

CANTERBURY TRAILS

Written by

Michael Brose

261 Sunset Hill Drive, Norcross, Georgia 30071

Outsidel621@yahoo.com
(678) 522-5339

FADE IN:

EXT. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

The Stevenson High School monument sign near the road reads, "SPORTS AWARD CEREMONY TONIGHT."

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

The Stevenson High School auditorium is filled with students from various sports teams. The golf team stands together in front of a backdrop, posing for a team photo. TODD, a 16-year-old, blonde-haired boy, and MIKE, a brown-haired sophomore, watch the photographer as she sets up her camera.

TODD
Hey Mike, check this out.

With a mischievous grin, Todd sneaks closer to the golf team.

TODD (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Fore!

The golf team ducks in unison as the camera flashes. Todd and Mike laugh hysterically.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM NEAR STAGE - EVENING

To the right of the stage, a slender woman, LAURA, approaches COACH DAVID KELSEY, an attractive 40-year-old.

LAURA
Hey Kelsey.

Kelsey turns and pulls Laura to the side. Laura's eyes open wide, and she smiles as Kelsey quietly but firmly speaks.

COACH KELSEY
Laura, hey, stop with those stupid rumors about me already.

LAURA
Um, I don't know what you're talking about... but, um, I do like your firm hand.

COACH KELSEY
It's getting ridiculous. The one with whips and chains is my favorite.

LAURA
Oh really?

COACH KELSEY
Look, it's been months since we
went out. Let it go already.

The loudspeaker screeches. They look up.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM STAGE - EVENING

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN, a 60-year-old gray-haired man, adjusts the
microphone at the podium.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Can everyone please take a seat?
We'll start tonight's athletic
awards ceremony with our boys'
cross-country team. Let's give a
warm welcome to Coach Kelsey.

The crowd claps as Coach Kelsey walks to the mic.

COACH KELSEY
Hi, I'm Coach Kelsey. First, I want
to congratulate our varsity cross-
country team for winning our second
State Championship in a row!

The crowd claps and cheers enthusiastically.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Now introducing our varsity
lettermen: John Haas, Collin Green,
Walter Warren...

Todd sits next to Mike and glances at him in excitement. Mike
nods back.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Andy Cook, Jim Elek, Scott
Oliverio, Joseph Hauser, and
Michael Brock. Come on up!

The crowd cheers. Todd crosses his arms angrily and looks in
disbelief at his mother, MRS. EVANS, a busty, 40-year-old
blonde-haired woman, as Mike strides to the stage. Todd
stands up and storms to the auditorium exit as Coach Kelsey
hands out the certificates to the varsity team.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Give our championship team a well-
deserved round of applause.

(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Now, it seems everyone improved
over last year, but the Most
Improved Award goes to... Todd
Evans.

Mrs. Evans walks quickly after Todd. Coach Kelsey looks for
Todd in the crowd.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
It appears he may have stepped out.
It never fails, right? Let's move
on to Rookie of the Year.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - EVENING

The office is bright and big with monitors and whiteboards.
Coach Kelsey sits at his desk when Mrs. Evans knocks on his
open office door.

MRS. EVANS
Hi, I was told I could find you
here. I'm Todd's mother.

COACH KELSEY
Oh, hi, I have Todd's award. Is he
okay?

Coach Kelsey stands up and walks to the front of his desk. He
picks up a plaque and extends it toward Mrs. Evans.

MRS. EVANS
Well, he's very disappointed that
he did not get his varsity letter.
There must be a mistake, right?

COACH KELSEY
Um, no.

Coach Kelsey leans back onto the edge of his desk.

MRS. EVANS
He did win one of the races.

COACH KELSEY
Yeah, he had a great race, but that
was for the junior varsity squad.

MRS. EVANS
Why did his friend Michael get a
varsity letter?

COACH KELSEY

Well, Mike ran in four of our
varsity meets when Joe got hurt.

MRS. EVANS

But Todd really thought he would
get his letter.

Mrs. Evans walks seductively toward Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Todd will definitely be on the
varsity team next year, and he will
likely be our star runner.

Mrs. Evans leans into Coach Kelsey and pins him to his desk.
She put her hand on Coach Kelsey's shoulder.

MRS. EVANS

The letter meant so much to Todd.
There has to be something I could
do to change your mind.

Mrs. Evans takes his hand, slowly places it up her skirt
behind her, and pulls his head down toward her chest.
Principal Donovan enters the office.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

Hey Coach, great cere... mony.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Coach Kelsey sits in front of Principal Donovan's desk.

COACH KELSEY

Don, yes, she's an attractive
woman, and I understand how this
appeared, but I did not do
anything!

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

(looking down, shaking his
head)

I saw where you put your hands.

COACH KELSEY

She pulled my hand onto her!

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

Okay, but it's not a good look
considering your past... (pausing
and then looking up) Laura Thomson.

Coach Kelsey quickly stands up.

COACH KELSEY

Oh, come on, don't bring that up.
Laura was just being vindictive and
made up all those ridiculous rumors
- you know that.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

I have to consider it since you
broke policy by dating a colleague.

COACH KELSEY

I went on one date with that woman,
and she's ruining my life.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

Now, Mrs. Evans said she will not
pursue any legal action. However,
you shouldn't approach her son.
That kid is likely to stir up
something.

COACH KELSEY

Ok, fine. No problem.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

Well, there is one problem. Todd,
of course, plans to run cross-
country next fall, so we will have
to replace you as coach.

COACH KELSEY

Really Don? This is ridiculous! I
only really teach so I can coach.
There has to be another way.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

If you want to coach, we can
transfer you to Canterbury.

COACH KELSEY

Canterbury? Canterbury? Aren't they
going to tear it down?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

That was the plan when this school
was built. However, there are now
too many kids, so they kept it
open. It's only a few miles away.

COACH KELSEY

I know, but I live next to the
school - I walk to work.

(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
My deck overlooks the baseball
field for Christ's sake!

Coach Kelsey puts his hands behind his head and looks up.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Canterbury desperately needs
teachers and will need a cross-
country and track coach. Mr. Allen
is retiring, so it's perfect, you
can coach there.

Coach Kelsey puts his hands in the air and turns around.

COACH KELSEY
Perfect? Really? That school is run
down, and I don't think they won a
cross-country meet in years.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Exactly, the superintendent thought
you would be a good fit to turn
them around. Look, you just teach
and coach there for a year, and I
will guarantee you that you can
come back to Stevenson.

COACH KELSEY
Just one year and I'll come back?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Todd Evans will graduate, so yes,
but the superintendent wants to
ensure you put your best effort
and, you know, Canterbury has not
won a meet in at least 10 years.
So, he wants to see Canterbury win
at least one meet, you know, break
the streak, or you will stay there.

COACH KELSEY
Don, I built a championship program
here and you're just let it go to
shit with a new coach for a year?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
It's either Canterbury or you leave
the district. You may have a
difficult time finding work if this
incident becomes public. Look, I
know you're a good person, but this
is the best I could do.

Coach Kelsey sighs in defeat.

INT. BURGER JOINT - EVENING

Mike sits in a booth across from ALLISON, an attractive 16-year-old, blonde-haired girl, eating burgers and fries.

ALLISON
Sorry Mike. Never thought your dad
would be such a cheat.

MIKE
Now we gotta stay with my
grandparents.

ALLISON
You're moving!

MIKE
Yeah, but they only live a few
miles down the road.

Todd and another Stevenson student, KYLE, approach the booth.

TODD
What's up, guys?

Todd sits next to Allison, and Kyle slides next to Mike.

ALLISON
Hey Todd, Kyle.

TODD
(mockingly)
Why the sad faces? Are you two
having problems?

Kyle and Todd laugh. Todd grabs a fry from Mike's plate.

ALLISON
Mike just shared some bad news.

TODD
Oh, sorry. What's wrong, buddy?

MIKE
My parents split up.

TODD
Congrats! That's great news! My
folks split up, and now they both
spoil me; it's great. Hell, I'm
guilt-tripping a new car out of
them.

MIKE

My dad took off, and now my mom and I will be living with my grandparents.

TODD

Oh, man, the grandparents house, that sucks.

MIKE

Yeah, it does suck and I'll be going to Canterbury.

TODD

What? Canterbury? You're joking, right? What about our team and the threepeat? What about Allison? You're ditching us.

MIKE

It's not like I have a choice.

TODD

Bruh, that school is for losers - no offense. Their cross-country team is pathetic. Do they still even have a cross-country team?

MIKE

I don't know and I don't care.

EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING (ESTABLISHING)

It's sunny and the birds are chirping. An aerial view of the high school reveals the school sign, the track, the athletic fields, and the parking lot.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Coach Kelsey holds a clipboard with a group of six boys in front of him. He points and counts to himself, and then looks at his watch.

COACH KELSEY

Hey guys, I'm Coach Kelsey. Welcome to Canterbury cross-country.

Coach Kelsey looks down the line of kids in front of him and sees a kid holding a pair of skis. He walks towards him.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

What's your name?

MATT

Matt Ferraro.

COACH KELSEY

What's with the skis?

MATT

Yeah, I wasn't sure if I should bring them since there's no snow on the ground.

COACH KELSEY

Do you realize that this is cross-country running, not cross-country skiing?

MATT

Um, no... ah, this sucks.

Matt takes his skis and walks toward the exit.

COACH KELSEY

We need some runners... are you interested in running?

MATT

(with his back turned)
Running blows!

Matt leaves the gym, and Coach Kelsey walks back to the guys.

COACH KELSEY

So, who was on the team last season?

RUSS, a tall, dark-haired boy, raises his hand.

RUSS

Hi, I'm Russ. Um, I was on the team for the last two seasons.

COACH KELSEY

Great Russ. Anyone else?

Nobody responds. Coach Kelsey walks up to JAVON TAYLOR, a big, overweight African-American boy.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

You're a big dude. What's your name?

JAVON

I'm Javon.

COACH KELSEY
Did you ever consider joining
football?

JAVON
My mama won't let me. She's afraid
I'd get hurt.

COACH KELSEY
Welcome to the team... Okay,
Puneet?

PUNEET, a skinny Indian boy wearing glasses, raises his hand
high over his head.

PUNEET
Hi Coach.

COACH KELSEY
So, Puneet, are you an avid runner?

PUNEET
No, I just need an extracurricular
activity for my college
applications.

COACH KELSEY
Okay, well, team sports do look
good on college applications...
Alright, who is Jeremy O'Brien?

JEREMY, a young, tiny, red-headed boy, stands behind Javon
and steps around him.

JEREMY
I'm Jeremy.

COACH KELSEY
So, you're a freshman?

JEREMY
Yes. I started school early, and I
skipped a grade. I'm almost twelve.

COACH KELSEY
Wow, eleven, great.

JEREMY
It's not that great. Being this
small, running is the only sport I
could really do.

COACH KELSEY
Have you run for a team before?

JEREMY

No, I usually only run when being chased. I do have a lot of practice, though.

COACH KELSEY

Okay... Javier Guerrero?

JAVY, a Hispanic boy, raises a hand slowly and looks down.

JAVY

I'm Javy.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, Javy, tell me why you're interested in cross-country.

JAVY

Um, uh, when I run, I like to listen to music. And I like music, so I run a lot.

A door opens, and a boy, BRIAN, enters the gym. He is wearing shorts, and the metal post from his artificial leg is showing as he walks awkwardly toward the group.

BRIAN

Hi Coach, sorry I'm late.

COACH KELSEY

Hi? Um, you know this group is for cross-country, right?

BRIAN

Yes, I signed up and got the notice to meet here today.

Coach Kelsey looks at the signup sheet.

COACH KELSEY

Brian Hunter?

BRIAN

Yes, that's me.

COACH KELSEY

I love your enthusiasm, but, um, are you able to run?

BRIAN

Oh, no, I'm not going to *run* run. I'm going to run the team as the manager. I was the team manager last year.

COACH KELSEY

Oh, okay, I'm glad to have you.

BRIAN

I keep track of statistics for all the runners. And scouting reports on all of our opponents. I can also analyze video.

He shows Coach Kelsey his iPad.

COACH KELSEY

Really? Okay, sounds great. Alright, everyone, we'll start with a warmup. Let's head outside and do a lap along the fence line.

They all walk out the gym doors that lead to the back.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

As the guys exit the gym to the school yard, a loud old white work van races through the parking lot and skids into a parking space near the gym. KEVIN, a tall teenager wearing a t-shirt and jeans, takes a hit from his vape pen. The guys and Coach Kelsey watch him as he exits the van. Kevin walks up to the group holding a paper form.

KEVIN

Is this cross-country?

COACH KELSEY

Yes, did you want to join the team?

KEVIN

Yeah, you know, because I need a parking pass.

COACH KELSEY

Parking pass?

KEVIN

Yeah, you gotta do after-school stuff to get one. I gotta park my van. Can you sign this form?

COACH KELSEY

Yeah sure. What's your name?

Coach Kelsey grabs the form and signs it.

KEVIN

Kevin Kelly... so I made the team?

COACH KELSEY

Yes, welcome to the team. Russ is going to lead us on a warmup run. Um, bring some shorts tomorrow.

Russ leads the guys around the fence line. Brian walks to the grassy area with his tablet to observe. The girl's cross-country coach, a fit, brown-haired woman in her thirties, JEN, approaches Coach Kelsey.

JEN

Hi, I'm Jen, the girls' cross-country coach. I assume you're the new boys' coach?

COACH KELSEY

Hi, yes, I'm Kelsey, David Kelsey. Nice to meet you.

JEN

Likewise.

The coaches shake hands.

JEN (CONT'D)

Are you teaching as well?

COACH KELSEY

Yep, history.

JEN

Ooh, fun.

COACH KELSEY

Yeah, I've always been a history buff. Hey, what's up with the boys' team and losing every year?

JEN

Yeah, I guess they never really had a motivating coach.

The girl runners approach the coaches.

JEN (CONT'D)

Well, good luck, Kelsey.

Jen walks to the girls.

JEN (CONT'D)

(to the girls)

Ok, let's do some stretching before we start our workout.

Russ leads with Javy close behind. Behind them, it's chaos. Javon slows to a walk, wheezing. Puneet hunches over, arms flailing like he's swatting invisible bees. Kevin sprints after Jeremy for a few steps before grinding to a halt, hands on his hips, gasping for air. Coach Kelsey watches and slowly shakes his head in dismay. The boys straggle in and line up beside him while catching their breath.

COACH KELSEY
Ok, guys, gather around.

The boys, all out of breath, sit down.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
The first run of the year is always the hardest. Let's get some stretching in first.

The guys stretch. Jeremy raises his hand.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Yes Jeremy.

JEREMY
Didn't we just do our first run?

COACH KELSEY
That was our warmup. Did any of you run during the summer?

Nobody responds.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
How about you, Russ?

RUSS
No, I worked all summer.

COACH KELSEY
Ok, not a problem. I can mold you into great runners. You may have heard that distance running is 10% physical and 90% mental.

KEVIN
Mental work? I'm out.

Kevin stands up.

COACH KELSEY
It's not that bad, Kevin. We'll establish our physical base, then work on improving our speed.
(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
That's where the mental toughness
comes in. Today, let's do an easy
three-mile run. Russ, lead the team
to Hayes Road and back.

The team runs toward the road. As Coach Kelsey walks toward
the school, an older African-American woman, PRINCIPAL
JACKSON, approaches, and they stop near the school.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
Hello, Mr. Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY
Ms. Jackson?

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
It's now Principal Jackson. I was
told of your situation over at
Stevenson.

COACH KELSEY
Yes, let me assure you that the
incident wasn't as it seemed.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
No need, the superintendent
informed me, but I'll be watching
you. As you can see, this school is
a bit more, let's say, rustic,
compared to the district's newest
school from which you came, but
decency still applies. So, you will
also be teaching history.

COACH KELSEY
Yes, that's correct. I've taught
history for several years.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
Very well. We learn from our
history so we don't repeat our
mistakes. Oh, and please give these
kids on the team some guidance.
Let's turn some lives around as you
are working on the same.

COACH KELSEY
I won't let you down.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
Just don't let the kids down.
Welcome aboard.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mike and Allison walk along a park trail, holding hands and eating ice cream they bought from an ice cream cart vendor.

ALLISON

Ugh, I can't believe we have to go back to school already.

MIKE

Yeah, I can't either.

ALLISON

And I can't believe you are going to that horrible Canterbury. That place is a dump, and those kids that go there... It's so cringe.

MIKE

It's only a few miles from here, so I'll still be able to see you.

ALLISON

Oh, I know, but it's not going to be the same.

Allison puts on a forced frown, and they hug.

MIKE

We can text or call every day.

Mike looks at his phone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I gotta go soon. I'm supposed to meet up with Todd and the guys after their cross-country practice.

ALLISON

Hey, you're not going to run for Canterbury, are you?

MIKE

No. I'm not.

Mike looks depressed as he licks his ice cream.

EXT. ON THE SIDEWALK ALONG A ROADWAY - DAY

Russ and Javy run slowly along the sidewalk. Russ stops.

RUSS

Hold up and let them catch up.

Javy does not hear him as he is listening to his earbuds, and continues to run for a bit. He finally notices, stops, and faces toward Russ. A group of eight runners from Stevenson High are running on the same sidewalk and approach Javy, who is looking the other way.

TODD
Move over, idiot!

Javy does not hear him, so Todd shoves him as he passes. The rest of the Canterbury runners catch up to Russ and stop. The Stevenson team continues and stops in front of Russ.

TODD (CONT'D)
Are you babysitting, or is this
really your team?

Stevenson runners laugh. Kevin pulls out a switchblade knife from his pocket, points it toward Todd, and pops it open.

KEVIN
Do you guys have a problem?

They all back away.

TODD
Calm down, psycho! Let's go.

Todd runs along the sidewalk, but Javon is blocking the way.

TODD (CONT'D)
Move it fat ass!

The Stevenson runners run around Javon and continue down the sidewalk. Javy jogs to the guys.

KEVIN
Yo don't take any shit from those
dickheads.

RUSS
Yeah, those Stevenson guys are
assholes, but Kevin, bruh, what's
with the knife?

KEVIN
Yeah, man, I forgot I had it on me.

JEREMY
You should probably be wearing
shorts when you run.

Kevin makes a fist and pretends to swing at Jeremy. Jeremy flinches.

KEVIN
Made you flinch!

Kevin punches Jeremy's arm.

JEREMY
Ow!

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

The guys enter the school yard and jog to Coach Kelsey and Brian. The guys breathe heavily as they sit down.

COACH KELSEY
Welcome back, guys. Good job, you completed your first day. You ran approximately 5k today. It wasn't race pace, but I'm glad you all finished together.

BRIAN
That took about 45 minutes.

COACH KELSEY
A 45-minute 5K is the same distance as a 15-minute 5K. Speed work will come later, once we gain our stamina over the next week or so.

INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mike sits on his bed with his phone. He sees a series of unanswered texts sent to Allison.

MIKE
(thinking out loud)
Why aren't you answering me?

Mike gets up and leaves the house. He runs down the street with a worried expression, but as he runs, his mood gradually shifts. He takes a deep breath, smiles, and picks up the pace. When he nears Allison's house, he suddenly stops, his face blank and unreadable.

EXT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

In Allison's driveway, Todd sits in a car with the convertible top down. Allison stands next to the car.

ALLISON
Wow, Todd, I love it!

TODD
Sweet, right? Get in and let's take
it for a ride.

Allison slides into the car. Todd backs out of the driveway and guns the engine, speeding down the road. Allison throws her arms up and screams with exhilaration as Mike watches them disappear into the distance.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

The sun beams through the clouds. The team gathers around Coach Kelsey and Brian.

COACH KELSEY
Ok, the weather cleared up. I think
we should do a long run on the
sidewalks today to avoid the wet
ground. Russ, lead the team down to
Dodge Park and back.

Brian and Jeremy notice Javon eating sardines from a can.

BRIAN
Javon, you can get cramps when you
eat and run.

JEREMY
Are those sardines? Yuck!

JAVON
I need my protein. I'll take cramps
over these hunger pangs. Want some?

Javon waves a sardine in front of Jeremy, and Jeremy screams. Javon finishes the last sardine, and the guys begin their run. Coach Kelsey watches the guys leave and notices Puneet slouches as he runs.

COACH KELSEY
Puneet, stop slouching and
straighten out your back. Run
erect.

KEVIN
What the what?

The guys giggle as they continue to run.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Hey Puneet, run erect! You can look
at my ass if that helps!

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The team runs along the sidewalk. A squeaking noise is heard. The guys look around for the noise as they run.

RUSS

What's that squeaking noise?

JEREMY

I think it's Puneet's shoes?

KEVIN

It sounds like Jeremy's mom's bed.

JEREMY

Um, it kind of does.

PUNEET

It's not my shoes, it's my glasses.

Puneet's glasses squeak with every step.

RUSS

Oh great, here come those Stevenson knobs again.

The Stevenson team approaches with Todd leading as both teams run in single file toward each other. As they come near, Todd steps hard onto a puddle and splashes Russ.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Thanks, dick!

The Stevenson team jogs by in single file along the sidewalk, passing the Canterbury runners. As the last in line, Jeremy casually jumps up and grabs an overhanging tree branch, then lets it snap back. Rainwater from the leaves dumps down, soaking the entire Stevenson team as they run beneath it. The Canterbury team bursts into laughter.

RUSS (CONT'D)

You dirty a-holes needed a shower!

TODD

You guys are dead, just wait!

The Stevenson team continues running while the Canterbury team gathers around Jeremy and high-fives him.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - LATER

Coach Kelsey is sitting in his chair on the phone.

COACH KELSEY
Hey Don, it's Kelsey.

INT. PRINCIPAL DONOVAN'S OFFICE

Principal Donovan sits at his large, neat desk.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Oh, hi Kelsey, how's it going at
Canterbury?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

COACH KELSEY
That's what I want to talk to you
about. Only six kids joined, and
all but one are beginners. We won't
be competitive. Is winning a meet
really a condition for coming back?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Well, yeah, the superintendent was
quite passionate about breaking
that losing streak. As arbitrary as
it might seem, he's the one
approving your return. I suggest
you do some recruiting.

COACH KELSEY (O.C.)
Recruiting? Seriously?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Work your magic. It's that or Gabe
will be the permanent coach.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Coach Kelsey stands up quickly.

COACH KELSEY
Gabe? Come on, Gabe is the new
coach! I don't trust him. He is
going to ruin the team vibe.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (O.C.)
Yes, Gabe agreed to be the interim
coach until you come back.

Kelsey looks at his watch.

COACH KELSEY
I've got to go.

Coach Kelsey slams down the phone, and his chair back breaks and falls backward as Coach Kelsey catches himself from falling. He puts his hand on his forehead and sulks.

EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING (ESTABLISHING)

Kids rush to get into the school.

INT. CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Kids walk to their homerooms. Coach Kelsey runs up to the door to his room, and Jen approaches.

JEN
Kelsey, ready for your first day at
Canterbury?

COACH KELSEY
Hey Jen, sure am. It may be a new
school, but history doesn't change.

JEN
My classroom is across the hall if
you need anything.

COACH KELSEY
Oh, ok, thanks.

Jen walks across the hall to her classroom.

INT. COACH KELSEY'S CLASSROOM

Coach Kelsey enters his room and stands next to his desk. He looks at the class list as the final bell rings, and writes his name on the whiteboard as students rush to their seats.

COACH KELSEY
Hello class, I'm Mr. Kelsey, and
I'll be your homeroom teacher.

The students talk and wander from their seats.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Alright, settle down. I know it's
the first day, but please just take
your seats.

He looks at the class list.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Jose Aguilar

Jose raises his hand.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Michael Brock?

Coach Kelsey looks around and sees Mike.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Mike, I didn't know you went here.

Mike looks embarrassed.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
I want to talk to you after class.

The class stares at Mike.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Jeremy walks down the empty hallway and notices Kevin entering the school.

JEREMY
Hi Kevin. You're late.

Kevin stops next to Jeremy. Jeremy notices Kevin's vape pen.

KEVIN
Well, you're late too.

JEREMY
I'm not late, I have a bathroom pass. When nature calls, I need to go quickly. Were you vaping? Vaping is bad for your health.

KEVIN
Shut up, bruh.

Kevin fake punches Jeremy. Jeremy flinches.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
You flinched!

Kevin chases Jeremy down the hall.

INT. COACH KELSEY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The bell rings, and the students get up to leave the room.

COACH KELSEY

Mike, can I talk to you for a sec?

A cute girl, LESLIE, who was sitting next to Mike, gets up and walks by Mike's desk, and looks at him.

LESLIE

Busted on the first day!

Mike looks a bit embarrassed and walks to Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Mike, I didn't know you were going to Canterbury.

MIKE

Yeah, my parents split up, so I'm staying with my grandparents.

COACH KELSEY

Oh, sorry about that. Look, I'm coaching cross-country here now. You need to join the team.

MIKE

I don't know, Coach.

COACH KELSEY

Hey, don't let your talent go to waste. Just come out to practice and check us out. Think about it.

As Mike walks away, Coach Kelsey does a quiet fist pump.

EXT. CANTERBURY STADIUM - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

A view from above shows the track around the football field.

EXT. CANTERBURY TRACK - DAY

The team stretches on the grass infield of the track. Coach Kelsey looks around for Mike. Brian is next to him with a stopwatch around his neck.

COACH KELSEY

Ok, team, we're going to work on speed. I want you to run one lap at full speed. Let's see what you got.

The kids line up on the track. Brian is on the infield of the track holding the stopwatch.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

On go. Ready, set, go!

The guys take off in a burst of energy. As they round the corner of the track, the pack begins to stretch out. Russ takes the lead, with Javy close behind, followed by Javon, Puneet, Jeremy, and Kevin bringing up the rear. Coach Kelsey hustles across the infield, cutting straight to the 200-meter mark to get a better view of the action.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

You're halfway there!

Javon then runs faster, taking the lead from Russ. Then Puneet, Jeremy, and Kevin pass the 200-meter mark. Kevin coughs, and Jeremy turns his head.

JEREMY

You should quit vaping.

Kevin chases after Jeremy, but Jeremy runs faster. Javon turns on his jets and races to the finish line as the coach runs across the field. Brian shouts out the times as the kids cross the finish line.

BRIAN

(to Javon)

54

COACH KELSEY

I don't believe it!

Brian continues to shout out the times as Russ, Javy, Puneet, Jeremy, and Kevin cross the finish line.

BRIAN

59, 61, 64, 70, 72.

The kids gather around Javon.

COACH KELSEY

Javon! That was spectacular! Just a fantastic time. Did you even know you could run that fast?

JAVON

(huffing out of breath)

No idea, Coach.

Coach Kelsey smiles in excitement. Mike watches through the fence, trying not to be seen. He pulls out his phone, taps it, and puts it to his ear as he walks away.

INT. NAIL SALON - AFTERNOON

Allison and ALLISON'S MOM, a bougie 45-year-old blonde woman, are getting pedicures. Allison answers her phone.

ALLISON
Hi Mike. What's up?

MIKE (O.C.)
I've been trying to reach you. You haven't answered my texts.

ALLISON
Oh, yeah, I've been really busy, you know, homework.

MIKE (O.C.)
Can I come over this weekend?

ALLISON
Um, yeah sure, that sounds good... but I've got to go... bye.

ALLISON'S MOM
You're still talking to that boy?

ALLISON
He's super sweet, but...

ALLISON'S MOM
Don't settle, sweetie. You deserve only the best. It took me a couple of tries to get what I deserve... You know Todd's dad is a lawyer.

Allison looks at her newly painted toes.

INT. COACH KELSEY'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

The students take their seats. Coach Kelsey sees Mike enter the classroom and approaches him as he takes his seat.

COACH KELSEY
Hey Mike, I thought you were going to come to practice yesterday?

MIKE

Oh, yeah, um, I'm not sure about running this year.

COACH KELSEY

Really? You love running. You know you were going to be the star at Stevenson, and that's saying a lot. And now you can do it here. We had a great practice yesterday.

MIKE

I don't know Coach.

The bell rings.

COACH KELSEY

Just think about it. We need you.

Mike takes his seat next to Leslie.

LESLIE

Did I hear that you run?

MIKE

Yeah, um, I did at Stevenson.

LESLIE

I run on the girls' cross-country team. You should run too.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, I hope everyone read the chapter last night.

Mike looks at Leslie, thinking before opening his book.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The bell rings and the kids exit the classrooms. Coach Kelsey sees Jen and walks quickly over to her.

COACH KELSEY

Jen! Hey, um, we have our first meet tomorrow.

JEN

Yep. Is your team prepared?

COACH KELSEY

Actually, where do I get their uniforms?

JEN
Uniforms? You mean you haven't
ordered them yet?

COACH KELSEY
Order them?

JEN
Yes, you have a fundraiser, then
you order them.

COACH KELSEY
Fundraiser? What?

JEN
We don't have the funding here to
supply uniforms. Most kids here
don't have the money to buy them,
so we fundraise.

COACH KELSEY
So, you're saying we don't have
uniforms to issue? That would've
been nice to know.

Coach Kelsey sees Mrs. Jackson and jogs up to her.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Mrs. Jackson!

Principal Jackson stops, and Coach Kelsey runs up to her.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Hey, I just learned the school does
not have uniforms to issue.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
Yes, that is true. Mr. Kelsey, the
district stopped issuing uniforms
many years ago due to funding cuts.
Now, kids have to buy their own.
Unfortunately, many cannot afford
them, so there is always a
fundraiser happening.

COACH KELSEY
Okay, but why does Stevenson have
uniforms to issue?

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
They had some generous donors when
the school opened three years ago.

COACH KELSEY

What can I do now? The meet is tomorrow.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON

I suggest having the kids sell popcorn or chocolate bars. But it may take a few weeks.

Coach Kelsey looks very disappointed.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

Coach Kelsey and the boys leave the locker room to go home. Jen approaches Coach Kelsey.

JEN

Hey Kelsey, I may have a solution to your uniform problem.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Jen opens the storage room, which has a bunch of sports equipment. She looks through the shelves and finds a box labeled "Boys CC" on top. She steps on the bottom shelf.

JEN

I remember seeing some in here. Ah, I think this is it.

As she hands the box to Coach Kelsey, the shelf breaks, and she tumbles into Coach Kelsey's arms. Coach Kelsey accidentally touches her chest. Kelsey promptly lifts her back on her feet.

COACH KELSEY

Sorry for, um, you know, grabbing you there. I just didn't want you hitting the ground.

JEN

Thanks, good catch.

COACH KELSEY

I had misunderstandings before, and um, I don't want another.

JEN

No, you're a lifesaver.

Coach Kelsey opens the box and sees the uniforms. He pulls some out to inspect.

COACH KELSEY

The uniforms are awesome! You're the lifesaver!

JEN

They're pretty old.

COACH KELSEY

Well, they're going to have to work... better than nothing.

JEN

Um, so hey, why did you want to come to Canterbury? You had back-to-back championships, and those facilities are state-of-the-art.

COACH KELSEY

Honestly, I didn't want to come here, but I really had no choice. There was, um, that misunderstanding, and it was easier for me just to transfer.

JEN

This wasn't related to Laura Thomson?

Kelsey stops inspecting the uniforms and looks at her.

COACH KELSEY

No, how do you know about that?

JEN

Um, everyone knows. You developed a reputation around the district.

COACH KELSEY

Oh god! Those rumors aren't true. She went nuts after I didn't want to see her again.

Coach Kelsey places the uniforms back in the boxes.

JEN

I knew Laura when she taught at Canterbury. And yeah, she was a bit aggressive.

COACH KELSEY

And vindictive!

As they begin to walk out of the room, a shelf collapses and boxes tumble down. Coach Kelsey sees yellow-colored jackets that have spilled out of a box and holds one up.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
These are great!

INT. STEVENSON'S TEACHERS LOUNGE - MORNING

GABE, an out-of-shape middle-aged man wearing a cross-country jacket, sits alone at a table drinking coffee. There are several tables in the room, and teachers are getting coffee and mingling. Laura enters and approaches Gabe.

LAURA
Gabe, you're coaching cross-country
this year?

Gabe stands up, nearly fumbling his cup, then quickly recovers. His eyes light up as a smile spreads across his face.

GABE
Um, hi Laura.

LAURA
I'm not used to seeing anyone but
Kelsey wear that jacket.

GABE
(proudly boasts)
Well, I'm the coach now.

LAURA
I wonder why he chose to go to
Canterbury?

GABE
Oh, I heard he was doing
inappropriate things and was forced
out. We actually have a meet
against Canterbury today.

LAURA
Oh, tell him I miss his face and
that I hope he's doing well.

Gabe appears annoyed as Laura walks away and sits angrily.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Coach huddles the team.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, guys, listen up. This is our first meet, so no huge expectations, just try your best. We're running against Stevenson, my old school, and they won the last two state championships.

The team groans.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Hey, this is a learning experience. Just try your best.

He places two boxes on the bench and opens one.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

I was told we were to have a fundraiser to get new uniforms. That didn't happen, but we have these for now.

Coach Kelsey pulls out jackets from a box.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Also, we have warm-up jackets. You will notice a different number on each jacket. At the end of every meet, we will swap jackets - the runner with the best time will get jacket number 1, second will get jacket 2, and so forth.

PUNEET

Cool idea, Coach.

COACH KELSEY

Russ, since you have seniority, I want you to be our team captain. You'll start with 1.

Coach Kelsey tosses Russ the jacket.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

The rest, you grab a random jacket. Brian, I want you to have this one.

He tosses Brian the jacket that has "Ass. Coach" printed on it as the guys grab jackets.

KEVIN

Ass Coach! Hilarious!

The team laughs.

BRIAN
Assistant coach! Thanks, Coach
Kelsey. This is such a great honor!

COACH KELSEY
Okay, get into your uniforms and
meet me at the field.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

The sun shines bright. The field behind the school is set up with orange cones marking the cross-country course. Coach Kelsey and Jen are at the starting line. The Stevenson teams walk to the starting line. Jen greets the Stevenson girls' coach. Coach Kelsey walks up to the Stevenson boys'

JEN
Varsity girls head to the starting
line.

The girls' teams go to the starting line.

GABE
Hi Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY
Hey Gabe.

They shake hands.

GABE
Don told me about your situation.
How are things going at Canterbury?

COACH KELSEY
Um, yeah, things are great. How's
the team this year?

GABE
We're ready for another
championship.

COACH KELSEY
You should. The JV team looked good
last year. So take good care of
them. I want to continue the
championship streak next year.

GABE
How's your team?

COACH KELSEY
Oh, they're inexperienced, but
they're working hard.

The girls line up at the starting line. The starting gun
fires, and the girls take off running.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The locker room benches are covered with uniforms as the guys
sort through them to find their size.

RUSS
Give Javon the largest one.

Jeremy and Kevin hold the shorts to their waists.

JEREMY
This small looks way too small.

KEVIN
The large looks too small. Are
these women's shorts?

The guys put on the shirts.

RUSS
The shirt fits fine.

The guys continue frantically searching through the shorts.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

GABE
Well, the girls are almost done.
Where's your team?

COACH KELSEY
Good question.

Coach Kelsey jogs up to the locker room door. The door does
not have an outside handle, so Coach Kelsey pounds on it.
Jeremy hears the knock and answers it.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Come on, guys, we need to start.
Let's move it.

JEREMY
But, Coach, these are too small.

Jeremy holds up the uniform shorts.

COACH KELSEY
There are like 30 uniforms; one
should fit. Get a larger size.

Coach Kelsey walks away quickly.

JEREMY
This is a large!

Coach Kelsey gets back to Gabe.

COACH KELSEY
They'll be here in a second.

The guys wear their jackets around their waists as they walk
out to the field to Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Okay, guys, take off your jackets
and stretch. We need to start the
race.

The guys take off their jackets, revealing that the uniform
shorts are super short and tight. The Stevenson team bursts
out in laughter. Todd bends over laughing and points.

TODD
They're wearing booty shorts!

Coach Kelsey turns to the guys.

COACH KELSEY
The styles were different before.
Let's just run the race, and we
will get new ones before the next
meet.

The boys line up at the starting line.

TODD
Coach Gabe, they only have six
runners. They need seven.

GABE
Kelsey, where is your seventh
runner?

COACH KELSEY
Yeah, we only had six sign up, but
we only need five runners that
score.

(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
The other two are just pushers -
they wouldn't contribute to our
score, just make your score worse
if they finish in front of your top
five. So if anything, it helps you
if we're short.

TODD
They need to follow the rules. I
think they need to forfeit.

GABE
You might think rules don't apply
to you, Kelsey, but you still need
to follow them.

Coach Kelsey looks surprised by his tone. He looks to the
small crowd of parents watching and then sees Brian.

COACH KELSEY
Wait, we have a seventh runner.
Brian, put down your tablet and get
over here. We need you to run.

Brian walks over with his artificial leg.

BRIAN
Coach, um, you know this is not a
running blade. I won't run very
fast.

COACH KELSEY
That's okay, don't worry about your
time, just move at your own pace.

BRIAN
Okay, anything for the team.

Brian walks to the starting line. The team high-fives him.

TODD
Really? He can't run.

COACH KELSEY
There's no rule against him
running, Todd. Let's go.

Coach Kelsey grabs the starter gun as the boys line up.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Ready, set...

Coach Kelsey fires the starting gun, and they take off. Javon, Russ, and Javy surge to the front alongside the Stevenson runners, led by Todd and Kyle, with Puneet not far behind. As they round the first turn near the fence line, Javon takes the lead. Todd and Kyle exchange a look of disbelief.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Way to go, Javon!

Javon races ahead and then starts to slow down - way down. The rest of the Stevenson boys catch up to him.

TODD

(to Javon)

What happened? Did you realize the buffet was closed?

COACH KELSEY

I get it now.

All seven Stevenson boys are in the front. Mrs. Evans approaches Coach Kelsey.

MRS. EVANS

Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Oh, hi, Mrs. Evans.

MRS. EVANS

It's Bethany. Hey, I'm sorry, I didn't think that they would remove you from Stevenson. I just thought Todd would get his letter.

COACH KELSEY

Well, they obviously did.

MRS. EVANS

Now we're stuck with Gabe as our coach. I'm still upset that dumbass principal walked in on us.

COACH KELSEY

Well, it could've been Mr. Evans.

MRS. EVANS

No, we're divorced. Um, so can I make it up to you?

COACH KELSEY

No, I think you have done enough.

MRS. EVANS
No, really, anything?

Kelsey watches the boys run by, then turns to Mrs. Evans.

COACH KELSEY
Actually, I do have one thing.

Coach Kelsey speaks to Mrs. Evans inaudibly while the girls' teams are stretching and cheering on the boys' teams. The coaches head to the finish chute. All seven Stevenson boys finish, followed by Russ and Javy. Puneet speeds up for a strong finish, followed by Jeremy, Kevin, and Javon. Brian completes his first lap. Coach Kelsey sighs. Gabe approaches Coach Kelsey.

GABE
Well, Kelsey, I'm sorry to say, it looks like I'll be Stevenson's permanent coach.

COACH KELSEY
Not so fast. We may have a lot of work to do here, but it's early.

GABE
Good luck with that. Look at those kids... pathetic.

As Gabe turns away, Kelsey grabs him by his shoulder.

COACH KELSEY
Don't talk about them that way.

GABE
You know, Kelsey, I never liked you... I don't understand why Laura does. She deserves someone better.

COACH KELSEY
Laura? She's crazy. What did she tell you?

GABE
Laura's a great gal, and you're pathetic, just like your team.

Kelsey grabs Gabe's shirt and looks at the kids.

COACH KELSEY
You're not worth it.

Kelsey lets go. Gabe walks away and turns around.

GABE
You're never coming back to
Stevenson. Good luck with your...
team.

Gabe laughs and walks away.

INT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

Mike walks up to the booth where Allison, Todd, and Kyle are seated.

TODD
Hey Mikey boy!

Mike takes a seat next to Allison.

MIKE
Hey Allison.

ALLISON
Hi Mike.

TODD
We trounced Canterbury yesterday,
15-50! Wow, that team is a joke.

MIKE
Actually, I was thinking of joining
the team.

TODD
What? Join those losers! Did you
even see them? One kid is fatter
than a freaking elephant. They had
this little kid who looked like a
kindergartener. Oh, and one kid
only had one leg! One leg!

MIKE
Yeah, that's Brian. He's in my
biology class.

TODD
Why the hell would you join those
pathetic bottom dwellers?

MIKE
I miss running, and it's not only
about winning.

TODD

So you want to be one of those losers? That's embarrassing.

MIKE

No, what's embarrassing is having your mom get our coach removed because you couldn't earn a letter on your own.

Todd violently stands up next to the table.

TODD

Not true, prick! I earned that letter, and I even had a faster time than you.

ALLISON

Mike, that was rude.

MIKE

Rude, Allison? Rude is when you don't have time to answer my texts but have time to go for a ride in Todd's new car.

ALLISON

(angrily)

Did you spy on me?

MIKE

No, I came over because I wanted to know why you wouldn't answer me.

Allison stands up and gathers her purse and phone.

ALLISON

I don't have time for this. Todd, can you take me home?

MIKE

So, you're just going to leave? With Todd?

ALLISON

I can't do this.

EXT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

Allison and Todd leave the restaurant, and Mike follows. Mike watches Allison drive off with Todd. Mike then runs down the street looking very upset and turns into a park.

EXT. MAGNOLIA PARK - DAY

Mike enters Magnolia Park and runs down one of the paved trails. His demeanor changes as he takes a deep breath while running down a path. He turns a corner and nearly runs into Leslie, who is running in the opposite direction. They stop.

MIKE

Oh! Sorry!

LESLIE

Mike?

Leslie jogs in place.

MIKE

Oh, hey Leslie. Whatcha doing here?

LESLIE

I usually run here during the weekends. You know you can't take too many days off training. Are you joining cross-country?

MIKE

You know, I think I just might.

LESLIE

Awesome, Mike! Well, I have to keep moving. See you in class.

They run off in opposite directions, but both glance back at the same moment. Leslie gives a small wave. Mike quickly jerks his head forward and smiles.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The Canterbury boys are in the locker room holding their uniforms and jackets and enter the coaches' office.

RUSS

Coach, we all talked and, um, we're quitting the team. Here are the uniforms and jackets.

COACH KELSEY

Wait guys. We'll get new uniforms before the next meet, I promise.

RUSS

It's not the uniforms, well, maybe part of it, but we don't even have a whole team-no offense, Brian.

BRIAN

No offense taken. I'm just glad to help out and be part of something. There aren't many opportunities for me to participate in sports.

KEVIN

We suck. They swept us.

COACH KELSEY

Kevin, they were back-to-back state champs. We'll improve, I promise.

JEREMY

I thought you just wanted to get a parking pass. If you quit, you'll have to turn it in.

KEVIN

Shut up, you little...

COACH KELSEY

Come on, guys. Cross-country is more than just running. It's about your teammates and camaraderie. Don't you want to be part of a team?

PUNEET

Cross-country is not a team sport, really. It's just a collection of times produced by individuals.

COACH KELSEY

It's more than that, Puneet. You will learn throughout the season how important your teammates are to your success. Russ, what do you do in practice when someone is lagging behind?

RUSS

We pull them up to us.

COACH KELSEY

Right! Make them part of the pack. You all are essential to this team. You motivate each other. Of all the sports you could join, cross-country will be your most close-knit team, and you'll form lasting friendships. So come on, guys, what do you say? Will you at least give it one more chance?

The team looks at each other.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Do it for Brian. Do it so Kevin
keeps his parking pass. Just do it
for yourselves. Who's in?

KEVIN
Hell, I'm in.

JEREMY
I'm in too.

JAVON, JAVY, AND PUNEET
I'm in.

COACH KELSEY
Russ?

RUSS
Look, I just don't want to waste my
time. There are other things I
could be doing. And if we lose all
the time, what fun is that?

COACH KELSEY
Just give us some time to turn
things around. You all have the
potential to be great, but we need
all of you guys. Stay for the team,
they need their captain, and I
promise you won't regret it.

RUSS
Okay, if everyone is committed,
I'll stay, but we really need to
improve. I want to win some meets!

The guys cheer.

RUSS (CONT'D)
But we're still short a runner.

The locker room door opens. Mike walks into the locker room.

MIKE
Hi Coach.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

The boys finish their warmup, and Leslie stretches next to
her teammate, IMELDA.

IMELDA

Hey, it looks like there's a new guy on the boys' team. He's cute.

LESLIE

Hey, yeah, that's Mike. He is cute.

Leslie gets up and jogs over to Mike.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Hi Mike, I see you joined the cross-country team.

MIKE

Oh, hey Leslie. Yeah, my first day.

LESLIE

That's great, Mike. I'm glad you changed your mind.

MIKE

I just missed running.

LESLIE

Yeah, I get that. Well, I'm glad to see you out.

Leslie jogs back to the girls' team as the guys gather around Coach Kelsey and stretch.

COACH KELSEY

I know you're feeling pessimistic about our chances of winning, but I know you have it in you to succeed, especially if we work together as a team. So today we are going to run as a team and not let anyone fall behind.

RUSS

Can we run to Red Run Park?

COACH KELSEY

Yeah, that would be a good run. Okay, Russ, you lead the way.

The guys start their run.

EXT. RED RUN PARK - AFTERNOON

The guys run into the park. Russ and Mike slow down and jog in place as the team gathers.

RUSS

We're at the halfway point, guys.
So we can run back the way we came
or, I say, we run along the river
and then cut back. It's about the
same distance but with a nicer
view.

MIKE

Let's do it!

Russ leads the team down a trail and cuts into a field of tall grass.

JEREMY

Wait guys! Where's the trail?

RUSS

We're blazing our own trail!

The team runs through the field toward the river. Jeremy struggles to move through the waist-level grass.

JEREMY

I can't see where I'm going!

Russ and Javy are in front. As they pass, a deer that was bedding rises from the grass and jumps out. Jeremy screams, and the deer runs toward Javy.

MIKE

Javy!

Javy does not hear Mike as he is listening to his earbuds. He turns around, and the deer nearly tramples over him. Javy dives to the ground, and the deer runs off. The guys gather around. Kevin picks up one of Javy's earbuds.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

JAVY

What was that?

He gets up, and the guys laugh.

KEVIN

Bruh! You just got run over by a reindeer!

Javy checks his ears for his earbuds.

JAVY

Hey, I'm missing a bud.

Kevin puts the earbud to his ear.

KEVIN
Yo, I found it. What the hell are
you listening to?

Javy stands and dusts himself off as Kevin hands the earbud.

JAVY
Um, Taylor Swift.

KEVIN
Bruh, seriously? You're bumming me
out.

RUSS
Let's get moving.

They continue down a path along the river and come across an abandoned minivan. The front of the van is bottomed out with front tires hanging just over the 30-foot-high sloped edge that goes down to the river. They stop and look at it.

JEREMY
Wow, it looks like they tried to
drive it off the edge.

KEVIN
This is my lucky day.

Kevin walks toward the car door, but Russ stops him.

RUSS
Hey, watch where you walk... Guys,
look at this plant.

As the team walks toward Russ, he points to stinging nettle plants by the front of the van doors.

RUSS (CONT'D)
That's a stinging nettle. See those
needle-like hairs on their leaves?
If you touch them, it will burn - I
mean burn. They're common near
creeks, so watch out.

Kevin walks to the back of the van, avoiding the nettles, and opens the back hatch.

JEREMY
You better not go in there.

KEVIN
Shut up.

Kevin climbs over the back seat and plops down. The van shifts slightly. He reaches for the dashboard. He fiddles around for a bit, then he struggles to get back. His waist is stuck between the seats, and his foot cannot get past the headrest of the back seat. The van moves forward a little.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hey guys, can you give me a hand?
I'm kind of stuck, and I don't want
to shift my weight too much.

JEREMY

I told you.

Russ and Mike reach into the van and grab his feet.

KEVIN

Just pull me out.

RUSS

Damn Kevin, help us out. You're all
dead weight.

KEVIN

I'm trying!

JAVON

I'll get him out.

Javon grabs Kevin's feet and pulls as Kevin wiggles. The van shifts and moves closer to the edge of the cliff.

KEVIN

Just pull me!

As Javon holds his legs, the van slides down the cliff. Javon stumbles back, pulling off Kevin's jogging pants. On his back, Javon stares at the jogging pants with a panicked look on his face.

JAVON

Kevin!

The team watches the van tumble down to the river.

MIKE

Holy shit!

Javon stands up and sees Kevin on the ground laughing in his tighty-whities. Javon angrily tosses the jogging pants at him. Kevin stands and puts on his jogging pants.

KEVIN

Oh, man, what a rush! Thanks guys!

JEREMY
Was it worth it?

Kevin holds out his hand and reveals a knob from the radio.

KEVIN
Hell yes, it was! The volume knob
on my van's stereo broke off and is
stuck on low. Now I can jam!

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Coach Kelsey and Brian watch the guys come back.

BRIAN
They ran pretty quickly.

The guys run back to the gym all energetic and smiling. Coach Kelsey looks at his watch.

COACH KELSEY
Yeah, they're looking good.

The guys run up to Coach Kelsey and Brian.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Hey guys, did you go all the way to
Red Run?

RUSS
Yeah, we went there and back.

BRIAN
That was an incredible pace, guys.

COACH KELSEY
I'm glad you're having fun. I told
you it's about camaraderie.

JEREMY
It was fun! We saw a deer and...

Kevin grabs Jeremy's arm.

RUSS
We got to know each other better.

The guys stretch.

COACH KELSEY
That's great, bonding helps you run
like a team. This week, we have a
meet against Ford High.
(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
We should do much better. I don't
think they won a meet last year.

Brian scrolls down his tablet screen.

BRIAN
They only had one win last year...
against us.

COACH KELSEY
Okay, they're rebuilding like us.
Remember, it takes time, and it
won't happen overnight. Let's just
try to get personal records - PRs.

BRIAN
I've got all the times from last
meet. I'll chart our progress.

COACH KELSEY
We'll do some speed work tomorrow.
Great run today, guys.

The guys walk very enthusiastically to the building, and Jen
walks toward Coach Kelsey.

JEN
Hey, what are you giving them? I've
never seen the boys' team look so
enthusiastic.

COACH KELSEY
I know. It looks like they're
enjoying themselves.

JEN
Well, keep up the good work.

COACH KELSEY
Thanks Jen.

Coach Kelsey and the team enter the locker room.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The guys gather around Coach Kelsey as he opens a box.

COACH KELSEY
Hey, before you guys head out, I
have your new uniforms.

Coach Kelsey hands out the uniforms and sees an envelope. He
opens it and pulls out a note. Coach Kelsey reads the note.

MRS. EVANS (V.O.)
Sorry about our incident. I sent
Principal Donovan a letter stating
you did nothing wrong. Bethany.

COACH KELSEY
Someone owed me a favor. New
uniforms for a new start.

EXT. FORD HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

The boys' cross-country race is halfway completed. A Ford runner is in first, followed by Russ and Mike, with Javy close behind. The runners pass by Coach Kelsey, who is watching from the edge of the course. Mike notices Leslie and the girls' team cheering for the guys.

COACH KELSEY
Good job, guys!

RUSS
(to Mike, breathing
heavily)
We need to reel him in.

Javy runs behind a Ford runner. The Ford runner slows down, and Javy slows down with him.

COACH KELSEY
Javy, pick up the pace! You can
pass him.

Javy speeds up and passes the Ford runner. Mike and Russ catch up to the race leader. Javy is close behind.

MIKE
Now, let's get him.

The guys pick up the pace and slowly gain ground on the Ford runner. Puneet, Kevin, and Jeremy are in a group with four Ford runners. And trailing, Javon is with two Ford runners.

COACH KELSEY
They're gaining on him. We have a
chance.

The runners make their way to the final stretch as the Ford fans cheer. The Ford runner notices his lead is shrinking and speeds up.

MIKE
(to himself)
Time to kick.

The guys sprint toward the finish line. Mike steadily closes the gap on the Ford runner ahead. Russ and Javy trail slightly behind. Mike catches up, but the Ford runner just edges him out, crossing the line first, followed closely by Mike, Russ, and Javy. Behind them, a tightly packed group of runners jostles forward. The four Ford runners launch their final kick, pulling away from the Canterbury team and finishing together. Puneet, Jeremy, and Kevin follow next. Javon is last, trailing two Ford runners entering the final stretch. Then, with a burst of speed, Javon catches both just before the finish. The team quickly gathers around Coach Kelsey and Brian, catching their breath.

COACH KELSEY

Great running, guys!

PUNEET

Did we win the meet?

BRIAN

They have 27 and we have... 28.

KEVIN

Awesome!

JEREMY

Duh, low score wins.

KEVIN

Damn!

Kevin glares at Jeremy. Brian checks his iPad.

BRIAN

We did better than last week. I think everyone got PRs. Russ, this was your fastest time based on last year's records. Mike, I don't have your times.

MIKE

No, it was NOT my PR. We would have won if I had beaten that guy.

COACH KELSEY

Mike, you did great. It was your first meet of the year, so give yourself a break. Okay, team, let's head to the bus.

Brian walks toward the bus next to Puneet and Coach Kelsey.

BRIAN

Hey Puneet, I was reviewing video and noticed that you always slow down in the middle of the race but pick it back up at the end.

PUNEET

I keep thinking I need to conserve my energy to finish the race.

COACH KELSEY

You know you can finish the race, right?

PUNEET

Yes, but my mind keeps telling me to slow down.

COACH KELSEY

You need to think about something else. How about doing a math problem in your head?

PUNEET

Oh, that sounds like fun.

COACH KELSEY

Some long division or something should keep your mind occupied.

PUNEET

I'll give it a try. Thanks Coach.

Puneet looks at Brian.

PUNEET (CONT'D)

I mean coaches.

Brian smiles, and Coach Kelsey pats Brian's back. As the boys and the girls' teams walk to the bus, Leslie runs up to Mike.

LESLIE

Hey Mike, you did great!

MIKE

Yeah, but I should have beaten that guy.

LESLIE

Well, you looked good out there. And you ran well too.

Leslie smiles as she enters the bus. Mike stops and thinks about what she just said. Then continues onto the bus.

EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING (ESTABLISHING)

Kids are entering the school.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - MORNING

Coach Kelsey stands at his desk on speaker phone.

COACH KELSEY

Don, hey, it's David Kelsey.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (V.O.)

Hey David, how are you?

COACH KELSEY

I'm fine. Hey, did you get a letter from Bethany Evans?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (V.O.)

Um, yes, I did. She said everything was consensual.

COACH KELSEY

See, there you go. It was all a mistake. So, will I be able to come back now?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (V.O.)

Well, it's not that easy. First, we do not currently have a teaching position available. Second, we will need the superintendent's approval.

COACH KELSEY

Approval? You have the letter.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (V.O.)

Yes, but consensual or not, it was not appropriate at the school.

COACH KELSEY

It wasn't consensual. I mean, I did not consent!

Coach Kelsey sits in his chair.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN (V.O.)

Okay, okay, if a position opens up, I will talk to the superintendent.

COACH KELSEY

Thanks Don.

INT. COACH KELSEY'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Coach Kelsey writes the word "teamwork" on the whiteboard.

COACH KELSEY
Throughout history, we have
achieved some remarkable milestones
through teamwork. Can anyone give
us an example?

A student raises his hand.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Jonathan.

JONATHAN
It took teamwork for a football
team to win a championship.

COACH KELSEY
Well, yes, it takes a team effort
for any sports team to win a
championship. But I'm thinking
about other achievements in our
history.

Coach Kelsey looks around, but it's quiet.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
What about something that happened
in 1969? Apollo 11?

Leslie raises her hand.

LESLIE
We landed on the moon.

COACH KELSEY
Yes! We landed on the moon. It took
the effort of many people to make
this happen. How many people do you
think it took to get us on the
moon?

STUDENT
One thousand?

COACH KELSEY
Way more than that.

STUDENT
One hundred thousand.

COACH KELSEY

Closer. It took an estimated 400,000 people to do their jobs so that could happen. So, we all know that Neil Armstrong was the first to step on the surface of the moon, but remember, it took a huge team to pull it off.

The bell rings and the students get up to leave. Mike remains seated.

LESLIE

You're in deep thought.

MIKE

Oh, no, I was thinking about what Coach said. He always says cross-country is a team sport.

LESLIE

Well, I think that if you don't get moving, you'll be late for biology class.

MIKE

True. You'd be a great teammate.

LESLIE

Thank you, Mike.

MIKE

We could use you. You'd definitely be on the varsity team.

LESLIE

What? On the guys' team?

MIKE

I'm joking. But you'd definitely be the cutest on the team.

LESLIE

Maybe the second cutest. Bye Mike.

Leslie leaves for her next class as Mike stands up.

EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

It's raining hard.

INT. COACHES' OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Coach Kelsey is at his desk. A water leak above his head drips onto his desk. He places a wastebasket on his desk to catch the drips. The guys crowd around the office door.

JEREMY

Is practice cancelled?

KEVIN

Are you afraid of a little rain?

COACH KELSEY

Well, like they say, a bit of rain wouldn't kill you, but a little lightning can. We don't run when there's lightning.

A thunderbolt crashes. Jeremy is startled and jumps.

JAVON

Should we lift weights today?

COACH KELSEY

Yes, that's one thing we will do. We want to be strong but not bulky. I have something I want you to do first. Remember, I said running is 10% physical and 90% mental.

INT. GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

The guys are lined up in front of Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, guys, we're going to do some mental exercises.

Brian hands out eye masks to each of the guys.

KEVIN

Nice, I could use a nap.

COACH KELSEY

No napping. We're going to run a 5K today, but we're going to do it mentally.

PUNEET

I do mental exercises when I run - math problems in my head to get my mind off running.

KEVIN

Nerd.

COACH KELSEY

I want you to visualize running on our course. Brian has been analyzing your running and will provide you with some areas to work on. So, lie down, get comfortable, and put on your eye masks.

The guys get situated on the gym mats and put on their eye masks.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Okay, visualize. We're at the starting line with your rival team, and the starting gun blasts. Get a pace going among the other runners. What do you see?

The girls' cross-country team walks in and stops to watch the guys on the floor.

KEVIN

I see myself kicking Jeremy's ass.

JEREMY

Stop looking at my ass.

The girls laugh.

MIKE

Did I hear girls?

LESLIE

(in a sexy voice)
In your dreams, Mike.

The girls continue to walk by. Mike pulls up the mask and smiles. Brian walks in front of Russ and Mike.

BRIAN

The rival team has five runners in front. Mike and Russ start to reel them in. Your speed has picked up, and you're gaining on them. Now you both run past all of them.

Brian walks toward Javy.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Javy, you tend to run behind your opponents, and if they slow down, you follow suit. You need to build confidence to pass them. It's time to come out of your shell and leave him in your dust.

KEVIN

Unleash the beast!

Brian walks toward Puneet.

BRIAN

Puneet, it's time to catch up to Javy. You see him wave for you to catch up. You pick up the pace—no need to conserve your energy.

Brian walks toward Jeremy and Kevin.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Jeremy, you are not afraid of tiring, so keep up your pace. Kevin, don't let Jeremy pull away.

KEVIN

He'd better run from me.

BRIAN

Javon, you are entering your second mile, and you're full of energy.

Jen enters the gym and walks over to Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, you have two more laps. Your opponents have just passed you. Now it's your turn to reel them in, and don't let them pass.

JEN

(to Kelsey)

Interesting. What's going on?

COACH KELSEY

It's raining, so I thought I would have them do some mental training. If they can visualize overcoming a struggle, it will give them the confidence to do it in reality.

JEN

Does it work?

COACH KELSEY

I think so. When I was a kid, I was very shy. I had no confidence, especially when talking to girls.

JEN

Wait, you were shy? Really? That's hard to believe.

COACH KELSEY

No, really, I was very shy. I remember that I really wanted to talk to this girl, but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. Then a wise man, my cross-country coach, told me to visualize the conversation. So I went over it again and again. Then I felt confident, so I talked to her.

JEN

How'd it go?

COACH KELSEY

Oh, it went horribly. I kept talking about something, and she had no interest. She was confused and eventually told me to go away.

Jen laughs.

JEN

All that preparation for nothing.

COACH KELSEY

No, after that day, I had the confidence to strike up a conversation with anyone. I know these kids might not be able to execute what they're visualizing right away, but if they don't see themselves doing it, they might never try.

Jeremy moves his legs and accidentally kicks Kevin.

KEVIN

Was that you shit squirt?

Kevin moves his legs to get closer to him.

COACH KELSEY

Guys, this is a mental exercise, not physical.

JEREMY

Sorry, I was just starting my kick.

KEVIN

I'm gonna kick your ass if you do it again.

JEN

(as she walks away)

You are doing a great job with these kids. I admire your dedication.

Javon has his hands cupped, as if he is holding something, and puts it toward his mouth.

BRIAN

Javon, what the heck are you doing?

JAVON

Eating a turkey bacon sub for energy.

BRIAN

Oh, I think you should stop that for multiple reasons.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, guys, one more lap.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON

The guys gather around Coach Kelsey, ready to go home.

COACH KELSEY

Listen up, tomorrow we have a tri-meet. So, we must be prepared. Get a good night's sleep.

PUNEET

What's a tri-meet?

JAVON

It's what I always tell my sister.

KEVIN

What the what? That's sick, bruh!

JAVON

She is a vegan. You're not right.

BRIAN

We're competing against two schools at the same time, so three teams race together, but it's scored as individual races. Tomorrow we've got Eisenhower and Lincoln. Eisenhower has a very strong team.

COACH KELSEY

Eisenhower's runners will not affect our score against Lincoln. Just focus on passing the Lincoln runners, and if you pass an Eisenhower runner, even better.

All the guys but Mike leave the locker room. Mike sits on a locker room bench, staring at his phone, which displays unanswered texts from Allison.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

One more thing, you guys have the ability to win. Don't forget that.

Coach Kelsey sits down next to Mike as the rest leave.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Doing okay, Mike?

MIKE

Everything changed when my dad left us. Things were great at Stevenson.

COACH KELSEY

It's not too bad here, really.

MIKE

My girlfriend thinks I'm a loser.

COACH KELSEY

You know, you've got to fight to get what you want, but when it comes to new relationships, if you keep needing to fight, then the prize might not be worth it. Remember, Mike, you're a winner.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

The guys are in the middle of the tri-meet race. Jen walks up to Coach Kelsey and Brian, who are watching the runners.

COACH KELSEY
Congrats on the double victory. The girls looked great out there.

JEN
Thanks, the girls ran well today. How are the guys doing?

COACH KELSEY
Um, not too great.

Russ slows down and is passed by Javy. Javy waves for Russ to speed up, but he does not, and runners continue to pass him.

BRIAN
It's not looking good, Coach.

The Eisenhower runners take first and second place. Mike finishes third, followed by two Lincoln runners in fourth and fifth. Eisenhower and Lincoln runners fill the next five spots. Puneet sprints to the finish, overtaking a Lincoln runner. Then Russ and the rest of the team cross the line. The team quickly gathers around Coach Kelsey and Brian.

COACH KELSEY
We had a tough one today, but you guys did okay.

RUSS
I sucked.

COACH KELSEY
You didn't suck. You went out on a blistering pace, and it caught up to you later in the race. Remember, we need to dictate the pace.

BRIAN
Good news, we had some PRs today. Javy, Puneet, Jeremy, Kevin, and Javon all had their best times.

The guys congratulate each other. Mike sees Leslie and Imelda walking back toward the school. He jogs over to them.

MIKE
Hey Leslie, nice run today.

Leslie and Imelda stop.

LESLIE
Thanks.

IMELDA
I'll see ya tomorrow.

Imelda smiles at them as she leaves.

LESLIE
Tough loss for you guys, those were
some pretty good teams.

MIKE
Yeah, but we're improving. Hey, I
was gonna ask you something.

A car horn honks, and they both look at the parking lot. A
young guy in the car waves for Leslie to come.

LESLIE
Oh, um, that's my ride. What did
you want to ask me?

MIKE
Nothing... nothing important. I'll
see you tomorrow.

Mike watches Leslie run to the car. She looks very excited to
tell the guy that she won her meet. Mike pulls out his phone
and looks down at Allison's name, pauses, then taps her name
and puts the phone to his ear.

ALLISON
Mike, please...

Mike interrupts her.

MIKE
Wait, Allison, um, I miss you. I've
been really lucky to have dated
you. I don't want it to end.

ALLISON
Mike, it just hasn't been the same
since you moved.

MIKE
Just give me a chance. We can make
it work.

ALLISON
I don't know, Mike. I've got to go.

Mike stares at the phone.

INT. STEVENSON'S TEACHERS LOUNGE - MORNING

Gabe sits at a table drinking coffee when Laura walks by him holding a cup of coffee. Gabe stands up.

GABE

Hi Laura.

LAURA

Oh hey Gabe. How's the cross-country team doing?

GABE

We're undefeated.

LAURA

That's great.

GABE

Kelsey hasn't won a meet yet at Canterbury.

LAURA

Yeah, I don't think Canterbury won a meet the whole time I taught there. If you see him again, tell him I'm rooting for him.

GABE

Um, we run against them in a couple of weeks.

As Laura walks out of the room, Gabe sits down with an angry look on his face.

INT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Coach Kelsey walks over to the team. The team looks sad as they stretch.

COACH KELSEY

Guys, I have a different workout for you today. Where's Russ?

BRIAN

He quit. He gave me his uniform.

COACH KELSEY

Quit? Why would he quit? Because he had a rough meet?

PUNEET

Coach, we'll be short a runner for the meets.

JAVON

Are we disbanding the team? Cuz, I do not want to - I've lost 15 pounds and feel great.

JEREMY

There goes Kevin's parking pass.

KEVIN

Nope, we're not disbanding. Brian will need to fill in.

BRIAN

Anything for the team, but we really need to recruit someone.

COACH KELSEY

Look, we're not disbanding the team. I know we have lost a few meets in a row.

BRIAN

Six.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, several. But remember, we're improving. If we were to run against some of those schools now, I know we would win. I'll talk to Russ tomorrow. Alright, team, today we're going to do fartleks.

KEVIN

What? Um, I'm not licking no farts.

COACH KELSEY

Fartlek is a training style. It's Swedish for speed play.

BRIAN

You run hard for a minute or two, and then you run easy for a minute or two. Then repeat.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, let's head to the track.

MIKE

Do we have to run on the track? It gets so boring running in circles.

COACH KELSEY

I guess you can run on the
sidewalks. Do a four-mile loop...
Mike, you've done these at
Stevenson, so take the lead.

MIKE

Got it, Coach.

The guys run toward the street. They get to the street, and
Mike stops. The rest of the team stops too.

PUNEET

I thought we'd pick up the pace?

MIKE

We need Russ back. Anyone know
where he lives?

JAVY

He's not home.

MIKE

Then where is he?

JAVY

He told me in math class that he
was quitting to help out his father
at his shop after school.

MIKE

His shop? Where is it?

JAVY

I'm not sure. It's Hanks Nursery.

JEREMY

He's babysitting?

JAVON

It's a garden center off Mound
Road. I know how to get there.

MIKE

Damn, that's probably too far to
run there and back.

KEVIN

Yeah, but it's not too far to
drive. Let's go.

The guys turn around and run back to the school.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The guys race to Kevin's van. Javon gets into the front while Kevin opens the back doors of the van. The back of the van was gutted with no seats. Folded camp chairs are in the back.

KEVIN

I'm still working on the interior.

JEREMY

Did you even start?

MIKE

Just get in.

KEVIN

You can use the camp chairs.

INT. KEVIN'S VAN - AFTERNOON

The guys climb into the unfinished back of the van. They unfold camp chairs and settle in. Kevin starts the van and peels out of the parking lot. He takes a sharp turn onto the street, sending the chairs sliding sideways. The guys laugh, gripping their chairs tightly as they try to stay balanced.

KEVIN

Time for some driving music.

Kevin turns on some heavy metal music and cranks up the volume. Javy jams to the music.

JAVY

What are we listening to?

KEVIN

It's speed metal, bruh. Better than your Taylor Swift shit. When I crank this up, I feel the need for speed!

He floors it, and the guys flip backwards out of the chairs.

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

Coach Kelsey sees Jen and walks toward her.

COACH KELSEY

Hey Jen, got a minute?

JEN

Sure, I'm just waiting for the girls to come back from their run.

They take a seat at the bottom row of the bleachers.

COACH KELSEY

You've been at Canterbury a while, you must like it here, then, huh?

JEN

Well, yeah.

COACH KELSEY

So you never thought of leaving?

JEN

No, not really. I enjoy teaching these kids. It can be challenging, but I love it. Why do you ask?

COACH KELSEY

So when they placed me here, they said I could get my old position back next year. All I have to do is show that I'm trying my best here.

JEN

I think you are.

COACH KELSEY

Thanks, but there was this lame condition to win at least one meet, you know, break the losing streak here. And we haven't won any.

JEN

Hmm, there are only a few meets left. Can you do it?

COACH KELSEY

After the invitational, we have Adams High and then Stevenson. So it will be tough. But we could pull off a miracle.

JEN

So if you win one, then you're gone next year?

COACH KELSEY

That was the plan. The facilities are excellent there, and I can walk to work.

(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
And of course, I can return to the
championship program I built before
Gabe destroys it.

JEN
Well, before you leave, we should
get a drink after work or
something.

Brian waits for Coach Kelsey at the side of the bleachers and
listens to the conversation. He shakes his head and goes back
into the locker room.

COACH KELSEY
Oh, um, you're great and all, but I
don't date coworkers anymore.

JEN
Oh-sorry, I didn't mean it like
that. I just don't have many
friends here. Most teachers don't
stick around—they usually leave
after a year. It's actually been
really refreshing having you here.

COACH KELSEY
Oh, don't be sorry. It's just that
I'm probably staying here.

JEN
So you're not leaving?

COACH KELSEY
I don't think so. I like it here. I
mean, Stevenson was great, but I'm
liking this place too. The kids on
the team act like a team. And the
kids in the classroom seem to be
actually interested in what I'm
saying. Sure, there are those kids
who like to act stupid.

INT. KEVIN'S VAN - AFTERNOON

Kevin races down the street. The guys in the back are trying
to hang on as Kevin swerves to pass traffic.

JAVON
Hank's Nursery is on the left.

He turns into the parking lot and hits the brakes, causing
the guys to fly into the front of the van. They race out of
the van and enter the store.

INT. HANK'S NURSERY - DAY

The shop is empty of customers. They see Russ at the counter.

MIKE

Russ.

Russ looks confused when he sees the guys.

RUSS

What are you guys doing here?

MIKE

What are you doing here? You're missing practice.

RUSS

No, I quit the team.

MIKE

We need you back. Right guys?

All the guys agree.

RUSS

Look, my dad needs me to work the counter.

MR. HANKS, a tall man in his 50s, enters from the back room.

MR. HANKS

Hey Russ, who are your friends?

RUSS

These are the guys on the cross-country team.

JEREMY

We're trying to get him to come back to the team.

MR. HANKS

Do you want to go back, Russ? You told me you weren't interested in running anymore.

RUSS

I know you and Mom work hard, and I wanted to help out. I feel guilty, especially since our team wasn't winning anyway. It's not like running is gonna get me a scholarship or anything.

MR. HANKS

Russ, you shouldn't feel guilty.
And it's not just about winning.
Okay, maybe you won't get a
scholarship, most won't. But
college applications ask for
extracurricular activities.

PUNEET

Team sports do look great on
college applications.

RUSS

What about the shop, Dad?

MR. HANKS

You already helped during our busy
season. Does it look like I need
your help now?

RUSS

Um, no, not really.

MR. HANKS

Then get out of here.

Russ walks from behind the counter.

RUSS

Thanks Dad! Okay, guys I will come
back to the team on one condition,
we kick some butt!

The guys cheer as they walk out of the shop.

INT. KEVIN'S VAN - AFTERNOON

As they approach the school, they see that traffic is slowed.
They drive down the residential street next to Canterbury
High and see several parade floats heading to the school.

KEVIN

What's all this?

JAVON

Oh, I forgot it's homecoming today.

A convertible with its top down is following the last float.

JEREMY

Hey, isn't that the Stevenson idiot
in the convertible?

JAVON

We do have a football game against Stevenson. Um, is he trying to be part of our parade?

Mike looks out the window and sees Todd and Kyle sitting on top of the doors and Allison sitting on top of the back seat, waving. Todd reaches with his foot to press the gas pedal.

TODD

Look at these idiots cheering us on like we're royalty!

Kevin gets closer to Todd's car and passes it.

MIKE

Wait, that's my girlfriend... or ex-girlfriend, I guess, I don't know, she's been ignoring me.

Kevin squeezes the van between the last float and Todd's convertible. Todd honks his horn. Kevin sticks his head out the window and flips him off.

TODD

That's those Canterbury cross-country losers... what a piece of shit van.

Todd honks his horn repeatedly.

KEVIN

Time to do our fart licks, boys.
Run fast...

Kevin shifts the van into neutral and lets it coast. Then he revs the engine hard, sending a thick plume of black smoke billowing from the tailpipe, right into the convertible behind them. Todd, Kyle, and Allison cough and frantically wave their hands in front of their faces, trying to escape the choking cloud.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

...then run slow.

Kevin eases off the gas, slowing the van until it backfires loudly. Todd's car swerves wildly, clipping the curb, and Todd tumbles out onto the grass. Kyle grabs the wheel as Todd scrambles after the car. He hops in, pulls over, and the guys burst out laughing while Kevin keeps trailing the floats toward the school parking lot.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The guys exit the van and see Coach Kelsey and Brian waiting for them just outside the gym. They walk up to Coach Kelsey.

JEREMY

Russ is back.

COACH KELSEY

It's good to see you back, Russ.
Okay, guys, tomorrow is the
Centerline Invitational. The bus
leaves at 8:15, so don't be late.

The guys head to the locker room except Russ.

RUSS

Sorry for leaving the team, Coach.

COACH KELSEY

You didn't even miss a practice.
So, I don't think that qualifies as
leaving. I know last meet was
rough. We all have ups and downs.
I'm just glad you're back. Your
teammates, your friends, count on
you as their leader.

RUSS

Yeah, I felt guilty for not helping
my dad. I didn't want to let him
down. But when the guys showed up
today, um, I realized that I didn't
want to let them down either.

COACH KELSEY

Just do your best and you won't let
anyone down.

RUSS

Thanks Coach.

Coach Kelsey pats Russ's back, and they walk to the school.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The guys are waiting for their rides near the parking lot.
Jeremy's mother, MRS. O'BRIEN, a gorgeous 30-year-old woman,
arrives, gets out of the car, and waves. Jeremy runs to her.
She hugs him, and his head is buried in her cleavage. The
guys stare at her.

KEVIN
Damn, look at her.

PUNEET
You should go over there... run
erect!

The guys laugh. Leslie and Imelda walk toward the football stands and stop next to Mike.

LESLIE
Hey Mike, are you going to the
football game?

MIKE
Hi Leslie. Um, are you?

LESLIE
Yeah, we made a promise to support
the cheerleaders, and they will
cheer at one of our meets.

Kevin puts his arms on Russ and Mike's shoulders and forces them to walk with the girls toward the stands.

KEVIN
Yes, we're going.

They enter the stadium and make their way toward the rest of the girls' cross-country team seated in the bleachers. In the visitors' section, Allison spots Mike walking alongside Leslie. Jealousy flashes across her face, and she stands up and quickly approaches him. As the girls settle in their seats, Mike notices Allison waving at him. After a brief pause, he walks over to her.

MIKE
What are you doing here?

ALLISON
To watch the game, of course. I was
going to text you, but, um, ah, I
knew you had practice, right?

Allison glances over Mike's shoulder and spots Leslie watching them. Without hesitation, she grabs Mike and kisses him hard. Mike grins as they sit down together. Across the stadium, Leslie stands and walks away. Noticing this, Allison quickly rises. Her eyes shift to the visitors' section, where she sees Todd talking to another girl.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
I'd better get to the visitor's
side.

MIKE

Let's go.

ALLISON

Um, you should stay with your school. Let's get together tomorrow night. Text me. We can go to Dino's for dinner.

Allison heads toward the visitors' section. Mike sulks, glancing at the empty spot where Leslie had been sitting—she's gone. In the stands, cheerleaders toss mini souvenir footballs into the crowd. Kevin and Russ dive for the same one and wrestle over it, drawing laughs. Mike looks back toward the visitors' section and sees Allison approaching Todd. Todd lifts her playfully, swinging her as if to throw her. They both laugh as he sets her down. Mike just shakes his head.

EXT. CENTERLINE PARKING LOT - DAY

Teams get off the buses, and several are warming up. The Stevenson team walks to the field, and Todd notices the Canterbury team exiting their bus.

TODD

What do we have here? It looks like Canterbury was invited. I think we need to drag those losers.

The Canterbury teams walk to the field.

COACH KELSEY

I hope everyone brought their spikes. It rained all night, so it's going to be wet out there.

BRIAN

The course is fast here at the Centerline Invitational. It's a good opportunity to get PRs.

EXT. CENTERLINE COURSE - DAY

Mike jogs up to Leslie as the teams head to the field.

MIKE

Hey Leslie, I lost you at the game.

LESLIE

Yeah, sorry, I wasn't feeling great, so I left.

(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)
I saw you were with Allison, so I
didn't think you'd miss me.

MIKE
Wait, you know Allison?

LESLIE
Yeah, um, she was my best friend
all through elementary school. She
moved, and we haven't talked since.

MIKE
Yeah, she's been ignoring me for
the most part since I moved. You
should have said hi to her.

LESLIE
She could've walked over to me. She
looked straight at me when she
kissed you. But it doesn't matter,
she turned into a two-faced snake
bitch.

MIKE
Hey now.

LESLIE
Okay, that might be a little harsh,
but before she moved, she got
jealous over some guy who liked me.
She made up lies and turned my
friends against me.

MIKE
Wow, that's shitty. I didn't know
she could be like that, sorry.

LESLIE
No worries, my true friends figured
her out. Just be careful, Mike.
She's very sus.

CUT TO:

Coach Kelsey and Brian are on the sidelines of the course
discussing the race.

COACH KELSEY
Brian, can you call out the mile
splits to the guys, and I'll call
out the 2-mile splits? We can meet
at the finish line.

BRIAN
(sarcastically)
Whatever you want. Are you sure
you'll be there at the finish?

COACH KELSEY
(with a questioning gaze)
Yes, we'll meet at the finish line.

Brian walks away toward the mile marker cone. Coach Kelsey walks by the Stevenson team.

GABE
Hey Kelsey, only two meets left.

COACH KELSEY
We're going to win. I guarantee it.

GABE
Oh, really, care to bet on it? The
loser leaves the district.

COACH KELSEY
Leave the district, why?

GABE
I just don't want to see or hear
about you anymore... afraid your
pathetic team won't win?

COACH KELSEY
Oh, we're going to win, you're on.

GABE
It's a bet, no backing out! Um, you
know your final two meets are
against us and Adams. And their
only loss was against us... Oh, and
when you lose, you better leave or
I'll make your life hell.

Gabe laughs as Coach Kelsey walks away.

EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY

The ground is soaked, with puddles scattered across the course. The guys line up, and the race begins. Mike and Javon burst out quickly, with Todd spotting them and closing the gap. Javy, Russ, and Puneet also get off to a strong start. The large field of runners stretches out as the race progresses. Puneet's glasses squeak and fog up, and he accidentally bumps into Russ.

PUNEET

Sorry.

A Stevenson runner gets next to Puneet and purposely bumps him. Puneet runs off course into the woods as his foggy glasses squeak, and he crashes into some bushes. The Stevenson runner turns his head and laughs. Brian looks at his timer on his tablet as Mike runs by.

BRIAN

5:07, 5:08, 5:09.

Two Stevenson runners approach Javy and Javon. They cut in front of them at a large puddle just to create a huge splash that soaks Javy and Javon. Jeremy is a bit ahead of Kevin when a Stevenson runner approaches and bumps Jeremy into a group of runners next to them, causing them all to fall.

KEVIN

Oh, hell no.

Kevin chases down the Stevenson runner. Just as Kevin catches up, the runner suddenly stops and sticks out his leg, tripping Kevin, who slides headfirst through a puddle. Kevin scrambles up, drenched and dripping. Up front, five runners—including Todd—lead the pack. Mike passes Coach Kelsey on the sidelines.

COACH KELSEY

Great pace, Mike. Reel 'em in!

Mike locks in on the pack ahead. He closes his eyes briefly, visualizing himself surging past them. Then he kicks. One by one, Mike overtakes them—until only Todd remains. Just before the finish, Todd throws his arms up in celebration—too soon. Mike blazes past him and crosses the line first. Todd stares in disbelief. Coach Kelsey rushes to the finish, pumping his fist in the air.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Yes! Way to go, Mike!

The other runners keep crossing the finish line. Kevin, soaked and gasping for air, pushes toward the end. With a running nose, he plugs one nostril, turns his head, and blows—sending a snot rocket straight onto the runner behind him. The team finishes up and quickly gathers around Coach Kelsey and Brian.

EXT. WINNER'S PODIUM - DAY

The teams gather around the winner's podium. Mike, Todd, and another runner get their medals.

Todd looks very angry as he receives his second-place medal. They get down, and the Canterbury team congratulates Mike. Leslie approaches.

LESLIE
Congratulations! That was awesome!

MIKE
Thanks Leslie.

The loudspeaker makes a screeching noise.

ANNOUNCER
Now for the team results. The
winner of the boys' varsity race is
Stevenson High.

The crowd cheers. Gabe accepts the trophy and sees Coach Kelsey. Gabe smirks and nods toward Coach Kelsey as he hands the trophy to Todd, who raises it to show everyone.

BRIAN
According to my calculations, we
came in 6th overall.

COACH KELSEY
Great showing, guys. Sixth place is
really good. There were lots of
great teams here today. You guys
just proved that you can succeed,
and we have a good chance of
winning next week.

BRIAN
(under his breath)
I'm sure you will like that.

COACH KELSEY
Okay, let's get to the bus.

The team walks to the bus, as do the other teams.

LESLIE
Bye Mike.

MIKE
You're not going on the bus?

LESLIE
No, I have to do a family thing
this afternoon. My brother is
picking me up.

Mike watches Leslie go to the car and realizes that her brother is the same guy who picked her up from school. Mike smiles as he gets on the bus.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

The kids get seated. Kevin squirms in his seat.

KEVIN

My damn underwear is soaking wet,
it feels like I freaking sharted.

Covering himself with his jacket, Kevin removes his wet underwear. The Canterbury bus is parked next to the Stevenson bus. Todd has his head out the window, holding their trophy.

TODD

Hey Canterbury! Remember this in
your dreams tonight!

Todd waves the trophy. As the bus starts to move, Kevin throws his wet underwear out the window. It hits Todd in the face, which causes him to drop the trophy onto the pavement.

KEVIN

You're gonna have some wet dreams
about this tonight, a-hole!

The kids roar in laughter as the bus runs over the trophy.

EXT. CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON (ESTABLISHING)

An aerial view of the high school reveals the school and its athletic fields.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Coach Kelsey walks and smiles down the hallway and is approached by Jen.

JEN

Hey Kelsey, are you all prepped for
the meet today?

COACH KELSEY

Yep. I'm really confident today.

JEN

Oh, really now.

COACH KELSEY

Yes. The guys have been running great in practice, and the Adams coach said that their team has been struck with the flu bug and will not be running a boys' JV race.

JEN

You don't even have a JV team.

COACH KELSEY

That's right. No junior varsity race because half of their varsity team is out. So we have a very good chance of winning.

JEN

(as she walks away)

Okay, good luck. Oh, I want to tell you that I was actually using your visualization technique, and the Adams boys won.

COACH KELSEY

Why would you do that?

JEN

I don't know, maybe I'd like to make sure you stay here.

Jen puts her fingers to her temples and closes her eyes as she walks. Coach Kelsey stops, shakes his head, and smiles.

INT. COACH'S OFFICE - DAY

The coach is on the phone at his desk.

COACH KELSEY

Don, I got your message. What's up?

INT. PRINCIPAL DONOVAN'S OFFICE

Principal Donovan is seated at his desk on speaker phone.

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN

Hi David, good news. Janet Price is taking maternity leave, but has indicated that she will not be returning for the rest of the year. I can speak with the superintendent to arrange for your transfer.

COACH KELSEY (V.O.)
Oh, wow, is this for real?

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Yes, I just need approval.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

COACH KELSEY
You know, I think I just need to finish what I started here. And today, we should easily get our win and satisfy the superintendent anyway. Thanks for thinking of me.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

PRINCIPAL DONOVAN
Sure, um, no problem. Take care, David.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Coach Kelsey has a huge smile on his face as he walks to the office door. He tries to open it, but it's stuck. His smile disappears as he twists the knob vigorously and pounds on the door until it finally opens.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

The team is huddled together outside, dressed for the meet and wearing their warm-up jackets.

RUSS
Hey Brian, how's our competition?

BRIAN
(in a snarky voice)
I don't know. Does it matter?

RUSS
Geez, just asking.

BRIAN
Hey, sorry, I wasn't gonna say anything because I love this team.

RUSS
What is it?

MIKE

Yeah, what's going on?

BRIAN

Coach is leaving us.

PUNEET

Our meet is here today? Where would he go?

BRIAN

After the season, he is going back to Stevenson.

The guys laugh.

KEVIN

Yeah, right, those guys are a-holes. He wouldn't go back there.

BRIAN

Yes, he is. I heard him talking to Coach Jen. He was transferred here due to an incident, and he will be moving back after this year.

RUSS

Wow, what a dick move. After he convinced me to stay on the team.

BRIAN

Yeah, he had a condition that he had to win just one meet and break the losing streak here.

JEREMY

Well, we haven't won any.

BRIAN

I know, but we're running against Adams today, and half their varsity team is out with the flu. Based on my calculations, we easily win. The last meet is against Stevenson at their course. Being real, I doubt that we win that one.

RUSS

Screw it, I'll just quit and we'll not have enough runners.

BRIAN

I'm sure Adams wouldn't mind since they're missing half their team.

KEVIN
I'll just go home.

JEREMY
What about your parking pass?

KEVIN
I'm not quitting. I'm just not showing up for this meet.

JEREMY
Well then, I'm not running either.

MIKE
Screw it, I'm out too.

JAVY
Where do we go during the race?

JAVON
I don't care, but I've got to be here at 5:30 when my mom picks me up or she'll kill me.

KEVIN
I know. Get in the van!

BRIAN
I think I need to be here. Coach will worry when he sees that you guys are missing.

KEVIN
Okay, just make sure you tell him that he's a two-faced a-hole.

The guys run to Kevin's van, and Brian heads to the field.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - AFTERNOON

Brian waits as the Adams team stretches. Coach Kelsey comes out of the gym and walks to the Adams coach.

COACH KELSEY
Hey, Landon. Good to meet you.

Coach Kelsey looks around for his team.

COACH LANDON
Hi Kelsey. Yeah, the flu hit us badly, but we scraped together a team.

COACH KELSEY
Understood, we have been
shorthanded all year.

Coach looks at Brian.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
Where's the team? They aren't in
the locker room.

BRIAN
They're not coming?

COACH KELSEY
What? Hold on, Landon, we have a
little issue.

He walks away out of earshot with Brian.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
What do you mean, they're not
coming?

BRIAN
Well, they're protesting.

COACH KELSEY
Protesting what?

BRIAN
We know you're leaving after the
season. With all your talk of being
there for the team, we felt
betrayed.

COACH KELSEY
Leaving? I'm not leaving. Why do
you think I'm leaving?

BRIAN
I heard you talk to Coach Jen about
going back to Stevenson. You said
that you just needed to win one
meet and you would go back.

COACH KELSEY
Brian, you heard wrong.

BRIAN
No, I didn't, Coach.

COACH KELSEY
Well, you are right, that was the
plan.

(MORE)

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
I had it good at Stevenson, and I liked coaching there, but you know what, it's even better here.

BRIAN
So you are staying regardless?

COACH KELSEY
Yes, of course I'm staying.

BRIAN
Then I'm really sorry, Coach. I'm really, really sorry.

COACH KELSEY
So, where's the team?

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

The guys buy snacks. Russ makes his purchase, walks toward the exit, and stops next to Javon.

RUSS
Need cash? I can spot you.

JAVON
No, we're not running, so I'm not eating. Working on willpower.

Jeremy pours a frozen slushie. Kevin walks up to him.

KEVIN
Get your money's worth. Snow cone the top.

Jeremy adds more to the top.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Add more... just give it to me.

Kevin takes a second cup and fills it to the top, stirs it, and packs it down. Then flips that cup on top of Jeremy's cup and pulls off the top cup. It formed a very tall tower of frozen drink.

JEREMY
Dang! That's so cool.

KEVIN
I'm gonna get some vape carts.

JEREMY
You're not old enough.

KEVIN
(whispering)
Quiet, I've got an ID.

JEREMY
Seriously? Vaping is a sign of low
intelligence or low self-esteem.

KEVIN
Quiet.

Jeremy and Kevin walk to the counter. Jeremy pays, looks at Kevin, and shakes his head as he walks away.

CLERK
What can I get you?

Kevin thinks for a second and looks through the window at his teammates outside.

KEVIN
Um, actually, I'm good. Thanks.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

The guys eat their snacks outside the store as Kevin exits.

RUSS
We probably should head back.

KEVIN
Let's make like a baby and head
out.

The guys get in the van.

INT. KEVIN'S VAN - MOMENTS LATER

The music is on very loud, and the guys sing along while eating snacks. The camp chairs are rocking with every turn. Javy jams to the music. Jeremy tries to balance his frozen drink and takes a big sip.

JEREMY
Brain freeze!

KEVIN
Yo, careful back there. Don't spill
anything.

JEREMY
I don't think anyone would notice.

They laugh.

KEVIN
Okay, let's see.

Kevin jams on the brakes. Jeremy's slushie splats into his face, leaving his eye sockets filled with red slushie. They roll into the school parking lot and exit the van. They see Brian and Coach Kelsey waiting by the school.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

The guys walk up to Coach Kelsey and Brian.

COACH KELSEY
Hi guys. Welcome back.

BRIAN
I'm sorry, guys, um, there was a misunderstanding.

RUSS
Misunderstanding?

BRIAN
You see, Coach is not leaving us.

COACH KELSEY
Guys, you probably heard why I was transferred here. But I assure you, I'm not going back to Stevenson.

KEVIN
Who'd want to go there anyway?

PUNEET
They do have a good robotics team.

RUSS
But why do you want to stay here?

COACH KELSEY
Oh, there are many reasons. In a way, this has always been my school. Come with me, I want to show you something.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The guys follow Coach down the hall to the trophy case.

COACH KELSEY
See that trophy?

RUSS
Yeah, so, 1998 Cross-Country State
Champions. That was decades ago. We
haven't had a decent team since.

COACH KELSEY
Take a closer look at the name tag.
Look at the first name in the
second row.

RUSS
David Kelsey? That's you?

COACH KELSEY
Yep. Coach Art retired after that
season, and well, they haven't
really had a dedicated coach since.
Who has jacket #4?

PUNEET
I do?

COACH KELSEY
Reach in the right pocket. It has a
hole in it, right?

PUNEET
Yes, how did you know?

COACH KELSEY
They're from when I ran here.

JEREMY
Wow, these are ancient!

Principal Jackson walks up to the group.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
I remember that trophy.

COACH KELSEY
Hi Principal Jackson.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
Your coach did not always get the
best grades when I was his teacher.

The guys chuckle.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON (CONT'D)
 However, he took direction very
 well, and when he learned
 something, he always helped others
 in need.

COACH KELSEY
 You were a great mentor.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
 You're an excellent teacher and,
 from what I heard, an even better
 coach.

COACH KELSEY
 Thanks, that really means a lot.

Principal Jackson continues down the hall and turns her head.

PRINCIPAL JACKSON
 Oh, those jackets are not ancient,
 they're vintage.

Principal Jackson swaggers down the hallway.

BRIAN
 I'm sorry I doubted you, Coach. I
 blew our last chance to win a meet.

COACH KELSEY
 No, we have one more meet left.

BRIAN
 Yeah, but it's against Stevenson.

JEREMY
 If Coach is staying, does it even
 matter if we win?

COACH KELSEY
 Well, it kind of matters to me for
 personal reasons. Did you ever want
 just to beat someone so badly
 because they deserve to be beaten?

RUSS
 Yes, those Stevenson jerks.

COACH KELSEY
 Exactly!

PUNEET
 But do we really have a chance?

COACH KELSEY

We do if we run as a team. Puneet, how does Stevenson run? You know, when you thought cross-country wasn't a team sport.

PUNEET

A collection of individual times.

COACH KELSEY

Yes! As a team, I think, wait, I know we can beat them. So, are you guys on board?

The guys look at each other.

THE ENTIRE TEAM

Bet!

INT. COACH KELSEY'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The doorbell rings. Coach Kelsey opens the door and sees Laura Thompson wearing a long evening dress.

COACH KELSEY

Laura, what are you doing here?

LAURA

Hey Kelsey, I heard about your transfer to Canterbury. If it had something to do with us, I'm sorry.

COACH KELSEY

Those stupid rumors about me did not help.

LAURA

I never spread any rumors... but Gabe told me a couple of doozies. Can I come in?

Laura walks in past Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Gabe?

Laura enters the living room. She walks to a bar cart with whiskey bottles and glasses.

LAURA

Yeah, he always brings you up when I talk to him, you know, in the teacher's lounge... Do you mind if I pour a drink?

Laura pours two drinks before Kelsey answers.

COACH KELSEY

So it was Gabe? I get it now. I think he's obsessed with you.

Kelsey walks to Laura, and she hands Kelsey a drink.

LAURA

Gabe, really?

COACH KELSEY

Um, so why did you come over?

Kelsey opens the sliding door and walks out onto the deck. He looks at the kids playing on the Stevenson baseball diamond. Laura is just inside the house near the sliding door.

LAURA

We never really had closure.

COACH KELSEY

Closure? We only had one date.

Kelsey continues to look at the baseball field as he leans on the railing. He scans the backstop and the bleachers.

LAURA

But we could've had more. I realize being coworkers made you apprehensive, but you know, we don't work together anymore.

Kelsey stares at the backstop again and stands abruptly.

COACH KELSEY

That's it!

LAURA

Great!

Kelsey turns his head around just in time to see Laura untie the back of her dress, which drops to the ground, revealing a full leather dominatrix outfit underneath. She gives a playful wave with a pair of handcuffs. Kelsey freezes, eyes wide in shock, then spins around and bolts inside.

COACH KELSEY
Laura, what are you doing!

LAURA
I'm going to cuff you.

Kelsey stares for a second.

COACH KELSEY
Sorry, Laura, but I need to check something out for our final race.

LAURA
But I thought you were into this?

Kelsey rushes out the front door. He then turns around and comes back in, stops, and stares at her. Laura smiles.

COACH KELSEY
Oh, um, let yourself out.

Kelsey leaves again.

LAURA
Kelsey!

EXT. DODGE PARK - DAY

It's a sunny day. The guys run into the park. They stop and run in place next to the bathroom building near the entrance.

RUSS
We're halfway. Great job running together. Let's head back and make it count. We only have a couple of practices left.

JEREMY
Hey guys, nature calls. I need to use the toilet.

KEVIN
(in a baby voice)
Aw, do you need to go pee-pee?

JEREMY
No, I actually need to take a shit.

RUSS
Alrighty then, go ahead, we'll do a loop on the lower trail and meet you back here in a few minutes.

The guys run off, and Jeremy goes into the restroom. Todd and Kyle see the Canterbury guys run into the woods as they enter the restroom. They use the urinals. Jeremy is in the stall next to the urinals and hears them.

TODD

I'm surprised Canterbury is still training. We're gonna kill them.

KYLE

Yeah, it would be another sweep if they didn't have Mike.

TODD

I'm not worried about Mike. He'll pay this time.

Jeremy exits the stall and washes his hands. Todd notices him.

TODD (CONT'D)

Is that the little shit from Canterbury?

KYLE

Yeah, I think he's the one who soaked us when he pulled that wet tree branch.

Jeremy leaves the building, but sticks his head back in.

JEREMY

Um, you must be mistaken...
assholes!

Jeremy bolts out of the restroom, sprinting toward the wooded trail. Todd and Kyle scramble after him, crashing out the door in hot pursuit. Jeremy reaches a fork in the path—straight leads to the lower trail, left climbs up the hill. Thinking fast, he ducks behind a tree at the split. The Stevenson guys glance straight ahead, don't spot him, and charge up the upper trail. Jeremy chuckles and casually jogs down the lower path—until he hears them circling back. He quickly drops into a crouch to hide... and instantly regrets it as he sees a patch of stinging nettles in front of him.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Whoa!

Jeremy stands up, and the Stevenson guys see him.

TODD

He's down there!

Todd and Kyle blaze a trail down to the lower trail, as stinging nettles brush against their legs. They get down to the lower trail, and Kyle grabs Jeremy.

KYLE

What should we do with this little shit?

TODD

It's his turn to get soaked. Throw him in the creek.

As Kyle holds Jeremy, he notices the burning sensation on his legs. Todd notices it too.

KYLE

My legs are on fire!

TODD

Mine too!

Kyle lets go of Jeremy as the Canterbury team approaches.

MIKE

What's going on?

JEREMY

These idiots were chasing me and ran through those stinging nettles.

RUSS

You'd better wash them quickly.

Russ points to the creek. Todd and Kyle jump into the creek and frantically rub their legs. The Canterbury team laughs.

KEVIN

Don't forget to scrub your nut sacks, jackoffs.

TODD

Screw you!

Todd slips and grabs Kyle, and they both fall into the creek. The guys laugh as they run out of the park. The guys continue running along the road when they see Todd and Kyle speeding by in his convertible.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

The guys finish their run at the back parking lot. Kevin's van has a flat tire and is leaning. Kevin slowly walks to his van. Kevin inspects it and sees that the tire was slashed.

KEVIN

It was those Stevenson fuckers. I'm going to kill 'em! I really am!

The team gathers as Kevin walks around, very upset.

RUSS

Kev, man, save it for the race.

Kevin slams his hand on the fender in frustration.

RUSS (CONT'D)

We can show those assholes on Friday that we're not the losers.

MIKE

They don't respect us now. But they will. We'll get 'em back.

KEVIN

Oh, we'll beat them and then I'll beat them. They're dead! Ahh!

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - AFTERNOON

The guys just finished a lap around the track. They all jog onto the infield of the track and collapse.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, guys... let's do one more.

JEREMY

Yeah, I don't think I can do another repeat.

COACH KELSEY

Guys, this is our last big workout... you're not going to beat Stevenson with that attitude.

PUNEET

Statistically, we only have a slim chance at best.

Russ stands up.

RUSS

I'm tired of losing. I only have one cross-country meet left before I graduate. I want to win for once.

Mike stands up.

MIKE
Stevenson thinks they're better
than us. They push us around. They
laugh at us.

RUSS
Let's kick their asses!

The rest of the team stands up.

KEVIN
(screaming)
Let's kill those mother fuckers!

Everyone is quiet and staring at Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Sorry, Coach.

COACH KELSEY
You all have it in you to win.
Everyone, get up.

The guys sluggishly move to the track.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)
I want you to sprint one lap, but
at your fastest collective team
time. If you run as quickly as you
can, then we'll be done. Or we'll
try again.

BRIAN
We're going to stagger start based
on your fastest 400 times. I
calculated how much head start you
will get. So, line up at the tape
with your name on it.

The guys find their tape on the edge of the track.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
If you all run at your fastest
pace, you will all finish together.
The key is not to let anyone pass
you. Coach, I have one for you.

COACH KELSEY
Me?

BRIAN
Yes, I thought you could be, you
know, the rabbit they chase.

Coach Kelsey walks way ahead to find his spot.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, but you guys will never catch me with this head start.

RUSS

We'll see about that!

BRIAN

Ready, set, go!

The guys explode into a sprint. Because of the staggered start, Coach Kelsey leads the pack, followed by Jeremy, Kevin, Puneet, Javy, Russ, Mike, and Javon. One by one, they start closing the gaps on the back stretch. As they round the final turn, they tighten into a unified wall, charging down the last straightaway in slow motion, eyes locked on Coach Kelsey. Just before the finish line, they catch him, and all cross together in perfect sync. They follow him onto the infield, where they collapse in a triumphant, sweaty pile on top of him. Mike lifts his head and looks toward Brian.

MIKE

Did we do it?

Brian looks disappointed and shakes his head.

BRIAN

I'm very disappointed, guys.

COACH KELSEY

Everyone up.

JEREMY

I can't even stand.

They all begrudgingly stand.

BRIAN

I'm so disappointed that you guys didn't run like this all season! That was the fastest collective quarter mile I've recorded.

The guys smile and look at each other. They chase down Brian, lift him, carry him to the infield, and fall on each other.

COACH KELSEY

You guys dug deeper than you ever did before. That's what it takes to win. You're now ready.

The guys cheer.

EXT. STEVENSON'S FIELD - AFTERNOON

The bus pulls into Stevenson. Todd's shiny convertible is already parked in the lot. The Canterbury guys step off the bus in silence, all wearing their game faces. Without a word, Javon hands Jeremy a couple of cans of sardines. Jeremy creeps over to Todd's car, pops open a can, and instantly recoils from the smell. Grimacing, he picks out the slimy sardines and chucks them between the seats, then tips the can to drizzle oil all over the upholstery. He bolts back. The ground is damp from earlier rain, and a crowd of Stevenson fans has gathered near the starting line. Allison spots Todd flirting with another girl, then her eyes land on Mike. Without hesitation, she strides over to him in white pants and high heels, heels sinking slightly into the wet grass.

ALLISON

Hi Mike, I thought we were supposed to go to Dino's. I haven't heard from you.

MIKE

I haven't heard from you. I don't think you really want to date me, and I'm not sure if I can be with someone like you.

ALLISON

What do you mean?

MIKE

You won't talk to me, and you've been hanging all over Todd. Plus, Leslie told me all about you. How can you be so mean to her?

ALLISON

Really? Leslie? She's so mid.

Leslie walks up to Mike and Allison.

LESLIE

Really? You're wearing that cheugy outfit to an event in the mud.

Leslie casually points to Allison's shoe. Allison tries to walk away with dignity, but her heel is stuck in the wet, muddy grass. She tugs once—nothing. She yanks harder—and her foot pops free as she tumbles backward, landing flat on her butt. Covered in mud, she scrambles up, fuming and disgusted.

ALLISON

Ahh! I don't want to be with a loser anyway.

Allison walks away angrily with a mud stain on her ass. The boys' team huddles around Coach Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY

Okay, team, just follow my plan,
and we'll stick it to them. Javon,
at around the mile mark, the course
goes around the baseball backstop
and along the bleachers. I need you
to get there first, so push the
pace and get there first.

JAVON

Got it, Coach.

COACH KELSEY

Mike, you just need to beat Todd.

MIKE

My pleasure. Consider it done.

COACH KELSEY

Remember, run together and pull
each other up. Then that last
quarter mile, you run like it's the
last time you will ever run.

KEVIN

This *is* the last time I'm running.

COACH KELSEY

Just give it your best effort, and
I think you will surprise
yourselves. And if we don't win,
fine. Just get yourself a PR.
Either way, I'll be proud. You've
come a long way.

RUSS

Guys, bring it in.

The guys put one of their hands in the middle.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Teamwork on three. One, two, three.

TEAM

Teamwork!

EXT. STEVENSON FIELD STARTING LINE - DAY

The Stevenson team gathers around Coach Gabe.

GABE

Let's not ruin our perfect season.
Do what it takes to win. They ran
better than expected at the
invitational, so don't let them
beat you.

TODD

We're gonna kill 'em.

GABE

Really, Todd? Are you going to let
that Canterbury kid beat you again?

Gabe locks eyes with Todd, his glare wiping the smug smile
off Todd's face. The Canterbury team stares down the
Stevenson runners as they march to the starting line, all
wearing their game faces. Coach Kelsey steps up beside Gabe.

GABE (CONT'D)

So, were you thinking of moving to
a different county or out of State?

COACH KELSEY

I'm going nowhere.

GABE

Are you ready to do this then?

COACH KELSEY

Oh, I'm ready.

Todd notices Javy is wearing earbuds and points.

TODD

Coach Gabe, he is wearing earbuds.

Gabe looks at Javy and walks over to Coach Kelsey.

GABE

Hey Kelsey, your boy is wearing
earbuds. It's not allowed, and yes,
you need to follow the rules.

COACH KELSEY

Javy, you can't wear the earbuds.

JAVY

Coach, I can't run without music.

COACH KELSEY

Sorry, they're being sticklers.
You'll manage, just do your best.
Sing or something. Whatever works.

PUNEET

Do math problems in your head.

KEVIN

Javy, I've got your back.

Javy walks to the bench and puts his earbuds in his jacket. Kevin runs to his jacket, pulls out his phone, and texts as Javy puts away his earbuds. Javy walks back to the starting line. Kevin continues to text.

COACH KELSEY

Kevin, let's go.

KEVIN

I'm coming.

Kevin puts down his phone and runs up to the starting line. He stares at Todd and points his fingers at his eyes, then at him. Todd and Kyle's legs are still red from the nettles.

JEREMY

Good luck.

Jeremy extends his fish oil-covered hand to Todd, and he reluctantly shakes it.

TODD

Prepare to get swept again.

MIKE

Look at this.

Mike turns his back on Todd and points with his thumbs.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You'll be seeing this all race.

TODD

You ain't getting lucky again.

Todd smells his hand and winces. The starting gun goes off, and Javon leads the pack with a blistering pace, and the Stevenson runners chase behind him.

TODD (CONT'D)

(to his teammates)

Fat boy won't last.

Javon stretches his lead, followed by the entire Stevenson team. The rest of Canterbury runs together behind them.

TODD (CONT'D)

Let's reel in that whale.

The Stevenson team increases their already fast pace as they approach the baseball diamond. Coach Kelsey stands behind Brian, shaking him by his shoulders.

COACH KELSEY

Come on, Javon, you can do it.

The Stevenson team catches up to Javon and nearly passes him, but Javon digs in and sprints to the backstop first and slows to a very slow jog. The Stevenson team is stuck behind him as they cannot pass between the fence and the bleachers.

TODD

Move it fat ass!

JAVON

Sorry, the buffet is closed.

The Canterbury team catches up to the log jam just as Javon passes the end of the bleachers. Mike races past the entire Stevenson team. The runners separate from each other. Javy slows down as Russ and Puneet pass in front of him. Kevin and Jeremy catch up to Javy, who looks lost. Then music starts playing. A car drives down the street next to the course with the windows down, playing speed metal (e.g., DragonForce's cover of Taylor Swift's Wildest Dreams) on full blast. Then two other cars pull up, playing the same music on full blast. Javy hears the music as Kevin nods at him.

KEVIN

It's need for speed time! Let out that beast!

Javy smiles and picks up his pace. He reels in the Stevenson runners one by one as he listens to the music. The squeaking of Puneet's glasses is heard as Javy passes him. Brian stands on the sidelines of the course yelling at Jeremy.

BRIAN

Jeremy, do what I told you, now!

JEREMY

(looking back at Kevin)
You run like a girl.

KEVIN

What the hell did you say?

JEREMY

Your van is a piece of crap.

KEVIN

My van? Oh, you're dead!

Kevin picks up the pace, closing in on Jeremy. Jeremy lets out a scream and sprints faster to stay ahead. Up front, Mike leads the race. Todd glances around, then surges forward, closing the gap. Eyeing Mike's ankles, Todd reaches out with his foot and spikes the back of Mike's Achilles tendon.

MIKE

Ow! What the...

Mike winces and trots with a noticeable limp. Todd pulls away. Mike sprints forward, then hobbles. Coach Kelsey sees this and runs closer to the edge of the course.

COACH KELSEY

Mike! Stop!

Mike ignores the coach and speeds up, but then limps a bit. Coach Kelsey runs onto the course and grabs Mike. Todd looks back and smiles.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Mike, stop! You're hurt!

MIKE

No!

Mike wrestles free of Coach Kelsey. Filled with adrenaline, Mike sprints after Todd, wincing with each step. He sees Todd in front of him and then closes his eyes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Mike remembers Allison in Todd's convertible, raising her arms and screaming with exhilaration as they speed away.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mike remembers running into Leslie at the park and how she looked back, smiled, and waved at him.

END FLASHBACK

Mike smiles and digs deep, reeling in Todd with every stride. Nearing the finish, Todd reaches down to rub his reddened legs, his pace faltering. A waterlogged patch stretches across the course just before the finish line. Todd slows, picking his way carefully through the puddle—until the sound of fast, splashing footsteps closes in behind him.

He turns his head and is stunned to see Mike gaining. Mike sprints past Todd and points with his thumbs to the back of his shirt as he crosses the line and collapses. Todd finishes, and Kyle crosses next.

Kevin's friend's car is near, and the music is blasting. Javy grits his teeth and puts his arms up in the air, making devil horns with his fingers.

JAVY

Ahh!

Javy kicks it into overdrive and chases down the Stevenson runner in front of him.

BRIAN

Javy's gonna catch him! He's gonna catch him!

COACH KELSEY

We could win this! Let's go, Javy!

Javy unleashes his final kick, screaming as he chases down a Stevenson runner. With a final surge, he passes him and finishes strong. Behind them, Russ and Puneet are locked in a sprint, one Stevenson runner just ahead. Russ motions forward, urging Puneet on. Puneet digs deep and pulls up alongside him.

RUSS

Let's get him.

They catch up to the Stevenson runner. Hearing the squeak of Puneet's glasses, he glances right and spots Puneet just a few steps behind. He looks left—and is startled to see Russ right beside him. Panicked, the Stevenson runner tries to block Russ with an arm, but loses his footing and face-plants into the wet, muddy grass. Russ charges ahead, and Puneet follows, glancing down at him as he passes.

PUNEET

2,924 divided by 43 equals 68,
bitch!

Russ crosses the finish line, followed by Puneet. The Stevenson runner gets up and finishes.

Kevin still chases Jeremy with three Stevenson runners behind them and Javon trailing.

BRIAN

We're tied up, Coach! The next runner to cross the line wins it.

Coach Kelsey grabs and shakes Brian's shoulders, making him look like a bobblehead as he yells to the guys.

COACH KELSEY

Come on, guys, one last push!

The guys near the finish line, and a Stevenson runner passes Kevin and catches up to Jeremy.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

No! Don't let him pass! No!

The Stevenson runner passes Jeremy as they enter the wet area. Coach Kelsey puts his head down on Brian's shoulder.

BRIAN

Oh, so close!

Kevin nearly catches up to Jeremy.

KEVIN

We're gonna beat these a-holes,
AAAAHHH!

Kevin barrels toward Jeremy with his arms outstretched like a linebacker. He grabs Jeremy by the shirt and shorts, lifts him clean off the ground, and hurls him forward in one smooth motion. Jeremy sails through the air and skips across the puddle like a human skipping stone, landing just across the finish line ahead of the stunned Stevenson runner. The Canterbury team erupts, racing over and hoisting Jeremy onto Kevin's shoulders. Javon, the final runner, comes flying in at full speed and doesn't stop—arms spread wide as he crashes into Kevin, toppling them. The rest of the team dives into the pile. Coach Kelsey and Brian rush over, beaming. Gabe stands in disbelief as his team stares in stunned silence. The Canterbury boys rise triumphantly and break into a booming team chant.

ENTIRE TEAM

Teamwork! Teamwork! Teamwork!

The guys congratulate each other. Kevin initiates a high five with Jeremy, but stops short, and Jeremy flinches. Then he completes the high five.

COACH KELSEY

What a fantastic team effort! I
knew you guys had it in you.

Gabe approaches Coach Kelsey and shakes his hand.

GABE

Congrats Kelsey.

COACH KELSEY
The guys did great.

GABE
So you're coming back to the team?

COACH KELSEY
Absolutely, I'm coming back to the team... Canterbury.

GABE
Um, you know I was joking about the bet, right? (nervously) Hahaha.

COACH KELSEY
Stevenson is all yours. Good luck, Gabe. Oh, um, just ask Laura out already, you might be surprised.

Gabe smiles as Coach Kelsey walks away. Mike's ankle is bleeding, and he is limping. Leslie runs to Mike as the team walks to the bus.

LESLIE
Mike, you did it! Are you hurt?

MIKE
I'll be fine.

Leslie helps Mike walk toward the bus.

MIKE (CONT'D)
You know, it was a blessing in disguise going to Canterbury.

LESLIE
Yeah, you escaped from Allison.

MIKE
Yes, that's true. But I think I was really lucky to meet you.

Leslie hugs Mike tightly. They release the hug and stare at each other. They smile and kiss. The rest of the team walks toward the bus together.

RUSS
It feels so great to win finally! Amazing finish, guys! But, Javon, what a great start! You need to join the track team.

Russ pats Javon's back.

JAVON
Thanks, I just might.

RUSS
And Puneet, great second mile!

Russ high fives Puneet.

PUNEET
It was fun dropping equations on
those bitches!

Kevin puts his arm around Javy.

KEVIN
Javy, you really released the beast
out there, bud.

JAVY
Thanks for that music blast!

KEVIN
I've got your back, man.

BRIAN
Jeremy, I told you Kevin would
chase you if you said that.

KEVIN
Wait, you set that up? Genius.

JEREMY
Your van really is a piece of crap.

KEVIN
Ohhh, you're dead!

The guys laugh as Kevin chases Jeremy to the bus. Jen catches
up to Coach Kelsey.

JEN
Hey, congratulations, you got your
required win. So, it looks like you
can still go back to Stevenson.

COACH KELSEY
No, I can't leave. I was meant to
be at Canterbury.

Jen puts her fingers to her temples and squints.

JEN
That's what I visualized.

COACH KELSEY

Oh really?

Coach Kelsey puts his arm around Jen as they walk to the bus.

COACH KELSEY (CONT'D)

Thanks for your encouragement and
for believing in me.

JEN

Hey, you believed in those kids,
and look what happened.

COACH KELSEY

You know, I'm visualizing a steak
dinner for two with a cold beer?

JEN

There better be two cold beers in
your vision.

COACH KELSEY

Or four!

They laugh as they enter the bus. The camera rises and shows
the bus door closing as it pulls away.

JEN (O.C.)

Hey, I thought you didn't go on
dates with coworkers?

COACH KELSEY (O.C.)

Who said I'm taking a coworker?

JEN (O.C.)

Oh, is that so?

COACH KELSEY (O.C.)

Would you like to go on a date...
friend?

JEN (O.C.)

Hmm, I don't know, I'll have to
check my schedule.

EXT. STEVENSON PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Todd, Kyle, and Allison, with her muddy pants, approach
Todd's car. Several cats are walking inside it.

TODD

I don't want you muddying up my
seats. What the...

Todd and Kyle shoo the cats away and notice that they had scratched and ripped the leather seats.

ALLISON

The seats are ruined. Can I ride
with you now... ew, it stinks...
never mind.

As Canterbury's bus passes Todd, Todd sees Jeremy smiling and waving to him. Todd looks at his hand, smells it, and pounds it on the car. The bus approaches the street with the Stevenson monument sign in view, and wet underwear splats onto it.

FADE OUT.

CREDITS ROLL

INT. GABE'S BEDROOM

Gabe and Laura lie in bed, each wearing part of their wild ensemble—Gabe sporting a spiked leather collar, Laura in her dominatrix outfit. One of each of their hands is cuffed, the chain looped tightly around the headboard. They stare at the ceiling, looking completely deflated. Stuck.

LAURA

Only you should be cuffed.

Laura reaches for her phone on the nightstand, which is barely within reach, and grabs it.

GABE

I thought we'd cuff each other.

LAURA

Not at the same time! We're going
to have to call someone.

She works her phone with one hand.

GABE

Don't call 9-1-1!

LAURA

I'm not... hello, Kelsey.

GABE

No!