At 2:59, McKinley High lazed in the afternoon sun, the perfect picture of peace and tranquility. By 3:01, it was an anthill, stirred by a carelessly placed heel. The final bell echoed through the air, its dying reverberation replaced by the roaring of car engines from the student parking lot. The ground swarmed with students, a constant supply pouring from every door.

Nick squeezed through the press of bodies as he made his way to the band hall. At the door, he saw Karen and Ozzy.

"Give it back, Ozzy!" Karen demanded.

"Don't be so touchy!" Ozzy drawled. He was taller than her and held something just out of her reach.

"What's up?" Nick inquired.

As Ozzy turned to reply, Karen snatched it from his hand.

"Nothing!" She said emphatically, and stormed away.

"I was only kidding, Karen." Ozzy called after her, as she disappeared into the crowd.

"I guess I made her mad," he said, turning back to Nick.

"What was that all about?"

"She got an invitation to Band of Champion's Summer Camp; I saw the letter in her book," Ozzy began, "So I read it." He continued, "She got all bent out of shape, said it was none of my business. Kind of strange, if you ask me. I don't know what to make of it. Do you?"

"I know!" a new voice piped in.

The boys turned to greet the speaker. "Oh, hi Sandy." Nick said and smiled. Ozzy slid his
arm around her. "What do you make of it?" he asked.

"I think she doesn't have the money." Sandy said. "Her folks haven't been doing very well, since her father left."

"But her mom works." Ozzy said.

"At the grocery store! I don't think she makes very much," Sandy explained. "Karen doesn't talk about it, but it's been hard on them."

"You're probably right," Nick agreed, "but knowing Karen, she won't even tell her mom."

"That's the truth!" Ozzy said. "Too bad! It's not easy to get an invitation to Champion's, you know. I wish I'd been invited."

"Well, I feel sorry for her." Sandy said. "I wish we could help."

Nick rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Maybe we can," he said.

Ozzy and Sandy looked dubious. "What do you mean?" Ozzy asked. "What can we do?"

"I don't know, but we can try, can't we?" Nick said defensively, "If we put our heads together, I bet we could think of something. It's at least worth a try."

"Relax!" Ozzy soothed, "I said what, not no!"

"Okay." Sandy interjected, "Here's what we'll do: we'll meet at my house after dinner. I'll make lemonade, and we can see what we come up with. Okay?"

"Great!" the boys said in unison.

"What time?" Nick asked. "Seven-thirty?"

"Eight," Ozzy said, "My Dad's been on to me about my homework. Math, yuch!" He made a face. "I've got to get it done before I can go anywhere."

"Me, too." Sandy agreed, "History." She shuddered.
"Okay, eight then. Do you need a ride, Oz?" Nick asked.

"Now, or later?"

"Either."

"I think I have a ride for now." Ozzy said, looking at Sandy. She nodded. "But I'll need one tonight."

"Alright, I'll pick you up at a quarter ‘til. Catch you later."

With that, he left, slipping through the back door of the nearly vacant band hall.

Eight o'clock that night, they convened over popcorn and lemonade.

Sandy began, "We talked to Mr. Peterson after you left, Nick. He said there weren't any scholarships available for Champion's. At least, not that he knew of."

Nick nodded.

"Which leaves us exactly nowhere," Ozzy said gloomily.

Sandy scowled, "Don't be such a rain cloud."

"I'm open to suggestions," he replied, with more than a hint of sarcasm.

Nick ignored him. "What we need to do is make a list of ideas, no matter how ridiculous. We'll just write them down and scratch out the ones that won't work, later."

"Got any paper?" he asked.

"Right here." Sandy pulled a couple of sheets from a notebook.

"Okay now, the first suggestion." Ozzy said, "Rob a bank."

"You're not being very helpful." Nick said.

"You said ANY suggestions." Ozzy returned. "That's a suggestion."
'Alright then, one, rob a bank, period. Okay, number two?' Nick looked up.

"We could have a car wash." Sandy offered.

"That's a good one. Car wash." He wrote it down. "How about, three, bake sale."

"That's a good one, too." Sandy encouraged.

"Now we're rolling." Ozzy commented. "We've got two suggestions."

"Three." Nick replied, "You forgot 'rob a bank.'"

"I know one!" Sandy said excitedly. "We could have a garage sale. Our church does it every summer for kid's camp. Why couldn't we do it for Karen?"

"A garage sale? What do we have that anyone would want?" Ozzy asked.

"Well, for one thing, there's that old bike of yours, the one you never ride." She looked squarely at Ozzy.

"No, no, no, no, no. Not my bike!"

"And why not your bike?" Sandy challenged, "You're always saying it's too small for you."

"Well," he paused, as if searching for the right words. "It has sentimental value for me. That was my very first bike!"

"Okay then, not your bike," Nick interrupted. "It's still a good idea. I've got an old guitar I've been meaning to get rid of, and some clothes I can't wear anymore. I bet we've all got something to give, if we just think about it."

"I've got some dolls and stuff I'll never use again. It's all just piled up in my room," Sandy said. "I'm sure my mom won't mind me selling it."

"I forgot about our parents." Nick moaned.

"That won't be a big deal, when we tell them what it's for." Sandy said.
He agreed.

Sandy turned to Ozzy, who had been silent since the word "bike" had been mentioned. "You are going to pitch in, aren't you?"

"Sure," Ozzy said weakly, "I'll think of something I can give."

Nick stood up. "Okay then, let's get the word out, on the sly, that is, and we'll see what we can come up with."

They agreed to first find out if anyone was interested and then decide where and when to have the garage sale. The meeting adjourned.

Word did get around, and a time and place were set: Sandy's house on Saturday of the following week. By Friday evening, the day before, there was more junk crowded into Sandy's garage than they knew what to do with.

"I can't believe it!" Ozzy exclaimed. "Who'd have ever thought?"

"Not you, that's for sure!" Sandy retorted.

Ozzy scowled.

The three of them, along with a handful of volunteers from the school band, sat up late, listening to music, munching popcorn, and pricing the merchandise. It was after midnight before they were done.

"That's it." Nick proclaimed, placing a piece of masking tape onto a pair of plastic roller skates. "That's the last of it!"

A cheer went up and Ozzy began skipping around, tossing popcorn into the air like rice at a wedding.
"Cut it out, Oz." Nick reprimanded. "You're making a mess." He grabbed the bowl of popcorn from him, and then, with an impish grin, dumped it over Ozzy's head.

Ozzy let out a yelp, shaking his head like a wet dog, popcorn flying in every direction. Nick burst out laughing and everyone joined in, while Ozzy sat picking popcorn from his hair and popping it into his mouth.

After cleaning up the mess, they went home, agreeing to meet back at seven the next morning.

Saturday morning came with a rush: staying up past midnight has a way of making seven seem awfully early. The volunteers took their places, not sure of what to expect.

At about seven-fifteen, Ozzy, the last to arrive, came squeaking up on his old bicycle, already priced at a hopeful twenty-five dollars.

Sandy gave him a kiss. "I knew we could count on you!"

"At twenty-five dollars, I figure no one will touch it!"

Before they even opened the doors, there were cars lined up along the street. These were the professionals—they worked for resale shops and antique stores and could smell a deal from a mile away, up wind. Ozzy's bike was one of the first things to go—no questions asked.

Next came the little old ladies, and the bargain shoppers, looking for a deal on something they could probably live without. It wasn't long before everything but the junk was left, with the exception of some larger items that had been priced too high. The tags on these were crossed out and re-crossed, with lower and lower prices hastily scribbled above the old, in hopes of sparking interest.
"I can't believe it!" Ozzy exclaimed. "Look at all this money." He held up the pencil box for everyone to see; it was stuffed full of bills and coins. They were awestruck.

Skateboards, baby dolls, old shoes, games, books, posters, Nick's guitar—all had been snatched up by eager shoppers. By four o'clock, all that had been left, they gave to a lady from a local charity.

"That wipes us out." Nick said, after they had loaded the last box into her station wagon and watched her drive away. "Let's count the money."

Everyone gathered round, as Sandy counted.


"Incredible!" Nick exclaimed.

Ozzy let out a long, low whistle.

"Now we have to figure out how to go about giving it to her." Sandy pointed out.

"I've got an idea!" Nick said. "Listen." They all gathered round, as he explained.

Karen stood before Mr. Peterson. In her hand, she held a check, enough to cover the cost of band camp. The hall was empty, with the exception of Nick, Sandy, and Ozzy, who milled about at the back of the room, busy putting away their instruments.

"I don't know what to say," Karen spoke in a shy voice.

"Nothing." Mr. Peterson said. "Like I said, there's been a scholarship set up to award worthy students and you were selected to be the first recipient."

"But why me?" Karen asked.
"You deserve it." Mr. Peterson said with a smile.

"Thank you, Mr. Peterson. Really, thank you very much!" Karen said. "I can't wait to tell my mom!"

"Good-bye!" she added. "And thanks again!" She went out the door.

Nick looked over at Ozzy and Sandy— the warmth of a job well done shared between them.
Quick Walkthrough[edit]. Acquire an invitation. Travel to Shad Astula and talk to the registrar. Find Arch-Mage Valeyn. Solve the memory challenge. Detailed Walkthrough[edit]. Prospective students, one of whom holds your invitation.