briefing.

I gave Kelly a call when Damian and I got back to our room. Her house meeting was breaking up. I promised I’d be over in a couple minutes.

After I hung up Damian announced, “I’m going out for awhile this evening. If you and Kelly want some privacy, you’re welcome to our room. I probably won’t be back ‘til 10:30 or 11:00. I’ve got someone I need to meet.” He gave me a wink.

“Meet?” I asked. “Like Kelly and I are ‘meeting’?”

Damian just gave me a big smile and said, “I’ll be at least three hours. You two have fun,” as he went out the door.

I headed over to Beaver Hall and picked up Kelly. We scrapped our plans to go downtown and headed back to my room. Damian’s generous offer left us plenty of time that evening to celebrate our reunion. After extensive foreplay and Kelly having multiple orgasms, I let Kelly ride my rod to repeated climaxes. We still had forty-five minutes when we completed our coupling, so we went again. Kelly let me take her doggie style for a nice change of pace. The evening was a great way to start off our fall semester.

Damian came in after eleven pm. His mood was mellow. I teased, “Did your ‘meeting’ go well this evening?”

“Meeting?” Damian replied, “Yeah, my meeting was very satisfying. I got myself satisfied twice.”

“Good for you,” I replied. “Are you ever going to introduce me to your girlfriend?”

“Girlfriend? Let’s just say ‘friend with privileges,’ that’s more accurate,” Damian replied. “I’m not one to kiss and tell.”

“Whatever you call it,” I said. “It’s a hell of a good way to start the semester, isn’t it?”

“That it is roomie...” Damian agreed. “That it is.”

Our game day schedule was accelerated on Saturday morning, since our scrimmage started at nine am. Breakfast was at the Training Table at 7:30. Coach Burton called the first string offense and the second string defense the Blue squad for the scrimmage. We played the White squad, our second string offense and first string defense. Our third string players would play as back-ups on both teams in the third and fourth quarters.

Zack and our offense lit up the scoreboard in our thirty minutes of football. We scored 31 points while we had possession of the ball. Jay and the second string offense didn’t so as well. They managed to score 21 points on our defense. The second string defense did a good job containing Jay, Christian, Tanner, Aidan Nagey, Wyatt and Damian. David McCall made a brilliant interception of one of Jay’s passes.

Glenn Korbel took over from Zack in the second half. Colin O'Shea quarterbacked the White squad for the third quarter. Each managed to score a touchdown while they played. Chip Brinton took over from Colin in the fourth quarter. Chip looked good leading his squad. He managed to score a touchdown and was driving for another when time ran out on the scrimmage. The final score was 38-35 with my Blue squad winning. Our guys looked ready for our next test – our game against Florida International in seven days.

Kelly waited for me so we could have lunch together after the scrimmage. The two of us went down to the bookstore after that to buy our books for the semester. I helped Kelly carry her stack of books back to her dorm. Kelly headed off to see her advisor. I dropped my books off at my room and then went to the Natatorium for the rest of the afternoon. I had promised Mr. Coleman that I would lifeguard for a few hours.

Kelly and I went out downtown for dinner to Baby's for burgers and shakes. Cameron Miller and Joel Peterson absolutely begged Kelly and me to come to the Omega Chi's kick off the semester party on Saturday evening.

Cam introduced us to Cole Sellers, the new president for Omega Chi. Cole recognized our names from the Thon fundraiser last year. It seems that the final report to the frat said Kelly and I were the top two fundraisers for the frat. That's how I found out that Aaron Morano, and Antwaan Booker increased their gifts when they redeemed their pledges. They each donated an extra \$5000 to the Thon. Cole wanted to know if the football team planned to get involved in the Thon again. I promised to talk with Zack Hayes and get back to Cole.

I wish I could tell you what Kelly and I did that night. I don't know exactly. I remember Kelly and I had some beers while we were at Omega Chi and danced some. I'm told Kelly and I ended up the night at Zack's apartment where we had more to drink. On Sunday Anders told me that we were quite inebriated and that he helped Kelly and me get back to our dorm rooms early on Sunday morning.

Judging by the way my head felt on Sunday when I finally got out of bed, Kelly and I had consumed a large quantity of beer the previous evening (morning?).

I bumped into Anders in the bathroom when I went for my shower.

"You and Kelly had a lot to drink last night," Anders said after greeting me.

"Yeah, I know," I answered. "My head is killing me."

"I'm an RA. You know I'm supposed to write up kids who come in drunk, right?" Anders asked. I nodded my head in agreement. "I'm not supposed to help you drag your sorry ass home and put you to bed."

"You did?" I asked. I really didn't remember that at all.

“Yeah,” Anders answered. “I had to help you and Kelly back from Zack’s apartment. Thankfully Kelly’s roommate was there to help put her to bed.”

“That’s Jen,” I confirmed.

“I don’t know where in the hell Damian was at two am, but he wasn’t around to take care of you,” Ander said. “I had to undress you and put you to bed myself. You were pushing friendship a little far last night Kyle.”

“Sorry,” I apologized as sincerely as I could. “I didn’t mean for this to happen.”

“See that it doesn’t happen again,” Anders replied. “No one on the team minds if you have a drink, just remember moderation is the key.” I agreed with my friend and promised again to behave myself at parties.

After I treated myself for my hangover and cleaned up, I called my sweetie. We met for a late brunch and then retired to her room to recuperate, to avoid bright lights and loud noises and to read the Sunday paper together.

I found an interesting e-mail while we were hanging out in my room later in the afternoon. I announced, “I got an e-mail from Ed Fritz.”

“What’s up with Ed?” Kelly answered.

“He’s griping about how training camp ended up,” I said. “He hoped to make QB #2. Last week he thought he had out played DeShaun. Coach Meyers put him at #3 yesterday after their scrimmage.”

“Is DeShaun the guy who transferred into Florida this summer?” Kelly asked.

“No,” I replied. “DeShaun Williamson is the senior who got us resupplied with beer during spring break. Ed is ahead of Terrence Walker, the kid who transferred in.”

“Was Ed being realistic to think he could beat a senior when he’s a red-shirt freshman?” Kelly asked.

“Jay did it here,” I replied.

“Well, that’s Jay,” Kelly countered. “Is Ed really as good a quarterback as Jay?”

“I have played with both guys,” I answered. “Ed is every bit Jay’s equal.”

“What are you going to write back to Ed?” Kelly asked.

The two of us sat down and composed our reply: “Chin up buddy. Cream always rises to the top. Keep studying and practicing. Your opportunity will come some day. You still have four years to be QB #1. Love, Kyle & Kelly”

I was feeling better by the time dinner was over, thankfully. Coach Burton wanted the starters to attend the Lion Ambassador’s ‘Be a Part from the Start’ rally at the Bryce Jordan Center. I threw on one of my game jerseys and headed over to the Jordan Center.

Zack and I got a chance to talk with Gary Stanton, the gymnast who plays the Nittany Lion while the Ambassadors taught the half full arena of freshmen Penn State lore, cheers and songs. We football players hung out when the Lion headed out to entertain the crowd. Zack Hayes, Evan Foster, Shawn O’Conner and I represented our offense. Jake Washington, Trevor Conwell, Karol Zizka and Cuch Cuchiella represented our defense. All twenty freshmen football players huddled with us while we waited for our introductions.

Coach Burton introduced us to cheers and applause from the audience. Zack, of course, got the loudest cheers from the crowd. The crowd politely applauded as the freshmen football players were introduced en masse. The atmosphere of the pep rally was electric. It was a fun way to spend the evening.

I hung out with Chip, Jared and David McCall during the dance outside after the rally was over. They seemed to have fun checking out all the freshmen girls. I got hit on by a few girls. I was polite but let them know I was unavailable.

I headed for my room and bed when the dance was over. I was psyched for the start of classes in the morning. I was looking forward to classes and to the first game, only six days away. I thought I would have a good year this year, so let it begin!

(To be continued)

Chapter 22

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I rolled over and ignored the sound of the first alarm that rang at 6:45 in the morning. Life is good. Damian had an eight o'clock Psych class Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I only had one eight o'clock class this semester – Scuba Certification on Thursdays.

Kelly and I had coordinated our schedules as much as we could. We had History 20 – American History up to 1877 at 9:05 on Mondays and Wednesdays. We met at the Pollock Dining Hall at eight o'clock for breakfast. We headed for the Wartik Labs and our first class. Kelly and I made our way through campus hand in hand, enjoying the glorious mid-70's late summer weather.

I was surprised after we found room 110 and had seats. The professor for the class wasn't at all what I expected. I understood most introductory level courses were taught by grad students or very junior instructors hoping to make professor and get tenure someday. The instructor, a stout, compact woman of 5'-1" and maybe 140 pounds, had short dirty blond hair and sparkling blue eyes. She began her introduction.

"I'm Dr. Katherine Brennan, professor of military history for the Pennsylvania State University. Welcome to History 20." She paused briefly and scanned the classroom. I noticed more than a few of my fellow students were surprised by her. She smiled. "I know what you are thinking. 'What in the hell is a full professor doing here? Who did she piss off to get stuck with you?' I'm here by choice!" She smiled and paused to gauge our reactions.

"I teach mostly older undergrads and grad students in my courses. I always like to teach one course with younger students, such as you. You're not jaded yet. I love to watch when the light clicks on and you get it – history. Get ready people. We are going to launch ourselves on a tour of the first couple hundred years of history in our country. Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a fun ride together."

With that, Dr. Brennan launched into the day's lecture. Kelly and I shared a look. This professor's warmth, humor and love of teaching history were infectious. This was going to be fun!

It was. The fifty-five minute class passed much too quickly. Kelly and I parted with a kiss. I had to head to Economics 4 in the Thomas Building. Kelly went back to her room for an hour until she had to head off to Electrical Engineering West and her philosophy class.

I hoped I would get a more dynamic instructor for economics than Dr. Noble was last semester. I knew economics was important for me to understand if I expected to teach kids social studies and history, but man, it was soooo boring last semester.

I expected my fears were coming true when the professor walked in the front of the big auditorium. He was a short bald man who looked to be in his late forties or early fifties. I initial impression seemed confirmed when the little man introduced himself as Dr. Frederick Blanchard in a high nasal voice. I groaned silently to myself. How in the hell would I stay awake for this guy?

Fifty-five minutes later I was chagrinned to find I had judged my professor much too quickly. After briefly outlining the course contents, Dr. Blanchard launched into an explanation of how economics affected nearly everything in our lives. He illustrated his examples clearly and with a touch of humor. If all his lectures were like his first one, I wouldn't need two cups of coffee just to stay awake like I did last semester.

I relaxed at my room reading the Daily Collegian. I was upbeat when I met Kelly back at her room after her philosophy class. We grabbed lunch and then relaxed together at her room until it was time for our next classes. Kelly had golf for an hour and fifteen minutes. I had Poly Sci 3 – Intro to Comparative Politics at the Forum.

Dr. Sally Hewitt was the professor for my Poly Sci class. We would meet Mondays and Wednesdays at the Forum for our big lectures. On Fridays we met with one of her grad assistants in a small class. I was assigned to Brian Kelley's 9:05 class at 207 Hammond. Dr. Hewitt seemed like an interesting lecturer. I shouldn't have trouble; I was interested in the subject too.

I headed for football practice after Poly Sci. Normally Tuesday was the day the coaches went over the game plan for Saturday's game. Since we didn't have game videos to review, Coach Burton presented us with the game plan for our game against Florida International.

Florida International was a FBS team (old I-A) but wasn't highly regarded. They were in the Sun Belt Conference, not one of the powerhouse conferences. Our arrangement with Florida International was simple. They came to our stadium for us to beat up on them and we paid them a half a million dollars. Our team sold out our 107,000 seat stadium, made tons of money for the athletic department and we got to fine tune our team before our real season started in a couple weeks.

I'd checked on-line on Sunday to see how FIU ranked. FIU didn't show up in any of the rankings of the Sunbelt Conference last year for top rushers, passers or receivers. I didn't find them in the conference rankings until I looked under scoring. One guy on their team was tied for 29th in scoring in their conference with 24 points. The other guy was tied for 33rd with 18 points. I'd outscored their top two scorers put together last season and I wasn't top scorer on our team! They were going to have their work cut out for them.

Coach Burton praised FIU's top running back and quarterback. He warned us we had to be careful with them. Some of the older team members joked as Coach Burton unveiled the game plan that he sounded just like Coach Paterno, praising each opponent before we

beat them. He ended with a pointed reminder. A few years ago I-AA Appalachian State beat highly regarded Michigan in their season opener. Michigan never recovered their poise that season. Coach Burton preached “Never underestimate your opponent.”

I hurried to clean up after practice. I needed to be in front of the dinner line at the Training Table. I had class at six o’clock. My NAUI Scuba Certification course met on Monday evenings. I had permission from the coaches to be a few minutes late for evening meetings. My class wasn’t over until 7:20 pm. I headed up to the Natatorium after I gobbled down dinner.

I changed into my swimsuit in the locker room and headed for the indoor pool where I expected the class to be held. I didn’t find a scuba class. Denise, the receptionist at the front desk told me that my class was upstairs in one of the meeting rooms. I hurried up, arriving a couple minutes after the six pm start time.

I found the room and ducked inside. The other people in the class were seated at tables, watching our instructor. I pleased to see that Mr. Coleman, my boss, was teaching the class.

“Have a seat Kyle,” Mr. Coleman said, pointing to an empty seat in front.

I noticed I had made another mistake. No one else in the course was dressed to swim that night. I guess I didn’t pay attention to the information on-line for the course. Fortunately, it wasn’t a big deal.

Mr. Coleman explained that we would not be in the water at all that day. We had a lot to learn about diving before we put on tanks and went in the water. Mr. Coleman went over the course schedule and then talked about the requirements to become certified as an open water diver.

We would complete all the requirements except for the open water diving test. We could arrange to do that through the university in the spring when water conditions would be warmer or we could take our partial certification home and complete it at home during the summer with another instructor.

Mr. Coleman discussed the risks and rewards of scuba, the equipment required, and physical requirements to dive safely. We would get in the water on Thursday morning. We would practice our skills snorkeling before we used air tanks for real dives. I expected that I would have no problems with the snorkeling section. I had taught Snorkeling BSA a couple times at scout camp to help my brother.

I changed and headed for the Lasch Building when class was done. I arrived about fifteen minutes after the receivers meeting had started. I settled in and listened as Coach Adams briefed us on what to expect from Florida International d-backs on Saturday. He took time after the meeting was done to review the part I missed while I was at class. I did my daily workout and run before I headed back to my dorm room. I gave Kelly a call

before bedtime to say good night and tell her that I loved her. We made plans to meet for breakfast on Tuesday.

Kelly and I met at the dining hall at 9:00 on Tuesday morning. I headed off to 207 Sackett Building for my Math 111 calculus course. I was pleased to see Dr. Gowavaram was teaching this course again. He was a good lecturer. I was also pleased to not see Bai Huo Wen, the grad assistant who “helped” me last fall with Math 110. We only had 39 students in the course, so there was no need for grad students to do individual instruction. We would meet Tuesdays and Thursdays for 50 minutes a session.

Kelly met me in front of Sackett Building when my class was over. We headed east for our next class, English 134 – American Comedy. We walked across campus using the IT building skywalk to get over Atherton Avenue in the center of town. Our classroom in the Leonhard Building was located on the east side of campus near the White Golf Course.

Our instructor was assistant professor Debra Pitts. She was a very pretty blonde haired woman in her early thirties. Watching her teach was going to be real easy on the eyes. I was going to have to be careful not to stare too much. After all, my girlfriend would be sitting beside me in the class.

We would have a lot of reading for the class, starting with Mark Twain. We would cover all the modern comedy writers in America in the next sixteen weeks. We would also have essays and analysis papers on each of the books we read over the course of the semester. Kelly and I agreed that we should have fun together with this course.

Kelly and I headed back to Pollock Commons for lunch. Kelly had to head back across campus for Golf. I went to the Lasch Building to work out and study film of Florida International.

I stopped off at the academic center to arrange for a tutor to help me with Math 111. There wasn't any sense waiting until I got in trouble. I passed the academic honor board on the way. I paused to look at the board. Kyle David Martin stood out prominently on the Dean's List. I very much wanted to keep my name there where it belonged this semester. I talked with one of the assistants at the center. I asked if Kevin Lee, my tutor from last year, was available. He said he would try to get Kevin, but couldn't guarantee it. He would have Kevin or whoever would tutor me call in a few days.

Kevin Lee called me Wednesday night. He was going to be my tutor again. We compared schedules and agreed to meet Tuesdays and Thursday after lunch so I could work on my calculus homework while Dr. Gowavaram's lecture was still fresh in my head.

I was reading the first book for American Comedy on Wednesday evening after Kevin Lee called when our room's phone rang again. I answered it on the second ring.

“Hello, Is Damian there?” a female voice I didn’t recognize asked when I answered the phone.

“He’s over at the Lasch Building working out right now,” I explained. “Would you like to leave a message?”

“Tell him Mel called,” she replied. “He has my number.”

“OK, I’ll give him the message.” I replied. She thanked me and said good bye. I made a note for my roommate and set it on his desk.

Damian returned a half hour later. “You got a message while you were out,” I said. “Who’s Mel?”

“Mel called? Cool!” Damian said. I gave Damian a quizzical look. “Her name’s Melanie. She’s a friend from high school.”

Raising my eyebrows, I asked, “A friend?” I remembered Damian’s going out late last Friday evening for sex. “A really good friend? You know... a friend with benefits?”

“No comment Kyle,” Damian answered. “Billy and I are trying to set up something with Melanie and her roommate Sarah for Saturday night.”

“Did Melanie transfer here from another school?” I asked. “I don’t remember you talking about a female friend from your high school last year.”

“Mel has always been a Penn State student,” Damian explained. “She couldn’t get space here on Main Campus until this semester. She commuted to the Erie Campus last year.”

“I see,” I said. “Are you going to introduce me to her some time?”

“I’m sure you’ll meet sometime,” Damian allowed.

I went back to my reading. It was obvious that Damian wasn’t going to give me any more juicy details about Mel or her roommate.

Coach Burton announced a change he decided to make for our team’s preparations for home games. On Friday nights we would have dinner at the Training Table as usual and then go over to the Lasch Building for our team meeting and to do final studying of our opponent. Instead of going back to our dorm room for the night, we were going to take a buses over to the Toftrees Resort Hotel a few miles from campus. Coach Burton felt we’d be able to get a better night’s sleep that way without all the distractions of staying at the dorm.

Kelly and I settled into a comfortable routine – breakfast and lunch together, history and English together and then spend a little time together in the evening after I finished with football. We didn't get as much time together as we wanted, but it beat the time we had together in the summer.

I was psyched up and ready to get on the football field and hit somebody by the time we finished practice on Friday night. After dinner the team headed over to the Lasch Building for a team meeting before going over to Beaver Stadium. The university had a start of the season pep rally planned for the evening.

I didn't realize how big a deal the pep rally was until our team walked over to Beaver Stadium for the rally. The university set up stands with food and games outside the stadium to entertain the crowd of students before the pep rally. The team gathered in the tunnel when the rally started. The Blue Band and the cheer leaders warmed up the crowd for us. Coach Paterno whipped the crowd up with a speech and then turned the microphone over to Coach Burton.

Coach Burton introduced the starters on the defense first. Karol Zizka and Jake Washington drew the largest cheers when they ran out through the gauntlet of cheerleaders to the center of the field. Coach introduced the offensive line next followed by our tight end, Evan Foster.

Evan drew sustained applause. His two and a half years as a starter earned him the students' respect. Hassan Jackson ran out next. I followed him when Coach called my name. I was surprised at the cheers and applause I received. Hopefully I would live up to their expectations. Shawn O'Conner drew sustained cheers and applause when it was his turn. Zack Hayes, our captain and undisputed leader, ran out to the loudest cheers of the evening. It was his due. Our hopes for the season did rest on his broad, sturdy shoulders.

My friends and I stared around the stadium, taking in the feelings of the 20-25,000 fans cheering our success tomorrow and the remainder of the season. The Blue Band serenaded us and the crowd with another rousing march and then led us in singing the fight song before the rally ended.

We funneled back through the dressing room and back to the buses when the rally was over. Our overnight bags had been loaded earlier in the night before we went to the stadium. The buses delivered us to Toftrees for a quiet evening. We were assigned very nice double room suites. I shared my room with Damian, just like I did on the road most of last season. Damian and I went down the hall and joined Jay, Shawn, Trevor, and Tony. We played some poker and watched TV until our 11:00 pm curfew.

Saturday morning went just like a road game last season. Get up, get breakfast, do position meetings, spend some time for personal pre-game preparations, take the bus to the stadium to check out the field. The field was in good shape. The sky was a clear bright blue with scattered clouds. The heat of the morning warned us that this was going to be a hot game. It was seventy-seven degrees when we checked out the field at ten o'clock. The weather channel predicted the temperature could reach ninety in the afternoon.

We went back inside for a late morning snack and then dressed for the game. The coaches warned us to get ourselves hydrated. Each of us went through our pre-game rituals to help prepare for the coming contest. I was pleased to see Chip imitating Zack and Jay studying the playbook. Chip was going to watch the game from the stands since Coach Burton planned to redshirt him this season. My friend was taking his responsibility to prepare himself seriously.

I reviewed the game plan a bit after I dressed. I felt relaxed and confident that day. That was quite a contrast with twelve months ago. Then I was so nervous that I threw up. That reminded me of Aaron's support to calm me down. I glanced around the locker room, checking on the freshmen.

I glanced down the row of lockers. Jared Cantrell, who some of my friends had dubbed 'my protégé', was engaged in an animated discussion with Bruce MacCauley of blocking assignments on kick and punt returns. Both guys looked fine.

I scanned around the locker room. David McCall was sitting along across the locker room in the d-back section, staring at the ceiling and not looking kind of pale. I walked over to him.

"How's it going Dave?" I asked cheerily as I sat down on the stool beside him.

Dave gave me a startled look as he stuttered, "Umm... OK,"

"You nervous?" I asked gently.

"Yeah," Dave confirmed.

"You ready to throw up?" I asked.

"No, I don't think so," Dave answered.

"Good, you're in better shape than me a year ago," I replied. "Last year I was in the john pucking my guts out before the game."

"Really?"

"I was," I confirmed. "Do you know what happened when I got out on the field?"

"I watched that game on TV," Dave answered. "You ran the kickoff in for a touchdown on the first play of the game."

"Exactly," I answered. "I was worrying for nothing at all."

"Well... that's you," Dave countered. "Everyone knows how talented you are."

"That wasn't true last summer," I explained. "I had been with the team less than a month. I knew maybe fifteen plays in the playbook. I'd never returned kicks or punts in my life. I had reason to be scared." David nodded his understanding. "You know the blocking for special teams right?"

"Yeah, I know them," David replied. "I'm not worried so much about the returns. I find my man on the field and hit him. I can do that."

"Good," I said smiling. "I wouldn't want their gunner to take me down on a return before I got started."

"I'll get him Kyle," Dave answered. "I know I can do that. It's basic football. I've been blocking and tackling guys since pee wee. I'm more worried about having to go in on passing plays. Am I ready to run with college receivers? Everybody is bigger and faster than I'm used to in high school. Can I handle this?"

"Faster? Yeah, college receivers are faster," I confirmed. "You're one of the fastest guys on our team."

"Except you," Dave countered. "You beat me all the time when I go against you in practice."

I leaned in close and whispered to him, "Don't tell the others I said this. I have more trouble against you and Shawn than I do the other d-backs. You make me work for every catch."

Dave looked surprised at what I told him. "You're a good cornerback," I explained out loud. "Any way, the first string will play until we have a good lead. When you get on the field the d-line will be teeing off on the quarterback. If you stay with your guy for two or three seconds, you'll be fine."

"Do you really think so?" David asked.

"Absolutely," I conformed. "You're a good cornerback now. You're going to be an excellent cornerback when you have more experience."

Dave and I sat together for the next twenty minutes talking about cornerback and wide receiver play. I told him about the tricks I'd learned to help me get separation from a

cornerback and some of the things I had done to me to stop me from catching a pass. Dave listened intently. I knew that would help him get in the proper frame of mind to play football.

Dave seemed much more relaxed when we went out for warm-ups. I was pleased that I had done my good turn for the day. It wouldn't hurt me either. Dave would block better for me on returns if he was comfortable on the field.

I made a point of stopping by the East Halls guys who always hung a "Kyle's Krazies" banner for me. We talked for a couple minutes. Christian and I stopped by to thank Kelly, Bev, Cindy and Jen for their "Kyle's Krazies" and "Christian's Crew" signs. Christian and I returned the kisses our girlfriends blew to us before we headed inside.

I saw Dad and Andy in the family section. I gave them a wave when they saw me looking their way. I headed inside with my friends to complete our final preparations. Coach Burton addressed the team and reminded us of the goals we set for ourselves this season – go undefeated and play for the BCS Championship on January 8th. We huddled for a final cheer and then headed out for introductions.

I waited patiently in the tunnel in front of most of my teammates for our introduction. Our team ran out onto the field behind Coach Burton, Zack Hayes and our other captains. I raced between the lines of band members as they played our fight song. We ran across the field to our benches as our 107,000 fans cheered wildly.

Zack, Jake, Evan and Karol took the field with Florida International's captains for the coin toss. We won. Coach Ferguson gave me and the other kick return team players final instructions before we took the field. The other special teamers and I huddled briefly on the field while FIU got set for the kick. I called for the guy's attention.

"Nail the guy you're blocking everybody!" I commanded as the guys looked to me. "Make a hole for me. Let's take this ball home!" We broke our huddle with a shout and lined up for the kick off. I drifted back to the five yard line. FIU's diminutive kicker had a strong leg. He boomed the ball down the field to me. I drifted back a couple yards and settled to receive it.

I caught the ball to my chest at the two yard line and started forward. I scanned right and saw Dave McCall engage his man. The blocking wedge was forming in front of me as I scanned towards the center of the field. I ran to get behind them. I watched as Shawn Byrd on my left shoved his man towards the sideline and out of the play.

I continued forward, watching my blockers engage FIU's wedge busters. Damian kicked his man out smartly. I accelerated through the crease he made for me. I dodged a couple arm tackles as desperate tacklers tried to adjust in the chaos around us. I faked one more guy as I cleared the mass of struggling players. The kicker adjusted to try to tackle me. I faked right and he stayed on me.

The guy had to be the shortest person I had ever seen on a college football field. I doubt he was as tall as Kelly's 5'-7" height. I lowered my shoulder and bowled over him. The lucky SOB managed to grab an ankle as I trampled him. The sucker wouldn't let go! By the time I shook loose, FIU's pursuit hammered me from the back and put me down.

I hopped up when the two tacklers climbed off me and tossed the ball to the referee. I smiled as he placed it on our 39 yard line. It wasn't a touchdown like last year, but it still was a good return. The crowd roared its approval as our special teams exited the field.

I met Zack and the rest of the offense in the huddle. Coach Burton decided to test FIU deep immediately. We might not complete the pass, but we knew we would force FIU to spread out and account for my speed immediately. That would make our job moving the ball much easier.

I lined up out wide on the weak side and looked across the line at the cornerback assigned to cover me. He lined up about six yards off the line of scrimmage. Obviously FIU had done its homework. They knew I was fast and were going to give me a cushion. The other way teams without fast cornerback try to cover me was by knocking me around at the line of scrimmage and throwing off my timing with Zack. I was big enough to beat that. USC found out the hard way last January.

I smiled as I sprinted off the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped. The cushion disappeared in the blink of an eye as I sprinted downfield, passing the defender in the first fifteen yards. I turned back twenty-five yards downfield. Zack rifled the ball to me as I continued running. The defender helplessly ran after me, a couple yards behind me. I pulled Zack's throw in over the DB's outstretched arms.

I accelerated away as I settled the ball securely in between my left arm and my side. I scanned downfield, spying the free safety. He had lined up deep and was hustling over to intercept me. I tried a spin move as he hit. He was a good tackler. He put me to the ground as I spun.

I jumped up and tossed the ball to the ref. He placed the ball at FIU's 18 yard line. I jogged back to our huddle as the Penn State crowd cheered my 52 yard reception. The cornerback on my side gave me a twelve yard cushion on the next play. The free safety cheated to my side too when he lined up. That was perfect, just what Coach Burton anticipated.

Zack hit Anders in the now wide open middle of the field for a twelve yard gain on the next play. Our big offensive line smashed into FIU's line and gave Shawn O'Conner room for a five yard run to the one yard line. The next play Shawn smashed into the middle of their line again to score a touchdown.

My friends and I trotted off the cheers of the faithful as the Nittany Lion did the first seven of what we hoped would be many push-ups that day. Sixty-one yards in four plays in less than a minute and a half – that was exactly how we wanted to start our season.

The FIU Panthers did better than we expected on offense. They mixed some runs, generally short, with a lot of passes. They kept our defense off balance enough to sustain a decent, though time consuming drive down the field on us. By the ninth play, we managed to catch a break when their QB miss-fired on consecutive passes at our 22 yard line. Coach C dialed up a blitz and sacked their quarterback on third down. The Panthers tried a 46 yard field goal. Shockingly that short kicker had enough leg to get the ball through the uprights to close the score to 7-3 Lion's favor.

FIU's kicker boomed the kickoff deep into the end zone, so I accepted the touchback. FIU was determined that they wouldn't give anything up deep to me. They lined the cornerback up a dozen yards off the line of scrimmage. The free safety was lined up twenty-five yards deep and shifted to my side of the field. They pulled a defensive lineman and sent in a nickel back to help contain Anders and Hassan.

I could have ten or twelve yards on any play we wanted. I faked a deep route and turned back and Zack could toss me the ball. They left Anders and Hassan good cushions too. We worked the ball down the field using a mix of runs and short passes, taking the easy yardage they allowed us. I assume FIU's plan was to wait for us to make a mistake. We didn't. It took nine plays and six and a half minutes for us to get the ball into the end zone. I caught a pass in the back of the end zone by out-jumping two d-backs to finish our drive. Andrew Perkins kicked the PAT to bring the score to 14-3 our favor.

I expected that our defense would be able to put some extra pressure on their quarterback with an eleven point lead. I was wrong. FIU managed to put together another long drive mixing a few runs with a lot of passes. It took them ten minutes and too many successful long third down plays to drive the ball into our end zone. Their successful PAT narrowed our lead to 14-10.

I waited my third kick off of the half at our five yard line. The little guy boomed the ball deep again. I drifted back close to our goal line and waited for the ball to come down into my hands. I glanced down when I caught the ball and saw I was just outside the end zone. I scanned the field, left to right. Shawn was lined up to block his man. The wedge was forming to my front and right. I looked over and saw Dave explode and level the guy on the right.

We planned a return right this time. My blockers walled off most of the tacklers as I exploded through the gap between Dave and Joe Ricci, the blocker on the right side of the wall. I sprinted down the sideline past my blockers for daylight.

The FIU kicker ran across the field to try for a tackle again. I faked like I would go right along the sideline. I cut back as soon as he shifted right. He came up with air as I dodged past him. By now David, Shawn and Joe were ready to escort me for the end zone. The kept the pursuers away as I sprinted in for another touchdown.

The other guys on special teams mobbed me to celebrate as the crowd roared its approval of my score. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT to put our lead back to 21-10. Hopefully this would discourage the pesky Panthers.

It didn't – at least not to start with. The Panther's began another drive featuring more passing than running. Coach C did adjust. He pulled a defensive tackle and a linebacker and put in Shawn Byrd and GJ DeLuca to help on defense. They picked up a couple first downs and 31 yards before the change made its mark. It was third and eight when Shawn cut in front of the FIU receiver and intercepted the underthrown ball. He spun out of the attempted tackle by the receiver and sprinted downfield.

Shawn is one of the faster players on our team. He outran the offensive lineman who might have caught him. He faked out the quarterback and then outran all the other pursuers to carry the ball into the end zone. Andrew Perkins kicked the PAT through the uprights to bring our lead to 28-10.

Coach C adjusted our defense again. He told Jake, Trevor and Memed Marsic, our defensive tackle, to ignore the run. Coach C blitzed a linebacker every down along with a d-back or the other linebacker. The pressure was too much for FIU's quarterback. He managed one first down before he threw another pick. Dom Cuchiella out-wrestled their tight end for the ball. We didn't get any yards on the return, but we got possession of the ball at FIU's 48 yard line.

We got the ball back with roughly five minutes left in the half. Zack huddled us and announced, "We've let these guys hang on too long. Let's play some smart football – no mistakes. Take it to the end zone and kill the clock. We're going to bury these guys before the half is over."

We ran a precision ball-control offense. Zack used four runs and five passes to move us methodically down the field. Only one pass was incomplete and no play went out of bounds on the drive. Zack finished the drive by tossing the ball to Hassan when I attracted half the d-backs to the opposite corner of the end zone. 1:22 remained on the clock when Andrew kicked the PAT. FIU had burned all their timeouts. Score: 35-10 Lions

The defense's blitzing made short work of the Panther's final possession of the first half. We went into the locker room with a comfortable 25 point lead. Our coaches preached that we needed to keep up the pressure in the second half. They wanted us to put FIU away before they decided they had a chance to win.

FIU took the second half kickoff and went to work. They managed to string a couple first downs together before things broke down. Karol caught their running back in the backfield when he blitzed on a draw play. He dumped the tailback on the ground for a three yard loss. The QB barely got rid of the ball on second down before Jake Washington knocked him down. Ball incomplete.

Coach C blitzed Karol, Josh Bruno and Shawn Byrd on third and thirteen. Trevor bull-rushed his blocker, broke free and nailed the left handed QB in the back. He crumpled to the ground as the ball bounced free and dribbled backwards in the backfield. Josh Bruno alertly grabbed it and started running for the end zone. FIU's tailback caught Josh near the FIU's middle of the field and took his legs out. Josh fell over and came to a stop at their 47 yard line.

I waited a few seconds to see what Coach Burton called. Was the first string done or would we have another shot at the end zone? Coach Burton shouted, "First string, put it away!" My friends and I followed Zack out onto the field.

Zack called the play. The primary receiver was Evan Foster, coming over the middle on a curl route. When we lined up I noticed the cornerback covering me lined up only six yards off the line. Zack looked over at me and smiled. I nodded my head. I knew exactly what my friend was looking for.

I sprinted downfield on a fly pattern when the ball was snapped, quickly going by the cornerback. Zack drilled the ball to me when I was twenty-five yards downfield. I kept running, pursued by the free safety. He wasn't able to catch me. I ran into the end zone to thunderous cheers of the Nittany Lions faithful.

Zack sprinted down the field while I accepted the thanks of a gathering crowd of my teammates. Zack grabbed my facemask and banged our helmets together.

"Damn Kyle!" Zack proclaimed. "You've arrived. That was a great read on that play."

"Thanks man," I replied. "I knew what you wanted. You made a great throw."

Coach Adams met us as we left the field. "Well done gentlemen," Coach said. "Go have a seat. You've done enough for the day." He waved his hand towards the bench and yelled, "Second string, on me! You're in on the next drive."

Andrew Perkins booted the PAT to bring our lead to 42-10 while the first string relaxed, shed their helmets and got ready to enjoy the rest of the show from the sideline.

Coach C sent in the second string defense in after that. Six defensive backs and a lot of blitzing kept the Panthers under control. Jay Nicholson, Damian, Christian, Tanner Riggs and the rest of the second string played into the middle of the fourth quarter. Jay and my other friends added three more touchdowns and a field goal while they were on offense. Glenn Korbel and the third string finished up the game. They added two more field goals before the end of the game. FIU did manage to score a couple touchdowns late in the game on our third string defense. The final score was 72-24 our favor.

I did a couple TV interviews and talked with some print reporters before I left the field. I couldn't come up with enough superlatives when I talked about the way Zack Hayes

played that day. I complimented my blockers on my kick return for a touchdown. They had been great.

I stopped by to talk with Kelly before I went inside. I told her I call her when I was done. We planned to go downtown for a nice dinner with Dad and Andy that evening. I dressed and went to the post-game press conference per Coach Burton's orders. The questions for Zack, me and the rest of the offense were easy. Zack was properly respectful of our next opponent, Temple University. That was appropriate. Coach Golden's team had come a long way from the 1-11 team that tried to recruit me over two years ago. They went 6-6 last season and were predicted to improve again this season – just not against us. Temple had no wins against Penn State since 1941.

I told Damian to have fun on his double date with Billy, Melanie and Sarah. I teased him that I wouldn't wait up for him that evening. He wouldn't comment on what he thought his chances were of ending up in bed with Mel that evening.

I called Dad on his cell phone and arranged for him and Andy to meet me outside the locker room. I passed the information on to Kelly too. We all met outside about fifteen minutes later.

Dad suggested we go to the Boalsburg Steakhouse. He called ahead and found out that they were swamped with hungry fans. Dad tried Kelly's Steak and Seafood next. They had a thirty minute wait. The four of us decided that sounded good. Dad suggested that Kelly and I meet him and Andy at the restaurant. That way he wouldn't need to drive back to campus from Boalsburg after dinner. Dad and Andy needed to get home this evening so they could get to church on-time tomorrow. Dad was an usher.

The four of us conversed as we enjoyed our meal. Kelly shared her crab cakes with me and I gave her some of my prime rib. Half a dozen people recognized me and stopped by for autographs. I obliged them with my signature. Dad treated us to dessert too. Kelly and I thanked Dad for the meal before he and Andy headed for home. It was really nice to see some of my family.

We headed back to Zack's apartment around 7:30. Kelly and I helped Zack, Leigh Ann, Evan, JT, Jake and Jake's fiancé Keneisha get things ready for the night's party. The usual crowd of friends started to arrive around eight o'clock.

Zack and I happened to get a moment alone in the kitchen. He asked, "So Kyle, how would you grade the offense today?"

"I thought we did well. I think we deserve an A, maybe an A+," I replied. "What is your take?"

"I was pleased with our offense," Zack answered. "Five possessions for us – five touchdowns. It doesn't get any better than that. You were great, especially on your last touchdown. If you keep playing like that, we're going to score a lot of points."

“How would you grade the defense?” I asked.

Zack smiled. “I’d grade our team a B+. Let’s stop there. We win or lose as a team, right?”

“You’re right,” I agreed. I lowered my voice and added, “...but we’re going to have to score a lot of points this year.” Zack smiled but refused to answer. I understood Zack’s intent. Nothing good would come of the offense complaining about how poorly the defense played today. Coach C would work on them and get them up to speed eventually. They had a lot more work to do to get ready for our run on the BCS Championship.

The party got rolling. My friends congregated, enjoyed some drinks and munchies, listened to music and sought companionship. The dynamic in our parties had changed since last spring when Zack and Leigh Ann became a couple. Evan, Jay, Trevor and Anders were the most sought after partners among the girls looking for a good night of fun in bed. None of the four was quite the chick magnet that Zack had been.

Some new freshmen girls appeared that night. The freshmen team members did their best to attract the attention of the girls. Chip’s friend Austin Dilworth came to the party with Chip. Austin and Chip were quite disappointed when Kimberly Frey hooked up with Evan that evening. Austin found a cute blond to talk with. From her body language, I suspected Austin would not be leaving the party alone.

Chip wandered off to the kitchen after Austin hooked up. I excused myself, explaining to Kelly that I would be gone a few minutes. I found him pouring himself a beer.

“How’s it hanging Chip?” I asked.

“Today sucked,” Chip answered. “I knew it would be hard to be red-shirted, but damn! I had no idea it would be like this. Virtually everyone on the team got to play today – except me. I could’a contributed. I know enough.”

“You wanted to play the last five minutes?” I asked. “All you would have done was hand the ball to Charlie or Jabari. Is that what you want? Waste a year of eligibility on that?”

“No, you’re right,” Chip said, shaking his head. “This isn’t exactly what I expected last year. Shit, I brought Austin to the party so he’d meet some girls. He’s probably going to get Gwen to go back to his room tonight. My buddy’s gonna get laid. What do I get? Another beer and a hand job when I get back to my room.”

“I understand Chip,” I said. “Things will get better when you get adjusted to college.”

“Yeah, right,” Chip countered. “Like you’d know what things are like for me. You’re the All-American. You got the great girlfriend. You KNOW you’re gonna get laid tonight.”

I snorted. “You have no idea what my fall was like last year.” I went on to explain all the troubles I had with football, classes and girls last fall. I think Chip understood my point by the end of my story. He was in a better frame of mind when we went back out to the living room.

Kelly and I drank the beers I brought and then started warming ourselves up for fun later in the evening. Half an hour later the two of us were making out like a pair of horny teenagers. OK, I know. We were still a couple of teenagers, but just barely.

I noticed Chip kissing a very attractive brunette when Kelly and I went in search of a free room for privacy and more fun. Maybe my friend wouldn’t need to give himself a hand job that night. Kelly and I checked around. Evan’s room and Jake’s room downstairs were taken. We checked upstairs. Zack and Leigh Ann were using his room. JT’s room was free. We found him and Keneisha downstairs. He agreed to us borrowing his room for awhile.

We went back upstairs, locked door behind us and undressed for some fun. We made out for a little and then enjoyed some 69 action. We made love twice after bringing each other to climax orally. We cleaned up and went back downstairs when we finished.

Chip gave me a wink and a nudge when he escorted the cute brunette into JT’s room when Kelly and I relinquished it. I gave him a wink and a smile. Maybe this would help him work through his disappointment at not playing football today. Kelly and I had one more beer, our third, before we headed back to our rooms for the night.

On Sunday morning I found a long e-mail from my brother Andy that he sent last Friday before my family headed to Cape Henlopen for the weekend. Andy reported on the happenings on our high school football team. I wasn’t surprised when Andy reported that he was elected team captain along with Tex Johanson, Jim Griffin and Ryan Anderson.

Andy said the competition between Logan Mitchell and Matt Sauder for quarterback was really close, but Logan won. The one surprise was at the other wide receiver slot. Dave Mitchell beat Jonathan Landis. Jon would play in the slot for the team. Andy thought the team would do well. His only concern was the deep pass. Could Logan deliver the ball when Dave and Andy streaked down the field? Andy said they would find out next Friday when the team played Cornwall up in Lebanon County.

Kelly and I hung out at her room in the afternoon after we had brunch with Bev, Christian, Cindy, Jen, Alan, Damian, Jay and Trevor. We settled in to read the Sunday paper. I was scanning the sports section when I found an interesting article.

“Ed Fritz got promoted to QB #2 yesterday,” I said.

“Oh?” Kelly asked. “That made the Philadelphia paper?”

“Uh... not exactly,” I explained. “The article is actually about Florida’s game against Troy yesterday. Florida’s starting quarterback, Elijah Carter, went down in the first half with a knee injury. Carter is expected to miss three or four games.”

“Did Florida win?” Kelly asked. “How about Ed? Did he play?”

“I’ll see,” I replied. I scanned the article. “The game was a blow-out – 59-31. I think the Gators probably played everyone like we did. Elijah Carter was hurt near the end of the first quarter. DeShaun Williamson took over for the next two quarters. Ed went in at the start of the fourth quarter. The box score says Ed completed 4 passes on 7 attempts for a touchdown and no interceptions.”

“Is that good?” Kelly asked.

“It’s good for playing mop-up at the end of the game,” I explained.

“We should send him an e-mail and congratulate him,” Kelly said. I agreed. Kelly fired up her computer. We composed an e-mail and sent it off. A couple seconds after Kelly hit “Send” a message box popped up and asked, “fritzman7 is on-line. Would you like to chat?”

We hit the Yes button and spent about fifteen minutes chatting with Ed. Ed filled us in on more details of the quarter he played yesterday. He was pumped to be QB #2, if only for a few weeks.

Ed congratulated me on my afternoon. He had one question: “How in the hell did you get 321 yards personally in one game?” I related the story of my three kick returns for 169 yards and 7 catches for another 152 yards. Kelly and I wished Ed good luck when we finished. We enjoyed chatting with Ed.

Kelly and I spent the remainder of the afternoon together until it was time for dinner. Christian, who had been relaxing with Bev down the hall, met Kelly and me. The girls picked up Jen and Cindy. The six of us walked together to Pollock Commons. The girls headed for the regular dining hall while Christian and I headed to the Training Table to eat with the team.

Zack Hayes talked to me as we were dressing for practice Monday afternoon. He suggested that we spend some time together doing film study. He wanted us to replicate our improvised non-verbal change in pass routes like we did against FIU on Saturday.

Zack and I would need to study the opponent's defense and agree on what adjustments would be made against various defenses to give us the best chance to succeed. We agreed on a couple more hours that we could work together.

Tuesday evening I found an official looking letter in my mailbox from the Philadelphia Phillies. I opened it and found it was the reply from Chase Utley, the Phillies second baseman. Chase thanked me for arranging to get him and his nephew in for a football game. He said it would be best if he and his nephew came for the Michigan State game on November 20th. I made arrangements through Coach Burton's secretary the next day. She sent off a letter and two tickets to Chase.

Andy e-mailed me on Tuesday evening to let me know how our family's annual trip to Cape Henlopen went. Liz was allowed invite her boyfriend Alex Bomberger to come for the weekend. Andy had a good weekend. Alicia Randolph, my one-time vacation squeeze, had decided that Andy would make an acceptable bed partner for the Labor Day Weekend. Apparently Andy had gotten his bell rung repeatedly over the course of the long weekend. He hadn't gotten that much nookie since he got Crystal pregnant with the twins.

Kelly and I fell into a comfortable routine, having breakfasts and lunches together. We had a class together every day – either history on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays or American Comedy on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We worked together on homework when we could.

Our coaches warned us not to underestimate Temple. They had improved considerably since last year. They could knock us off if we didn't play our best against them. Coach Burton exploded at Wednesday's practice when too many guys goofed around to suit him. We ended up practicing an extra half hour and then running two miles before Coach dismissed us. We made sure to practice hard on Thursday. We didn't need to repeat that experience.

I had Poly Sci on Fridays in the Hammond building. I caught up with Kelly at the library after that. Both of us needed to start research for our first term paper for History 20. Both of us were working on papers on the French and Indian War – Kelly on the Fort Necessity and me on Wolfe's storming of Quebec later in the war. We spent an hour on the research before Kelly had to leave for her Philosophy class at EE West.

I went back to the dorms and packed my bag for the trip to Philadelphia. I put on my new slacks, tie and sport coat for the trip. I took along my travel bag when Kelly and I met for lunch in the dining hall. We hurried through lunch and said our good byes. I met the buses outside the Lasch Building.

I read a book by Mark Twain for English most of the way to Philadelphia. The bus trip was supposed to be three and half hours, but we got caught in Friday afternoon traffic in

King of Prussia when we got off the turnpike and tried to get on the Schuylkill Expressway. Our buses finally arrived at the Hampton Inn near the airport at a quarter to six in the evening. The staff was fairly efficient at handing out rooms. They got the 150 or so people in our travelling party into rooms in half an hour.

The team met in one of the conference rooms for dinner and then had team meetings for another hour and half. The coaches gave us free time around 9:30 pm that evening. Chip, Matt, Jared Cantrell, Dave McCall, Damian and I met in Chip's room for some poker and to watch TV until it was time for bed.

Coach Burton scheduled our breakfast for 8:30 on Saturday morning. We ate and then went back to our rooms to pack and check out. The buses hauled us over to Lincoln Financial Field and dropped us off around 10:00 am.

We met with our position coaches and then went outside to inspect the field and the weather conditions. It was a gorgeous Saturday morning. The temperature was in the mid-80's and only few high cirrus clouds were in the sky. It was a perfect weekend for football and any other type of Labor Day holiday activity.

Playing the Philadelphia Eagle's home was exciting for me. I started paying attention to football back in seventh and eighth grade when the Eagles made their run for the Super Bowl back in 2004. T. O. had played on this field, albeit briefly. My favorite pro quarterback, Donovan McNabb threw the ball to Westbrook, Smith, Brown, Curtis, Baskett, and Jackson on this actual field.

I know we're only playing Temple, not the Dallas Cowboys. Still, standing on the same field as my boyhood heroes made this day special. Who knows, maybe someday if I get lucky, I'll be on this field again in the NFL.

I was shocked when I looked around the stadium. The place was three quarters full with fans already. I knew Temple only normally averaged 15-20,000 fans a game. A vast majority of the fans were dressed in blue and white, our colors, instead of Temple's cherry and white. We were going to play an away game with a home crowd in the stands. How cool!

Zack Hayes brought my mind back to the task at hand – preparing for today's football game. I caught a few passes from Zack while he warmed up his arm. I shagged balls for Steve Cobb while he got ready to punt that day. I scanned the section where Will and Abby were supposed to be sitting. I couldn't spot them. I went back into the locker room for final preparations for the game.

Temple won the coin toss and elected to receive the opening kickoff. Our defense played the first series better than last week. Temple had two runs and then misfired on a third and five play. Temple did a good job covering the punt. They knocked me down at our 42 yard line after I gained a dozen yards.

Our offense efficiently drove the ball down the field. On the third play Coach Burton sent Temple a reminder of my speed. I flew down the field on a streak route. Zack threw the ball just beyond my finger tips on the play. The play served its purpose anyway. Temple's d-backs spread out and gave us a bigger cushion from the line of scrimmage. Zack found Evan in the middle of the end zone on ninth play for our first touchdown. Andrew Perkins didn't get a chance to kick the PAT when the snap was botched. Score: 6-0 Lions

Our defense's good start didn't continue. Our offense and Temple traded scores in the first half. Temple ended a long drive with a field goal to bring the score to 6-3. We answered with another drive ending with me catching a TD in the corner of the end zone to increase our lead to 13-3. Temple ended their third possession with a touchdown on a deep pass when Angus Pitts slipped covering the pass and Yasin Clark, our free safety, couldn't tackle the guy in time. That narrowed our lead to 13-10.

Zack took us down the field again. Ten plays later he found me in the end zone for another TD. Andrew Perkins' PAT brought our lead back to 20-10. Temple answered by passing their way to another score.

We answered their drive by going deep on the first play. I out-leaped the two guys covering me and ran down field before they pushed me out of bounds at their 12 yard line. A couple running plays up the middle set them up for the coup de grace – a shovel pass to Shawn for a touchdown. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT through the uprights to increase our lead to 27-17.

Our defense finally managed to stop the "I score, you score" pattern on the fifth play of Temple's next drive. They tried to hit another deep ball on our guys when their quarterback held the ball too long. Jake Washington and Trevor Conwell met in the backfield, smashing together as they sandwiched the quarterback. The ball flew backwards out of the collision.

Memed Marsic, our giant defensive tackle alertly scooped up the ball and started lumbering down the field for the end zone. Memed is close to 300 pounds and also one of the slowest guys on our team. One of Temple's guards caught him first. He hung on but couldn't take down the big guy. When the center and a tackle caught up, the three of them brought Memed to the ground. Our buddy managed to carry the ball twelve yards closer to Temple's end zone. We took possession at their 32 yard line.

The coaches had worked me exclusively on the weak side last game and this game. We finally changed the pattern on Temple on the first play. Anders went in motion from his slot position on the strong side over to my side of the field, ending up between me and the tackle. On the snap Ander ran an out route while I slanted across the field. Just that quick, the faster cornerback was stuck giving Anders an unnecessary twelve yard cushion while the slower nickel back was stuck trying to keep up with me.

Zack led the ball to me perfectly. I caught it in stride as I ran diagonally across the field. I turned for the end zone and sprinted as hard as I could go. Unfortunately the strong side cornerback caught me near the five yard line. He knocked me down, sending me skidding across the field into the end zone. The ref ruled my knee went down at the three yard line. Shawn O'Conner stuffed the ball in the end zone on the next play. Andrew booted the PAT to bring our lead to a comfortable 34-17.

Coach C finally felt comfortable turning our defensive line loose on the quarterback while six d-backs covered the receivers. Under the increased pressure, Temple managed to gain 17 yards on six plays before they were forced to punt the ball back to us. I gained fourteen yards on the first punt return I had of the day. Thirty-two seconds were left in the half, so Zack handed the ball off to Shawn once and let the clock run out on the half.

I almost broke the second half kickoff, but was pulled down after picking up 34 yards. Zack and our offense worked the ball downfield on our next drive. Coach Burton threw a twist at his close friend and ex-Lion when we crossed the middle of the field. Anders and Hassan swapped spots so Anders was outside on the strong side and Hassan was in the slot. Hassan went in motion across the backfield and switched to the slot on my side of the field just before the ball was snapped. Hassan ran an out route while I ran a slant again like in the first half. Of course I drew the attention of the best d-backs. Hassan's out move was a fake. He turned sprinted downfield when the cornerback bit.

In moments the Temple defense was out of position, the free safety and fast cornerback running the wrong way after me towards the opposite side of the field while the nickel back tried to recover and pursue Hassan on his route downfield. Zack launched a deep ball to Hassan as soon as he saw the results of our subterfuge. Hassan ran under it and sprinted for the end zone, scoring a touchdown.

Anders, Evan and I sprinted after Hassan to celebrate. Zack met us, congratulating everyone around in the end zone. The group of us trotted off the field to the cheers of the tens of thousands of Penn State fans.

Coach Schroeder met us at the sideline. "Go get comfortable guys. You're done for the day." He yelled louder, "Second string! On me!" He briefed Jay and the rest of the backups to prepare them for the next drive.

Jay and the second string scored a field goal and a touchdown in the second half, matching Temple's offensive output. The final score on the game was 51-27 Nittany Lion's favor. I had another stellar day, returning four kickoffs for 121 yards, one punt for 14 yards and catching seven passes for 127 yards and two touchdowns.

I did more interviews than the previous week after the game was over. The four Philadelphia TV stations interviewed me along with the usual Lancaster, York and Harrisburg stations. I did half a dozen interviews with newspaper reporters too.

I finally got to go inside to change and shower after a half hour on the field. The travel staff handed out box lunches for everyone to eat on the way home. No one was interested in spending extra time in Philadelphia and then getting back home in the wee hours of the morning. The buses loaded everyone up around 6:30 and we headed back to campus.

The buses pulled into the parking area beside the Lasch Building around 10:30 that evening. Probably 500 students and well-wishers cheered us when we stepped off the buses. Those of us with girlfriends got an extra special greeting from our loved ones. Kelly carried my suit jacket back to my dorm while I carried my bag. I was tired from the long day, so Kelly and I settled for some cuddling and kissing before I went to bed. It was all I had energy for that evening.

(To be continued)

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Kelly and I got together with our friends for brunch on Sunday then went back to my room to read the paper. I grabbed the sport section of the Inquirer immediately. I wanted to see what the reporters had to say about our victory. They had a nice article on our blow out. They did a second speculating on Zack's odds of getting the Heisman. Nothing so far this season dampened anyone's expectations of my friend.

The third article noted the problems our defense was having stopping the pass. That wasn't news to me. We had a horrible time stopping the pass until we had a big lead. Our run defense was good, but we didn't get enough pressure on the quarterback to stop the opponent's passing. I hoped Coach Burton and Coach C could find a fix before we got to the Big Ten heart of our schedule. Michigan, Ohio State and Illinois would kill us if we didn't figure out how to stop the pass.

I flipped inside the sports section to check out how the rest of the Top 20 fared. One headline caught my attention immediately – "Red Shirt Freshman saves Gators' Day With Late TDs". I read the article aloud so Kelly could hear the news about Ed Fritz.

The Gators' starting QB, DeShaun Williamson, had been ineffective against the University of Central Florida, leading the team to four field goals. Coach Urban Meyer pulled him at the beginning of the fourth quarter with the Gators trailing 24-12. Ed had rallied his team, completing 12 of 17 passes to gain 149 yards and scoring two touchdowns. The Gators beat UCF 26-24 when UCF missed on a last second 51 yard field goal.

Kelly and I sent off an e-mail congratulating Ed on his performance. We both were hoping he'd be on-line so we could chat, but he wasn't.

Kelly and I went for a walk after we finished the paper. We studied until dinner time. Kelly caught up with her girlfriends when it was time for me to head to the Training Table for dinner.

I caught up on some bad news about the guys from our team trying to make it in the NFL over dinner. Yesterday was cut-down day in the NFL, when they had to reduce their rosters down to fifty-two players. The Rams decided Bo Cherry wasn't good enough to play wide receiver on a team that went 4-12 last season. I wasn't totally surprised. Bo knew he was a long shot to make the NFL. He had a Plan B ready for yesterday's contingency. He hoped to catch on with a Canadian Football League team.

Cooper Barnes, our kicker last season, was cut by the Chargers. That wasn't surprising either. I'd heard that few kickers stick with a team at their first training camp. I knew David Akers, the Philadelphia Eagles' excellent kicker, needed four tries before he found

a permanent job. Hopefully Coop would get another chance later in the season if a kicker got hurt or played poorly.

The news about the other three guys from last year's team was much better. Zack Hayes reported that Aaron Morano was going to be the 49er's nickel back this season. He was also their punt returner. I expected that he would move up the depth chart as the season went on. Aaron's was too talented to stay off the field very long.

Pete Klein was Tampa Bay's #2 weak side linebacker. Derrick Brooks was in front of him. It might take Pete awhile to pass the pro-bowler. The news about Antwaan Booker was excellent. Antwaan would start at left defensive end for the Broncos. He would have his work cut out for him helping transform the AFC West's doormats into a decent football team.

The Student Government Association was showing a movie at the HUB, so Kelly and I decided to go. It was a romantic comedy which both of us enjoyed. I escorted Kelly back to her dorm and received a pretty passionate kiss good night. We promised to meet for brunch in the morning.

I found a reply e-mail from Ed Fritz when I got back to my room. Ed had gone in to study game film that afternoon and bumped into Coach Meyers. The coach told him he was going to get to start next week, which was great news. The bad news was that his first start would be next Saturday evening on prime time TV when the Gators went to Baton Rouge to play the #1 ranked LSU Tigers in "Death Valley". You give the Cajuns all day to tailgate and then pack them in that tall, tight stadium – it truly was one of the loudest, most intimidating places to play in the country. I didn't envy my friend. Zack and our team would be hard pressed to play well under those circumstances and Zack was a fifth year senior.

Monday was Labor Day and we didn't have any classes. Damian and I both enjoyed a long peaceful snooze until mid-morning. I met up with Kelly and the other girls from Beaver Hall with my friends for an early lunch. The group kicked around ideas to pass the afternoon before the guys had to go for football practice. Someone suggested we play a round of golf. Kelly tried to persuade me, but I was resistant. I am a horrible golfer.

Damian's decision to join the golfers fixed my dilemma. Kelly readily agreed to a game of tennis with me followed by us taking advantage of the privacy in my room while Damian was gone for two or three hours. Damian and Jay agreed to take on Bev and Christian while Trevor and Jen played GJ and Cindy. Kelly and I told the golfers to take their time and enjoy themselves.

Kelly and I changed and grabbed our racquets back at the room and meet at the tennis courts. We played one match, which I won 6-4. My speed and athleticism made up for her superior knowledge of the game. We were quite sweaty when we headed back to my room. That was OK – we planned to get even sweatier that afternoon.

It took me seconds to join my naked lover in my bed after I hung my “do not disturb sign”, a tie, outside on the door and locked it. I gazed at Kelly, lying naked on my bed, smiling up at me. How had I gotten so fortunate to have this vivacious, beautiful, sensual woman fall for me? I disrobed and climbed in bed and into her open, welcoming arms.

I wrapped my arms around Kelly as we locked our lips together and teased each other with the tips of our tongues. The jolt of electricity that passed between us increased our craving for intimacy. Kelly moaned when I began kissing down her neck and chest, intent on sampling her shapely twin melons.

My bronze tan from a summer of lifeguarding contrasted against the milky white band of skin across her breasts, forced by modesty back home. I gently hefted them and then kissed decreasing circles until my lips reached her aureoles and nipples. I kissed and suckled as Kelly ran her hands through my hair, trying to press my lips tighter to her chest.

I stroked Kelly’s sides and then rubbed her tummy with my free hand while my tongue teased her nipples to hardness. Kelly cooed her approval as I slid my hand further down through her neatly trimmed tuft of red hair and along her moist outer labia. I slipped my finger between her puffy moist lips and rubbed.

My finger and tongue’s actions increased Kelly’s passion while her moans and squirming swelled my lust. I kissed my way across her tummy until my lips reached her clit. I kissed around it and gently penetrated my finger into her silky tunnel. I nuzzled my nose between her folds and licked. Her nectar was sweet, tinged with a slight saltiness from the sweat from our earlier tennis match.

Kelly thrust her hips up into my face while she pressed my head down, trying to spur me on to bring her to a rapid climax. I obliged her, pressing and stimulating her G-spot while I sucked and licked her labia and clitoris. A few minutes of licking, sucking and probing were enough to induce an orgasm in my lover. I let her enjoy it as I happily lapped up the flood of moisture her body released during her climax.

When she came down from her high, Kelly demanded, “Give it to me now, I’m ready.”

“Patience honey,” I answered. “We have half the afternoon.” I returned to work with my tongue. I licked and sucked her slippery muffin for a few minutes while my lover slowly lost coherence. Her second orgasm was as thunderous as her first. I sat back and watched her tits jiggle as Kelly squirmed and shuddered.

When she recovered, Kelly put her head up, looked me in the eye and demanded, “God damn it Kyle! Fuck me. I need you dick in me right now!”

I scooted forward over her and gave her a deep kiss while I positioned my big prick. I let my weight sink my cock into her hot tunnel, reveling in the sensations caused by the

tautness of our fit. When our pubic areas bumped together, Kelly smiled and said, "Give it to me deep honey. I need a good fucking."

Kelly raised her knees up to her chest. I pulled them onto my shoulders and went to work satisfying my lover. A few thrusts later Kelly and I found our well-practiced rhythm as we shared ourselves with each other.

After a few minutes I saw Kelly smile as her eyes twinkled. "You know my period started eleven days ago?"

"Uh huh..." I grunted as I pumped in and out. "I know."

"That means I'm almost in the middle of my cycle," Kelly explained unnecessarily. I grunted my agreement as I worked my cock in and out. "You aren't ready to come yet, are you?"

"No," I answered. "I'm not close."

"Good, I don't want you to pull out yet," Kelly said. "I love doing this with you and I don't want it to end too quickly."

"I don't either," I said agreeably as I continued screwing her.

"Promise me you'll pull out before you come Kyle," Kelly said, trying to sound scared. "Daddy will kill us if you get me knocked up. I'd have to drop out of high school and everything."

I smiled at my playful lover. She wanted to do some more role-playing for my enjoyment. "I'll be careful Kelly, I promise," I replied. "It would be hard for us to raise a baby when we're only fifteen."

Every couple minutes as we coupled, Kelly reminded me that I couldn't come in her like I did last week. I always swore that I'd be careful. We continued on, me pumping in as Kelly thrust up towards me cock, our pubic areas slamming together, I'd grind a little and then pull away as Kelly let her body sink into the bed again.

Kelly's breathing got ragged as she approached her pinnacle. "Ooohh... are you clooo.... close?" she moaned.

"Not quite yet," I replied as I continued to drill her. I made sure to crunch into her clit as we came together with each thrust.

"Make.... Ooohh.... Sure.... you.... pull..... Ooohhh.... GOD!" Kelly stammered. Her pussy rippled against my cock and clenched as she squealed when she orgasmed. My lover shuddered as she rode her climax through to its denouement. Kelly slumped to

the bed, spent. I continued thrusting in and out, but at a slower pace, giving her a chance to recover her sanity.

“Fuck!” Kelly exclaimed as her eyes focused. “That was fantastic.”

“I’m glad you are enjoying this,” I replied as I continued to pump in and out of my lover. I felt my balls churn. I slowed my pace and swiveled my hips as I bottomed out on each stroke. I wanted to give Kelly another climax before I spewed my seed.

“Pull out before you... ooohh....” Kelly moaned. “...come.... Please?” I sensed she was close too.

“OOhh... yeahh!” I exclaimed. “I’ll pull out.... Unhh... I... [pant] ...promise.” I thrust a few more times. I felt my cum boil up out of my balls. I thrust hard one last time and planted my cock as deep as possible in my lover.

Kelly’s eyes widened as my first spurt shot out into her pussy. “Kyle! I can feel it.”

“Oooohh....” I groaned as I drained my balls into my lover.

“You promised to pull out!” Kelly protested.

“Sorry,” I replied. “It felt... oooh..... sooo good. I couldn’t stop myself.” I slumped on top of Kelly. She hugged me as she rolled us to our sides.

“You promised to pull out,” Kelly protested. Her smile belied her protests. “What if you get me knocked up?”

I let the question go unanswered for half a minute. Kelly and I cuddled while I enjoyed the post-orgasmic feelings of bliss. Kelly arched her eyebrow questioningly. “What can I say? I’m incorrigible.”

We cuddled and exchanged kisses for a minute or two. Kelly stared into my eyes and asked, “You really get turned on by the chance of getting a girl pregnant, don’t you?”

“I think both of us get turned on by it,” I replied. “You were pretty passionate this afternoon too.”

She gave me a kiss then answered, “You’re probably right.”

Kelly and I cuddled for awhile before we noticed the time. It was after three o’clock. Damian was expected back anytime. Damian and I had to get ready for football practice soon. Kelly dressed and headed back to her room. Damian came in half a minute after Kelly left.

“You have fun this afternoon roomie?” Damian teased. He arched his eyebrows like Groucho Marx and pretended to tap the ashes from his ‘cigar.’ “A little afternoon delight?”

“You know how it is,” I replied. “Any way, why would I go golfing with you guys? I’d much rather stick to something I’m good at.”

“Good at it?” Damian teased. “I see you’re Mister Modesty.”

“I’ve never had any complaints from my performance,” I replied.

Damian and I headed over to the Lasch Building early and hung out in the player’s lounge until it was time for practice. The coaches had the offense and defense meet with their coordinators and coaches to review the film from Saturday’s game.

The offense enjoyed the film review. The coaches were mostly complimentary. They pointed out a few spots where we could have done better. I was surprised when Coach Schroeder singled out poor blocks by me on a couple running plays.

The defensive players didn’t look quite as happy when we finished the film review session and headed to dinner. Understandably, the defensive coaches had pointed to a lot of places where they could improve their play. No one on the offense pointed fingers, but we knew our defense needed to pick up their game for us to continue winning when we started playing the good teams – such as Nebraska in six days.

This wasn’t the Nebraska of the storied Tom Osborne era. It also wasn’t the dog of a team that had a couple losing seasons earlier in the decade either. They went 8-4 against a tough Big 12 schedule and had played in a minor bowl game last year. We’d have to play well to beat these guys.

Classes were going well so far. I had a lot of reading in the American Comedy course and had two turned in two short papers. My history term paper was due next Monday, so I spent a lot of my free time at the library researching things. I planned to write the paper Thursday afternoon before practice and then polish it on Friday night and Sunday afternoon.

I met twice in the week with Kevin Lee so he could help me with my calculus course. Dr. Gowavaram gave a pop quiz on Tuesday. I was extremely pleased to get an A when he handed them back at Thursday’s class.

Kelly and I enjoyed having a class together every day. Most mornings we ate breakfast together. We always ate lunch together. Neither of us had a lot of free time during the week to spend together. Classes, homework and football didn’t permit it. We had

Saturday nights and Sundays to spend quality time together. It wasn't as good as last spring, but was better than the limited time we had over the summer.

Thursday morning I got up bright and early, grabbed breakfast alone and then headed for the Natatorium. Mr. Coleman finally allowed us to get tanks and practice our scuba. We spent most of the class in the pool in about five feet of water, getting comfortable breathing with the tank. We learned to clear our masks if they get flooded. We practiced sharing our air supply with another diver too.

Zack, Chip and I got together with Ryan Reynolds in the afternoon after I finished my tutoring session with Kevin Lee. We reviewed video of Nebraska's defense, looking for spots where we could try our sight adjustments to my pass routes. We agreed on four defensive looks we would use this technique and what route I was to run for each look. Zack would signal that the adjustment was on if he pulled his hands away from under center while he was looking at me. I was to nod my head if I understood that adjustment. We thought we have a chance to use the technique against Nebraska.

Zack, Chip and I headed over to the locker room to change for practice after we finished. Chip sat down on the stool beside my locker while I started to undress.

"You know..." Chip said. "This was fun studying with you guys."

"That's good," I answered.

"Jared told me about how you helped him learn the plays last spring," Chip continued. "I was wondering if you'd be willing to let me study with you."

"I don't mind," I replied. "You're welcome to join me if your schedule allows it."

"Thanks man," Chip said. "I can see what you were telling me last month about how much I have to study. I can use all the help I can get."

Chip and I arranged to meet after I finished my history class Friday afternoon and work together reviewing game video and the playbook.

Kelly and I gave each other a long good bye after History 20 outside the Chambers Building Friday afternoon. We wouldn't get to be together again until after the game on Saturday when we went out for a late dinner with Dad and Andy after the game. Our game was one of the regional games on ABC, so kickoff wasn't until 3:30 in the afternoon.

Chip and I spent an hour in the film room reviewing the playbook and video of our team running the plays. I could see that Chip had been making progress learning the plays as

we worked. My friend seemed to be a quick study. We went through plays faster than when I worked with Jared in the spring.

The first string offense worked against the third string defense at half speed. They defended using their best imitation of Nebraska's defense against us. Later in practice when I was on the sideline while our backups practiced with the first string Coach Adams called me over to talk.

"Kyle, I'd like to look these plays over for a few minutes," Coach explained as he handed me a dozen plays. "Get familiar with these. I'd like you to run these with the scout team offense."

I glanced over the plays. They were all marked "Nebraska" with the name of the play. They weren't anything complicated, mostly streaks and other deep routes. I let Coach Adams know when I knew them.

Coach yelled, "Scout team, on me!" We huddled around our coach. "You guys are going to run the next set of plays at full speed. Martin is in for MacCauley." Coach called for us to run the third play in the stack. He reviewed assignments briefly and told to go get'em.

"Damn, this is good!" Chip exclaimed as we headed for the line of scrimmage. "I didn't think I'd get to throw with you this season."

"I knew we wouldn't go the whole season without a little time together," I answered.

Karol Zizka did a double take when he saw me line up outside. He called an audible and rotated Shawn Byrd to my side. Angus Pitts sprinted across the field behind the linebackers and positioned himself beside our slot receiver. Tyler Madden, who was in a free safety at the moment, shifted towards my side of the field. The center snapped the ball when Coach C blew his whistle.

I sprinted downfield. Shawn had given me an eight yard cushion, which allowed him to stay with me further downfield. Chip threw the ball to me just as Tyler Madden arrived to help Shawn. I managed to out-leap the two defenders and snag the ball. Tyler pawed at the ball as I came down, trying to knock it loose. Shawn knocked me and Tyler over as he made certain that I didn't gain anymore yardage.

I headed back to the offensive huddle again. Coach Adams had us go through each of the dozen Nebraska plays with our first string defense. I caught three more balls. Tyler and Shawn also kept me from catching a couple more that Chip threw our way. When we were through all the plays Coach Adams called me over.

"Thank you Kyle," Coach Adams said as he shook my hand. "That was helpful."

"No problem coach," I answered, "I was wondering..."

“Why?” Coach said grinning to me. I nodded my head yes. “Coach Czarwinski wanted to try some new things on defense. He wanted to see how it would work against a fast receiver.”

“What do you think?” I asked. “They seemed to do a better job covering me than they did a few weeks ago in the last scrimmage.”

“I’ll watch the practice videos before I decide,” Coach Adams answered. He gave me a wink and added, “Between you and me – I think it’s an improvement.”

“That’s good,” I agreed. “We need to improve on pass defense.” Coach Adams smiled and didn’t say anything. I understood. Tearing down one part of our team wouldn’t help the whole team. We would succeed as a 109 person unit, not separately on offense, defense and special teams.

We grabbed dinner at the Training Table when practice was over. Coach Burton gave us fifteen minutes after dinner to pick up our overnight bags and then meet the blue Penn State buses at the Lasch Building for the ride over to Toftrees for the evening. Coach Burton did a brief team meeting at the resort and then gave us the rest of the night off to relax.

Damian and I joined Jay, Shawn, Trevor, Tony, and Josh in the pool for an evening swim. When we were waterlogged we went back to my room for some poker and TV before bedtime. The coaches came through at a quarter to eleven to remind everyone of our eleven o’clock curfew.

Coaches didn’t schedule the team breakfast until 9:30 on Saturday morning, a fact nearly all members of the team appreciated. I don’t know what Christian, GJ DeLuca and the few other early birds on our team did. I enjoyed my extra sleep. The team loaded up on the buses again after breakfast and headed back to the Lasch Building.

Coach Burton had us meet with our position coaches to review our game plans and then held a general team meeting to prepare us for Saturday afternoon’s game. Yasin Clark, normally our free safety, was sitting this game out. He had tweaked a hamstring at Wednesday’s practice and wasn’t ready to play. Tyler Madden would take his place.

Yasin, David McCall, Jared Cantrell and Chip Brinton were delegated to escort this week’s group of recruits around campus this weekend. The recruits included Brian Henson, a wide receiver from Bloomsburg; Chris Richardson, a defensive back from north Philly; Cody Jones, a linebacker from York; Andrew Burke, a running back from Moorestown, New Jersey; and Marco Cuchiella, a defensive back and little brother of Dom Cuchiella, our starting Hero [strong safety]. Yasin and Chip would stay the recruits during the game. The other guides would join them afterward. Coach Burton asked me to assist on Sunday morning when the guys had their workouts with the coaches.

The recruits and their parents were invited to join the team at lunch at the training table. We headed back to the locker room after lunch. Yasin and Chip took the recruits around and introduced them to the team while we dressed and did our final preparations for the game.

We headed out for warm-ups. After we stretched, I caught some passes to help Zack warm-up his arm. I shagged some punts for Steve Cobb after that. I was down near the end zone when I heard a voice from the past.

“Hey Kyle,” a woman said.

A shiver ran through my body as I remembered. “Julie!” I exclaimed as I turned to see her. What a sight! She had filled out a little in the right places since we had gone steady back in tenth grade. She had on a tight red top with a big ‘N’ on it and a red micro skirt. Her blond hair was pulled back in a ponytail with a red ribbon.

“God, you look great Julie,” I added.

“You do too Kyle,” Julie answered. “You’ve grown since I’ve seen you the last time.”

“I’ve filled out not grown,” I said. “I’m still 6’-4” like three years ago. Obviously you are going to Nebraska. What’s your major?”

“Business,” Julie replied. “How about you?”

“I’m going to be a teacher and a football coach,” I explained. “How is your brother... uh, WJ? Did he stay in scouts when you moved?”

“Yes, WJ did,” Julie explained. “He is almost done with his Eagle. I heard you completed yours a couple years ago.” I nodded yes. “My brother took after his hero.”

I shot her a surprised look. Julie smiled and nodded yes. “He idolized you. Didn’t you know? He worked at scout camp last summer just like you did back then. He’s plays football like you too. He’s a running back. He made varsity this fall. I didn’t hear if he got to play in his first game last night.”

“Wow, that’s amazing,” I said. “I had no idea he thought that highly of me. How are your parents doing?”

We exchanged information for a couple minutes. Julie’s dad loved managing New Holland Agriculture’s Grand Rapids plant. Her mom worked part time as a church secretary. They were very happy with their decision to move to Nebraska.

Julie asked, “What are our friends from high school doing? I know about Jeremy. I saw him when Notre Dame came to Lincoln last fall. How about everyone else?”

I related what Hal, Tammy, Kathy, Drew Stacie, Brandon, Jake, and Morgan were doing. I finally related the news about Ed.

“Ed’s starting quarterback at Florida?” Julie said. “I can’t believe he’s a starter already!” She paused and added, “I know you are too.”

“I understand your surprise,” I replied. “I’ve been very lucky to get this chance. Anyway, Ed’s first start is tonight. Hell, you can watch it on TV. Umm... that is if you aren’t flying home immediately after this.”

“We’re not leaving until tomorrow morning. We don’t want to get back to Lincoln at 3 am.”

“You can watch Ed on ABC after our game,” I said. “He picked a hell of a game for his first start. They play LSU in Baton Rouge in Death Valley.”

“Death Valley?” Julie asked.

“That is the Tiger’s nickname for their stadium,” I explained. “It’s appropriate. The fans are packed in close to the field, closer than here. They are some of the loudest fans I’ve ever seen. Ed and I went there two years ago for a recruiting visit.”

“You don’t think he has a chance to win?” Julie asked.

“Win? No, he doesn’t have much of a chance,” I replied. “I just hope he plays well, win or lose. That would be excellent when you’re playing an away game against the #1 team in the country.”

I noticed the other guys on my team were leaving the field. “It looks like I have to go soon,” I said. “I wanted to apologize... you know, for the way things ended.”

“You don’t need to,” Julie replied. “We were young and foolish. We never should have tried to have a relationship a thousand miles apart. It was silly.”

“A thousand miles? Hmmp!” I snorted. “I think you knew I got back to together with Penny after we broke up. I couldn’t make that work with me here and her two hundred miles away at Penn. We broke up a year ago.”

“Are you with anyone now?” Julie asked.

“I am,” I replied. “Do you see the beautiful red head over there by the ‘Kyle’s Krazies’ sign? That’s Kelly.”

“There?” Julie said, pointing to the wrong ‘Kyle’s Krazies’ sign.

“No, the other sign,” I said pointing towards Kelly, Bev and their friends.

"I see," Julie said. "She's very pretty."

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes. Sean's a junior," Julie explained. "He's here today." She pointed down towards the Husker's band. "He one of the trumpet players."

I glanced towards the Penn State tunnel. Most of our guys were gone from the field and heading for the locker room.

"I've got to go Julie," I said. "It's been great to see you." I gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm glad we saw each other again Kyle," Julie replied as she returned the kiss on the cheek. "Good luck today!" I turned away to head off the field. Julie called, "Not too much luck today Kyle. Be kind to my Huskers."

"I can't promise that," I answered as turned back and waved good bye. I jogged across the field and headed inside.

My teammates and I made our final preparations for the game. Zack and Jay huddled, studying the game plan one final time. Some guys like to talk and trade jokes. Some guys listened to music. A couple guys sat and brooded, working themselves into a nasty state of mind. I listened to my MP3 player and reviewed the game plan at my locker, wrapped up in my assignments for the approaching sixty minutes of combat.

We did a team prayer and then lined up in the tunnel. As always, I was jazzed when I ran out of the tunnel between lines of band members blaring out the fight song while thousands of white clad students and alumni cheered us. Hopefully our team, especially the defense, was ready for its first real test against Nebraska.

Nebraska won the coin toss, so I started on the sidelines. We got our first break after only four plays. Jake Washington shot the gap between the tackle and the guard. He almost was in position to take the hand off from the quarterback instead of Nebraska's tailback. He settled for plowing into both as they made the hand off. The ball went squirting across the backfield. Josh Bruno, who had sideline contain on what looked like a sweep to his side, jumped on the fumble and covered it.

Zack led our offense out to start our start our drive at Nebraska's 31 yard line. He hit Anders across the middle for a seventeen yard gain when Nebraska covered me with three guys. I out jumped the two defenders in the corner of the end zone on the next play to score a touchdown. Andrew Perkins kicked the PAT. Score: 7-0 Lions

Dave McCall made a brilliant play covering the kickoff. He out-maneuvered his blocker and dropped the kick returner on 15 yard line. The Huskers used running plays and short

passes to move down the field. Our defensive line and linebackers handled them, holding them to 3-4 yards a play.

Trevor sniffed out a screen on the fifth play of the drive and dropped the running back for a six yard loss. Surprisingly, our pass defense stopped them on third down. I lined up on our 35 yard line to return the Huskers' punt.

I couldn't see from my vantage point, but either the snap was bobbled or the punter mishandled the ball when he kicked. It came flying down field wobbling and drifting short and to my right. I ran ahead and towards the sideline, managing to field the ball cleanly. When I scanned across the field, I saw the bad punt had disrupted everyone's schemes for the punt return. I sprinted down the field near the sideline, trying to get as many yards as possible.

Damian got over and knocked down the first guy who tried to tackle me. Shawn Byrd caught up and screened off two more guys as I ran down the field. The kicker tried to arm tackle me. I spun off him and cut back across the field again, aiming for the goal post. I out ran the rest of the Huskers, carrying the ball into the end zone to the delight and thunderous cheers of the Penn State faithful. Andrew booted the ball through the uprights to give us a 14-0 lead.

Nebraska adjusted a little on their next offensive possession, managing to drive down the field. They used a mix of runs and short passes. They settled for a long field goal when Jake Washington sacked their quarterback on third and long at our 22 yard line. Score: 14-3 Lions

Nebraska respected my speed and put two defenders on me in addition to giving me a cushion at the line of scrimmage. Anders, Evan and Hassan had room to catch the ball away from me. We mixed in Shawn O'Conner's running with our passing game to keep Nebraska's defense confused. We cruised to 28-3 lead as the first half was closing. The Huskers pushed the score closer when they hit a deep ball across the middle of our defense and scored a TD before the half ran out. A 28-10 lead wasn't nearly as comfortable as we would have liked.

I almost broke the kick off for a touchdown to start the second half. The kicker managed to push me out of bounds at our 43 yard line. Coach Burton started this drive off sending Shawn O'Conner on a sweep to my side for 5 yards. Zack hit Anders on a curl over the middle for seven yards. It was a set up for the next play.

Zack tossed the ball wide to Shawn again as he ran wide to my side of the field. I sprinted across the backfield on a reverse, accepting the ball from Shawn as we passed. Shawn picked off the cornerback pursuing me as I sprinted for the right side of the field. Hassan kept the cornerback covering him away as I rounded the corner and ran down field. Nebraska's free safety was fast and smart. He recovered from Shawn's fake and ran across the field to intercept me. He pushed me out of bounds at the Husker's 19 yard line. On the next play Zack tossed the ball into the corner of the end zone for Hassan

when Anders and I attracted most of the d-backs to our side of the field. Andrew Perkins brought our lead to 35-10 when he knocked the PAT through the uprights.

Nebraska gave up on the run after that. Coach C turned up the blitz on them: First and 10 – incomplete, Second and 10 – offensive line holding; Second and 20 – incomplete; Third and 20 – sacked for a 12 yard loss. It wasn't pretty for Huskers fans.

Coach Burton decided the first string was done for the day. Christian handled the next punt. He caught it at mid-field and almost broke it. The punter forced him out of bounds at Nebraska's 16 yard line. Jay handed the ball off four times to my roommate. Damian dove into the end zone on the last play to score his first touchdown of the season.

Coach C kept our first string defense in throughout the third quarter, I assume so they could get more work defending against the pass. Coach C kept the pressure on the Huskers. Our first string ended up with seven sacks before they left at the start of the fourth quarter.

Jay and our second string offense had run the score to 45-17 when they also were relieved in the fourth quarter. Damian carried most of the load, smashing the ball up the middle, killing time on the clock.

Nebraska managed to score a couple late touchdowns against our third string, mostly freshman defense. Their last hope of rallying died with a minute and half left in the game when Matt Frye intercepted the ball and ran it back for a touchdown. The final score of the game was 52-31 Nittany Lions' favor.

I gained 266 yards in the game – four catches for 57 yards, one carry for 31 yards, 3 punt returns for 77 yards and 3 kick returns for 101 yards. My two touchdowns brought my season total to seven, the most for our team. I had a good day, though not a great one.

I did interviews after the game and then headed inside to change. I called Dad to let him know I'd meet him and Andy outside the locker room in fifteen minutes. Dad let me know Kelly had caught up with them already. She'd meet me there too.

The four of us decided that it was a burger night. We walked downtown to the Penn State Diner. The waitress seated us about fifteen minutes later. We placed our order and relaxed.

My brother was in a bad mood. Our high school lost their first game to Cornwall last night 17-13. While we waited for our dinner, I asked, "What happened? How'd our team get held to 13 points?"

"It was ugly," Andy replied, shaking his head. "Cornwall has a good defense, but damn! We made it too easy for them. We didn't stretch them deep. I had four catches for 39 yards."

"Ouch! I didn't know Cornwall had people fast enough to cover you," I replied.

"They don't," Andy answered. "We ran deep routes. I was open deep. So was Dave [Mitchell]. Logan just wouldn't throw the ball down the field. He kept dumping it off to a running back for a couple yards. By the second quarter Cornwall's coaches figured out what was happening. They put nine in the box [nine defenders in close to the line of scrimmage]. The safeties stayed a little deeper, in case Logan decided to go deep. The team couldn't run the ball well. We receivers got beat up after every catch too."

"Did you tell Logan you were open deep?" I asked.

"Of course, all the time," Andy responded. "I don't know what Logan is thinking. I know he doesn't have the strongest arm, but he can throw it twenty-five yards. That's all we need."

"So, what are you going to do about this?" I asked.

"Me?" Andy replied.

"You're a team captain, aren't you?"

"Yes, but what can I do?" Andy asked plaintively.

"Go in and talk things over with Coach Caffrey as soon as you can," I suggested. "How urgent is this? Who do you play next week?"

"Central," Andy answered glumly.

"Oooh-Kayyyy, it's urgent," I replied. "Why don't you give Coach a call tomorrow and see if you and the other captains can sit down with him before school on Monday?"

"I'll give it a try," Andy agreed.

"Coach Caffrey is working on how to fix this problem too," I added. "He's too good a coach not to see what is going on."

"I guess," Andy replied. "This isn't how I expected to start out my senior season. I want college coaches drooling over my stats, not wondering why I'm not getting my catches anymore."

"It'll work out Andy, don't worry," I said.

Our conversation moved on to more pleasant topics. Dad quizzed Kelly and me about how our classes were going. We assured him that our classes were great and our grades would reflect that. Dad and Andy filled me in on the happenings back home. We enjoyed our dinner together. I thought ruefully how nice it would have been a year ago

when I had so much trouble to have an occasional meal with Dad. Maybe things would have gone smoother back then. Kelly and I said good bye to Andy and Dad after we had a grilled sticky for dessert.

Kelly and I walked over to the Nittany Apartments to Zack's place for the party. I planned to ask Zack to turn the TV to the Florida-LSU game so I could check on how things were going for Ed. I didn't need to.

Zack, Leigh Ann and Karl Weaver were huddled by the TV while the party went on around them. Karl was our friend from back home and another former receiver for our high school team. Kelly and I joined them.

"What did we miss?" I asked. It was around 8:30 in the evening and the game started at 8:00 pm.

"LSU won the kickoff," Zack explained. "They just drove the length of the field for a touchdown. You're just in time for them to kick the ball back to the Gators."

The Gators didn't keep the ball long. Ed's first throw went incomplete when he had to hurry it due to the ferocious pass rush. He completed a screen pass on the second play, but LSU stopped the receiver for a two yard gain. They sacked Ed on third down. The Tigers were really swarming on defense. They looked fired up for the game. I went out and grabbed a couple beers for me and Kelly. I was afraid it was going to be a long night.

Things didn't improve for Ed or the Florida Gators. They were down 14-0 before they got the ball back. The LSU defense employed a scheme that neither Zack nor I could identify. Poor Ed couldn't either. He managed a couple completions on the next drive before a Tigers cornerback intercepted him.

The five of us stuck things out through the whole game, rooting for Ed to do better. Some of our teammates stopped by to check out the game as we watched, but never watched very long. None of us said it, but I know we were all glad when the game finally ended a few minutes after eleven.

ABC put up a graphic showing Ed's tough day after the game ended. It said Ed was sacked ten times, hit thirteen more times and completed 16 passes in 42 attempts for 157 yards, one touchdown and four interceptions. The TV commentator noted that it was a shaky debut by Ed under extremely trying circumstances.

Ed was hustled off the field before a reporter could talk to him. A very shell shocked Coach Meyers faced the on-field reporters. He agreed with the polls, LSU fully deserved the #1 ranking they had. He complimented them on a good game plan and for their outstanding play.

One of the reporters asked, "Why did you stay with the kid so long Coach? You have highly touted Terrence Walker on the bench. Why didn't you put him in a see what he could do?"

"I put the best man on the field today," Coach Meyers replied. "Ed Fritz gave us the best chance to win."

The reporter followed up with this, "Who's the starter next week Coach?"

"Fritz is further along than Walker," Coach Meyers responded. "Fritz will start next week against Kentucky. I have confidence that he will bounce back from tonight."

The reporter thanked Coach Meyers for the interview as the coach disengaged and headed for the locker room as quickly as he could get away from the cameras.

We looked at each other when the TV switched over to the Game Day show. I spoke first. "Wow, that was a rough; a baptism under fire, so to speak."

"You got that right Kyle," Zack agreed. "There were times I was looking at that defense and I couldn't figure it out."

"It's a lot tougher to figure out what the defense is doing when you have 92,000 fans screaming at you," I said. "The noise in Tiger Stadium is deafening."

"I forgot, LSU recruited you didn't they?" Zack said.

I told my friends about the recruiting visit Ed and I made two years ago to Baton Rouge. Zack turned the TV off. Kelly and I had another beer and mingled with the other guests at the party.

Kelly and I eventually took advantage of Zack's empty bedroom to make love. Both of us were a little down from watching our friend's bad evening down in Louisiana. We made love gently. I think the comfort and closeness was more important to us that evening than spectacular climaxes. We headed back to our dorm rooms a little after midnight.

I got up quietly on Sunday morning so I didn't wake Damian. I was invited to breakfast with the recruits, their parents, the coaches and the other teammates who were going to work out the recruits after breakfast. We met the coaches at the Lasch Building and rode over to Innovation Park and the Penn Stater Hotel to meet the recruits and their families.

I ended up seated with Brian Henson, his parents, Zack and Coach Adams during breakfast. I got to know Brian a little better over our meal. He was runner-up for all-state at wide receiver last season, behind my brother. Brian was familiar with who my brother was and asked about Andy's college plans. I told him about Andy's planned visit in a couple weeks. I also told Brian I had no idea where Andy would end up next season.

Everyone headed over to the practice fields after breakfast. Chris Richardson and Brian Henson both tested well in the 40 yard run – 4.35 seconds. Jay and I teamed up to test Chris Richardson's pass coverage abilities. We ran a couple dozen routes at him. Chris handled me well on speed routes. I made some catches but Chris made some nice stops too. I was impressed.

Jay, Chris and I caught the tail end of Brian Henson's try-out. Brian finished his workout by beating Shawn Byrd on a deep throw from Chip. I was impressed with Brian's work. He showed promise for a high school senior. I had to work at it to beat Shawn when he covered me.

Zack, Jay, Shawn Byrd, Tyler Madden and I headed back to the Lasch Building with the recruits and their parents after we were done. It was too late in the morning to go back to bed and too early to go to brunch. Of course Cuch headed for the player's lounge with his younger brother and parents.

We talked with the recruits while they waited for their conferences with the coaches. We shot some pool, played foosball and just shot the bull with them. We tried to sell our university to the guys. All five impressed me.

Chris, Brian, and of course, Marco were pretty serious about coming to Penn State if they were offered a scholarship. Cody was weighing offers already from Maryland, West Virginia and Pitt. Andrew had offers or visits lined up with Miami, Virginia Tech, Rutgers and Florida State. Andrew's parents were pushing for Rutgers or Penn State since they were close to home. Andrew seemed more interested in abandoning the winter weather and heading south.

Andrew Burke and Brian Henson had already had their meetings with Coach Burton. Both were offered scholarships to attend our university. Brian was visibly excited at the possibility but had two more recruiting visits before his parents would let him accept an offer. Andrew was pleased at the offer but was non-committal about whether he would attend.

Marco Cuchiella and his parents were in with Coach Burton when my cell phone rang. I answered it and found myself talking with Ed Fritz.

"What's up Ed?" I asked. "Shouldn't you be on an airplane back to campus now?"

"We landed a few minutes ago at the airport. I'm on a bus back to campus," Ed explained. "I was just looking for a friendly voice."

"How are you feeling after last night's game?" I asked. I noticed Zack perk up and pay attention when I mentioned last night's game. He mouthed the word "Ed?" I nodded yes.

“Like I was mauled by a cage full of tigers,” Ed answered.

“I guess you were,” I replied. “You knew that your chances of winning weren’t good going into the game didn’t you?”

“Yes, in my head I did,” Ed replied. “LSU has only lost two games in that stadium in the last decade. I knew my chances weren’t good. I just hoped I wouldn’t embarrass myself.” Ed snorted. “So much for those hopes.”

“It was a tough night,” I agreed. “Karl summed it up best. ‘The guy I know is tough. I’ve seen him do it before. Ed will learn from this and get better. Just like he did after we lost to Cornwall years ago.’ What do you think?”

“Karl?” Ed asked.

“Karl Weaver,” I answered. “You know, high school – the receiver you’d hit in the slot when I was covered.”

“He goes to Penn State?” Ed exclaimed. “I didn’t know that.” Ed harrumphed and continued, “Cornwall? I’d forgotten about that game. I guess that’s a pretty good analogy.”

“You’ll do better next week,” I said.

“Yeah, right!” Ed replied. “Like Coach Meyers is going to give me another start after this fiasco.”

“He said you’re starting the next game on TV last night when they interviewed him,”

“He said that?” Ed answered. “I hadn’t heard. I guess I’ll find out tomorrow.”

Zack was waving for me, asking for the phone. I handed my cell phone to him.

“Hey man, it’s Zack,” my buddy said. “That was a tough one last night. How are you feeling?” Zack listened for a minute, nodding and agreeing with what Ed was saying.

“You’re right. Keep your chin up Ed,” Zack replied to my friend. “Go in tomorrow and look at the film. Figure out what went wrong and fix it. You’ll do better next Saturday.”

Zack listened a little longer and then added quietly, “I don’t know if I could have taken my team down there and won. I have four years experience. You have one. Don’t get down from one game. You’ll do better next week.”

Zack listened for a minute to Ed, wished Ed luck and said good bye. I added my good wishes and told my friend he’d do better the next week. We went back to our foosball game.

The Cuchiellas came out of Coach Burton's office. Cuch and his family headed outside. I assume the news was good for Marco. He was as happy as a clam when he left. Cody Jones and his mother went in to see Coach Burton. Cody wasn't real pleased when he finished his meeting with the coach. He was offered preferred walk-on status. I didn't expect to see him back. Pitt and Maryland had offered him full scholarships.

Chris Richardson and his parents went in last. His meeting went longer than the others. I found out why when he came out.

"How'd it go Chris?" I asked when he came out to the lounge again.

"Great!" was his eager reply. "We'll be teammates next season."

"Cool!" I replied. "That's good news. I'll see you next summer."

"No," Chris explained. "I'm set to graduate from high school in December. I will start classes after Christmas."

"Excellent! I'll see you in January Chris," I said. We shook hands before he left with his parents. That was good news. Chris impressed me. He did a better job of covering me than some my teammates.

I met Kelly outside Pollock Commons for brunch. When we finished eating we went back to my room to read the Sunday newspaper for awhile. We exchanged our history term papers so we could proof read each other's work. We spent the remainder of the afternoon checking and critiquing each other's papers and then correcting our own. We walked to Pollock Commons together before separating for dinner, Kelly to the main dining hall and me to the Training Table. I had to work out and study at the Lasch Building most of the evening.

Dr. Brennan's TA (teaching assistant) collected all the term papers at the start of History 20 on Monday morning. Dr. Brennan promised to have the papers graded and returned by next Monday. She launched into the day's lecture – the cost of the French and Indian War and the British attempts to pay for the war in the 1760's. The lecture was fascinating as always. She made us rethink our preconceived ideas. The British did safeguard the colonies from the French and their Native American allies. How should the British have paid for the war? The Stamp Act may not have been the best choice. American hot heads vs. stubborn British aristocrats was a volatile combination.

Kelly gave me a kiss and hug after history. I headed for Econ while she had an hour free before her philosophy class. We agreed to meet at lunch time. We didn't get nearly enough time together but we made the most of the time we had available.

We began preparations for Indiana at Monday's practice. Their defense didn't look that dominating on video. Their offense on the other hand looked very good. They ran a no huddle offense sometimes. They were balanced on offense, running roughly as often as they passed. Their QB was also their best runner. Our defense was going to have its work cut out for it on Saturday.

Zack, Chip and I compared our schedules for the week so we could fit in time to review video and prep for Indiana. My schedule was getting hectic again like last fall, but this year I think I'm better prepared to juggle all the balls without dropping any.

Before practice on Tuesday Christian Hunsecker stopped by my locker with a challenge. "You interested in a bet like last year?" he asked. "If Central wins, you do my laundry next week, if the Wolverines win, I do your laundry."

"Ummm... I think I'll pass," I replied.

"You're not expecting your team to win?" Christian teased.

"Let's just say I'm not as confident as last year," I admitted. "How did your brother do last week?"

"Josh caught seven balls for 95 yards and two touchdowns," Christian replied.

"That's good," I answered. "I'm not surprised. Your brother looked good when he was practicing with us at scout camp this summer. He runs very good routes. I'm guessing you've been coaching him?"

"I have," Christian said.

"Who did your team play last week?" I asked.

"We beat LS 42-13 last Friday night," Christian replied.

Christian and I agreed to disagree about the desired result of our high school team's impending meeting. No bets would be placed this year.

Kelly and I got a bonus Thursday evening after I finished my receivers meeting. I stopped by Kelly's room and found her alone. Jen had to go to the library for the evening and would be gone until the library closed at 9:30 pm. Kelly and I took full advantage of the hour of privacy to make love. It was wonderful. It was also needed since I would be in Bloomington, Indiana on Saturday night and we wouldn't be able to enjoy our usual Saturday evening loving.

Kelly and I met for breakfast on Friday and then walked hand in hand towards the Thomas Building and my Econ course. We paused at the corner of Shortlidge and Pollock.

Kelly gave me a hug and said, "Have a good game tomorrow Kyle, I'll be cheering for you back here. Be careful."

"I will be honey, I promise," I replied. I gave her a deep kiss. "I love you."

"I love you too," Kelly answered. "See you on Sunday about 11:30 for brunch."

"Sunday, 11:30," I agreed.

I headed across the street and into the lecture hall in Thomas for Dr. Blanchard's lecture. I headed back to my room after class, grabbed my overnight bag and headed to the Lasch Building to catch the bus to the airport and Bloomington, Indiana.

The buses took us out to the airport. We boarded and settled in for the three hour flight to Indianapolis, the nearest large airport to the University of Indiana's Bloomington campus. We had lunch during the flight. Buses picked us up in Indianapolis and took us south for the hour and a half drive to Bloomington. Our athletic department put us up for the night in the Radisson Hotel, near campus.

Travel for football games was becoming routine by now. After dinner at the hotel we had team and position meetings followed by some time to relax before our curfew. Saturday morning we had breakfast at the hotel, packed our things, checked out and took buses over to the stadium.

The Hoosier's stadium was smaller than some of the stadiums we played in. It only held 53,500 fans. The stands were horseshoe shaped with the south end open onto campus. The older stands on the sides were connected by the new North End Zone Facility. The new building added 4,500 seats, football offices, meeting rooms, a weight room and Memorial Hall, which was dedicated to IU's football legacy. Zack Hayes was impressed with the facilities. He said work hadn't started when he played here two years earlier.

The field was covered in Astroplay turf and was in good condition for the game. The weather report said there was a possibility of thunderstorms later in the afternoon but that we should have good weather for most of the game. We should be able to play our spread offense the way we liked it.

The stadium was filling with red and white clad IU fans when we came out to warm up. My teammates and I went through our routine and then headed back into the locker rooms for final preparations. The stadium shook as the Hoosier fans cheered their team while we waited for our introductions. We ran onto the field to polite applause from the crowd when it was our turn.

The Hoosiers won the coin toss and elected to receive the football to start the game. Our team found out quickly that this was going to be a very different game from our first three. Indiana came at us with a no huddle offense. Their quarterback was also their leading rusher. He was equally likely to throw the ball as run with it. This quick no huddle offense kept our defense off balance. Indiana scored a touchdown on their first drive.

Zack and our offense were equipped to strike fast too. We answered with a touchdown of our own. The first half continued that way, each team answering score for score. Unfortunately, our offense was just a little out of sync that day. A couple times in the first half we had to settle for field goals instead of touchdowns.

Indiana assigned a fast cornerback to cover me. The times I was sent deep he managed to stay with me. They assigned the free safety to help cover me deep too, so I had little chance to catch a dramatic deep pass. I almost broke a couple of the kick returns for touchdowns, but was taken down before I could get by the last guy.

We were down 35-27 as the first half was finishing. Indiana had the ball and was driving for another score. Yasin Clark, our free safety, came flying in on a quarterback draw to fill the hole and stop the QB from making a first down. Yasin was a good hitter. He knocked the QB down a yard and a half from the down marker. Unfortunately Trevor Conwell knocked down Indiana's big left guard as he was fighting off a block. The guard rolled backwards and rolled over Yasin's left knee.

Yasin rolled over on his back, writhing and clutching his knee as he screamed from the pain. A chill ran down my spine as I remembered THAT feeling as the bodies were unstacked from the pile and the referee marked the ball. Our medical staff was out immediately to examine Yasin. There was a pause while the medical people waited for the cart to take Yasin in for examination.

A few of our teammates stood with him while he waited for his ride. I joined the crowd.

"Hey man, hang in there," I offered in comfort.

"My knee! I heard it pop!" Yasin moaned.

"I know," I replied. "I've been there already." I pointed to the three scars on my knee. "The surgeons can rebuild it good as new. Look at me now."

The cart arrived before he could reply. I hoped Yasin got my message. The medical staff loaded him on the cart and hauled him off to the training room.

Tyler Madden came in to replace Yasin. Indiana tried to go deep immediately. Tyler had his man blanketed. The QB checked down, looking for his tight end next. Cuch Cuchiella was following the QB's eyes. He hung back a yard or so, baiting the QB.

Cuch jumped ahead when the QB fired the ball to the “open” tight end, neatly intercepting the pass. Cuch only gained a few yards on the run back.

Our offense only had forty-seven seconds left before the end of the half. Zack hit me for a 25 yard gain on the first play. He worked the ball down the field, spreading throws around to me, Anders, Hassan, and twice to Shawn. We managed to drive down to Indiana’s 37 yard line before the clock ticked down to 0:03. Coach Burton sent Andrew Perkins in to try a 55 yard field goal. Andrew boomed the ball straight down the field for the middle of the uprights. Unfortunately, Andrew doesn’t have the leg to consistently get that far. The field goal would have been good at 52 yards, but was just short at 55. We went into the locker room down 35-27.

I was pleased at my teammates’ reaction to our predicament. Nobody was panicking. The coaches calmly reviewed adjustments for the second half. Everyone expected we would be able to pull ahead of the Hoosiers.

Coach Schroeder called on the offense as we met to step up our game another notch. He predicted we would need to score at least as many points in the second half as the first, perhaps more. We needed to make sure that we took better care of the ball.

Shawn O’Conner had uncharacteristically lost a fumble in the first half. Zack had thrown two interceptions – the first was a bad throw when he was being hurried; the second wasn’t really all that bad. We had tried a deep pass across the middle to Anders on third and long. Anders batted the ball away from the nickel back when he couldn’t get it. Unfortunately the free safety caught the batted ball. The whole thing happened forty yards downfield. The interception was as good as the punt we would have made on the next play.

We started the second half off with a bang. I took the kickoff two yards deep in the end zone and ran left behind a wall of blockers. They did a great job. The first guy to have a chance at me was the kicker, close to mid field. I juke left and spun right, leaving him grasping at air when I sprinted by. I went into the end zone untouched. Andrew booted the PAT to bring the score to 35-34 Hoosiers’ favor.

The game turned on the next drive by Indiana. Tyler Madden properly diagnosed the action on the fourth play of the drive as a quarterback draw. He came flying up out of the backfield with a full head of steam. Tyler is an extremely hard tackler. I know; he’s gotten me too many times in practice. He nailed the quarterback cleanly in the chest, driving him backward and into the ground viciously.

The ball popped loose and Cuch alertly scooped it up and ran for the end zone. He was tackled by a Hoosier running back at their 22 yard line. The Indiana quarterback was still lying on the ground when the play ended. Their trainers helped him off the field. He spent the next ten minutes or so watching the blinking lights in his head as the trainers treated and observed him.

Zack tossed the ball to me in the corner of the end zone on the next play where I out-jumped two defenders and held on to the ball as they pawed at it until we landed on the ground. Touchdown! Andrew made the PAT to finally give our team a lead – 41-35.

Indiana lost its best quarterback and best running threat when he went down. The back-up tried gamely to fill in, but wasn't up to the task. Coach C turned up the heat with blitzing. They had to punt the ball back to us.

Coach Burton was tired of watching Indiana's no huddle offense, so we played ball control. We ran the ball using our big offensive line to punch holes in their defense. Shawn O'Conner, Damian and Wyatt Kennedy traded off carrying the ball. They mixed in a few short passes to Hassan, Anders and Evan while I ran deep routes to keep the defense stretched. We used the remainder of the third period to score our next TD. The clock read 0:11 third quarter when Andrew Perkins made the PAT to bring the score to 48-35 Lions' favor.

Indiana's backup QB made a couple big plays on the next drive. They got a pass interference penalty in their favor when they went deep. Our sideline was screaming, because the receiver actually had pulled Shawn Byrd down to prevent an interception, not the other way around. Our protests did no good. They spotted the ball at our 13 yard line. Indiana managed to punch the ball into the end zone for a touchdown. Score: 48-42 Lions' favor.

The Hoosier kicker booted the ball deep into the end zone, stopping me from returning it. It was too bad. Our blocking scheme was working perfectly. I could see a wall forming to the right side of the field. I was under strict orders from Coach Ferguson that I was not to run out any ball more than two yards into the end zone. I downed the ball to give us possession on the 20.

Coach Burton played ball control again. We used up most the remainder of the fourth quarter with the drive. Unfortunately, it ended short of the end zone when we stalled at the Indiana 36 yard line. Coach Burton decided to punt rather than go for a field goal. Steve Cobb brilliantly punted the ball out of bounds inside the 5 yard line. Indiana had 1:40 to go ninety-five yards for a touchdown.

Our defense blitzed and pressured the QB as they tried to go down field. Jake Washington and Trevor Conwell each had a sack on the drive. Indiana's chances died when the back-up QB threw a bad pass under pressure that Angus Pitts alertly picked off. Zack and the offense came out and ran the ball until the clock ran down to 0:00.

Our second string didn't play nearly as much as the previous games. They came in occasionally to spell us starters when we got tired. The game was a lot closer than we had wanted. Zack didn't have a brilliant day. He threw 19 catches on 42 pass attempts for 243 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions. I felt I had done my best to help our team. I had made 199 yards on five kick returns, including my touchdown. I caught ten passes for 123 yards and both of Zack's two touchdowns. I had two punt

returns for 29 yards. Both Shawn O’Conner and Damian had gone over 100 yards running the football.

More reporters interviewed me after the game than usual. ESPN’s sideline reporter talked with me for a few minutes. Reporters from Indianapolis and Chicago talked to me in addition to the usual Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Harrisburg reporters. I made sure to praise our offensive line along with Shawn and Damian’s work denying the ball to Indianapolis in the second half.

It was the key to our victory. Their work stopped the tit-for-tat score-fest of the first half. We held the ball over twenty minutes of the thirty minute second half. I was pleased when a couple of the reporters talked with Damian after they finished talking with me. My roomie deserved the recognition.

We headed into the locker room to shower and change when the reporters finished with us. The coaches herded us onto the buses after we cleaned up. The athletic department lined up box dinners for us to eat on the buses on the way to the airport.

Zack took the seat beside me when he climbed on the bus. We unwrapped our dinners as the bus got underway.

“You had a hell of a game Kyle,” Zack offered before he took a bite of his sandwich.

“Thanks, you were good too,” I answered.

“Me? No...” Zack allowed. “My timing was off. My brain would say, ‘Throw the ball now!’ and my body was half a beat behind what it should be. I was lucky you were here to take up the slack.”

“It wasn’t that bad Zack,” I replied. “I bet most of the BCS teams would love to have a quarterback that performed as well as you did today. How many teams do you think scored 48 points today?”

“Not many,” Zack agreed. “I am aiming for perfection. I expect to do better than this today.”

“I know you will,” I replied. “We’re a team. You had an off day. Next week I might be in a funk. We help each other out.”

“You’re really learning what football is about Kyle,” Zack answered. “I’m proud of what you’ve accomplished.”

I thanked Zack for his kind words. We talked about the strategy our coaches used to win the game today as we ate our meal. We talked for a bit about our game next Saturday with Michigan. The Wolverines seemed discombobulated since their loss last January to

Notre Dame. They lost a non-conference game to Washington last week. The two of us agreed that we'd have a hard game, regardless of Michigan's record.

I called my brother Andy on the way to the airport. Andy congratulated me on my game before he launched into a bitch session about how lousy a quarterback Logan Mitchell was. I was correct when I refused Christian's bet earlier in the week. My high school team, the Wolverines, lost last night to our rivals and Christian's high school team, Central. The score was 31-17.

Logan had not thrown a single pass deeper than 10 yards. Central stacked its defense up close to the line of scrimmage and bottled up our runners. Andy griped that the team was lucky to have scored seventeen points the way things went. Andy said he had organized a "captains only" meeting at Coach Caffrey's house tomorrow afternoon to discuss how to right the listing team. I reported to Zack what was going on with our former team. Zack talked with Andy for a couple minutes before ending the phone call. I hoped my brother and my high school coach could bring our team back to respectability.

We arrived back at the Lasch Building a few minutes after midnight. About a thousand students and other fans met us when we got off the buses. We disembarked to the cheers of our fans. Most of us dropped some of our gear off in the locker room at the Lasch Building and then headed back to our rooms. It had been a long hard day.

I woke up around 10:30 on Sunday morning. After my shower and getting dressed, I went on-line to find out how my friend Ed Fritz had fared in his second start against Kentucky. Florida lost 35-30 but Ed had improved his performance substantially. Ed completed 19 of 31 pass attempts for three touchdowns and 198 yards. Unfortunately Ed threw two interceptions early in the game. Kentucky didn't lead until their final drive ended in a touchdown at the game. I sent him an e-mail congratulating him on improving. I predicted he'd win next week.

I headed off for Pollock Commons with Trevor, Damian, Christian, GJ and Shawn. Bev and Cindy joined us outside Pollock Commons. The girls had no idea where Kelly or Jen were. They were supposed to join us too. Our group went upstairs while I waited downstairs for my lover.

I waited fifteen minutes for Kelly but she didn't show up. I left her this message when she didn't answer her cell phone: "This is Kyle. I missed you at the dining hall honey. I'm going upstairs. I'll meet you inside. Call me when you get this message."

I went through the line for my food and joined my friends at their table. Trevor teased, "Where's your better half?"

"I have no idea," I admitted. "Bev, Cindy? Do you have any idea where Kelly is?"

Bev shook her head no. Cindy added, “I passed her leaving the bathroom an hour ago. She didn’t look like she was feeling well.”

“Uh-huh... OK” I replied. “Maybe she went back to bed.”

I headed downstairs to the store and picked up a Sunday newspaper after I finished lunch. I headed back to my room and read the paper. I felt kind of lost. Kelly and I had spent nearly every Sunday afternoon together this year.

I left Kelly another message letting her know I was going over to the Lasch Building to do my work-out and spend some time in the whirlpool to ease some of my aches and pains from the game the day before. I asked her to call me when she got my messages.

I hung out in the player’s lounge after I finished my training and therapy. Anders and I took on Chip and his roommate Matt Frye in pool. Anders and I beat them handily – a first for me. Finally I found two guys worse at pool than me.

I went over to Beaver Hall when I finished the game. I knocked at Kelly and Jen’s door but didn’t get an answer. I tried Bev and Cindy’s door after that. Christian answered it. Bev explained that she had seen Kelly leave an hour earlier. She had mumbled ‘hi’ and disappeared when Bev asked how she was doing. Bev loaned me paper and a pencil. I slid a note to Kelly under her door that asked her to give me a call as soon as she got my note.

I was pretty perplexed and worried by the time I headed to the Training Table for dinner with the team. Chip, Zack, Jay and I headed over to the Lasch Building after dinner to review video of Michigan to help us prepare for our next game.

I noticed the light was on in room 313 of Beaver Hall as Chip, Jay and I came back to Hartranft Hall. I called Kelly’s room on her land line instead of her cell phone. The phone rang about ten times before someone answered.

“Hello?” my lover asked quietly.

“Kelly, I’ve been trying to reach you all day,” I explained. “Are you OK?”

“Ummm... I haven’t uh...” Kelly mumbled. “I haven’t felt good.”

“Is there anything I can do to help you honey?” I asked.

“No... uh...” Kelly replied. She hesitated and then blurted out, “I think.... I think it’s best if we don’t see each other anymore.”

“What?” I asked, incredulous. “Why would you say that?”

I didn't hear anything. I asked, "Honey what's wrong?" The only answer I got was a quiet click as Kelly hung up the phone.

(To be continued)

Chapter 24

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I sank down on my bed, stunned. What had gone wrong? Had I done something to make Kelly mad? Why would she break up with me? I was totally lost. I stared into space, desperately trying to understand what had just happened. I lay down on my bed, put on my ear buds and turned up my MP3 player. I tried to lose myself in music.

I desperately wanted to see Kelly in person so I could talk with her and find out what I had done to cause this shocking development to what I thought was an extremely happy relationship. I went over to the dining hall at 8:15 on Monday morning like the two of us always did. I searched the dining hall thoroughly but couldn't find Kelly. I sullenly ate my breakfast alone. Hopefully I could talk with Kelly before history started at 9:05.

I arrived at class early and hung out outside the classroom. Kelly didn't show for class. A minute before class started I went in and found a seat. I halfway paid attention to what Dr. Brennan was saying. How do I get Kelly to explain what in the hell is going on?

"Mr. Martin!" rang in my ear. I realized Dr. Brennan was standing by my desk addressing me.

"Yes Doctor?" I replied, sitting up straight.

"Your term paper, Mr. Martin," Dr. Brennan said as she handed it to me.

"Thank you," I replied as I accepted my work. Dr. Brennan continued down the row passing out papers to the students in the class.

I looked over the cover sheet for my paper. An 'A+' in bright red Flair graced the cover. I read the note under the grade.

"Excellent work Kyle. Please see me after class to arrange an appointment to discuss this paper further. Dr. K. Brennan."

I wondered why Dr. Brennan wanted to meet me after she finished grading my paper. I shrugged it off and listened as she continued handing out papers. I had an idea how to talk to Kelly when Dr. Brennan repeated, "Miss O'Keefe? Miss O'Keefe?" as she searched the room for Kelly.

"She's my girlfriend," I replied. "She's not feeling well today. Would you like me to deliver it to her when I see her at lunch?"

"That's fine Mr. Martin," Dr. Brennan replied. "See me after class for the paper."

I tried to concentrate on Dr. Brennan's lecture, but it was hard. My mind wandered back to what would I say to Kelly and how would I get her to talk with me. What had I done to make her want to dump me? The hour passed slowly I struggled to make my mind pay attention to class.

I met Dr. Brennan at the front when class was dismissed. She greeted me warmly.

"That was an excellent paper Mr. Martin," Dr. Brennan said. "I'd like to schedule an appointment with you to discuss your paper further."

"Is there a problem with my paper?" I asked.

"No.... no, no.... no problem at all," Dr. Brennan replied quickly. "Actually it is an exceptional paper for an undergraduate of uh..." She eyed me carefully for a second and added, "... your age. That's what I wanted to discuss with you. I take it that you enjoy studying history."

"I love it," I answered. "I plan to be a history teacher when I finish school."

"Interesting," she replied, nodding approvingly. "I'd like to talk with you further about that."

Dr. Brennan and I compared schedules and agreed on Tuesday at 1:30 pm. Dr. Brennan allowed me to bring Kelly her term paper after I indicated that I had lunch every day with Kelly. I thanked Dr. Brennan and headed for my Econ class.

I thought about what I would say when I finally found Kelly. Kelly was acting so strange since I got back from Indiana. I was worried that she might refuse to talk to me like she did last night. I wanted to deliver her term paper. She'd have to talk with me if I had her paper. I wracked my brain trying to figure out what I had done to cause Kelly to be so upset with me that she would want to break up with me. I was at a total loss about why all of this was happening.

During Econ I decided to try to find Kelly immediately after her 11:15 philosophy class. I figured she had avoided history so she wouldn't have to see me. I went across campus and hung out near Electrical Engineering West for most of an hour, waiting for the 12:05 dismissal time of Kelly's class.

I was determined not to make the same mistake that Penny and I made when we first broke up in tenth grade or to make the mistake I made when I broke up with Penny last fall. What ever happened, the two of us were going to talk through whatever was wrong and come to a complete understanding before we split up. So help me God, I was going to see to that.

I waited fifteen minutes after dismissal time without seeing my girlfriend. I headed back across campus when I decided I must have missed her or she hadn't attended this class

either. I went back to Pollock Dorms, pondering my next move. Poly Sci wasn't until 2:30, so I had plenty of time to track down Kelly.

I went to lunch, hoping I would find Kelly in the dining hall. No luck. I ate my lunch quickly. I decided it was time to be direct. I went straight to Beaver Hall and up to the third floor. I listened before I knocked at the door. I could hear someone was inside.

I knocked and stated, "Kelly, are you there? It's Kyle."

"I... I... can't see you," Kelly answered, sniffing as she replied. "Go away."

"Dr. Brennan handed out the term papers today," I explained. "I picked yours up for you."

"OK," Kelly answered weakly. She sniffled and unlocked the door. I stood back a little in the hallway. Kelly cracked the door open and peeked out. Her eyes were red and puffy. She obviously had been crying.

"What's wrong honey?" I asked. She reached out for her term paper. I didn't give it to her. "I love you and don't want to lose you. If I've done something wrong, I'll fix it; whatever it may be."

"You?" Kelly asked. "It isn't you. You deserve better than me for a girlfriend."

I breathed a sigh of relief that I hadn't screwed up again. "What is it honey? We promised each other that we would try to build a long lasting relationship. That is based on trust and communication. Please tell me what is wrong."

Kelly stared at me for a few seconds, sniffled and then held the door open for me. I went inside her room. "What is it Kell?" I asked. "We'll work it out together, no matter what." I held my arms out to her. She melted into them, clutching me. I wrapped my arms around her and embraced her to my body. She trembled and sobbed as I held her. I cooed in "It's OK" in her ear as she cried.

Kelly got quiet after a couple minutes and simply clung to me. I asked, "What happened to get you so upset honey? Please tell me."

Kelly pulled away a little and stared down at the floor. "I... I... was unfaithful."

Shock shot through my body. Unfaithful? Some guy with my Kelly? Thankfully my next thought was about how cruel I had been to Penny last fall when I assumed my own error had been unforgivable. I fought back my anger and decided to hear Kelly out. I took a deep breath and asked quietly, "What happened honey? You still love me don't you?"

"I do!" Kelly answered instantly. "I love you so much!"

I hugged her and held her tight to me. After a few seconds I asked, “How did this happen Kelly?”

I let Kelly go. She sat down on her bed and patted the bed beside her, indicating I should sit down.

Kelly breathed deeply and began. “Alan took Jen out for dinner on Friday night. The bastard dumped her over dessert.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” I said sympathetically.

“Jen is just destroyed about this,” Kelly said. “She thought Alan and her had a future together – marriage, kids, the whole thing. His dumping her threw her completely.”

“That’s really too bad,” I agreed. “What does that have to do with us?”

“I’m getting to that part,” Kelly replied. “I wanted to get Jen out on Saturday night. I called Cam [Cameron Miller, who rooms next door to me in Hartranft Hall]. He invited Jen and me to Omega Chi’s party on Saturday night. I thought getting out would help Jen forget about Alan.”

“Did one of those frat bastards take advantage of you?” I asked, my anger rising again.

“No!” Kelly insisted. “The guys at the frat know better than to fool with your girlfriend. We enjoyed the music and the beer at the party. We danced a bit. All of the guys were proper gentlemen.”

“OK, when did things go wrong if it wasn’t at the frat party?” I asked.

“Jen and I had a lot to drink at the party. We were pretty wasted when we got back to our room. Jen started thinking about Alan again. I gave her a hug to comfort her and.... and things went further.”

“What?” I asked. “You and Jen....”

“We started to kiss and... and... Jen played with my titties and...” Kelly explained.

“You got each other off?” I said. Kelly nodded yes. A wave of relief swept over me and I laughed – loud. Kelly stared at me, plainly shocked by the reaction. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t laugh. It’s just that I was expecting it to be much worse. You and Jen got drunk and got each other off.”

“But we ate each other’s pussies,” Kelly explained. “I thought you’d be upset with me having sex with someone else.”

“Kelly, if getting off with a friend counts as cheating, Ed and I cheated all the time back at camp,” I explained. “I whacked off nearly every night thinking of how much I missed you. I have no idea which of his dozen girls Ed was remembering each night.”

“It isn’t the same,” Kelly countered. “You and Ed didn’t do each other. You didn’t put your hand on his cock and jerk him off. You didn’t give him a blow job, did you?”

“NO!” I replied hastily. “Definitely not. You aren’t planning to become a lesbian are you? You still like guys, right?”

“I definitely like guys Kyle,” Kelly answered.

“Good,” I said. “That’s settled. You’re not going to go to bed with Jen again.” Kelly nodded yes. “Heh... heh... heh... not unless you plan to include me too,” I teased.

“You’re being bad now,” Kelly replied.

“Hey, I’m a guy,” I said. “Two girls making out makes me horny. What do you expect from me?” I opened my arms and offered Kelly a hug. We embraced and kissed. I could feel the tension drain from my girl as we showed our love to each other. We parted and stared into each other’s eyes.

“Promise me this,” I said. “We want this thing of ours to last. When we run into problems we have to talk things out. Don’t assume we can’t work out problems together. Can you promise me that Kelly?”

“Yes, I promise Kyle,” Kelly said. “How did you get this smart?”

“I screwed up...” I replied. “A lot! Let me screw something up half a dozen times, eventually I figure it out.”

“I’m glad you’re the forgiving sort Kyle,” Kelly said. “I’m sooo lucky to have you.”

“I’m lucky too,” I said. “I have the greatest girl in the world. You ready for some lunch honey? I’m starving.”

“Give me a minute to get cleaned up Kyle,” Kelly answered.

Kelly took a couple minutes to get her make up on and get ready for lunch. We headed to the dining hall together, my arm around her waist and Kelly’s across my back. I felt like a million dollars after the past twenty-four hours of craziness.

Monday evening after Damian and I turned out the lights at bedtime I had time to reflect. A year or two ago I would have let my temper drive my response to Kelly’s admission of infidelity. I would have yelled and stormed off, never waiting to hear what really

happened. Maybe there was hope I could get my act together and display some of the maturity I admired in my older brother Will.

I had to chuckle when I remembered how Will, Mr. Cool, had reacted when Abby got drunk and went to bed with some guy back when they were freshmen. Will had made a complete mess of their relationship when he broke up with her in the aftermath. Had it really been five years ago? Will and Abby both were eighteen when it happened, a year younger than me now. I had handled things better, with more maturity, than Will had then. Maybe there was hope that I would turn into a decent, fully functional adult some day.

Things settled down between Kelly and me over the next few days. Kelly needed time to realize that I really wasn't upset about her comforting Jen the previous Saturday night. By mid-week it was like Sunday and Monday had never happened.

Tuesday afternoon I found excellent news posted outside the locker room on our bulletin board. The Big Ten had named me Offensive Player of the Week for my 351 yard performance and three touchdowns against Indiana. The Collegian, our student newspaper, did a feature article on me that day too. I got a lot of good natured ribbing from my teammates.

The doctors confirmed what most of us suspected on Saturday. Yasin Clark had blown out his ACL and MCL when he went down in the game. I spent some time after practice talking with him, letting him know my experiences from a few years ago. Yasin was a senior, so his football days were pretty much over. He would have been a stretch to make it in the NFL before his injury. He had no chance at all now. Yasin was philosophical about it – he'd take things as they came. I doubt I would have been quite as calm if the same thing happened to me.

The coaches worked us hard that week to prepare for our showdown with Michigan. The odds-makers installed us as even with Michigan, which surprised me. We had home field advantage and our offense had been playing absolutely lights-out this season. Michigan had suffered an embarrassing loss to an unranked BCS team and fell out of the top ten teams in the country.

Our three blowouts and our win over Indiana had only advanced us from #8 to #6 in the national polls. I didn't blame the pollsters for questioning our defense. It was unproven and we needed to figure pretty quickly how to replace Aaron, Antwaan and Pete if we wanted to have a shot at the BCS Championship.

Our practices were intense. Zack, Jake, Evan and Karol set the tone for the rest of us. Everyone put in some extra study time in addition to practicing hard to get ready for our game on Saturday afternoon.

Coach Burton called a group of players, including me, into his office after Tuesday's practice to discuss this week's visiting recruits. Chip Brinton and Yasin Clark were assigned primary responsibility for showing the visitors around campus and sitting with them during the game. Trevor Conwell, Zack Hayes, Shawn Byrd and I would assist them when we weren't busy with our pre-game preparations. Obviously I was part of the group guiding them to help convince my brother to join me at Penn State.

Our prospects this week included a quarterback, a wide receiver, two defensive backs, a defensive lineman and a tight end. The duties were becoming routine – meet and greet them and their parents Saturday morning, show them around the locker room before the game, and then turn them over to Chip and Yasin while we prepared for and played our game.

When the game was over we'd take them downtown and feed them dinner and then bring them back to a party at Zack's apartment so they could meet and socialize with our team members. Sunday we would help the coaches work out the recruits before the coaches met with them and their parents. It was all routine, but very important to the long term success of our team. We needed good recruits every year to continue competing at the top levels of the Big Ten and for a spot in the BCS Championship game.

I went into my meeting with Dr. Brennan on Tuesday afternoon unsure of what to expect. Dr. Brennan greeted me warmly and seated me across from her desk in the Weaver Building while she finished some paperwork. It was a small office, filled to the ceiling with books and notebooks. I scanned the titles as I waited for my professor to finish. She had an amazing collection of books about military history and the American Civil War. I could only dream of having a collection like that some day.

"Mr. Martin, thank you for coming in today," Dr. Brennan said when she turned her attention to me. "May I call you Kyle? Mr. Martin seems so formal."

"Certainly Dr. Brennan," I agreed. She seemed friendly and informal, but not so informal that I would venture to ask to call her Kathy instead of Dr. Brennan.

"I was extremely impressed by your paper Kyle," she explained. "It was well researched and footnoted. It was clearly written. You obviously have done historical research and term papers before."

"Yes ma'am," I replied. "I had a history teacher in high school for two years who assigned us a quarterly term papers and hour long oral presentations. He was a stickler for proper research and foot noting."

"That's a good background that explains the work you did," Dr. Brennan agreed. "When I picked up your paper and saw the title, 'The Storming of Quebec' I was expecting the usual battle account of Wolfe's army scaling the cliffs and fighting on the Plains of

Abraham that I see from freshmen and sophomores every year. Your paper was different.”

“Thank you,” I replied.

“I was impressed by the section you had on the importance of British seapower on the battle’s outcome. That and the section you included on logistics,” Dr. Brennan explained. “Why did you include that?”

“I thought it was important,” I replied. “Can you imagine Wolfe trying to march the whole way down the Saint Lawrence with his little army without the Royal Navy to help? How could he have fed his army and brought enough ammunition to fight a battle assuming he could reach Quebec?”

Dr. Brennan smiled and asked, “Have you heard of the saying, ‘Amateurs study strategy and tactics. Professionals study logistics?’”

“No,” I admitted.

“You’re in the College of Education, correct?” Dr. Brennan asked.

“Yes, I plan to be a history teacher,” I replied.

“Have you ever considered a career as a professional historian?” Dr. Brennan asked.

“No, I never really thought about it,” I replied.

“Based on the incisive questions and comments you have in class and this paper,” she said. “You should consider it. I think you have the potential to be very good at it.”

“You know I play football right?” I replied.

“The whole campus knows you play football Kyle,” Dr. Brennan answered. “You had a very good game last week.”

“Thank you,” I responded. “My plan to be a high school history teacher is so I can combine my two loves – history and football. It’s hard for me to choose which I love more.”

“I see,” Dr. Brennan replied, smiling at me. “Keep an open mind to the possibility of majoring in history. You would be very good at it. You don’t need to make a decision right away; your course of study to teach secondary students history isn’t much different than what you would have in the Department of History. Come in any time you would like to discuss this further. My door is always open.”

“Thank you Doctor,” I answered. “I will keep this in mind.”

Dr. Brennan shook my hand and wished me well against Michigan's secondary before I left. My talk with the professor was quite an ego boost. I could see myself immersing myself in the Civil War someday in the future. Would that be more satisfying than my current career path? I would need to think about it some more.

Andy let me know that Will and Abby were going to use the family's tickets to the game on Saturday. Andy said they wanted to know if they would be welcome at dinner Saturday night after the game. I e-mailed Will and let him know that Zack Hayes was one of the guides. I assured him that Zack would enjoy seeing them Saturday night.

Andy reported on his team's plans to fix the deep passing game. Coach Caffrey brought Logan and Matt in for extra video study. He was working with them on deep coverages and how to spot Andy and Dave when they were open. Coach Caffrey wouldn't confirm it, but he suspected that Logan was going to be on a very short leash on Friday night when they played Drumore. If things didn't open up, Logan was going to find himself sitting on the bench watching Matt lead our team.

Coach Burton's planning for the heart of our Big Ten schedule came into play this week. I was used exclusively on the weak side of our formation for the first four games. That was a set up for this week's game plan. On Saturday Anders and I were going to swap back and forth from slot to weak side throughout the game. We even had a couple plays where I started in the slot between Evan and Hassan and ran out routes to the far sideline. Our aim was to confuse Michigan's coverage as much as possible and to get me open deep as often as possible. We also practiced my reverse and reverse option play, hoping to get the right situation to use them too.

Our team captains finally addressed a pending question that had been around a couple weeks. Would the football team participate in the Dance-a-thon? The answer was yes. Zack, trained in leadership skills in Boy Scouts, delegated responsibility for the Thon – to me. Being equally well versed in those skills, I immediately deputized Kelly to be my assistant.

That was a wise move by me. The next organizing meeting for the Thon was Thursday evening at 7:00 pm. I had a team meeting then, so Kelly covered the meeting for me. She told me she got quite a few funny looks when she announced to the assembled frat brothers and sorority sisters that she was there to represent the football team. They accepted her when she explained that she probably would have to cover a lot of the meetings during the football season due to my full schedule.

Kelly filled me in on things when we got together after we finished our meetings. We would need to get busy on fundraising. Most of the frats and sororities had been raising funds for four or five months.

Damian obligingly agreed to study over at the Lasch Building so Kelly and I could have an hour together at my room. She suggested another role-playing fantasy. I was the stern teacher punishing the misbehaving school girl. She got a gentle spanking as well as a thorough licking (with my tongue, pun intended). We had time for a couple love-making sessions before Damian was due back in our room. It was enough to hold us over until Saturday night.

Kelly and I lingered after Friday's history class at Chambers, enjoying the early autumn sun on the benches outside. We decided to go back to our dorms by way of the Creamery for some ice cream. We walked down Bigler Road to our dorms. I received a passionate kiss good bye when I headed for the Lasch Building and practice. We wouldn't be together again until 8:00 or 8:30 Saturday night, after the game.

Friday's practice went well, with a minimum of yelling by the coaches. I made both option passes that we practiced. Hopefully I would do as well against Michigan. We were tired but confident when we left the field to shower before dinner.

We ate dinner at the Training Table and then headed back to the Lasch Building to study and review the game plan with our position coaches. Buses took us over to Toftrees for the night. We had time to relax with our teammates before our eleven o'clock lights-out.

Our game against Michigan was one of the big college games that day. ABC was televising us at 3:30 pm. That meant the coaches gave us a little extra sleep on Saturday morning. Buses hauled us back to the Lasch Building after breakfast. We went through our normal pre-game preparations.

I headed out to the reception area around a quarter to eleven to wait for Dad and Andy. They came in a few minutes later, accompanied by Will and Abby. Abby received a welcome hug and kiss on the cheek. Dad, Will and Andy had to settle for a handshake.

My brother was positively ebullient. "Am I to assume your game went better last night?" I asked.

"Better?" Andy replied, chuckling. "That's an understatement. We smacked Drumore 56-10. I had four touchdowns."

"Congratulations!" I exclaimed. "That's excellent. I guess you guys convinced Logan to throw deep."

"Not exactly," Andy answered. "It's a long story. I'll tell you about it over dinner."

"OK," I agreed. I turned to Will and Abby. "To what do I owe the pleasure of your company now? I thought I wouldn't see you guys until dinner time."

Will explained, “Abby and I wanted to check this place out and make sure it’s good enough for our favorite brother to attend next year.” He grinned at the implied put down of me.

I straightened up and stated, “As the BIGGER brother here, I can assure you based on my year and half of scouting out the Pennsylvania State University, you will find it will meet Andrew’s needs both scholastically and athletically.” We laughed at my pompous answer. “C’mon, do you want to see the football center? I’m sure the coaches won’t mind.”

Will and Abby looked at each other and nodded. I let Ann Marie, our receptionist, know where I was going and to have her assure Coach Burton I would be back in time to meet the other recruits. I made a point of passing the academic achievement bulletin board on the way in and pointed to my name on the Dean’s List. I took them to the weight room first.

“Whoa! This is amazing Kyle,” Will said when he stepped into the weight room. “No wonder you look like you could bench press your VW.”

“Not quite Will,” I replied. “But this is a big step up from using your old weights in our basement five years ago.”

“That it is little bro,” Will replied. “That it is.”

I showed him the trainer’s facilities and the whirl pool therapy area. I showed Will and Abby the meeting rooms. We popped into one of the video rooms.

I shushed them as soon as I saw Zack and Jay staring at one of the machines, studying for the day’s game. I whispered, “Zack likes quiet while he’s preparing for a game.”

Zack looked up before we could retreat out of the room without disturbing their work.

“Abby! Will!” Zack exclaimed in delight. “This is a great surprise.” Zack hopped up and jogged over to the door. “Abby, marriage agrees with you. You’re more radiant than ever.”

Zack gave Abby a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Will got a hearty handshake. “Hey Jay, come on over here,” Zack commanded. “You need to meet Kyle’s big brother and sister-in-law.”

Zack and I introduced Jay to Will and Abby and talked.

After a couple minute I suggested, “Will, Abby, we should let these two get back to work. I wouldn’t want us to be responsible for Zack screwing up during the game. He needs his study time.”

“Yeah,” Zack agreed laughing. “I’ve studied this video of Michigan twenty times. I’m sure the twenty-first time will be the key to beating them. Are you guys joining the recruits when we take them to dinner tonight?”

“Yes, Kyle thought we could tag along,” Will answered. “I hope that’s OK.”

“Absolutely,” Zack replied enthusiastically. “We haven’t had time to talk since Sam and Trish’s wedding.”

“Excellent!” Will said. “Good luck today. I’ll see you after the game.”

I showed Will and Abby the locker room briefly and then took them back to the reception area. I invited them to join the team at the Training Table. Families were welcome to eat with us for the bargain price of \$5 a person. Abby explained that they had a picnic lunch in the car so they planned to tailgate. Will and Abby told me to go have a good game before they left.

Chip introduced me to the other recruits who had arrived since I took Will and Abby for the tour. This week’s visitors included Jon Stafford, a quarterback from Pittsburgh, Pa.; Jeff Knox, a defensive back from Columbus, Ohio; Bobby Smith, a tight end from Trenton, NJ; Michael Harris, a defensive back from Aliquippa, Pa.; and Jonah Adams, a huge kid who played defensive lineman in Baltimore.

Yasin, Trevor, Shawn Byrd and I hung out in the reception area while the recruits and their families met with Coach Burton. Yasin questioned me about my experience with my ACL reconstruction while we waited. I did my best to reassure him that he should end up with full mobility after his surgery. It was scheduled for the middle of October.

The recruits and their families joined the team for lunch when they finished their meeting with Coach Burton. The Staffords sat by Andy, Dad and me. Their son Jon seemed like a nice guy, but extremely confident, bordering on cocky.

I guess he had a right to be. He was this season’s hottest Pennsylvania quarterback. He was entertaining scholarship offers from us, Miami, Florida State, Ohio State and Michigan. Some recruiting websites listed him as a four star recruit; others had him at five stars. Zack and Jay sat on the other side of the Stafford family, telling Jon about their experiences playing quarterback here at Penn State. Hopefully they could make the sale with Jon. Jay and Chip were going to need good back-ups when the older guys were gone in a year or so.

Chip and Yasin took the recruits and their parents on a tour of campus while the team and coaches went back to the locker room to finish our preparations for the game. The buses hauled us over to the stadium when we were dressed. The fans that always lined the walk from the bus into the stadium locker room shouted out Zack’s name as always. Quite a few cheered me too. I stopped and shook hands and signed a few autographs as I made my way in, just like my mentor always did.

The stadium was nearly full when we came out to warm up. The student government association declared this game to be a “White Out” so the place was a sea of white shirts. Even though it was late September, fall hadn’t arrived yet. The temperature at 2:00 pm was 71 degrees. There was a light wind from the northwest. I didn’t expect it to be a problem for Zack, the kickers or me. The sky was partly cloudy. The weatherman said there was a chance of late afternoon, early evening showers. The TV blimp was hovering over our stadium, ready for the show. All in all, it was a good day for some football.

I sought out JT Hill, my friend and our starting center after I warmed up.

“You see that guy JT?” I asked, pointing out William Johnson, the big defensive tackle I’d met two years earlier at Michigan. “You look out for him. He hits like a battering ram. He just about killed me a couple times last year on special teams.”

“Johnson?” JT replied. “I know about him. They line him up at left defensive tackle or at nose guard if they are in a three man front. I saw what he did last week when I was studying video. The guy is strong.”

“I worked out with him two years ago when I was visiting Michigan,” I warned. “William is strong. He is also deceptively fast. You be careful to keep Zack upright and healthy today.”

“Don’t you worry little buddy,” JT replied as he gave me a slap on the back. “We always take good care of the ‘Man’. He’s going to take us all the way this year.” JT headed off for the locker room.

Christian and I stopped to talk with Bev, Kelly and our other friends before we went inside. I said hello to the guys from East Halls that had second “Kyle’s Krazies” sign last year. More signs were in the stadium supporting me, though not as many as for Shawn O’Conner or Zack Hayes. I spotted Dad and Andy seated with Yasin and Chip and the other recruits. I gave them a wave as I went back inside.

I love the pageantry and excitement of a college football game – running out onto the field to the cheers while the band trumpets us. Penn State fans are never blasé about our team. This week they cheered and shouted extra loud as we took the field. No one forgot that Michigan administered one of our two losses last season. All of us, fans and team members alike, wanted revenge!

We won the coin toss and elected to receive the football first. I lined up on the 2 yard line on the eastern or more open end of our stadium. Coach Ferguson had given me more freedom this season since he trusted my judgment. I was allowed to bring the ball out of the end zone if I was two or three yards behind the goal line and if I thought I could get a good return.

Michigan's kicker boomed the ball deep. I backed up into the end zone and settled under the ball. I took a quick glance downfield and saw my blocking forming up nicely. I waited a moment for Shawn Byrd to tell me to down the ball in the end zone. He didn't. I raced forward to catch up to my blocking.

I spotted an opening developing as I passed the 15 yard line. Dermot McMillan and Bill Daugherty had split apart the guys they were blocking. I accelerated and shot through the crack they left me. I felt some hands desperately try to grab me as I went through the hole but no one got enough of me to slow me down. I out ran a couple pursuers with poor angles and then faked the kicker into jumping one way while I went the other. In my peripheral vision I saw David McCall and Shawn Byrd join up with me and escort me as I sprinted into the end zone. Touchdown!

Dave and Shawn hugged me and hoisted my arms in the air when they arrived to celebrate. The rest of the kick coverage team joined our celebration as they arrived in the end zone. We trotted back to the sidelines. The Lion gave me a high five as I passed after he finished the first seven of what we hoped would be many, many push-ups that afternoon.

Coach Ferguson called Shawn Byrd and me over to talk after Andrew Perkins made the PAT to bring the score to 7-0 our favor and kicked the ball down to Michigan.

"I thought I said not to run out kicks if they were five yards deep in the end zone," Coach said.

"Was I that deep?" I replied. "I was waiting for Shawn to tell me where I was."

"I saw the two guys Michigan had facing Bill and Dermot were slightly out of position," Shawn added. "I thought Kyle could get a good run back."

Coach Ferguson smiled. "It was a close call on running it out but the two of you made a good call. Nice work men."

I made a point of finding Dermot and Bill and thanking them for springing me into the open on the play. They assured me it was their pleasure. Bill summed it up. "You make it fun playing on special teams. I expect something good to happen every time you get the ball. I don't start yet but I feel like I have an impact on game this way."

"I appreciate everything you guys do," I responded. "I don't get many yards without great blocks like yours."

I wandered over and joined Anders, Hassan and Evan as we watched our defense work on Michigan. Zack, Jay and Coach Adams were nearby, reviewing the plays for our first possession.

Michigan used a balanced attack against our defense, managing 27 yards and a first down before they bogged down at mid-field. Their punter got off a good kick, pushing me inside our 10 yard line. I caught the ball anyway and managed to get thirteen yards back. Would Coach Ferguson chew me out on Monday? I took it out because I was afraid the ball wouldn't bounce into the end zone for a touchback and we'd be bottled up on our first drive.

I lined up in my normal split end spot on the first play of the drive. I looked across the line and found a familiar face lined up a yard and half away.

"Hey Terrell, how's it going?" I asked.

"Hey Kyle, I see you made starter too," Terrell Ross answered. Terrell and I met two years ago on our official recruiting visits to Michigan.

"I did," I agreed. "How'd things turn out? Did Garrett Bradford end up going to your school?"

"Brad? Yeah, he's my roommate," Terrell said. "Didn't you see him last possession? He's starting at tight end."

"No, I missed that," I answered. Zack snapped the ball mid-sentence and I took off flying downfield. The coaches knew Michigan would expect us to open with our deep threat like we did other games. I faked continuing deep when I was 20 yards downfield and turned back towards Zack and the sideline. Zack hit me in the hands with the ball. Terrell hit me as I turned to run down field, followed a split second later by the free safety hitting me. They tackled me, pushing me out of bounds at our 37 yard line.

Terrell helped me to my feet, smiled and said, "Nice fake Kyle. So the chess match begins."

"Thanks," I answered. "That was a good tackle."

Our banter continued between plays, friendly but competitive. Coach Burton shifted me to the slot on the third play. Terrell followed along with me as I lined up. Their free safety shifted my way too. Michigan wasn't going to let me get deep. I knew Terrell's speed was only a coupled hundredths of a second slower than mine, so we weren't going to beat him with pure speed. I would need to play smart to get catches and yards.

Michigan's decision to double cover me left Hassan or Anders in single coverage. They saw more of the ball than me. With the free safety tied up on me, they had to use a linebacker on either Evan or Shawn O'Conner, giving us some mismatches to exploit.

Zack worked our team down the field, mixing runs by Shawn with passes. Anders pulled in a nice twenty-two yarder. Hassan caught another for fifteen. Michigan kept me blanketed. I caught one five yard pass on our drive for the end zone. Zack lobbed a

gorgeous pass into the corner of the end zone to me. I out-jumped Terrell and grabbed the ball. Terrell managed to punch it away from me before I landed. We settled for a 29 yard field goal to put us ahead 10-0.

Michigan used a good mix of runs and passes against us on their next drive. Our line and linebackers kept their runs short. Short and medium passes kept their drive going. They ran a screen in response to Coach C's blitz. Michigan edged into our red zone. Cuch Cuchiella was ready on their next play. He correctly anticipated a crossing route by Garrett Bradford, their tight end, and jumped the route, intercepting Pete Cochrane's pass. Cuch got a couple yards on his return before he was swamped by half of Michigan's offense line.

Zack, me and the rest of our offense ran out on the field. I was surprised when I lined up and saw Pete Cochrane holding Garrett Bradford by the facemask, absolutely screaming at him. They were still on the field! The Michigan defenders were milling around, looking at each other and at the bench, trying to figure out what to do. The Michigan coaches were on the sideline screaming at Pete to get the hell off the field.

The play clock was running while this was happening. Zack alertly lined us up and called for the snap. Yellow flags flew as soon the ball was snapped back to Zack and the referee blew the play dead. The officials conferred for a minute, trying to sort out what penalty to call. They considered delay of game, illegal substitution, too many men on the field, lining up off sides (Pete and Garrett were arguing on our side of the line) and players outside the team area.

The referees decided the last penalty was most appropriate and penalized Michigan fifteen yards. I saw Coach Rodriguez chewing out Pete when he reached the sideline. I was glad I had chosen Penn State. Pete was a physically talented quarterback but he sure was a dick of a person.

Zack lined us up on our 34 yard line to start the drive. Terrell and the safety kept me in check deep. My prediction about how hard William Johnson would be to block was also accurate. JT usually teamed up with another lineman to try to block him. We managed to get a drive going in spite of the pressure and good coverage. We pushed the ball down the field. Michigan stopped us on a third down and long play when William broke free of the double team and sacked Zack. Andrew Perkins came in and kicked a 44 yard field goal. Score: 13-0 Lions.

Michigan's coaching staff adjusted to what Coach C and our defense were doing. Good coaching and top quality athletes can have an impact – and they did. Michigan caught us with screen passes to their tailback and to Garrett, their tight end, when we blitzed. They moved the ball down the field on us and stuffed it in the end zone. Score: 13-7 Lions

The game continued on into the second quarter inconclusively. Michigan got enough pressure to hurry Zack's throws. Shawn O'Conner could run the ball some but couldn't break anything big. Our drives broke down with a penalty, sack or an incomple

before we could score. The same thing happened to Michigan. Michigan's punt coverage team played tight. I only managed one return for 13 yards in the half. The score stayed locked at 13-7 our favor.

We started at our 22 yard line when the clock showed 3:42 left in the first half. We used six plays to edge our way into Michigan territory. Coach Burton decided it was time for one of our special plays – my reverse option. Everyone made their blocks to get me free. I was disappointed when I checked my key and found the cornerback had stayed with Hassan instead of coming back to tackle me. I sprinted down the field, determined to get as much yardage as possible. The cornerback and free safety combined to shove me out of bounds at their 17 yard line.

Shawn O'Conner carried the ball five yards forward on the next play. We followed up with a variation on our crossing play. Anders lined up in the slot between me and the offensive line. This time he ran for the corner while I ducked behind him and ran for the post. I paralleled the back of the end zone when I got there. Zack drilled the ball between two defenders as I came open momentarily. Touchdown! Andrew Perkins kicked the PAT to put us up 20-7.

Our defense kept Michigan from scoring in the last 1:17 of the half. We went into the locker room with an uncomfortable lead. The coaches reviewed our progress and outlined some adjustments for us in the second half. I didn't feel as confident this game as last week even though the score was closer last week. Last game I knew we could score often against Indiana. Michigan was making this game too close for my liking.

The nervousness increased when Michigan got the ball to start the second half and marched down the field on us. The big play was a deep pass that Vic Samovitz couldn't stop. Michigan got in the end zone to bring the score to 20-14 our favor.

Neither team could score on the next few series of downs. We could move the ball for six or eight plays, but couldn't get the ball into scoring position. Our defenders tightened up and didn't let the Wolverines get close to our goal line.

Michigan broke the stalemate early in the fourth quarter when they ran a screen pass on third and long. We were blitzing and got caught out of position. Pete Cochrane rolled out to the right on the next play and fired the ball to an open wide receiver for another twelve yard gain. The Wolverine offensive line bulled their way forward, finally popping their tailback in on the third play, a sweep to the right. Their kicker drilled the PAT to give them the lead 21-20.

I caught the kickoff on the goal line, so I did my best to bring it out. Michigan had covered their earlier hole. I only managed a 21 yard return. Zack called us into the huddle.

"Who are we guys?" Zack demanded. "Where do we want to go in January – Miami or San Antonio?" All of us knew that Miami as the site for the BCS Championship game.

San Antonio hosted the Alamo Bowl on Dec. 29th, a decidedly less appealing bowl for the bottom half of the top 25 teams in the country.

“Miami!” everyone agreed.

“Good!” Zack thundered. “Give it everything guys. We’re gonna’ find out who the men are!” He stared down his nose at JT. “Keep that GOD DAMNED Johnson off me.” JT nodded yes. Zack called the first play. “Give it everything!” he exhorted as we broke the huddle.

Michigan’s defense bent as we pushed down the field, taking four to six yards a play. We continued mixing the runs and passes to keep their defense guessing. Zack reminded us every play, “Be precise, we can beat these guys if we play error free.”

Christian came in on the seventh play of the drive to give Hassan a breather. I lined up in the slot between Evan and Christian. On the play I slanted across towards the sideline while Christian passed behind me across the middle. The best two d-backs followed me down the sideline deep. The third guy hesitated a moment before deciding to pursue Christian. It was all the opening required. Zack spotted it and fired the ball down field to my friend. He hauled the pass in and spun away from the nickel back.

The free safety had overplayed my route and was out of position to catch Christian. My friend motored down the field. I managed to get a block on the free safety as Christian ran into the end zone. The 107,000 fans cheered their approval as Anders, me, Evan and then the rest of our offense mobbed Christian to celebrate his TD.

Andrew Perkins extended our lead to 27-21 when he booted the PAT through the uprights. A pumped up Andrew boomed the ball deep into the end zone when he kicked it back to Michigan.

Our kickoff team did a good job on the ensuing kickoff. Michigan started with the ball at their 17 yard line. 10:05 remained in the game. Michigan mixed up their play calling between runs and passes to keep our defense honest. Coach C didn’t blitz, fearing that we’d get burnt for another long play on a screen.

Our defense slowed Michigan’s drive for the goal line but didn’t stop it. They grabbed three to five yards a play as they drove on us. We made them work for every yard, the clock winding down as they struggled to keep going.

The dilemma of run vs. pass for our defense was solved when Coach C called for a run blitz. Karol Zizka shot the gap between the center and left guard, catching the tailback four yards deep just after he took the handoff from Pete Cochrane. Jake Washington sacked Pete on second down and fourteen yards.

I noticed Shawn Byrd line up off the line deeper than usual on third down and twenty yards. I watched, curious about what our coaches had in mind. The receiver on Shawn’s

side streaked downfield. Shawn turned the wrong direction as the receiver headed down the field. Pete Cochrane spotted the “error” and flung the ball to the receiver. Shawn streaked after the receiver, covering him quickly. The ball hung a little. Shawn managed to cut in front of the receiver and out jump him for the ball. Shawn broke free of the receiver’s tackle and headed for Michigan’s end zone. He made eleven yards before the tailback brought him down.

I realized after I had watched the whole play that I had seen something like that before. Aaron Morano had baited the quarterback to throw into coverage twice last season. Shawn had done more than learn the playbook with his mentor last season. Aaron had left Shawn with a couple tricks too.

The clock showed 3:57 when we took possession of the ball. We didn’t do anything fancy. Zack handed the ball off to Shawn O’Conner repeatedly as our big, experienced offensive line established dominance. We drove down the field, picking up four or five yards a play. Damian came in after four plays to spell Shawn. We continued running at Michigan’s now weary defense. Coach Schroeder swapped Shawn and Damian every few plays to keep them fresh.

We used almost every second on the play clock for each play, slowly burning time off the clock as we pushed for another score. Michigan started calling time outs when the clock got close to 2:00 left in the game. We continued pushing down the field. Michigan tried run blitzing. It didn’t work. Zack kneeled down when the clock went under 1:30. Three plays later the final seconds ticked off the clock, sealing our victory. Final Score: 27-21 Lions over the Wolverines.

I made a point of talking with Terrell Ross and Garrett Bradford after the game was done. “You had an excellent game Kyle,” Terrell said when we shook hands.

“You did too Terrell,” I replied. “It’s going to be interesting over the next three years. You made me work harder than anyone I’ve played against since I started college. I expect we’ll have some real battles.”

The three of us shook hands and wished one another luck for the remainder of the season. I did quite a few interviews. Mr. Montgomery, the reporter from the Lancaster evening paper arranged to talk with me, Zack and Christian together. He wanted to do a feature about the three Lancaster County players being the key to our victory. The three of us had been responsible for all the day’s touchdowns.

Christian seemed nervous during the interview. Zack and I tried to keep him comfortable while we answered Mr. Montgomery’s questions. I enjoyed the interview. His questions went into more depth than I was used to. He questioned us about our high school teams’ rivalry and how we felt about each other now that we were teammates. He was surprised when we explained that Christian and I had been friends before we were football rivals and that we had roomed together for a couple months last year. Mr. Montgomery

promised to let us know which day the article would appear in the paper so we could see it. The Pattee Library carries almost all of the local papers from around the state.

The three of us were some of the last players to head inside after the game. Coach Burton awarded a game ball to Christian, which he certainly deserved. Chip and Yasin arrived with the recruits while we showered. I came back to my locker to find Andy seated on the stool at my locker.

“Comfortable?” I asked.

“Yeah,” Andy replied looking around the locker room. “The sign says Martin so I decided to try it on for size. You have a nice set up here. It sure beats our high school locker room.”

“Nice enough to play here?” I asked. I reached behind him for my boxers. Andy stood up and started to move away. “No, that’s OK. I can stand while I dress.”

“I can see it Kyle,” Andy replied. “I can definitely see it. It must have felt pretty good standing in the end zone and having a stadium full of people cheering you after you scored on your touchdowns.”

“It does feel good,” I agreed. “It really does. I think the Penn State fans could get used cheering for another Martin.”

Andy nodded in agreement. We continued talking while I dressed. I felt Penn State really had a shot at getting Andy’s commitment. I could see the excitement in his eyes as he took in everything as he watched me and my teammates celebrate our victory.

I phoned Will to arrange for Abby, Kelly and him to meet me, Andy, the guides and rest of the recruits. We headed for the front lobby of the Lasch Building where we were to meet the parents and Coaches Burton, Schroeder and Czarwinski. Coach Burton went over the evening plans. The parents would go to dinner with the coaches. The recruits would go downtown with Zack, me and the other guides for dinner. The recruits would meet more of the team and “socialize” with us at Zack’s apartment. Zack and I, being the only two guys in the group with cars, would drive the recruits back to the Penn Stater Hotel by midnight.

Zack greeted Will and Abby warmly when they met. Abby got a big hug and a kiss on the cheek from Zack. Kelly greeted me with a hug and a hot, sloppy kiss. I didn’t expect Leigh Ann to be there too. It turns out she was a last second addition to the guest list last spring when Zack was best man for his brother’s wedding. She and Abby had become good friends at the wedding.

Our big group walked downtown across campus. We kept the pace slow for Yasin. He stopped using crutches the previous day when the swelling on his injured knee went down. He got around pretty well with a brace on his knee.

I walked and talked with Andy and Bobby Smith, the tight end from Trenton, NJ, as we headed for the Penn State Diner. I discussed playing at Penn State with Andy and Bobby, telling them how much I enjoyed being a part of this team. Zack and Chip worked on Jon, Trevor on Jonah while Shawn and Yasin sold Penn State to Jeff and Mike, the defensive back recruits. Will, Abby, Kelly and Leigh Ann tagged along at the back as we headed for the diner.

The waitress at the diner seated us in a small banquet room when we arrived. She had no problem seating our extra four persons when Zack let her know about Will, Abby, Leigh Ann and Kelly. Zack asked for separate checks for each, but Will generously offered to pay for Leigh Ann and Kelly's dinners.

I ended up seated with Kelly, Andy and Bobby at one end of the long table. Zack, Leigh Ann, Chip and Jon came next followed by the recruits and team members/guides that played the same position. Our aim was to do the best job possible giving the recruits an understanding of what it meant to play football for Penn State and to sell them on making us their school next fall.

Andy was ready to burst when we finally got seated and he had a chance to tell me about our high school team's game the previous night. He excitedly began telling about the Wolverine's 56-10 thrashing of Drumore.

"Whoa, whoa, slow down," I said. "I guess Coach Caffrey fixed the Logan problem."

"Yeah, right!" Andy snorted. "He fixed it all right. He sat Logan's ass on the bench."

"Really?" I said.

"We were down 3-0 at the end of the first quarter," Andy explained. "Logan was playing the same as the first two games – super cautious, afraid to make a mistake. Coach sent Matt in on the next drive."

"Was Matt nervous?" I asked.

"Nervous? The 'Mad Bomber'?" Andy answered laughing. "Coach Caffrey had Matt hand the ball to the tailback for the first play so he could get comfortable. He let Matt loose the next play. I caught a 62 yard touchdown."

"The 'Mad Bomber'?" I asked. "Where did that nickname come from?"

"We started calling him that after the third touchdown, just before the end of the first half," Andy explained. "Matt threw six touchdowns, three for more than fifty yards. It was amazing. I caught four of them, Dave Mitchell caught the other two."

"Cool! I'm glad things are working." I answered.

Bobby Smith, who was listening to Andy and I talk, asked. “Did I hear correctly? You caught four touchdowns last night?”

Andy confirmed that. Bobby’s team hadn’t won a game yet in the season. They lost too many players to graduation and academic problems from the previous season. Bobby had been a favorite receiver to the last season’s now departed quarterback. He had been a hot prospect with a lot of coaches contacting him last spring and summer. He was just happy that Penn State was still interested in him.

Andy and I told him about how our team had developed our spread offense over the last half a dozen years. It provided me with an excellent segue to our coaches’ philosophy on offense here at Penn State. It was an excellent opportunity to sell our school to Andy and Bobby.

Dinner gave Kelly and me time to catch up on what was happening in Will and Abby’s lives. Abby was working hard in medical school and she loved every minute of it. Will enjoyed working as a teaching assistant for two professors this year. He was slated to teach a freshman physics course on his own in the spring. Leigh Ann quizzed Will about grad school. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to do that next year or not.

Zack recommended the grilled stickies to the recruits when the meal was over. Most tried them, though a couple guys opted for ice cream instead. Zack took care of the bill for the university’s hosts and guests. Will took care of the girls and himself.

We headed through campus past Pollock Halls to the corner of Bigler and Shortlidge Roads after dinner. Zack, Leigh Ann, Andy, Kelly and I exchanged hugs with Abby, shook Will’s hand and said our farewells at the corner before they headed for the game parking area to retrieve Will’s old Honda. They had a three and a half hour drive to get back to their apartment in Philly that evening. We headed for Zack’s apartment when Will and Abby headed for home.

As we were heading for Zack’s apartment Andy whispered to me. “Do you think Johara is going to be at the party?”

“Johara?” I replied, looking at me brother. “No, she graduated.” Andy’s face fell. I added, “If you play your cards right, you still might be able to talk your way into bed with one of the girls at the party. Are you prepared?”

“Rubbers?” Andy said. “I have three in case I get lucky tonight.”

“Good, we wouldn’t want any surprises in nine months,” I said as our group turned in the walk to Zack’s apartment.

We stepped inside Zack’s apartment a few minutes before nine. Evan, Jake and JT had set everything up and the party was in full swing. Zack called the recruits into the

hallway in front of Evan and Jake's bedrooms. He informed them that it was OK if they had a beer that evening but that they needed to be discreet. No one would be happy – parents, coaches, team members or the recruits if one of them showed up at their hotel drunk that evening. Zack let them know that he and I would give them a ride back to the Penn Stater Hotel at 11:45 pm. Andy, Mike, Bobby, Jon, Jeff and Jonah agreed to Zack's rules for the evening.

Kelly and I took Andy and Bobby back to the living room. I introduced Bobby to Evan. They happily started discussing some of the finer points of playing tight end in the Penn State system. Andy spotted Anders and headed over to talk with my friend. They had gotten to know each other pretty well when Anders spent a week at my house in the summer. Chip introduced Jon Stafford to Glenn and Colin. They talked with Jon about learning to run our offense.

Kelly and I were free for a couple hours or so. We headed into the kitchen for drinks. Kelly grabbed an amber ale. I took a Coke. I knew I'd end up seeing Dad when I brought Andy back to the hotel. I didn't need to get in trouble by smelling of beer.

I noticed Jay come into the apartment with a tall, long legged brunette with curves in the right places. She was nearly as tall as my 6'-2" friend. I did a double take. She looked somewhat familiar. Jay has a reputation for spreading his affections widely among the women, so this was a new development.

I got the chance to confer with Jay a few minutes later when Kelly headed to the kitchen for another beer. Jay's date had gone to the bathroom. I sidled up to him and gave him a nudge in the ribs.

"What's up?" I asked. "Weren't you with this girl after the Nebraska game? You have a second date?"

"Yeah... er, well..." Jay replied. "Actually I have a fifth date."

"You? A fifth date?!?" I asked. "How'd you fit five dates in the last two weeks?"

"Three weeks," Jay corrected. "We went out for Sunday brunch after the Temple game three weeks ago."

"Is this one serious?" I asked. "Are you ready to get attached?"

"Maybe," Jay agreed. "I really like this girl." I started to leave but Jay added, "Stick around Kyle, I'd like you to meet her." His date came back and joined him.

"Steph, I'd like you to meet my close friend, Kyle Martin," Jay said. I shook her hand. "Kyle, this is Stephanie Kolmar."

We were exchanging pleasantries when Kelly returned with her bottle of beer. Her eyes widened in surprise as she looked at Jay's date and asked, "Stephanie?"

"Kelly?" Stephanie asked in response, smiling. "I didn't expect to see you at this party."

Kelly edged closer to me and slipped her arm in mine. "Kyle's my boyfriend," she explained.

"You two know each other?" Jay asked.

"Of course," Stephanie answered. "We have Comm 260 together."

"We're both journalism majors," Kelly added. "Steph, how did you and Jay meet?"

"Jay and I are taking Statistics 200 this semester," Stephanie replied. "I'm sure the two of us will have more courses together in the future. I want to do Broadcast Journalism and Jay is majoring in Telecommunications."

"You want broadcast?" Kelly asked Stephanie. "I haven't made up my mind. I'm torn between print and broadcast." That comment started the three communications majors off and running into an extended discussion of the merits of their career options. I listened as best I could as they talked, following the gist of the conversation. We talked for about five minutes. The girls really hit it off.

Stephanie looked at Kelly and suggested, "Why don't you and Kyle join us for brunch tomorrow morning?" Stephanie turned to Jay and added, "Wouldn't that be fun?"

"Yeah, it would be," Jay agreed.

"What time would it be?" I asked. "I have to help work out the recruits tomorrow morning?"

"I'm helping with that too," Jay replied. "We can hit the Waffle Shop after we're done with the workout."

"OK, cool," I answered. The four of us talked for a couple more minutes before we split up. Jay and Stephanie went for more beer. Kelly and I joined Damian, Mel, Billy and Sarah and talked for awhile.

I checked out the recruits to see how they were doing. Anders and Andy were chatting up a group of girls, intent on getting a pair of them horizontal in bed for an extended period of time that evening. Jon Stafford was talking with Zack, Leigh Ann, and Colin O'Shea. Bobby Smith was talking with Shawn O'Conner and Evan Foster. Everything seemed OK with them.

I headed to the kitchen for another soda. Lori Brown, a cute freshman, intercepted me when I came back to the living room.

“Which one’s Stafford?” she asked sweetly.

I pointed to Jon standing across the room still talking with Zack and Colin. Lori headed straight for the group of quarterbacks. I don’t know if you’d consider Lori a groupie, but she seemed determined to check out the bedroom prowess of most of the team, starting with the star players. She had propositioned me a few weeks ago one time when Kelly was out of the room. I passed on her offer.

Apparently she didn’t mind trying out the star recruits too. Jon Stafford was rated a five star recruit by some services. The others listed him as a four star recruit. There was no question he was a highly sought after prize among the big colleges. Lori seemed intent on convincing Jon that Penn State would be an extremely hospitable place to call home for the next four years.

I rejoined Kelly, who was still with Damian, Mel, Billy and Sarah. We talked for awhile. I thought Damian and Mel would make a nice couple. They’d double dated with Billy and Sarah four times so far this year. I hoped my roomie would settle down with Mel. She would be good for him.

We hung out together for fifteen or twenty minutes. Damian, Mel, Billy and Sarah excused themselves. They planned to head back to Mel and Sarah’s apartment for more privacy. I whispered teasingly to Damian before they left, “I won’t wait up for you.”

“Good idea,” Damian agreed as he gave me a wink and a smile. “I don’t know when I’ll be back to our room.”

Kelly and I grabbed the open spot on the couch when Jay left with Stephanie to go back to her apartment. We cuddled and kissed, preparing ourselves for some fun later in the evening. Kelly was feeling frisky after she’d finished her third beer. I was sober, but quite happy to help quench her lust.

We had been kissing for a few minutes when I noticed Amber Noel out of the corner of my eye. She’s a well built blonde freshman, who was leading my brother Andy across the room. They conferred briefly with Zack before heading upstairs, presumably to use Zack’s bedroom. My understanding, by way of Trevor Conwell’s report from a few weeks ago, was that she was hot in bed. My brother was in for some fun that evening.

My boner was trapped between Kelly and me as we made out. Kelly’s squirming while we made out was driving me crazy. I felt her up as we kissed, driving her thirst for connection higher. We desperately needed privacy within a few minutes. We tried downstairs but Evan’s room and Jake’s room were both occupied. We headed upstairs, hoping that JT’s room would be available.

We found both bedrooms occupied when we got to the top of the stairs. I recognized the sounds of my brother demonstrating to his girl exactly what he could do with his tongue coming from Zack's bedroom. The couple in JT's room were fucking. Kelly and I were too hot wait much longer. Hopefully the couple in JT's room wouldn't be too long.

Kelly shucked her bra out from under her T-shirt. I pinned her against the hallway wall and slipped my hands under the T-shirt to feel her up. We kissed as Kelly slipped her hand down my pants and stroked my hard cock. Both of us were ready to explode if we didn't fuck soon.

Kelly pulled me into the bathroom. Both of us dropped our pants. Kelly turned around and put one leg up on the toilet seat. She put her hands on the wall and leaned over to give me access. I got behind her, lined up my cock with her hole and drove it home. I fucked Kelly hard and fast. Neither of us had the patience for slow gentle lovemaking at the moment. I blasted a load of sperm into my girlfriend three or four minutes later. Kelly and I dressed when the act was completed.

The couple in JT's room had finished so Kelly and I cuddled and kissed while we waited for the room. A smug Lori Brown led a dazed but happy Jon Stafford downstairs while Kelly and I kissed in the hallway. My girl and I took the empty room immediately.

Kelly was in the mood for role playing again. This time I was the fifteen year old neighbor boy being seduced by the young widow after I finished mowing the lawn. I was perfectly happy to let 'Mrs. O'Keefe' take the lead in seducing 'Davey' (me). Mrs. O'Keefe was delighted to find that Davey was extremely well endowed for a boy his age. She taught him how to satisfy a woman orally and with his big cock. Davey satisfied the widow twice before the fantasy was done.

Kelly and I dressed when we were done and stopped in the bathroom to cleanup before rejoining our friends downstairs. I didn't want my Dad smelling pussy on me when I dropped Andy off at the hotel. We ran into Andy and Amber in the hallway outside the bathroom. Andy gave me a wink and a subtle thumbs-up as Kelly and I followed Andy and Amber downstairs.

Kelly and I struck up a conversation with Zack and Leigh Ann when we got downstairs. Zack and I had about fifteen minutes until we had to drive the recruits back to their hotel.

"Honey," Kelly asked sweetly after a couple minutes. "Would you get me another beer please?"

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Haven't you had four already?"

"I'm fine Kyle," Kelly insisted. I went back to the kitchen and picked up an amber ale for my lover. Kelly thanked me and downed half her beer.

Kelly winked and said, "I guess I worked up a thirst upstairs."

We continued talking with our friends until Zack checked his watch about ten minutes later. Zack and I gathered up our recruits. Andy was cuddling with Amber when I found him.

“Your curfew is coming up,” I said.

“Gimme’ a few minutes Kyle, please?” Andy pleaded.

“Sorry bro,” I answered. “No can do. The parents aren’t going to be happy if Zack and I bring you guys back late.”

Andy reluctantly disengaged from Amber and followed me. Jon Stafford was equally reluctant to leave Lori Brown’s arms. Bobby Smith was talking with Evan Foster. He didn’t object when I told him it was time to leave. Zack collared Mike, Jonah and Jeff. The eight of us headed for the East Parking Deck and our cars.

Andy, Jon and Bobby rode with me. The other guys climbed in Zack’s car. I followed Zack out and onto Park Avenue. We headed north towards the hotel. The police had traffic cones and a flare out right after we passed the stadium. A policeman waved Zack and me onto the shoulder of the road. Another policeman waved Zack and me forward until we were right behind a couple other cars.

Two policemen were talking with the driver of the car three cars in front of Zack. Another policeman walked down the line of cars. I rolled down my window. He leaned in and said, “Have your license and registration ready.”

“Certainly officer,” I replied. “What is going on?”

“This is a sobriety check point,” he answered. He walked back to the car stopped behind me.

As soon as the policeman went back to the next car, pandemonium broke loose. “Shit!” “We’re gonna’ get busted!” the guys moaned.

“Chill guys... CHILL!” I commanded. “How many beers did each of you have?” I asked. I stared at Andy.

“One,” my brother answered. Jon acknowledged having one beer too. Bobby insisted that he didn’t have any.

“Good!” I said. “They’re checking for drunk drivers. I didn’t have anything to drink tonight. We’ll be fine. Everyone take a deep breath. Things will be OK.”

The four of us waited as we watched the two policemen work down the line from car to car. We were surprised to see them talk with Zack for a minute and then ordered him to

get out of the car. One policeman had Zack stand on one leg for about thirty seconds. Zack had to breathe into a machine after that. The policeman waved Zack back into his car and sent him on.

The two policemen approached my car next. The first policeman looked inside and said, "License and registration." I handed over my cards.

"Have you been drinking Mr. Martin?" the officer asked.

"No sir."

"Mr. Martin, where were you earlier tonight?" the policeman asked.

"A football team party," I answered. "I'm driving these potential recruits back to their hotel."

"Party?" I officer asked, staring over the top of his glasses. "Please step out of the car, Mr. Martin. I'd like you to take a field sobriety test. Is that acceptable?"

"Whatever you want officer," I replied. I stepped out of the car. The officer had me stand at attention, close my eyes and then touch my nose with my index finger. He had me step along the white line toe to heel, turn and walk back.

"Would you take a preliminary alcohol screen test Mr. Martin?" the officer asked.

"That's fine sir," I said. He had me breathe into the machine.

He looked at the numbers on the machine and then said, "You're free to go Mr. Martin. I'm sorry for the inconvenience."

I got back in the car and pulled back onto the highway. We arrived at the Penn Stater Hotel about five minutes late for the recruits' midnight curfew.

Dad, Mr. Stafford, Bobby's mom, Mrs. Bartholomew, Mr. Harris, Mr. Knox and Mrs. Adams met the boys when Zack and I brought them inside the hotel lobby. We explained about the sobriety check. The parents understood about our delay. Dad wished me a good night and told me he'd see me in the morning at breakfast.

When we got out of the hotel I asked Zack, "I guess you passed the breathalyzer test?"

"Sure, with flying colors," Zack explained. "I only had two beers tonight and that was awhile ago. The cop said I blew a .02. No problems. They let you go so I assume you passed too."

"Of course," I said confidently. "I didn't have anything to drink tonight. I knew I would have to drive the kids back here."

“Yeah, right,” Zack replied. “You’re a lucky SOB. Most Saturday nights you would have been nailed at that stop.”

“Most nights I don’t have to drive somewhere at midnight,” I countered.

“Just remember to keep things in moderation Kyle,” Zack said. “I wouldn’t want you getting into trouble by drinking too much. You’re too valuable to the football team.”

“Don’t worry about me Zack,” I answered. “I have things under control.”

“You keep it that way Kyle,” Zack said. “I worry about you sometimes.”

We drove back to campus. The police were still running their checkpoint just on the campus side of the Mount Nittany Expressway ramps. They didn’t disturb us when we were heading the opposite direction. We parked in the East Parking Deck and walked back to Zack’s apartment.

The party was dying down when we got back. I found Kelly on the sofa beside two empty amber ale bottles. She wasn’t feeling any pain.

“How many did you have tonight?” I asked.

“Oh... not many,” Kelly slurred. “Four? I don’t know.”

“Can you give me a hand Zack?” I asked, shaking my head. He looked my girlfriend over doubtfully.

“I don’t know man,” Zack answered. “Maybe she better sleep it off here.”

“We can get her back to her room,” I said.

“Kelly can sleep on the couch,” Zack suggested. “As drunk as she is, I think it would be best if you didn’t try to get her back to her room. You’ll get caught, sure as anything.”

I considered the offer for a few seconds then asked, “Could I borrow a sleeping bag Zack? I’d like to stay here too, in case Kelly needs anything. I don’t want to put you out.”

“Yeah, that would be fine,” Zack agreed. “I’ll get my bag. You can sack out on the floor here.”

Zack returned a couple minutes later with a blanket, a sleeping bag and two pillows. Kelly was cooperative, but semi-comatose when I helped her lay down to sleep. She fell asleep in seconds after her head hit the pillow. I covered her with the blanket and lay down to sleep on the floor beside the couch.

Zack woke me around a quarter to eight on Sunday morning. Kelly was still dead to the world. I left her a note reminding her about our brunch date with Jay and Stephanie. I said I'd call her when I finished with the recruits' workout. I headed back to my dorm room, showered, changed and then headed for the Lasch Building.

I met the usual crowd of quarterbacks, receivers and defensive backs at the Lasch Building. Ryan Reynolds and Coach Adams gave us a ride in team vans over to the Penn Stater for breakfast with the families. I ended up seated with Andy, Dad, and the Staffords during breakfast. Everyone headed for the practice fields beside the Lasch Building after breakfast for the recruits' workouts.

I was pleased to see Andy run the 40 in 4.34 seconds. It was the best time he ever had in the test. Bobby Smith ran it in a respectable 4.42 seconds. Jeff Knox and Mike Harris both ran sub 4.4 second 40's too. Jon Stafford ran it in 4.58 seconds and Jonah Adams needed 4.74 seconds to complete the 40 yards. That was OK, neither was being recruited for blazing speed.

The coaches split the recruits up with team members. David McCall and I were assigned to test Jon Stafford with some pass routes. Andy ended up with Zack and Shawn Byrd. Jon Stafford performed superbly.

He was accurate, put good velocity on the ball and delivered it to me on time. That was fortunate for him and me. David McCall blanketed me when he covered me. David was going to make a strong case for more playing time once he learned our playbook. We worked on short routes, medium depth routes and finally deep routes. Jon managed to complete three of the four deep passes to me. Coach Peterson, our quarterbacks coach, seemed impressed with Jon by the time the workout was finished.

Zack Hayes filled me in on Andy's workout as we walked back inside the Lasch Building. Zack was pleased. He said working with Andy was almost identical to working with me. We had similar speed, size, and style of play. Zack said Andy would be welcome on the Nittany Lions team anytime.

Jay, Anders, David and I hung around the player's lounge after the workout while Coach Burton met with each recruit and his parents. Jay and I took on Anders and Andy in foosball while we waited for Andy's turn. It was a close game that Jay and I managed to pull out a win in the end.

The recruits went in to see the coaches one at a time with their parents while the rest waited in the lounge. Jonah Adams was asked to come to Penn State as a preferred walk-on, as was Mike Harris. Jeff Knox was offered a full scholarship, which he promptly accepted. His dad had played at Penn State with Coach Burton. There hadn't been any suspense about his coming to our school to be a Nittany Lion.

Andy quizzed me about working with Coach Schroeder and Coach Adams. I assured Andy that they were great to work with. I enjoyed their coaching just as much as I enjoyed working with Coach Caffrey in high school. Andy and Dad's meeting with the coaches took longer than I expected, about half an hour.

Andy was excited and Dad had a huge smile on his face when he and Andy left Coach's office. I took Dad and Andy down to the lobby where I figured we could have some privacy. Andy was nearly bursting, trying to contain himself.

"So, how did the meeting go?" I asked after we were seated.

"Great!" Andy answered. "They still want to offer me a full scholarship to come here. I was a little worried about that. Coach Burton and I had a long talk about my uh... productivity this year. My total yards and yards per carry are way down."

"Of course," I agreed. "Did you tell him how you and the other captains worked with Coach Caffrey to fix the problem? It would show him your leadership potential."

"That's exactly what Coach Burton said when I explained how we tried to get Logan to open up our offense," Andy said. "Coach Burton suggested that Logan might be intimidated having to live up to Zack's, Ed's and Jake's legacy at our school. It's a lot to follow a potential Heisman winner, Florida's starter and even Jake. Did you know Jake got to play at Syracuse last week?"

"I hadn't heard that," I replied.

"He played last week in the final quarter when Syracuse was getting blown out by Pittsburgh," Andy answered. "Coach Burton talked about what they thought I would be able to do to help the team in my first year or two." Andy looked embarrassed and hesitated a second. "Coach thought I'd be good at returning kicks and punts. I'm not trying to take your job you know."

"No problem," I replied. "I'm starting at wide receiver now. I have no problem if someone else that can do a good job at it takes over for me. It will let me concentrate on being the best receiver possible."

"That's a relief," Andy said, smiling. "I wouldn't want anything to mess up our relationship. If I came here I'd want things to be like they were in high school when we played together."

"They can be," I answered. "So, what do you think? Will you be joining me here next fall?"

"I'm leaning that way," Andy replied. "I know I won't be going to Rutgers. No offense to Hal [Long, my friend who is Rutgers' backup kicker], but I wasn't that impressed with

their program. I like what you guys are doing on offense a lot more than what Coach Schiano is doing.”

“What do you need to stop leaning and be a Lion?” I asked. “Have you given up the crazy idea of trying to get home every weekend after games?”

“Coach Burton pretty much said the same thing you did about it,” Andy admitted. “He said you had to be committed to be successful.”

“Coach is right,” I said. “Look at me. I’m here on a Sunday morning doing things for the team. I study, practice, and work out seven days a week, nearly year round to be ready to play at this level. You still need a scholarship to go to college, right?” Andy nodded agreement. “You can’t do this without being totally committed.”

“I’m learning that,” Andy answered.

“So, are you ready to be a Lion?” I asked.

“Just about,” Andy agreed. “I still have visits to Maryland in two weeks, then Temple and finally Delaware.”

“Delaware?” I asked. “You can play with the big boys here. Why would you have any interest in Delaware?”

“I promised Coach Keeler I would visit with him before I make a final decision,” Andy explained. “I plan to keep my word, regardless of my final destination for college.”

“Fair enough,” I agreed. Dad and Andy got up to leave. I asked, “When are the two of you coming to be back for another game?”

“Not for awhile son,” Dad said. “We have too many college visits next month. Mom and Liz are talking about coming for the Northwestern game. I don’t know who will use the tickets for the Illinois game. I let you know closer to the game.”

“That’s cool,” I said. “I didn’t know Mom was willing to leave the little kids behind.”

Dad explained, “Your Grandma Robinson has been bugging us to let the Hunter and the twins spend a weekend with her. This seemed like a perfect opportunity.”

“I’m glad Mom and Liz will get a chance to see me play,” I said. Dad and Andy headed for the door of the building. “Love you Dad.”

“I love you too Kyle,” Dad replied. He insisted on a hug too. I didn’t object. Andy and I exchanged our elaborate handshake that we had been doing to most of the last decade.

“Remember, I expect to see you in blue and white next August,” I said as they walked out the door. Andy smiled and gave me a wave as they left. I felt optimistic that Andy would join me here at State College. It seemed like he finally understood that he was going to have to sacrifice a little time with the twins if he wanted to play football at the top level in college.

I went back to the player’s lounge and found Jay. We decided to walk together over to Beaver Hall so I could pick up Kelly for our brunch double date with Stephanie and Jay. Jay needed to drive over to Steph’s apartment to pick her up. He offered to give Kelly and me a ride in his Mustang.

Kelly was up and just finished with a shower when Jay and I arrived at a quarter to twelve. We waited in the hallway while she finished dressing. She came out wearing a pair of dark sunglasses. She had a splitting headache from her hangover, even after following our standard hydration, aspirin and hot shower regimen. She thanked me for staying with her last night on Zack’s floor when she crashed. Evan had told her when she got up in the morning.

Jay decided it was a nice day, so he put the top down on his Mustang. It certainly was a sweet ride. We drove through State College to Stephanie’s apartment and picked her up. The temperature just after noon was in the high sixties. Driving with the top down in a classic car felt great. We looked great too. Jay managed to find a parking space near the Waffle Shop. The wait to get a table wasn’t too long.

Stephanie chose a beautiful strawberry Belgian waffle. Jay and I both had ultimate omelets. Kelly went light – a breakfast fruit salad of strawberries, bananas, yogurt and granola.

The four of us had an enjoyable brunch. Stephanie was a good conversationalist. The four of us clicked. By the time lunch was over it was like we had been friends for years. The four of us agreed to meet again next Sunday for brunch. Jay gave Kelly and me a ride back to campus after we finished brunch. Jay’s vintage ragtop Mustang got quite a few looks as we drove across campus.

Jay dropped us off at Pollock Commons. Kelly and I picked up a Sunday newspaper at the Mix and then headed back to her room. I checked out the sports section and found that Ed Fritz had won yesterday when Florida beat Ole Miss 28-24. Ed completed 22 of 40 passes for three touchdowns and two interceptions. It was his first college win even if it wasn’t a stellar performance.

Kelly and I sent off a congratulatory e-mail after we finished the article. Ed was on line when we sent it off. We IMed for about fifteen minutes. Ed filled us in on the details of the game that didn’t make the Philadelphia paper. The Gators had been in control of the game most of the day. They had been ahead 21-17 when Ed threw his second interception. Ole Miss ran it back to take the lead.

The Gator crowd screamed for Coach Meyers to put Terrance Walker or Elijah Carter in but he stuck with Ed. Elijah Carter had suited up for the game but was only about 90% healed. Coach Meyer wanted him completely healthy before he played again. Ed stayed in the game and engineered the game winning drive to put his team ahead with four minutes left in the game. This was going to be Ed's final start for quite awhile.

Ed concluded that he had a lot to learn before he was ready to lead his team full time. Ed said he planned to tap Elijah for as much knowledge as possible in the next few months. Hopefully he'd be better prepared for his competition with Terrance Walker next year for the starter's job.

We spent an hour after signing off from the computer perusing the paper. We cut our Sunday afternoon ritual short because both of us had a lot of work to do that day. I had mid-terms in Econ and Math coming up. Both of us had papers due in American Comedy. Kelly had a mid-term in Philosophy and a newspaper article due on Monday for her new writing course. The two of us spent the rest of the afternoon and evening studying. We got together for half an hour later in the evening when we shared an arctic swirl from the Mix.

I was pleased with how everything had turned out that weekend. My team beat Michigan, one of our toughest opponents. I had one of my best games yet, scoring two touchdowns and gaining 326 yards between my ten catches, my reverse, and my punt and kick returns. I thought my brother was sold on attending Penn State too. We'd make a great combination next season when we were together again. All in all, this had been an excellent weekend.

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Monday afternoon our team reviewed the video from the Michigan game. The coaches were mostly complementary as we reviewed the game. Coach Schroeder got on my case again about my blocking on a couple running plays. He got after Damian too for dropping a couple passes late in the game.

The coaches reminded us that we couldn't get complacent after our victory. We flew out to Lafayette, Indiana on Friday to play Purdue. The Boilermakers play a spread offense like we did. If we were careless, they'd beat us and any chance at a BCS bowl game and the national championship would evaporate. Coach Burton warned us we were going to have hard practices this week to make sure we were ready to play on Saturday.

Kelly and I both were swamped with homework during the week. She studied hard for her philosophy exam on Wednesday. My Math 111 exam was on Thursday. I had to make arrangements with Dr. Blanchard to take Friday's Econ midterm early since the team bus was departing at 9:30 on Friday morning and the class was at 10:10 am. Dr. Blanchard arranged for his grad assistant to give me the test at the Lasch Building study center at 8:00 am on Friday morning.

I was pleased when I left Osmond Lab after I completed my Math 111 midterm on Thursday morning. I knew I had done well. There was a chance I might have aced the test. I called Kevin Lee, my tutor, after lunch and thanked him. Normally we met for a tutoring session in the afternoon, but both of us agreed that it wasn't necessary that day since I wouldn't have any new homework to do.

Kelly felt she did well on her midterm on Wednesday. She was relaxed, amorous and ready for fun on Thursday evening. Damian kindly left us have privacy in my room. Poor Kelly had to settle for fifteen minutes of mutual oral stimulation for satisfaction that evening. I really HAD to study for my Econ exam. I needed to get a good grade.

I went to breakfast on Friday with Christian, GJ and Damian. Kelly didn't have classes until 10:10 and had no interest in an early breakfast. I didn't blame her. I wouldn't get up early either if it weren't for my Econ test.

I headed over to the Lasch Building and met Dr. Blanchard's grad assistant in the study center. The test was hard. I thought I did well enough on the multiple choice portion of the exam. Dr. Blanchard had two excellent essay questions. Hopefully I answered them to his satisfaction. I hung out in the player's lounge for half an hour until it was time to get on the buses for the airport.

This was my ninth travel game in the last thirteen months, so it was getting routine. I studied the game plan and notes on our opponent on the trip out. Our athletic department put us up in the Hilton Garden Inn. The Wabash River was visible east of our hotel.

After a catered dinner at the hotel we had a team meeting followed by position meetings. The coaches dismissed us at 8:30 pm. Jay, Damian, Trevor, Christian, GJ, Shawn Byrd and I headed for the pool to relax for awhile. When we were tired of swimming we hung out in Jay and Shawn's room until curfew.

The buses delivered us to Ross-Ade Stadium around 10 o'clock in the morning after breakfast at our hotel. ESPN was televising our game at noon. The Boilermaker's stadium was a traditional older stadium. It seated around 62,500 fans in a horseshoe shaped arena. The stadium had a good quality artificial turf, very well drained. That fact was going to be useful. It rained over night and we still had low threatening clouds. More rain was predicted in the afternoon.

The stadium was filled with gold and black dressed Boilermaker faithful when we came out to start the game. We won the coin toss. I managed a thirty-four yard return on a low bouncing kickoff. We went to work at our 41 yard line.

Purdue had studied us carefully. They were absolutely determined that I would not beat them deep. They gave me a ten yard cushion and kept an extra d-back deep in case I beat the first guy. Our opponents were smart and well coached but physically overmatched. Our skill guys were faster than theirs. Our offensive line was bigger and able to dominate the line of scrimmage.

Hassan beat single coverage on the fifth play of the drive and sprinted into the end zone untouched to put us ahead. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT through to give us a lead of 7-0.

The Boilermakers ran a spread offense just like we did, except with slower players. Jake Washington, Trevor Conwell and our other defensive lineman were too big to move off the line of scrimmage. Purdue was stopped after three plays and punted the ball back to us.

Things didn't improve for Purdue. I caught a couple passes on the next drive, taking what Purdue gave me – about 12-15 yards each time. I managed to bull ahead a few yards after each catch before the Boilermaker players swarmed me and stopped me. Shawn was able to run wide for good gains every time he ran the ball. Zack took us on a nine play drive for another touchdown.

Purdue found out what I already knew about Tyler Madden. He demonstrated his ability by making a hellacious hit when he came flying up to pound the ball carrier. With Tyler, Cuch, Karol, Josh and Brendan backing up our strong defensive line, the Boilermakers were stymied.

Our advantage had increased to 21-0 before Purdue finally scored on a long field goal in the second quarter. Coach Burton decided it was time for to try my reverse option play. It was a gutsy call. We had the ball on our own 32 yard line at the time. I keyed on the

cornerback covering Hassan Jackson as we ran the play. He stayed with Hassan covering him as they ran downfield. I kept the ball and ran downfield. Hassan made a great block, pushing his man towards the center of the field as I ran by along the sideline. The free safety tried to catch me but took a bad angle. I cut back as he missed me and sprinted for the end zone. The crowd was nearly silent as our Blue Band struck up our fight song to celebrate my touchdown. Score: 28-3 Lion's favor.

The rain that had been threatening finally cut loose after Andrew Perkins kicked the ball down to Purdue. The wind swirled through the stadium as the storm intensified. Our defense stuffed the tailback on three consecutive plays.

I was nervous as I waited for the punt to come to me. The wind caught the ball and pushed it out of bounds so I didn't need to handle the ball. Coach Burton was satisfied to pound the ball down the field to finish out the first half of the game.

Our second string took over in the second half. Damian and Wyatt Smith pounded the ball at Purdue in the second half, denying them possession of the ball. The Boilermakers finally managed to score a couple touchdowns late in the game when our third string went in. The final score was 31-17 our favor.

No one on our team lingered on the field after the game was over. Reporters caught up with us in the locker room. I did half a dozen interviews as I dressed. The coaches had us on the buses around 5:00 pm. The travel coordinator made sure everyone had a box dinner for the drive to the airport.

I worked on homework on the flight home. We arrived back on campus in State College a little before midnight. Kelly and Leigh Ann invited some of the other football "widows" to the movies that evening, since they were missing their boyfriends. Stephanie, Bev and Keneisha joined Kelly and Leigh Ann in greeting us when we got off the bus. Kelly was in an amorous mood, but I had to give her a rain check. I was too tired from the day's activities to oblige my girlfriend.

Damian and I slept in on Sunday morning. I met Jay after I showered and dressed. The storm that dumped on us in Indiana had followed us home. The day was gray, cold and dismal. Jay was going to get his Mustang and then pick Kelly and me at the parking lot beside Beaver Hall. I headed across the commons through the rain to Beaver Hall. Jay picked us up outside a few minutes later. We headed for Stephanie's apartment and then on to the Waffle Shop.

I decided to have the strawberry waffles that Steph had last weekend. Kelly ordered the cinnamon-apple waffles. Steph had the strawberry waffles too. Jay went with a western omelet. The four of us savored our breakfast, talked and enjoyed each other's company for nearly forty-five minutes. Kelly and Steph quickly had become close friends. Officially Jay and Stephanie weren't a couple yet. It was as distinction without meaning.

They spent every free moment together they could manage. Jay dropped Kelly and me off at Pollock Commons after breakfast. Jay and Stephanie headed back to her apartment. Kelly and I grabbed a newspaper at the Mix and headed back to my room to enjoy the paper and each other's company. We spent an hour together.

When I read the sports section, I let Kelly know that Florida beat Vanderbilt handily. Gators fans cheered the return of their hero, Elijah Carter. Ed spent the first three quarters on the bench. He relieved Elijah in the fourth quarter, adding an extra touchdown to a game that had been long decided. The paper said Gators fans thought things would improve now that their hero was back on the field. Unfortunately their two losses had dropped them out of the top ten and cost them any chance at a BCS championship.

Kelly went back to her room around 2:30 pm. She needed to study for her Comm 260 midterm on Monday. I had a Poly Sci midterm on Wednesday, so I spent the afternoon studying. I checked my e-mail before I headed out for dinner.

An e-mail Andy sent me on Friday night reported that my high school was righting itself. The Wolverines celebrated their homecoming by blasting underdog Eastern 52-10. Matt "The Mad Bomber" Sauder threw six touchdowns, matching Ed's school record again. Andy caught three of them, Dave Mitchell caught two more and Cody Stevens caught the last one.

Andy teased that he and the other captains were going to need to discuss ego control measures to deal with Matt. He had played spectacularly but it was against Eastern and Drumore, two of the weaker teams in our league. I e-mailed back to Andy and told him to remind Matt that LS, the Braves and any team he faced in the playoffs would be much tougher than his first two opponents.

I headed over to the Lasch Building for my daily workout after dinner. I popped in the player's lounge to see who was hanging out before I went over to the weight room. The guys had the Patriots-Giants game on the TV. Just as I walked in the room, I heard Joe Buck, the game announcer, "...Groff, rookie linebacker made the tackle for a three yard loss."

"Huh?" I asked Cuch Cuchiella, who was sitting in a chair by the TV, staring at the screen. "Who'd they say made that tackle?"

"Andrew... uh, Groff?" Cuch replied.

"I don't believe it!" I exclaimed.

Troy Aikman, the play-by-play man added to Joe Buck's call, "Groff is a promising young man promoted from the practice squad this week. He played college ball at the University of Delaware."

“You know him?” Cuch asked.

“Yeah, we played together in high school,” I explained. “His dad told me he was only going to training camp with the Giants on a lark. He’s supposed to be in pharmacy school now.”

“I guess your friend did better in training camp than he expected,” Cuch replied.

“Yeah, I guess,” I agreed. I shook my head as I headed for the training room. Andy Groff is playing in the NFL?!?! Who would have thought that five years ago when we were playing together?

I ran into Zack at the training room. He surprised that I hadn’t heard about Andy making the Giants’ practice squad at the beginning of the season. Zack stayed in touch with Andy this summer. That wasn’t surprising – they were classmates as well as teammates. Andy decided to postpone pharmacy school and enjoy the ride in football as long as it lasted. He didn’t expect his NFL career would last long.

Kelly and I met up later in the evening before bedtime and watched about a quarter of Sunday Night Football. We had to take whatever time was available during the week to have time together.

The polls came out Sunday evening. They moved our team up to #4 after our victory over Purdue. LSU stayed at #1, followed by USC, and Texas. Notre Dame was #5 and Ohio State was #6. Our game against Ohio State in three weeks was shaping up to be important, both nationally and for the leadership of the Big Ten.

Our opponent next week was Northwestern, they were 5-1, having lost to Michigan State a couple weeks earlier. They weren’t ranked in the Top 25. They hadn’t played Michigan, Ohio State, Wisconsin or us yet. They were going to be underdogs against each of those teams as they played them in the rest of the season.

Coach Burton preached that we couldn’t take Northwestern for granted. Not everyone on the team got the message. The coaches and the captains both chewed us out during Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s practices for goofing around too much. Thursday’s practice went better. We all had the message that Homecoming Weekend would be a horrible time to lose.

Kelly and I both were pleased when we received our midterms back from last week. I had a 93 on my Math 111 test and an 87 on my Econ test. Kelly had an 83 on her philosophy midterm. That encouraged us to make sure we did well on this week’s midterms. I knew I had aced my Poly Sci test when I finished it. Kelly was confident about her news writing midterm too.

Kelly and I ran into Cameron Miller and Joel Peterson at breakfast on Thursday. They told us about the big bash Omega Chi was throwing on Saturday night. They insisted that we had to go to the party. We were “family” as far as the brothers at Omega Chi were concerned. We promised to put in an appearance.

Our meeting gave me a chance to fill in Cam and Joel on what the football team was doing for the Thon in February. I had recruited two players from each class. Anders and Cuch represented the seniors, Tyler Madden and Andrew Perkins represented the juniors, Trevor and I represented the sophomores while Chip and Jared Cantrell represented the freshmen. Kelly and Leigh Ann were organizing the support team for the dancers and contacting their friends and family for donations.

Anders, Cuch and I planned to hit up team alumni for donations for the Thon. Homecoming weekend was to be our kickoff for the fundraising. Joel and Cam were pleased with my report on our plans.

Usually Kelly and I had managed to find some privacy on Thursday evenings. Unfortunately Jen and Damian both stayed in their respective rooms that evening. Kelly and I had to settle for walking downtown around ten o’clock and grabbing grilled stickies together at the Penn State Diner.

Kelly and I had breakfast together Friday morning before our first classes. I headed for the Forum for Poly Sci. Kelly’s didn’t have philosophy until 11:15. Kelly and I met for lunch and then walked together to History 20.

Dr. Brennan asked us to turn in our ideas for our next term papers. I planned to do my paper on feeding, clothing and training the Continental Army at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78. Kelly proposed to do a paper on the miracles of Trenton and Princeton in 1776. The day’s lecture was about the American efforts led by Ben Franklin to draw France into the American Revolution. The lecture was fascinating as always. Ben was a cagey old fox. We were fortunate to have him on our side during the Revolution.

I walked with Kelly back to our dorms after class. We exchanged kisses and hugs before we parted. I needed to study some video with Zack and Chip at the Lasch Building before practice. We wouldn’t be together again until we went out to dinner with Mom and my sister Liz after the game tomorrow.

Zack and the other captains kept our team focused through Friday’s practice. The coaches drilled us hard to make sure we were ready to put on a good show for the homecoming crowd.

The team had an early dinner at the Training Table and then headed over to the IM Building for the homecoming parade. About forty or fifty teams, clubs and other student organizations were marching in the parade, interspersed with floats. Almost all the floats were prepared by fraternities and sororities on campus.

The State College Area High School Band led off the parade. Half a dozen floats, bands and marching groups went ahead of the football team. We followed the Sigma-Sigma-Sigma/Tau Epsilon '*The Lion King*' float. It was hilarious. They had Disney's Pumbaa and Timon chasing the Nittany Lion around the float.

The parade followed Curtin Road to Bigler, southeast on Bigler then right on Pollock, left onto Shortlidge and south on College Avenue. The parade headed five blocks down College Avenue to Burrowes Road where we turned right and headed back to Pollock Road and the end of the parade. The team drew a lot of cheers as we hiked the route through the crowds of students, alumni and locals.

The crowds headed over to the Old Main lawn when the parade was over. The football team took seats on the terrace in front of Old Main. A couple speakers warmed up the crowd before Coach Paterno spoke. He introduced Coach Burton who verbally stoked the fires higher. The cheerleaders, the Blue Band and the Alumni Blue Band all performed for the crowd. The team walked back to the Lasch Building and caught buses over to Toftrees for the night.

The parade and pep rally delayed our evening. Coach Burton had an hour long team meeting that didn't end until after ten o'clock. I hung out with Damian and our other friends until our eleven o'clock curfew.

I noticed a missed call when I went back to my room. Mom had called to let me know that she and Liz had arrived at their room at the Hampton Inn north of State College. She wished me good night and asked me to be careful at the game. Moms! How do you "be careful" while you're playing football?

Our game with Northwestern was being televised, but only on ESPN2 at noon. This matchup wasn't considered a big draw by the TV networks. Breakfast was at 8:00 am, followed by checkout and the return trip to the Lasch Building.

We went through our final preparations and then grabbed a light lunch at the Training Table before we dressed. The blue buses picked us up and hauled us over to the stadium. We finished dressing and then headed out to the field to warm up.

I caught some passes with Zack to help him get ready. I caught a few balls from our punter, Steve Cobb. Christian shagged a few more balls after I was ready. I stopped by the two Kyle's Krazies signs to talk with Kelly, Bev, Jen and Cindy and then the guys from East Halls.

Our undefeated 1994 team was having a reunion that weekend. Anders pulled me aside as practice was finishing up. He wanted to introduce me to some of the team members. I immediately recognized one member of the four "old-timers" watching our warm-ups –

Kerry Collins. I had seen him playing on TV for most of my life. Anders introduced me to Kerry, Ki-Jana Carter, Kyle Brady and Bobby Engram. The four greeted us warmly.

“So you’re the next guy to pass me on the career reception list,” Bobby teased.

“Oh, I doubt that sir,” I said politely. That drew a chuckle from all four of the former teammates.

“Call me Bobby please,” Bobby Engram said. “...and yes, you’ll be chasing my record for reception yardage someday. This season is only half over and you’re close to beating my sophomore record.”

“I don’t know about that Mr. ... uh, Bobby,” I answered. “I’d love to talk to you sometime.”

“I’ll be around after the game,” Bobby answered. “I’ll see in the locker room.”

“That would be great,” I agreed. I noticed the field was emptying. “I’d really like that.”

I headed back inside to do my final preparations for the game. I was jazzed at the idea that I could spend a little time talking with Bobby Engram, one of the best receivers in Penn State’s history.

The sell-out crowd in the stadium was cheering wildly when our team took the field. Our captains took the center of the field. Northwestern won the coin toss and chose to accept the kickoff to start the game.

Northwestern ran a very balanced offense. They also were notoriously slow starters. This day wasn’t an exception. They made one first down before their drive stalled. I managed to return the punt fourteen yards to set up our offense.

Zack and our offense didn’t need many plays to score. I went in motion and ended up in the slot. Zack hit me on a slant when I cleared the short zone in the defense. Northwestern lost track of me and I was able to sprint into the end zone untouched.

Northwestern took the ball back and went nowhere. They punted back to us after three plays. Coach Burton wanted Christian and Tanner Riggs to get more experience, so they were our primary kick and punt returners for the day. Christian had a nice twelve yard return on the punt.

Northwestern adjusted their defense after getting burned on the previous two drives. Our coaches adjusted quickly too. Shawn O’Conner carried the load on the third drive, carrying seven of the first ten plays. We were down to the Wildcats’ 27 yard line on the eleventh play. The Wildcats pulled people in closer to the line and threatened to blitz.

Zack recognized the switch as we lined upon the line. I expected him to give me one of our sight adjustments and have me sprint deep. Instead Zack called an audible, switching the play to a tailback screen. I sprinted downfield at the snap looking like a deep receiver. A quick look back told me Shawn had swung out into the flat while the two linemen provided lead blocking. I ran a few more steps and then blocked the defensive back towards the center of the field.

Moments later Shawn came flying by us, between me and the sideline. I managed to tie up my guy long enough to keep him from tackling Shawn as he ran by. I trailed Shawn as he ran, ready to block anyone else out of the way as he sprinted for the end zone.

I ran into the end zone three steps behind my friend. Shawn tossed the ball to the referee after he signaled touchdown. Shawn and I exchanged high fives and then I gave my buddy a big bear hug. Anders and Hassan joined us celebrating the score as we basked in the cheers of the huge crowd.

I looked around for Zack as we turned to head back to the sideline. It was strange that Zack hadn't joined us. He almost always jogged down to the end zone and joined our celebration.

We found out why when we turned. Two of our linemen were eye to eye with a Wildcat defensive end, shoving him away. Two referees hurried to the scene of the confrontation, trying separate everyone. When the crowd dispersed I found out why our guys were so mad at the DE. Zack was on his knees in the backfield, leaning down, his head on the ground. A yellow flag lay on the ground near my friend.

Shawn, Anders, Hassan and I jogged over as the trainers headed out to tend our quarterback. I collared JT, our center. "What in the hell happened?"

"The God damned son of a bitch!" JT replied. "He nailed Zack after the ball was gone. I'm gonna get the SOB!" JT bristled and took a step towards the Wildcat defensive end.

"Chill man," Mahmoud Greene said, attempting to placate JT. He pushed JT away from the confrontation. "Chill! We'll take care of him on the field later."

I was surprised by Mahmoud. He's the only sophomore starter on the offensive line. Usually he is very quiet and reserved. Mahmoud backed JT away from our opponents,

The trainers helped Zack to his feet. They escorted him as he walked unsteadily to our sideline and then back to the benches. He had a dazed, out-of-it look on his face.

The referee announced a fifteen yard unnecessary roughness penalty for a late hit on the quarterback, the penalty to be assessed on the kickoff. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT through the uprights to give us a 21-0 lead.

Coach Adams had me catch some passes for Jay while he warmed up on the sidelines. The Wildcats finally managed to get their act together a little. They exploited our over emotional state to patch together a drive that netted them a field goal.

Tanner Riggs did a good job on the kickoff, turning the ball over to the offense at our 36 yard line. In spite of being younger than all but one of the guys in the huddle, Jay took control, just like a captain takes command of his soldiers. Jay and the coaches channeled the offensive lines' anger, making sure most of our running plays went off tackle right over the defensive end that took Zack out of the game.

Jay performed superbly that afternoon. He led us to four more touchdowns in the next two quarters. I was his favorite receiving target, ending the day with nine catches for 167 yards and two more touchdowns. Jay's only drawback on the field was a reluctance to call an audible when the defense was different than expected. All in all, my buddy played superbly.

The coaches pulled the first string after the first drive in the third quarter. Jay continued to play with his second string until the beginning of the fourth quarter when Glenn and the young guys took the field.

Northwestern managed only a touchdown and another field goal as our team rolled to victory. The final score was Penn State 52, Northwestern 13.

The doctor reported Zack had a minor concussion. They took him over to the Mount Nittany Medical Center for tests, but he was expected to be fine after a night's rest.

After I dealt with the media, showered and dressed, Bobby Engram caught up with me. He teased me about doubting my own abilities. I was one catch short of his sophomore season record with five more games to play. I appreciated him taking time to talk with me. He introduced me to more members of the 1994 team. It gave Anders and me an opportunity to make a pitch for the Thon. We collected contact information so we could make a formal pitch for donations later in the fall.

I met Mom, Liz and Kelly outside the Lasch Building. I was surprised to see Leigh Ann with the group.

"I hope you don't mind Kyle," Kelly explained. "I invited Leigh Ann to join us for dinner. She's at loss about what to do with Zack in the hospital."

"Sure it's fine," I answered. "Is there any more word on Zack? How's he doing?"

"I talked with him a few minutes ago," Leigh Ann replied. "They've finished up with the tests. He has a grade 2 concussion. The doctors want him to stay overnight so they can watch him."

“Thank God!” I replied. “I’m glad he’ll be OK. We’re going to need him to win out this season.”

“Jay seemed to do a good job today,” Kelly commented.

“Jay played well,” I agreed. “... but Zack is the best here, maybe the best in the whole country. We expect tough games against Ohio State, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan State. We have to win them all to have a shot at the national championship this season.” I hesitated for a second and swallowed hard. “I want him around to help our team, but most of all I want him around because he’s a true friend. I wouldn’t be here without his help.”

“My boyfriend is special,” Leigh Ann responded. Mom and Kelly agreed with her observation.

“Maybe we should go visit him after dinner,” Kelly suggested.

“No, we can’t do that,” Leigh Ann said. “The doctor said he shouldn’t have visitors tonight. He has a terrific headache and is still dizzy. They want him to have a quiet night to rest.”

We agreed with Leigh Ann, rest was what Zack needed for the evening. The five of us headed across campus for downtown. Kelly and I suggested that Mom and Liz needed to be introduced to one of State College’s traditions – the Penn State Diner.

The wait for seats at the diner wasn’t too bad since this was an early game. Fewer fans were in a rush for dinner after the game. Mom generously offered to pay for dinner for everyone, including Leigh Ann. We placed our order and talked while we waited for our food.

Liz talked about her boyfriend Alex Mueller. Alex had finally worked up the courage to ask Liz to go steady after school started. They had to work at finding time together this fall. Liz made the varsity field hockey team. Alex was the goalie on the varsity soccer team. Alex had taken her to our high school’s football game the previous night.

Liz related the course of the game for us. Matt, the Mad Bomber, had been busy again, passing deep every opportunity that was presented. The Wolverines had blown out Sadsbury 48-10. Andy had another big night, pulling in eight passes for 110 yards and three touchdowns.

Her ex-boyfriend, Cody Stevens, had a good night too. He gained over a hundred yards rushing and scored two more touchdowns. Our neighbor and Liz’s close friend Dave Mitchell had scored the other Wolverine touchdown.

Even though the Wolverines were only 2-2, the student body fully expected the team to make the playoffs and to make another run at the state championship. Liz related how

Matt's ability to deliver the deep pass had righted things in the land of red and white football.

So far Matt managed to keep his dramatic success in proper perspective, undoubtedly with help from Andy and the other team captains. If any students tried to suck up to him or fawn over him, Matt would just say, "It's nothing special. I'm just out having fun and playing some ball."

Mom pronounced her burger to be delicious when she finished it. I insisted Mom and Liz had to try the grilled stickies for dessert. No trip to Penn State is complete without trying them. Mom and Liz enjoyed their stickies.

When we finished our dessert Mom asked, "What do you two have planned this evening? I thought maybe we could all catch a movie tonight."

"Sorry Mom," I explained. "Kelly and I were invited to a party tonight."

"Sorry Sharon," Kelly added.

"Your boyfriend is laid up," Mom said. "Would you like to join us at a movie tonight Leigh Ann?"

"That's a tempting offer Sharon, but I'll have to pass," Leigh Ann replied. "I promised Keneisha and the boys back at Zack's apartment that I would help them set up for their party tonight."

Mom looked at Liz and said, "Looks like it's you and me kiddo."

"That's fine Mom," Liz replied. "We'll call it girl's night out. That's a very good thing with all the guys at our house."

Mom paid for our dinners. I gave Mom and Liz hugs and kisses before we left the restaurant. I explained where the movie theater was when we left the restaurant. Mom and Liz headed that way. Leigh Ann walked back to campus. Kelly and I headed the other direction for Omega Chi Epsilon's house.

Cole Sellers, the frat president, greeted us warmly when we arrived. He took us back to the kitchen for beer. Cole was excited when I described the team's plans for raising funds for the Thon. He was particularly excited when I told him about meeting Kerry Collins, Bobby Engram, Ki-Jana Carter and Kyle Brady that day. I said that I thought I had a good chance of getting donations from them.

The frat didn't have any of the amber ale that evening. They had something called Troeginator Double Bock. It was a dark lager with a strong malt flavor. It was oh soooo smooth. Kelly and I agreed that it was excellent.

The brothers peppered me with questions about the day's game and Zack Hayes' condition. I assured everyone that Zack would be fine. His hospital stay was purely precautionary. I talked about how Jay performed in the game. The brothers suggested that I should invite him to come to one of their parties. He'd be welcome anytime, just like I was.

Kelly and I got more of the double bock, downed it and then headed for the dance floor. We danced for awhile, talked with our friends and danced some more. I would have liked more of the double bock. It was smooth and delicious, but packed a punch. Kelly and I were feeling pretty good by the time we said good bye to our hosts and headed back to campus.

We had just crossed College Avenue and were walking up Shortlidge onto campus when Kelly's cell phone rang. We stopped while she answered it. I listened to Kelly's side of the conversation as she talked.

"He's nice?" she said, smiling. Her smile grew wider and she exclaimed, "You're the best roommate in the world! I'm glad you and Darrell hit it off. I'll see you in the morning." Kelly winked at me as she listened to her roommate Jen.

I smiled too. "See you in the morning" meant that Kelly was going to have an empty bed in her room tonight. My cock stirred at the possibilities. We hadn't been able to spend a whole night together since Jen broke up with her previous boyfriend.

Kelly was bouncing up and down as she said good bye and put away her phone. "I have an empty room tonight honey," she declared.

We hugged and kissed deeply. When we broke from the kiss Kelly asked, "You interested in spending the night?" My cock had swelled to full size. I smiled as she ground her body against it. "I'll take that as a yes."

"I'd love to spend the night with you, sweetie," I answered. I hugged her again. "Do you want to go straight to your room?"

"No, let's go visit with Leigh Ann, Keneisha, JT, Jake, Evan and the rest of our friends," Kelly said as she released me from the hug. "We have all night together." We started up the hill into campus, Kelly's arm around my back, my arm around her waist resting her on lovely bottom.

"You don't have to get up early tomorrow, do you?" Kelly asked as we walked.

"No, this week's recruits are all linemen," I answered. "I'm not needed to work them out in the morning. I'm yours as long as you want me."

"Goody!" Kelly replied.

We headed across campus for Zack's apartment and our friends. My cock deflated a little, but not entirely. My body was flooding with hormones. This was going to be a special night.

The party at Zack's apartment was in full swing when we arrived. Kelly and I each grabbed a bottle of Coors and joined our friends in the living room. Damian was there with Melanie as was Billy Robinson with Melanie's roommate Sarah. We hung out and talked for awhile. The girls left to "powder their noses" so I leaned in close to Damian and Billy.

"You know Kelly's roommate Jen is spending the night at her boyfriend's apartment," I said with a smile. "I won't be back until morning. If you want some privacy with Mel tonight..."

Damian's and Billy's eyes grew wider and they broke out in huge smiles. "You mean, you're not going to be back to our room at all tonight?" Damian asked.

"You know what time I like to get up on a Sunday morning," I replied. "You'll have plenty of time Damian. Who knows, maybe Sarah will invite you back to her room too Billy."

"Roommate swaps," Billy replied. "I like IT!"

"Yeah!" Damian enthused. "Get laid and spend the night with my lover. I'm down with that."

Damian and Billy conferred with Mel and Sarah when they returned. After a few moments they excused themselves and took off to have some fun that evening. Kelly and I grabbed more beer from the kitchen.

We hung out with Chip, Austin and couple new girls. They introduced us to Erin and Lindsey, freshmen they knew from math class. We talked with them for awhile. It was fun to watch the guys sweet talk the girls into bed. The guys' persistence paid off after half an hour. The two couples headed off to seek privacy for a romp in bed.

Kelly was sitting on my lap through the proceeding. I had a wicked hard-on. I whispered in Kelly's ear that it was time to go after Chip and Austin disappeared with their girls. She glanced at her watch, noted it was after 11:30 and suggested it was time to head back to Beaver Hall.

Kelly and I were almost giddy as we walked across campus for her room. We stripped down and climbed in Kelly's bed as soon as we got to her room. The two of us made out for a few minutes. As soon as I started to kiss and fondle her breasts Kelly demanded that we make love.

Kelly lay on her back and spread her legs for me. I got in position but fumbled around a little trying to get my cock in her pussy. After a couple aborted tries I managed to drive it home. I'd like to claim our lovemaking session lasted a long time – it didn't. Both of us were too horny to make it last. I screwed my girlfriend for maybe three or four minutes before I blew my load.

This performance embarrassed me. I went down on Kelly and used my tongue and fingers to bring her to climax. The two of us cuddled together after that to recharge my batteries so we could make love properly. Unfortunately we fell asleep before we had the chance to do that.

I woke up in morning to the sound of the door being unlocked. Light flooded into the darkened room as Jen came in. She stopped abruptly when she saw me.

"Shit!" Jen exclaimed. "I'm sorry. I thought you'd be gone by now."

"It's OK," I replied.

Jen let the door close and walked across the room to her desk. She turned her desk light on, adding a soft yellow glow to the light filtering into the room from the closed curtains. I blinked as my eyes adjusted to the light. I knew I would have a hangover in the morning from the amount I drank, but it wasn't too bad.

"Did you have a good night?" I asked agreeably.

"It was wonderful," Jen answered. "I think Darrell is going to be special."

"Darrell?"

"Darrell Winterburne, my official, brand new boyfriend," Jen added. "He asked me to go with him last night."

"Congratulations" I said. Jen sat down at her desk and stared at Kelly and me. We were still spooned together, except Kelly was sleeping while I was propping my upper body up on my elbow. The blanket covered Kelly and me from my mid-section down. That was fortunate. I hadn't worn anything to bed last night.

"I didn't think you'd still be here after eleven," Jen said.

I glanced at the clock and saw how late in the morning it was. "I guess it's time to wake sleeping beauty," I said. I leaned down and kissed Kelly on the neck.

“Mmmmm...” Kelly murmured. She rolled over and gave me a quick, passionate kiss. My morning hard-on pressed into my lover’s belly. “Aaahhh.... Somebody is ready for some fun!”

“Well, uh....” I said as I pointed across the room. “We have an audience.”

“Oh!” Kelly replied. She rolled over and looked at Jen. “Hey Jen, how was last night?”

“Wonderful!” Jen answered enthusiastically. “Darrell asked me to go with him last night. We’re a couple!”

Fantastic!” Kelly answered. She climbed out of bed naked and walked across the room and gave Jen a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. I scrambled to pull the covers over myself. I sat up and arranged the covers to hide my hard-on.

Kelly let go of Jen, walked across the room to her closet for her robe and pulled it on.

“I guess I should be going,” I said. I waited while Jen and Kelly stared at me. I waited a little longer, hoping Jen would allow me a touch of modesty. No such luck. “Could you give me a minute Jen?” I said. “I’m not wearing anything.”

Jen mock pouted and said, “I was hoping to be lucky enough to see two hunky naked guys this morning.”

“You’ll have to settle for Darrell,” I replied.

“Spoilsport,” Jen answered. She got up and headed for the door.

“I’ll only need a minute,” I said as she left. I dressed quickly as soon as Jen left the room. “Jen really seems upbeat.”

“She is if Darrell wants to be her exclusive,” Kelly answered. “Jen thinks he’s going to THE GUY.”

“The guy?” I asked. “As in ‘til death do you part’?”

Kelly nodded yes. She added, “She said last week that Darrell is pretty good in bed too. What you are seeing today is Jen’s well fucked look.”

“Ahhh...” I said knowingly. Jen came back in unannounced as I was zipping my pants up over my hard-on. I tried to be discrete as I positioned my package so it didn’t show too much. “Congratulations on the new boyfriend,” I said to Jen. “I should probably get going.” I gave Kelly a hug and kiss before I left. I said I would warn Jay and Stephanie that we would be a few minutes late for our brunch double date.

I wished I'd brought my sunglasses last night as I crossed the quad from Beaver Hall to Hartranft. My hangover was worse than I originally thought. My head was pounding by the time I reached my room. Damian left me a note letting me know he and Billy were taking the girls out to lunch. I saw quite a few cum stains on Damian's bed. Apparently he and Mel had fun last night.

Aspirin and a long hot shower helped my hangover. I felt almost human again when I got out. I stopped by Jay's room to let him know Kelly and I would be a little late. Shawn said he wasn't there. He hadn't come back last night.

I tracked Jay down on his cell phone. He spent the night at Stephanie's apartment. He agreed that Kelly and I would meet him and Stephanie at the Waffle Shop at noon. I picked up Kelly twenty minutes later and we headed downtown.

Jay waved us over to his table when we got there. Kelly and I joined him and Stephanie. We ordered our brunch and talked. The four of us had developed an amazing chemistry together. We were lingering over our second cup of coffee after brunch.

"You know what?" Jay asked.

"What?" Kelly and I answered together.

"You know the Cellblock?" Jay replied.

"The night club?" I answered.

"Yeah, we ought to go there, the four of us," Jay said.

"I see a problem with that," I said. "It'll be a couple more years before they let us in the door."

"No, they are having one of their special nights next Friday night," Jay explained. "It's an eighteen to come, twenty-one to drink night. They're going to have a local band on stage. It should be cool."

"Hmmm... that sounds interesting," I said. Kelly and Stephanie agreed. The four of us talked about it and decided that we would double date on Friday. Our bye week was coming up at just the right time. The night out would be a good way to relax from the tension of our long season.

Jay insisted on giving Kelly and me a ride back to campus. It was one more opportunity to show off his pride and joy, his vintage Mustang. Jay got quite a few admiring looks as we drove through campus. He dropped us off outside Pollock Commons. He and Steph waved as they left for a quiet afternoon at Steph's apartment.

I picked up the Sunday paper at the Mix, Pollock Common's in-house convenience store, and headed back to my room with Kelly. Damian was in, reading for one of his business courses. Kelly and I teased him about having some fun last night with Melanie. It was all in fun. He teased us just as much about our night together. Kelly and I hung out for a couple hours. We split up so each of us could wrap up homework we needed to finish for classes on Monday.

I went over to the Lasch Building at four o'clock for my daily workout. I caught part of the Atlanta – 49ers game in the player's lounge after I finished my workout before dinner. I got to watch Aaron Morano return a couple punts before I had to leave. He looked good on the returns, though he didn't come close to my 15.6 yards a return average. Of course Aaron faced guys bigger and faster than the ones I faced.

Coach Burton was relaxed at dinner. He called for a team meeting after we finished, but wasn't in any hurry to get us out of the dining hall and over to the team meeting room. The Falcons – 49ers game was playing on the big screen when we filed into the meeting room around 7:15. Coach Burton asked us to find seats, relax and watch the tail end of the game.

Atlanta was down 27-24 to the 49ers with a minute and a half left on the clock. Matt Ryan, the young Chester County native who quarterbacked the Falcons, was leading another of his now famous hurry-up drives down the field to attempt to pull out a win. Disaster struck on the fifth play. Ryan threw a deep pass to his slot receiver, Brian Finneran. The 49er's nickel back, our friend Aaron, cut in front of Finneran and stole the ball out of the air.

The room erupted in cheers for our friend and former teammate as he ran downfield, dodging tacklers. A couple Falcons finally ran him out of bounds at the Falcon 22 yard line. The 49ers' coaches were content to run out the clock on the game.

We knew Coach Burton hadn't called the meeting just so we could watch Aaron play. We waited through ten minutes of post game wrap up before we found the purpose of the meeting. Coach wanted us to see the first BCS ranking when it was announced.

The LSU Tigers were firmly atop the rankings with a 0.9746 rating. USC was number 2 with a 0.9401 rating. Texas' loss to Oklahoma yesterday dropped them down in the polls as expected. We were number 3 with a 0.9397 rating, four ten-thousandths of a point behind the Trojans. Notre Dame was ranked #4 at 0.8793 followed by Ohio State #5 at 0.8651.

One of the assistant coaches turned off the TV while Coach Burton climbed to the podium.

"Gentlemen, this is excellent news tonight. We have done extremely well in the first half of the season. IF we do our job in the last five games, I like our chances of reaching our team's ultimate goal this season – the national championship game.

“LSU faces a tough schedule in the next few weeks. They have away games at Alabama and Georgia before they face the SEC playoffs. I don’t know if they will be able to win all those games.

“USC has an easier schedule with their remaining Pac-10 opponents, though they do have to go to South Bend and play Notre Dame at the end of November. They may not win that game.

“What I’m telling you is all speculation. Don’t sit back and expect it just happen for you. The point I want you to take from all of this is: there is an opportunity out there for our team to take a berth at the Orange Bowl. We can play for the national championship. We control our own destiny.

“We need to concentrate on each game, prepare to play our best, then go out and execute to win the game – one game at a time. If we do that we have the talent and drive to win the rest of our games this season. That will put us sitting pretty at the Orange Bowl in Miami next January. Our goal for the season will be in our grasp – there for our taking.

“Next Saturday our team has a bye. It will provide a welcome rest for this long season – time to heal, mentally and physically. Don’t dress for practice tomorrow. We will use the time for film study of yesterday’s game and our game against Michigan. Tuesday and Wednesday’s practices will concentrate on our fundamentals – blocking, tackling and ball control.

“On Thursday will walk through the game plan for our game against Ohio State. They are going to be one tough foe. We have to travel to Columbus this year, and the upperclassmen know what the Horseshoe is like. We need to be our best on the 23rd when we play them.

“We will not have practice on Friday.” Coach let the cheers from the team die down before he continued. “I don’t want to see any of you in this building from Friday night to Sunday night next weekend. Go home and see your families. Take your girlfriend out on the town. Relax and enjoy life. I want you mentally and physically refreshed when you return to football Sunday night.

Coach asked, “Does anyone have any questions?” He paused for a few seconds. “No? Excellent. Now all of you, get out of here! Have some fun.”

After the cheering died down we filed out of the meeting room. I sat near the front, so I was one of the last guys to leave the room. I overheard Zack and Jay ask Coach Burton a question about the video we had of Ohio State.

“Video?” Coach Burton exclaimed. “There is no football tonight. Get out of here and go visit those girlfriends of yours.”

Zack and Jay left the room behind me, shaking their heads.

“I’ve never been chased away from video study before,” Zack said. “I don’t know if this is a good thing.”

“It a good thing,” I answered. “Relaxation will help you perform better in the future.” Jay and Zack grudgingly accepted the coach’s decision.

I called Kelly as I walked back towards Pollock Halls. She invited me up to her room to take advantage of this extra free time. Christian and Bev apparently had the same idea. I rode the elevator up to the third floor with Christian. We had a plan by the time we stepped off the elevator. The two of us invited our girlfriends to go bowling with us. It would be a fun way to enjoy our free time. The girls agreed.

The four of us walked up to the East Parking Deck to my car. I drove us out to the Northland Bowl on the west end of State College. We spent a couple hours bowling and had an absolute blast together. Bev and Christian were a little sleepy when we got back on campus after ten o’clock, but they still had fun with Kelly and me.

Monday afternoon’s video study session was fun for both offense and defense. What else could it be when the first and second string win the first three quarters by 52-3? Everyone was forced to sober up a little when we moved on to reviewing video from our Michigan game. The coaches seemed to enjoy pointing out our mistakes and places we could improve our efforts. I think all of us got the message. I know I did – we are not world beaters yet. We need to put in more hard work if we want to beat Ohio State.

Jake, Cuch and Shawn O’Conner talked for a few minutes about what it was like to play in Ohio State’s Horseshoe two years ago. Our team had beaten them 34-21. Penn State had been losing that game late in the third quarter when Aaron Morano picked off a pass and sprinted in for a touchdown to put our team up 27-21. Phil DiStefano managed a safety touchdown late in the game as they ran out the clock.

The Ohio State fans would be loud. The Buckeyes defended their home field well too. They rarely lost there. Penn State’s record was particularly dismal. We had only defeated them twice in the Horseshoe since we joined the Big Ten in 1994, Daryl Clark’s crew the first time and Phil DiStefano’s guys two years ago.

Kelly and I shared good news from Monday’s classes at breakfast on Tuesday. I earned a 97 on my Poly Sci midterm. Kelly was pleased with her 92 on her Comm 260 news writing midterm. Kelly and I headed for Pattee Library after lunch to work on the research for our history term papers. We worked until a quarter to three, when I had to go to the Lasch Building for my tutoring with Kevin Lee.

Wednesday evening brought me an unusual e-mail from Andy. He related the excitement Tuesday night at home. Mom and Dad were away at a church meeting. Liz was studying at a friend's house. Andy was watching Noah, Connor and Hunter while he worked on homework. About 7:30 that night Connor was toddling across the family room when he tripped on a toy that he or his brother had left out. He fell and smacked his head open on the corner of the coffee table.

Andy rushed to help his son. Blood is everywhere and Connor is bawling. The blood scared Noah so he's crying too. Hunter started crying because he's scared by all the commotion. The bleeding wouldn't stop. Andy saw that the gash was big enough that it certainly would need stitches.

Andy tried to get Mom or Dad but they didn't answer their cell phones. Liz was unavailable too. In desperation, Andy started calling friends for assistance. Fortunately Eric Connell and Sammy Hoover were nearby at Eric's house.

Eric and Sammy rushed over to help. The three of them bundled the three scared kids up, put them in Mom's mini-van and took them to the emergency room at Lancaster General. Andy drove while Eric tried to keep Noah and Hunter quiet and Sammy comforted poor Connor.

The admissions nurse insisted that she needed a parent before she could admit Connor. It took Andy ten minutes and his driver's license to convince her that he was of legal age. She looked up the boys' records and confirmed he was the twins' father. Mom and Dad finally got the messages Andy left and met them at the hospital around ten o'clock. The whole crew was stuck there until after midnight when Connor finally got his stitches to close his head up.

Connor was still grumpy the next day. He hated the big bandage covering his "boo-boo". Kelly and I made a get well poster for Connor. Damian snapped a picture of us holding it up for him. I sent it back to Andy and asked him to print the picture out for Connor. He was to tell Connor that Uncle Kyle and Kelly were rooting for him to get better.

Jen went to lunch with Kelly and me on Wednesday. She was giddy from excitement. She and her boyfriend Darrell were caught up on their schoolwork. Darrell had scored tickets to a concert in Baltimore. They were leaving after their last class on Friday and wouldn't be back until Sunday evening. Kelly and I were excited too – both for Jen and also for the empty dorm room it would leave for the two of us. Imagine – a whole weekend with no football and no roommate!

Thursday morning Yasin Clark went under the knife. The surgeon reconstructed his ACL and his MCL. Kelly and I stopped by to visit him after dinner. Yasin bitched that the sadistic nurse had dragged him out of bed and forced him to take a walk already. It hurt

like hell. I assured him things would get worse before they got better. He would see the continuous passive motion machine in the morning. That one was hell in the beginning of rehab. I told Yasin to work hard in rehab. He'd be back to normal eventually. I was living proof for him. Yasin thanked me for visiting him.

Coach Burton's weekend off from football included our team dinners at the Training Table. It was closed until Sunday night. Jay, Shawn and GJ joined Christian, Bev, Kelly and me at dinner in the regular dining hall on Friday night.

After dinner Jay and I headed for the showers to get ready for our double date, as did Kelly. I took my overnight bag over to Kelly's room before Jay picked us up in his Mustang around eight. He drove us over to Steph's apartment. She made some appetizers for us to enjoy before we went downtown to the club that evening.

Stephanie made something interesting for us. She mixed finely diced onions with mozzarella cheese and mayonnaise, put it on Triscuits and broiled them in the oven. They were very tasty. All of us piled into Jay's Mustang and headed for the club.

The Cellblock was mobbed when we arrived. They carded the four of us and stamped our hands "No Alcohol". We paid our cover charge and headed inside. The place was packed. We managed to find a table in the back. The waitress took our drink orders while the band set up.

The band started playing after 9:30. The music was loud and also very good. The crowd was electric. This place was a blast. We stayed through two sets by the band, had half a dozen Cokes or iced teas in the evening.

Half a dozen guys recognized me in the crowd and asked for autographs. I obliged them. One of the guys was pretty drunk when he stopped by. His praise for my game against Northwestern was over the top. After I signed his autograph he eyed Jay suspiciously.

"You football player too?" he demanded.

"Yes," Jay agreed.

"You aren't much," the guy sniffed. "What are you? Some pansy-assed defensive back?"

Jay's dander was up. He stood and prepared to confront the guy. I waved him off.

"You know those touchdowns you were praising?" I asked. "He's the one who threw me two of them." The guy's hard looked softened. "This is Jay Nicholson, our next quarterback after Zack Hayes graduates."

"Nicholson?" the guy asked as he broke into a grin. "You had a hell of a game last Saturday. We're lucky to have you to back up Hayes." Jay sat down and smiled.

“Could I get your autograph?” the drunk asked politely.

Jay signed for the now happy drunk. After he left our table Jay said, “I’m glad you handled that one. I was ready to deck the guy after that crack about my size.”

“Remember what Zack is always preaching Jay,” I replied. “These guys make everything we have possible. Humor them whenever possible. Walk away if things get out of hand. Zack gives good advice, I think.”

“Yeah, he does,” Jay agreed.

“Don’t you get tired of all these people bothering you Kyle?” Steph asked.

“You get used to it,” I replied. “It’s a small price to pay for a free college education.”

“Kyle’s right honey,” Jay added. “We have a lot to learn from Zack, don’t we?” Kelly and I agreed with our friend.

The four of us enjoyed the music for another fifteen or twenty minutes. We headed out after the band finished their second set. Jay offered to drive Kelly and me back to the dorms. We demurred. Beaver Hall and Hartranft Hall were in sight across College Avenue and up the hill from us. Jay didn’t really mind. He could head straight back to Steph’s apartment. He had an invitation to spend the night with her.

Kelly and I undressed and squeezed onto her bed, lying side by side. I nibbled on her ear and kissed her neck while she rubbed my back. I kissed along her jaw and chin until my lips met hers. Our lips locked together and our tongues probed each other.

After a couple minutes Kelly rolled onto her back, guiding me over top of her. My hard cock was nestled between her pussy lips while we kissed. I rocked my hips gently while our tongues continued their dance together. Kelly slipped her hands down my back onto my ass cheeks. She caressed them and pulled, encouraging me to stimulate her further with my cock. I rocked my hips faster, spreading Kelly’s secretions over our genitals.

I plowed my seven inches of cock up her slot, rubbing her button and then drew it back down again. The slipperiness and heat where our bodies touched drove us further. Kelly’s body’s movements mirrored mine as we humped together. Kelly moaned as we kissed.

“Oooooohhh.... Just do it Kyle,” Kelly groaned.

“I won’t last long,” I replied as I ground the tip of my cock on her clit.

“Just put it in,” Kelly moaned. “I need....

I pulled my hips back and drove my cock part way into my lover’s pussy.

“Yeah!” Kelly groaned. “That’s what I want.”

I drove my cock in until our pubic bones crunched together. I ground against her clitoris for half a second before I pulled part way out. I knew I needed all the help I could get to bring Kelly to climax before I shot off.

Kelly and I synchronized our movements as I pumped in and out of her body. I held off my climax as long as I could. Without an initial cum to take the edge off, I feared I would come before I could bring Kelly to climax. The stimulation was too much for me after three or four minutes of coupling. I pressed my cock in deep and unleashed a small torrent of cum into my lover.

Kelly rolled me off her when I was spent. She kissed me and rubbed my back as I recovered.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I didn’t bring you to...”

“Sshhh” Kelly answered. “I’ll get my turn later.”

Kelly quieted further apologies by kissing me. I insisted on going down on her after about thirty seconds of kissing. Kelly spread her legs for me as I hunched over and licked up the combination of my cum and her juices. Apparently I had brought Kelly closer to orgasm than I realized. Kelly exploded in orgasm after thirty seconds of licking followed by me teasing her clit with my tongue.

We cuddled and kissed in the afterglow for awhile. Inevitably that got us aroused for further action. Kelly wanted the female superior the second time that evening. I amiably let her climb on top of me and engulf my hard rod. Our second joining of the evening lasted a good long time. She brought herself to a couple more orgasms on top of me before I rolled her over and finished by drilling her for a couple minutes. Both of us were spent by the time I came the second time.

We cuddled together for a couple minutes and then cleaned up for bed. Kelly and I spooned together so both of us could fit in her single dorm bed. My chin was resting on Kelly’s shoulder and my arm was draped over her belly when we fell asleep.

I woke early in the morning and had to pee. I tried not to wake Kelly when I returned to bed, but was unsuccessful. Kelly and I cuddled for a bit. We ended up making love early in the morning. When we were finished we fell asleep again.

Kelly and I didn’t get up until eleven o’clock Saturday morning. We bought some sandwiches for our lunch from the Mix and headed for my car. I drove us down to the

Whipple Dam State Park. We spent the afternoon taking a long walk in the woods and enjoying the fall foliage. We worked up a good appetite during our walk. We stopped in at the Boalsburg Steakhouse for dinner. Our steaks were excellent as were the trimmings.

Kelly and I headed back to our own rooms after we returned to campus. We showered and dressed for the party at Zack's apartment. We arrived early and helped Zack, Leigh Ann, Jake and Keneisha get the refreshments ready. The party got underway around eight o'clock.

Kelly and I hung out with Jay and Steph for awhile. All of us enjoyed beers while we talked. Jay and Steph danced a bit. Kelly and I did too. Our friends decided to take off early. They hadn't gotten enough of each other after spending last night together. They planned a repeat this evening and were anxious to get back to Steph's place.

I grabbed another beer for Kelly and one for me after they left. We joined Zack, Leigh Ann, Jake and Keneisha. We enjoyed the music and our friends at the party. The empty dorm room back at Beaver Hall took the pressure off Kelly and me. We could enjoy the party without the need to borrow one of the bedrooms here to get our jollies. We'd have plenty of time later that evening.

It was a little after 10:30 when Zack's cell phone rang. I listened as soon as I heard Zack say, "Yeah Coach, what's up?"

I was surprised that Coach Burton would call Zack at this time of night on a Saturday night. I couldn't ever remember that happening before. Zack eyes grew wider as he listened then his jaw dropped.

"Shit!" Zack exclaimed. "No." He took a deep breath and listened for another thirty seconds. Nodding, he added, "OK, I'll pass the word around." Zack turned off his phone and snapped it shut. He took another deep breath and walked across the room to the stereo. He turned it off and waved for attention.

"Every one, please listen up," Zack demanded. I couldn't read the emotions on the friend's face. He took another deep breath and continued. "There's been an.... um, accident."

The room went dead silent. I held my breath. Zack batted his eyes a couple times to clear them. "It's Jay. All Coach Burton knows so far is that he was in a serious accident and the ambulance took him to Mount Nittany Medical Center."

The party goers stayed silent as we looked at each other. Kelly clung to me and buried her head against my shoulder. A single thought flashed into my brain – that horrible night Greg Harrison died. I hugged her against my body, desperate for strength.

Zack announced, "I'm going over to the hospital to get more information. I'll pass the word as soon as I know more."

“I’m going too,” I added. More than half dozen others said the same thing when I did.

The apartment emptied quickly. Zack and Leigh Ann grabbed sweatshirts. Zack conferred with Evan and Jake before he left. They decided that Jake would stay at the apartment and collect information as it became available. Evan would make the rounds of the other apartments to pass the word.

Chip asked me to give him a ride as Kelly and I left. The three of us hurried over to the East Parking Deck for my VW. Chip climbed in the back and Kelly sat in front beside me. My phone rang as I put the key in the ignition. I pulled my phone from its holder.

“Hello?”

“Hey Kyle, it’s Stephanie,” the voice said. She sounded upbeat.

“Uh, hi Steph,” I replied. Kelly’s eyes betrayed her shock. She stared at me.

“Kyle, have you seen Jay lately?” Steph asked. “He went back to his room to get...” She giggled. “We’re not kids. He went back to his room for more condoms. He should have been back forty-five minutes ago. I’ve tried his cell phone but he isn’t answering it. Do you know what’s up?”

Shit! What do I tell her? She obviously hasn’t heard about the accident yet. On the spur of the moment I decided hearing about it by phone wouldn’t do.

“Um... Let me do a little checking Steph. I’ll see what I can find out,” I said. “I’ll get back to you shortly Steph.” I ended the call and put down my phone.

“Why didn’t you tell her Kyle?” Kelly asked.

“How would you feel if the positions were reversed?” I asked. “What if I had been in the accident? Would you want someone to blurt it out on the phone?”

“No,” Kelly agreed. “We can’t leave Steph in the dark.”

“I agree,” I said. “We’re going to go over there and tell Steph in person. Take my phone and call Jake. Tell him where we’re going and see if you can get us more information before we see Steph.”

I headed out onto Porter Road and the south on University Drive. Kelly called Jake and then Zack, seeking more information. Zack promised to call us as soon as he got to the hospital and knew anything.

Fire police directed us off of University Drive a block before Easterly Boulevard, the road I wanted to take. We could see flashing lights ahead just out of sight. I knew what that was. Jay's accident was what was closing the road in front of us.

I went west a couple blocks and then jogged back onto Easterly Boulevard. We followed the boulevard west across Atherton Street. I pulled into the Parkway Plaza Apartments' parking lot in front of Steph's building.

"Call Zack again," I said. "I want more news before I hit Stephanie with this."

The phone rang as Kelly picked it up. She answered it. Zack called to report what he knew. Jay was alive but in bad shape when they ambulance brought him in. He was in the ER right now while the doctors assessed his condition. The nurse told Coach Burton it could be awhile until we got more information. Kelly thanked Zack and ended the call.

"Stay with my car Chip," I directed. "Kelly and I are going to talk with Stephanie. I want to be able to move when we come back out. I'm betting Steph will be as anxious to get to the hospital as the rest of us."

"You got it Kyle," Chip said.

Kelly and I hurried into the building and up to the second floor. We knocked at apartment 207. Stephanie answered it after a few knocks.

"Kyle? Kelly?" Steph asked as she peered out the couple inches of opening in the doorway. "What's up? Why are you here?" We definitely startled her with our unexpected appearance.

"Can we come in for a minute?" I asked. "We need to talk with you."

Steph pulled her bathrobe closed tighter as she let us into her apartment. I doubted she was wearing many clothes under her robe.

"Could we sit down for a minute?" I asked.

"What's going on?" Steph asked suspiciously. "Where's Jay?"

Kelly sat down beside Steph. I looked her in the eye, took a deep breath and started. "There was an accident tonight." I explained. Kelly slipped her arm around Steph's shoulder. "We don't know much yet. Jay was hurt. Coach Burton and Zack are at the hospital with him right now. The doctors are working on him."

"Is he going to be all right?" Steph asked. "Do you know what happened?"

"This is all we know right now," Kelly added.

“We’re going to the hospital,” I said. “Would you like to ride over with us? Hopefully we’ll find out more information there.”

Steph stared at me for a few seconds, gulped and then said, “I’d like to go with you.” She looked down and realized what she was wearing. “Can you give me a second to get dressed?”

Of course Kelly and I agreed. Two minutes later the four of us were on the way to Mount Nittany Medical Center. I made sure to take a wide detour around the accident scene. None of us had the stomach to see that right now. Twelve minutes later we pulled into the parking lot of the medical center.

We hurried into the ER. A dozen team members were in the waiting room along with Coach Burton and Coach Peterson. I introduced Coach Burton to Kelly and Stephanie. Coach Burton didn’t have any new information. My information about the probable location of the accident was news to Coach.

We found seats. Kelly put her arm over Steph’s shoulder to try to provide comfort. I sat down on the other side of Steph and put my arm over both girls’ shoulders. I brooded while I waited. The feeling of déjà vu was horrible. Everything was too much like that terrible night almost three years ago when my close friend Greg Harrison had died. I just couldn’t go through that again!

A doctor came out half an hour later and talked with Coach Burton. Coach Burton called all of us together.

“Jay is being moved to surgery now. He has a head injury, broken left arm, three cracked ribs and his left tibia and femur are both shattered. They believe he has internal injuries as well. His condition is critical.

“Apparently another vehicle crashed into the side of Jay’s car as he was turning off University Drive onto Easterly Boulevard about 9:30 this evening. I’d like all of you to head back to your rooms. You can’t do anything for Jay staying here. Go home, say a prayer for Jay before you go to bed and get some sleep tonight. If there is any news, I will have the team captains pass it on to you.”

Kelly, Steph and I talked for a minute. Steph was determined to stay at the hospital until there was more news. Kelly and I offered to stay but she insisted we go back to campus and get some sleep. We could come in the morning and relieve her.

Reluctantly we agreed to Stephanie’s suggestion. Kelly and I headed back to campus, bringing Chip and Anders back with us. It was after one am when Kelly and I finally got to bed. We cuddled together, not wanting anything more than to be close to another person at this time.

I thought about Greg again while I tried to go to sleep. I prayed that God wouldn't take another of my friends too soon. My thoughts kept coming back to that day. What if the surgeon couldn't get the bleeding to stop? I sniffled. What if they did get him stabilized and... I choked a sob back. Greg had a broken leg after his accident. A blood clot formed at the injury, broke loose and went to his brain. What if...

I couldn't hold it back any longer. I started sobbing. Kelly sat up and pulled me to her and held me as I sobbed.

"What's wrong honey?" she asked soothingly.

"Jay... what if..." I blurted out between sobs. "What if... he dies?"

"The doctors are taking good care of him," Kelly said reassuringly. She rocked us and talked to me, trying to ease my run away fears. "It'll be OK," Kelly chanted quietly to me.

"But... but..." I repeated. Finally I managed to add, "Greg... Greg didn't..." before I sobbed again.

"Greg?" Kelly asked. "Who's Greg?"

Little by little Kelly managed to coax the whole story out of me. I told her about my friend and former teammate Greg Harrison, the double date we went on the night of the accident, and my casual 'I'll see you Monday,' when he dropped me off at home. The next time I saw him was at his funeral. I described how it haunted me to have been the next to last person to see him before the accident. I told her how I tried to remember Greg before each game with his #82 written on duct tape inside my helmet.

"Is that what you're doing?" Kelly asked. "I've seen you stare into your helmet when you're on the sideline during the game." Kelly paused for a few seconds and then asked, "Zack does this too, doesn't he?"

"Yeah, he does," I admitted.

"History doesn't have to repeat itself," Kelly said. "Jay will make it. I just know he will." Kelly held me longer, until I managed to get control of my emotions. We lay down together, still cuddled. Eventually I fell into an uneasy sleep.

My cell phone's ringing woke me. The clock said it was a little after three am. I was shaking as I reached for phone. What if....

"Hello?" I grunted, still half asleep.

"Kyle, It's Zack," the voice replied. "Jay's out of surgery. They've managed to stop the internal bleeding. They have upgraded his condition to serious. He's going to make it!"

“Thank God!” I exclaimed.

“Wha?” Kelly moaned.

“Jay’s going to be all right,” I explained. “He’s out of surgery and going to make it.”

“Oh... good,” Kelly said.

The two of us cuddled together and fell back to sleep. This time it was a restful sleep.

(To be continued)

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I woke up early in the morning with a piss hard-on. Kelly's clock showed it was 7:03 am. I slipped on my robe and went across the hall to use the bathroom. Fortunately no girls answered when I knocked on the door. I took care of my business and headed back to Kelly's room.

I decided to check-in at the hospital before I went back to sleep. I grabbed my cell phone and went back out into the hallway. The front desk at the hospital wouldn't give me any information. The nurse did agree to take a message down to the football players in the waiting room. I waited in the hallway for five minutes for someone to return my call.

Karol Zizka called me to report that there was no change in status for Jay. Karol came down to the hospital to relieve Zack after he called around at three am. Karol accepted my offer to relieve him later in the morning. I was to come in around ten am. I slipped back into bed with Kelly without disturbing her after I finished the call.

I woke Kelly around nine am. I knew she'd want to come along to the hospital to keep the vigil. I went back to my dorm to shower and change. Kelly and I met at the Mix where we picked up a newspaper, breakfast sandwiches and juice.

Karol Zizka, Max Rosen, Brendan Hayden and Shawn Byrd were in the waiting room when we arrived. Steph was asleep on the couch. We sat down and listened as Karol explained all the news available.

Jay's accident did occur as he turned off University Drive onto Eastern Boulevard last night. A drunk driver smashed into the left side of Jay's car as the drunk tried to turn onto Eastern Boulevard at the same time as Jay. The police said this was the guy's third drunk driving arrest in three years.

The surgeons found that Jay had a ruptured spleen when they operated last night. They controlled the bleeding and stitched Jay back together. The doctors were concerned about possible brain swelling from his head trauma. Fortunately that didn't happen. Jay's broken arm and three fractured ribs were relatively minor injuries. His left leg was another story entirely. Both his left tibia and femur were fractured in multiple places.

Jay woke after his early morning operation briefly. The doctors gave him a heavy dose of sedatives so he could sleep through the pain during the day. Jay was expected to be awake sometime later in the afternoon.

Karol, Max and Brendan took off for their rooms to get some sleep. Karol said more players were expected to keep Shawn, Kelly, Steph and me company. Kelly and I had seats. We shared our newspaper with Shawn and waited for more information.

Stephanie woke up about an hour later. I offered to give her a ride back to her apartment, but she decided to stay here and wait. Small groups of football players stopped by throughout the morning, seeking information. We passed on the information we had. Jake Washington called just before noon to let us know he and JT Hill would be over to relieve us around two o'clock.

The four of us grabbed some lunch at the hospital cafeteria around 12:30. We settled down again in the waiting room after we ate. About fifteen minutes later a well dressed woman at the reception desk caught our attention when we overheard her ask about Jason Nicholson. The nurse directed the lady to have a seat in the waiting area while she brought the doctor out to talk with her.

The trim blonde haired lady was probably 5'-10" and in her late forties. Shawn popped out of his seat and walked towards her as she came to the waiting area. Kelly and I followed Shawn. A weak smile creased her face as she recognized Shawn.

"Shawn! How is he?" Mrs. Nicholson asked. Before Shawn could answer she added, "I left at six am and drove straight through. How is my son?"

"It was a pretty severe accident, but he'll be OK Mrs. Nicholson," Shawn answered. Mrs. Nicholson gave Shawn a hug. Kelly, Stephanie and I stood by Shawn while they hugged.

"Thank God!" Mrs. Nicholson said. She looked over at the other three of us standing by Shawn. "Are you going to introduce us to your friends Shawn?"

"Um... yeah, sorry Mrs. Nicholson," Shawn replied. "This is Kyle Martin."

I shook hands with Jay's mother. "Kyle," she said, smiling. "It's good to meet you. Jason has said so much about you. He values your friendship highly." She pumped my hand up and down a few times and then looked over at Kelly and Stephanie. "One of you must be Kyle's girlfriend Kelly."

"That's me," my girlfriend answered. She offered her hand to Mrs. Nicholson, who shook it.

"Jason is correct. You and Kyle make a very handsome couple," Mrs. Nicholson said. "I'm guessing you would be my son's girlfriend Stephanie."

"Yes, I'm Stephanie... Stephanie Kolmar," Steph said, shaking hands with Mrs. Nicholson. "I'm not exactly.... Um, Jay's girlfriend. We've dated quite a bit this fall but we aren't a couple yet." She gave an embarrassed grin. "I guess Jay and I never got around to talking about becoming a couple."

"My son adores you Stephanie," Mrs. Nicholson said. "I talked with him yesterday afternoon before he took you to dinner." She looked at Kelly and me and added, "He told

me how much he enjoyed your double date on Friday night. I'm glad my son has made such good friends here." Mrs. Nicholson stepped towards the chairs. "Maybe we should all have a seat. Who knows how long with will be until a doctor gets here to talk with me. What do you know about my son's accident?"

Shawn, Kelly, Steph and I sat down beside Mrs. Nicholson and filled her in on all the information we had about the accident and Jay's condition. Well... everything except the reason Jay made a trip back to the dorms before going back to Steph's apartment. Some things are best left unsaid.

We talked for about ten minutes, until the doctor arrived to brief Mrs. Nicholson. He spent five minutes discussing Jay's prognosis with Mrs. Nicholson. Jay was still asleep, according to the doctor, though Jay was expected to wake up any time. The five of us sat and made small talk while we waited.

Half an hour later a nurse came out and got Mrs. Nicholson. Jay was awake. While Jay's mom was in his room Cuch, Tyler Madden, Trevor, and Dave McCall arrived, the next shift of football players to keep the vigil. I filled the other guys in on everything we knew about Jay's accident and condition.

Mrs. Nicholson came out about five minutes later. Jay was asking if any of his friends were at the hospital. The nurse said we could visit him two at a time for a few minutes. We conferred briefly and decided Shawn, his roommate, and Stephanie would visit first. Shawn and Steph spent about five minutes with Jay before it was my turn.

Kelly and I held hands as we walked into Jay's room. He was in the nearest bed to the door. Our friend was in bad shape. His left leg was in traction. His left arm was in a cast and lay at his side. Jay had numerous cuts and scrapes on his face along with a large gauze bandage covering a spot on the left side of his forehead. His face was puffy. His left eye was swelled halfway shut. Jay looked like he had just done fifteen rounds with Muhammad Ali.

Jay lifted his head a little to look at us. I tried to conceal my shock at my friend's appearance, unsuccessfully. Jay gave us a weak smile and said, "I guess I look like hell, don't I?"

I stammered for a second and then said, "You're alive. That's what's important."

"Yes," Kelly agreed. "We weren't too sure about that last night."

"How are you feeling?" I asked.

"I guess better than I look, judging by everyone's reaction to me," Jay said. "They have me doped up on painkillers. I'm not feeling much of anything right now."

“I’m glad you aren’t in pain,” Kelly said. There was an awkward pause. Neither of us were quite sure what to say.

“My mom told me my dad is flying in,” Jay said.

“Why would that be a surprise?” I asked. “I’m sure my dad would come up to State College if I got hurt.”

“Your dad’s carrier isn’t in the Indian Ocean like my dad’s,” Jay replied. “The admiral said he and the XO can look after things.”

I knew Jay’s dad was in the navy. Still I was surprised when Jay talked about an admiral and the XO, or executive officer, looking after things while his father was gone.

“What exactly does your dad do in the navy?” I asked.

“He’s the commanding officer of the George H. W. Bush, CVN-77,” Jay answered.

“Your dad commands a carrier?” I asked. “I had no idea. Isn’t the Bush our newest one?”

Jay gave a slight smile and replied, “Yeah, it is.”

The nurse stuck her head in the room, interrupting. “You need to wrap things up. I don’t want Jason overexerting himself.” We acknowledged the nurse before turning back to Jay.

“Is there anything you need?” I asked.

“I gave Shawn a list of things to get for me,” Jay said. “He could use a ride over here. He doesn’t have a car on campus.”

“You got it Jay,” I replied.

“One more thing Kyle,” Jay added. “No one around here knows what became of my car. Can you find out?”

“You got it,” I answered. Kelly and I told Jay to take it easy as we left.

Cuch and Tyler went in to see Jay after us. The rest of us talked for a few minutes. Shawn and I compared schedules with Kelly and Stephanie. Shawn, Kelly and I would meet for lunch tomorrow. Steph would meet us at Jay and Shawn’s room after lunch. Everyone would ride over with me to visit Jay. We let Mrs. Nicholson know what our plans were and left her our cell phone numbers.

I promised Mrs. Nicholson as we left, “Anything, anything at all, call us. We will be glad to help you.”

I gave Steph a ride back to her apartment and took Shawn and Kelly back to campus with me. It was after three o’clock when we got back to campus. Kelly and I both had homework to do, so we headed back to our own rooms.

Coach Burton talked with the whole team after dinner at the Training Table. He briefed us about everything he knew about Jay’s accident, condition and prognosis. The team grapevine had gotten most team members up to speed already, but it was still good to hear this from an authoritative source.

Coach reported the doctors were extremely pleased with the results of Jay’s neurological exams. They ruled out serious brain damage from when Jay’s head bounced off the steering wheel during the accident. I was surprised to learn the extent of the work necessary to fix Jay’s left leg. The doctors wanted Jay to get stabilized before they used rods, plates and screws to rebuild the shattered bones. Jay would travel to some other hospital for this surgery. Mount Nittany wasn’t equipped for that kind of work.

Coach also reported Yasin Clark was back at his apartment recuperating from the ACL/MCL repair surgery last Thursday. He would be resting at his apartment this week and then begin rehab with the team trainers on Friday.

I talked with Coach Burton after dinner and asked for his help in tracking down Jay’s car. Coach promised to have one of the assistants check with the police tomorrow morning. I was to check with Ann Marie at the Lasch Building front desk before I went to the hospital.

On Monday Kelly, Shawn Byrd and I met at the dining hall after Kelly’s philosophy class for lunch. Stephanie met us at the elevators on the fourth floor of Hartranft when we came back from lunch. We walked up the hill to the East Parking Deck for my car. A few minutes later I pulled into the parking lot at Mount Nittany.

Mrs. Nicholson and a tall distinguished looking gentleman in navy khakis were talking with Jay when we arrived. We waited at the door for a half a minute until they noticed us. I noted the all the stripes on the officer’s shoulder boards. There was no doubt Jay’s father was a senior naval officer.

Mrs. Nicholson introduced Captain William J. Nicholson to us. Capt. Nicholson stood ram rod straight to greet us. He was 6’-2” tall with short brown hair with a touch of gray on the sides.

“We’ll give you young people some privacy,” Capt. Nicholson suggested. “We’ll go down to the cafeteria for some java.”

When the Nicholsons were gone Shawn asked, “How are you feeling today?”

The swelling in his face had gone down, replaced by various shades of black and blue. Jay’s left eye was open today. “Not too bad,” Jay explained. “I feel the pain more than yesterday but my head is clear now.”

“That’s good,” I said. “What happens now? How long are you going to be stuck in this hospital?”

“This hospital?” Jay answered. Jay held his casted left arm up. “Not long. My arm is set and needs time to recover. My ribs will heal on their own. My leg...” Jay shook his head and pointed down to his left leg. “... that’s another story. The doctor showed me the x-ray of it. It looks like a jig saw puzzle. The doctor tells me they can fix my leg.”

“I’m sorry your leg is in such bad shape Jay,” Stephanie said.

“When’s the operation?” I asked.

“Mom and dad decided they wanted the best orthopedic surgeon working on my leg,” Jay explained. “They’re flying me down to Birmingham, Alabama on Wednesday to see Dr. James Andrews. I guess he’ll operate on Thursday or Friday, after he examines me.”

“Dr. Andrews, I’ve heard of him,” Shawn said. “He supposed to be the best. He’s taken care of a lot of big NFL players.”

“I’ve heard of him too,” I agreed. “He fixed up Donovan McNabb when he blew out his knee a few years ago.”

“How long will you be laid up Jay?” Kelly asked.

“The doctor here thinks it’ll be a month to six weeks,” Jay replied.

“What are you going to do about classes?” Stephanie asked.

“I’m going to have to withdraw from my classes this semester,” Jay explained. “There is no way I can catch up after missing classes for that long.”

“Oh man, that sucks,” Shawn said.

“Yeah it does,” Jay agreed. “Did any of you find anything out about my car? Where is it at?”

“Ryan Reynolds checked into it for you,” I replied. “The police had a tow truck take it to the police lot.”

“Can somebody pick it up for me?” Jay asked. “Mom and dad are flying to Atlanta with me on Wednesday.”

“Um... I don’t think that’ll be necessary,” I said. “The policeman Ryan talked to said he expected your insurance company will probably declare the car totaled.”

“Totaled?” Jay said. Jay’s face filled with emotion. He blinked a couple times and said, “Totaled! I love that car.”

“It’s just a car man...” Shawn said. “... a hunk of metal.”

“What’s important is that you are around here, not the car,” Stephanie added.

“It’s more than a hunk of metal to me,” Jay said. “I haven’t spent as much time with my dad when I was growing up as I would have liked, what with his sea duty and career. My dad’s posting to Norfolk as the base commander’s COS [chief of staff] five years ago was great. Two years as COS and two more years forming and training the Bush crew – that was the longest time I lived in one place in my life.” Jay batted his eyes again to try to clear the tears. “The four years dad and I spent working on the car were so special to me. That’s why it isn’t just a hunk of metal to me.”

“The car may be gone,” I said. “Nothing will ever take away the time you spent with your dad. You’ll always have that.”

“I guess,” Jay answered.

Shawn delivered a couple of Jay’s books and his MP3 player. We talked for a few minutes about classes.

Kelly asked, “How did your dad get here so quick? Didn’t you say he was on a carrier in the Indian Ocean?”

“Admiral Nash, the task group commander, said dad should get home to see me after he heard about the accident. Dad caught an E-2C to Diego and then a MAC flight to Dover. He caught another flight to Patuxent where he got a T-38 to fly here.”

“You’re dad’s a pilot?” Stephanie asked.

“Don’t say that around my dad,” Jay said, giving us a slight smile. “Dad is a naval aviator.”

“I guess your dad’s is pretty protective...” Kelly said. “... to fly half way around the world to see you.”

“Yeah, my parents are,” Jay agreed. “I guess it’s understandable, what with my sister and all.”

“Sister?” I asked. “I don’t remember you ever talking about having a sister.”

“We don’t talk about Jennifer much,” Jay explained. “Jennifer is... no, Jennifer would have been my older sister. She was born five years before me. She died from SIDS when she was three months old. There were complications when I was born. Mom couldn’t have more children after me. I guess that’s why mom and dad are pretty protective.”

Jay asked for some time alone with Steph, so Kelly, Shawn and I went out in the hall and hung out while Jay talked with his girlfriend. Capt. and Mrs. Nicholson met us outside Jay’s room while Steph talked with her boyfriend. Jay’s parents thanked us for being good friends with Jason.

Kelly, Shawn and I popped in to say good bye when Steph was done talking with Jay. We had to head back to campus so Kelly got to her golf class.

Jay’s accident discombobulated our practices. Monday afternoon the coaches had to switch up the quarterback assignments. Glenn Korbel took about fifteen snaps with the first string and took most of the snaps with the second string. I was surprised that Chip Brinton took snaps with the second string when Glenn wasn’t with them. Chip and Colin split time quarterbacking the scout or third string team.

Ryan Reynolds delivered messages to Zack, Chip and me after practice letting us know we had a meeting with Coach Burton at 2:30 pm the next day. None of us knew what the topic of the meeting was. Ryan couldn’t explain either.

I hurried through my dinner and rushed off to my scuba class. Mr. Coleman had taught us nearly everything we would need to get certified after an open water dive. We were able to spend most of the class playing around under water. It was a joy. I had a receivers meeting with Coach Adams after that so we could review the expected defensive coverages by Ohio State for Saturday’s game.

I caught up with my e-mails later on Monday night. My brother Andy sent me two e-mails over the course of the weekend. The first was from Friday night to report that our high school football team had beaten LS, a strong team in our league 31-27. Matt Sauder had to lead the team on an end-of-game drive to pull out the win. Of course the touchdown came when he threw the ball to his favorite receiver, Andy, in the corner of the end zone.

Andy sent the second e-mail Sunday afternoon. So far Penn State was still the favorite destination over Maryland and Rutgers. Andy had a visit to Temple next Saturday and a visit to Delaware on October 30th. I thought the chances of Andy coming to Penn State

were excellent. We had better facilities and a better program than Temple. Little Delaware shouldn't even be in the competition for an athlete like Andy.

I had time to focus on the polls that evening. LSU and USC kept their #1 and #2 rankings. Missouri beat Texas, allowing us to move up to #3. Missouri jumped up to #4, then Notre Dame #5 and Ohio State #6. Odds were good that either LSU or USC would lose a game before the end of the season and let our team into the BCS Championship game. Things were looking good for our team reaching our goal.

Shawn Byrd had class after lunch on Tuesday so Kelly, Steph and I visited Jay on our own. Mrs. Nicholson gave us a few minutes of privacy when we arrived. Jay's dad had left already to return the jet he borrowed from Patuxent. He volunteered to ferry an aircraft to Pensacola for the Navy so he could get south quickly. He was renting a car there and driving up to meet Jay and Mrs. Nicholson in Birmingham tomorrow afternoon when they arrived.

Our conversation with Jay was awkward. Normally we talked about our weekend plans, the next game, or classes. Jay knew all about our game plan for Ohio State, so there was nothing to discuss there. I briefly told him about how practice went in his absence. Classes weren't a good topic since Jay was dropping all of his. Jay was leaving so we didn't discuss our weekend plans.

Jay gave me a list of things he wanted Shawn to bring over tonight or tomorrow morning before he left. Jay sent a second list of things he wanted shipped to his home in Norfolk for his convalescence after his surgery. I promised to make sure Shawn had the lists before he came over to visit after dinner.

The silence was uncomfortable as we sought a suitable topic to keep the conversation going. Finally Kelly blurted, "You take good care of yourself Jay." She walked around the bed, held Jay's right hand and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "I'm going to miss you."

"Yeah," I agreed as I moved around the bed to join Kelly. "It isn't going to be the same without you to hang with." Jay and I did a hand clasp, shake and knuckle bump.

"You work hard for your physical therapist," I added. "He's going to be a frickin' sadist, but that's a good thing. He'll get you back on the field in the spring."

"Yeah, when I get back..." Jay said, without conviction.

"Hey! I'm counting on you to lead our team next season," I insisted.

"With my leg busted up the way it is? Yeah... right!" Jay answered sharply. "My dream was to be a starting quarterback on a big college team." Jay stared down the bed at his left leg. His dropping, Jay added, "So much for that dream."

“That’s it? I hurt my leg, so I’m finished,” I said, my voice rising. “Three years ago I was in that hospital bed with my knee all mangled up. I had expected lots of scholarship offers from all the big colleges. I didn’t get squat after my knee injury. I point blank asked Coach Burton at football camp in the summer if they were going to offer me a scholarship. The answer was no. I busted my ass at rehab. I got back.”

“In the shape I’m in?” Jay retorted. “I don’t know.”

“You’re a pocket passing quarterback,” I replied. “You don’t need to be the fastest guy on the field. You need a good arm, the right one.” I pointed to his good arm. “... and a good mind.”

“I guess I’m too hard headed to lose that,” Jay answered. His lips curled up in a small smile.

“What is your home e-mail address?” I asked. “I want to stay in touch with you while you’re rehabbing.”

“You can use my university e-mail account,” Jay answered. “The university is keeping it active for me while I’m away.”

“Good luck with the operation man,” I added. “I’ll see you next semester.” I stepped away to make room for Stephanie. She stepped up to Jay’s bed on the right side. Jay did his best to hug her as she leaned down to give him a farewell kiss.

“You do what you promised for me,” Jay said when they broke the kiss. “I don’t want to hear that you spent three months shut in on date nights. Get out and have some fun. Just remember I will be back in January. I hope we can pick up where we left off this fall.”

“I don’t really want to date others Jay,” Steph answered. “But I’ll go out occasionally if it makes you happy.”

“I just want you to be happy honey,” Jay answered. Jay and Stephanie exchanged another kiss and hug before they disengaged. We wished our friend good luck with his operation and promised to write often before we left.

I dropped Kelly off at Rec Hall and Steph off behind Pattee Library. I parked my car in the parking deck and hustled over to the Lasch Building for my meeting with Coach Burton.

I met Chip in the locker room when I dropped things off at my locker. The two of us headed over to the coach’s office together. Ann Marie showed us in immediately. Zack

Hayes was already seated with Coach Burton on the Coach's couch. Chip and I had seats where Coach indicated.

"Thank you for coming gentlemen," Coach Burton said. He turned and looked at Chip. "This meeting concerns your future Chip. I've rethought your role with the team." Chip's eyes went wide in surprise.

"Relax Chip," Coach continued. "You're still a quarterback in my plans." He chuckled as Chip relaxed again. "I want to accelerate your development Chip. We're going to scrap your red-shirt year and give you some playing time this season."

"OK Coach," Chip said in acknowledgement. "What does this mean in the future? I'd use a year of eligibility this way."

"That is correct Chip," Coach Burton acknowledged. "Contrary to what you and I have discussed in the past, I will give you a shot at earning the starter's job next season." Coach Burton paused for a second to gauge Chip's reaction to the news. Chip's big smile spoke volumes about his feelings about the change. "Understand that I will not promise you that you will be the starter next season. You will have the opportunity to compete with Jay and Glenn for the starter's spot."

"I would like that chance Coach," Chip said, his grin rivaling that of the Cheshire Cat.

Turning to Zack and me, Coach continued, "I understand the two of you have been working with Chip to help him learn the playbook." We nodded yes. "I want you to continue doing that with Ryan Reynolds' help. Ryan will direct you on what formations and plays to study each week."

"No problem coach," Zack answered.

"You got it Coach," I added.

"I don't want you shortchanging your game preparations Zack," Coach Burton explained. "This year's games take priority over QB development." Zack nodded in agreement. "I hope you will continue to work with Chip after the season is over."

"I'll do my best Coach," Zack answered. "I won't have as much time on campus in the spring as now. I have to get my student teaching in before graduation."

"That's no problem Zack," coach Burton responded. "I will appreciate any help you can give Chip after the season is finished." Coach turned and looked at me. With a chuckle he asked, "Do you have any questions Kyle?"

I returned the grin and asked, "Why?" All four of us laughed, given my reputation among the team and coaches for asking exactly that question – time and time again.

“You tell me Kyle,” Coach Burton said.

“Obviously, part of this is due to Jay’s injury,” I explained. “I assume the information you’ve gotten from the doctors throws doubt into Jay’s ability to play in the future. I stopped by to see him before this meeting and he was pretty down.”

“That’s correct Kyle,” coach Burton agreed. “The team doctor says there is no chance he will be ready for spring practice and a 50/50 chance at being ready for next fall.”

“Don’t you think that Glenn or Colin can run the offense if Jay isn’t ready?” I asked.

Coach Burton pondered my questions for about ten seconds and then replied, “Why don’t you and I continue this conversation in private Kyle? Zack and Chip, do you have any questions?”

“No Coach, I understand what you want,” Zack said.

“Thanks for giving me this opportunity Coach,” Chip added. Zack and Chip headed out of the office while I sat on Coach’s couch. Coach Burton stared at me for a few seconds.

“I didn’t want to get into player evaluations with Chip and Zack present,” Coach said. “You’ve played or practiced with all of our quarterbacks. How would you evaluate each of them?”

“Well Zack...” I began.

“Skip Zack, he doesn’t figure into next year’s QB situation,” Coach Burton explained.

“OK, Chip is bigger than Glenn and Colin,” I said. “Chip is more mobile than either of them too.”

“Uh huh...” Coach said nodding as I talked.

“Glenn doesn’t have the strongest arm,” I said. “We’d be at a disadvantage when we want to run our deepest routes.”

“How do you expect our offensive line to do at protection next season?” Coach asked.

“We’re going to lose three good guys to graduation after this season,” I said. “That is going to be a good question. Can we protect our quarterback long enough to try deep passes next season?”

Coach Burton nodded his head in agreement.

“I guess having a mobile quarterback would be a benefit,” I explained. “Glenn and Colin have been here two years and know the offense inside out. Would Chip’s arm strength, size and mobility make up for his inexperience next season?”

“That is the question, isn’t it?” Coach replied.

“I guess I can understand what you’re doing,” I said. “I’ve always assumed you planned to have Jay as the next starter followed by Chip when Jay graduates. Are you selling our team’s future short by using Chip next season?”

“There is one piece to the puzzle you don’t have Kyle,” Coach replied. “I received a phone call from Jon Stafford last evening. He is announcing that he will play here tomorrow afternoon.”

“Ahhh... the future is assured,” I said. “I was extremely impressed with Jon when he visited.”

“Jon will be an excellent addition to the team next season,” Coach Burton agreed.

“Can I ask one more question Coach?” I asked. Coach Burton nodded yes.

“You said Chip will compete with Jay and Glenn for the starter’s job next season. Why didn’t you include Colin in your list of competitors?”

“You noted that Colin doesn’t have the size, speed, or arm strength to match up against our other quarterbacks,” Coach explained. “Colin could be a starter at a Division II or III school if he wanted to go that route. He asked Coach Paterno to let him be a walk-on when Coach said Penn State wasn’t interested in him. Colin agreed to help develop our younger guys and run our scout team. That is how much he wants to be a part of the Nittany Lions team.”

“I had no idea,” I replied. “Colin knows that he has almost no chance to start but puts in as much work as the rest of us each day. That’s amazing. I guess he’s kind of like the guy in the movie Rudy.”

“That’s an accurate analogy,” Coach agreed.

“Thanks for helping me understand Coach,” I said.

“No problem Kyle,” Coach replied. “I enjoy talking with my budding coaching protégés.”

Things calmed down among team members once we knew Jay was safe, would heal and return for next semester. One of the exciting things missed the previous weekend was a chance to celebrate the Phillies dramatic comeback win over the Chicago Cubs in the NLCS Game six on Sunday night.

Chase Utley delivered when it counted in the bottom of the ninth inning, blasting a three run home run. His home run put the Phillies into the World Series again with an 8-6 win. Almost half of our team were from eastern Pennsylvania, south Jersey or Delaware and had a rooting interest in the Phillies doing well. They took on the Boston Red Sox, with the first game being played in Boston on Wednesday. Philly took the first game, 2-1 with a virtually unhittable Cole Hamels pitching.

Practices slowly got better organized as the week went on. People were sharp on Thursday's practice. I felt we were ready to face the Buckeyes. We had better be, they were the only team so far that was favored to win over us.

Jen kindly let Kelly and I have Kelly's room for an hour on Thursday night when she went downtown with her boyfriend Darrell. It was enough time to make love once. Both of us wished we would have more time, but it would have to do.

Kelly and I flipped on the TV to catch Game 2 of the World Series after we were done making love. We didn't watch long. The Red Sox bombed the Phillies 7-2.

Kelly and I had breakfast together before class on Friday. Kelly decided to walk over to the Chambers Building with me since she had another two hours until her first class. We exchanged hugs and kisses outside the class building.

"Do you have anything special planned tonight honey?" I asked.

"We're having another football widows' movie night tonight," Kelly answered. "Leigh Ann, Keneisha, Stephanie and I are going out to a movie. We're getting together at Leigh Ann's apartment to watch the game tomorrow night."

"That's cool," I replied. "I'm going to miss you."

"I'll miss you too Kyle," Kelly replied. "I'll see you Sunday morning when your bus gets in. 11:30, right?"

"Yes, I'll see you then," I answered. We exchanged kisses again before I went into class. Dr. Hewitt gave a provocative lecture and defense of the role of the electoral college in presidential elections. I hurried back to my room and changed into my suit, grabbed my overnight bag and headed for the buses at the Lasch Building.

Our buses pulled away from the Lasch Building promptly at 10:30. The flight to Columbus was our shortest commute of the season. Buses picked us up at the Columbus

International Airport and hauled us over to the Hilton Inn near Ohio Stadium. The hotel had an indoor pool, so a group of my friends and I went swimming until dinner time.

Coach Burton stood to make an announcement after dinner.

“Attention everyone. I received excellent news before dinner. Jay Nicholson is in recovery after a long operation to repair the damage to his left leg. Dr. Andrews reports that everything went well with the surgery and Jay will make a full recovery.”

The banquet room filled with cheers and clapping as our team celebrated the good news for our friend.

The coaches showed a video of our team’s victory over Ohio State two years ago on the team’s way to the national championship that season. When it was done the coaches showed the ‘Remember the Titans’ movie, an old, but good story.

Our game was the prime time game for ABC that Saturday. The coaches offered us the option of getting up for breakfast between eight and nine o’clock on the game morning. I doubt many made it to breakfast. I certainly wasn’t interested in it if I could sleep later. Damian and I finally got up around eleven o’clock. We had lunch in the hotel banquet room set up for the team. The coaches had us study game video of our game against Ohio State last year and some video from other games OSU played earlier this year.

The buses took us the couple blocks over to the stadium mid-afternoon. Ohio State’s campus was mobbed with fans dressed in red. That was to be expected when your stadium seats 102,000. The buses dropped us off outside the stadium. We dropped our things off in the visitor’s locker room and went outside to check out the conditions in the stadium.

I’d seen pictures and video of the stadium already, but the sight of it from the playing field was inspiring. Ohio Stadium was a double decked horseshoe ring with the southern end closed in by more seating. The natural grass playing surface was in excellent condition. The day was a sunny but slightly chilly fall afternoon. The temperature was expected to drop down to the high forties by game time.

A ten to fifteen mile an hour wind blew over the north end and down through the stadium to the more open southern end. As long as the wind didn’t increase I thought Zack would be fine passing the ball and I would do OK fielding kicks and punts.

The coaches held position meetings to review our game plan to make sure everyone was prepared properly for their duties. We had a light snack before we suited up and went out to warm up.

The stadium was filling with fans when we came out. I worked out with Zack a little and then went to help Chip warm up. My friend was totally jazzed to be in uniform and on the field for his first college game. Coach Burton had warned Chip that there was

virtually no chance he would take the field against Ohio State. His first playing time probably would be against Illinois the following week, assuming we had a good lead late in the game. Chip's orders for the day were to stay close to Coach Schroeder and Zack and pay attention to every detail as Zack played the game so he could learn from them.

Anders came up to Chip and I as we finished our warm-ups.

"Isn't this place something?" Anders asked. Chip and I nodded in agreement. "I caught my first college touchdown here two years ago."

"That's cool," I agreed.

"This place is going to be so loud you won't believe it," Anders said. "They were going crazy here two years ago... until I caught the touchdown to give us the lead in the second quarter. You wouldn't believe how loud these fans can be. We have to jump on them early today to get the crowd out of the game. These people are crazy about their Buckeyes."

"We'll have to make sure we don't let them get into the game today," I agreed. Chip, Anders and I followed our teammates inside for the final preparations for the game.

I overheard Cuch report an upset in the standings. Notre Dame got routed by Jim Harbough's Stanford that day, 38-20. I knew Jeremy North would be extremely upset. This was the first time in his collegiate career that his team had lost a game. USC, LSU and Texas were still playing as we got ready. All three teams were leading their games.

We headed out to the tunnel after our prayer and Coach Burton spoke. A wave of sound assaulted us as we stood in the tunnel while the Ohio State team was introduced to their fans. We took the field to polite applause after the cheers died down for the Buckeyes.

Evan Foster called heads on the coin toss, winning us first possession of the ball. I lined up on our five yard line. Ohio State's kicker boomed the ball down to me. I settled under it at the three yard line, caught it and looked up field for my blocking.

Coach Ferguson had a return left set for this time. David McCall knocked his man away towards the sideline while I shot the gap between him and GJ DeLuca. GJ kept his guy pinned down long enough to spring me free. I sprinted down the left sideline.

Our blockers did a good job. The first player I met was the kicker at midfield. He tried to box me in along the sideline. I pirouetted as he tried to tackle me and cut back diagonally across the field, heading for the goal post.

Somebody took me down from behind by my heels as I ran for the end zone. I skidded across the turf a couple yards. The referee placed the ball at OSU's 22 yard line when I got up and handed it to him.

I checked out the Ohio State player who caught me, #27. He was a couple inches shorter than me and very fast. I would need to account for him on future returns. I saw the name on the back of the jersey said "Burkholder" as he jogged back to his sideline. I chuckled, with a name like that he could be a cousin of mine. Burkholders were almost as common in Lancaster County as Martins, Weavers and Millers.

Coach Burton called a play to stretch the Buckeyes deep to start off the game. #27 lined up across from me and their free safety lined up deeper and closer to my side of the field. Obviously the Buckeye coaching staff remembered me from last year. Statistically my game against Ohio State was my best regular season game last season. They weren't going to let that happen again.

Number 27 tried to bump me at the snap of the ball. I sidestepped him and took off down the field. He stayed with me, covering me short. The free safety rotated over my way and stayed deeper than me. Zack rifled the ball to Anders as he came across the middle of the field for a nine yard gain.

On the next play Coach Burton overloaded my side of the field, having Evan and Anders line up there. We flooded the end zone, attracting nearly all the defensive backs to us. Zack coolly dumped a pass over the defensive lineman to Shawn O'Conner in the flat. Shawn cut back behind Mahmoud Greene's block of the outside linebacker and raced the thirteen yards into the end zone. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT through the uprights to give us a 7-0 lead.

The crowd cheered loudly when Andrew kicked the ball back to Ohio State. Their returner moved the ball out to their 23 yard line. OSU's big tailback gouged eight yards from our defense on first down. The Buckeyes decided to go deep on the next play. The Buckeye quarterback managed to toss the ball out half a tick before Trevor Conwell collided with him. Jake Washington leaped up and tipped the ball as it flew over his head. Shawn Byrd alertly undercut the receiver's route and caught the wobbly pass. He ran his interception back eight yards to give us the ball at OSU's 23 yard line.

Coach Burton called for four wide receivers and then ran the ball for six and then five yards on the first two plays. On the next play Hassan, Anders and Tanner lined up on the opposite side from me. I ran for the left corner of the end zone while the other receivers drew most of the defenders to the other side of the field. Zack lobbed the ball perfectly into the corner for me. I jumped and caught the ball. The cornerback and free safety couldn't knock the ball loose when I landed. Touchdown! Andrew Perkins made the PAT. Score: 14-0 Penn State.

Our quick success quieted the big crowd of Buckeye fans. My teammates and I felt confident thanks to our quick scores. Ohio State did better on their next possession, picking up a couple first downs before our pass rush forced a hurried incomplection on third and eight. Their punt sailed out of bounds at our 17 yard line.

Ohio State adjusted their defense, adding extra defensive backs. Our team had to depend on Shawn O'Conner's running. The Buckeyes were determined that we wouldn't get any big plays. We got stuck in third and long too often. The first time I kept the drive going when I found the seam in OSU's zone defense, catching Zack's eight yard pass to me. I managed to break #27's tackle, get the first down and pick up an extra dozen yards. Evan caught the ball on a tight end screen the third time we had third and long. Unfortunately the Buckeyes sacked Zack on our next time we were in third and long. The only good thing about the drive was that Steve Cobb managed to pin OSU inside their 10 yard line with his punt.

OSU wasn't fazed by the poor field position. They rushed at us, mixing in an occasionally pass to keep our defenders spread out. Our guys bit on a play action fake. The Buckeyes' receiver gained 38 yards to move them down to our 13 yard line. OSU needed four more rushes, but they pushed the ball into the end zone. Their kicker made the PAT. Score: 14-7 Nittany Lions' favor.

I advanced the kickoff out to 27 yard line. We worked from a single back, three wide receiver formation again. Hassan and I alternated threatening deep routes to keep the defense spread while Shawn O'Conner ran the ball. Five of Shawn's runs along with an eight yard pass across the middle to Evan Foster moved us across the middle of the field.

Coach Burton called for my reverse option next. I raced for the backfield at the snap. Shawn took the ball and ran for me, handing off as we passed in the backfield. I was almost ready to turn down field when I spotted Anders' nickel back slip his block and cut me off from the sideline. I turned inside again, trying to get up the field. The free safety came up to stop me. I tried to juke away from him but was taken down from behind by the nickel back.

I got up mad as hell. I had lost two yards! Anders apologized for missing his block as we huddled for our third down and twelve play. Zack hit Anders coming across the middle; unfortunately gaining only eight yards. Steve Cobb punted the ball back to Ohio State.

Our defense managed to hold OSU again after a couple first downs. They punted back to us from their 43 yard line. The ball went out of bounds at our 13 yard line. We had 1:57 until the end of the half.

Coach Burton has Shawn O'Conner carry the ball for four and then seven yards on the first two downs. Ohio State adjusted to our running. We hit them with a play action pass. I slanted across the middle behind the linebackers, caught Zack's pass in stride and sprinted down the field. The free safety took me down after I gained 22 yards. Damian relieved Shawn, carrying the ball three times in a row for four, four and six yards.

We ran another play action. Zack hit Hassan Jackson down the right sideline for another 17 yards. Shawn came in to run again, pounding out another 13 yards. We flooded the end zone with four receivers on the next play. Zack coolly shoveled the ball to Shawn in

the middle of our formation. Shawn drove into the end zone, bowling over a linebacker on the way. Andrew Perkins kicked the PAT. Score: 21-7 PSU

Zack's excellent time management left seven seconds on the clock for OSU. They wisely chose to kneel down and end the half. My teammates and I headed for the locker room pleased to have a 14 point lead at Ohio State's home field. It boded well for us in the second half.

Ohio State took the second half kickoff and pushed the ball downfield on our defense. Their coaches called a nice drive, mixing up the runs and passes to keep our defense guessing. They needed twelve plays, but they pushed the ball into our end zone. Score: 21-14 Penn State's favor.

OSU's kicker drove the ball deep on the kickoff. I fell back across the goal line and caught the kick. The Buckeyes kept to their lanes well on this kick. I was forced to run into the chaos of my wedge and their wedge-busters to get as many yards as possible. Three tacklers took me down at our 25 yard line.

We went after OSU using the same strategy as our last drive. We used the deep pass threat to loosen up the defense and then Shawn or Damian would run on them. Occasionally we'd hit them with play action passes. Things blew up in our faces on the eighth play of the drive. Zack's pass to Anders was tipped up in the air by the nickel back and then caught by the middle linebacker, who was nearby. Anders downed the linebacker after he gained a couple yards.

Ohio State took possession of the ball on their 32 yard line. The Buckeyes moved the ball on us, gaining nineteen yards in the first four plays. The fifth play was another run up the middle. Karol Zizka stood the tailback up. Cuch Cuchiella came in and punched the ball loose as the runner struggled for more yards. Trevor Conwell was the first player to dive on the fumble. He was buried under eight or ten players before the referees could whistle the play dead.

The offense took the ball at OSU's 49 yard line. Shawn O'Conner gained eight yards on an off-tackle run on the first play. Zack hit me in stride on second down as I slanted across the middle of the field. I managed to gain 21 yards on the play. We surprised Ohio State on the third play by running the play action again. This time Zack hit Evan Foster on a curl route. Evan broke a tackle and ran into the end zone to score a touchdown. Andrew Perkins booted the PAT to bring the score to 28-14 our favor.

The fourth quarter started after Ohio State returned our kickoff. Our defense held OSU to a three yard gain on the first two plays. Coach C called for a blitz on third down. The Buckeyes lined up with two receivers on the weak side and then sent the strong side receiver in motion to the weak side before the snap. Our defensive backs shifted to cover the unbalanced formation. At the snap of the ball our four linemen rushed along with Karol, our middle linebacker. The play was a screen to the strong side where Brendan Hayden was playing. The left tackle blocked Brendan out of the play while the left guard

pulled and escorted the tailback down the field. Between getting caught blitzing and having to cover triple receivers on the far side of the field, no one was left along the near sideline. The tailback sprinted down the sideline for the end zone. Cuch was on the only other player to have a shot at the ball carrier. His desperation lunge at the 10 yard line missed. Touchdown Ohio State! They were successful with the PAT. Score: 28-21 Lion's favor.

The Buckeye fans were getting loud again now that the score was close. I was determined to do my part on the kick return. The Buckeye kicker was a little short this time. I took a few steps forward and caught the ball around the 7 yard line. OSU's player's kept to their lanes, so I advanced forward to get behind my blocking wedge.

I waited for an opening to clear but none did. When I reached the 20 yard line I chose the gap between Bill Daugherty and Joe Ricci. I knew I wasn't going to break free, but I'd get as many yards as I could out of the return. I managed to slip between them and keep running. I broke free of Bill and Joe's guys, bounced off another would-be tackler and cut back towards the center of the field to avoid the big guy on my right. A whole pile of tacklers collapsed on me when I reached the 39 yard line.

I congratulated myself as I waited for the bodies to be unstacked so I could get up after the play. I met the rest of the offense in the huddle.

"OK guys, this is going to determine the game," Zack said. "Ball control time. Make every play count. Nobody goes out of bounds on this drive." Zack called for a power run at the gap between JT Hill and Mahmoud Greene. "I want a touchdown and five minutes left on the clock when we leave the field," Zack demanded. "Make these guys bleed red! On two. Break!"

I fulfilled my role as a decoy forcing #27 and the free safety to cover me deep while Shawn carried the ball. We made our way down the field using the same formula as our previous drives – our big offensive line punching holes for Shawn and then hitting them with a play action pass when they were expecting a run. We used as close to 40 seconds as possible each play. Shawn would run the ball a little then Damian would come in to relieve him.

We pushed down the field, gaining yards, running time off the clock and most importantly, keeping Ohio State's offense on the sidelines.

"Stay in bounds," Zack commanded each time we huddled. "Protect the ball. Keep that clock running!"

I caught a pass near the sideline on the drive. #27 was trying to pull me out of bounds while the free safety worked at prying the ball loose from me. I was proud to: a) survive that pounding, b) keep the ball, c) gain twelve yards and d) stay in bounds.

We pushed on against a desperate Ohio State defense – across midfield, across the 40, the 30 and finally into the red zone. They substituted in their big package defense. They stopped Shawn cold on first and ten from their 19 yard line. On second down we did a delay draw that went bad.

JT Hill stepped back too far as he snapped the ball, stepping on Zack's left foot. Zack went down like a sack of potatoes, losing the ball backwards as he went. Damian alertly fell on it just before he and Zack were swamped by a swarm of desperate Buckeyes.

The referees unstacked the pile and declared the ball was still ours. It was now third and sixteen at Ohio State's 25 yard line.

"Sorry Z. My bad," JT said apologetically when we huddled.

Coach Burton decided to take one shot at the end zone before kicking a field goal. He sent in our four receiver package. Anders, Hassan, and Christian lined up to the right. I was alone on the left side. Shawn came back in as our safety valve receiver. He was better at catching passes than my roommate.

The three receivers opposite from me worked, drawing most of the pass coverage to their side. I was covered by #27 and the free safety. I sprinted for the end zone and glanced back, expecting to see Zack lob the ball into the corner of the end zone for me.

Instead I saw a big defensive end plow into my friend just as the ball was launched. The ball bounced off the ground about five yards away, incomplete. Our offensive linemen helped Zack up. The field goal team jogged onto the field as we left. Coach Burton was not going to chance a fourth down play. We wanted points on the board.

Andrew Perkins came in and split the uprights cleanly on a 49 yard field goal try. Andrew had learned his craft well from Cooper Barnes last season. Score: 31-21 Penn State's favor.

Our offense had run six and half minutes off the clock and increased our lead to ten points. It was good work. Now our defense had to hold for the last six minutes of the game.

Zack, Anders, Shawn, Damian and I stood together to watch the finale. Andrew Perkins booted the kickoff into the end zone, leaving the Buckeyes eighty yards to navigate to score.

Ohio State's players calmly went to work. They mixed in runs and passes just like the previous drives this half. Coach C sent in Angus Pitts and GJ DeLuca as defensive backs. Trevor, Jake and Mahmoud stayed in on the line while Karol and Josh backed them. Coach C emphasized that we couldn't give up any quick points. Make the Buckeyes work for every yard.

Our defense tried some stunts and blitzes to put Ohio State behind. They pushed down the field, averaging four yards a play. We tried to force a sack or a fumble but couldn't. We were able to keep the clock running while they marched down the field. Thirteen plays later Ohio State pushed the ball into the end zone. They made the PAT. Score 31-28 our favor.

Our defense had forced them to use all their timeouts and had run the clock down to 32 seconds. Coach C sent our "hands" special teams group onto the field for the obvious on-sides kick. My friends and I waited on the sideline, holding our breath. This was getting too damn close!

Ohio State's kicker bounced the ball down the field into our players. A scrum formed as our players and theirs battled for the ball. The ball slid along the ground out of the cluster of players. Shawn Byrd and an Ohio State player dove for it simultaneously. More players from both teams dove into the pile. The referees blew the play dead. When they unstacked things, Ohio State had the ball.

The stadium broke into an ear splitting roar of approval at this disgusting turn of events. Ohio State's offense lined up at their 49 yard line. Twenty-seven seconds remained in the game.

Our defenders covered the sidelines, to ensure that no receivers got out of bounds. The quarterback calmly fired the ball to his tight end in the middle of the field. Tyler Madden and Cuch made damn sure he was tackled in bounds after gaining twelve yards.

Ohio State's QB hurried his guys to the line and downed the ball to stop the clock. Twelve seconds remained in the game. He lined his guys up, took the snap and waited for the play to develop. Jake and Trevor both broke loose. The QB threw the ball into the end zone for an incomplection. Six seconds were left in the game.

Ohio State lined up with five receivers on the right side of their line. Coach C put seven defensive backs in, flooding the end zone in expectation of a Hail Mary pass. Trevor, Jake and Karol rushed the passer while the receivers sprinted down the field. The QB launched a bomb for the crowd in the end zone. Half a dozen guys leaped, trying to grab the ball.

My friends and I watched in horror as a hand in the crowd tipped the ball towards a Buckeye player. The guy caught the ball by his finger tips as our players converged, trying to jar the ball loose. Our tacklers drove him to the ground hard. He rolled over and held the ball aloft.

Everyone on the Penn State sideline stared in stunned disbelief as the referees signaled touchdown. I glanced over at the clock. It read 0:00. The Buckeye fans roared in approval as they realized that their team had pulled off the comeback. The final score was 34-31 Ohio State.

Our dreams of going to the BCS Championship game evaporated into the late night air above Ohio Stadium. Most of the team hurried off the field, congratulating any Ohio State players as they left.

#27 found me as I was jogging for the exit. I congratulated him perfunctorily as I jogged by.

“Hey, Martin – have you got a second?” Burkholder asked.

“What do you want?” I asked. I wasn’t really in the mood for someone to rub it in that we lost.

“I wanted to compliment you on how you played today,” Burkholder replied. “I never worked so hard to cover a receiver than today.”

“Thanks... um...” I replied.

“Eldon... I’m Eldon Burkholder,” he answered.

“It’s good to meet you Eldon,” I answered. “Eldon Burkholder. That’s an unusual name. You sound like you should be from Pennsylvania Dutch country with that name.”

Eldon smiled. “Ohio has Dutchmen too. My great grandparents were Mennonites who moved to Ohio from Pennsylvania. How about you? Martin is a Mennonite name here in Ohio.”

“My grandparents were too,” I replied.

“My dad has cousins who stayed in Pennsylvania, near New Holland, the town where they make the farm machinery,” Eldon said. “Have you heard of the place?”

“Heard of it?” I replied. “New Holland is a few miles from my house.”

“It’s a small world, isn’t it?” Eldon asked. Eldon and I talked for a couple minutes. We had a lot in common besides our heritage. Both of us were sophomores studying to become teachers. Eldon was planning on being a phys ed teacher. He was one of the rising stars on the Buckeye team. We wished each other good luck for the remainder of the season.

I thought about it as I jogged inside to the locker room. Eldon and I were going to face off two more times. Was I ready to face him again? I had five catches and gained 102 yards on the day and scored a touchdown. It was obvious that Ohio State wanted to limit the damage I did after last year’s loss. Largely they had been successful. I didn’t have a bad day but I also didn’t beat them.

My locker was a couple down from Zack's. A large crowd of reporters were interviewing him when I came in. I felt bad for my friend to have to face that crowd after such a devastating loss.

"Zack, how do you feel?" one of the reporters shouted.

"Feel?" Zack replied calmly. "This is a tough loss for us. I expected better of our team."

"Any comments on the sack and fumble that killed your final drive? Did you say anything to your center about it?"

"It wasn't Jelani's fault," Zack explained patiently. "I should have dropped back quicker than I did. That's how he ended up stepping on my foot. I take responsibility."

"Zack, what was the key to the game?" another reporter shouted.

"It lasted about six seconds too long," Zack answered. The crowd of reporters chuckled politely. "No, really Ohio State played a hell of a game today. I thought our team played well, but in the end the Buckeyes were better today."

I undressed and went off for my shower while the reporters peppered Zack with more questions. I marveled at my friend's patience. I knew he had to be hurting as much as I was, but he still sat and answered the reporters' questions. Zack was really special.

A few reporters were still talking with Zack when I came back ten minutes later. Zack was still talking, sweaty and dirty from the game. It was more of a conversation now between Zack and the reporters than an inquisition like earlier. The conversation continued a few more minutes while I dressed.

"You'll have to excuse me guys," Zack finally said, standing. "I have to get cleaned up. I've spent enough time in Ohio Stadium today. I don't want the bus to leave without me."

The reporters thanked Zack for his time and left.

"How do you do that Zack?" I asked. "This loss is killing me. I'm glad I only had to talk to a couple local reporters from back home tonight."

"I get the accolades when things do well," Zack explained. "I have to take responsibility when they go wrong. It's something Phil DiStefano taught me when I was younger. You'll need to do this when you're a leader on the team. The reporters have a job to do. So do I."

"This hurts so much," I replied. "How can you be so calm about losing?"

“Trust me, I’m hurting too,” Zack replied. “It won’t do me or the team any good to rant, scream or cry. On Monday we have to get ready to play Illinois next Saturday. We move on.” Zack gave me a wry smile. “Anyway, I hear Orlando is very nice in January.”

Zack was referring to the Capital One Bowl, a decidedly less appealing destination than the BCS Championship game in Miami or the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

“Yeah, I guess,” I answered.

“Remember we play football,” Zack said, winking. “It’s a funny shaped ball that bounces in odd directions. We may not be done yet.”

Zack’s confidence was amazing. I wished I could share in it. We had been sitting pretty for a shot at the championship and that was gone now. If we were lucky we wouldn’t drop out of the top ten in the country after today.

It was after midnight before the coaches got everyone loaded up to return to our hotel. Damian and I were too worked up after the game to go straight to bed. I fired up my laptop and sent Kelly an e-mail telling her I loved her and wished she was here to comfort me.

Damian talked about his part of the game. The loss hurt but still he was pleased at how he played. Damian had carried the ball sixteen times for eighty-three yards, for a 5.2 yards per carry average. Most important, the coaches handed him the ball repeatedly when the game was on the line. He definitely impressed the coaches. Wyatt Smith, his main competition for the #2 slot at tailback, had only gotten the ball twice all game.

My brother Andy had sent me an e-mail on Friday night reporting on our high school football team. Andy had three more touchdowns as our team trashed another hapless opponent. Matt, the Mad Bomber, had kept his undefeated streak going. Andy said Matt was playing way over his head for a tenth grader. It looked quite possible that my high school team could make the playoffs this season. They were 5-2. Their sternest test in the rest of the season would be next Friday night when they faced the Braves, one of the better teams in our league.

I sent Andy an e-mail congratulating him and the team on their performance. I knew Andy wouldn’t get the e-mail until he got home. He and Dad were visiting Temple this weekend.

Damian and I finally went to bed around one am. I lay awake for a while thinking about our defeat. Had I done enough to help? Ohio State chose take me out of the game as much as they could. Would I accept that and expect my teammates to carry the load for us to win future games?

I found out a few weeks ago that Terrell Ross from Michigan was just as fast as me. So was Eldon Burkholder. I decided I was going to have to improve my game all around if I

wanted our team to have the best chance at winning tight games like this one. Terrell could cover me and so could Eldon. I needed to learn some new things so I could beat them next year.

(To be continued)

Chapter 27

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The coaches had us up early for breakfast, checked out and on the road by eight am. The flight home to State College was quiet. I worked on my homework on the flight and listened to a few tunes on my MP3 player.

A few hundred die hard Penn State fans turned out to greet us when our buses brought us back to the Lasch Building Sunday morning. They cheered us even though we lost. The “football widows club” was out in force, each girl there to console her boyfriend.

Kelly and I walked down Hastings Road to Pollock Dorms together. Kelly seemed surprisingly upbeat.

“Didn't you hear?” Kelly asked. “Yesterday was the day for upsets.”

“What happened?” I asked. “I know Notre Dame lost. I feel bad for Jeremy.”

“Missouri got trounced 38-10 by Oklahoma, Notre Dame lost 31-20 to Stanford, #7 Alabama lost to Florida 42-20 and #8 Auburn lost big to Kentucky 35-10,” Kelly explained. “The only top ten teams that won yesterday were LSU, USC and of course, Ohio State.”

“Really?” I asked.

“You guys may not have hurt yourselves as much as you think,” Kelly explained. “Losing by four points in the final seconds to Ohio State looks a lot better than losing by ten or twenty points like the other teams did.”

“That is good news,” I agreed. Zack had been right last night. The ball was funny shaped and bounced in strange ways. I expected there would be a lot of my teammates in the player's lounge tonight when the latest BCS rankings were announced that evening.

Kelly and I stopped by the Mix and bought a Sunday newspaper on the way back to my room. We spent a couple hours digesting the day's paper and enjoying each other's company.

I received sympathy e-mails from Jeremy, Ed and Hal. I returned congratulatory e-mails to Ed and Hal, whose teams had won and a sympathy e-mail to Jeremy. Ed was happy. He expected Florida to return to the top ten this week. He had played the entire fourth quarter after Elijah was finished for the day. He went 4 of 6 for 57 yards and a touchdown.

The newspaper said my high school teammate Drew McCormick had half a dozen carries for forty yards when West Virginia beat Pittsburgh. Drew scored his first touchdown yesterday.

While I was reading and sending e-mails, one came from my brother Andy. He and Dad were home from Temple. The visit went OK but Andy decided he wasn't interested in being an Owl. The only college visit left was to the University of Delaware next weekend. Penn State was still his first choice for college next year. That was excellent news!

Andy also reported that Tex Johanson was looking forward to his official visit to Penn State next weekend. Andy kindly forwarded Tex's e-mail address to me. I sent off an e-mail welcoming him to campus and promising him that I'd spend some time with him over the weekend.

Andy also told me that Justin and Sherry Baer were going to use Dad's tickets to the Illinois game. I sent Justin an e-mail asking him to give me a call when he got to campus on Saturday. Hopefully Zack and I could hook up with them.

Other news in the sport section was grim for Philadelphia fans. The Red Sox beat the Phillies again last night while we were losing to Ohio State. They lost Game 3 5-4 in the eleventh inning.

Over half the team gathered in the player's lounge after dinner. We watched the tail end of the New York Giants / Denver Broncos game while we waited for Fox to announce this week's BCS standings. Our former teammate Antwaan Booker dominated his side of the line. We cheered both times he caught and sacked Eli Manning. Unfortunately Antwaan's great game was for naught. The Giants won 17-6. The Bronco's vastly improved defense needed an offense to go with it.

The top three teams in the BCS ranking surprised no one. USC was first, closely followed by LSU. Ohio State jumped up to number three as expected. Our cheers shook the building to its foundations when they announced #4 – us! The pollsters and the computer gave us due credit for a good game against another strong team.

USC scored a 0.9745 rating, LSU a 0.9630 and Ohio State a 0.9145 in the rankings. We had a 0.8467, closely followed by Oklahoma at 0.8311, and Florida at 0.8284. Missouri, Alabama, Notre Dame and West Virginia rounded out the bottom half of the BCS Top Ten.

Our team had picked a great weekend to lose, if we had to lose. Every Penn State fan on earth was going to be cheering for Wisconsin, Michigan State, Northwestern and Michigan – Ohio State's last four opponents. Maybe one or two of them could take Ohio State down and we could slip back into contention. Of course, we had to take care of our business too – beating Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan State.

Zack Hayes put a damper on our celebration when he announced we were having a team members only meeting immediately after dinner on Monday. Zack seemed to be in a bad mood considering the good news we had received that evening.

Only a few guys were hanging out in the player's lounge later Sunday night after I finished my daily workout. Game 4 of the World Series was on. I stopped to watch just as Boston's pitcher walked Jimmy Rollins. The Phils were down 2-0 and it was the fifth inning. I hung around a little to see if the team had any life left after two straight defeats. Jimmy managed to steal second while the pitcher was dealing with a pesky Shane Victorino. The unsettled pitcher ended up walking the Flyin' Hawaiian too. Chase Utley followed up by hitting a single to load the bases.

Everybody in the room was glued to the TV now. Ryan Howard came up and took two quick strikes. He settled after that, battling back to a 3-2 count. Big old Ryan clobbered a fastball the pitcher served up to him on the next pitch, sending the ball deep into the stands.

I had to get back to my room to finish homework for Monday, so I left with the Phillies leading 4-2. It was 7-2 when I got back to my room and Boston had a new pitcher. Damian and I watched the rest of the game as we finished our homework. The Phillies won 7-3, giving them breathing room and a realistic shot at winning the series again.

The coaches were harder on us than I expected when we did our video review of the game on Monday afternoon. I got chewed out for a couple of my run blocks. I wasn't sure why. My technique looked proper. Damian was chewed out for dropping a pass late in the game. Zack, Karol, Evan and Jake reminded everyone at the end of practice that we had a mandatory team meeting immediately after dinner.

I asked Zack what I was to do. I had my scuba class from 6:00 to 7:30 that evening. Zack's response? "Get your ass to the damn meeting! You can go play in the pool later."

Fortunately I had Mr. Coleman's cell phone number since he was my boss when I guarded at the Natatorium. When I called him he allowed me to report for class when my meeting was over.

Damian and I walked back to the Training Table together. The coaches' comments about my blocking still stung.

"What is the problem with my blocking?" I asked. "I've watched the film. I think I'm using the technique they've taught me."

Damian chuckled. "It's not technique Kyle."

"What then?"

“You don’t shy away from contact when you have the ball,” Damian replied. “You seem to enjoy hitting people then.”

“OK yeah,” I agreed.

“When you’re blocking it’s like you’re dancing with them,” Damian explained. “Blocking is partly technique, but more it’s attitude. You gotta try and knock them on their asses. Be MEAN! Don’t just stand in their way.”

“OK” I agreed.

“I’ve seen you knock people over when you have the ball,” Damian said. “Block that way too.”

“OK, I’ll give it a try,” I replied.

“Now it’s your turn to give advice,” Damian said. “Why am I such a poor receiver?”

I chuckled. “It’s not attitude, it’s technique. You need more practice buddy.”

“More practice?” Damian asked. “When do I find time for that? The coaches never give me much time to work with the quarterbacks.”

“Do you remember me last fall?” I asked. “I begged Steve, Andrew, Coop and Mitch for time after practice so I could learn to catch punts and kickoffs. How’d that work out for me?”

“OK, I get your point,” Damian agreed.

“Talk to Zack, Chip, Glenn or Colin,” I said. “I’m sure they’ll give you some extra work. If they won’t, talk to me. I’ll be happy to throw you some balls and help you improve your technique.”

“You?” Damian asked dubiously.

“I’ve taken some snaps under center,” I insisted. “I won’t make a living doing it, but I can play quarterback in a pinch.” Both of us got a good laugh out of the image of me lining up under center in the Big Ten. Not in our lifetimes! The two of us agreed to coach each other in blocking and pass catching as we walked to dinner.

Zack, Jake, Karol and Evan read the riot act to the team at our meeting Monday night. Coach Burton had prepared our captains with information on what had happened to Penn State previously when our team was in this situation.

The 1982 National Championship team overcame a loss. They explained how the 1999 team had let a loss to Minnesota get them down. They lost the rest of the games in that season. The 2005 team had overcome a loss to Michigan. The 2008 team managed to overcome their loss to Iowa too.

Our captains demanded that we put in extra study time to prepare for our last four games. They promised that we would “kick Illini butts from here to Boalsburg and back on Saturday,” to quote Jake’s colorful description. Everyone understood in no uncertain terms what was expected when the meeting was over.

I arrived at my scuba class half an hour late. I asked if there was anything I needed to make up but Mr. Coleman said no, not to worry about it. Most of the time I missed was used to get people comfortable underwater and Mr. Coleman wasn’t concerned about a “water rat” like me getting comfortable.

I caught up with the other receivers after class for our Monday night receivers’ meeting with Coach Adams. Coach went over what I missed while I was at class when the receivers’ meeting was over. It was close to 8:30 by then and I was going to be late getting to Kelly’s room for our planned History 20 study session.

I was in a quandary. I wanted to spend time with Kelly that evening but after the team meeting and receivers’ meeting, I knew I needed to study more video to get ready for our game against Illinois. I gave Kelly a call on my cell phone.

“Honey, I’m sorry,” I said when Kelly answered. “I’ve got to stay over here at the Lasch Building tonight. The captains and the coaches are after more work from everybody. I have to study video to get ready for Saturday’s game.”

“Ooohh... I was looking forward to spending time with you this evening sweetie,” Kelly said. From the tone of her voice I knew my girl was pouting. “We hardly have any time together now.”

“I know honey,” I agreed. “I wish I had more time during football season but I don’t. Four more weeks and I will have free time.”

Kelly sighed and answered, “Yeah, I guess. Can you stop by on your way back to the dorm? I’d like to see you a little tonight.”

Absolutely,” I promised. “I’ll stop by so we can cuddle a little. How’s that sound?”

“Good. I love you Kyle,” Kelly said.

“I love you too,” I replied.

I headed over the film room and studied video of Illinois for an hour. I had a brain storm as I was finishing my study. I had met some of Penn State’s most successful receivers in

the past year. Why not tap them for suggestions to improve my game? I made a list of receivers that I wanted to talk to – Glenn Walker, Derrick Williams, Deon Butler, Joe Jurevicius and Bobby Engram. Unfortunately I didn't know how to get a hold of most of them, except for Bobby.

I had put Bobby's phone number in my cell phone a few weeks ago when we met. I wanted to be able to contact him back then so I could beg for money for the Thon. I glanced at my watch and saw it was twenty to ten. I almost stopped dialing until I remembered I Bobby lived on the West Coast. It wasn't even seven o'clock where he was.

Bobby answered the phone himself. He seemed pleased to talk after I explained what I was looking for. The two of us must have talked for a half hour, discussing ways for me to be a more effective receiver. Bobby had one final thing to say when we wrapped up our conversation.

"I'm 5-10," Bobby explained. "I've given you the perspective of someone my size. You need to talk to some of the big receivers too. I'd suggest you call Joe Jurevicius or Glenn Walker. They may be able to give you some ideas that fit your height."

"Both of them are on the list of receivers I plan to call," I replied. "I don't know how to reach either of them. I think I can get Glenn's number from Zack Hayes. Would you happen to have Joe's number? I've never met him."

"I'll go one better Kyle," Bobby replied. "Joe and I went to school together. I'll call him for you and have him get in touch with you. Joe can give you a lot of insight into how a big receiver can use his body size to dominate a DB. What's your phone number Kyle?"

I gave Bobby my number and thanked him for all his help. I gave Kelly a call as I walked back to the dorms. It was after ten o'clock and was pretty late for me to visit. Kelly agreed when I talked with her. We exchanged "good nights" and said we'd see each other at breakfast time.

At breakfast Kelly told me about Game 5 of the World Series, which I missed the previous night. She had watched it with Bev, Cindy and Jen, all die-hard Phillies fans. The Phillies had won a tight game 3-2 with a Jimmy Rollins solo homer in the eighth. Game 6 was going to be big when the two teams returned to Boston to play on Wednesday night.

I spent as much time as possible with Kelly on Tuesday before she had her golf class in the afternoon.

Coach Burton had this week's recruit guides come in fifteen minutes before practice. Zack, Damian, Yasin, Colin, Mitch Jackson and I were assigned the duties this week. This week's recruits included Tex Johanson from my high school; Robert Huber, a quarterback from Lebanon, Pa.; Caleb Fuller, a punter from CD East High School outside Harrisburg, Pa.; Etienne LeBlanc, a running back from Montpelier, NH; and John Crosby, a wide receiver from Damian's high school in Erie.

Tuesday and Wednesday's practices were tense. The coaches and the captains demanded that we run things to perfection. If it wasn't right, we did it again, and again and again. Morale improved in spite of this. We grew more confident that we would be ready on Saturday. The Fighting Illini had better watch out.

I got an e-mail from Jay on Tuesday evening. He had come home from the hospital in Birmingham a couple days earlier. He talked his mom into getting a wireless router for their house and setting it up. Jay was able to use his laptop to keep in touch with the world from his bed.

Dr. Andrews said the operation on Jay's leg went well. Jay wasn't allowed to put any weight on it for a few weeks, so he was stuck in bed, probably until Thanksgiving. With extensive rehab in December the doctors expected him to be able to get around with crutches in January when the next semester started. He'd see us then.

Game 6 of the World Series was on Wednesday night. Kelly had a big paper due in Comm 260 on Thursday that she hadn't finished. I offered to watch the series on her little TV and stay with her while she worked. Kelly gave me a hug and kiss and sent me to the Lasch Building to watch the game with my friends. I would be too much of a distraction to her.

Coach Burton had Ryan Reynolds run a TV feed into the projection system in the team meeting auditorium. More than three quarters of the team turned out to watch the game in comfortable theater style seats on the big screen. The university and the athletic department did take good care of us.

Damian and I found seats with Trevor, Shawn Byrd, Christian, and GJ – our usual group of friends. The team captains brought in popcorn and sodas. This night was an excellent way to relax during a hard week.

Brett Myers pitched the game of his life that evening. He held the powerful Boston lineup scoreless through six innings. Ryan Howard scored the only run of the game in the third inning with a solo home run. Things continued going well for the Phillies into the seventh inning. J. C. Romero retired three batters with two strike outs and an out on a pop-up.

Disaster struck in the eighth inning. David Ortiz got a single. J. D. Drew, to the accompaniment of boos from all the Phillies fans in the room, hit the ball over the Green Monster. The chorus of boos continued as he rounded the bases to give the Red Sox a 2-

1 lead. Drew had been hated in Philly since the day years earlier that the Phillies had drafted him and he refused to play for them.

The Phillies were too punky to let that get them down. Jimmy Rollins worked the pitcher to get a walk to start the ninth inning. Jimmy deviled the pitcher, threatening to steal on every pitch as the pitcher tried to get Victorino out. Jimmy beat the catcher's throw on the third pitch to steal second base. Victorino scorched the next ball past the pitcher into shallow center field for a single. Rollins was stopped at third by the coach.

Chase Utley stepped up to bat but had to wait when Terry Francona called time so he could talk with his pitcher. Everyone in the room expected the pitcher to be pulled. Terry talked for a minute, patted the pitcher on the back and walked back to the dugout.

Chase watched the first pitch go by for a ball. Shane took a commanding lead off first, further flustering the poor pitcher. After a couple half hearted pickoff attempts he delivered the first ball to Chase. Chase stroked through the slightly misplaced pitch and blasted it up and away.

The auditorium erupted in cheers as Harry Kalas, the Phillies announcer, exclaimed, "That ball is outa' here!" Chase rounded the bases as my friends and I exchanged high fives and cheered.

"He's amazing," Trevor exclaimed as the Phillies met Chase at home plate to celebrate their 4-2 lead.

"Did you hear the rumor?" Shawn Byrd asked. "I overheard the coaches talking about Chase Utley visiting one of our games in a few weeks. Maybe we'll get a chance to meet him."

"Yeah, Chase is visiting," I acknowledged. "He's coming to visit for the Michigan State game."

"Yeah, like you'd know that," Trevor answered sarcastically.

"I know Chase," I answered.

"Right! You're bullshitting us Kyle," Trevor declared. "There is no way you know Chase Utley."

"No, it's the truth," I responded. "I met Chase at a game in Pittsburgh last May when I went out to visit Kelly. I met him when I went down for his autograph."

"Autograph?" Trevor replied. "OK, I believe you met Chase Utley, but there is no way in hell you KNOW him. Utley wouldn't know you from Adam if he showed up here to visit one of our games."

“Wanna make a bet?” I said, smiling. “I’ll bet you a month of laundry that Chase Utley will walk up to me in the next month and greet me by name.”

“Seriously?” Trevor asked, incredulous. “You’ll do my laundry for a month unless Chase Utley comes up to you and greets you by name?” I nodded my head yes. “He has to know your name, right? He can’t be introduced to you first and then call you by name.”

“That’s right, by name without introduction,” I answered. I nodded my head for emphasis.

“You’re such a bull-shitter Kyle,” Trevor answered. “I’ll take that bet.” We shook hands on it. Of course I didn’t tell Trevor that Coach Burton had given me Chase’s tickets after practice that day. They were in my pocket and I was writing him a letter and mailing him the tickets later that evening. Trevor didn’t need that information.

My friends and I turned our attention back to the TV when that was settled. Brad Lidge came in for the ninth inning and nailed down the win by getting three batters out in order. Our auditorium echoed with cheering as we celebrated the Phillies’ second World Series championship in the 21st century.

Chase Utley was selected the MVP for the series, based on his .323 batting average, 4 home runs and 9 RBI’s. He had been spectacular fielding at second base and had turned some beautiful double plays with Jimmy Rollins.

I wrote a nice congratulations letter to Chase when I got back to my dorm room and enclosed the two tickets for him and his nephew. I invited him to meet me at the Lasch Building Saturday morning before the game. I offered to give him and his nephew a tour and to let them meet some of the players on our team.

Half the students on campus were groggy Thursday morning. The game and post game ceremonies hadn’t ended until well after midnight. It was worth it. The repeat championship was just as much fun as the first one in 2008.

The football team’s hard work over the week seemed to pay off. Thursday’s practice was the best practice I had seen since I had joined the team fifteen months earlier. Illinois was in for a tough game when they arrived at Beaver Stadium on Saturday.

Zack, Chip, Ryan Reynolds and I spent half of Thursday night studying video and reviewing the game plan to get Chip and Zack ready to play. Coach Burton wanted Chip to play in the fourth quarter if we had a ten point lead or better so he could get experience. Chip was ecstatic at the prospect.

My ever generous roommate agreed to spend an hour over at Billy Robinson’s room after I returned from video study that evening. Kelly came over for our normal Thursday night tryst. Both of us were satisfied by the time Damian came back a little before ten o’clock.

Kelly had excellent news for Damian and me when he returned. Jen planned to stay overnight at Darrell's apartment on Saturday night, so I would spend the night with Kelly and Damian would have privacy in our room.

Coach Burton had us walk through the game plan at Friday's practice instead of playing full tilt. The rest from the hard week was welcome. The team had dinner at the Training Table, did a team meeting at the Lasch Building and then took buses over to Toftrees for the night.

Damian and I got together with Trevor, Shawn Byrd and GJ in Shawn's room and played some poker for an hour or so. The game broke up about fifteen minutes before our eleven o'clock curfew. Damian and I headed back to our room.

I was curious about how my brother's football game went that night. The Wolverines were playing the Braves, one of the top teams in our league. The Wolverines' chance of making the playoffs required them to win every game for the rest of the season. I hoped they could continue their string of wins. I logged onto Channel 8's website and went to the sports section.

The top headline on that page reported "Wolverines Flog Braves 55-0". The report said Andy had returned the opening kickoff for a touchdown and had caught three more touchdown passes in the game. Tex Johanson had two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown. I certainly looked like I'd be able to see my high school team in a playoff game when I got home for Thanksgiving.

Damian and I were packing our travel bags Saturday morning when my cell phone rang. It was a little after 9:30 am. It was Justin Baer. I gave him directions to the Lasch Building. He and Sherry would meet me there. I had permission from Coach Burton to give them a tour of the facilities before lunch.

Damian and I headed downstairs, checked out and loaded our things on a bus. We were dropped off outside the Lasch Building a little after ten o'clock. Zack, Chip and I studied our game plan together while we waited for Justin, Sherry and the recruits to arrive.

The intercom in the locker room crackled and Ann Marie, our receptionist, announced, "Kyle Martin, you have a Mr. Baer to see you in the lobby."

"Justin?" Zack asked, grinning. I nodded yes. "What's he doing here?"

"Justin and Sherry are using my dad's tickets today," I explained. "Dad and Andy are visiting the University of Delaware this weekend."

"Cool!" Zack exclaimed. "Do you mind if I visit them too?"

“Sure, be my guest,” I answered.

The two of us headed out to the lobby. We greeted Justin and Sherry warmly. Justin looked Zack in the eye as they shook and exclaimed, “Dude, I didn’t expect you’d have time to visit this morning. You’ve got a game to prepare for.”

“The game is almost five hours away,” Zack replied. “I can spare a few minutes for old friends.”

“I’m surprised,” Justin answered. “Your brother was borderline obsessive about quiet time to prepare before a game. I expected Sam’s little brother would be at his locker studying the playbook before the game.”

I laughed and added, “You nailed him Justin. That’s exactly what Zack was doing before you came.”

“And it’s what I’ll be doing in a few minutes when we’re done visiting,” Zack said. “I will have plenty of free time after the game.”

“Justin Baer?” The four of us turned to see who was calling for Justin. We were surprised to see Coach Burton standing near us.

“Yes?” Justin replied.

“Didn’t I try to recruit you to play for me when I was at Lehigh?” Coach Burton asked.

“Yes sir, you did,” Justin agreed.

“I thought I remembered that name,” Coach Burton said. “Baer is an unusual name. I assume you are the football coach Kyle is showing around.”

“Yes sir, I am. I work part time for Walt Caffrey,” Justin explained.

“Walt is a very good coach,” Coach Burton said. “I’ve always been impressed his work – obviously...” Coach Burton gestured toward me. “... Hayes, Kring, the Martin brothers, Johanson. His young men are always well prepared.”

“Justin had a part in that too,” I interjected. “He is the one who taught me to follow my blockers.”

“Uh-huh... did you teach him that?” Coach Burton said. Justin nodded in agreement. “That was good work. Where did you end up going to college? I never heard”

Justin chuckled. “Penn State.” He paused to watch Coach Burton’s surprise. “I did night school at Capital Campus. My wife and I had our first son while we were still in high school.”

“What was that? Something like seven or eight years ago?” Coach Burton asked. “I bet your son is a real chip off the old block.”

“Billy is eight,” Justin replied. “He started pee wee football this fall. He plays running back.”

Coach Burton chuckled. “If he has any of your God given talent, I’ll be calling him in about ten years.”

“Who knows?” Justin answered. “Maybe that will happen. Thanks for letting Kyle give my wife and me a tour of the facilities.”

Coach Burton headed back to his office. After Coach Burton left Zack asked, “Do you two want to join Kyle and our girlfriends for dinner downtown after the game?”

“We’d love to but we can’t,” Justin replied. “Sherry’s mom is watching the boys. She needs to get home at a decent time tonight so she can be ready to teach Sunday School tomorrow morning. We plan to book as soon as the game is over.”

“That’s too bad,” Zack said. “What’s new with the two of you?”

The four of us talked about what was happening back home and here at school for a few minutes. Zack apologized for not staying longer, but he had to get back to his game preparations. I took on Justin and Sherry on a tour of the Lasch Building facilities. We found Zack studying the game plan with Chip Brinton when we popped into the video room.

Justin and Sherry were suitably impressed with the facilities our team had. We were walking back to the lobby when I commented, “Kelly is going to be disappointed that you can’t stay for dinner. She was looking forward to seeing you tonight.”

“Kelly?” Justin said, looking surprised.

“You’re still with her?” Sherry added. “Not many teenage couples stay together for long. The kids in the Venturer Crew are change partners so often that I can’t keep up with them. Are you and Kelly serious?”

“We barely qualify as teenagers anymore. Kelly turns twenty in January and I do the following July,” I replied. “And yes, our relationship is very serious. Don’t be shocked if you get a wedding invitation in a two or three years.”

“Really?” Sherry asked. “That’s good. The two of you make a nice couple.”

“Thanks for the compliment,” I said as we walked into the lobby.

“Coach Baer?” a familiar voice said from behind us. “What are you doing here?”

Justin, Sherry and I turned to find Tex Johanson sitting in the reception area with his parents.

“Michael! Just making sure you keep out of trouble,” Justin said as he winked.
“Actually Kyle was giving us a tour of the facilities. Kyle’s dad is going on a recruiting visit with Andy this weekend. We’re using his tickets today.”

“That’s cool,” Tex agreed. We spent a minute introducing Sherry to the Johansons and the rest of us greeting each other.

When the introductions were done Tex asked, “Could you give me a tour of the football building Kyle? I’d like to see the facilities.”

“Patience,” I explained. “You and the other four recruits will meet with Coach Burton first. He’ll introduce you to the rest of the guides for the weekend.”

Justin, Sherry and I sat with the Johansons while we waited for the other recruits to arrive. Tex and Justin filled me in on the details of our high school team’s demolition of the Braves the previous night. Confidence was high on the team that they’d make the playoffs. The remaining two opponents were the Trojans and Norlanco.

Damian showed up a few minutes later. He greeted an African-American guy who came in with his parents. I assumed he was John Crosby, the wide receiver who played for Damian’s Strong Vincent Colonels. He was average height, maybe 5’-11” and thin. John was going to need to bulk up some if he came to Penn State. The Big Ten cornerbacks would never let him across the line of scrimmage if they played bump and run coverage on him.

The Fullers, the Hubers and the LeBlancs arrived within a couple minutes of each other. The boys and their parents filed into Coach Burton’s office.

Justin said, “We should probably get going. I’m sure you have some preparations to do for the game.”

“Yes, I do,” I agreed. “Thanks for stopping by.”

“Which way is the Creamery?” Justin asked as he and his wife reached the door. Everyone says we MUST have some ice cream there when we visit Main Campus.”

I gave them directions to find the Creamery. When I finished Justin asked, “Do I come back this way to get back to the stadium?”

“No,” I answered laughing. “Stay on Curtin Road. It’s the really, really big building that seats a 107,000 at the end of the road. You can’t miss it.”

“Thanks smart ass,” Justin said. We shook hands. “Have a good game Kyle.”

“Thanks for the tour Kyle,” Sherry added. I gave her a kiss on the cheek before she and Justin left.

Yasin, Damian, Mitch, and I waited outside until Coach Burton called us in and introduced us to the recruits. I was impressed at Robert Huber’s size. He looked to be an inch or so shorter than me and sturdy looking. He’d be hard for linebackers and defensive backs to take down on blitzes.

Caleb Fuller, the punter from outside Harrisburg, wasn’t a scrawny kid like you’d expect for a punter. He was probably 6’-1” and husky. Etienne LeBlanc, the tailback from New Hampshire was built like my roommate Damian, short and stocky.

Tex Johanson was the only one that didn’t fit the beefy look of the other recruits. My ex-teammate had grown to 6’-1”. I doubt he weighed more than 170 pounds. He was going to have to beef up a little if he was going to play in the Big Ten. Cornerbacks do have some run responsibilities.

Coach Burton invited the recruits and their parents to go to the Training Table with the team for lunch. Yasin Clark took the recruits and parents on a campus tour after lunch while the team headed back to the locker room.

We dressed for the game and then took buses over to the stadium. The afternoon was sunny, cool and breezy when we went out for warm-ups. The weatherman predicted that the current high forties temperatures would drop by the end of game to the high thirties.

The stands were filling with white clad fans. This game was another white-out. We did our warm-ups. My teammates and I were up-beat. We were confident that we would take care of our business with the Illini, unlike the previous game.

I noticed Zack staring as he scanned the stadium as we were finishing up. I asked, “What’s up?”

“Can you believe I only have one more game here after this one?” Zack asked.

“I know,” I agreed.

“Enjoy your time here Kyle,” Zack said. “It goes by faster than you will believe.”

“We’ve got five more games together,” I replied. “Let’s make the most of them.”

Zack and I shook hands on that. We headed inside with our teammates for our final preparations. Coach Burton challenged us to give our best today, to make up for last

Saturday. Our loss last week didn't diminish the enthusiasm of the Penn State faithful when we ran on the field.

Illinois won the coin toss and chose to receive the ball. The Illini have a mobile quarterback and ran the option play a lot. Three straight runs step up our defense for the next play, a play action pass.

The play unfolded right in front of the Penn State sideline. Illinois' best receiver, #80, ran a post route down the sideline. Shawn Byrd had excellent coverage. The quarterback made a near perfect throw, just over the outside shoulder of the receiver, inches above Shawn outstretched hands. #80 caught the ball by his fingertips and tapped his foot down before falling out of bounds. The referee spotted the ball on our 24 yard line.

Coach C adjusted to counter the option play. Three straight runs netted Illinois six yards. They settled for a 36 yard field goal. Score: 3-0 Illinois

I settled in at our 5 yard line for the kickoff. The kicker boomed it pretty good. I drifted back almost to the goal line where I caught the ball. Shawn Byrd said to run it out, so I took off to get behind my blocking wedge. Dermot McMillan and Bill Daugherty opened a crack. I shot through the hole, dodging to the right to avoid a tackler. I accelerated, angling for the Penn State sideline.

The kicker followed me over that way, trying to intercept me. I juked, and spun away as he lunged at me, heading back for the center of the field. The pursuit caught me just as I cleared the kicker. They put me down hard at their 48 yard line.

Coach Burton had Shawn O'Conner run off tackle, cutting back against the grain and gaining eleven yards. As expected Illinois had double covered me on the first play. Coach Burton had me line up in the slot beside Hassan Jackson on the right side of the line. Hassan went in motion before the snap, ending up in the slot. The Illini defense didn't have time to adjust before Zack took the snap.

I sprinted downfield along the sideline. As I got separation from the d-back, Zack launched the ball to me as I passed their 20 yard line. The ball came in over my right shoulder, perfectly on target. I ran on, breaking the free safety's arm tackle on the way to the end zone. Andrew Perkins made the PAT, as always. Score: 7-3 Lions

Our defense took the field fired up to improve on their performance on the first drive. They did. Three plays later the Illini punted the ball back to me. I managed to get 15 yards on the punt return.

We only needed seven plays on the second drive to score. Tanner Riggs was ecstatic when he caught his first touchdown in the end zone. Our defense held Illinois to short, unproductive drives.

The offense... well, the offense clicked in a way I'd never seen before. Zack's throws were near perfect. Our offensive line dominated the Illini line. We scored four touchdowns on our first four possessions. Illinois could move the ball on our defense, some, but not enough to sustain drives to the end zone. We led 28-6 at half time.

Coach Burton decided the first string had seen enough play at half time. Chip Brinton took over for the second half of the game. Coach Adams told me I would play with Chip on the first drive of the second half. He explained to my question 'Why?' that my deep threat would keep the Illini defense loose and make our running game more effective.

Tanner Riggs had a nice twenty-seven yard return on the second half kickoff to get our drive started. The coaches had Chip hand the ball off five straight times to Damian for runs up the middle, gaining 31 yards and two first downs on the way.

Damian, Christian and I did our best to keep Chip calm. He was living his life's dream playing in front of the fans in Beaver Stadium. Coach Burton called for a quick pass on the next play. Chip dropped back three steps and fired the ball out to Christian on the strong side of the field. Christian caught the ball three yards downfield, broke the first tackle and picked up about five more yards.

The drive continued with mostly running plays and an occasional safe passing play. Chip hit Jibril Sloan, our #2 tight end, across the middle. After a couple more runs, Chip threw a pass behind Tanner Riggs as he ran a slant, leaving us with third down and 6 yards to go.

Illinois blitzed Chip on the next down. Fortunately Coach Burton had expected that. Chip fell back from the rushers and then tossed the ball over their heads to Wyatt Smith out in the flat where he was waiting for the screen pass. Wyatt picked up eight yards and another first down.

Coach Burton called a play action pass on the next play. I was the primary receiver out on the weak side. The linebackers bought into the run fake, but the safeties didn't. I ran my fifteen yard route, covered by the cornerback shallow and the free safety deep. I turned back for the ball, not really expecting it to come my way. The proper read on the defense's coverage called for the ball to go to Tanner or Christian, depending on who was single covered.

I was shocked when I looked and found the ball was heading my way and looked to be a little short too. I jumped and almost dove over top of the cornerback to get to the ball. Both of us grabbed the ball at the same time. I rolled as I came down, outwrestling the cornerback. The free safety crunched into me driving me to the ground hard. I had possession of the ball when we untangled the pile. It was a fourteen yard gain.

"Good catch Kyle!" Chip enthused as I joined the huddle.

“You shouldn’t have thrown the ball to me. I was covered,” I countered. “One of the others should have been open.”

“Yeah Chip, I’d beaten my guy,” Christian said.

“The linebacker who should have had me tackled Damian,” Jibril added. “I was totally open.”

“You were the primary receiver on the play Kyle,” Chip replied defensively.

“Take what the defense gives us,” I said. “The other guys were safer choices this time. We’ll talk about this some more on Monday when we study the video.”

Coach Burton stuck to mostly running plays after that, lowering the risk of an interception. The Illini defense finally tightened up as we pushed the ball into the red zone. Chip was forced to scramble on a third and six play when the Illini blitzed. He made four yards. Andrew Perkins came in and booted the ball through the uprights for a field goal. Score: 31-6 Lion’s favor.

Coach Adams, Zack and I debriefed Chip when Illinois took possession of the ball. We reviewed the positives and the negatives from the drive. Chip hadn’t done bad for a freshman playing for the first time. We talked about what he could expect for the next drive too. Coach Adams promised there would be a lot of running again along with a few high percentage passes to keep the defense off balance.

Illinois managed another long drive ending in a field goal while Zack and I were occupied helping Chip. Coach Adams told me to relax, I was done for the afternoon. Aidan Nagy took the split end spot.

Chip threw an interception on the next drive when he threw into double coverage on Christian. It was the exact same play where he threw into double coverage to me on the other side of the field on the previous drive. The Illini rated Christian the biggest receiving threat when I wasn’t on the field, showing him great respect by doubling him.

Illinois couldn’t capitalize on Chip’s error. They punted the ball back to us. The coaches were satisfied to rely almost entirely on Damian, Wyatt and Charlie Taylor’s running after that. Chip managed the plays properly. Damian ran the ball in from the five yard line on the next drive to score a touchdown. Score: 38-9 Lions

Illinois managed a touchdown late in the fourth quarter, long after the game was decided. Our team was content to run out the clock and take a 38-16 win. Zack had been excellent in the first half, completing 12 of 15 passes for 208 yards and two touchdowns. Chip’s stats weren’t bad for a first start: 6 completions in 10 pass attempts for 99 yards. The no touchdowns and one interception didn’t look quite as good. The second half had been a good introduction into the Big Ten for my buddy.

The fans cheered us as the last seconds ticked off the clock for our victory. We could have put more points on the board against Illinois if we had wanted too. I agreed with Coach Burton that we needed to get Chip as much preparation as possible in case he had to play instead of Jay next season. Running up the score on our opponent just wasn't worthwhile.

I did a few TV interviews after the game and an interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer's assistant sports editor. They all had routine questions. Mr. Montgomery, from Lancaster's Sunday paper surprised me with his second question.

"Any comments about Ohio State today?" Mr. Montgomery asked.

"Ohio State?" I replied. "It was a tough loss last week, but I thought our team responded well today. We worked hard this week to eliminate some of the mistakes that cost us that game."

"No Kyle," Mr. Montgomery replied. "I was looking for a comment about Ohio State's loss today."

"They lost?" I questioned. Mr. Montgomery nodded yes. "Cool! I don't even know who they played."

"Wisconsin," he answered. "Ohio State lost 28-24 to Wisconsin this afternoon."

"Wow, I had no idea," I managed. "Maybe if we play hard the rest of the games, like today, we can have a chance at a good bowl game after all."

Mr. Montgomery asked me half a dozen questions about the game, which I was better prepared to answer. He thanked me for my time when he finished and wished us luck next week out in Iowa.

The news about Ohio State's loss was filtering through the locker room when I got inside. All of us were overjoyed at our opponent's misfortune. We might get an opportunity to climb back up in the polls if we maintained the intensity and focus we had today through the remainder of the season.

Ohio State still had the lead in the run for the Rose Bowl, if we couldn't break into the national championship picture again. They also ended their season by going to Ann Arbor to play Michigan. Ohio State had a good team, but they were beatable. I wasn't even sure if they would be favored against Michigan.

Yasin Clark brought the recruits into the locker room while we were changing. I invited Tex Johanson over to talk while I dressed after my shower. Tex was impressed with our team's performance. We talked about how Illinois covered me and what I did to beat them.

Yasin and Zack gathered up the recruits and other guides when we finished and went out to meet Coach Burton and the parents. Coach Burton briefed everyone on the night's plans. Zack led our group of guides and recruits out for dinner while Coach Burton took the parents to dinner at the Nittany Lion Inn with his assistants.

Leigh Ann and Kelly met us outside the Lasch Building. The group decided it was a pizza night, so we headed for Hiway Pizza. I spread my time between Tex, Kelly and John Crosby, the wide receiver from Damian's high school.

John seemed like a nice kid. He wasn't particularly tall. Damian told me he had excellent hands and caught any ball their quarterback threw his way. John ran track and field in addition to football. He was a sprinter like I was. His best time so far in the 100 meter was 10.52 seconds. He hoped to improve in the spring.

Yasin spent time with Tex talking about what it was like to play defensive back in the Big Ten. Tex seemed excited by what he had heard and seen this weekend. Tex had visited Virginia Tech, Baylor and LSU so far this fall. Tex and I compared impressions of Baton Rouge. He had forgotten that Ed Fritz and I had done official visits there two years ago. Tex was excited about his final official visit to Austin and the University of Texas in two weeks. He was torn between staying close to home and his parents for college and getting a chance to play at "home" in Texas.

I shared my thoughts based on my own deliberations two years ago when I was torn between USC, LSU and Penn State. I was happy I was here and that my family and friends could visit and see me play. Having that kind of support was great when you're adjusting to college life and all the stresses of football. I explained about my problems last fall and how much better things were for me this year when I could see Mom or Dad more frequently.

I hoped that speech would help sell him on Penn State. Tex's talent would go a long ways towards filling the void we still had from Aaron Morano's graduation last spring. I knew the attraction of getting back to his beloved Texas would be a big part in his decision. His attraction to his family might counter that yearning to go south next fall.

Zack paid for dinner for the guides and recruits. I paid for Kelly and Leigh Ann. That would help cover my share of the beer bill for the night's party at Zack's apartment. The whole group headed back to campus and for Zack's apartment when dinner was over. Jake, Keneisha, Evan and JT promised to have the apartment ready when we got back from dinner.

Zack went over the rules for his party as we crossed campus. Zack invited them to enjoy the snacks that would be out, visit with the team members, dance a little and have a beer or two if they were so inclined. He also warned them to be on their best behavior. Moderation was the word of the night. The five recruits agreed to Zack's rules.

Tex hung back a little on the way back. He tugged at my sleeve to get my attention. I stopped and Tex whispered into my ear.

“Can I talk with you privately for a minute Kyle?” Tex asked.

“Kelly, go ahead,” I said. “Tex and I need a minute. We’ll catch up.” Kelly agreed and continued walking with the group when Tex and I stopped.

“Do you think there’s a chance I will get to sleep with one of the girls?” he asked when the rest of the group was out of ear shot.

“What gave you an idea like that?” I asked. “We don’t have a bunch of cheerleaders back at the apartment ready to jump in bed with you to convince come here, if that’s what you were expecting.”

“No, I wasn’t expecting that,” Tex agreed. “But I did overhear your brother talking about getting laid both weekends he came to visit. I know Jake Kring slept with a girl when he visited. He bragged all about it last fall when he got back to school. Rumor has it that you slept with a coed when you were a recruit too. Is this true?”

“It’s true, but it’s not like it sounds,” I explained.

“I’ve got a couple condoms with me,” Tex said. “I’d be safe.”

“It’s not that Tex,” I explained. “You don’t know much about what Zack Hayes was like when he was in high school, do you?” Tex shook his head no. “Zack was a lady’s man back then. He slept with a different girl nearly every weekend. I found if I could hang out with him on Saturday nights my chances of getting somewhere with a girl went up exponentially. Half a dozen hot girls would be hanging all over Zack. He’d pick one to sleep with and the other five would end up looking around for somebody else to take to bed. It was good to be standing nearby.”

“OK, I see,” Tex said. “So I should hang out with Zack tonight? I thought he was dating Leigh Ann.”

“He is,” I answered. “All I did for Andy and Jake was to suggest who to talk with at the party so they would be standing in the right place to catch rebounds. The rest was up to them.” Tex nodded his understanding. “I thought Andy told me you have a serious girlfriend?”

“I do,” Tex answered. “Well, high school serious.” I raised my eyebrows questioningly. “Michelle and I are good together for high school, but we both know we don’t have a long term future. She has been accepted to Columbia through early admission.”

“...and they don’t have athletic scholarships,” I added. “Been there, done that. Penny begged me to go to Penn with her.”

“You wouldn’t do it because they don’t give scholarships there,” Tex said. “So you came here.”

“Exactly,” I said. Tex and I hurried to catch up to the group. I wanted to say more to him about faithfulness but didn’t. I knew his girlfriend Michelle Eckman and her parents. They were quite strict with Michelle. I doubted Tex and Michelle had many opportunities to be alone. Who was I to judge other people? I had enough trouble keeping myself under control.

Kelly helped Leigh Ann and Keneisha get snacks out when we arrived. I introduced Tex to Anders, Trevor, Evan and Chip and gave him a wink. Tex nodded his understanding of my meaning. His best chance of finding someone to go to bed with was with these guys. They represented the remains of the guys who hung out with Zack last season and attracted the best looking girls who wanted some fun at the party.

Damian and I talked with John Crosby and Etienne LeBlanc. Etienne had an unusual name and personal history. He was born in Quebec. His family had emigrated from Canada about ten years ago. He still had a slight French accent but was otherwise thoroughly American now.

Normally Penn State doesn’t do a lot of recruiting in New Hampshire. Etienne contacted our school because our school’s national championship two years ago had fired his imagination. He had a million questions about our offensive philosophy. Damian and I did our best to answer them. Etienne seemed to be a real student of the game.

Kelly joined us when the other girlfriends didn’t need her help. We talked about classes and what it was like to be a student at Penn State. Christian and Bev joined our group a little later.

I headed to get Kelly a beer and to get a soda for myself. Lori Brown, the freshman cutie endeavoring to sleep her way through the available team members, tapped me on the shoulder while I was getting my soda out of the refrigerator.

“Could you introduce me to Michael Johanson?” she asked. “Rivals.com says he went to the same high school as you. You know him, right?”

“Tex? Yeah, I know him,” I replied.

“Tex? Why do you call him that?” Lori asked.

“He’s from Texas. I started off calling him that to annoy him three years ago,” I explained. “Mike and I didn’t get along at first. Follow me and I’ll introduce you to him Lori.” I chuckled to myself as I led her over to the cluster of guys and girls talking at the far end of the living room. Tex had just gotten himself a ‘sure thing’ trip to bed with a really cute, if promiscuous young lady.

I gave Tex a wink as I introduced him to Lori. I just smiled when he returned the wink with a questioning look. Tex would figure Lori out soon enough. I told the two kids to have fun and reminded Tex that the car back to the hotel was leaving at 11:30 pm.

Billy Robinson joined us later. Their friends Mel and Sarah were back home in Erie that weekend, so Billy and Damian were bachelor-ing it this weekend.

Shawn O'Conner joined Damian, Billy, Etienne and John. The recruits seemed to be enjoying their talk so Kelly and I mingled with other guests. I cautioned Kelly to take it easy on the beer tonight. I was counting on having fun with her at her room after I dropped the recruits off at the Penn Stater Hotel. I didn't want a repeat of the party after the Michigan game a month before. Kelly promised to be on her best behavior.

I noticed Lori Brown and Tex Johanson making out about fifteen minutes later while Kelly and I were dancing. A few minutes later Lori led Tex off to one of the downstairs bedrooms. Tex looked back and gave me a sheepish smile as Lori led him away. I thought about his girlfriend at home, Michelle Eckman. She's a nice girl. She'd undoubtedly take it hard if she knew Tex was cheating on her this weekend. I sighed and shrugged my shoulders. What right did I have to judge people for their infidelities? I hadn't done any better last fall.

Kelly and I danced, talked and relaxed with our friends that evening. Kelly switched to pop after her second beer. Kelly and I cuddled a little but tried not to get too excited. We wouldn't be able to begin our night's fun until after I helped Zack deliver the recruits back to their hotel. That wouldn't be until after midnight.

Lori and Tex returned to the living room half an hour later. Lori grinned like the cat that got the canary. Tex had a happy, somewhat dazed look on his face. Lori gave Tex a good bye kiss and left the party.

He tried to strike up a conversation with Shawn Byrd, but Shawn was only interested in his girlfriend Jada Owens. Jada's a cute, cinnamon brown skinned sophomore who caught Shawn's eye earlier in the semester. Jada and Shawn were celebrating going steady for a month that evening.

Tex gave up on Shawn and Jada after a few minutes and joined Kelly and me. Tex filled us in on more details of our high school's game last night beyond the bare details I had gotten from browsing the internet. Tex and I compared impressions from our visits to Baton Rouge to check out LSU.

Zack and I rounded up the recruits a few minutes before 11:30, all except John Crosby. A couple inquiries led us to JT's bedroom door where we could hear two people slapping skins inside.

Before we could knock we heard, "Ooooh... Johnny... that's sooo good."

“Crosby, we have to leave in a few minutes,” Zack commanded in his authoritative voice.

“A minute.... Please? I’m... almost.... Unh... unh.... Unh....” Our missing recruit grunted. “...cumming!” he squeaked.

“Two minutes,” Zack answered. “Be downstairs in two minutes or we’re coming in to get you.”

“No problem,” John promised breathlessly.

He joined the group downstairs about ninety seconds later, buttoning his shirt as he came down the steps. John’s face glistened from pussy juice. His hair was a mess. His turgid cock pressed a bulge into his pants.

Zack took one look and said, “Go clean up. I can’t take you back to the hotel looking like you were in a brothel.” Zack looked rest of the group over. “Anyone else need to cleanup? Go.”

No one followed John upstairs to the bathroom but I noticed Tex pull his shirt collar up tighter to try to hide the hickey Lori had given him earlier in the evening.

Bob, Etienne and Caleb rode with Zack. Tex and John rode back to the Penn Stater with me. Both Tex and John agreed that they had a great time at the party. John teased he was ready to start college tomorrow if they would allow him. Zack and I dropped our charges off at the hotel without incident or question and returned to the party.

I had my first beer of the evening when I returned while Kelly had her third. She wasn’t drunk, just pleasantly buzzed when we headed back to her dorm room.

Kelly and I visited the bathroom to get ready when we got back to her dorm. We locked the door and stripped. Kelly stopped me from taking off my boxers. She still had her bra and panties on when motioned for me to join her on her bed. I sat down beside her and we began kissing. The intensity of the kisses grew quickly.

After a couple minutes of making out I began caressing Kelly’s breasts outside of her bra.

“Ohhh... that’s nice Davey,” Kelly moaned. “Keep doing that like last week at the movies.” After another moan she added, “We have to keep our underwear on tonight. I’m not ready to go all the way.”

Kelly was being playful and wanted some more role playing. I was game. “Allison, you know I love you,” I responded. “You promised me last week when we made out that you would be ready to let me make love to you the next time we were alone.”

Kelly pressed her body against mine and resumed kissing. I wrapped my arms around her as we kissed, unhooking her bra. I would do my best to seduce this sweet young girl. That seemed to be my role that evening.

Young Allison responded just like the real Kelly when I caressed her breasts as we kissed each other. After a bit more of making out, the two of us lay down facing each other. I slipped my hands under her loose bra and continued caressing her breasts.

“My titties, don’t you think they’re too small?” Allison [Kelly] asked.

“Let me see them Allie,” I begged. Kelly blushed and then pulled off her bra. I cupped each wonderful orb in a hand and palpated them. “They’re gorgeous. They’re the nicest pair I’ve ever seen.”

“Better than your old girlfriend Becky?” Allison [Kelly] asked.

“She was absolutely flat chested compared to you Allie,” I responded. I strummed both thumbs across her nipples. Kelly moaned and pressed herself against me while we kissed more. After a bit I kissed along her chin, down her neck and across her chest to her right breast. Kelly shuddered when I teased her areola with my tongue.

“Ooohh... Davey!” Kelly groaned as I sucked on her nipple. “I’ve never allowed another boy to get to second base before you.”

I kissed and suckled her right breast while I felt up the left one. Nineteen year old Kyle was horny as hell and probably not as patient as young Davey would have been. My cock was hard as steel and needed to go to work – soon! I slipped my extra hand down across Kelly’s stomach and rubbed her slot through her soaking panties.

“Davey!” Kelly snapped. “I don’t think I should allow you to do that.”

I rubbed my finger up and down, pressing the cloth of her panties into her slot. “You’ll love it Allison.”

Kelly purred as I continued rubbing. I worked around the top of her slot around her clitoris. This elicited more moans from my lover. I kept rubbing for a minute or so before I slipped my hand inside Kelly’s panties.

“Davey, no!” Kelly protested. She pretended to try to pull my hand out. She stopped that when my finger hit her clit. Kelly purred and giggled as I used one hand to tease her vaginal opening, play with her labia and to stimulate her clittie.

It would have been easier for me to use my tongue to bring Kelly to orgasm but that wouldn’t have fit our fantasy. I did my best to bring her off manually instead. After a couple minutes of stimulation I used my thumb to rub her clit. Kelly’s eyes grew wide as my middle finger pressed into her pussy.

“Davey, we’ve never gone this far,” Kelly said.

“Do you trust me completely Allison?” I responded. Allison [Kelly] nodded yes. I pressed my finger in as deep as it would go and wiggled it. My thumb strummed Kelly’s clitoris while I used my finger to fuck her.

Kelly was getting flushed like she does when she gets close to orgasm. I slipped a second finger in to join the first and fucked her with abandon. I latched my mouth onto one of her tits while I brought my lover to orgasm. Kelly clutched my head to her breast and thrust her pelvis up to increase contact with my hand in her panties.

She moaned, “Oooh.... Ooohh... Davey....” and came hard. Kelly rolled on her back as her orgasm took her away. I withdrew my hand from her panties and climbed between my lover’s legs while she shook and spasmed. When Kelly calmed down I crawled over top of her, resting my weight on my knees and elbows.

“Did you like that Allison?” I asked.

“Wow! It was wonderful Davey,” Kelly answered. I leaned down and we kissed deeply. Horny young Davey wasn’t done teaching innocent Allison about sex yet. I grounded my steely erection against Allison’s wet panties as we kissed. I made sure my boxer covered cock mashed her clit with each thrust as I humped against her.

After I broke the kiss I stared into Kelly’s eyes and asked, “Do you love me Allison?”

“Of course,” Allison [Kelly] agreed.

“This will feel better if we take off our underwear,” I replied. “Please?” I rubbed the end of my cock on her clit as I begged.

“I don’t know Davey,” Kelly answered doubtfully. “We can’t go all the way tonight.”

“No! Of course not!” I promised. “I wouldn’t even think of it.”

I sat back on my haunches between Kelly’s legs. I slipped her panties down when she raised her torso for me. I pulled her pretty but wet panties off as I climbed out of bed. I dropped my boxers to the floor and climbed back between Kelly’s. It was out of character for ‘Davey’ but I leaned down and gave Kelly’s clit a kiss before I climbed over her again.

I slid my cock up Kelly’s wet and sloppy slot as I leaned in and kissed her. Kelly wrapped her arms around me as we kissed. I rubbed my cock up and down a few times then broke the kiss.

“Doesn’t that feel good Allison?” I asked sweetly. Kelly nodded yes and kissed me while we rubbed our genitals together. I paid particular attention to spreading my precum and

Kelly's juices around her clitoris with my hard cock. Young Davey certainly would want to get Allison as excited as possible if he wanted to get laid.

Kelly and I squirmed as we rubbed our pelvic areas together. Kelly was lubricating freely, making our joining slippery and totally mind blowing. We continued rubbing for a bit until I decided to escalate things more.

"Allie, you know I love you don't you?" I asked.

"I know Davey," Allison [Kelly] acknowledged.

"I want to show you how much I love you tonight," I said. I rubbed harder against her clit with the end of my slippery cock. "I think we should go all the way tonight."

"I don't know Davey," Kelly replied. "My friends tell me it hurts really bad the first time."

"It didn't hurt for my last girlfriend when we did it," I explained. "I can be really gentle, I promise." I changed the angle of my hips and rubbed the head of my cock down her slot and probed against her vaginal hole.

"I don't know Davey," Allison [Kelly] said hesitantly. I probed her hole again, stretching it a little. I rubbed my erection up my lover's slot and rubbed her clitoris again until Kelly shuddered.

"It'll feel really great Allie, I promise," I pleaded. "Let me put it in just a little. You'll love it." I rubbed the tip of my cock over her clitoris repeatedly. It was having the desired effect on my girl.

"You'll be careful if I let you put your.... uh, thingy in me?" Kelly asked.

"I promise! I promise!" I answered quickly. "I love you so much Allie. I promise I'll be soooo gentle." I rubbed my cock down her slot and positioned my cock head against her opening. I started to press into my lover.

"DAVEY!" Allison [Kelly] exclaimed. "Where's your rubber?"

"Ummm.... Ummm...." I stuttered. I kept my cock penetrating a fraction of inch into my lover. "I don't have any tonight."

"Davey! You told me you managed to get rubbers a couple weeks ago," Allison [Kelly] said. "We have to stop."

"Please.... Please don't make me stop," I begged. I pressed further so my cock was an inch into my lover's vagina. "My dad found my stash of rubbers and took them away. He said fourteen is too young to be fucking around."

“Oooohhh... Davey, we have stop if you don’t have protection,” Allison [Kelly] said. She pulled away, trying to remove my cock from her body. I scooted along, keeping my cock head just inside my lover.

“Just let me put it in a little Allie, Pleeaaaaaseeee?” I whined. “Doesn’t this feel good honey?”

“It does feel nice,” she agreed. I pressed a little deeper, inserting another inch of cock into my lover.

“I love you so much honey,” I begged. “Let’s see what sex really feels like. Let me put it in all the way.”

“I don’t know Davey,” she replied. I thrust my hips in, driving my cock half way into Kelly. I stared into her eyes, pleading to be allowed to go all the way. Kelly nodded her agreement. I thrust my hips gently until all seven inches of my cock were implanted in Kelly’s vagina. “We have to be careful Davey. My next period is two weeks away. You can’t cum in me.”

“I’ll be careful,” I promised. I pulled my cock part way out. “Does this feel good honey?”

“Yeah,” Kelly agreed. “It really stretches me but it feels good.”

I pulled almost out and then thrust my cock back into my lover. In and out. Kelly and I quickly fell into our accustomed rhythm, like the well practiced lovers that we really were. For a few minutes our alter egos were forgotten. It took me about five minutes to bring Kelly to orgasm. I slowed my thrusts while she enjoyed her climax.

Kelly went back into character after her orgasm. I continued thrusting in and out of my lover.

“Are you close to cumming Davey?” Allison [Kelly] asked. She feigned fright as she stared into my eyes.”

“I’m not too close,” I said as I continued drilling her.

Every minute or so Allison would ask, “Are you ready to cum yet? You have to pull out before you do Davey.” I nodded my agreement and continued fucking her.

Kelly was building to another orgasm while our lovemaking continued. I was getting closer too. I was panting and my thrusts were getting erratic when my balls tightened.

“You’re close Davey,” Allison [Kelly] said. “You better pull out now.”

“Just a little longer,” I begged. “Ppplllleeeassee....” I continued pumping in and out, trying to keep a steady rhythm. I felt the cum boil up. I groaned, “Oooohhh God!” and thrust my hips until my cock was fully planted inside my lover.

Kelly’s eyes went wide with shock. Her acting was excellent. I could almost believe she was frightened.

“Oh SHIT!” Kelly growled. I pulled out a little and drove my cock in hard again. “PULL OUT NOW!” Kelly declared. I nodded yes but drove my cock in until it hit bottom.

“Oooooohhhhhh...” I moaned. My cock blasted a big wad of cum against Kelly’s cervix.

“KYLE!” Kelly screamed. “PULL OUT NOW!”

I squirted another rope of cum into my lover’s cervix when I realized she said, ‘Kyle pull out!’ What the hell?

Kelly was pushing me, trying to get me off her. Another two spurts erupted out of my cock before I could disengage us. Half a dozen more squirts of cum sprayed over Kelly’s vagina, tummy and sheets.

“What?” I asked breathlessly. “What’s wrong?”

“Oh shit!” Kelly moaned. “I forgot to go to the health center,” she moaned as she tried to wipe my cum off her pussy. “How could I be so stupid?”

I stared at Kelly. “What just happened?” I demanded.

“I.... I forgot....” Kelly said despondently. “How could I be sooo stupid?”

I helped Kelly clean herself up. By the time all the cum was wiped up she had calmed down.

“I was supposed to go to Ritnour Thursday and get this month’s ring,” Kelly explained, “I got busy with my term paper and didn’t have time.” I nodded my understanding. “I meant to pick up a birth control ring yesterday, but I forgot. I don’t have protection tonight.”

“How bad could it be if you are only a day or two late with your ring?” I asked.

“The doctor told me there is a chance of getting pregnant, even if you are one or two days late,” Kelly explained. “Why didn’t you stop Kyle? I told you that you had to pull out.”

“I thought we were still play-acting,” I replied. “It was too late when I realized you wanted Kyle to pull out. I thought Allison was still talking to Davey.”

“Shit!” Kelly exclaimed. “My dad is going to be so pissed if I get pregnant. I’ll never hear the end of it after all the lectures he gave me about how wrong pre-marital sex is.”

“Calm down,” I commanded. I pulled Kelly to me and cuddled with her. “You’ll go down to Ritnour tomorrow and see a doctor. They’ll give you the morning-after pill and everything will be fine.”

“This isn’t how I planned to have our first child,” Kelly said.

“And we won’t,” I confirmed. I gave her a kiss. “Worst case honey, we get married a lot sooner than we had planned.” I shook my head and smiled. “You and I getting married isn’t something to be sorry about. If we end up with a child now it only means we start our life together sooner than planned.”

I leaned in and gave Kelly a passionate kiss. “It will all be all right Kelly.”

I felt her relax in my arms. We cuddled for five or ten minutes, enjoying our closeness. We got up and put robes on when we started to cool down. We cleaned up and cuddled together in bed, falling asleep quickly.

I hit the off button on the alarm clock as soon as it rang on Sunday morning. It said it was 7:30 in the morning. I gathered up my things and dressed. I left Kelly a love note and a reminder to call Ritnour for an appointment that day before I headed back to my dorm. I headed over to the Lasch Building after I showered and changed into clean clothes.

Zack, Yasin, Damian, Mitch and I rode over to the Penn Stater Hotel with the coaches for breakfast with the recruits and their parents. I sat with the Johansons at breakfast. It was nice to talk with Tex’s parents. I never really got to know them when Tex and I were in high school together.

After breakfast the team member and coaches rode back to campus in the athletic department vans. The recruits and their parents followed us over to the Lasch Building for workouts.

I was delighted at Tex’s 4.33 second time in to 40 yard run. I knew he was fast. That had to impress the coaches. Chip and I were assigned to do some passing drills with Tex. Tex and I hadn’t practiced against each other since I was in high school. I had seen him in a few games and knew he had improved his technique since then. I was pleased and a little surprised by how much he had improved in the last two years.

Chip and I only managed to complete 4 of 10 short passes with Tex defending. We were also 4 of 10 on medium depth passes. I managed to catch 3 of 10 deep passes with Tex blanketing me in coverage. I was forced to use some of the moves I learned in college to catch those.

I knew Tex had improved since we had last practiced together two and half year ago, but I was amazed at how much progress he had made. Tex must be a shut-down cornerback when he played against high school receivers.

My eyes sparkled at the possibilities of coaching a high school team with him on it. You could take out your opponent's best receiver with one guy. You could double up on the number two receiver and take him out too, you could add extra run support, you could blitz. Man the possibilities were nearly endless.

I gave Tex a slap on the back as we finished the last pass. "That was damn good work," I exclaimed.

"You weren't taking it easy for me, were you?" Tex asked.

"No, no I wasn't," I assured Tex. "Coach Schneider would have spotted that immediately. My orders are to give you a good workout. You did very well."

"Thanks for saying that Kyle," Tex replied. "I appreciate it. You and I didn't get along very well when we were in high school together. Sorry about being such a punk back then."

"You don't need to apologize," I responded. "You were a good teammate back then after you got the Wolverines' team first concept down." Tex and I shook hands. "I'd be honored to have you as a teammate again."

Tex and I talked about Coach C's defensive philosophy as we walked back to Chip and the coaches. Tex liked what he saw of our defense yesterday. He liked our combination of pressure and pass coverage to get the job done.

Chip, Tex and I had worked faster than some of the other groups. The three of us watched the end of Coach Adams' work out of John Crosby. He took Dave McCall deep on a couple passes that really impressed me. He had run a 4.37 second 40 earlier in the morning. John would be a good addition to our group of receivers. We have to fill Hassan Jackson and Anders Voight's large shoes after this season.

Everyone headed back into the Lasch Building when the workout was over. Damian and I kept John and Tex company while they waited for their turn to meet with Coach Burton. Both of us continued selling our former high school teammates on the virtues of a Penn State education and football career.

Coach Burton did offer both guys full scholarships to attend Penn State. Neither accepted on the spot. John was weighing our offer against an offer from Ohio State. Tex was torn between staying somewhat local where his parents could see him play and returning home to his beloved Texas. He had been a die-hard Longhorn fan when he was younger.

Damian and I wished our former teammates luck when they left for home. Both guys were given strict orders to get their teams into the playoffs. Damian and I both wanted to watch our high school football teams play over Thanksgiving vacation.

I called Kelly on my cell phone as Damian and I walked back to our dorm. She was just getting up. The two of us agreed to meet at 11:30 at Pollock Commons for brunch. Kelly and I met up downstairs at the Mix before we went upstairs to eat. The two of us wanted privacy that mealtime to talk about our birth control slip up the previous evening. Kelly had a 1:15 pm appointment at Ritnour to talk with a doctor about our problem.

Kelly was pensive when we returned to my dorm room to read the newspaper and wait for her appointment. I did my best to cheer Kelly up. I thought the odds of this one accident making us parents were slim. We'd survived worse last spring when we had unprotected sex for a month. I offered to walk down to Ritnour with Kelly but she said she preferred to go alone.

I went straight to the sports section to read about Ohio State's stunning upset loss to Wisconsin yesterday. Schadenfreude isn't a pretty emotion, but that's how I felt. The Badger's upsetting the Buckeyes felt great after the Buckeyes took away our best chance at the national championship. I expected that we would move back up to the #3 slot in the BCS rankings that night.

The Badgers used their big offensive line and stable of big running backs to pound Ohio State into submission 20-9. The time of possession in the game favored the Badgers 40:12 to 19:48. My team was going to have to be extremely efficient on offense to score enough points on the Badgers in two weeks when we played them out in Madison.

Kelly was more upbeat when she returned. The doctor gave her the morning after pill and a stern lecture on personal responsibility. I felt bad. I was equally responsible for what happened last night but I didn't have to listen to the lecture. The doctor assured Kelly that the chances of her getting pregnant were remote from this accident. To be safe, we weren't to have sex for another seven days unless I wore a condom.

Kelly and I agreed after some discussion that 'Oh, please don't get me pregnant' was a role playing fantasy that we should drop in the future. There was too much chance of misunderstandings happening like last night. Kelly insisted that in the future I confirm with her that the birth control ring was in place each time before we made love too. We couldn't be too careful.

Kelly and I spent the rest of the afternoon together reading the newspaper, relaxing and corresponding with friends via e-mail. Ed Fritz played the fourth quarter of Florida's game destruction of Citadel yesterday. Ed had thrown two touchdowns in the second half. His QB rating was starting to look halfway decent now. Jeremy North had ten tackles and two sacks in Notre Dame's win on Saturday. He was ecstatic that their team bounced back the way it did after the previous loss.

Late in the afternoon while we were on line I received an e-mail from my brother Andy. He and Dad were home from their visit to the University of Delaware. I had expected that this was a pro forma visit to finish out his five official visits. Andy reported that he absolutely loved Coach Keller and what he saw of the Delaware football program. Trent Wilson, Christian's cousin and starting cornerback on the team acted as Andy's guide that weekend.

He liked what Coach Keeler had planned for his offense. He hit it off with the freshman backup quarterback. Andy especially loved the fact that Delaware's campus was less than an hour from home. I was stunned when I read that Coach Keeler said it would be no problem for Andy to slip home on Saturday nights after games. Coach Keeler praised Andy's dedication to helping raise his sons.

I called Andy on my cell phone as soon as I finished reading his e-mail. Andy was conciliatory when we talked. He hadn't made up his mind to go to Delaware, contrary to what I thought from his e-mail. I reiterated my reasons that Penn State was the best fit for him and his sons' long term financial future. Andy had narrowed the choice down to either Penn State or Delaware. He decided he needed to concentrate on his football team now. He'd wait to make the decision until after the season was over.

I wished Andy luck on his game against the Trojans on Friday night. He wished me luck against the Iowa on Saturday.

Most of the team gathered in the player's lounge after dinner to see how we fared in this week's BCS ranking. USC and LSU both won, so #1 and #2 stayed the same. Most of us expected to see us go back to #3. Both human polls put us at #3 but the damn computer thought otherwise. It jumped Oklahoma above us in the averaged rankings.

Barry Switzer, Fox's college analyst, chortled at the change. He noted that Oklahoma's 66-10 slaughtering of TCU was much more impressive than our 'lackluster' win over unranked Illinois.

We were incensed at his comments. Switzer, the former coach of the Sooners, was hardly unbiased. TCU was unranked too. At least Illinois had a winning record, unlike this year's version of the up and down TCU program.

Zack Hayes shut off the TV after the BCS program ended. He announced that we'd need to redouble our efforts. If the damn polls wanted points, that was what they'd get! Lookout Hawkeyes, Penn State's coming on Saturday and we're going to kick butts.

I reported my conversation with my brother to Coach Burton before practice on Monday. Coach promised they'd pull out the stops to make sure Andy chose Penn State over Delaware.

Zack, Jake, Evan and Karol drove us harder at Monday's practice than the coaches did. They wanted everything perfect. They took it as a personal insult that Oklahoma had slipped ahead of us in the polls. In spite of the tension from our captains' demands, practice went well. We were still clicking like we had last week during practice and on Saturday at the game.

I was in the video room studying on Tuesday evening when my cell phone rang. It was Joe Jurevics, the excellent wide receiver from the mid-1990's Penn State teams. Bobby Engram had followed through with his promise to have Joe give me a call. Joe was extremely friendly and willing to help me improve my game. We talked for half an hour. Joe had excellent suggestions for me to work the defense better. Joe was about half an inch taller than me and weighed maybe ten pounds more than me when he was in college. I thanked Joe for all his help and wished him luck on his game on Sunday.

Zack and I spent hours with Chip Brinton and Ryan Reynolds during the week getting him ready to run another twenty or so plays if he got playing time. Zack promised Chip he'd get in the game. Zack planned to blow Iowa out of the water on Saturday and leave Chip plenty of time to play cleanup at the end of the game.

The older players when Zack started at Penn State had passed on a dislike for Iowa that went all the way back to our team's 2008 loss to them. It was the 2008 team's only loss. Zack and the other captains did their best to make sure we younger players felt the same way.

Kelly and I had very little free time together during the week. We didn't need the condoms I bought after class on Monday afternoon. We never had more than thirty minutes of free time together and never had privacy for more than a little kissing.

I received a very formal invitation addressed to Mr. Kyle D. Martin and Miss Kelly M. O'Keefe on Wednesday when I checked my mail after lunch. It was an invitation to Omega Chi Epsilon and Tau Nu's formal winter dance. The event was to be held at le Pappilon at Toftrees. Formal dress was required.

Kelly and I had to call home to our parents. Kelly didn't have a formal dress here at school. Her mom and dad agreed to front her the cost of the dress from her summer earnings next summer. The tux rental was also over the monthly budget Dad allowed me. He said I could put it on my credit card. My debt to Dad was going to be staggering by the time college was over.

I received a letter from Chase Utley on Thursday. He thanked me for arranging for the tickets for him and his nephew. They both were looking forward to the game. Chase told me a little about the Phillies World Series celebration. The Phillies brass made sure Chase and microphones stayed well separated this year. Chase said he was happy to smile, wave and say nothing but thank you to the crowds of Philadelphians at the Broad Street parade. He ended the letter with this note: 'World fucking champions again! Don't tell ANYONE I said that. I'll see you in a couple weeks. Your friend Chase.'

The buses left the Lasch Building at 9:30 am on Friday, so I missed all my classes for the day. My poly sci professor, Dr. Hewitt, was very understanding. She gave me a reading assignment to do on the flight to Cedar Rapids.

The flight out to Iowa was around three hours. The charter service served us lunch on the airplane. My friends and teammates were upbeat as we studied and relaxed on the way out. The athletic department put us up at the Sheraton Inn Iowa City in downtown Iowa City. By late afternoon the hotel staff had everyone checked into their rooms.

Damian, Trevor, Shawn Byrd, Tony, Christian,, GJ and I found our way down to the pool for a relaxing pre-dinner swim. The hotel served us dinner in one end of the ballroom and then we adjourned to the other end of the ballroom for a team meeting and then position meetings. The coaches dismissed us around 8:30 in the evening.

A group of my friends and I decided to take a walk instead of staying cooped up in the hotel all night. There wasn't much to see downtown Friday night, other than a lot of Iowa fans congregating at pubs and bars. We headed back to the hotel after half an hour of wandering around. We played some poker and watched TV until it was time for our curfew.

On Saturday morning I turned on the TV as I was getting dressed. The weatherman reported that the temperature had dropped down to twenty degrees overnight. He predicted the day would be sunny and cold. He doubted the temperature would rise above freezing by game time. We were going to need to dress warm for the game. The only good news from the weatherman was that the wind was going to be from the northwest at three to five miles an hour. It would be excellent conditions for a passing team like us.

ESPN was televising our game at 2:30 in the afternoon, so the coaches let us sleep in until 9:30 on Saturday morning. We met for breakfast in the ballroom and then packed our things and checked out. The buses delivered us to Nile Kinnick Stadium, about a mile and a half from our hotel on the opposite side of the river from the Sheraton.

The Iowa Hawkeyes had a couple mind games they played with visiting teams. Our locker room was painted pink. The older guys had warned us about that trick. A little pink paint wasn't going to influence our play. The other tradition that the Hawkeyes had was their "black-out." Every fan came dressed in black. I gave them credit. We did the

same thing with our white-out. Dressing all the fans in black wasn't going to deter us either.

Conditions in Kinnick Stadium looked good when we got there. The field had dried out from the rain Iowa City had on Wednesday. Fans were filing in as we inspected the field. We came in and had a light lunch before we suited up for the game. The stadium was nearly full of loud, black clad fans when we came out for warm ups.

Coach Burton spoke to the team after we came in for our final preparations. Coach Burton turned things over to Zack Hayes when he finished. Zack spoke about our team's goals for the season and the need for every member, starter down to third string bench warmer to strive for the best – to strive for excellence. It was an excellent pep talk.

It also was extremely familiar. I had listened to the same 'drive for excellence' speech for three years in high school. I knew Zack had cribbed some notes from our high school coach to prepare for his talk. It didn't matter, Zack's speech was well received by our team. We took the field mentally prepared for combat.

Our team won the coin toss and elected to receive the kickoff. I lined up at my usual five yard spot, flanked by Dave McCall and Shawn Byrd. The kickoff was a little short. I advanced and caught the ball at the ten yard line. I ran ahead and settled in behind my blocking wedge. Charlie Taylor and Joe Ricci opened a nice seam for me on the left side of the wedge. I shot through the hole at top speed. The first couple players missed me as I streaked by. The kicker managed to get in my way as I ran. A tackler took me down from behind while I tried to dodge the kicker. I tossed the ball to the referee when I got up.

The loudspeaker blared, "#87, Kyle Martin carried for 38 yards on the return." The special teamers high fived me as they trotted off the field for our offense. Coach Burton threw a wrinkle at Iowa immediately. Anders lined up as a second tight end on my side of the field for the first play. Zack faked a handoff to Shawn O'Conner as Evan, Anders, Hassan and I ran downfield. I drew the nickel back and free safety to me. The strong safety covered Evan while the other cornerback followed Hassan.

Iowa had assumed the two tight end formation meant we were running. They had a linebacker to cover Anders. It was no contest. Anders was by him by the time he made his cut ten yards downfield. Anders ran diagonally across the field. Zack drilled the ball to him in stride. Hassan, Evan, and I ran interference as Anders ran as fast as possible for the end zone. Anders ran out of gas just short of the goal line. An Iowa player tackled him, but Anders managed to stagger ahead for the last two yards to score for us. Andrew Perkins booted the ball through the uprights to give us a 7-0 lead.

Our coaches were always a couple steps ahead of the Iowa coaches. They never found any balance on offense or defense. Our offense performed almost flawlessly. Zack's first incompletion didn't come until the second quarter. Four minutes were left in the half, we were ahead 35-6 and the Hawkeyes had just gone three downs and out again.

Coach Burton decided it was time to show a little mercy. He sent Chip Brinton and the second string in to finish the half. Chip did a good job on the drive, using most of the four minutes and scoring a field goal before the half ended.

They only bad news for our team was that Chip went in so early that we were in danger of running out of plays for him to run before the game was over. Chip's playbook was extremely thin, only having 30-35 plays that he was prepared to run. Coach Burton decided that Chip would play through the third quarter and into the fourth. Glenn would take over in the fourth quarter.

Chip managed to score a touchdown on one of his three time consuming drives in the third and fourth quarter. Glenn Korbel spent the rest of the game handing the ball off to Damian, Wyatt and Charlie Taylor to run the clock out on the game. Our big lead allowed Coach C to play looser on coverage. Shawn Byrd and Cuch Cuchiella both got second half interceptions to snuff out Hawkeye drives. The best Iowa could do in the second half was score field goals – four of them. The final score was 44-15 our favor.

I had an outstanding game. I made 58 yards and a touchdown when we ran my reverse option play in the first half. Zack hit me for 6 passes for 131 yards and two touchdowns. I added in my 38 yard kick return and two punt returns for another 34 yards. I gained a total of 267 yards in the game. That's a decent game but it's a spectacular first half. I spent thirty-four minutes of the game on the sideline watching the second and third string.

The tips Joe Jurevics gave me Tuesday night paid off. I was able to use them to dominate even though I was always double covered in the game. I owed Joe big time for his suggestions.

I ended up doing more interviews than usual after the game. I didn't find out why until I talked with ESPN's sideline reporter. He asked me how felt about setting the Penn State season receiving record today. He said my receptions today put my season total up to 64 catches. I was shocked. I knew I was doing well this season, but I never expected to beat Bobby Engram and O. J. McDuffie's 63 catches in one season.

No one minded dressing in a pink locker room after our victory. The athletic department handed out box dinners for everyone to eat on the buses on the way to the airport. We were aboard our flight home by 9:30 that evening. Most of the team tried to catch a little sleep on the flight home. The buses dropped us off at the Lasch Building early on Sunday morning. About 500 die-hard fans cheered us as we stepped off the buses and headed for our rooms. Damian and I went straight to bed.

Damian and I got up late that morning. I had to hurry to get showered and dressed in time to meet Kelly at Pollock Commons for brunch that morning. We picked up a

newspaper on the way back to my dorm room. Damian, the best roommate in the world, promised to spend his afternoon over at the player's lounge and the study room that afternoon. He knew how desperate Kelly and I were to have some alone time.

The two of us didn't plan to use the whole afternoon for lovemaking. We didn't, but just barely. Kelly and I exchanged oral favors in the 69 position until both of us orgasmed. Kelly rode my hard cock until she came again. We kissed and cuddled for awhile. Kelly's kissing and rubbing got my motor running again. We ended the afternoon with me doing Kelly hard in the classic missionary position. The two of us had a lot of pent up sexual energy that we needed to expend.

We finally cleaned up about 4:30 in the afternoon. Both of us were totally mellow when we spread the newspaper out to enjoy our afternoon read. I checked my e-mail before dinner time.

My brother Andy reported that the Wolverine express was still on track. They walloped the Trojans Friday night 41-13. Andy had two touchdowns. Cody Stevens, my sister's ex-boyfriend, had three more – two running and one receiving.

The newspaper didn't report any upsets in the BCS top ten. Our closest competition, Oklahoma, had beaten Kansas State yesterday 42-35 with two fourth quarter touchdowns. Ed Fritz hadn't gotten a chance to play when Florida beat South Carolina 31-21. Notre Dame won and Jeremy North had another great game. Jeremy had 12 tackles and an interception in the game.

Jay Nicholson sent me an e-mail congratulating me on the good game. I could tell reading between the lines that Jay was upset that he hadn't been there to mop up the game instead of Chip and Glenn. Anytime you are second string and have a chance for thirty-four minutes of playing time it is special. I wrote back telling Jay I was counting on him to work hard at rehab. I told him I expected him to lead us onto the field next September as our next starting quarterback.

Three quarters of the team showed up Sunday evening after dinner to watch the BCS standings announcement in the player's lounge. It was standing room only. No one was surprised that the standing didn't change. It was USC, LSU, Oklahoma, us, Florida, Missouri, Ohio State and West Virginia. Oklahoma had a 0.8851 rating. We were a hundredth behind at 0.8751.

Our victory over #24 ranked Iowa had improved our standing, but not enough.

Barry Switzer droned on about how well Oklahoma was playing. We cheered as Terry Bradshaw commented that he was impressed by the way Zack Hayes played against Iowa. He thought Zack was a sure Heisman finalist. Terry rated Brady Rasmussen and Elijah Carter as strong candidates too.

School work pressed in on me in the next week. I had a Math 111 midterm on Thursday. Kevin Lee helped me study so I would be ready. Kelly had a midterm in Philosophy midterm that week too.

Monday's video review was fun for the whole team. The coaches had a hard time finding things to complain about. Chip did get raked over the coals by Coach Peterson for his third quarter interception. Wyatt was chewed out for his fumble even though he recovered it himself and did no real damage to the team.

I had left messages for Glenn Tucker to call last week. He finally had time Monday evening, his one day off a week in the NFL. Glenn and I talked for forty-five minutes. A lot of Glenn's ideas were similar to the ideas Joe Jurevicius gave me last week. I teased Glenn near the end of the phone call about how similar his suggestions were to Joe's. He freely admitted that he had done the same thing a few years ago when he was a young receiver and pumped the 'old hands' for tips to improve his game. Glenn wished me luck against Wisconsin... for the glory of old State. That is the tag line that ends every one of the Penn State Football Newsletters that the alumni receive after each game.

Our practices were intense mentally, but with less hitting than earlier in the season. We were in the part of the season where everyone had aches and bruises to heal from the next game. My roommate Damian spent a lot of time with the trainers and in the whirlpool. His designated role lately was to be our clock eating, human battering ram. He, Wyatt and Charlie ground our opponents into the ground after we got of lead on them. They were good at their job but it was hard on their bodies.

All of us talked about how important it was for us to win the physical battle with Wisconsin this weekend. Wisconsin's offensive line, defensive line and running backs were all big guys that like to pound on you. Our lines were going to have to dominate the line of scrimmage to pull out a victory.

Coach Schroeder and Zack Hayes preached to the receiving corps how important it was for us to get some big plays early in the game. If we could put them behind in the score early in the game their offensive line would be back on their heels pass protecting instead of pounding on our defensive line. Additionally if we had success deep early in the game it gave Wisconsin's defense a harder task to defend us. They wouldn't know if we were running or passing on any given play and couldn't gang up on our offensive line.

Our coaches wanted to run my reverse option play early in the game if the opportunity came. We had run it five times this season and everyone covered Hassan deep on the play, making sure I didn't pass. I'd gained 186 yards running when the pass wasn't there. The coaches expected it was time for someone to fear my running on the play more than my chances of completing a pass to Hassan. We'd see on Saturday if Wisconsin's coaches felt the same way as ours.

Coach Ferguson informed me to count on running back all the punts and kickoffs until we had a good lead in the game. We needed every advantage possible to win the game. Tanner and Christian could gain experience as our returners during another game.

Dr. Brennan handed back our second term papers in History 20 on Wednesday. Kelly was pleased with her B+. I received another A+ for my paper. Dr. Brennan added this note too: "Outstanding work Kyle! My profession could use a good young talent such as you. Think about what we talked about last month. You would be an outstanding historian. K. Brennan"

I ended up pondering Dr. Brennan's suggestion before I went to sleep that evening. She was right. I did enjoy writing and researching history. Could I become a historian?

Jay and Yasin's injuries reminded me what I had learned three years ago when I blew out my knee. Never, ever count on playing football in the future. It all could be over on the next play of the game or the next time you hop in your car to go somewhere. Nothing is guaranteed. I decided when my schedule wasn't so busy in a few weeks I'd go in and talk with Dr. Brennan again.

Dr. Brennan wanted us to turn in our final term paper ideas on Friday. I would have to e-mail my idea to her since I would be flying to Wisconsin during Friday's class. I thought about my term paper idea too. I decided to do my paper on two cousins from New Holland in who fought in the Mexican War.

The men had prominent gravestones in the cemetery in the center of New Holland. Both tombstones were marked with the names of battles they fought in early in the war. The one tombstone was marked Brevet Major John Randolph. Majors were pretty rare in the small 1840's era regular army. This guy must have been pretty important to hold that rank.

I noticed the first tombstone when I was riding along with my Dad in New Holland when I was about eleven or twelve. I remember because I noticed the tombstone on the way to visit one of Dad's clients. The client's last name was Randolph too. Being the nosey kid I was, I asked Mr. Randolph if he was related to the dead soldier. He was the great grandson of the soldier's brother.

Mr. Randolph told me a little bit about Major Randolph and told me about the major's cousin being a Mexican War hero too. Mr. Randolph had Major Randolph's letters from war upstairs in the attic. I found Brevet Captain Randolph Luther's tombstone on another trip to New Holland later that summer.

The term paper was due the Friday after I came back from Thanksgiving vacation. I could do research here on campus now and then contact Mr. Randolph to get family stories about the two when I went home. Hopefully he would let me see the letters from the war. That would really add to the creditability of my term paper.

I decided this would be an excellent subject for my paper to explore and document the experiences of these two young soldiers during the Mexican War. Hopefully it would show Dr. Brennan if I had the chops to be a professional historian too.

Kelly and I both were so busy with classes and studying that we only were together for breakfasts, lunches and the one class we had together each day. We were so grateful to Damian for letting us spend Sunday afternoon together. We would have gone crazy otherwise.

Buses departed from the Lasch Building on Friday morning at 9:30 like the previous week. Thank goodness my professors were more forgiving than Dr. Henderson had been last fall about missing classes. Dr. Hewitt and Dr. Blanchard both loaded me up with readings to make up for their classes while I traveled.

I spent most of the flight to Madison studying. I saw three big lakes with the city of Madison stretched around them as our airplane banked and landed at the county airport just outside the city. Buses took the team from the airport into the center of Madison to our hotel, the Doubletree Inn. The hotel staff had us in our rooms with half an hour to spare before dinner time.

The coaches filled half our evening with team and position meetings. My friends and I spent a little time in the pool and then hung out in one of our rooms until a quarter to eleven that evening.

I went on-line when Damian and I went to our room. My high school team was played Norlanco that evening. If they won, they were certain to get into the district playoffs. If they lost they might still make it, but it wasn't guaranteed. The time difference between Pennsylvania and Wisconsin made it possible for me to see the results on-line before curfew.

I went to bed a happy man that evening. Channel 8's website reported that the Wolverines pounded Norlanco 56-3. My brother and his team were going to the playoffs. I knew they would be seeded near the bottom of the sixteen teams in District 3, but that was OK. The way the team played since Matt Sauder took over at quarterback, anything was possible.

Wisconsin was ranked #15, so our matchup was one of ABC's regional games. Our kickoff was at 2:30 pm to accommodate ABC. Coach Burton scheduled our breakfast for 8:30 on Saturday morning. We packed up after breakfast, checked out and took buses over to Camp Randall Stadium, about a mile west of our hotel.

The stadium was named for a training camp that helped prepare soldiers for action in the Civil War. The stadium was a two tier stadium oval stadium that held 80,000 fans. The

field was covered with a newer style artificial turf. The turf was soft, unlike some artificial turfs I'd seen. It looked like we would have good footing for the game.

The snow squall had blown through the previous night and there was a dusting of white in places around the stadium. The weatherman reported the temperature was in the mid-twenties when we got up in the morning. They expected the start of game temperature to be in the mid-forties. The temperature was expected to drop throughout the game. Wind wasn't expected to be a factor in the game. That was excellent news for our team.

We went back inside for a light lunch. We suited up and went back out to warm up. The fans were filling the stadium while we were outside. The game was a sell out like usual for the Badgers. Coach Burton gave a good warm-up speech before we took the field for the game.

Our team won the coin toss and elected to receive the football. Wisconsin's kicker didn't get much leg on the ball. I drifted forward a couple yards and fielded the kickoff. I ran ahead to get behind my blocking wedge. I waited to see where the hole would be. Unfortunately the hole that developed was in our wedge. A big guy wearing #57 broke through and aimed for me. I put my head down and bulled ahead to get as many yards as I could before the guy slammed me to the ground.

I managed to pick up 21 yards. That isn't good compared to most of my returns, but it gave us the ball on our 28 yard line. The rest of the offense joined me on the field for the huddle.

Zack Hayes immediately called my reverse option play. "What?" I squeaked. "We don't run that play here!"

"They won't expect the option here," Zack answered. "Surprise is on our side. Make your blocks count guys. Let's spring Kyle free."

We lined up in our standard three receiver formation, me wide on the weak side. Zack dropped back three steps at the snap and tossed the ball to Shawn as he headed my way. I ran across our backfield to pass Shawn. I saw most of Wisconsin's defense shifting to our left to try to cover Shawn's run. The cornerback who covered me screamed REVERSE!"

Shawn hand the ball to me and then took out the cornerback pursuing me. Zack, Evan and Anders took care of blocking their guys out of the play as I sprinted for the far side of the field.

I looked downfield for Hassan and the cornerback on that side. I smiled as I spotted the cornerback sprinting to tackle me. I paused, got my feet set and launched the ball down the field to a wide open Hassan Jackson. To my shock I managed to get a good spiral on the ball. Hassan managed to grab my slightly off target pass, turn and sprint for the end zone. No Badger player was able to catch him before he scored.

I sprinted down the field to join Hassan in the end zone to celebrate our success. Hassan and I hugged and banged helmets together.

“That was a hell of a pass Kyle,” Hassan said.

“You made a great catch buddy,” I replied. Our teammates slapped us on the back and congratulated us as we jogged off the field. Andrew Perkins continued his success streak on PAT by booting the ball through the uprights. Score: 7-0 Lions

Coach C adjusted our base defense to counter Wisconsin’s strong running game. He rotated fresh guys in on the defensive line after a few plays. Cuch Cuchiella shifted up so he was practically on the line of scrimmage to provide run support. Our free safety, Tyler Madden, had one key to read and then his orders were to come flying up field and nail the ball carrier too. We were selling out almost completely against the run. Wisconsin’s spotty record at passing made this worthwhile.

Coach C’s adjustments worked on the first Wisconsin drive. The Badgers gained 24 yards and a first down before we put them into a third down and eight yard situation. We shifted back to our base defense, assuming they’d pass. Wisconsin tried a draw on us. Karol Zizka alertly diagnosed the play and dropped the running back after a three yard gain.

Wisconsin punted the ball back to me. Shawn Byrd managed to kick his gunner out of my way and free me up to the right sideline. I took off down the sideline, gaining twenty-one yards before I was pushed out of bounds.

Coach Burton and Coach Schroeder called great plays, keeping Wisconsin off balance. We spread them wide with three receivers, we ran out of a four receiver set, Anders, Hassan and I lined up in different spots every play, anything to keep Wisconsin off balance. Zack put velocity on the ball when it was needed and had touch when that was called for. Zack went 6 for 7 moving us down the field on a twelve play drive. We scored a touchdown when I out-jumped two defensive backs in the corner of the end zone. Andrew Perkins drilled the PAT to bring our lead to 14-0.

Wisconsin pounded the ball at our defense again, with mixed success until the fifth play of the drive. They passed on first down, catching Tyler and Cuch with a play action fake to their tailback. Tyler ran the receiver down after he gained 32 yards. Wisconsin mixed a couple more passes in with the running plays. Shawn Byrd and Vic Samovitz each batted the ball away when it came their direction. Wisconsin was forced to try a 45 yard field goal, which they made. Score: 14-3 Lion’s favor.

That is how the first half went. Our offense ran like a finely tuned Mercedes. Our offensive line kept Zack safe and upright when we passed. He spread the ball all over the field. Shawn O’Conner had enough carries to keep Wisconsin’s defense off balance. We

didn't commit penalties and no one dropped the ball. We ran as close to perfect as was humanly possible in the first half.

We scored to go up 21-3 before they finally managed to score a touchdown to bring the score to 21-10. We answered with another touchdown – 28-10 our favor. Wisconsin tried to pound the ball at us. Our defense held their runners to under 3.0 yards a carry. Trevor and Jake's pressure along with good coverage by Shawn, Tyler, Cuch and Vic kept their quarterback's completion rate below 40%.

Our next drive moved us down the field efficiently until we reached Wisconsin's 10 yard line. A couple batted down passes forced us to try a field goal on fourth down. Score: 31-10 Lion's favor.

Coach Ferguson told me I was done with returns after the first quarter. Tanner Riggs went out for this kickoff. Tanner has always had supreme confidence that he could be a star player on our team if we gave him a chance. He demonstrated that on the kick return. He did an excellent job following his blocking wedge up with field. He shot through seam as soon as Bill Daugherty opened it. He made a couple tacklers miss and then plowed over the kicker to break free. Tanner had enough speed to sprint into the end zone and score another touchdown for us. Score: 38-10 Lions

Wisconsin managed to cobble together enough plays to try a long field goal before time ran out in the half. They made it. We went into the locker room with a 38-13 lead.

Coach Burton announced the first string offense would be benched for the second half. Our first string defense would continue their rotation so we had fresh bodies on the field until Wisconsin gave up trying to run the ball. We came out feeling good with our prospects for winning the game.

Wisconsin came out passing to start the second half. Their team wasn't built for that. Coach C switched us to our nickel defense but still continued the lineman and linebacker rotation so our pass rush would be fresh. They were forced to punt the ball back to us after six plays.

Chip Brinton performed well, handing the ball to Damian, Wyatt and Charlie Taylor repeatedly. Coach Burton mixed in just enough passes to keep Wisconsin's defense spread out. Chip and our offense scored a touchdown in the third quarter on a long drive. Damian had the honor of punching the ball into the end zone.

Wisconsin finally connected on a long pass near the beginning of the fourth quarter. Vic Samovitz managed to tackle the receiver at our 9 yard line. The defense couldn't stop Wisconsin from pounding the ball into the end zone. Score: 45-20 Lion's favor.

Chip and our offense went on another long, time killing drive that ended with Jibril Sloan catching Chip's pass in the back of the end zone. Score: 52-20 Lions.

Wisconsin fans emptied from Camp Randall Stadium as their Badgers futilely struggled to score late in the fourth quarter. Our offense was satisfied to run and kill the clock to end the game.

Zack Hayes held court on field for a throng of reporters. He was rightly proud of his day's statistics: 13 for 17 passing for four touchdowns and 253 yards. Zack didn't throw any interceptions. Those are good statistics for a game. Zack only played one half so his performance was spectacular. Many of the reporters' questions centered on the possibility of him winning the Heisman Trophy.

Zack was properly modest when he talked about his chances. I thought his chances were excellent. He had played very well most of the season. He had been other-worldly good in the last three games. I thought he was the best quarterback in the nation.

We had dinner on the plane on the way home from Madison. Most of the team went to sleep after dinner. It was after 2 am when we boarded our blue Penn State buses to ride back to campus from the State College airport. All of us were surprised to find over a thousand fans outside the Lasch Building when we returned to campus. They cheered us and we waved back as we climbed off the buses.

Kelly was in the crowd to greet our return. The two of us walked back to Pollock Dorms together. I would have loved to have spent the night with Kelly in her empty room, but I was too tired. I settled for giving her a long kiss before Damian and I headed back to our room for sleep.

(To be continued)

Chapter 28

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I awoke Sunday morning to the sound of my phone ringing.

“Hello?” I answered groggily.

“Are you still in bed sleepyhead?” Kelly asked cheerfully.

“Umm... yeah, I just woke up,” I answered. “What time is it?”

“Quarter to twelve,” Kelly said.

“Sorry I’m late,” I answered. Kelly and I were to meet for brunch at Pollock Commons at 11:30. “Give me fifteen minutes.”

“I’ll get a paper and meet you inside,” Kelly said before she finished the call.

I quietly headed for the bathroom to shower and brush my teeth. Damian was just waking up when I got back to the room. I invited him to join Kelly and me. He declined since he was meeting Billy, Mel and Sarah downtown for lunch in half an hour.

I found Kelly sitting with Bev, Christian, Cindy, Jen and GJ. Kelly and I went through the line for food and rejoined out friends.

“You look tired honey,” Kelly commented as we were eating our brunch.

“I am,” I agreed. “It was a long day yesterday and I didn’t sleep well on the plane.” I snorted. “Actually it’s been a long season. I love football but I’m glad our last game is next Saturday.”

“I’m glad too,” Kelly added. “I want to spend more time with you sweetie.”

“It will be better in December,” I agreed. “But remember I still have practice every day.”

“Yes, but you aren’t tied up Friday nights and all day on Saturdays, right?” Kelly said. I agreed.

The girls had watched our game in Cindy and Bev’s room yesterday. They praised how Christian and I played. Christian had three catches in the second half, one of them for Chip’s second touchdown. GJ had rotated into the game in the second half and had some good playing time too.

Christian had talked to his brother before his family left for church this morning. Joshua reported that Central was seeded #2 in the District 3 playoffs. My Wolverines were down

at #14, but were in the playoffs. The way the seeding chart was set up my team and Christian's team wouldn't meet up unless both teams made it to the district championship game in early December.

Kelly and I headed for her room when we finished brunch. We relaxed, read the paper and caught up with our friends via e-mail. The sports section had interesting news. Of course USC and LSU continued winning. Oklahoma almost lost to Nebraska, squeaking out a 31-30 win with a last second field goal. That should give the poll voters and the computer something to think about before the BCS standings were posted in the evening.

Florida won but Ed Fritz didn't get to play yesterday. Notre Dame won too. Jeremy North made fourteen tackles and had an interception. Jeremy was starting to get noticed nationally. Rutgers lost to Pittsburgh yesterday. I sent congratulations off to Ed and Jeremy and condolences to Hal Long. All my e-mails today included a question, 'Are we going to Panama City Beach for spring break?' Kelly and I both wanted to repeat our week in the sun like last year.

E-mails came back from all my friends later in the afternoon congratulating me on my performance yesterday and saying they planned on doing our trip to the beach again next spring. Kelly and I could start working on our parents at Thanksgiving to get permission to go on the trip.

At dinner on Sunday night Coach Burton announced that we would do video study on Monday and we would practice without pads this week. This announcement was greeted with raucous cheers. No hitting would give us more time to heal before we faced Michigan State. Coach also announced that the entire team was expected to attend our final pep rally on campus on Friday night.

Zack Hayes arranged with the coaches to wire up the projector system in the team auditorium after dinner so we could view the Fox's post game show and see the latest BCS standings in comfort. Most of the team showed up. We expected to finally see our team jump ahead of Oklahoma.

We had to wait through the end of the Denver Broncos vs. New York Jets game for the announcement. Our friend Antwaan Booker was a one man wrecking crew against the Jets' offensive line. He sacked the QB, drew holding penalties and batted down passes for his team. The color commentator said he thought Antwaan was the most dominant rookie defensive end he had seen since Reggie White.

It was too bad the Broncos didn't have an offense. Their defense scored their only touchdown when Antwaan's sack knocked the ball loose and into the hands of a blitzing cornerback. He ran it 35 yards to the end zone to score. The Broncos offense only managed two field goals in four quarters. They lost to the Jets 17-13.

USC was #1 and LSU was #2 – no surprise. We were shocked when Oklahoma stayed at #3. The Harris Poll and the USA Today Poll both moved us up to #3 but the computer

stubbornly refused to grant us the same respect. Oklahoma's rating dropped to 0.8803 while ours rose to 0.8797.

The rest of the BCS rankings stayed the same as last week –Florida, Alabama, Ohio State, Notre Dame, West Virginia followed us. What really sucked about all this was that we weren't even ranked #1 in our own conference. Our loss to Ohio State gave them that honor and the lead in the race to the Rose Bowl. If the season were over today we might be going to one of the minor bowls.

Zack Hayes put things in perspective for us. The only thing we could control was ourselves. We needed to rest up, study hard and come prepared to beat Michigan State when they showed up on Saturday. Zack reminded us that Oklahoma had to survive the Big 12 championship game to stay ahead of us. LSU faced an even more daunting task in playing the second best SEC team, probably Florida. We still had a shot at the national championship if things broke properly for us. Zack preached that we needed to be prepared to take advantage of every opportunity that came our way.

Video study on Monday was fun. What else would you expect from a 52-20 shellacking? Coach Schroeder complimented me on one of my run blocks in the game. I had flattened the cornerback to keep him away from Shawn O'Conner as he ran by. Damian's advice was beginning to pay off.

The second half the afternoon was devoted to viewing clips of Michigan State. They were similar to Wisconsin in philosophy, relying on their running game to move the ball. They were 9-2 and ranked #19 in the polls.

Coach Burton didn't introduce changes to our game plan on offense. We would continue using our spread offense utilizing a balanced mix of runs and passes. Coach C planned to defend against Michigan State using Cuch up in the box focusing on running plays again. Tyler Madden would stay deep this game and help Shawn Byrd and Vic Samovitz defend against the odd passing play.

Kelly and I started research on our term papers after lunch on Tuesday. I ended up down on the second floor of the Stacks. It was dim and musty down there. The top of my head barely missed the light fixtures on the ceilings. One section of the Stacks had histories of Lancaster County. A book published in 1857 had a whole chapter on the exploits of Lancaster County's two Mexican War heroes. They both attended West Point. John Randolph was 14 when he started, Randolph Luther was 17.

They graduated in 1837 with half a dozen other young men who became famous as generals in the Civil War. The boys did well at the academy. They ranked high enough to get posted to the artillery after graduation. The top of each class became engineers, the next brightest went to the artillery. Service in the cavalry was a step up from being

assigned to the infantry. The lowest ranked cadets were assigned to infantry duty after graduation.

The book gave me the bare outlines of the young men's service in the war. Both fought at Resaca de la Palma, Palo Alto and Monterey. Luther was wounded and sent home after Monterey. John Randolph also headed back to Pennsylvania after the opening battles. He was assigned to recruit and train a volunteer artillery battery for the attack on Mexico City. His battery arrived after General Winfield Scott captured the city. They served as occupation troops until the peace treaty was signed.

The book reported that Randolph Luther never recovered from his wounds. He died in New Holland in 1849. I found his tombstone when I was a little kid nosing around the cemetery but hadn't remembered the date.

Brevet Major Randolph continued in the Army after the war. He was died in Charleston, South Carolina during a yellow fever epidemic in 1853. He was serving as an artillery officer in the sea defenses of Charleston at the time of his death.

I found two more books covering the military history of the Mexican War. I checked them out to read and study back at my room later in the week. My first hour of research was extremely productive. I had enough information for a decent History 20 term paper already. I wanted to do better so I would justify Dr. Brennan's confidence in my abilities. I needed to see Mr. Randolph over my vacation and see John Randolph's letters. That would be what a professional historian would do.

Practices went smoothly throughout the week. My teammates and I put in extra time studying to get familiar with Michigan State. Zack, Ryan Reynolds and I reviewed Chip's successes and mistakes when he played the second half against Wisconsin. He had a lot of little things to fix. Thankfully my friend was receptive to corrections.

Most of the team spent time with the trainers for massages and treatment. We also spent time in the whirlpool to ease our many bumps, bruises and aches from the season.

I bumped into Trevor in the bathroom Wednesday night just before bedtime. Trevor was upset as told me about some weird things going on.

"You aren't going to believe what's happening," Trevor related. "I was over at Lasch studying video with Karol, Tony [King], Josh [Bruno] and Brendan [Hayden]. Karol invited us to stop by his apartment when we were done for some pizza."

Karol, Josh and Brendan are our starting linebackers. Trevor starts at defensive end. Tony is Trevor's roommate and a backup linebacker for our team. I nodded my understanding as Trevor continued his story.

“The cops were at Karol’s apartment,” Trevor explained. “I don’t know what the hell is going down.”

“No shit! Wow!” I replied. “I wonder if Anders knows anything.”

Trevor and I stopped by Anders’ room before we went to bed. Anders hadn’t heard anything either.

Rumors were flying around among team members on Thursday morning but no one knew anything about what happened at the apartment Karol shared with Aidan Nagy, Max Rosen and Alex Majerowicz.

While we were getting dressed for practice I overheard Josh Bruno ask Karol what was up.

“Zatraceně debilové!” Karol spat out. “How could they be so fucking stupid?” I later learned his curse was Czech for ‘God damned assholes.’ Karol clammed up and refused to talk further. Aidan, Max and Alex were missing from the locker room as we prepared for practice.

No one learned more until just before practice started. Coach Burton called for everyone to huddle up.

When things got quiet Coach Burton announced, “I’m sure all of you heard there was an incident with the police and some members of our team last evening at one of the apartments. I won’t go into detail about exactly what happened. The State College Police were called to the Nittany Apartments last night for an excessive noise complaint. Aidan Nagy, Maximilian Rosen and Alexander Majerowicz were involved. Aidan and Max were arrested for underage drinking. Alex was charged with supplying alcohol to minors and resisting arrest. These three are suspended from the team pending further investigation by the police and the DA.”

I looked around the circle at the jaws that dropped. Everyone was shocked by the news. What were these guys thinking? Have a party in the middle of the week? You just DON’T do that.

Coach Burton continued, “Their roommate Karol Zizka is uninvolved in this incident. Any media inquiries about this incident are to be directed to me or to the athletic department PR staff.” Coach paused and scanned around the crowd as we nodded our understanding. “I want you gentlemen to understand being a member of this team does not entitle you to any special treatment. Aidan, Max and Alex will be investigated and possibly prosecuted just like any other student at this university. Zack Hayes and Karol Zizka would like to address the team now. Zack, Karol...”

Zack and Karol looked at each other. Zack nodded to Karol for him to speak first.

“I was asked by Max, Aidan and Alex to pass along their apologies to the team for their behavior last night. They did not mean to cause trouble for our team,” Karol began. His face grew redder the longer he talked. “I can’t believe they were such... such... ZADKY...” Karol paused for a second to compose himself. “...that they were such assholes to pull a knuckleheaded stunt like this! They want to apologize to the team for what they have done.” Karol turned to Zack.

Zack took half a step towards the center of the crowd and began. “What happened yesterday reflects poorly on our coaches, our university and on our team. All of us know what is expected. DO IT! These three teammates slacking off and partying on a Wednesday night is disgraceful. Weeknights are for school work and preparation time for our team. All of you know I enjoy getting together with teammates and friends to socialize responsibly on Saturday nights after a game. That’s fine.

Zack scanned around the circle of players. “Our team is close to something special this season. I know the polls still list us at #4 but we have a good opportunity to play for the national championship in January. Oklahoma and LSU both have much tougher roads ahead than us. We take care of business with Michigan State on Saturday and we’ll be looking good. Don’t let last night distract you. We’ve been working for the chance to play in Miami on January 8th since the season started. Let’s not blow it now! Beat the Spartans!”

Coach Burton took over. “Due to the suspensions, we are making the following changes in the depth chart. Cantrell, you’re #2 behind Martin now.” I saw my friend Jared Cantrell smile at the news. “MacCauley, you’re now #3 behind Jackson and Hunsecker. You will also be #3 behind Voight and Riggs. Any questions gentlemen?”

We got busy practicing. I noticed everyone seemed a little more focused that afternoon. No one wanted to join Alex, Max and Aidan in the coach’s doghouse.

Jared Cantrell went in and practiced with the first team for a dozen plays. We passed each other when he came off the field. “I can’t believe I was playing with the first string!” Jared said. “I’m only a freshman.”

“Take advantage of any opportunity you get to catch the coaches’ eyes,” I answered. “You move up the depth chart when you show them you’re ready.”

I was happy for my protégé. He’d probably get 12-15 plays against Michigan State, assuming the first string played the whole game. He’d get a lot more playing time if we blew out Michigan State the way we had with Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

Suspended from the team meant Alex, Aidan and Max weren’t allowed in the Lasch Building and didn’t eat with the team at the Training Table. They stayed in their university apartment with Karol and continued to attend classes. Their punishment would be decided after the police, the DA and the university finished their investigation.

In the past Coach Paterno had issued four game suspensions for players caught drinking. Coach Burton hadn't faced this question yet but we all assumed he'd probably discipline Aidan and Alex that way. They probably weren't going to participate in whatever bowl game we went to.

Max was a different case. Max had been suspended for discipline problems when he was a freshman. He had been suspended for academic problems last season. There was a very real possibility that he could be dismissed from the team for this.

Kelly and I shoe-horned an hour of time together on Thursday night. Damian graciously agreed to study over at the Lasch Building so we could be together. Back to back away games are hell on the love life.

After History 20 on Friday afternoon Kelly and I made plans to go out for dinner Saturday night after the game. I planned to invite Chase Utley and his nephew Devin to join Kelly, me, Dad and a client of Dad's who was attending the game. Kelly and I exchanged passionate kisses before we headed our separate ways. The kisses would have to last us until tomorrow evening.

The coaches walked us through the game plan at practice on Friday afternoon, including the first fifteen to twenty plays they planned to call for tomorrow's game. We cleaned up after practice and grabbed dinner at the training table. Coach Burton made an announcement when we were finished eating.

"I'm sure many of you heard rumors flying around our team this week..." He paused and smiled. "... unrelated to Wednesday night's problems. I want to confirm the rumor that the Phillies MVP second baseman Chase Utley will be visiting our game tomorrow afternoon. He will be visiting with the team before the game and has graciously agreed to address all of you. You can thank your teammate Kyle Martin for helping arrange this visit."

Trevor Conwell gave me a shocked look. I just smiled. Coach continued, "Mr. Utley will be accompanied by his nephew Devin Kerr. Ironically young Mr. Kerr made it into our tracking system before we knew he was visiting us with Mr. Utley. Young Mr. Kerr is making quite a name for himself returning punts and kicks for the Parkland High School Trojans. Please make both of our visitors feel welcome."

"Damn Kyle," Trevor exclaimed. "You weren't bullshitting me before were you?"

"I tried to tell you that Trev," I answered. "Are you free Sunday afternoon? I have a good pile of laundry that needs done."

Trevor sighed. "Sunday afternoon? I can do that." I just smiled as I got up to take my tray over to the cleanup window.

We headed for Beaver Stadium for the final pep rally of the season after dinner. I was amazed when I came out with my teammates into the stadium. There must have been 20-25,000 people there cheering us. The cheerleaders and the Blue Band entertained the crowd to open the pep rally. Coach Paterno spoke, rousing the crowd the way only he can. Coach Burton spoke next. He gave a good talk, getting the crowd cheering loudly for our team.

Coach Burton called each senior on the team forward to be recognized. Tomorrow was Senior Day. Cuch Cuchiella, Karol Zizka and Evan Foster received loud cheers when they were introduced. Shawn O'Conner drew louder applause. Coach Burton introduced Zack Hayes last.

I was moved by the reaction of the big crowd. Everyone stood and gave my friend a standing ovation. No one on our team worked harder or meant more to our success over the last two seasons than Zack. It was proper that the crowd should recognize this.

This evening was bittersweet for me. I was happy that my good friend and mentor was recognized by the fans but I was sad that tomorrow was the last game Zack would play in Beaver Stadium. Zack was one of the key reasons I chose to play at Penn State and our time together was nearly over. I owed Zack almost everything I had accomplished in my six years of football. I owed him a debt I could never repay.

The cheerleaders and Blue Band performed to end the rally. We headed through the locker room and outside to our buses. They delivered us to Toftrees for the evening. We had a short team meeting and then were dismissed for the evening.

My friends and I got our usual poker party together in Trevor's room. We played and watched TV until it was almost curfew. Damian and I went back to our room. I went on-line, hoping for information about how my high school team had played against Conrad Weiser, a powerful team from Berks County that had only lost a single game to AAAA Wilson this season. Our team, seeded #14, were long shots against the #3 seed. No information had been posted yet. I started to call Andy at home when the coaches came through doing bed check. The news would have to wait until morning.

Our game against Michigan State was one of ABC's regional games... again. I guess you're popular with the TV people when you win a lot. Our game wouldn't start until 3:30 pm. The coaches scheduled breakfast for 9:30 am.

I took advantage of the later breakfast to go on-line to check out my Wolverines. They went up to Berks County last night and had beaten Conrad Weiser in a barn burner of a game. The final score was 40-38. My brother had caught the winning touchdown in double overtime.

The article reported that my high school would face East Pennsboro next Friday night at 7:00 pm. I noticed that Central had won their game too. They beat Kennard-Dale 28-17 in Manheim. The website reported they would play Greencastle next Saturday afternoon.

The team packed their things and loaded on the buses after breakfast. We were dropped off at the Lasch Building. I was all keyed up when I settled in at my locker. I was excited about the game but I was also excited to meet Chase Utley and his nephew. They were to stop by to see me in the lobby at 11:00 am.

Ann Marie at the front desk paged me a few minutes before eleven o'clock. Most of my friends tried to tag along when I went out to meet my guests.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa..." I said, stopping the parade of people following me. "Coach said Chase will be meeting the team later. I can't have everyone follow me out here now."

"I'm you're roommate," Damian protested.

"We've got a bet," Trevor added. "I've got to witness you meeting him if you expect me to do your laundry for a month."

The other guys added to bedlam. "OK," I said. "Trevor's right. He needs to witness this for the bet. The rest of you will just have to wait until later. Chase will be here all day."

Trevor triumphantly followed me out front while the rest of my friends headed back to the locker room. Trevor hung back to watch when we reached the lobby. I walked up to Chase and extended my hand to him.

"Kyle Martin, it's good to see you again," Chase said. He winked to me. This was the exact wording I asked him to use for Trevor's benefit. We shook hands.

"It's good to see you again Mr. Utley," I replied.

"I'm Chase," I responded. "Mr. Utley is my dad." Chase gestured to his nephew standing beside him. "I want to introduce you to your biggest fan, my nephew Devin."

"Devin, it's good to meet you," I said as I shook the boy's hand.

"Oh... Oh, wow..." Devin stammered. "It's really nice to meet you Kkk.... Uh..." I nodded yes. "...Kyle. This is such an honor."

Chase laughed and said, "For me it's just 'hey, Chase.' For you – 'it's such an honor.' I just don't get any respect."

"You get a lot of respect Chase," I responded. "World Series MVP – that says it all. There is a whole locker room full of guys dying to meet you back there."

“MVP was nice. So was the parade,” Chase agreed. “My personal statistician here...” Chase gestured towards Devin. “...tells me you are doing great too. You broke Penn State season records for receptions and yardage already. I hope you add to your record today.”

“I hope so too,” I agreed.

“Are you going to introduce me to your bashful friend over there?” Chase asked as he nodded towards Trevor.

“This is my personal laundryman, Trevor Conwell,” I said as I waved for Trevor to come over. “He also plays....”

“....Defensive End!” Devin gushed. “You’re the greatest!”

“My nephew gets over his shyness quickly,” Chase teased. “Give him half an hour.”

I introduced Chase and Devin to Trevor and vice versa. Trevor did some gushing of his own at first until he got used to Chase’s friendly manner. When everyone was accounted for I suggested, “Coach Burton wants to talk to you this morning. Why don’t I introduce you to him?” Chase, Devin and I started towards Coach Burton’s office. Trevor headed back to the locker room.

Ann Marie sent us into Coach Burton’s office immediately. I introduced my coach to Chase. Coach Burton thanked me and dismissed Devin and me.

Outside the office, I said, “Let me show you around the Lasch Building. We have some great facilities for football.”

“I’d like that Kyle,” Devin agreed. I took Devin around the building on the usual tour we gave potential recruits. I took him to the weight room and the training room first.

We were walking to the locker room when Devin blurted out, “Chase isn’t really my uncle.” I stopped and stared at him. “My dad married Chase’s sister. She’s my step-mom.”

“I wondered how someone Chase’s age could have a nephew your age,” I said.

“My dad works for the Phillies organization,” Devin continued. “He was playing ball in AA when my mom died. The Phillies released him a year later but asked him to work for their organization. Chase met dad when he played in Reading. He introduced his sister Suzanne to my dad. Dad and Suzanne hit it off and got married. I guess I’m lucky to have Suzanne and Chase as a part of my family.”

“It sounds like you are quite lucky Devin,” I replied. “How’d you end up playing football instead of baseball with your dad and uncle’s backgrounds?”

“I guess it’s mostly because our football team is a lot better than our baseball team. That and the fact that my closest friends are all football players too,” Devin explained.

“I understand,” I replied. “All my closest friends play football too.”

“How’d you get so good at returning kicks and punts?” Devin asked.

“I guess I should give most of the credit to my brother Andy,” I said. “I never returned punts or kicks in high school.”

“Is he the Martin that has all the state high school records for return yards?” Devin asked.

I chuckled and replied, “That would be my younger brother Andy.”

Devin peppered me with questions about how I made my returns and what advice Andy had given me. I answered his questions as best I could as we walked. I gave him the tour of the locker room.

My teammates seemed disappointed when I showed up without Chase but they treated Devin respectfully. Devin was over the top as he met his football heroes on the team. He could quote detailed statistics about each player as he met them. The kid must be borderline obsessive to know this much about our team.

“You certainly know a lot about Penn State football,” I commented as we walked back to the lobby to meet Devin’s uncle.

“I love this team,” Devin answered. “I hope I can play on it someday, though it probably won’t happen.”

“Don’t say that,” I answered. “Coach Burton said you have played well enough this season to be in Penn State’s tracking program.”

“Tracking program?” Devin asked.

“We track all high school athletes in this part of the country to see who we should be recruiting when they are seniors. Coach Burton had a watch on you before we knew you were Chase’s nephew and were coming to visit this week.”

“So, does that mean the team wants me to play here?” Devin asked eagerly.

“I can’t say,” I replied. “You’re in tenth grade, right?” Devin nodded yes. “Do you know about the recruiting rules?”

“No,” Devin answered. I proceeded to fill him in on most of the NCAA rules regarding recruiting. “So I would be considered a recruit making an unofficial visit and Uncle Chase has to pay for everything?”

“I think so,” I agreed.

“Cool!” Devin replied. “The guys at home are going to be so jealous.”

“Let’s go track your uncle down,” I said. “It’s almost time for lunch for the team.”

We found Chase talking with Coach Burton in the lobby, waiting for us to return.

“Coach, would it be all right if Chase and Devin had lunch with the team?” I asked. “I’m sure the guys would enjoy meeting them.”

Coach Burton chuckled. “The team will have an opportunity to meet Chase a little later this afternoon. Chase and his nephew have a luncheon date with President Spanier.”

“Oh, OK,” I replied. “Could I invite you to go to dinner with me after the game?”

Chase smiled and responded, “I was planning on taking you out for dinner after the game to thank you for setting this up for us. What do you say?”

“Umm... sure,” I agreed. “Can my girlfriend, my dad and my dad’s friend come too? He made a reservation at the Boalsburg Steakhouse already.”

“Done!” Chase answered decisively. “Devin and I have an invitation from your coach to come down to the locker room after the game. I’ll see you then.”

Chase and Devin headed out when the dinner arrangements were set. Coach cautioned me to make sure I understood that Chase had to pay for Devin’s meal and Dad or I had to pay for mine. They were the only arrangements that the NCAA would care about. I gave Dad a call to let him know about the arrangements. Dad and his insurance client, John Webber, were stuck in a traffic jam on Route 322 near Lewistown.

I caught up with my friends as we headed for our pre-game lunch. The atmosphere at lunch was relaxed. All of us were confident we would be able to beat Michigan State in spite of the distractions we had this week. The part of the team that were Phillies fans buzzed with excitement at the prospect of meeting Chase Utley before the game. Trevor and I were the only ones to meet him so far.

After lunch we headed back to the Lasch Building locker room to dress for the game. The blue buses hauled us over to the stadium. The fans were out in force at our entrance to the stadium. I followed Zack, Anders, Chip and Trevor off the bus. Zack, Trevor and I greeted fans and did a few autographs along the fence line. Anders and Chip, being more anonymous, went straight into the stadium. Zack thanked everyone for their

support. Trevor and I gave the crowd waves as we headed inside. We finished dressing and then went outside to warm up for the game.

Warm weather from down south pushed up on Friday and took the fall chill out of State College, driving our usual lake effect and Canadian weather north of the border. The temperature dropped down to the mid-forties overnight and went back up with the late fall afternoon sunshine. It was sixty degrees when we came outside. The winds were 10-15 miles an hour from the southwest. They wouldn't be a factor in the game. The weather was a blessing to our high powered passing attack. I'm sure Michigan State would have preferred snow and cold weather instead.

Chase Utley and Devin were in the locker room when we returned. Chase and Devin worked their way around the locker room, greeting every player and offering encouragement as we did our final preparations. Coach Burton spoke briefly to remind us of the importance of this game. It was our last chance to show we belonged in a big BCS game instead of a lesser bowl game.

Coach Burton introduced Chase when he finished speaking. Chase spent a couple minutes addressing the team about the things that had made him and his teammates on the Phillies World Champions twice. Chase told us everyone on the team worked hard to get there but hard work wasn't enough. The Phillies didn't break through until they figured out how to be a team. If Chase struggled, Ryan Howard would pick up the slack – same with Jimmy, Shane, and everyone else on the team. The team became more than the sum of its parts.

Chase's talk was well received. Zack, Jake, Evan and Karol called everyone into a huddle. Zack commanded, "Hands in! On three, Teamwork and Excellence! One... Two.... Three...."

"TEAMWORK AND EXCELLENCE!" we chanted in response. We jogged out of the locker room to the tunnel to wait for introductions. This was Senior Day, so the seniors were introduced individually before the rest of the team ran out onto the field.

Our fine punter Steve Cobb was introduced first, followed by our nickel back Angus Pitts and then our little used fullback Vlad Lazlo. Yasin Clark limped out of the tunnel on crutches to the cheers of his appreciative fans. Vic Samovitz, our left cornerback received scattered cheers.

Ben Harris, our right guard, Cory Wells, left tackle, and JT Hill, our center, followed to the cheers of the fans. These guys made our offense work with excellent protection for Zack on passing plays and with good solid run blocking for Shawn and Damian.

The announcer moved on to our graduating skill players – Hassan Jackson, Anders Voight and Shawn O'Conner. The cheers and applause grew in volume as each of my friends was introduced.

Our Hero, literally and by position name Cuch Cuchiella followed Shawn. Karol Zizka, our three year starter at middle linebacker followed Cuch. Karol drew sustained applause from the crowd.

Evan Foster followed Karol. Jake Washington, our extraordinary defensive end, garnered the loudest cheers so far.

The loudspeakers announced, “Team captain and fifth year senior, your quarterback, Zachary Hayes.”

The stadium erupted in thunderous applause as almost 108,000 Nittany Lion fans stood and cheered my friend and mentor as he trotted out onto the field and joined the other seniors. I fought back the tears in my eyes as I looked over the seniors we would lose next season. Those of us left were going to have to play like hell to make up for all the talent leaving after our bowl game.

The rest of the team ran onto the field between lines of Blue Band members and cheerleaders to the continuing cheers of our faithful. We took our positions along the side of the field as our captains met with Michigan State’s captains and the referee for the coin toss. Michigan State won the coin toss and elected to receive the kickoff.

Coach C’s game plan on defense wasn’t radically different than last week’s plan against Wisconsin. Cuch was lined up close to the line of scrimmage and didn’t have pass coverage responsibilities. The only change was for Tyler Madden, who covered the pass first and then gave run support when the ball left the QB’s hands.

It worked. Michigan State ran off tackle left for a yard and then up the middle for two more. Jake Washington broke loose on third down, chasing the QB out of the pocket into Trevor Conwell’s bruising sack for a six yard loss. They punted the ball back to us from their 25 yard line.

I lined up on our 35 yard line to await the punt. I advanced a few yards and caught the high punt on the run. Coach Ferguson spotted something on the video last week and we planned a wall to the right side of the field. I followed Shawn Byrd as he set up his block. When Shawn engaged his man I shot around behind Shawn and sprinted diagonally towards the sideline. I flew by my other blockers as they set up the wall to keep Michigan State away from me. We even managed to get a blocker on their kicker.

I raced down the sidelines and into the end zone untouched. “TOUCHDOWN, #82, Kyle Martin.” I held the ball aloft to the cheers of the Penn State fans before I was mobbed by the rest of our special teams players. As always, Andrew Perkins booted the ball through the uprights for the extra point. Score: 7-0 Lions.

The Spartans did marginally better on the next drive. They gained a first down running before our defense tightened up. Jake knocked the quarterback to the ground a split second after he sailed the ball to bench on his sidelines.

Michigan State fixed the gap we exploited last time in their punt coverage. I had to settle for a sixteen yard return to give the ball to our offense on our 43 yard line. Almost six minutes were gone in the game when Zack huddled us up.

Time turned out not to be an important factor on the drive. Zack used six plays, three runs and three passes to take us down the field and score. Shawn ran, I caught a fifteen yard hitch pattern, Shawn ran two more times, then Hassan caught a quick out and broke a tackle and gained twelve yards to put us at the Trojan's 18 yard line. Zack capped off the drive by hitting Anders in stride as he crossed the middle of the field. Anders broke free of the nickel back and strong safety and strode into the end zone for a touchdown. Andrew nailed the PAT. Score: 14-0 Lions

Our team had been on a roll since we squashed Illinois four weeks earlier. Michigan State didn't even provide a speed bump for us. We used our spread offense and a good mix of running and passing to keep Michigan State off balance. We were ahead 21-0 when Michigan State finally managed to score a field goal.

We responded with an eight play drive down the field. I caught the touchdown when Zack threw a beautiful fade pass into the corner of the end zone. We were ahead 35-3 as the half wound down.

The Spartans caught their first break when Shawn Byrd slipped as he went for an interception on a deep pass just before the end of the half. The receiver caught the ball and sailed into the end zone to score. Coach Burton was satisfied to let the clock run out and take a 35-10 lead into the locker room.

Coach Burton sent Chip Brinton and the second string in for the second half of the game. Chip and the offense mostly ran the ball with just enough passing mixed in to keep Michigan State off balance. Chip piled two more touchdowns and a field goal on the Spartans in the third quarter, one a long pass to Christian and the other to Bruce MacCauley. It was his first TD since joining the team. The Spartans managed to score again, another field goal.

Chip and the offense ran the ball relentlessly to take time off the clock in the fourth quarter. The crowd cheered wildly when Charlie Taylor made a three yard run. I looked around, trying to figure out why the crowd cheered so much for a routine play. I found out when I saw the score board. It read "4Q Michigan 31 - Ohio State 20."

Coach C inserted our third string players to let them get some experience. Michigan State's first string did manage a touchdown when they were faced with a prevent defense and a bunch of freshmen.

Chip and the third string were working another time killing drive after the Spartan score. The Spartans brought extra men up close to the line of scrimmage to stop our running. They forced us into third and five. Coach Burton called for short routes. Chip hit Bruce

MacCauley slanting over the middle. He had a couple steps on the cornerback covering him. Chip hit Bruce in stride. Bruce opened some eyes once he had the ball in his hands. He accelerated as he ran down the field. He made a sweet move to fake the safety out of his socks, cut back and sprinted into the end zone for another score to put us ahead 59-20.

The game had 4:09 left when Andrew Perkins kicked the ball down to the Spartans. Coach Burton yelled, "First string offense on me!"

The eleven of us gathered around our coach and listened. "Seniors, you've earned the right to be on the field for the end of the game. The ball is in your hands. Take us home Zack."

"Keep in bounds guys," Zack added. "We need to milk every second on the clock. The Spartans don't get another shot today. Got it?"

Everyone yelled our agreement. When we turned our attention back to the field we found the Spartans were facing third and long. Their QB's pass fluttered down the field way past the receiver. They punted back to Tanner Riggs. Tanner advanced the ball to our 42 yard line.

The boisterous Penn State crowd cheered when Zack led the first string back on the field. Zack used nearly every second of the forty seconds we had to get off each play before he handed the ball off to Shawn O'Conner. Hassan, Anders and I concentrated on blocking to help Shawn. The Spartans slipped more defenders in close to the line of scrimmage to try to slow us down.

They managed to slow us down force us to pass. Zack found Anders coming across the middle on third and five. Anders caught the ball and made the first down, barely. Coach Burton decided it was time to spread the Spartans out again. We caught Michigan State in the wrong defense when I sprinted deep on the next play. I beat the cornerback easily. The free safety had come up to stop Shawn's run fake.

When I turned back for the ball I found it was high and going long. I jetted ahead, stretching to try to catch Zack's pass. I managed to get my fingertips on it as I fell but lost the ball when I hit the ground.

I jogged back to our huddle. "Damn Kyle, you weren't supposed to be able to reach that ball," Zack said. "I wanted the Spartans to be scared about the deep pass. I didn't want you picking up twenty-five yards. Twenty-five yards should buy us three minutes off the clock."

"Sorry Zack," I answered. "I assumed if you threw the ball to me that I should try to catch it."

Zack called the next play, another off tackle run at the Spartans. Every second or third play I'd sprint down field on a deep pass route to keep the Trojan defense loose for

Shawn. We steadily ran the time down on the clock and forced the Spartans to use all their time outs. When the clock ran down below 1:30 Coach Burton ordered Zack to kneel down even though we were in the Trojan's red zone and could have scored if we wanted to. The kneel-downs ran the remaining seconds off the clock.

The Penn State fans cheered widely as the last seconds ran off the clock. Zack, Shawn, Anders, Hassan and the other seniors basked in cheers as the final seconds of their careers in Beaver Stadium ticked away. The final score was 59-20 Penn State's favor.

We hugged and shook hands with each other to celebrate the successful conclusion of the season. Zack and I were too overcome with emotion to even speak. We stared at each other and then hugged.

One of my main reasons for coming to Penn State was so Zack and I could play together more. A single bowl game was all we had left together.

The departing crowd of fans cheered wildly one more time. Every one turned to check the score board. It read: "Final: Michigan 34 - Ohio State 27." Team members took up the cheering. Rose Bowl bound or better!

I did one TV interview with ABC and then the Lancaster and Harrisburg TV stations demanded that Zack and I take interviews together. I had a good half plus: four catches for 112 yards and a touchdown, 2 punt returns for seventy-six yards and a touchdown and one kick return for thirty-three yards. Zack had been spectacular in his one half plus four minutes of play: 19 of 23 for 245 yards and three touchdowns. I praised my friend in every interview.

Players headed back into the locker room as the crowd thinned out. Everyone inside was in a mood to celebrate as we undressed. Chase Utley's appearance added to the festive mood. Devin hung out with me while his uncle worked the room, greeting players as he made his way around the room. Coach Burton interrupted things to award two game balls, one to Zack Hayes and the other to Shawn O'Conner, who gained 142 yards.

I called Dad to find out where he was. He had already hooked up with Kelly. They would meet me outside the Lasch Building when I was ready. Coach Burton let Chase and Devin ride the bus back to the Lasch Building with us. I showered quickly and changed into regular clothes.

Chase, Devin and I headed out to the lobby where we found Dad, Kelly and John Webber, one of dad's clients. I introduced everyone. I could see Mr. Webber was extremely impressed to meet Chase. I'm sure all he expected when he left home this morning was to meet a few Penn State players and enjoy watching our game. Meeting Chase certainly had to add to the wow factor and wouldn't hurt Dad's business any.

Dad made reservations for us at the Boalsburg Steakhouse for the evening. Dad gave Chase directions and then all of us split up to get our cars and meet there. Kelly and I walked back to the East Parking Deck for my VW.

Kelly was talkative and very affectionate that evening. That was good. Jen was spending the night with her boyfriend Darrell again. We had Kelly's dorm room to ourselves all night.

Kelly and I met up with Dad, Mr. Webber, Chase and Devin outside the restaurant. We had to wait a few minutes to be seated. The waiter took our orders a few minutes later. I was famished. I hadn't eaten in nine hours. Chase entertained us with stories about the Phillies two World Series championships, his teammates and some of the experiences he had playing baseball professionally.

Some of the diners were baseball fans who recognized Chase and stopped by to get autographs. They'd do a double take when they saw me and I'd sign autographs for them too. Some were die-hard Penn State fans who recognized me first, asked for an autograph and then recognized Chase.

The dinner was quite enjoyable. When we finished our meals Kelly and I were happy to talk more with Dad, Mr. Webber, Chase and Devin some more, but all of them were anxious to get on the road for home. Dad and Mr. Webber had a two and half hour drive to get to Paradise. Chase expected it would take him three hours to get to his sister's house. He planned to crash there before heading back to his home outside Philly tomorrow.

Chase generously paid for everyone's meal, except mine. Dad paid for me to keep us within the NCAA guidelines. Everyone headed outside to the parking lot.

"Kyle, I'd like to thank you for arranging for Devin and me to come to the game today," Chase said as he shook my hand. "Having a luncheon with the university president and watching the game from his box was pretty sweet."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," I replied. "Keep working at football Devin. Maybe your next trip up will be when we try to recruit you to attend our university in a couple years."

"It won't take much convincing Kyle," Devin answered.

Chase said, "Dan, I'd like to invite your family to one of the Phillies games next spring when college is out. Of course Kelly is invited too. Are you interested?"

"Are you sure Chase?" Dad responded. "We have a pretty big family."

"Sure, no problem," Chase said. "Have Kyle get me some dates that it would suit everyone. I'll be happy to set it up to say thanks for your hospitality today."

Everyone shook hands and finished saying good bye.

“I’ll see you Wednesday for dinner Dad,” I said as he climbed in his car. “I should be home before six.”

Kelly and I waved as Chase and Devin headed east followed by Dad and Mr. Webber. The two of us hopped in my car and headed back to campus. Zack’s party was going to be a big chance to celebrate. We won big, Ohio State lost and Oklahoma was shaky, barely beating their opponent for the day. It was time to party!

I turned onto Porter Road from the Mount Nittany Expressway and was waved into a sobriety check point immediately. I handed over my license and registration when the officer stopped at my car.

“Where have you been Mr. Martin?” he asked as he looked over my license and registration.

“Dinner with my father and Chase Utley,” I replied.

“THE Chase Utley?” the officer responded. I nodded yes. He scanned my license again and then took a good look at my face. “You had a good game today Mr. Martin. Keep it up.”

“I’ll try sir,” I answered as he returned my cards.

“Drive safely,” the officer said as he waved me on.

“That was easy,” Kelly commented.

“I didn’t tell them I was at a party like the last time,” I explained. “It seemed to help.”

I parked my car in the parking deck. Kelly and I arrived at Zack’s apartment around ten pm. The party was in full swing. Evan had been fooling around for the last month or so with his bar tending skills. He had prepared a batch of apple martinis that he handed to everyone willing to try them. Kelly and I both accepted his offer.

Usually I stick to beer but this martini that Evan whipped up was pretty tasty. It had a kick to it too. Kelly and I downed the first ones and went back for seconds before we mingled with our friends.

Zack was in an expansive mood that evening. Our decisive victory over Michigan State was nice. Ohio State’s loss was better. At worst we were going back to southern California for Christmas and New Years to play in the Rose Bowl again. If we got lucky and Notre Dame knocked off USC next Saturday or if Florida could beat LSU in two

weeks...well, that would really sweet. Start the New Year out in Miami at the Orange Bowl and play for the national championship, nothing could be better. Kelly and I danced for awhile then grabbed some beers. Evan's martinis were long gone. We danced some more until the party started to wind down. Singles hooked up with each other while the couples cuddled and kissed.

Kelly and I found a chair in the living room. She sat on my lap as we made out. Fifteen minutes had my motor running at 5,000 rpm. "Let's go back to your room honey," I suggested as I felt up her left tit.

"One more beer and I'm ready," Kelly countered.

"I've had a lot tonight sweetie," I said.

Kelly pulled me out of the chair and led me to the kitchen. "Come on, you're a big boy," she purred. "One more for the road." I didn't argue at all. The tall cold bottle of beer went right down, smooth as could be.

The two of us wished Leigh Ann and Zack a good night and headed back to Beaver Hall. We weren't totally wasted but we had quite a buzz going on. The excitement of the victory, the dinner with Chase, the alcohol and all those hormones raging through our bodies – we were totally ready to join our bodies all night long.

I woke up the next morning spooned against my lover, my arm draped across her with a breast nestled comfortably in my hand. I squeezed it gently. The dull throb in my head reminded me that I shouldn't have drunk quite so much last night. My morning wood was stuck against my lover's legs. I felt warm and comfortable right where I was so I stayed there, barely stirring in the pleasant half awake, half asleep state.

My memories of last night were hazy after we left Zack's apartment. I did remember making love once to Kelly. I remembered Kelly teasing me that it only rated two O's (as in orgasms) with her and that I had done better before. I thought we did it again. I remember lining my cock up and starting to push in and... JEN!

I shifted as the memory hit me. Jen had burst into the room while we were starting to make love the second time. Why? I couldn't remember that. My lover was awake. She grasped the hand on her breast and squeezed it to encourage me. I responded, caressing her tit and flicking her nipple with my thumb.

"Mmmmm..." she purred. Why in the hell had Jen interrupted us? She always went out of her way to give us privacy when we needed it.

She lifted her leg, grasped my hard-on and positioned it against her hole. I obliged by thrusting my hips up, sliding an inch or so into my lover's sloppy wet, well used hole.

“Somebody’s still horny,” she said as I grasped her hips and drove my cock deeper into her hot cavity.

Alarm bells went off in my head. That wasn’t Kelly’s voice! I opened my eyes and found myself staring down at the top of a head of blond hair instead of Kelly’s beautiful red hair.

“Jen?” I gasped. Jen pushed her hips down on my cock, further embedding me inside her.

“Fill me up with that big thing again Kyle,” Jen said. “Kelly was right about how good you are in bed.”

“What the fuck?” I gasped as I pulled myself out of Jen’s pussy. I rolled backwards to get away, ending up on top of ... Who the fuck is behind me?

“Kyle, you’re too heavy,” Kelly grumped as she woke up suddenly. I rolled back over and got up, ready to get off the bed except... I was on the floor already! I looked around and by the dim light filtering in around the edges of the curtains saw Kelly and Jen’s beds were didn’t have mattresses. The two mattresses were pushed together on the floor. I stepped over Kelly and sat on the edge of her bed frame.

“What’s wrong honey?” Kelly asked.

I saw my T-shirt on the floor beside, grabbed it and covered my cock.

“He’s shy Kelly,” Jen said, staring unabashedly at my crotch. “There’s no need to be modest after the way you fucked me last night.”

“I... I.... fucked you?” I stammered in disbelief.

“You don’t remember?” Kelly asked as she sat down on the bed frame beside me. She slipped her arm around my waist. I shook my head no. “Oh poor baby,” Kelly added as she stroked my back.

Jen got up and flipped on the desk lamp to provide illumination to the scene. She sat down facing us cross legged on the mattresses on the floor.

“What happened....” I stammered. Darrell! I remembered why Jen stumbled in on Kelly and me having sex. She dumped Darrell last night. “What happened with you and Darrell?”

“You don’t remember?” Jen asked.

“I had more to drink than I thought last night,” I explained. “A lot of the details are hazy.”

Jen explained, “Darrell and I went back to his apartment last night like we planned. We watched a DVD and made out a little. Both of us got the munchies. You know how barren guys keep their cupboards, right?” Kelly nodded in agreement. “Darrell went down the street to the Sheetz store for snacks. The phone rang while he was gone so I answered it. It was some girl named Carly. I offered to take a message for her. She asked me to tell him to call her. I asked for her phone number. She laughed and said, ‘Of course he has my number. I’m his girlfriend.’ I couldn’t believe that... that... the bastard would...” Jen rubbed her eyes and struggled to avoid crying.

Kelly hopped off the bed and sat down beside her friend on the mattresses. She hugged Jen and said, “We agreed on this last night. You’re better off without the son of a bitch!”

Jen cleared her throat and agreed, “Yeah, you’re right.” She sniffled, wiped her eyes again and took a deep breath.

“How did you dumping Darrell end with all of us sleeping together?” I asked. One scene from last night popped into my head. I was fucking Kelly doggy style while... while... she bent down and... Yeah, she was eating Jen’s pussy while I fucked her.

“You really don’t remember?” Kelly asked, clearly perplexed at my lack of knowledge.

“Sorry, I was drunker than I realized last night. I don’t remember much,” I answered.

“You don’t remember Jen coming in soaked to the skin last night?” Kelly asked.

“Just that you and I were ready to have sex when she burst in,” I said.

“You don’t remember me undressing Jen as she sobbed about the break up?” Kelly asked. I shook my head no. “I tried to comfort her so she would stop crying.”

An image popped into my head of Kelly, naked, hugging and kissing Jen who has clad only panties and a sports bra. “I kind of remember you hugging Jen to comfort her and...” I admitted. “...and kissing her?”

“You told us we looked totally hot,” Kelly said. “You teased, ‘You two don’t get to make out unless you include me.’ Do you remember that?”

“Did I say that?” I asked. Kelly nodded yes. “I don’t remember.”

“We talked about how Jen’s bisexual last night,” Kelly explained. I shrugged my shoulders. I didn’t remember that at all. “...and how I’m straight, mostly.”

“But you did girl on girl with... uh, Marie, when you were too young to date boys,” I said as more of last night’s conversation came back.

“I like to be with a girl once in awhile,” Kelly said. “Like September.”

“OK, I can see how the two of you ended up making out last night,” I said. “How did all of us end up in bed together and how did I end up fucking Jen?”

“I can’t believe you don’t remember Kyle,” Kelly said. “You were still horny when Jen interrupted us. We joined you on my bed when you teased us about including you. You were kissing me and fingering my pussy while Jen did my breasts. No memories of that?”

I shook my head no. Kelly continued, “The two of you got me so horny that I demanded a good fucking. You screwed me doggy style.”

“I do kind of remember that part. You ate Jen’s pussy while I did you,” I said.

“Yes,” Kelly agreed. “When I brought Jen to orgasm I teased her about how much you like you prostate massaged.

“You?” I asked. Jen blushed and nodded yes.

“We flipped over so you were on top,” Kelly explained. “Jen gave you a prostate massage while we screwed. You said it was the best cum of your life.”

I looked over at Jen. She blushed. “How did Jen and I... uh...”

“...end up fucking?” Kelly said, finishing my question. I nodded yes. “I guess I was pretty wasted too last night. I said that Jen deserved a ride on your cock after she had her fingers up your ass.”

“And I did,” I said. Both girls nodded agreement. “Where does that leave us Kelly? This whole night just blows me away.”

Kelly started to answer but Jen interrupted. “Forget it ever happened Kyle. I’d never want to be the reason you and Kelly broke up. You two make the best couple around.”

“Is it that easy?” I asked. “This was some pretty heavy stuff we did last night.”

Kelly’s face fell when Jen mentioned breaking up. Kelly’s face showed her shock when I didn’t immediately deny any thought of this threesome causing problems in our relationship.

“I love you totally Kelly,” I said to reassure her. Kelly stood and we stepped together and hugged.

“I love you totally too Kyle,” Kelly answered.

“Maybe we better get cleaned up and take a little time to think,” I suggested. “What time is it?” I looked over at Kelly’s clock. “It’s after noon!” I exclaimed. “Why don’t I go back to my room and get a shower. Let’s meet at Pollock for lunch. I think the three of us need to have a long talk.”

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I thought about what had happened as I showered. Was I interested in a relationship with Jen? No. Kelly seemed OK with what had happened last night. Was there any harm in three people having consensual sex together? I was almost finished with my shower when I remembered – what about birth control? I certainly was too drunk to think of using a condom with Jen last night, or this morning for that matter.

I had a lot of questions to resolve with Kelly and Jen. Certainly the most important question was how did Kelly feel today about me fucking Jen now that it was done. I was totally head over heels in love with Kelly and didn't want anything to screw that up.

I was nervous as I walked across the quad to meet the girls. I had this bad habit of screwing something up every fall going back to ninth grade. I'd gotten drunk and been grounded for a month in ninth grade. I slept around and felt guilty and stopped communicating with Julie in tenth grade. That cost me her as a girlfriend. I had blown out my knee in eleventh grade and nearly lost my chance at a college scholarship.

By some miracle I hadn't messed up when I was a senior. Penny had kept me sane while I tried to choose a college. That hadn't really worked out anyway. Everything blew up for me last fall – academics, being unfaithful to Penny and then the disastrous break up with her. Was my personal history going to repeat itself again?

I met Jen and Kelly at the bottom of the stairs to the dining hall. We went through the line for our food and then headed for a deserted table in the back. It wasn't hard to find one since we came near the end of the lunch period. We sat down and started to eat.

Jen broke the awkward silence first. "Can I say something?" Jen asked. "It would kill me if last night did anything to harm your relationship. You two are the best couple I know."

"How do you feel about what happened last night Kyle?" Kelly asked.

"It scares me," I began. "I had sex with someone else. We're supposed to be in a committed relationship. How are you going to feel about this? I love you and don't want anything to screw up what we have together. Will having sex mess things up in our relationship?"

Kelly laughed, not exactly the response I expected. Kelly saw my reaction and stopped laughing. "'Will having sex mess things up between us?' That is exactly the same question you asked last night Kyle," Kelly explained. "I told you to go ahead and give Jen what she needed. My only concern about what happened last night is if it freaks you out too much Kyle. I encouraged you to have sex with Jen and am comfortable that Jen would never do anything to break us up."

“I would never do anything like that,” Jen confirmed.

“So you’re OK with last night Kelly as long as I’m OK with it. Jen doesn’t want to get in the middle of our relationship and mess it up. Can we just say, ‘No harm, no foul, everything is good?’” I asked. Both girls nodded yes. “I do have one more concern. I was pretty drunk last night and I know I didn’t have any condoms with me. I’m guessing Jen and I had unprotected sex. Do we have any worries there?”

“No, we’re fine Kyle,” Jen answered. “I’m on the pill and I’m faithful about taking it every single morning. You don’t have to worry about surprises in nine months. I’ve was tested for STDs a couple months ago when Darrell and I started dating. He was tested too. There are no worries...” Jen’s smile disappeared. “Shit! The bastard lied about me being the only one in his life. He never showed me the test results. It would be just like that SOB to lie about being clean too.”

“Do you really think there could be a problem?” Kelly asked.

“I think all of us should get tested just to be safe,” I said. We discussed it for a couple minutes and decided it would be prudent to visit Ritnour to be sure we didn’t have any sexually transmitted diseases.

“So, we all got a little drunk last night and got crazy,” I summarized. “You feel OK about what happened Kelly...” Kelly nodded yes. “... and I’m OK with it if you’re OK. Jen, you’re not looking for anything more from me than normal friendship like we had before last night, right?”

“No, I don’t want to get in the middle of your relationship with Kelly,” Jen agreed.

“So, this is just a one-time thing, no harm, no foul,” I said.

“Umm... I’m not so sure about that part Kyle,” Kelly replied. Jen and I both stared at her. “You both had psych. You remember the lecture on human sexuality and heterosexuality versus homosexuality.”

Both of us nodded yes. I wondered where my girlfriend was going with this.

“Heterosexuality and homosexuality aren’t binary,” Kelly continued. “If seven on the scale is totally heterosexual and one is totally homosexual, I’m probably a five or a six. I like guys a lot.” Kelly smiled back when she saw my relieved smile. “You both know I had some girl on girl sexual experiences in high school when I wasn’t allowed to date boys.”

“I know,” I agreed. “We’ve talked about it. Wasn’t that just curiosity?”

“Mostly, but not entirely Kyle,” Kelly explained. “Once in awhile I enjoy what Jen and I did in September or what we did last night.

“I probably would rate myself a four on that scale,” Jen said. “Kyle, you probably didn’t know I’ve had a couple lesbian affairs in high school and one here in college.”

“Put me down as a seven,” I said. “I have never been with a guy. Being with girls is too much fun to consider hooking up with a guy.”

“Does it have to be a one-time thing if we’re all comfortable with what happened last night?” Kelly replied. “I had fun together with the three of us.”

“I had fun too, Jen said. “...but I don’t want to get in the way of you two.”

“I don’t remember last night so I have no idea if I had fun,” I replied.

“Trust me honey,” Kelly replied. “You had fun.”

“You certainly did,” Jen added.

“I think we need some ground rules if we’re contemplating repeating what happened last night,” I said. “I see all kinds of possibilities for trouble if we don’t.”

The three of us discussed things for another ten or fifteen minutes before we hammered out acceptable ground rules:

1. This was allowed only by informed mutual consent of all three of us. If we were as drunk as last night it wouldn’t happen.
2. Under no circumstances would Jen and I or Kelly and Jen have sex without the third party being present, awake and participating in the liaison.
3. This was going to be an occasional fling, not an every weekend thing.
4. Kelly and I would treat Jen like a close, very dear friend but not as our lover.

Jen headed back to her room. Kelly and I grabbed a Sunday paper at the Mix and headed for my room. We spent the afternoon hanging out in my room the way we did most Sundays reading the paper and keeping in touch with our friends.

Our thumping Michigan State got big play in the sports section. The writer speculated that Zack Hayes should be considered one of the leaders in the quest for the Heisman Trophy. I agreed completely. He also praised our team’s late season surge, both offensively and defensively.

Michigan's upset of Ohio State got lots of space too. The Wolverines apparently jumped out to an early lead and never looked back as they bashed the Buckeyes. Ohio State's loss gave us sole possession of the Big Ten championship. Oklahoma struggled to win their game yesterday. The defense barely protected a big lead in the fourth quarter. That wouldn't help them any in the polls tonight.

My friends' teams, Florida, Notre Dame, Rutgers, and West Virginia, all won. Congratulatory e-mails sailed back and forth between the five of us. Ed sat for his game. Drew did spot duty running for the Mountaineers, gaining 21 yards on five carries. Jeremy did his usual outstanding job at linebacker – 11 tackles, two for a loss and a sack. Hal made his first appearance in Rutgers' game against Cincinnati. The kicker pulled a hamstring in the first half. Hal handled the three kickoffs, and two extra points in the second half of his game.

Coach Burton announced the practice schedule for the week at dinner. We would study video from our game against Michigan State for half the practice and then study film from Ohio State for the remainder of practice on Monday. Tuesday we would spend our practice time working on fundamentals – blocking, tackling, ball control and fumble recovery. The whole team cheered when Coach Burton reminded us that we had off from Tuesday after dinner until Sunday's team dinner.

After dinner most of the team went over to the auditorium in the Lasch Building to watch the BCS Post Game show. USC and LSU stayed at #1 and #2. We maintained #3 in the Harris and USA Today polls. The computer finally yielded, edging us above Oklahoma to give us the third position in the BCS standings. We were looking pretty. All we needed was for USC or LSU to falter in the final weeks of the season.

Jeremy and Notre Dame hosted USC next Saturday in South Bend. Hopefully the Fighting Irish could take down the Trojans. In two weeks LSU would face the winner of the SEC-East. At the moment Ed's Florida Gators were tied with the Georgia Bulldogs for the lead in the division. The two teams faced each other Saturday. The winner would take on the Fighting Tigers the following Saturday. Maybe if the Gators beat Georgia they could do better with Elijah Carter in a game played on neutral ground.

On Monday I wrapped up my research for my history term paper after lunch before I went to Poly Sci. The video study at practice went well. The coaches had nothing but good things to say about the first string. Coach Peterson and Coach Schneider had quite a few comments for Chip to improve his play. I was glad my friend understood the purpose of the review. He didn't let their criticisms faze him. He simply took notes, nodded and moved on. That is a good quality to have when you're a first year quarterback being force fed our complicated offense each week.

Kelly and I would have liked to spend some time making love before we headed for home. Unfortunately that wasn't possible. That was also good news. Kelly's period started that day which meant we weren't going to become parents thanks to our carelessness three weeks earlier.

Both of us were too busy with classes anyway. Kelly had Philosophy midterm on Wednesday morning. Both of us had a History 20 midterm Wednesday afternoon. We were forced to spend our evenings studying.

Wednesday's history midterm was easy, at least for me. We covered American History through the mid-nineteenth century, right up to the start of the Civil War. It was a standard blue book essay test. I was confident I aced the test.

Kelly and I walked back to our dorms together. Charlie Taylor was meeting me in the lobby of Hartranft Hall at 2:45. I was giving him a ride back to Lancaster on the way home. The rest of the Lancaster County contingent on our team had other arrangements – Mr. Umble was taking Bev and Christian home. Zack was dropping Leigh Ann off on his way home. Poor Kelly had to wait until after dinner for a ride back to Pittsburgh. Her mom and dad were sending her younger brother Mike to pick her up. He left right after school and wouldn't get to State College until 6:15 or so.

Kelly and I stopped off outside Hartranft.

"God, I'm going to miss you Kelly," I declared. I gave my lover a hug and a kiss.

"I'll write you every day Kyle," Kelly replied. "I'm going to miss you so much." Kelly returned the kiss deeply. I responded, with my tongue. The kiss lasted too long. We broke it to the sound of someone nearby clearing his throat.

"Sorry to interrupt Kyle," Charlie Taylor said politely. "Are we going to leave soon?"

"Yeah, sorry Charlie," I said. I gave Kelly one last kiss. "I love you totally Kell. Have a good holiday."

"You too Kyle," Kelly replied. "Have a safe trip home." She gave me a final hug and kiss before heading for her dorm.

"Give me a minute to get my bag upstairs Charlie," I said. "I'll be down in two minutes."

"No problem Kyle," Charlie answered. "I appreciate you giving me a ride home."

Charlie and I carried our bags across campus to my car. Mom was going to be totally shocked when I showed up at home with a bag full of clean clothes. Trevor Conwell made an excellent laundryman.

Traffic was heavy heading east out of State College until we passed Porter's Mill where Rt. 322 turned back into a four lane divided highway. Traffic was bad around Harrisburg until we reached Rt. 283. It was busy again as we passed Lancaster. I got off at Rt. 23 and followed it into the east end of Lancaster. I dropped Charlie off at his house on Franklin Street, not too far from McCaskey High School. Charlie was a pleasant riding companion. We agreed I'd pick him up on Sunday at 1:00pm.

I pulled up in front of my house about twenty minutes later. It was ten minutes before six, just barely in time for our families' dinner time. I grabbed my bags and headed across the lawn to the house.

"I'm home," I yelled when I came in the front door.

"We're in the kitchen Kyle," my sister Liz yelled back.

I heard what sounded like a stampede of miniature elephants were coming through the living room and heading my way. I kneeled down and threw out my arms for my nephews.

"Unka Ky!" Unka Ky!" Noah and Conner yelled as they ran for me as fast as toddlers could go. I hugged both boys together as they hugged my neck and gave me sloppy kisses on the cheek. The boys stepped back. Both held out their arms and begged, "Plane? Plane?" as they waggled their 'wings.'

"OK," I agreed. "Connor?" One twin snapped his head towards me immediately. I inspected him as I lifted him over my head and gave him a brief plane ride around the entry hallway. I needed to learn to tell my nephews apart again. I couldn't tell which was which anymore.

Noah waited expectantly for his turn. I put Connor down and lifted Noah up and gave him his plane ride. The twins toddled off towards the kitchen. I left my bags in the hallway and followed them.

Noah and Connor looked like they had grown three or four inches since last summer. They had put on weight too. The twins headed for Mom, who was finishing off our dinner at the stove. The twins surrounded Mom and tugged on her pant legs.

"Mom-mom... cookie?" "Cookie?" the boys begged.

"No boys," Mom said. "See Lizzy to wash up for dinner." She pointed towards my sister who was putting my little brother Hunter in his high chair. The twins toddled over to Liz and held their hands up.

"Hey Kyle, welcome home," Liz said as she herded the twins to the sink.

“Welcome home Kyle,” Mom added. “Go wash up, dinner is in a couple minutes.”

“Sure thing Mom,” I replied. “What’s for dinner?”

“Meat loaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans,” Mom answered. “We have cake for desert.”

“Cool!” I replied. “That sounds great. Do I have time to take my stuff upstairs to my room before dinner?”

“Yes and no,” Mom said. “You have time but you’ve been moved downstairs to the basement. The two little monkeys...” Noah and Connor giggled at Mom’s reference to them. “...started getting out of their cribs last month. They have the bunk beds in your old room now.”

“OK Mom,” I said. I headed back to the hall and dragged my bags downstairs. The dresser was full of my extra clothes that I left behind last summer when I went to college. I dropped my things, washed up downstairs and headed back to the kitchen to join my family.

I bumped into Andy at the top of the steps. Andy grinned and exclaimed, “Big bro! It’s good to see you again.”

“It’s good to see you too Andy,” I said as we did our standard handshake, clasp and knuckle bump. I followed Andy over the kitchen table and had seats. Dad appeared seconds behind us.

We said grace and then dug into Mom’s delicious food, except Hunter of course. My little brother had started having rice cereal a couple weeks ago in addition to his breast feeding.

I enjoyed catching up with my family’s news of events around home and school. I had a lot less catching up this Thanksgiving compared to last year since I seen everyone except the little ones in the last five or six weeks at school.

After dinner I unpacked my things and then started making phone calls. Dad gave me the phone number for Mr. Randolph, the descendant of one of the soldiers, Major John Randolph. Mr. Randolph was friendly when I called. He was retired and welcomed me to stop by to read through his great-great uncle’s correspondence. We agreed I would stop by Friday afternoon. Mr. Randolph gave me directions to his house in the center of New Holland.

My second call was to my high school coach, Coach Caffrey. I called to make sure I’d be welcome to visit our high school team prior to the start of Friday night’s playoff game. He not only invited me to visit, Coach Caffrey asked me to deliver the pre-game pep talk

that was traditional for our post-Thanksgiving playoff game when the college age former Wolverines players came home.

Coach and I talked for awhile about how our respective seasons went. I complimented him for helping the Wolverines pull out of their early season tailspin. Coach Caffrey complimented me on my season. I ended the call by thanking him for trusting me with the pre-game pep talk.

I joined Andy after I finished with my calls. We worked out on Andy's weight set in the basement. I gave Andy a few tips on adjusting his workout based on what I had learned from Coach Collins, the Lions conditioning coach. Andy could do a few things to help with his speed and explosiveness. We headed out for a three mile run when we finished with the weights.

I showered after the run and then gave Hal Long a call. We compared plans. He was going to the Wolverines playoff game with his girlfriend Tammy and her close friend Kathy Trimble. I said I'd catch up to them at the game.

I headed upstairs and joined Liz, Andy, Noah and Connor in the family room to watch TV. The twins had their bathes and were dressed in their jammies. Andy and Liz both were working on homework.

About ten minutes before nine pm, Andy said, "Boys, time to put your toys away. It's bedtime." Noah and Connor continued playing with the trucks they had on the floor. "Put your toys away or no story tonight." That got the twins' attention. They gathered up their blocks and trucks and dumped them in the toy chest in the corner. Connor sorted through the books on the shelf and carried one over to Andy.

"Book?" Connor asked as he handed 'Dr. Suess' The Cat in the Hat' to his father. Connor and Noah looked expectantly.

"Again?" Andy asked. "I read 'The Cat in the Hat' to you three times in the last week. Don't you want something different?"

"Cat!" Connor insisted. Noah chimed in "Cat!"

Andy sighed and then suggested, "Maybe your uncle would read to you tonight." He gave me a glance. I nodded yes.

Noah and Connor scampered over and asked hopefully, "Unka Ky, book?"

"OK guys," I said. "What's the deal on story time?" Andy and Liz explained story time and putting the twins to bed. The twins gave their father kisses and then gave their Aunt Liz kisses to before they headed upstairs with me.

The twins could do steps, but weren't the most graceful at it yet. I followed the boys upstairs to my old bedroom. It had been redecorated in toddler style with a Disney theme. The bunk beds were taken apart so neither twin had a top bunk. I helped both twins into one bed and sat down with them. They settled down immediately when I started reading to them. Both boys were dead to the world by the time I reached the end of Geisel's masterpiece. I carefully moved Noah over to his bed and tucked both boys in for the night.

I went back downstairs and rejoined Andy and Liz in the family room. Andy felt he had to go upstairs at the next commercial to check on the boys. He complimented me for being a good uncle when he got downstairs again. I hung out with Andy and Liz until the eleven o'clock news came on and then I went to bed.

I got to be a total bum on Thanksgiving Day. I slept until eleven am, grabbed some breakfast and then vegged out in front of the TV most of the afternoon with Dad, Andy and the twins. We watched football and goofed around with the twins until their nap time.

I cheered as Tampa Bay's defense put a hurting on the Dallas Cowboys. As a die-hard Eagles fan, anyone who knocked the Cowboys around was worth cheering for. I saw Pete Klein, my former teammate, make some nice plays on special teams. Unfortunately Romo and 'Boys pulled the game out in the end with a fourth quarter drive to win 17-14.

The Detroit Lions versus the St. Louis Rams was a yawner. Will, Abby and Abby's parents joined us around 4:30 pm. Will and Mr. Hendricks sat with Dad, Andy and me to watch football while the women finished preparations for dinner. I didn't mind when Mom called everyone for dinner, the game was an exercise in ineptitude.

Mom made a delicious Thanksgiving dinner. Mrs. Hendricks' pumpkin pie was up to her usual high standards. Will announced his and Abby's plans for Christmas. They were flying out to Chicago with the Hendrickses to visit their Illinois relatives. Mom and Dad took it well. I guess I had softened the blow of not having all your kids home for the holidays last year.

My own Christmas plans were up in the air, subject to our bowl invitation. I certainly hoped to be home this year. That would mean we were playing in the Orange Bowl for the national championship. If not, I'd spend my Christmas day in the pool at our hotel or at the beach in sunny southern California while our team prepared to play in the Rose Bowl again.

In the evening game the Green Bay Packers played against the Miami Dolphins. I felt bad for Green Bay. The team still missed Brett Favre after all these years. They were predictable on offense. The offensive line didn't give much protection and the quarterback didn't throw passes more than five yards. It was a recipe for poor offense. I figured the Packers would take another stab at a new quarterback with the high draft pick they were almost guaranteed to have next season.

Friday morning I slept in. It was glorious. I got up around eleven, had lunch, read the paper and then drove over to New Holland to meet Harold Randolph.

Mr. Randolph was a friendly gentleman in his late seventies who lived in a large brick house on Main Street in the center of New Holland. His family had been prominent in the town for generations. Mr. Randolph was a history buff too and was delighted someone took an interest in the old letters, photos and things had had kept safe in his attic over his lifetime.

Mr. Randolph's attic was filled with wooden shelves to holding his collection of documents. He had close to two hundred years of family papers, letters, photos and official documents dating back to when the Randolph family moved to the little village of New Design in Earl Township in 1801. The Randolph family supplied the area with doctors, lawyers, township supervisors and later borough councilmen when New Holland was incorporated.

Mr. Randolph sorted through the stacks of material, finally locating the bundle of letters and documents pertaining to Brevet Major John Fulton Randolph Jr. U.S. Army, 4th Artillery Regiment. The packet was tied together with a strip of cloth. Mr. Randolph untied the bundle and spread the documents out on the table under the light in the center of the attic.

The first thing I looked at was a nineteenth century photo made from a glass plate negative. Mr. Randolph said it was a photo made in 1850 of Major Randolph before he traveled to his posting in the harbor defenses of Charleston, South Carolina. He was a handsome young man dressed in his finest ceremonial uniform with sash and sword at his side. He was thirty-one at the time the photo was taken.

I brought along my digital camera to photograph the letters and other documents so I wouldn't trouble Mr. Randolph all day. Mr. Randolph held the letters or documents while I photographed them. I browsed some of them as I photographed them.

One particularly poignant one from "Your loving son Johnny", barely fourteen, told about how home sick he was during his first year at West Point. I found references to half a dozen Civil War generals that were his classmates – Joe Hooker, John Sedgwick, Jubal Early, Braxton Bragg, John Pemberton, and William French.

Jubal Early's reputation for irascibility was started long before the Civil War. Early was a long time rival of John Randolph and his cousin Randolph Luther. Another letter celebrated the fact the John had beaten Early in the final class standings. John placed #17, one ahead of Early. Randolph Luther ranked #20 in the class of 1837.

I read his accounts of battles during the Seminole War and in the Mexican War. His description of Monterey was so vivid that I felt like I was with Captain Randolph as he described manhandling his two howitzers to the top of a small hill outside the city in the

darkness. His two guns opened on the Mexican city at dawn, eventually causing the breach in the wall that General Taylor's storming party used to take the city. He was brevetted to Major for this action.

I was shocked to see that I had spent the entire afternoon with Mr. Randolph reading and photographing the documents. He stayed with me the entire time, happily sharing his wealth of knowledge of his ancestors. I had found a kindred spirit in love of history in spite the fifty plus years difference in age. I thanked him profusely and promised I would send him a copy of my term paper when it was finished.

Supper was a grab bag of leftovers served early after reheating in the microwave. Mom and Dad had to haul the kids over to my grandparents. Alex was picking Liz up to go to the football game with another couple. Andy missed our dinner altogether. The football boosters and coaches arranged a special pre-game meal for the team at the high school before they headed to the game. I had to head over to Brandon McCafferty's house. He was riding with me to the game.

Our playoff game against East Pennsboro High School was held at their field in Enola, across the river from Harrisburg. The field featured small stands by the standards I was accustomed to. The stands would literally be standing room only with all the fans that came to our games.

Brandon and I found Hal, Tammy, and Kathy in the stands before the game. I was surprised spot Penny Edwards with them. After greeting everyone I commented to Penny, "I thought you'd be in New Jersey with Marco this weekend."

"Marco?" Penny harrumphed. "No, the two of us broke up."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I replied.

"Are you and... uh, Kelly... still together?" Penny asked.

"Definitely," I replied. "I hope you find someone to make you as happy as Kelly and I are."

"I guess I'll find that guy someday," Penny replied.

Hal and I excused ourselves once everyone was settled in. We had a team meeting to attend. Hal and I found our way to the visitors' locker room. Our team, being poorly seeded, was considered the visiting team.

Half a dozen of our past teammates were already in the locker room with the current team members as they dressed for the game. Zack Hayes and I greeted each other warmly. Stan Humphreys, Karl Weaver, Jerry Morton, Pete Ellis, Jason Harting and Kenny

Weaver all made it. We talked and caught up on each other's lives while the team went outside to warm up for the game.

All of us were in college except Pete. Stan was a senior, Karl and Jerry were juniors and Jason and Kenny were freshmen. Stan, Jerry, and Kenny still played football. Stan and Jerry were at Division III schools. Kenny played linebacker at Villanova, Division I-AA. The guys complimented Zack and me on our spectacular seasons.

I spoke with Pete longer. We were classmates as well as teammates. Pete and his wife Natalie were living in Georgia. Pete had recently completed Ranger training with the army. Natalie and little Petey, their fourteen month old son, came home for Thanksgiving when Pete got two weeks of leave. Pete said he liked the army and that fatherhood and married life suited him. I suggested he and Natalie should stop by to visit us before they headed home tonight. I knew Penny, Kathy and Tammy would enjoy seeing Pete, Natalie and the baby.

Coach Caffrey called everyone together when they came in from warm-ups. He introduced each of us team alumni with our name, position and the seasons we played varsity. Coach introduced Zack next to last as a Heisman Trophy candidate, Nittany Lions starting quarterback and three year Wolverine varsity member and former team captain.

Finally it was my turn. Coach Caffrey gave me a nice introduction, noting that I set the new Penn State season reception record two weeks ago. I was a little surprised that Coach Caffrey knew that. I hadn't told him.

"Thanks for the introduction Coach," I said before turning to face the team. I held up a #87 Wolverines jersey for them to see. "It wasn't long ago that I wore one of these."

Dave Mitchell was kind enough to loan me his game jersey before I started the talk. He was also courteous enough to have asked for my permission last summer to use my old number.

"It seems like a few months ago," I continued. "You have an opportunity tonight for something special. Many of you have already earned a state championship." I gestured towards Andy. "One of you has two championships. One thing all championship teams have in common is the friendships you make – they last a lifetime."

I gestured towards Zack, Stan, Jerry, Karl, Pete, Jason and Kenny. "I haven't played Wolverine football with some of these guys in five or six years, but still I'd rather have them with me if my back is against the wall. The friendships and the team spirit we feel never dies."

I proceeded to "borrow" most of Chase Utley's speech on teamwork as I described how essential this was to being successful on the field. My talk seemed to be well received by

the team. Coach Caffrey gave the kids on the team a couple minutes to mingle and talk with us.

Matt Sauder, Cody Stevens and Dave Mitchell collared me first. All were excited to tell me about their experiences this season and how much Ed Fritz and I had helped them this summer. I congratulated them all. Each of my young friends had an outstanding season, especially when you consider that they were sophomores playing varsity for the first time.

I spoke to Tex Johanson briefly. I teased him that it was time for him to commit to Penn State next season. Tex and Andy, the two team captains, had agreed that college recruiting would go on hold until the Wolverines were done with the playoffs. Coach Burton, Penn State and I would have to wait awhile longer before Tex or Andy made up their minds.

We guests took off for our seats in the stands when the team gathered for the prayer before taking the field. Hal and I rejoined Tammy, Kathy, Penny and Brandon in the stands. We settled in to enjoy the game.

The East Pennsboro Panthers were one of the top teams in our district that year. They had a strong running game and a good quarterback too. The Panthers won the coin toss and elected to receive the football.

The Panthers deserved their high rating in the playoff seeding. The Wolverine defense tried hard but couldn't stop the Panthers. They pushed down the field and scored a touchdown on their first drive. The Wolverines responded with a good drive of their own, unfortunately capped off with Matt Sauder throwing an interception into the end zone. The Panthers drove down the field again against increasing resistance as Coach Wyndham and the Wolverine defense adjusted to the Panthers' style of play. Our guys stopped them in the red zone, forcing them to kick a field goal.

Coach Caffrey didn't change his approach offensively. Our team moved the ball down the field with some nice running by Adam Eberly, our big fullback and Cody Stevens, our tailback, mixed with some passing to Andy and Jonathan Landis. The drive bogged down in the red zone when Matt threw consecutive incomplete passes. On third and ten Matt sailed a pass into the corner of the end zone for Andy. Unfortunately it was slightly off target. Andy deftly batted the ball away from the Panthers DB. Our team kicked a field goal to get on the scoreboard.

Both offenses overmatched the opposing defenses. The first half went back and forth each team scoring three more times. The Panthers took a 27-20 into the locker room.

Hal, Brandon and I headed for the snack stand to get coffee, hot chocolate and nachos for our group. Hal and I talked about his experience playing last Saturday while we waited in line. Hal enjoyed finally performing for the 50,000 person crowd in Rutgers Stadium.

“Did I tell you?” Hal asked. “I’ve resigned from the soccer team.”

“Did you?” I answered. “I’m sorry to hear that. What happened?”

“I’m just facing facts,” Hal explained. “I don’t measure up to the other guys on the soccer team. They are better with game strategy. They’re better at ball handling. I just don’t have any chance to catch up to them and still do my job for the football team.”

“...and the job with the football team got you the scholarship,” I added.

“Exactly,” Hal agreed. “I guess I really am a football player now.”

“It’s probably best if you concentrate on football if you’re going to be the first string kicker next season,” I said.

“You’re right,” Hal agreed. “I assume I will get the job next season. We have recruited another kicker next season, but I expect that I should be able beat him for the starting job.”

“Good luck with that Hal,” I said. “You’ll find it’s quite trip being a starter.”

“I guess so,” Hal agreed. “That’s what Jeremy has told me. Ed’s not quite so sure about starting being so much fun.”

“Ed had a rough initiation this fall,” I replied. “He improved with every start and he’ll do better next season.”

Hal, Brandon and I carried our snacks back to the girls and distributed them. Kathy invited everyone to come over to her house tomorrow afternoon for the Notre Dame vs. Southern Cal game at 3:30. We agreed each of us would bring some snacks to munch on during the game. We would order pizza for dinner during the game.

Kathy gave all of us strict orders – we had to root for the Fighting Irish or we wouldn’t be allowed to stay. I certainly had no problems with that. A Notre Dame victory would move Penn State up to second in the BCS standings and put us in the national championship game.

Andy made an excellent kick return for the Wolverines to start the second half, turning the ball over to the offense on the Panther’s 45 yard line. A couple Cody Stevens runs set up the Wolverines with a third down and two yards to go play. Coach Caffrey called a play action pass. Matt Sauder launched the ball twenty-five yards downfield to Andy, who scooped the ball in, spun out of a tackle and sprinted into the end zone.

The Panthers responded with another good drive, taking the lead again 34-27. The Wolverines responded with another seven play drive that got a field goal.

I was proud of the way my high school team fought back all evening. They fell behind early and never gave up. They kept their poise and continued working Coach Caffrey's game plan. East Pennsboro impressed me. They weren't a traditional District 3 power but they had a good team this year.

Matt Sauder was doing pretty well, excepting the one interception. Andy was doing his share to win the game. Our other superstar, Tex Johanson, hadn't been a big factor yet. The Panthers were throwing away from him. Hopefully the coaches could find a way to get him involved.

The two teams traded touchdowns as the third quarter continued. The Panthers maintained their lead 41-37. Things finally broke our way after we kicked the ball back to East Pennsboro. Tex Johanson backed off the line of scrimmage to cover deep on the first play. The Panthers tried a quick out pass to the wide receiver on Tex's side. Tex had anticipated and timed the pass. He neatly cut in front of the receiver, stole the ball and sprinted untouched into the end zone. The successful PAT gave the Wolverines their first lead of the game, 44-41.

Coach Caffrey surprised me when our defense lined up after the kickoff. Tex Johanson lined up deep as a second free safety instead of his usual cornerback spot. #19, who I later learned was Jason Stauffer, took Tex's cornerback spot. I understood when the first play was run.

Patrick Jones, the other free safety, came flying up immediately to help stop the run for only a one yard gain. The coaches were disguising the eight-in-the-box run defense. On the next play I found out the other aspect of this personnel group.

The Panthers tried to take advantage of Jason's Stauffer's inexperience on the next play. Jason rotated deep while Tex sprinted back to the line of scrimmage as the play started. The Panther's QB fired the ball to his primary receiver. Tex cut in front the receiver and snagged the pass. Tex gained a few yards before he was tackled.

I saw Coach Caffrey huddled with the offense on the side of the field. I knew the speech the boys were getting now. It was time to take control of the game. He challenged the guys to stuff the ball down the Panthers' throats.

That is exactly how things unfolded. Adam Eberly and Cody Stevens took turns carrying the ball as the Wolverine offensive line pushed the Panthers defense down the field. My favorites used thirteen plays and six and half minutes to push down the field. Adam Eberly punched the ball into the end zone to increase the Wolverines' lead to 51-41.

Coach Caffrey sent in the nickel package now that we had a ten point lead with a little more than eight minutes to go. Tex Johanson lined up deep as a safety. Coach Wyndham started blitzing. The combination of extra DBs and more pressure solved the Panthers' offense. Six plays later they punted the ball back to us.

Adam Eberly and Cody Stevens took it from there. They took turns pounding the ball ahead behind our offensive line. The Wolverines kept the ball until time ran out in the game. The Wolverines fans in the stands stood and cheered at the clock ticked off the final seconds.

My friends and I headed down to the field to congratulate our team. I met up with Zack and Leigh Ann down on the field. I found and congratulated all the guys who scored: Andy, Cody, Tex, Dave Mitchell, and Adam Eberly. Andy and Cody had two touchdowns each while the other guys scored one touchdown.

Zack and I met with Matt Sauder and congratulated him. Matt had played a pretty decent game. He made a couple mistakes, not unexpected for someone with his limited experience in the playoffs.

Brandon and I hung out until Andy came out of the locker room. I had promised him I'd give him a ride home after the game. The three of us headed out to the parking lot. The three of us were loading into my car when we heard someone call out, "Hey Kyle. How's it going?"

I turned and saw my Penn State teammate Greg Nowicki accompanied his younger brother. Greg was the #2 center behind JT Hill for the Lions.

"I assume this is your high school" I asked. I knew Greg lived somewhere in Cumberland County.

"Yes, this is my high school you guys beat tonight," Greg answered. "This is my little brother Carson."

Brandon, Andy and I shook hands with Carson, the "little" brother. Carson was probably 6'-4" or 6'-5" tall and appeared to be close to Greg's 305 pound weight.

"It's nice to meet you Carson," I replied. "Do you play center like Greg?"

"No, I play left guard," Carson explained. I introduced Andy and Brandon to Carson.

"It's good to meet you Andy," Carson commented. "You and your team played a good game. Not that we were surprised by that. What is this? Like your fifth time playing in the district championship game?"

"Actually Carson, it's the sixth year in a row," I corrected. "Zack Hayes was still in high school the first year we won the district."

"Do you know who you're playing Andy?" Greg asked.

"No, either Central or Greencastle," Andy answered. "I haven't heard who won that game tonight."

“Good luck in it,” Carson said.

“Yeah, good luck,” Greg agreed. “I’ll see you Sunday at dinner.” Greg looked at Andy and added, “I’ll see you next summer at football camp. I expect to see you wearing blue and white next season.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Andy said compliantly. Andy, Brandon and I hopped in my car and headed for home. It was close to midnight by the time Andy and I got home. Mom, Dad and Liz got home twenty minutes ahead of us. Andy and I went straight to bed.

It was after eleven in the morning when I was slept out. I showered and joined my family upstairs after that. Andy was watching cartoons with the twins. Mom was in full domestic mode in the kitchen, starting her four week binge of holiday cookie baking. Hunter was resting in his bassinet on one end of the kitchen table. I played peek-a-boo with my little brother from a minute. Eighteen month olds are a lot more fun to play with than five month olds.

I grabbed some cereal to tide me over until I went to the Trimbles to watch the Notre Dame/USC game. When I finished breakfast I headed to the grocery store to get my share of snacks for the party.

I spent the rest of the early afternoon working on my history term paper. I had a lot of reading and studying to do to digest all the information Mr. Randolph gave me yesterday. I knew I had enough information to give readers a thorough understanding of what it was like to be a cadet and army officer in the pre-Civil War years.

I headed over to the Trimbles’ house around three pm. Our gang of friends had a couple additions for the party. Brandon invited Holly Cox to come as his date. Kathy’s older sister Jenny was home for the weekend and hung out with us too.

Jenny had graduated from Shippensburg University last spring. She had a job as a bank teller for a bank down in Valley Forge/King of Prussia. Jenny had an apartment outside Phoenixville.

Jenny still had a reputation as a party girl. She had been one of Zack’s regulars back in high school. The two sisters couldn’t be more contrasting. Kathy had a single boyfriend since ninth grade and seemed destined to marry him some day after they finished college. Jenny had more boyfriends and flings than you could count, starting with her first serious boyfriend, my brother Will, when she was in eighth grade.

Kathy set up two card tables to hold all the snack food and drinks our group collected for that football party. Everyone settled in for the game in chairs, on the couch or stretched

out on cushions on the floor. Mr. Trimble's big HDTV provided a great picture for the game.

The pregame show filled us in on earlier games in the day. There weren't any upsets to change BCS standings yet. ABC did interviews with Pete Carroll and Charlie Weis. They also did a profile of Brady Rasmussen, USC starting quarterback and my friend. Brady and I exchanged e-mails once or twice a month since the Rose Bowl last season.

My friends good naturedly jeered Brady after the profile. I explained that they really would like Brady if they got to know him. He was a genuinely nice guy and a fellow outdoorsman like us. I did agree with my friends that Zack Hayes was more deserving of the Heisman Trophy.

The announcers introduced the starters for each team as the game got under way. Naturally Jeremy's introduction brought loud cheers from this highly-partisan crowd. I was surprised when USC's defense was introduced. The cornerback who had primary coverage on me last year at the Rose Bowl was only a year older than me. I had thought he was more experienced than that.

The game turned out to be a well fought battle between the defending national champions and a team aspiring to be this year's champions. Southern Cal scored first. Notre Dame kept it close and then went ahead. The lead changed twice before half time. USC went into the locker room with a 21-17 lead.

Jeremy played well. By Kathy's careful accounting he had four quarterback hurries, five tackles and four successful pass defenses. The running backs and tight end he covered when he dropped back in coverage caught no passes.

The Irish took the second half kickoff and drove down the field and grabbed the lead back. Brady Rasmussen was up to the test. He passed his way down the field under heavy pressure from Notre Dame's blitz.

Kathy was outraged when Jeremy got flagged for a late hit on Brady. It was a close call, but I couldn't argue with the ref. I kept my opinion to myself. Brady hit a receiver in the corner of the end zone to take back the lead in the game, 28-24.

Notre Dame had a good return on the ensuing kickoff and started off well. They hit an eight yard pass across the middle and then ran twice for another nine yards. Disaster struck on the next play.

It was a high percentage short pass to the split end running a hitch pattern. The ball was a little underthrown but catchable. The defensive back made a brilliant play, batting the ball up by the tips of his fingers. The free safety, who was coming over to help with coverage, grabbed the ball out of the air and sprinted down the field.

"Dylan, no! Arrrrgghhhh!" Kathy screamed. "You talked about how he does that!"

Meanwhile the defensive back sprinted for the end zone chased by Notre Dame's quarterback Dylan Harris. Dylan managed to slow the DB down enough for the wide receiver to help tackle him a couple yards short of the end zone.

"Dylan, you talked about this at dinner on Saturday night," Kathy continued as she talked to the TV. "You can't under throw against this guy. You know that."

Brandon said, "You know the quarterback?" The question went unanswered as Kathy watched in horror as USC lined up and stuffed the ball into the end zone. The extra point brought the Trojans' lead to 35-24.

When Kathy calmed down a little bit Brandon asked again, "You know Notre Dame's quarterback?"

"Well of course, he's Jeremy's closest friends," Kathy explained. She saw the slightly bewildered look on Hal's face and added, "... on campus, of course. Dylan, Beth, Jeremy and I double date sometimes."

Brandon rolled his eyes and seemed ready to go on another of his rants on how exotic football players' lives were. I cut him off by asking, "Tell us about Dylan and Beth." I knew humanizing the guy on the TV would help Brandon understand.

Dylan Harris was a red shirt sophomore taking over from Notre Dame's beloved Jamison Peters, who graduated last season. He had done well for a first year starter playing in the glare of the spotlight that always shown on the Notre Dame football program.

Bethany Kirkland was a sophomore that Kathy knew from classes. They both majored in biology. Kathy was the one who introduced Beth to Dylan. Dylan and Beth hit it off immediately and had been dating since last spring. It was all typical things that happened to lots of college students. Brandon understood, mostly.

He couldn't help but add one final comment with a smirk. "Typical college student..." He paused theatrically. "... who is playing on TV in front of millions of people." He gave us a wink to let us know he actually did understand our point. He was just... well, just being the contrarian that he enjoyed being.

When our attention focused back on the TV we found that things were looking grim for the Fighting Irish. Thanks to the lead, USC felt comfortable using press coverage on the wide receivers. Anders and I were big enough to beat that at the Rose Bowl. Notre Dame's wide receivers weren't as big as me or Anders. The press threw off the timing. USC blitzed and harassed Dylan, further throwing off the offense.

Dylan didn't make any more mistakes but he also couldn't complete any big plays to bring his team back into the game. They punted the ball back to USC. Brady Rasmussen

led his team on a long, time consuming drive that ended with a back breaking touchdown that killed any hopes the Irish still held.

The final score was 42-31, thanks to a late fourth quarter score by the Irish. We commiserated with Kathy on her team's loss. I certainly felt it too. I thought Notre Dame would have a good chance at upsetting USC and letting us slip into the national championship game. Now our hopes rested entirely on someone, presumably Florida, beating LSU next weekend.

The USC/Notre Dame game ran long so ABC switched coverage straight to the Florida/Florida State game down in Tallahassee. The first shot when they switched to the game was of Elijah Carter conferring with Coach Meyers and Ed Fritz on the sideline. All of us gave a cheer when we spotted our friend.

The group conferred and decided to keep watching Florida and Ed since it was early and no one had other plans for the evening. Florida was ranked #5 and was playing #20 ranked Florida State at their home stadium in Tallahassee.

This game proved to have a much more satisfy outcome for our group. Florida easily dominated their cross-state rival, 38-17. Brandon and Holly stayed through the third quarter before they split to go back to Brandon's house. His parents were away and his little sister out on a date. They planned to take advantage of the privacy available before they had to return to college tomorrow.

Ed Fritz never got on the field but he looked good standing beside Coach Meyer holding a clipboard. This win set up Florida and LSU for the SEC title game next Saturday. I knew members of the Penn State team were going to be instant Gators fans while we watched that one.

The group talked about our spring break plans. Everyone, including Penny, was interested in the trip to Panama City Beach. I promised to talk to Ed and have him make arrangements for us to stay at the same campground as last year.

We wished each other luck with finals and bowl games. Hal's team was 8-4 on the season and probably would be invited to one of the minor bowls this year. We promised each other to get together after New Year's.

I got up in time to have breakfast with my family on Sunday morning and to attend church with them. With everyone home this weekend, including Will and Abby, our family's pew was overflowing. Will, Abby and I joined Zack Hayes and Leigh Ann for the services.

The Rev greeted all of us warmly after the services. I was surprised to find that Rev knew Leigh Ann. Apparently she had attended church with Zack regularly last summer.

Rev commented as we were ready to leave, “Promise me all of you will visit again over Christmas vacation.” Will and Abby immediately agreed.

“I don’t know Rev,” I answered. “Zack and I hope to be in Miami until after January 8th. I don’t know if we’ll be able to.”

“We still have a shot at the national championship,” Zack added.

“I’ll forgive you for missing church if you’re in the championship game,” Rev replied, smiling. “...but only if you win!”

Zack and I happily agreed to do our best to win if we got the opportunity to play for the national championship. Zack and I wished each other a safe trip back to campus and to catch up to each other at dinner that evening.

I browsed through the Sunday paper while I ate my lunch back home. It seemed that Central had won their playoff game against Greencastle Saturday afternoon. Central would meet the Wolverines yet again for dominance in our division at Hershey Stadium next Saturday. I called Charlie Taylor before I packed my things to warn him when I would be stopping by to pick him up.

I was probably the only college student in America that was taking dirty clothes back to school. Why not? Trevor was my personal laundryman for three more weeks.

I gave Connor and Noah airplane rides, hugs and kisses before I left. Little Hunter had to settle for hugs and kisses from his big brother. Mom sternly warned me he wasn’t ready for any rough stuff yet. I wished the rest of my family good bye and headed for Lancaster and then State College.

(To be continued)

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Charlie and I ran into snow flurries as we headed up Seven Mountains west of Lewistown. We made it back to campus on dry roads. I dropped Charlie off by Hartranft before I took my VW up to East Parking Deck.

Damian hadn't returned from home when I got to our room that afternoon. I called Kelly's room. Jen explained that my lover wasn't expected until after dinner. Her dad had been delayed leaving for campus. I went down to the Mix and picked up a Sunday paper to read until dinner time.

I started to worry when it was 5:20 and Damian hadn't appeared yet. Five minutes later Christian knocked at my door to see if Damian and I were ready to go for dinner. I headed over to the Training Table with GJ, Shawn Byrd, Trevor, Tony.

Jared Gray, our freshman kicker, caught up with us as we were crossing the quad. "Anybody seen Bruce?" he asked, meaning Bruce MacCauley. "He hasn't been to our room yet."

"No," I replied. "I'm missing my roommate too. I haven't seen Damian."

The six of us talked about the missing guys as we headed over for chow. It was obvious that Bruce and Damian weren't the only guys missing. We didn't see Josh Bruno, one of our starting linebackers. Most obvious absence was Evan Foster. His spot at the table where Zack and the other captains usually sat was empty. We went through the line for food and found a table.

A couple minutes of discussion brought to light the thing that all six to eight missing teammates had in common. All of them lived along Lake Erie between Cleveland, Erie and Buffalo. GJ, a Pittsburgh resident, put his finger on the problem first.

"Lake effect snow," GJ explained. "The flurries we had this afternoon are the edge of a storm coming off Lake Erie. Those storms can be nasty. They'll drop a foot or two of snow in no time."

I was somewhat reassured to know the likely cause of Damian's delay but still I was worried. Was my friend stuck along the highway somewhere in a snow drift? I found out after dinner.

Coach Burton announced the names of nine team members caught by the storm. Five were through the worst and would be back on campus later tonight. Evan Foster and Bruce MacCauley had taken cover from the storm in shelters run by the local fire companies. Damian and Josh Bruno found rooms in hotels along I-80 and would return to campus as soon as they were dug out tomorrow.

Many of the guys on the team headed for the Lasch Building after dinner to check out the late afternoon NFL game and the post game show's BCS standings segment. I decided to skip it this week. USC won, LSU won and we didn't play. I knew the results before they were to be announced. USC #1, LSU #2, us #3, after that, who cares?

I worked on my history term paper, organizing the information I got from Mr. Randolph while I was home. Damian called a little after 7:30 pm to let me know what was up. He was stuck at motel in Brookville in Jefferson County, just off of I-80. He didn't expect to be back to campus until noon tomorrow.

Kelly called about fifteen minutes after Damian. Her dad had a miserable drive to campus. They ran into a sleet storm halfway to State College. Kelly was delighted when I let her know one side benefit of the storm – that I had a private room for the night.

Kelly came over fifteen minutes later. The two of us worked on homework for an hour before our hormones got the better of us. The first time we jumped each other's bones, filling our urgent needs. We cuddled and kissed for awhile as we cooled down. The two of us got excited again and danced under the sheets. Nice and slow this time, enjoying each other's bodies immensely.

We settled in together after our second time making love. This was a wonderful opportunity to be together. I'd love to be able to do this more often. Maybe next year I would be in one of the Nittany Apartments. Wouldn't that be great?

The coaches had us practicing our fundamentals at Monday's football practice. We didn't have a team to prepare for yet. If nothing changed in the standings next weekend, we would face the Oregon Ducks in the Rose Bowl. We still had hope that Florida could beat LSU in a neutral stadium in the SEC championship game. There also was a slim chance that UCLA could beat USC in their final game. Our money was riding on Florida to upset the favored Tigers. Saturday's games would determine our destination for the New Year.

Monday evening I convened the first meeting of the team's Thon committee after position meetings. Anders Voight, Cuch Cuchiella, Tyler Madden, Andrew Perkins, Trevor Conwell, Chip Brinton and Jared Cantrell agreed to help with the fundraising.

"I appreciate all of you agreeing to raise funds for the Thon. The fraternities and sororities have a huge head start on us. They have been raising funds since the school year started. We need to kick start our efforts right now while we have a little extra time."

I scanned the circle of faces around table and saw them nodding in agreement. "We raised \$19,542.00 last year. I believe we can do much better this year with your help."

I outlined my plan for raising money. Each member of the team's Thon committee would recruit two assistants from their classmates on the team. I would supply a list of team alumni for them to contact from the list Coach Burton got for me. We had twenty-seven Penn Staters playing in the NFL. They were prime targets in my plan. Even the lowest paid NFL player made over \$300,000 a year.

Each committee member and each assistant would be expected to make at least eight alumni contacts. Kelly and I updated a suggested script for each person to use when they requested a donation for the Thon. I took my dad's suggestions when we revised the script. Every year Dad helped the Boy Scouts raise money for their program. We would start off asking \$5000 or more from the best paid alumni. Dad suggested asking for more than we expected to get. If we asked a guy for a \$100 and he could have given a \$1000, we'd only get the \$100 we asked for. If we asked for \$5000 and the guy couldn't give that much, he'd probably give what he was able.

To conclude the meeting I announced, "We're going to have weekly report meetings to keep track of our status. By next week each member should recruit his two assistants for his team. The top team would be rewarded with a treat." Leigh Ann and Kelly agreed to do cupcakes, pie or something like that for each meeting. "Let's get to work gentlemen. Our team's name is on the success or failure of this so I want maximum effort. Is everyone in on this?"

"Yeah Kyle." "You bet." "We're in Kyle." My friends chimed in. I handed out the scripts and contact lists to each member of our committee before we left.

As we were leaving Anders pulled me aside. "That's a side of your personality I haven't seen before," Anders said. "Take-charge Kyle. Where did that come from?"

"Boy Scouts," I answered, chuckling. "Organizing a group of eight people is no big deal to me. I ran a scout troop with 35 scouts for a year."

"You seem to have thought this through carefully and organized things well," Anders replied. "If you are this together in couple years when it's your turn to be captain, our team will be in good hands."

"I don't know if I'll be a captain," I said. "There's twenty-one of us in my class and only two or three of us will be captains."

"You're already showing leadership with your play on the field," Anders countered. "If you pull off this fund drive for the Thon, the other guys are naturally going to look to you as one of the leaders."

"I don't know," I said. "I guess time will tell." Anders and I headed back to Hartranft together. Anders' comment made me think a little. I'd like to be recognized among my

teammates and classmates but I still need to be humble. Zack had made it clear me that as a sophomore, that is my place.

Kelly and I both used most of our free time during the week to finish our history term papers. I proofread and critiqued hers and she did the same to mine. I thought Kelly's paper turned out well. She raved about how good she thought mine was. I hoped Dr. Brennan would agree.

The term papers were due on Friday. We had to start preparing for finals too. We had one more week of classes after this week. Kelly and I could have gone out Friday night, but we chose to study instead. Both of us wanted to have all of Saturday free.

Zack, Leigh Ann, Christian, Bev, Kelly and I decided to go to the big Wolverines vs. Central District 3 championship game in Hershey Saturday afternoon. Zack agreed to drive. All of us could fit in his Explorer if we didn't mind close quarters.

The six of us met at Zack's apartment at 11 am. The two hour drive to Hershey was broken by a quick stop in Dauphin for lunch. We arrived outside Hershey Stadium around 1:30 pm. We purchased our tickets and headed into the stadium. Christian and Bev excused themselves and headed for the Central side of the stadium to join their friends from home.

I stopped by and said hello to my parents on the way to our seats. Zack, Leigh Ann, Kelly and I found seats with Eric Connell, my brother's best friend, and Samantha Hoover, his long time steady. We were just settling in when Sherry Baer came by with her sons Billy and Wesley in tow. Zack, Kelly and I invited her to join our little group.

Billy had grown since I last saw him a year and a half ago. He looked bigger than I remembered fourth graders and had his dad's thin build. Wesley was a toddler just a few inches taller than Noah and Connor. Wesley didn't have much interest in the football game. Billy, the budding pee wee football running back, paid close attention to the game.

The game was exciting and much too close for our taste. The two teams were closely matched. Tex Johanson effectively neutralized Joshua Hunsecker, keeping him from dominating the game the way he had earlier in the fall. Coach Caffrey put Andy in to return all punts and kickoffs, hoping he'd be able to break something. Andy did a good job but Central kicked away from him every time, so the return game was neutralized too.

Adam Eberly and Cody Sauder did a decent job running the ball. Andy and Dave Mitchell caught enough longer passes to keep the defense loose. Unfortunately Central's running backs were able to move the ball on our team too.

The difference turned out to be the quarterbacks. Marcus Hornberger, the junior who quarterbacked Central, proved to be slightly better than Matt Sauder. Marcus started for

thirteen games against Matt's eleven this season. Marcus also played some last year when he backed up Caleb Sommers, Central's previous quarterback.

One mistake separated the teams in the first half. Central went in to the locker room with a 21-17 lead thanks to Matt throwing an interception in the second quarter. Andy scored one of the Wolverine touchdowns. Cody Stevens had scored the second when he caught a pass in the end zone. Christian's brother Joshua had also scored one when Tex got picked on a crossing pattern over the middle of the field.

Central took the second half kickoff and drove straight down the field to score another touchdown. Central pressured and blitzed Matt Sauder after that. Matt managed to hit Andy on another deep pass for a touchdown, but he also threw another interception that Central converted into a field goal. The score was 31-20 mid-way through the fourth quarter.

Central had the ball and was trying to run the clock down on the game. Coach Wyndham and our defense guessed correctly on a run blitz on first down and stuffed the runner with a four yard loss. A second down blitz pressured Marcus Hornberger into throwing the ball away. Tex Johanson made a brilliant play on third and long, out jumping Joshua Hunsecker for the pass. Tex ran the ball back, unfortunately getting shoved out of bounds just before he crossed the goal line.

Adam Eberly shoved the ball into the end zone on the next play. Our kicker missed the PAT, leaving the score at 31-26, Central's favor. Central took the kickoff and played ball control again, this time not being hurried into more mistakes.

The Wolverines were out of time outs and had 90 seconds left when they got the ball back. Our guys tried gamely but Central blanketed Andy and Dave deep. Matt was forced to check down on every play. We ran out of time before we could score again.

The Central fans across the field from us celebrated wildly as the disappointed Wolverine fans filed out of the stands. Kelly, Zack, Leigh Ann and I made our way down to the field to talk with the players.

Zack consoled Matt when he found him. Matt had played well considering his age and lack of experience. I found Andy and Tex together answering questions from a reporter. I waited until they were done before I bothered them.

"You guys did well this season, considering everything," I offered.

"Not well enough," Andy groused. "I thought we could go all the way with this team."

"Only one of the sixty-four AAA playoff teams in the state get to end their season with a win," I replied. "Starting 0-2 and winning your next ten games is excellent. You and Tex make sure you teach these young kids what they need to know and they'll do better next season."

"Yeah, I guess that's what's left for us here," Tex agreed.

"That and finalizing your college choice," I added. "We have room for both of you at Penn State." I gave them a wink.

Zack pitched in too, trying to sell Andy and Tex on choosing our college. Neither Andy nor Tex was ready to commit that day. Christian and Bev met us on the field while we were talking with Andy and Tex.

The six of us said good bye to our friends from high school before we left. We grabbed a quick dinner in Hershey before we headed back to State College. We dropped Christian and Bev off near Hartranft and Beaver Halls on the way to the parking deck. Zack, Leigh Ann, Kelly and I headed over to Zack's apartment for the evening's party.

We arrived just before the kickoff of the LSU/Florida game. This game was our last hope. USC thumped UCLA while we were watching my high school team lose.

Kelly and I grabbed beers and settled in on the floor to watch the TV. Unlike most parties, everyone watched the game, anxious to find out which bowl our team would be going to in January. The girls settled on guys early and cuddled with them as we cheered the Gators on.

The game was played in the Georgia Dome, so LSU lost one of the edges that helped them win the first game between the two teams. Elijah Carter was much more settled in the pocket than Ed had been in Baton Rouge in September, so that improved the Gators' chances too.

The game turned out to be a closely fought chess match between Coach Miles and Coach Meyers. Each team had an excellent defense. Florida operated from a wide open spread offense while LSU ran a more pro-style offense. LSU scored first and Florida spent the rest of the game playing catch up.

LSU led 21-17 at half time. Carter and the Gator offense took the second half kickoff and drove down the field into the red zone in a well executed drive. Unfortunately for Nittany Lions and Gators fans, the drive stalled short of the end zone. The Gators settled for a field goal.

The Tigers took the ball back and ran a crisp, precise, time consuming drive to increase their lead to 28-20. The teams traded touchdowns as the third quarter wound down and the fourth quarter started.

The Tigers drove down the field again, pushing into the red zone. The Gators finally managed to make a break for themselves. They caught Andre Dugas, the quarterback, in the backfield for a sack and knocked the ball loose. Gator's possession!

My friends and I cheered loudly. Maybe the Gators could pull off the upset. Elijah Carter executed what undoubtedly would be remembered in years to come at UF as “The Drive.” Elijah willed his team down the field, hitting impossible passes time and again.

“You didn’t really want the Heisman?” Evan teased. “This guy is making his case for the trophy loud and clear.”

“If Carter pulls this game out,” Zack replied. “He can have the trophy. I’ll be satisfied to play for the national championship.”

Carter hit a beautiful strike to Eric Peters, Ed’s roommate. Kelly and I got a couple funny looks as we cheered our friend’s name. Eric was shoved out of bounds at the 6 yard line as he raced for the end zone. Elijah Carter found an open receiver in the back of the end zone on the next play to score the touchdown. Four minutes were left in the game. Coach Meyer decided to go for it with a two point play. He outfoxed Coach Miles, sending Elijah into the end zone on a quarterback draw when the Tiger’s defense was expecting a pass. The score was tied at 35 each.

The Gators’ hopes and our hopes now rested on the Gators defense – the defense that had only one stop all night. The room full of Lions fans cheered for the Gators while LSU worked the ball down the field. On the fifth play Andre Dugas hit Josh Allain, the wide receiver I met on my visit to Baton Rouge two years ago, on a short pass over the middle. Josh turned up field and sprinted as hard as he could go. He made a nice move when the free safety came up for the tackle, breaking loose. He sprinted into the end zone.

“Nice move Josh,” I whispered. Kelly was sitting on my lap, my arms wrapped around her tummy.

“You know him, don’t you?” Kelly whispered back in my ear.

“He helped Ed and me work out during our visit to Baton Rouge,” I responded.

“It’s all over now, isn’t it?” Kelly asked.

“Not necessarily,” I answered. “LSU scored too quickly. Florida will have two and half minutes to score. They can do that.” LSU kicked the PAT through uprights as I said it.

All of us cheered on the Gators, hoping they could pull even. They started well, catching the Tigers blitzing when they ran a tailback screen. Carter hit two more passes to bring his team to midfield.

LSU sent the blitz on the next play. Carter eluded the first rusher and hurried his pass before the second guy decked him. The wobbly pass sailed downfield over the head of the intended receiver. LSU’s free safety fielded the ball cleanly. He picked up a dozen yards before a pair of Gators tackled him.

“I guess you just picked up those votes for the Heisman again,” Evan reflected.

“I’d rather let Carter have the trophy and play for the championship in Miami,” Zack replied.

My friends and I watched silently as the Tigers ran the last seconds off the clock to seal their 42-35 victory to earn the SEC championship and a berth to the BCS National Championship Game.

Zack let out a sigh when the game ended. “Sunny California, here we come.”

All of us had some more beer to drown our sorrows. We talked about what could have been if we could have kept Ohio State out of the end zone back in October. We came soOOOooo close but didn’t make it to the big game.

Kelly and I cuddled and kissed each other. I soon had a hard-on trapped under Kelly as we kissed. Kelly and I got more excited as we made out. We weren’t quick enough to score an empty bedroom.

The party broke up early, about a quarter to twelve that evening. Couples headed off to find a private place to comfort each other. Kelly and I decided to head back to her room since I knew Damian was in my room. Hopefully Jen didn’t get back from her date too early.

Kelly called ahead, unfortunately getting Jen on the phone. The two of us stopped abruptly on the sidewalk along Pollock Road, half way to our dorms.

“Jen’s date didn’t go very long,” Kelly asked. “She said the guy was a loser. What do you want to do Kyle?” We hugged and stared into each other’s eyes.

“I want to fuck you silly,” I replied as she ground her body against my hard-on.

“I know,” Kelly answered. “We could go back to our own rooms and sleep alone or....” She paused, took a deep breath and added, “We could invite Jen to join us and sleep together tonight. What do you think?”

I hesitated. I had a bit of a buzz going on but definitely wasn’t as drunk as two weeks ago the first time we included Jen in our sex games. We agreed on ground rules for this but was I really ready to do this?

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“Yes, I think so,” Kelly answered nodding. “I’d rather include Jen than sleep by myself tonight.”

I kissed Kelly and said, “I will if you’re sure.” She smiled and returned my kiss.

Kelly called ahead to ask Jen if she was interested in joining us that evening. She was. Kelly and I walked back to her room. I wondered what I was getting myself into.

Jen gave me a hug and kiss when we arrived at the room. We shed our coats and got comfortable. Jen and Kelly hugged and started kissing. I excused myself to go to the bathroom. I needed to get rid of some of the beer I had that night if I was going to be of any use to Kelly... or Jen I remembered a few seconds later.

The girls were down to panties and bras when I returned, sitting on Jen's bed kissing. They paused when I returned.

"You have too many clothes on Kyle," Kelly said. "Join us."

"OK" I agreed. I took off my shirt, pants, socks and shoes and set them aside, ending up with only my boxers covering my hard-on. Kelly patted the bed on the opposite side from Jen. I sat down and slipped my arm around Kelly.

Kelly slipped an arm around my back and kissed me. Soon our tongues were tangling together and I felt less uneasy. Jen nibbled on Kelly's nearest ear while the two of us kissed. I reached a hand up to caress Kelly's breast, only to bump into Jen's hand. I started to pull away when Jen grabbed my hand and pressed it against Kelly's left breast.

Seconds later as Kelly and I continued kissing I felt Jen's hair brush against my hand as she kissed Kelly's right breast. I didn't need to share Kelly's breasts for long. Jen kissed her way down Kelly's tummy until she reached her panties.

"Up sweetie," Jen asked. Kelly and I paused kissing while she lifted her hips so Jen could pull her panties off. Kelly and I went back to kissing. I caressed her breasts as we continued tangling our tongues.

I glanced down as Kelly moaned into my mouth. Jen was between my lover's legs kissing and licking her labia. I kissed my way down to Kelly's breasts, trying to increase the good feelings for Kelly.

Jen wasn't satisfied making Kelly happy. I felt a hand slither in the slit in the front of my boxers and grasp my hard cock while I was suckling my excited lover's breasts. Jen gently wrapped her hand around my erect member and stroked it a few times. I let Kelly's nipple slip from my mouth as I let out an involuntary groan of pleasure.

I kissed and teased Kelly's nipple with my tongue. Jen continued tonguing Kelly's pussy as she extracted my cock through the slit in my boxers. I continued nuzzling and massaging Kelly's breast.

My eyes bugged out when I felt hot, sweet wetness engulf my exposed cock. I concentrated my attention again while Jen started giving me exquisite head. I kissed my

way down Kelly's torso until I reached her pussy. I tongued and licked, trying to bring Kelly to climax before Jen's intense blow job unwired my frazzled brain.

I barely succeeded by finger fucking my lover while I teased and licked around her clitoris. Jen sucked my cock, licked it and teased my balls with her tongue and mouth. Her technique was excellent. Kelly exploded in orgasm seconds before Jen pushed me past the point of no return. I shook as my cum burst out, filling Jen's hungry mouth. Kelly held my head down between her legs as she squirmed and moaned through her own climax.

Jen let my shriveling cock go after she had drained all my fluids. I lay back and tried to recover my senses. Kelly collapsed against my side. I gave Kelly quick kisses when I began to sense reality again. Kelly returned them after a few seconds. We paused after about ten seconds to see where Jen got to. Jen had pulled her mattress off the bed onto the floor while we were insensible.

"Do you want to put your mattress down too like last time?" Jen asked. "We had more room and it was fun that way."

"That sounds good," Kelly agreed. The two of us got off the bed and pulled the mattress onto the floor beside Jen's.

"Thanks for what you did Jen," I said. "You are very talented at blow jobs."

"I kept a lot of high school boys at bay with that skill," Jen answered with a smile.

"You're something special," Kelly said to Jen before she sat down beside her roommate and kissed her. I watched for minute as the two girls escalated from friendly kisses to deeper kisses and then flat out passionate, tongue sucking, blow-your-lover's mind kisses.

I decided I owed Jen for the blow job. The girls were lying down on the mattresses embracing and kissing. I nudged Jen's legs apart and ran a finger up and down her wet slot.

"Is this OK?" I asked. I wasn't totally sure where my boundaries were yet.

"Knock yourself out Kyle," Jen replied between kisses.

Jen spread her legs wider for me as I kneeled down and put my head between them. I licked along her slot, top to bottom, tasting her juices. Jen's flavor was slightly tarter than Kelly's but was still delectable for a dedicated pussy licker such as myself. I used all my skill to give Jen an enjoyable experience.

I lost track of what the girls were doing as I licked and fingered Jen. When I paused for breath I found Kelly was licking and suckling at Jen's small firm mounds. Jen's nipples stood out prominently, especially for someone with Jen's slim gymnast's build.

"Is it all right if I finger your pussy?" I asked politely.

"You don't have to be so God damned PC Kyle," Jen answered. "I'll let you know if you go too far."

I wormed a finger into Jen's vagina while I gave her labia a bath with my tongue. Jen moaned, perhaps from my ministrations, perhaps from Kelly's stimulation of her titties. It didn't matter. I finger fucked her with one and then two fingers while I licked and teased around her clitoris. I knew Jen was close when she started to tremble. I concentrated on her clitoris until she convulsed, froze and then shivered while she experienced rapture.

Kelly and I backed off to let Jen enjoy the feeling of euphoria for a few moments. We kissed and hugged while she recovered. My cock was hard and ready for some real action. Kelly was ready too.

"Do me doggie style Kyle," Kelly directed. "I can get Jen off again while you do me."

Kelly scooted between Jen's legs and knelt down with her ass towards me. I took position and nosed the head of my cock against Kelly's hole. I put my hands on her hips and plunged my cock smoothly into my lover's tunnel.

"Mmmm... yeah," Kelly moaned. She pushed her ass back at me as she leaned down and put her head between Jen's legs. I began to pump in and out while Kelly tongued Jen's pussy. I screwed Kelly as she ate out Jen.

Kelly brought Jen to an orgasm before I induced one in Kelly. I continued screwing until I came too. I slumped on top of Kelly's back. She rolled me onto the center of the mattresses as I tried to recover my senses.

Jen and Kelly lay down on either side of me and nibbled my ear lobes, kissed my cheeks and teased my nipples. The three of us had been at it for about forty-five minutes and I was tired. The girls weren't yet.

"It's Jen's turn Kyle," Kelly said.

"Are you sure honey?" I asked.

Kelly nipped at my nipple and rubbed my stomach. "Oh yeah, I'm quite sure Kyle." Kelly kissed her way across my tummy and down to my cock. "We've got to get you hard again." Kelly slurped my shrunken cock into her mouth.

Jen rolled on top of me, pressing her chest against my upper chest. She kissed my cheeks and chin, slowly closing in on my mouth. Jen's kisses landed on my lips. For some crazy reason, I felt self-conscious about doing something too intimate such as kissing Jen. I'd fucked her two weeks ago. Jen swept my hesitancy away when she planted her lips on mine and thrust her tongue into my mouth.

My tongue met hers. My tongue rubbed against Jen's tongue as she explored the contours of my mouth. The last shreds of self-consciousness about being intimate with Jen dissipated as I remembered that I'd already licked her pussy to orgasm. What got more personal than that?

Jen and I swapped tongues back and forth as we got ourselves ready to screw. We kissed for thirty or forty seconds before Kelly tapped me on the ass.

"You're ready to go honey," Kelly said.

"Top or bottom?" I asked Jen.

"You can be on top," Jan answered. "I like a nice big guy on top of me."

Jen climbed off me and lay on her back. She pulled her legs up over her head, folding herself nearly in half while Kelly positioned a pair of pillows under her bottom. Jen, who was a high school gymnast, hadn't lost any of her flexibility. Her pussy was presented to me, inviting me to take her. I positioned myself behind Jen and rubbed my hard cock up and down her slot, getting it nice and wet. I nudged her clitoris with the head of my cock.

Jen groaned as I asked, "Do I need a condom?"

"We all got clean bills of health," Jen replied. "I haven't missed a pill in over a year. Go ahead and fuck me bare Kyle. I want it."

I rubbed my cock up and down one more time and then plunged it into Jen's hot, juicy pussy. The feelings were sweet as my cock slid inside Jen's slippery tunnel. I began pumping in and out. It was awkward at first until Jen and I synchronized our movements. Jen wrapped her arms around my neck and pulled my head down. We kissed as I fucked her.

I concentrated on pleasing Jen, trying to grind against her clit as we mated. I wasn't sure where Kelly got to until I felt a pair of hands caress my ass. One hand disappeared while the other spread my cheeks apart. Kelly poured a cold liquid down my crack then used her other hand to massage it all around my hole.

I tried to keep a steady rhythm fucking Jen, but Kelly was distracting me. Kelly teased my asshole with her finger for a few seconds and then wormed it inside me.

“Oooohhhh...” I moaned involuntarily. I tried to keep the beat as Kelly wormed her finger in and out of my backside. Jen continued kissing me as we fucked.

Kelly probed deeper after a minute and hit my prostate. My eyes bugged out and I groaned “OOoohhh God!”

“You like that don’t you Kyle?” Kelly asked as she continued to massage my prostate.

My semen was welling up in my tight balls. “I’m going to cum too soon,” I groaned as I thrust hard into Jen, trying to pull away from Kelly’s finger. I held myself tight into Jen’s pussy for a moment. Kelly withdrew her finger a little and concentrated her massaging on my asshole. My impending explosion of cum subsided a bit while I held my big cock motionless deep inside Jen’s body.

I started pumping again after about twenty seconds, when I thought I could last. I made sure to grind on Jen’s clitoris with every stroke. My lover wasn’t going to allow me to last as long as I wanted to get Jen off too.

Kelly massaged my asshole for a bit and then would thrust her finger in deep again, tease my prostate a bit and then back off. I was on the verge of cumming for a minute or two while I thrust and pumped my cock in and out of Jen. She was flushed and panting, probably close to cumming herself the next time Kelly teased my prostate.

It was too much. “Arrgggh!” I growled as I pounded my cock into Jen as deep as I could get it and froze. Cum boiled out of my balls and blasted into Jen’s pussy, flooding it to saturation. Stars glittered in my eyes as I drained myself into Jen and collapsed on top of her.

I was lying on my back staring at the ceiling when I became aware of my surroundings again. Heavy breathing and panting beside me caught my attention. The two girls were 69ing each other, Kelly on all fours over top of Jen. Both girls were eating the other’s pussies with abandon. Kelly pushed Jen over the precipice to climax first. Jen squealed and shimmied as she enjoyed another orgasm that evening.

I reached over and patted Kelly on the ass. “That was thoughtful of you,” I said.

Kelly turned to me, smiled and replied, “Jen made sure we had fun tonight. I had to say thank you.”

The three of us cleaned ourselves up and then settled into the make shift bed on the floor. I spooned with Kelly and Jen pressed herself against my back, sandwiching me between to the two loveliest, sweetest girls in the world. I draped one arm across Kelly’s chest and pulled her tight to my body. Jen did the same and snuggled against my back. We fell asleep quickly, exhausted by our evening’s exertions.

I awoke early in the morning, near dawn, with an urgent need to pee. I dressed and slipped across the hall to the bathroom, did my business and slipped back to the girls' room. Kelly and Jen had slid together while I was gone. Jen had her arm draped across Kelly's chest holding one of her breasts. I stripped and climbed in bed in front of Kelly, pulling the covers over the three of us.

Jen was out of bed dressing when Kelly's rolling woke me up. We greeted each other with a kiss and a hug. Modesty was no longer an issue between us. I climbed out of bed naked and pulled my clothes on. I gave Jen a hug and kiss on the cheek before she headed to the bathroom. I didn't kiss Jen on the lips on purpose. I wanted some distance between us when we weren't having sex together. Kelly had earned my undivided romantic interest.

Kelly and I agreed to meet in forty-five minutes for brunch. Kelly invited Jen to join us. I met the girls in the dining hall. We found an empty table and sat down. I kept wondering if things would be normal after what we had done last night. They were.

I'm not the most experienced guy around at romance, but I could see the potential for trouble with what the three of us were doing – Kelly being jealous of attention I paid to Jen, Jen trying to intrude on my relationship with Kelly, or me getting too hooked on Jen and her delicious body. The possibilities for trouble seemed nearly endless.

Thankfully Jen seemed to understand. She treated me as a friend, albeit as a very intimate friend, just like she always had. Jen gave room for the love Kelly and I had for each other.

Bev and Christian joined us after a few minutes. Damian, Billy Robinson, GJ and Trevor arrived a few minutes after them. Everything seemed perfectly normal to everyone not aware that I was now involved in a ménage a trios.

We talked about finals and our holiday plans. Of course all the guys except Billy now planned to enjoy the holidays in LA. None of us were sure who our opponent was. GJ offered that he thought it might be the University of Oregon. None of us knew much about them other than their mascot was a beaver.

Kelly and I stopped by the Mix for a newspaper after lunch and headed back to my room for the afternoon. We found out that GJ was correct. The University of Oregon was ranked #2 in the Pac-10 Conference. We also found out that their mascot was a duck, not a beaver. The beaver was Oregon State's mascot. I didn't know anything about the Ducks. I also knew I would start learning about them tomorrow at practice so I didn't worry about the Ducks that afternoon.

Kelly and I spent an hour or so relaxing and enjoying the newspaper together. Kelly headed back to her room to study. Finals were a week away. I spent the rest of the afternoon studying Math 111 and Econ 4.

Coach Burton didn't say anything about our Rose Bowl invitation at dinner. Officially we weren't invited until later that evening. He did say we'd go over our holiday plans tomorrow at practice.

Coach Burton announced that JT Hill was named one of four finalists for the Rimington Trophy, for the best college center in the nation. Evan Foster was a finalist for the John Mackey Award for the nation's best college tight end.

Coach Burton saved the best announcement for last. Zack Hayes was named one of three finalists for the Heisman Trophy. He was competing with Elijah Carter and Brady Rasmussen for the honor. Zack and Leigh Ann would be flying to New York next Saturday night for dinner and the presentation ceremony. The entire team cheered for our captain and friend.

I headed over with about a third of the team to the Lasch Building after dinner to see the bowl invitation show on ESPN. We watched in the player's lounge since it wasn't a big crowd.

Denver was playing the Chargers that evening while we waited for the announcement show. As usual the Denver defense, dominated the line of scrimmage. They held a normally explosive Chargers team to 13 points. Unfortunately the Broncos offense only managed three field goals in the game. Losing this game took their record to 2-10. I felt bad for Antwaan Booker. He and his defensive teammates played their hearts out and still lost game after game. It was pathetic. The young, inexperienced offensive line allowed way too many sacks for John Henderson, their thirty-seven year old, immobile quarterback. They had no speed at wide receiver. They had a promising rookie at running back that was running out of gas in his long first pro season.

This was the first time in Antwaan's career that he had to endure losing. His high school team had beaten all comers two years in a row down in Maryland. He only had five losses in fifty-two games at Penn State. What was I going to face in two years if and when I became a pro? I wasn't used to losing games either. I dismissed the thought. I had a Rose Bowl to win and the game was four weeks away.

The bowl invitation show didn't provide a lot of surprises. Here is the list that they announced:

January 8th – BCS Championship Game – USC #1 vs. LSU #2
January 5th – Fiesta Bowl – Notre Dame #11 vs. Oklahoma #4
January 2nd – Cotton Bowl – Texas Tech #5 vs. Kentucky #8
January 2nd – Sugar Bowl – Georgia Tech #14 vs. Florida #4
January 1st – Rose Bowl – Oregon #20 vs. Penn State #3
January 1st – Orange Bowl – West Virginia #6 vs. Boston College #13
January 1st – Capital One Bowl – Alabama #7 vs. Ohio State #9
January 1st – Outback Bowl – Georgia #12 vs. Michigan #22

I went downtown after lunch to window shop when Kelly went to her golf class. I found the perfect Christmas present for her at the second jeweler I visited. They had a gold intertwined hearts pendant on a gold chain that was perfect for Kelly. I put down a deposit on it and said I would be back later in the week to pick it up. I stopped by the bookstore too and bought Nerf footballs and stuffed Nittany Lion toys for Noah and Connor. It wasn't too early to start brainwashing my nephews to favor Penn State.

Our focus at practice on Monday was getting to know the Oregon Ducks. They had a fast strike offense that ran about 60% of the time. Their passing game was efficient but not extraordinary. They liked to spread the ball around among three or four receivers. What really stood out about the team were their runners. They spread most of the work load among four runners. The team averaged 6.1 yards a carry. Three of their top four runners made seven yards a carry. Our run defense was going to have to be on their toes.

I was confident that we would win the game. The odds makers installed us as a seven point favorites. I expected we could do better than that.

Coach Burton announced our travel plans at dinner Monday night. We would depart campus on Wednesday, December 22nd for Los Angeles. We'd practice a couple days, have Christmas day off and then practice mornings until the game. Coach listed some of the outside activities planned for the team but said the athletic department was still finalizing all the arrangements. We would return home on January 2nd, same as last year.

Coach Burton also announced the discipline for Max Rosen, Aidan Nagy and Alex Majerowicz. Max was dismissed from the team until next August. He would continue his studies on campus and continue to room with Karol, Aidan and Alex. He could ask to be reinstated if he did well in his school work and kept himself out of trouble until then.

Aidan and Alex were suspended from the team until January 15th. They would be allowed to train with us and participate in spring practice. Coach Burton pointedly reminded us that now was a very bad time to get in trouble. It was essential that we be the "preacher's wife" for the next month and keep our noses clean.

I hurried over to the Natatorium after announcements for my next to last scuba class. Mr. Coleman let us spend the class playing underwater in the pool. We'd finished everything indoors for NAUI certification. He let me leave early so I could make it to my wide receivers meeting at seven o'clock with Coach Adams.

I was surprised to find Zack Hayes waiting for me when I came out of the meeting room in the Lasch Building when Coach Adams was done. He took me off to one of the small study rooms. We sat down, Zack on the study table, me on the chair.

"What's up Zack?" I asked.

“I wanted to emphasize Coach Burton’s message this evening after dinner,” Zack answered.

“You mean about Max, Aidan and Alex?” I said. Zack nodded yes. “Keep my nose clean. Stay out of trouble. I get it.”

“Do you?” Zack asked rhetorically. “There but for the grace of God go you.” I gave him a funny look. “How many times have you and Kelly slept it off on my couch?”

“I don’t know,” I answered.

“More than once,” Zack said. “How often have I or your other friends had to drag your sorry butt back to your room because you were too drunk to make it on your own?”

“Well, that hasn’t happened very often,” I replied.

“Anders has had to drag you back there,” Zack answered, his voice rising. “He’s an RA. He’s supposed to write you up not clean you up and put you to bed.”

“It’s not that bad,” I insisted.

“Watch yourself,” Zack said. “I don’t want Coach Burton suspending you or kicking you off the team. You’re too valuable for that.”

“I’m fine Zack,” I answered. “You’re talking about unusual circumstances – when I broke up with Penny, when I...”

Zack interrupted and asked, “Are you going to that frat party Saturday night? Watch yourself.”

“Omega Chi is having a formal dinner dance at le Papillon with Tau Nu. I doubt we’ll be able to drink at it – anyway Kelly and I have a room at Toftrees for the night. We’ll be fine,” I insisted.

“You have a great future here at the university and later,” Zack said. “DON’T fuck it up.”

“Don’t worry Zack,” I replied. “I WILL be careful. I understand the opportunity I have.”

“Good,” Zack said as he extended his hand to me. I shook it as he said, “Promise me that you won’t.” I agreed before the two of us left.

I wasn’t real sure why Zack felt the need to single me out for a temperance lecture. I didn’t drink anymore than a lot of other guys on the team. I knew when to stop and I had

managed to keep out of trouble for most of two seasons. My friend worried too much sometimes.

I convened the football team's Thon committee meeting at eight o'clock on Tuesday evening. Leigh Ann had supplied cupcakes for the meeting. Trevor helped me bring lattes in from downtown for everyone. I opened the meeting with status reports from everyone. I started off by announcing that Shawn Byrd and Christian Hunsecker had agreed to assist me with the fundraising. We went around the table getting reports from everyone. All the guys were successful in recruiting their two assistants except Cuch.

I fixed my eyes on Cuch and said, "Are you going to be a part of this?" Cuch nodded yes. "Good! Get your act together. I want you to have your assistants lined up by practice on Thursday."

"I'll try," Cuch agreed.

"Just do it!" I directed. "I don't want to hear, 'I've been too busy with classes this week.' Next week it'll be, 'I've been too busy with finals.' And then 'I'm too busy with the bowl prep.' Get two people by Thursday 3:45 pm."

"OK, you got it Kyle," Cuch agreed.

I scanned around the table. "The next order of business is a status report of the funds raised. Does anyone have a report to make yet?" As expected all I got was people shaking their heads no. "That's OK, I wasn't expecting you to have raised much yet. Giving starts by us setting examples for the people we ask to contribute. Each of us should fill out a pledge card now."

I passed the cards around the table. We took a minute to fill the pledge cards out. They guys handed them back to me. I kept a running tally of the total as the cards were turned in. When the last card was turned in I announced, "This is excellent gentlemen. Our current pledge and donation total stands at \$10,725."

I sat back and smiled as I watched my friends' reactions. "What the hell?" "You've got to be kidding." "No way" "How?"

"That is the correct total," I said smugly. "I started a little early making calls. It's not hard. Start working the lists I gave you last week. Phone calls make money. Make sure you and your assistants get other teammates to hit up their families for donations over the holidays. I have two more announcements before we finish this meeting. The top fundraiser each week will receive two movie tickets. The top fundraiser among the twenty-four of us will receive a free ski weekend in the Poconos for two."

"No shit!" Anders exclaimed. "How in the hell did you pull that off?"

“I found us a generous backer who wants to see our team do well raising money for a worthy cause,” I replied. “Get out there and make those phone calls. They pay off double – once for the fight against cancer and again for you personally. Ask your assistants to attend the next meeting. Kelly has promised us some tasty refreshments. The next meeting is at 8:00pm Tuesday, December 14th. Thank you for coming.”

I was very pleased with the meeting. It had lasted fifteen minutes. Dad’s advice seemed to be excellent. Keep the meeting short, feed the workers, build up enthusiasm, and reward the top workers to create competition among them.

We had raised \$475 in pledges that evening from the eight of us. Kelly’s dad had sent us a check for \$100 and my dad sent one for \$150. Most important for me was the success of my phone call to Aaron Morano last night. Aaron pledged \$10,000 towards the Thon and also agreed to underwrite the fundraising expenses. He would pay for the weekly pairs of movie tickets and the ski weekend. He figured the total contribution probably amounted to about six minutes of time from his per game salary.

I had just finished cleaning up the meeting room when my cell phone rang.

“Hey Kyle, it’s Andy,” the voice said when I answered it.

“Hey bro, what’s up?” I asked.

“Do you have a few minutes to talk?” Andy asked.

“Sure, shoot,” I replied.

“I’ve got something I have to tell you,” Andy said.

“Yeah, and?”

“You won’t like it,” Andy replied.

“What is it Andy?” I asked. I waited a couple seconds, getting only silence. “Just tell me.”

“I’ve...” Andy replied. I heard him take a deep breath. “I’m going to.... Delaware.” I was stunned. I didn’t say anything. “Kyle?” Andy asked.

“Yeah...” I finally answered. “Are you sure you know what you’re doing? You have the talent to play at a big school. Why would you want to go to someplace like that?”

“Delaware is a good school,” Andy explained. “I can get a degree in business there and it’s close to home. I’ll be able to spend some time with the twins on weekends.”

“What about football?” I asked. “You’ve got the potential to be big. Why would you choose them? You could go anywhere.”

“Delaware is a good team,” Andy explained. “They’re a top FCS team.”

“If I stay healthy, I think I might have a chance to make it to the pros,” I said. “Are you going to throw away a chance to do that to? You could have that and set yourself and the twins up financially for the rest of your lives.”

“Joe Flacco,” Andy replied.

“One guy,” I said.

“Ever hear of Brian Westbrook?” Andy asked. “How about Chris Gocong or Jamaal Jackson, also with the Eagles? There’s more – Howie Long, Rich Gannon, Tony Romo, Kurt Warner, Brandon Jacobs, Rodney Harrison, Marques Colston, Gus Ferrotte... want to hear more Kyle?”

“No, that’s not necessary,” I said quietly.

“If I’m good enough to play in the NFL someday, they’ll find me,” Andy explained. “I know you don’t... no, you can’t understand yet. Someday you will when you have your own kids. I can’t miss four years of my boys’ lives.”

“You know you aren’t truly committed until February 2nd?” I asked. “You can change your mind until then.”

“I won’t change my mind Kyle,” Andy answered. “I know my decision disappoints you, but it’s what I have to do.”

“Yeah, well I hope it works out for you,” I snapped. I turned off the phone. Immediately I regretted being cross with Andy. It was his decision and his life. I let myself cool down a little as I headed back to my room. I sent off an e-mail apologizing for being mad at him and wishing him success at Delaware.

I stopped off to see Coach Burton Wednesday afternoon about twenty minutes before practice. I stuck my head in the door and asked, “Got a minute coach?”

Coach Burton gave me a big smile. “Sure, I was expecting you Kyle.”

“Expecting me?” I asked. It hit me – Andy. “You know about my brother’s decision?”

“Yes, I do,” Coach said. “Come in, sit down.” I sat down on Coach’s couch where he pointed. Coach sat down beside me. “Your brother Andrew called me Monday evening and let me know he was committing to Delaware.”

“Nothing is final until letter of intent day,” I said. “I was wondering if it might help if you talked with Andy. Maybe you can get through to him better than me.”

“No, I doubt it,” Coach Burton replied. “I talked with Andrew for an hour on Monday night. He’s pretty set on his choice. The two of you are very close, aren’t you?”

“Yes, most all of our lives,” I said. “Except for a year or so when I shot up a foot in height, got interested in girls and fell in love with football when I started high school. Andy was just starting middle school and was still a little kid then. We got to be close again when he caught up to me in size and interests.”

“Your brother is a very talented high school player and I’d love to have him play for our team,” Coach said. “I respect the decisions he has had to make over the last couple of years. It’s tough being a teenaged father.”

“All things considered, I think Andy’s done a great job being a dad,” I agreed.

“He may be sacrificing opportunities for himself for the sake of his two sons,” Coach said. “I can’t help but admire him for that. Don’t give your brother too much grief for this decision. He’s just a dad doing the best he can for his family.”

“I guess,” I replied. “I was hoping we’d have a couple guys from my high school to help us next year. I guess were down to one chance now.”

“No, I’m afraid your high school is out of recruits for our team,” Coach said.

“Tex... uh, Michael is going to Texas?” I asked.

“Yes, I talked with him last night,” Coach responded. “He gave Coach Brown his oral commitment yesterday afternoon.”

“I was hoping Tex would come here, but I’m not surprised,” I replied. “He’s been a huge Longhorns fan as long as I’ve known him. He’s going to be a good cornerback. I guess it is good he’s going far away. I wouldn’t want him in the Big Ten where I’d have to play him every year.”

“Yeah, I saw you had some trouble against him when we worked him out,” Coach Burton replied. “I was afraid a high school kid was going to shut down my star receiver.” Coach’s smile told me he was just teasing.

“I hadn’t practiced against Tex in two years,” I explained. “He has improved a lot since I was in high school.”

“That’s to be expected, especially with a team like yours,” Coach said. “Do the Wolverines have anyone else I should be watching in the next year or two?”

“Well... maybe our fullback, Adam Eberly. He’s not too bad,” I suggested.

“I saw him on tape,” Coach replied. “He’s not that special. What about the sophomore quarterback? Somebody did a hell of a job getting Andrew all those yards.”

“Matt? Matt Sauder has got a strong arm and good size,” I allowed. “He also has a lot to learn. Did you hear about his two interceptions costing the Wolverines the district championship?”

“Ryan Reynolds had me look at the game tape Coach Caffrey sent me,” Coach replied. “He’s green but I see potential there. You should encourage uh... Matt?” I nodded yes. “You should encourage Matt to come to our football camp next June. It would be good for him and I’d get a chance to evaluate him better.”

“I can talk with Matt for you,” I said.

“You can’t tell him about my interest in him,” Coach cautioned. “You can invite him football camp. Invite that backup tailback too. He’s got some speed and has good hands. Also invite the kid who plays receiver and wears your old jersey number. He looked good playing across from your brother.”

“I’ll do that Coach,” I said. “Thanks for talking with me about Andy.”

“No problem,” Coach Burton said as we stood. “You’re welcome to talk with me any time.”

Jay Nicholson sent me an e-mail Wednesday night. The doctors put a new cast on his leg so now he was allowed out of bed. That allowed him to hobble around with crutches a little bit. The six weeks in bed had destroyed his conditioning totally. He said he moved around like an old man. Still Jay was pleased to be mobile again. He wished us luck against Oregon and said he’d see all of us January 16th when he got back to campus for the spring semester.

I had my final tutoring session with Kevin Lee on Thursday afternoon after Math 111. Kevin reviewed some problems with me. He pronounced me ready to take on the calculus final next Tuesday.

The coaches finally introduced the game plan for Oregon at Thursday’s practice. It wasn’t anything dramatic. On offense we would test the Duck’s defense deep early to put

them on warning about my speed. We would spread out the defense and take advantage of the mismatches that resulted.

Coach Ferguson added a new wrinkle to our kick returns. We were going to set up the Ducks using a reverse. I'd take the kickoff to the left sideline and appear to start up field that way. Dave McCall would trail me. I'd toss the ball back to him and he'd run against the flow of the cover team and return the ball up the right side of the field after our blockers set a wall for him. The play sounded like it could work. The Ducks certainly would be keying on me on every return.

We walked through the some plays at practice. The coaches weren't interested in us doing any hitting for another week or so. Everyone needed time to heal and rest.

Kelly and I went full throttle studying for our finals. I had three classes on Friday. Kelly had two to go. We could have gotten privacy if we had wanted. Both of us wanted to wait until Saturday night. I had reserved a room at Toftrees for the two of us to stay in after the dinner dance was over. A whole night together with complete privacy – it was going to be wonderful.

All my professors did reviews during Friday's classes. I went downtown after my Econ class to pick up Kelly's Christmas present from the jewelers. I also picked up my tux for Saturday night's dinner dance. I made it back to my dorm in time to meet Kelly for lunch.

Dr. Brennan handed back the term papers at the start of History 20. She gave me a big smile as she handed out the papers.

I had a big A+ on the front of mine and a sticky note. The note said: "This paper was up to your usual high standards Kyle. You should offer this paper to your local historical society. It deserves to be seen by the public. Good work. K. Brennan"

Kelly was pleased with the B she received for her paper. Kelly and I stayed after class so I could see Dr. Brennan. She was packing her notes in her brief case when I stopped by the table in front.

"Dr. Brennan, could I arrange to see you the week after next?" I asked.

"Unsatisfied with your grade?" she teased. "You do realize that finals are over next Friday, don't you?"

"I do," I replied. "I will be on campus until the football team leaves for Los Angeles on the 22nd. I would like to talk with you some more about what sort of careers a history major could have."

"Certainly, I'd be happy to talk with you about that Kyle," Dr. Brennan replied. We settled on meeting on Monday, Dec. 20th at 11:00 am at her office.

Kelly and I headed back to our dorms together from class. I gave her a kiss and promised to stop by in the evening after I finished at the Lasch Building. Kelly and I caught a late movie downtown that evening. We had earned the tickets that Aaron donated for the first week. We were responsible for 96% of total raised in our first week.

Kelly and I both enjoyed a peaceful morning's sleep on Saturday. I bumped into Joel Peterson in the bathroom when I got up. He reminded me that the frat had reserved room 210 as a hospitality suite for guests at the dinner dance. Kelly and I were supposed to stop by to socialize before dinner.

Kelly and I met for lunch and then headed downtown to do some Christmas shopping. I helped her pick out things for her brothers. She helped me with my sister Liz's gift. We split up after an hour. Kelly headed off to get her hair and nails done for the evening. I went back to my room to study until it was time to leave for the dinner dance.

Kelly called me at 3:30 to let me know she was ready. I hiked up the hill to the parking deck to get my car. I parked in the lot nearest Beaver Hall and went upstairs to get my girl.

I was stunned when she opened the door. The salon had done a fabulous job with her hair. The stylist had added some highlights and curls. It looked fantastic, as did her carefully manicured red nails. I gave Kelly a hug and kiss before I carried her overnight bag down to my car.

We checked into our room at Toftrees as Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Martin. Kelly got a kick out of having the clerk address her as Mrs. Martin. We headed upstairs to prepare for the evening. I let Kelly shower first. I showered after her and then shaved for the day.

Guys with light blond hair like me don't need to worry about five o'clock shadow, but I did want my face nice and smooth for my sweetie later in the evening. I had finished shaving when Kelly popped in the bathroom.

"Can you zip up the back honey?" Kelly asked as she turned away from me. She had on a long black dress with the zipper open to her waist. The back of her lacy black bra showed. I had never seen Kelly with a lacy black bra before. I gulped and carefully ran the zipper up her back. She turned around so I could see her.

"Holy cow!" I exclaimed. Kelly's dress hugged her gorgeous figure like a glove. It was low cut and showed a generous amount of cleavage. My cock inflated instantly, pressing out the front of my boxers. I swallowed hard and managed to say, "You look stunning honey."

"Thank you," Kelly answered. I stepped to her to give her a hug. Kelly backed away saying, "You're still damp. That will have to wait until later Kyle."

I stepped back. “You look fantastic,” I gushed. “Every guy at this dance is going to be totally jealous of me for having the prettiest girl for his date.”

“You know just the right thing to say, you charmer,” Kelly replied. “Get yourself ready. I want to have plenty of time at the hospitality suite tonight.”

“You got it honey,” I said. I finished shaving and brushed my teeth. I didn’t need too much time to get dressed. Kelly had to help me with the cummerbund. I managed to tie the black bow tie without assistance. Kelly was done with her makeup when I was ready to go. Kelly started towards the door when we were set.

“Hold on, there is one more thing before we leave,” I said. “Your outfit isn’t complete.”

“What’s wrong?” Kelly asked, concern clouding her face.

“I want to give you your Christmas present now,” I explained. I offered the small gift wrapped package to my lover. Her smile lit up her face.

“I don’t have yours ready yet,” she said. “I thought we were going to exchange gifts next Friday night.”

“This is perfect for tonight. I couldn’t wait another week to give it to you,” I said. Kelly tore the paper off. She smiled when she saw that the box was marked Kranich Jewelers. She opened the box and stared for a second.

“It’s beautiful Kyle,” Kelly said. “This is perfect!”

“I wanted something that said how I feel about you,” I said. “Two hearts together forever – I hope we’ll be that way too.”

Kelly’s blinked a couple times to clear her eyes and gave me a huge hug. I returned it and kissed my lover. Our tongues met and twirled together for a few seconds. We let each other go, only because we had to leave soon.

“Put it on me,” Kelly said. “It will look great with this dress.” She handed me the box. I carefully removed the intertwined hearts and chain. Kelly turned around for me and I placed the chain around her neck and clasped it shut. Kelly turned around again and displayed my gift. It hung down just above my girlfriend’s cleavage, accented against her pale skin.

“It looks fabulous on you,” I said.

“I have to see it,” Kelly answered. She walked over to the mirror above the desk in our room and stared at herself for a few seconds. “It’s the perfect gift Kyle. Thank you so much.” She walked back to me. “I’m embarrassed. My gift for you isn’t nearly this fancy. You spent too much money on this.”

“I have an extremely understanding dad,” I explained. “He knows how important it is to make your woman happy at Christmas time.”

“You have made me happy Kyle,” Kelly responded. “I love you so much.” We hugged each other and kissed.

“I love you too Kelly,” I added between kisses. We allowed ourselves about thirty seconds before we separated. Kelly and I headed for the hospitality suite in room 210.

Cole Sellers, the president of Omega Chi Epsilon, greeted us as we entered the suite. He complimented Kelly on her stunning good looks and invited us to have a drink at the bar the fraternity had set up in one end of the suite.

Kelly and I picked bottles of Troeg’s amber ale from the bar and mingled with the other guests. We found Cameron Miller and Joel Peterson with their dates.

Joel was escorting Bethany Mason, a gorgeous blonde, who was around 5’-6” and built like a playboy bunny. Cameron’s date was Rachel Knight. I recognized Rachel immediately. She was majoring in education too. We had CI 295 together last spring. She was majoring in primary education, so we didn’t see that much of each other this year. Rachel’s appearance rivaled Beth’s and Kelly’s. She was a 5’-8” brunette with a slim but pleasing figure.

Kelly and I talked with Joel, Cameron and their dates as we sipped our beers. We found out that Beth majored in nutritional science. I got to catch up with Rachel on things since last spring. She was concentrating on psychology and sociology courses this fall. Rachel wanted to understand young children as much as possible to aid them in their learning. Of course as a future high school teacher, I had to concentrate on acquiring deeper knowledge of the subject I was teaching.

The six of us had been talking for about ten minutes when I spotted Trevor Conwell walk in the door. Kelly and I did a double take when we saw who his date was. Trevor was escorting Stephanie Kolmar, Jay’s frequent date this fall. Trevor and Stephanie gave us big smiles when they saw us.

The couple joined our group after soon as they picked up beers from the bar. Joel and Cameron introduced their dates to Trevor and Steph. Trevor introduced Steph to the group.

When the introductions were done I asked, “How in the hell did you end up asking Steph to the dance tonight?”

“I’m lucky,” Trevor explained. “The date I had lined up cancelled on me. She had to go home. Her grandmother died and the funeral was today. Stephanie was kind enough to agree to accompany me at the last minute.”

“How did you get a dress so fast?” Kelly asked. “This is lovely.”

Steph explained about her last minute rush to get ready for this formal dance. Trevor was a lucky guy to find such a great girl to escort him to the dance on short notice. It was nice having Steph in our crowd of friends again.

The eight of us headed down to the ballroom at a quarter to six to find a table. We decided we’d rather sit together than have dinner with strangers. We found a table and then headed for the appetizer buffet table.

le Papillon had a nice spread of appetizers. I tried the fried onions sticks, the calamari in aioli and something the waitress called sand trap. It was crab in a cream sauce placed on top of a toasted slice of baguette with melted cheddar jack cheese on top. Everything was delicious.

It was fun for Trevor and me to catch up with Cameron and Joel. We had time for little more than greeting each other in the hallway or bathroom during football season. All the girls seemed to get along too. Joel and Beth had a room at Toftrees tonight like Kelly and me. They had been dating for a couple months. Cameron and Rachel were not spending the night. Of course Trevor and Stephanie weren’t either.

Cole Sellers and Heather Wells, the president of Tau Nu, asked everyone to be seated at 6:30 pm, right on schedule. They thanked everyone for coming to the dinner dance. Waiters and waitresses appeared immediately and served the first course of our dinner – a salad. Leek Potato Soup followed behind the salad at a comfortable interval. The soup was delicious. Kelly and I waited to see the next course as the wait staff cleared the bowls and spoons.

Omega Chi and Tau Nu did up the evening properly. The waiters and waitresses brought out big trays with the entrees. Our waiter made a great show on unveiling the plate when he placed it in front of Beth and pulled away the cover. Our dinner was prime rib with beef reduction and mushroom sauce, baked potato and steamed broccoli. The waiter rapidly served the rest of our table.

We dived into the prime rib. It was exquisite, the perfect shade of pink in the center and melt in your mouth tender. The baked potato was served with butter, sour cream and chives. It was delicious. The broccoli, well it was broccoli. It wasn’t bad but it paled beside the remainder of the meal.

The conversation at our table was a pleasant accompaniment to the meal. The waiter served us crème brulee after the main course dishes were cleared. Another waitress came around as dessert was being served checking IDs and providing champagne to those of age and offering sparkling apple cider or ginger ale to anyone underage. Everyone at our table took the cider that was offered.

Cole Sellers and Heather Wells came to the front and got everyone's attention. The two presidents gave a short speech accounting for the fraternity's and sorority's charity fundraising efforts in the past year. They reported their combined tally so far for the Thon was over \$15,000. They thanked members and guests for their efforts in the past year and then asked everyone to toast the future success of Tau Nu and Omega Chi.

Everyone around the table raised their flutes in toast to their future success. We enjoyed the crème brulee. It was the perfect end to a delightful meal. The DJ started off with some 70's and 80's rock as the wait staff cleared the tables.

Couples started dancing when the tables were cleared. The DJ played more formal slow music to start things off. Kelly and I took the floor and joined our other friends from the table. I held Kelly close to my body as we danced. It was wonderful. We danced for half a dozen songs and then took a break. le Papillon set up a bar in one end of the ballroom. I got sodas for Kelly and me when we took a break.

We danced off and on for the next three hours, filling the time in conversation with our friends when we weren't on the dance floor. The music got faster as the evening wore on. Ties, cummerbunds and other formal wear were set aside as we partied.

The party wound down around 9:30 or 10:00 that evening. Cole Sellers stopped by our table and reminded all of us that the hospitality suite would stay open until midnight. He invited all of us to stop by and enjoy more "liquid" refreshments that would be available there.

Stephanie and Trevor seemed to enjoy themselves that evening. It was nice of Trev to get her out for some fun while he boyfriend was on the mend. The two of them headed back to town around ten o'clock. Cameron and Rachel headed back soon after them. Joel, Beth, Kelly and I headed for the hospitality suite when we left the ballroom.

Each of the four of us enjoyed another beer and talking together. A number of brothers stopped to talk with me about our game against Oregon. Everyone wished me luck in the game. Kelly and I excused ourselves and headed back to our room after half an hour visiting with the brothers, sisters and other guests.

Kelly and I had all the time in the world that evening to show each other how much we loved each other. Kelly made sure her dress was put away properly. It would be a shame for anything to happen to that wonderful dress on the first night she wore it. I carefully packed my rented tux back in its bag.

Kelly wanted to shower before we went to bed. I offered to help her wash her back. I guess we could have predicted the outcome of that decision. Kelly and I got too worked up to wait while we soaped up and washed each other. I ended up pinning her to the shower wall while I drilled her.

Our first time together took the edge off our most urgent needs. Kelly and I made out in our bed for awhile, slowly working ourselves up again. I went down on Kelly to make sure she was ready for orgasm from vaginal stimulation.

Kelly and I did role-play while we made love that evening. We were Mr. and Mrs. Martin, a couple happily married for two years that wanted to start their family. In our fantasy we hadn't had sex for a week and Kelly was at her peak fertility that evening.

Kelly wanted me on top with her ankles on my shoulders. We made love slowly, wanting the experience to last. We calmly talked about children as we pretended to start our family. We both agreed that we wanted a large family – at least four children. My grinding on Kelly's clitoris as we mated brought my "wife" to orgasm twice before I was ready to "impregnate" her.

I pumped my cock in and out rhythmically as Kelly, stepping momentarily out of character, commented, "Do you realize that if I didn't have my ring in, this would be a dangerous time for me?"

"Really?" I grunted. I was trying to concentrate on holding off my orgasm for a few more moments.

Kelly was panting and struggling to maintain her concentration too. The next time I rubbed my pubis against Kelly's clitoris was too much for her. Kelly arched her back, froze and groaned, "OOOohhh GOD! Give me your baby...."

Kelly's pussy spasmed and squeezed my already primed cock. I pushed in until the head of my cock was planted against her cervix. I groaned and blasted gobs of sperm into my lover. I imagined in my mind how Kelly's body was sucking up my sperm and drawing it up into her uterus, getting ready to try to get her pregnant. But for that little ring... I knew we'd have become parents that night.

I collapsed on top of my lover as we finished our mutual orgasms. Uncharacteristically Kelly wouldn't let me roll off her. She clung to me with my cock still embedded in her well-spermed pussy.

"Thank you for making this so special Mr. Martin," Kelly said after half a minute. "I will be the happiest girl in the world when I have your baby."

"It'll be the best thing in the world when we have our first child," I replied. "I love you totally Mrs. Martin."

We stayed together with my cock plugging up her pussy for almost ten minutes before Kelly allowed me to get off her. Kelly carried the fantasy further. She put a pad in her panties and wore her panties to bed to hold my sperm inside her longer, just like we really were trying to have our first baby.

We cuddled together after we finished making love. I asked, "Did you enjoy this evening honey?"

"It was great," Kelly answered. "I enjoyed dressing up. Dinner was excellent, we had good company and the dancing was fun. I liked this much better than my prom."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"I felt like a kid playing dress-up at my high school prom," Kelly explained. "I felt like a grown woman tonight enjoying an evening out with her man."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," I said. "I had a good time too." Kelly and I cuddled and kissed for a bit.

"How do you think Zack did tonight?" Kelly asked after a period of silence. I glanced over at the clock beside our bed. It was 11:15 pm.

"We could check on the news," I suggested. Kelly agreed. I turned on the late news and rejoined Kelly in our bed. We had to wait about five minutes until they reached the sports section of the broadcast.

The first story the sportscaster presented was about the Heisman Trophy. "Disappointment in Happy Valley this evening." Kelly and I looked at each other. We both knew what that meant.

The sportscaster continued, "Brady Rasmussen of the University of Southern California won the Heisman Trophy this evening in one of the closest votes in the decade. Rasmussen with 1681 votes bested Penn State's Zachary Hayes, who had 1631 votes. The University of Florida's Elijah Carter earned 1479 votes to place third."

"I disagree with those voters," I said. "I had to choose between the two of them. I still think Zack is a better quarterback than Brady, though I agree they're close."

"I feel bad for Zack," Kelly said.

"Don't feel too bad," I replied. "Zack can console himself for missing the Heisman with millions of dollars. He's a sure first round draft pick."

I flipped the TV off after we found out Zack lost. Kelly and I spooned together and went to sleep.

I woke up Sunday morning urgently needing to go to the bathroom. I managed to disentangle myself from Kelly and find my way to bathroom in the semi-darkness. I noticed it was a few minutes after eight when I climbed back in bed. I wanted to let Kelly sleep a little longer. We didn't have to check out of our room until 11:00 am. Unfortunately I was unsuccessful in getting in bed without waking Kelly.

“Good morning,” Kelly murmured when I nestled my body against hers. She turned to face me. “What time is it?”

“8:07” I answered.

Kelly hugged me and asked, “Do you want to have a little fun before we leave this morning? We have time.”

I gave her a wink and replied, “I guess I could oblige you if you really insist.”

Kelly and I hugged for a bit and then I switched around into the 69 position. Kelly and I used our mouths and tongues to get each other ready to make love. We gave each other orgasms. Kelly sucked me off again to get me hard while I teased her pussy with my tongue. Kelly wanted to ride me on top that morning. I happily obliged her.

Kelly and I made love slowly and passionately. I brought Kelly to two climaxes while we made love. We flipped over after that. I finally planted my seed when Kelly demanded that I go hard and deep as she came to her third climax. We cuddled and recovered for a few minutes after making love.

Kelly and I had time to shower before we checked out of our room. I dropped Kelly off outside Beaver Hall and then dropped my car off at the East Parking Deck. I took my overnight bag back to my room before going to brunch with Kelly.

I found a hanger on the door of my room when I got off the elevator. Apparently Damian took advantage of the privacy to have a night of fun with Melanie. I heard grunting and groaning from inside the room. Apparently the two were having a nice romp in bed to start their morning. I left without disturbing the lovers. I went over to Kelly’s room and left my overnight bag with Kelly before we went to brunch.

Kelly and I met up with Christian, Bev, Cindy, Jen, Shawn Byrd, and GJ in the dining hall. Christian reported his high school lost to Strath Haven yesterday afternoon in the state semi-final playoff game. He and Bev went to cheer on Christian’s younger brother Joshua. Christian glumly reported he was going to be doing laundry for Joe Ricci for the rest of the semester to pay off their bet on the Central vs. Strath Haven game yesterday.

Damian never showed up at the dining hall. Kelly and I stopped by the Mix, picked up a Sunday paper and headed for her dorm room. We spent an hour reading the news together before Kelly and I started studying for our American Comedy English course. That was our first final, on Monday at 8:00 am.

My finals were spread out across finals week – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Kelly’s finals were back loaded. After our English final, Kelly didn’t have another until Thursday morning. She had two on Friday – History 20 at 8:00am and Newswriting Comm 260W at 4:40 pm.

Kelly's late final on Friday complicated her trip back to Pittsburgh. Her dad decided to pick her up Saturday morning instead of Friday night. He wasn't interested in driving home to Pittsburgh late at night when there was a chance of bad weather. He would arrive on campus Saturday morning at 10:00 am for his daughter.

I headed back to my room around 4:30 in the afternoon. I unpacked my overnight bag and relaxed for bit before the team dinner. I teased Damian about having Melanie over last night. He blushed for me, which is why I enjoyed teasing him. My roommate certainly was guarded about his love life.

We rounded up our friends from our floor before we headed for the Training Table. I stopped by to offer Zack my sympathies on his losing out on the Heisman.

"Sorry about you losing out on the Heisman," I said as I stopped at his table. "I think you deserved to win."

"Thanks for saying that," Zack said. "Have a seat Kyle. Join me. I have some news to share."

"Sure, what's up?" I said as I sat down across from my buddy.

"Yesterday was the best day of my life," Zack said.

"What?" I asked.

"I took Leigh Ann out to a fancy lunch at Bolo yesterday," Zack explained. "I asked Leigh Ann to marry me."

"You did?" I said. "That's fantastic! Of course she said yes."

"She did," Zack acknowledged. "The Heisman is nothing compared to Leigh Ann agreeing to share my life with me."

Zack and I talked about the news as we had dinner. Evan, JT and Jake knew already. Karol, Cuch and Vic Samovitz hadn't heard either. All of us congratulated Zack on this news. Zack and Leigh Ann hadn't made any wedding plans. That would wait until after the Rose Bowl. Zack's parents and Leigh Ann's parents would be able to get together then and start planning. Zack assumed it would probably be in June or that they would wait until next year when the NFL season was over.

Coach Burton had a couple announcements at the end of dinner. Andrew Perkins, our excellent kicker, won the Lou Groza award for being the best kicker in the nation. He was 18 of 19 on field goals. Andrew was perfect on point after attempts. Andrew was tied with the kicker from Pittsburgh for the most points scored in the nation, 126.

Evan Foster made the finalist list for the John Mackey Award, for the nation's best college tight end. Evan would find out if he won the award later in the week.

Coach Burton dismissed us and told us that we should prepare for our finals. He expected the video rooms and weight room at the Lasch Building to be empty tonight. Tonight was a night for us to focus on the scholarship aspect of our scholar-athlete designation at the university.

I spent an hour after dinner studying for my English final with Kelly. I gave her a good night kiss and went back to my room to get in advance work for my Math 111 final on Tuesday.

Kelly and I met for an early breakfast at 7:00 am on Monday morning. Both of us felt well prepared for our American Comedy final. Professor Pitts' final was entirely essay questions. Kelly's and my confidence didn't seem misplaced. We compared notes after the final was over. Both of us felt we'd aced the test. It was easy.

The coaches had us run through our game plan at half speed at practice Monday afternoon. We would use this week to heal and sharpen our knowledge for the game. Next week we would get back to hitting.

Kelly and I spent time together, but studying our own subjects. We would take occasional study breaks for snacks, to take a walk to clear our heads or once to make love after lunch while Jen was away at a final. Kelly did a good job staying focused on studying during the week while she waited for her next final.

The Math 111 final seemed easy. Kevin Lee had me totally prepared for it. I knew when I finished half an hour early that I had aced it. I went back over all my questions to check the answers and still left fifteen minutes before the final period was over.

I convened the next team Thon meeting at eight o'clock on Tuesday night. Everyone had their assistants recruited. Twenty-two of the twenty-four members of our committee made it to the meeting. I went through our plans for fundraising and the reward system. I had Anders review the script for asking for donations to make sure everyone knew what to say.

We did the pledge and donation report last. We added \$3460 this week. Tyler Madden got \$500 donations from two alumni. He earned the week's movie tickets. The business portion of the meeting took twenty minutes. We dug into the chocolate raspberry parfaits Kelly and Leigh Ann prepared for our group.

My Econ final on Wednesday morning was harder than I expected. Dr. Blanchard gave us mostly multiple choice questions with two essay questions at the end. I still felt I did a decent job on it. I finally had a break from studying when I finished it. I headed downtown and finished up my Christmas shopping.

Wednesday evening I helped Kelly study for her Philosophy final by feeding her sample questions from the text book and the two midterms she had taken in the course. I got back to Hartranft Hall about 8:30. I ran into most of my teammates that lived on the fourth floor in the ground floor lobby. They told me that the All-American list had been released. I headed over to the player's lounge in the Lasch Building with the rest of the group.

Evan Foster had found the results on the web, made a print-out and gathered everyone together to share the information. He announced the biggest one first. The Walter Camp Foundation named Zack Hayes their first team All-American. We cheered for our leader.

Shawn O'Conner was named first team All-Big Ten for his performance this season. Evan had Zack read the next one. Evan was named second team All-American and first team All-Big Ten at tight end. Zack continued reading.

"This one delights me," Zack said. "First team All-Big Ten at wide receiver, our own Kyle Martin. It says here that Kyle leads the Big Ten in receiving yards. Walter Kamp also named Kyle second team All-American at wide receiver. Kyle is second in the nation in yards receiving."

I acknowledged the cheers and applause of my teammates. Zack turned the papers back to Evan who continued reading the awards. No one was surprised when JT was named first team All-American at center. He had already received national recognition for his efforts.

Evan moved on to our defense. Jake Washington was recognized as second team All-American at defensive end. His fourteen sacks this season and twenty tackles for a loss was outstanding. Evan announced that Trevor Conwell was recognized too. He was named first team All-Big Ten at defensive end. It was a great honor for a sophomore.

Evan moved on to special teams honors. Naturally Andrew Perkins was named first team All-American at kicker. Evan announced I made Walter Kamp first team All-American as kick returner. Evan added that I was first team All-Big Ten as a punt returner too.

I accepted congratulations from my teammates. I made a point of talking with each of the other honorees. Trevor and I reflected on the how much our lives had changed in the last seventeen months. In August of last year we were a couple completely green freshmen who knew nothing about playing football at this level. Now we were being recognized for outstanding play nationally and by our conference.

"You realize that we're going to be expected to help lead the team soon?" I asked.

"I noticed we didn't have any juniors earn honors this season," Trevor replied.

"It's worse than that," I added. "We have three juniors that start against eight sophomores. Who are the captains going to be?"

“I don’t know,” Trevor answered. “You and I are probably going to have to help keep our team in line next season. You know... be leaders even if we aren’t team captains.”

“Yeah, you’re right,” I agreed. “You, me, Shawn, Jay – we’ll have to be like Zack, JT and Cuch were last year, helping our captains keep our team focused and ready to play.”

It was a good night for our program. We were getting some individual recognition to make up what we felt was a slight to our program to have no chance to play for the national championship. I know everyone on our team would have given up individual honors to get us down to Miami for the national championship game.

I got to sleep in Thursday morning like a total lazy bum. I got up in time to have lunch with Kelly before her philosophy final. I spent most of the afternoon over at the Lasch Building reviewing video of Oregon.

Kelly and I spent part of the evening reviewing for the History 20 final in my room. We continued studying together in my room when I switched to political science and Kelly moved on to her news writing course. Kelly headed back to her room at ten o’clock so both of us could get a good night’s sleep.

Kelly and I met for breakfast at 7:00 am on Friday. We headed off to Chambers for our history final together. Dr. Brennan had us choose six essay questions from ten questions on the test. I finished my answers well before the hour and fifty minute period was over. I went back and checked my spelling and grammar along with the contents of my answers. I knew I aced this test.

I hoped my work would keep Dr. Brennan’s high opinion of my abilities as a history student. I definitely planned to take more courses that she taught before I graduated. She simply was the best professor I’d had at Penn State.

Kelly and I headed downtown after we stopped back at our rooms to drop off our books. Kelly stopped by the Frame Shop on College Avenue to pick up a Christmas present. It was already wrapped when she got it. She refused to say who it was for, but I suspected it was for me. We had an early lunch at Baby’s Burgers and Shakes for a holiday lunch.

The two of us headed back to campus. Kelly went back to her room. I headed for Burrowes and my poly sci final. Dr. Hewitt’s final was easy for me. I knew I would get an A on this one too. I headed for the Lasch Building after my final. Kelly wanted privacy to do a final review for her news writing final at 4:40 pm.

I reviewed video of the Oregon Ducks until it was time for practice. We ran through our plays without pads. I was surprised and pleased when Coach Burton had Chip run fifteen plays with the first string that afternoon. Maybe Chip would see a little playing time in the Rose Bowl if we could put the Ducks away early.

After dinner Coach Burton announced news he received in the morning. Evan Foster was selected to receive the John Mackey award. Zack led the team in three cheers for our outstanding tight end. Coach Burton announced we had tomorrow off. The Training Table would be open for any team members who wanted to eat there. Anyone who wanted to spend the weekend at home with their families was welcome to do so. All of us had to be back on campus for the team dinner on Sunday night.

The guys without cars made a scramble to arrange rides home after dinner. Shawn O'Conner agreed to give Charlie Taylor a ride to Lancaster on his way to Downingtown. I agreed to give Christian a ride back to campus on Sunday afternoon. He knew he could get a ride with home tomorrow with Bev and Mr. Umble.

I stopped off at my room to change into nice clothes for the evening. Things were hectic at the dorm as students packed up and headed for home for Christmas. Parents helped their kids carry their bags downstairs for the trip home.

I headed over to get Kelly when I was done at my room. I bumped into Mrs. D'Antonio, Jen's mom, when I knocked at Kelly's door. Jen and Kelly introduced me to Jen's mom. We visited for a couple minutes. Jen and her mom had to get on the road for their home in Berwyn.

Kelly and I headed downtown for an early movie. We stopped off at the Diner for grilled stickies before we headed back to Kelly's room. We headed back to campus hand in hand.

I helped Kelly pack her things before we got down to our evening's fun. We stacked all the boxes and bags on Jen's empty bed as we finished loading them.

Kelly pulled out the big box we'd picked up at the frame shop in the morning and said, "I guess now is as good a time as any to give you your Christmas gift Kyle." She handed the big flat box to me. "It isn't as expensive as the pendant you got me, but I hope you'll like it."

I tore the paper off and pulled the framed picture out of the box. It was a collage of photos of me. The center photo was my team publicity head shot in uniform. Kelly had surrounded that photo with action photos from our games this season. One was of me running a kickoff in for a touchdown against Michigan. She had a leaping touchdown grab I made against Northwestern. She had me celebrating with the Nittany Lion mascot on another. Another shot had me taking the handoff from Shawn O'Conner on a reverse when we played Nebraska. The fifth shot was of me fielding a punt against Illinois. The final shot was of Zack Hayes and me celebrating on the sideline in the second half against Michigan State.

Kelly had an artist put all my stats in a game by game chart on the bottom of the picture. The top boldly announced 'Big Ten Champions - Penn State Nittany Lions'

“Thank you honey,” I said as I kissed her. “This is the greatest.” I set the picture down on her desk and gave Kelly an impassioned hug and kiss. “This is wonderful. I love you.”

“I love you too Kyle,” Kelly replied. She pulled me towards her bed. We quickly stripped down to our underwear. We settled down on her bed on our sides facing each other and we made out. Our underwear was discarded within minutes. Kelly gave me an excellent blow job to take the edge off for me. I went down on her, using my tongue, lips and fingers to bring her to two orgasms.

Both of us were ready to make love then. Kelly wanted on top our first time. I let her ride me through more orgasms. Kelly tired after about ten minutes of exertion. We rolled over so I was on top and completed our coupling.

Kelly and I cuddled together under the blanket after we were done. I commented, “I’m going to miss this Kelly. Are you still planning to come in to Lancaster after New Years?”

“I expect to,” Kelly replied. “Assuming that we don’t have bad weather. I’ll come in on January 7th and stay until the 10th.”

“It’s going to be a long three weeks for me,” I said.

“For me too,” Kelly agreed. We exchanged a few sweet kisses and then cuddled together and went to sleep.

I woke on Saturday morning as Kelly kneed me in the back. “Oww!” I grumped.

“Sorry honey,” Kelly said soothingly. “I tried not to wake you up.”

I glanced at Kelly’s clock as she climbed back in bed in front of me and snuggled in against me. The clock said it was a quarter to nine in the morning. Kelly and I planned for me to leave by 9:30. Her dad didn’t expect to be on campus before 10:00 am.

I draped my arm over Kelly’s side and palmed her lovely breast in my hand. Kelly responded by grinding her back and bottom against my chest and crotch. Predictably my cock rose in response. Soon I was sawing my cock up and down between Kelly’s ass cheeks while I fondled and teased her breasts.

Predictably this escalated. Within a couple minutes my hard cock was embedded in Kelly’s tunnel while we made love on our sides. Both of us loved this position for wake-up, first thing in the morning sex. We could keep everything slow and loving this way. Kelly played with her clitoris while I pumped in and out of her. She brought herself, with my help, to a couple orgasms. I came soon after Kelly’s second orgasm, planting myself

in as deep as possible before I spewed another load of semen into my girl. We cuddled and kissed as we cooled down afterward.

Both of us climbed out of bed around 9:15. Kelly went across the hall for a quick shower while I dressed. I figured I would shower back at my own dorm to save time. Neither Kelly nor I wanted me to run into her dad this morning. I had my overnight bag packed and was ready to go when Kelly returned.

I hung out while Kelly got dressed. The two of us hugged when she was ready. "I'm going to miss you so much honey," I said as we kissed. "I love you totally."

"Eeewww..." Kelly replied pulling away a little. "You still smell of pussy from last night."

"Sorry," I replied.

"I love you too," Kelly said. "But you better get going before my dad gets here."

I gave her a final hug and said, "Have a Merry Christmas."

Kelly gave me a quick peck on the cheek and replied, "You do the same Kyle. I'll see you on the 7th."

I headed out of my lover's room and down the hall to the elevator. I got lucky as the door opened immediately after I pushed the button. Or at least I thought I was lucky for a split second until Bill O'Keefe stepped off.

"Ummm... Bill," I stammered. We were busted totally and completely. "Ummm... I uh, came over to help Kelly bring her bags down to the car."

Bill eyed me carefully and said, "Yeah, right." I knew he didn't believe me for one second. He stared at the Penn State football bag I was using as an overnight bag. "Well, if you're here to help with Kelly's bags, let's get to work."

I obediently followed Bill back down the hall to Kelly's room. Bill knocked at her door and said, "Kelly, it's daddy."

The door opened and she rocketed out the door and hugged her dad. "Daddy!" she exclaimed. "It's so good to see you." She gave her dad a hug that equaled the passion of any I had received last night. She spotted me standing behind her dad a few seconds later. "Kyle?"

"I came over this morning to help carry your bags downstairs," I answered to her questioning look.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "That was so sweet of you."

I followed Bill and Kelly into her room and waited for my load of baggage. I knew Bill knew we had sex recently. Kelly had sprayed the room with air freshener but I could still smell sex in the air. He knew. He knew I knew that he knew we had sex. He kept his interaction with me to a minimum. He was polite but curt. He loaded me up with two bags and a box. He took more luggage. Kelly carried the last of it. I followed father and daughter down to their car.

Bill did not question why the overnight bag I had when he met me wasn't packed in the trunk with the rest of Kelly's luggage. "Have a Merry Christmas Bill," I said when everything was loaded up.

"You do the same Kyle," Bill answered. "Go out and beat those Ducks. I'll be cheering for you and the rest of the team."

"Thanks," I answered. "We'll do our best."

Kelly gave me a hug and a chaste kiss on the cheek. She whispered to me, "I love you so much Kyle."

I returned the kiss and whispered back, "I love you too. I can't wait for the seventh of January to get here." Kelly hugged me again and then climbed into the car. Bill and Kelly waved good bye as they drove away. I returned the wave and watched as my lover and her father headed for Pittsburgh.

(To be continued)