

Judge Not Lest You Be Judged

Week Four Joe's Story

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Early Monday morning, as they are walking to class with Ed and Pete, Amy asks Jenny, “have you thought about what your talk is going to be about in two weeks?” Jenny replies, “I have no idea. But, I’ll think of something.” Pete suggests, “how about speaking about when Jesus turned water into wine.” Jenny laughs, and replies, “I should like really do that!” Ed comically mentions, “Rodney probably tore that page out of his Bible.”

Changing the subject, Jenny announces, “oh! And, guess what? I’m meeting with Joe this week! Joe texted me over the weekend and told me that he found out why I can’t sleep!” Amy tells Jenny, “I’ll bet you’ll be glad to find that out!” Pete asks Jenny, “does this mean no more wine?” Amy replies, “not on your life! But, I don’t know. I’ll see what Joe has to say first.”

As they walk into the classroom, Jenny tells Ed, “by the way, that was a really awesome poster of Amy diving! Everyone on our hall was like seriously impressed.” Ed confesses, “all I did was push the button on the camera. Amy did all the work.” Pete suggests to Amy, “maybe you should post that pic on social media.” Amy replies, “that’s a really good idea! I’m going to do that like right now.” Ed tells Amy, “if you want, you can post one of me diving too. Maybe the diving coach will see it.” Finding her favorite photograph of Ed diving, Amy asks Ed, “how about this one?” Ed replies, “sure. That’s a really good one.” Amy posts the picture of her diving and Ed’s favorite picture of him diving on a few social media sites, wondering if anyone will notice.

Dr. Lawrence walks in, and announces, “please recall from your syllabus that, on this coming Thursday, there will be an examination. Please be sure to be here on time. The first forty-five minutes of our ninety-minute session will be allotted for the examination. If you have

been attending class and paying attention, the examination should take you no more than twenty minutes to complete.” Ed whispers to Amy, “especially since there are old copies of the tests floating around.” Quite surprised, Amy asks Ed, “do you have copies of old tests?” Ed searches through his backpack and, finding copies of a dozen old tests for CS 3150, hands them to Amy, and tells her, “yeah.” Amy looks over the tests, realizing that some of the questions are a bit difficult.

Class lets out. Amy suggests to Ed, “we should get together and study old test questions.” Not getting the news yet, Jenny asks Ed, “wait! You have old tests?” Ed replies, “yeah. I got them from Mark Johnson.” Jenny replies, “I should have known.” Amy asks, “who’s Mark Johnson?” Ed replies, “he’s a senior in computer science. He has a huge collection of old tests. He hands them down to me every semester.” Pete mentions, “I keep thinking we’re going to get in trouble if we get caught with them. But, those tests have saved our butts several times.”

Late Monday evening, Ed and Pete get together with Amy and Jenny in the study room on the lower level of Amy and Jenny’s dorm. With a few tests coming up this week, social activities have taken a back seat to studying. Going over the old tests for several of their classes, the group thinks they will ace their upcoming examinations.

Midnight comes along, and Pete mentions, “wow! It’s really getting late.” Jenny replies, “I like see that. And, we have an eight o’clock class tomorrow morning.” Ed and Pete gather their stuff together and, after saying good night to their girlfriends, head back to their dorm.

Amy tells Jenny, “I’ll be up in a few minutes,” and walks outside. Amy sits on a bench in the back of the dorms, smoking a cigarette before she gets her shower and goes to bed. Checking social media, Amy again finds out that pictures of her and Jenny are being again posted online. Another picture of Jenny drinking a glass of wine has been posted where all their friends can see it. And, a picture of Amy smoking outside of the pizzeria has also been posted online. It is no secret to Amy who took and posted those pictures.

Staring at her phone as she walks down the path to her dorm, Amy catches a glimpse of a familiar face hiding out on the far side of the bushes. Wanting to catch the person in the act of spying on her, Amy gets her cell phone camera ready. Amy suddenly calls out, “Dana!” Not immediately recognizing the voice of who called out her name, Dana abruptly turns around. Amy snaps a quick photograph of Dana as she is in the act of exhaling a plume of vapor. With a bit of sarcasm, Amy tells Dana, “wow! Dana! I didn’t know you vaped!” As Amy casually walks away with the photographic evidence, in a panic, Dana yells out, “no!

Wait! Come back! I can explain! Wait! Please!” Amy cordially tells Dana, “I got an eight o’clock class. Gotta run.”

Amy walks back into her dorm, leaving Dana outside. Dana repeatedly bangs on the door, yelling out, “please open up! We have to talk! Please!” In a complete panic, Dana, who lives in another dorm, runs from entrance to entrance, looking for an unlocked door. Out of luck, Dana sits alone on a bench, having a massive emotional breakdown. Continually checking social media, Dana fears that the picture Amy just took will go viral any minute now. But, Amy is in the shower, thinking about her evening with Ed, and how peaceful it was studying with the group.

Wednesday evening, the day before two tests, Pete and Jenny join Ed and Amy at the pool. Ed has convinced Amy that, by exercising the day before the test, she’ll do a lot better. Amy is willing to give it a try. Ed has been trying to convince Pete that working out the day before a test will result in a better grade. But, hearing the same message from Ed over the last two years, Pete still has his doubts.

Walking out from the locker room, Pete asks Ed, “are you sure we shouldn’t be studying rather than swimming?” Ed replies, “I’m totally sure, bro. If you don’t know the material by now, another day of cramming isn’t going to do you any good. All you’ll do is confuse yourself.” Pete tells Ed, “maybe I’ll look at it later tonight.” Ed replies, “you’re wasting your time, bro. We already went over the old tests. Stop worrying so much. You got this.”

Amy and Jenny walk up, interrupting the guy’s conversation. Amy asks Ed, “are we diving or swimming?” Ed suggests, “how about both? It looks like the diving team is just finishing up for the day.” With a renewed interest in diving, Amy exclaims, “let’s hit the boards!” Pete tells Ed, “we’re going to swim some laps.” Ed replies, “we’ll join you guys in a while.”

Ed whispers to Amy, “the diving coach is watching me. I’m going to mess with him again.” Ed climbs the ladder to the high board, and sets the fulcrum. With the diving coach’s full attention, Ed executes a reverse two and one half somersault dive in the pike position¹ with a perfect entry. Getting out of the water, Ed quickly heads to the high board again. For his second dive, Ed does three and one half perfectly executed

¹ Reverse 2 1/2 somersaults, pike position - Level of difficulty 3.0.

forward somersaults with one twist in the pike position², again entering perfectly vertical in the water. This is Ed's favorite dive to perform for the diving coach, for no diver in the University's division can successfully execute this dive.

Ed whispers to Amy, "here comes the coach. Let's really mess with him this time." The diving coach, Dr. John McRae, approaches Ed, preparing to convince Ed to join the diving team. Before Dr. McRae gets out his first word, Amy tells the coach, "I'd give Ed a 9.8 on his last dive. With a degree of difficulty of 3.7, that would be what? Thirty-six points on the rack? What do you think?" Put on the spot, Dr. McRae asks Amy, "why a 9.8?" Amy replies, "Ed's left foot was not pointed as far as his right. Please don't tell me you missed it."

Coach McRae asks Ed and Amy, "who are you guys, anyway?" Ed replies, "I'm Ed Becker. This is Amy Amherst, my diving coach." Surprised that Amy knew the degree of difficulty for Ed's dive, Coach McRae asks Amy, "you're his coach?" Acting like Ed's diving coach, Amy replies, "yeah. I'm his diving coach. And, I need to show Ed something right now." Amy instructs Ed, "watch my feet carefully as I make my entry." Amy then tells Coach McRae, "you can watch too, if you'd like."

Amy walks over to the high board as Ed and Coach McRae carefully watch. After making a minor adjustment to the fulcrum, Amy makes her approach, takes two bounces on the board, and delivers a perfect forward two and a half somersault with one twist in the pike position³. Pointing her feet as straight as she can, Amy makes a perfect entry into the water, leaving next to no splash. Knowing she delivered an excellent performance, Amy shows off her swimming skills and gets out of the water.

Amy walks up to Ed, asking him, "did you see what I was talking about?" Ed nods his head, and replies, "yeah. Got it." Coach McRae tells Amy, "that was a rather good dive!" Recalling that Ed told Amy to mess with the diving coach, Amy replies, "I know. But, thank you anyway." The coach asks Amy, "would you, by any chance be interested in joining my team?" Amy replies, "um, no. I don't think you guys could pay enough."

Coach McRae turns to Ed, and asks, "are you sure I can't convince you to join my team?" Ed replies, "thank you for the offer. But, no, not this

² Forward 3 1/2 somersaults, 1 twist, pike position - Level of difficulty 3.7.

³ Forward 2 1/2 somersaults, 1 twist, pike position - Level of difficulty 3.0.

year.” In a frenzy, Coach McRae asks, “what do you have to lose?” Ed replies, “my freedom. Saturday is still the Sabbath, and I go to church on Sunday. Most of your meets are on the weekends. God comes first.” Realizing he will get nowhere with Ed, Coach McRae tells Ed, “when you change your mind, let me know.” Ed replies, “thanks. But, I don’t think I’ll be changing my mind anytime soon.” The coach walks away, sorely ticked off that neither Ed nor Amy is considering joining the diving team.

Once Coach McRae is far enough away, Amy tells Ed, “that was kind of fun, messing with him like that.” Ed replies, “yeah, seriously.” Ed then asks, “was my left foot really not pointed correctly?” Amy replies, “slightly. But, it was still a really, really good dive. I just used that as a reason to show him what I can do.” Ed gives Amy a high-five, telling her, “good thinking!” Ed and Amy take a few more dives, then join Pete and Jenny over in the lanes and swim a few laps.

After a good workout, Ed tells Pete, “now, you’ll do better on the test tomorrow, bro.” Pete replies, “I really hope so.” Jenny tells Pete, “don’t worry. You’ll do good. You’ve like already seen all the test questions for both of the tests we have tomorrow.” Pete relents, telling Ed and Jenny, “okay. You guys convinced me. I’ll just relax for the rest of the night.” Jenny tells Pete, “I’ll help you relax.” Amy tells Ed, “yeah. We all need to relax tonight.”

Thursday morning, nearly everyone in the class arrives early for the test. Most students are doing some last minute studying, which will not likely afford them a better grade. At the back of the classroom, Pete casually asks, “does anyone know what’s up with Dana? I’m kind of worried about her.” Jenny asks Pete, “like what do you mean?” Pete replies, “the word is she’s missed more than half her classes and she’s having some sort of meltdown. I heard she’s now in the hospital or something.”

Amy thinks back to Monday night and blurts out, “oops.” Jenny asks Amy, “uh oh. What’s up, girl?” Amy pulls up the picture on her phone that she took of Dana when she was vaping, and shows it to Jenny, Ed, and Pete. Ed comments, “wow! She looks really frightened!” Amy replies, “yeah. I know, right?”

Wondering how and when Amy got the photo, Jenny exclaims, “what? How did you get this pic, girl?” Amy explains, “Monday night, after we were studying, I went outside for a few minutes. When I was coming back in, I saw Dana hiding out behind the bushes, so I thought she was spying on me again. So, I called out her name, and she like turned around in a panic. That’s when I took the photograph. I suppose I was wrong. She wasn’t spying on me this time.”

Shocked at what she is seeing, Jenny exclaims, asking, “has anyone else like seen this?” Amy replies, “no. I totally forgot about it until now.” Amy continues explaining, “then, when I went back inside, she had some sort of panic attack and started banging on the door. I just went inside, got my shower, and went to bed.” Jenny replies, “that girl is like seriously psycho. She’s probably resorted to drinking.”

Dr. Lawrence walks in, and the class immediately quiets down. As she is passing out the examination, Dr. Lawrence announces, “please place your books, phones, and backpacks on the floor. You will have forty-five minutes to complete this examination. If you finish early, please check your work or feel free to take a nap like some of you usually do in my class.” Dr. Lawrence obviously knows that waking up for an 8:00 a.m. class is far too much to ask for some of her students. The test scores will alert her to exactly whom those students are.

Receiving his test booklet, Ed smiles, as he has seen every question on the test before. Ed also knows that Amy, Jenny, and Pete have also seen all of the questions on the test before. Knowing the answer to every question on the test, Pete might just believe Ed that working out the day before the test is far better than any last-minute studying. Finishing the test early, Amy sits back in her seat and wonders what Dana’s problem really is.

Class lets out, and the consensus among the students is that the examination was a bit more difficult than expected. Ed, Amy, Pete, and Jenny, however, have a different opinion. Ed asks Amy, “so, how did you do?” Amy replies, “really good! I think I got an A!” Jenny exclaims, “I think I like got an A, too!” Pete tells Ed, “you might be right about not studying before the day of the test.” Ed replies, “well, having the test questions ahead of time helps a little too.” With thirty minutes before their next class, the group hangs out in the plaza in front of the student center, relaxing instead of doing some last-minute cramming for their next test.

Thursday afternoon, Jenny meets with Joe Sugarman in the school cafeteria to learn what Joe found by looking at her DNA. Walking up, Jenny sees Joe sitting at a table reviewing a few pieces of paper. All excited, Jenny announces, “hi! So, you found out what’s wrong with me?” Joe replies, “I did. And, it’s really very simple. Take a seat, and we’ll go over it.” Jenny tells Joe, “before we begin, I want to get a cup of coffee. Can I get you anything?” Joe tells Jenny, “forget the coffee. Trust me. Drink some water instead.” Jenny gets a glass of water for herself and one for Joe. Returning to the table, Jenny is eager to find out why she never sleeps well.

Bouncing up and down on her seat showing her excitement, Jenny asks, “so, what did you find out?” Joe replies, “I found two problems, not one. So, that will be two slices of pizza.” Jenny tells Joe, “I’ll buy you like a dozen pizzas if you can fix me.” Joe replies, “you don’t really have to buy me a slice of pizza. That’s just my personality. I always tell people it will cost them big time. Then, I enjoy seeing how they respond when I tell them the cost is a slice of pizza.” Jenny tells Joe, “you’re getting your pizza, Joe. You really deserve it.” Truth is, Joe will go out of his way to help anyone he can.

Getting down to business, Joe asks Jenny, “have you ever heard of glutamate?” Jenny asks, “like in monosodium glutamate?” Joe replies, “exactly! I’ll make a biochemist out of you yet.” Joe then explains, “glutamate is the brain’s primary excitatory neurotransmitter. There’s an enzyme, called glutamate decarboxylase, that converts glutamate to gamma aminobutyric acid, or GABA for short. GABA is the brain’s primary inhibitory neurotransmitter. Now, here’s problem number one. You have a defect in the glutamate decarboxylase enzyme, so you can’t convert the excitatory glutamate to the inhibitory GABA very well. So, you have too much of the excitatory glutamate, which is keeping you awake, and not much of the inhibitory GABA, which allows you to sleep and relax.” Jenny replies, asking, “so, too much glutamate is like making me not sleep?” Joe replies, “exactly! You’re on your way to becoming a biochemist!”

Jenny asks, “so, how do we fix it?” Joe replies, “it’s simple. First, don’t ever eat anything that has monosodium glutamate in it. It will keep you up all night long. Staying away from stimulants, like caffeine, will also help. To fix the problem, though, you’ll have to take a supplement that has taurine, GABA, and glycine in it. Take the supplement in the evening about an hour before you go to bed. You can get the supplement at the vitamin store near the mall. And, you’re in luck. There’s a supplement on the market that has all three of those ingredients combined in it. You’ll sleep like a baby.”

Now curious, Jenny asks Joe, “then, why does having a glass of wine like always help me sleep?” Joe explains, “that’s a really good question. Alcohol mimics the action of gamma aminobutyric acid in the brain. So, when you have a glass of wine, the alcohol activates the GABA receptors, which are inhibitory in nature, and you sleep better. Does that make sense?” Jenny exclaims, “totally!”

Jenny then asks, “so, why is it that when I don’t have a glass of wine for three weeks, I stay up all night long and like fall asleep in class?” Joe explains, “that’s a little more complicated. Not sleeping is a form of stress to the body. Stress stresses your adrenal glands, and you eventually end up with an inverted circadian rhythm. And, it’s all downhill

from there. But, if you take the supplement, you should never get to that point.” Jenny replies, “got it.”

Jenny asks, “so, what’s my second problem?” Joe replies, “the expression of your MAO-A and your MAO-B enzymes are a lot less than what we would call textbook normal. That causes you to have higher activity of dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, phenylethylamine, and a few other excitatory neurotransmitters. God gave you a lot of excitatory neurotransmitters, but not a whole lot of the inhibitory ones. That’s probably why you’re so smart.” Jenny asks, “what do we do about that?” Joe replies, asking, “what? You don’t want to be smart?” Jenny laughs, and replies, “no! The high activity of all those neurotransmitters.” Joe replies, “nothing just yet. Let’s see how the supplement does first.” As an afterthought, Joe advises Jenny, “oh, and don’t ever take an antidepressant. By day two or three, you’ll land in the emergency room.” Jenny replies, “got it.”

Jenny asks Joe, “can you write down the name of the supplement for me?” Handing Jenny a piece of paper, Joe replies, “I already did. Start with one in the evening about an hour before you go to bed. I think you’ll notice the difference right away. You can bump it up to two if you’re still not sleeping well. And, if you feel like you’re really sleepy the next day, you can always skip a day.”

Since Jenny’s problem is obviously one of a genetic nature, Joe asks Jenny, “do your parents sleep well?” Jenny replies, “they never did. Neither does my sister.” Joe tells Jenny, “that’s the first law of genetics at work.” Jenny asks, “what’s the first law of genetics?” Joe replies, “the first law of genetics is ‘choose your parents carefully.’” Jenny laughs, and exclaims, “you can’t choose your parents!” Joe laughs, and tells Jenny, “I know. That’s the geneticist’s joke.”

Jenny asks Joe, “is there any chance that you can look at Amy’s DNA sometime?” Joe replies, “sure. I’ll be glad to. What’s Amy’s problem?” Jenny explains, “I don’t know how much she’ll tell you, but everyone in her family like has severe depression. Amy doesn’t want to go down that path. She’s been really happy ever since she met Ed, but something is going on with her. I’ve known her like since the fifth grade.” Joe confidently reassures Jenny, “if there’s something in her genes, I’ll find it.” Jenny tells Joe, “you’re so sweet, Joe. I’m sure Amy will really appreciate it.”

Jenny tells Joe, “thank you so much for finding this. I’m going to the vitamin store like right now and get my supplement.” Jenny then asks, “when do you want your pizza?” Joe replies, “that’s okay. You don’t have to do anything for me. I’m just glad I could help.” Jenny tells Joe, “no, Joe. You’re coming with us to get pizza after the fellowship meeting

tomorrow!” Joe replies, “okay. If you insist, I’ll come.” Jenny replies, “I insist. So, hold off on your dinner. The pizza will taste a lot better.” Joe smiles, and replies, “believe me. I know that.”

Joe and Jenny talk for a while longer, but then Joe has to head to class where he teaches freshman chemistry. Again thanking Joe for his hard work, Jenny heads back to her dorm to drop off her books. Jenny then cuts class, driving up to the vitamin store near the mall to get the supplement that Joe recommended.

Friday morning, the alarm suddenly goes off, playing the annoying tone that usually causes Jenny to abruptly spring out of bed. This morning, Amy stumbles out of bed first, and shuts off the alarm. Still a bit wobbly, Amy begins to get ready for class. Amy walks out of the bathroom and, gently shaking Jenny, announces, “hey! Wake up, girl! We’re going to be late for class!” Jenny slowly opens her eyes and asks, “what? What day is it?” Amy replies, “it’s Friday! Come on, sleepy head, get up!” Jenny replies, “oh, yeah. Friday. I guess we have to get to class.” Amy tells Jenny, “yeah. You’d better hurry up and get ready.” Jenny sits up, and comments, “so, this is sleep. Wow. I never knew.”

Amy and Jenny leave for class, albeit a little late. Not seeing Ed and Pete waiting for them on the retaining wall at the corner, Jenny comments, “I guess Pete and Ed left without us.” Amy replies, “they probably thought that we already left for class.” Jenny tells Amy, “I’m going to text Pete.” Jenny texts to Pete, “Where are you?” Pete texts back, “Almost to class. I thought you left.” Jenny texts back, “Nope. Overslept. On my way.”

On the way to class, seeing that Jenny slept through the entire night, Amy tells Jenny, “I wonder if Joe can find my problem.” Jenny replies, “I talked to him about that yesterday. He said he’d be glad to take a look.” Amy tells Jenny, “maybe I’ll talk to him after the meeting tonight.” Jenny informs Amy, “I invited Joe to get pizza with us tonight after the meeting. You can definitely talk to him about it then.” Amy and Jenny walk into class fifteen minutes late, something Jenny has never done before in her life.

Friday evening, Ed, Amy, Pete, and Jenny arrive at the student center for the weekly Interdenominational Campus Fellowship meeting. Seeing Joe standing in the back of the room, Jenny rushes up, gives him a hug, and tells him, “I slept so wonderful last night! I like never knew what sleep was until last night!” Glad to hear the good news, Joe replies, “good! I told you we’d find it.” Jenny again tells Joe, “thank you so much.” Jenny then asks, “and, you’re still coming with us for pizza later, right?” Joe replies, “I’ve been looking forward to it all day.”

Walking in next is Rodney Steele, who appears to be a little on the angry side tonight. Some would argue that Rodney is always a little on the angry side. They would be correct. Making a beeline toward Donna and Theresa, Rodney gives them an update on Dana. Occasionally glancing over at Amy, Rodney appears to be very concerned about something.

Ed quietly announces, “here comes trouble,” as he sees Rodney head straight for Amy. In an accusatory tone, Rodney bluntly tells Amy, “Dana isn’t going to be with us tonight. And, it just happens to be all your fault.” Waiting to see how Amy handles the situation, Ed gives Rodney a look that sends a clear message that he’d better not cross the line. Rodney’s immediate problem is that he does not know where Ed’s line is. Amy replies, “good evening to you, too. And, I’m sure whatever I did is my fault. So what?” Rodney quietly exclaims, “have you no compassion?” Amy replies, “I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about. So, either explain yourself, or go away.”

Rodney waves over to Donna, who briskly walks over. Rodney instructs Donna, “please explain to Amy what happened to Dana.” Donna looks at Amy, explaining, “Dana is in the hospital. She had a nervous breakdown.” Amy asks, “so, what does that have to do with me?” Donna continues, “she said you mentally tortured her, and that you’re out to get her. She says you’re trying to destroy her. And, she’s so heartbroken that you’re going out with Ed, and she wanted to date Ed. And, that’s only the beginning.” Amy rolls her eyes, not even knowing how to begin to respond to Donna’s rapid fire ridiculous accusations.

Jumping into the conversation, Ed tells Donna and Rodney, “I was never interested in Dana. She’s not my type. So, you can put that one to rest.” Rodney responds to Ed, by telling him, “that’s not what Dana has been telling us.” Ed replies, “shut up, Steele. I don’t care what Dana has been telling you. If you hadn’t noticed by now, Dana’s life is one big mess. I wouldn’t date Dana if she was the last girl on this campus.” Rodney tells Ed, “now, that wasn’t a very nice thing to say.” Ed replies, “so what, Steele. Do something about it.” Apparently, Rodney has found one line he should not have crossed. To his credit, Rodney clearly knows when to back down when dealing with Ed.

Seeing that Ed has absolutely no fear in handling Rodney, Amy tells Rodney and Donna, “well, it sounds like Dana is right where she needs to be, in the hospital. I’ll put her on my prayer list.” Suddenly tongue tied, Rodney wants to respond, but can’t. Amy turns toward Donna, and informs her, “and, by the way, I didn’t torture Dana. In case you haven’t noticed, Dana is the one who has been posting pictures of me and Jenny all over social media. And, you know what? I could have posted pics of Dana too, but, unlike you and Dana, I have a sense of decency.” About to

pop a cork, Donna angrily, but quietly, exclaims, “what are you talking about?”

Amy grabs her purse and gets out her cell phone. Showing Rodney and Donna the photo she took of Dana vaping, Amy tells them, “I could have posted this, but I didn’t.” Taking a look at the pic, Donna exclaims, “wow! That’s Dana! I never knew!” Shutting down the conversation, Amy tells Donna, “there’s probably a lot you don’t know. So, kindly stop posting pics of me online, and please stop all your gossiping.” Rodney, seeing the pic of Dana vaping, for once, has nothing to say. Ed, clearly seeing that Amy is very upset, tells Rodney, “why don’t you start the meeting, Steele? And, I strongly suggest that you don’t bother Amy about this again. Got it?”

Rodney pulls Ed aside, and asks him, “can you please call me Rodney?” Ed replies, “sure. No problem, Steele. You got it.” Now sorely irritated, Rodney asks Ed, “for once, can’t you be nice?” Ed points his finger in the air and, shaking his finger several times, whispers to Rodney, “you know, Steele, you’re walking a very fine line. And, I know your little secret. So, you’d better watch out.” Rodney, who dares not confront Ed further, angrily walks away.

Putting on a cheery face, Rodney opens the meeting, announcing, “okay, everyone. We’re ready to get started.” Those in the room get quiet, and Rodney opens the meeting, praying, “Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together again this week. We ask that, during our time of fellowship this evening, that Your Name be exalted above all. And, we ask that You be with those who, for one reason or another, could not be with us this evening.” As Rodney continues to pray, starting more rumors, Donna whispers to Theresa that Amy has a pic of Dana vaping. Rodney concludes his prayer and, with everyone’s eyes now open, Donna and Theresa stop whispering to each other.

Rodney announces, “as some of you may already know, Dana couldn’t be with us tonight. So, if there is someone here who would like to lead the singing, please feel free to come up to the stage.” Hearing Rodney’s cue, the praise band takes the stage. No one immediately volunteers, so Rodney decides that he will lead the worship in song tonight.

During the first number, Amy whispers to Ed, asking, “what’s Rodney’s problem, anyway?” Ed whispers back, “he’s the modern day equivalent of a Pharisee. But, I think he’ll leave us alone now.” Amy whispers to Ed, “good. Because, he doesn’t know anything about me.” Ed whispers back, “exactly. All he’s concerned with is the outside of the cup and appearances, just like the Pharisees were.” Amy finally understands why Ed, Pete, and Jenny call Rodney a Pharisee.

After two more numbers, Rodney announces, “I believe, tonight, we’re going to hear from Joe Sugarman, and what the Lord is doing in his life. For those of you who don’t know, Joe has been with our group longer than anyone else. If I am not mistaken, this is Joe’s eighth year with the Interdenominational Campus Fellowship. Please give a warm welcome to Joe Sugarman.” The group claps as Joe makes his way to the stage from the back of the room.

Joe thanks his audience for the warm welcome, telling them, “thank you. Thank you.” The clapping subsides, and Joe begins, “good evening all of my friends. As Rodney mentioned, this is my eighth year at the University. With any luck, I’ll be getting out this Spring along with some of you. Did you ever notice that no one ever says, ‘I graduate in the Spring’? Everyone always says, ‘I get out in the Spring’, as if going to college is some sort of prison sentence.” The group laughs, pleased to hear Joe’s cheerful and relaxed demeanor.

Joe asks the group, “how many of you have heard of the *Eddie, The Mechanic* book series?” A few people raise their hands and, showing his excitement, Joe continues, “I started reading the series at the same time I started on my Ph.D. In the series, the main character is a guy named Eddie Bogenskaya. Eddie is the all-American guy. In high school, Eddie ran track, and was the fastest guy around. When Eddie was a freshman, he was one of the strongest guys in the high school. Eddie was even witty in the classroom. And, Eddie even got the girl that everyone else wanted. Eddie never lost! Even when it looked like Eddie was going to lose, Eddie managed to find a way to win! As if that’s not enough, Eddie has several friends that are just as much of a winner as he is.”

Joe then reminisces, “when I was reading the second book in the series, *Eddie, The Freshman Year*, I thought back to when I was in my high school years. When I was in high school, I would have liked to have been Eddie Bogenskaya. Who wouldn’t? Eddie had everything going for him. But, back in my high school days, I was no Eddie Bogenskaya.” Many students are wondering what a fictional book series has to do with what the Lord is doing in Joe’s life. Rodney, for one, sitting with his arms crossed, was expecting to hear something more of a spiritual nature.

Joe then quiets down a bit, and tells the group, “but, I had one problem. When I was in high school, I was at least seventy-five pounds overweight. I was the guy who was always last to be picked for a team in gym class. By the time I started my Ph.D. program here at the University, I was more than one hundred pounds overweight. When I weighed three hundred pounds, everyone was telling me that I should lose weight, as if I didn’t already know that. When you weigh three hundred pounds, it’s really hard to find clothes that fit. When you weigh three hundred pounds, your car seat wears out in twenty thousand miles. When you

weigh three hundred pounds, it's kind of hard to get a date with a girl. Maybe you get the picture.”

Revealing part of the storyline of *Eddie, The Freshman Year*, Joe explains, “when I was reading the second book in the series, I learned that Eddie discovers that he has every genetic quality associated with being a sprinter. But, Eddie also finds out that he has a serious genetic issue, called methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase deficiency, or MTHFR for short. Because of Eddie’s MTHFR genetic issue, Eddie must take a special form of folic acid, called methylfolate, which is in the B vitamin group. Now, I won’t tell you how Eddie found out that he had this problem. I don’t want to spoil the story for you.”

Joe then explains to the group, “so, when I finished reading the second book in the series, I decided to have my own genes sequenced. I spent countless hours going over my own genetics, endlessly searching for some reason that I could not lose weight no matter how hard I tried. After about a week, I discovered that I was born with my own genetic deficiency. What I discovered is that I have something called a renal carnitine transport defect.”

Explaining further, Joe continues, “now, what exactly is carnitine? Carnitine is something the body produces that allows fatty acids to enter the mitochondria where they can be used to make energy. Without carnitine, fat cannot enter the mitochondria, and therefore cannot be used for energy. My body makes enough carnitine, but the vast majority of it goes out in my urine. Unlike all of you, my kidneys do not retain carnitine. So, fatty acids build up in the cells, which can eventually damage the liver, heart, and muscles. So, my body was able to store fat, but unable to burn fat for energy. No wonder I couldn’t lose weight! There was no way for me to metabolize any of the fat that I was eating.”

Explaining his solution to the problem he discovered, Joe continues, “to solve this problem, I started taking several grams of carnitine a day, started exercising, and limited the fat in my diet. But, I still like a slice or two of pizza occasionally. I’m from New York. What can I say? When I first saw the weight coming off, I was skeptical. But, after a few weeks, I dropped ten pounds and I was very encouraged. And, here I am, two years later, down ninety pounds and twenty more to go.”

Joe then addresses specific members of the fellowship group, telling them, “now, I’m sure that a number of you will quote to me certain verses in the Bible that say the sins of one generation will be passed down to the third and fourth generations. I know those verses very well. If you want to look those verses up, let me help you. They are Exodus, chapter 20, verses 5 and 6; Exodus, chapter 34, verse 7; Deuteronomy, chapter 5, verse 9; and perhaps a few more. Some of you may also tell me that I

should live with the genetic problem that I inherited. I'm sure the same people who tell me that I should live with my genetic issue are the same people who would accuse me of the sin of gluttony." Many members of the fellowship, knowing exactly to whom Joe is referring, laugh at Joe's comment. Ed whispers to Amy, "Joe is talking about Rodney and the rest of the Pharisees." Amy laughs, and replies, "believe it or not, I can see that now."

Addressing the larger audience, Joe continues, "but, let us all be reminded of First Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 19, where it states, 'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?' If the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, should we not be doing everything we can to treat our bodies in the same manner as the Jewish people treated The Temple in Jerusalem during Old Testament times? Of course we should!"

Joe pauses for a moment, then explains to his audience, "so, I asked myself, 'how many other people out there have problems of a genetic nature?' We must remember that God has complete control over our genetic makeup. If God allowed me to have a weight problem and gave me the ability to find my specific solution, shouldn't I be doing the same for others? As far as where I am today, I believe the Lord is leading me in that direction."

Joe lowers his voice a bit, and tells his audience, "I've also learned the secret to keeping the weight off. This is the biggest kept secret in the world. Do you guys want to hear it?" A good number of people reply, "yes." Joe looks around the room as if he is making sure it is safe to divulge the world's biggest secret. Ed looks at Pete, already knowing the secret that Joe is about to divulge to the group, for it was Ed who told Joe the secret.

Joe then announces, "many of you don't need to hear this secret right now but, in about ten or twenty years, it might be a different story. The secret to keeping weight off is never, under any circumstances, buy any clothes larger than the size you want to be. The only exception is when a woman gets pregnant. If you have a 32-inch waist, once you buy size 34 jeans, in no time you'll be up to a size 36. Then, it's on to size 38. It will never end! And, if you are trying to lose weight, once you get down to the size you want to be, throw away all your clothes larger than that size. Do not keep them! If you keep them, you are not committed to keeping the weight off!" While the secret Joe divulged is quite simple, it, in fact, works.

Joe then concludes, "let me leave you with this. When I weighed three hundred pounds, I had a few good friends here in this fellowship. You know who you are. I just want to take this time to thank my few true

friends who didn't judge me when I weighed three hundred pounds. And, I would also like to thank the two guys who help me in the gym, and push me far beyond what I would normally do myself. Thank you for listening to me this evening. I hope I said something to encourage someone here tonight."

Stepping down from the stage, Joe waves to the crowd, receiving a standing ovation from the group. Arriving at the back of the room, Joe receives a high-five from Ed and Pete, for they are the two guys who have been coaching Joe in the gym for the last two years.

Rodney takes the stage, and announces, "thank you, Joe," followed by even more applause for Joe. Rodney, a bit Jealous of Joe, secretly wishes the applause were for him. Once the applause subsides, Rodney announces, "we will now continue to worship the Lord in song." The band plays, and Rodney leads the group in their final number of the evening as the offering plate is passed around. Rodney then closes the meeting with prayer, and the group breaks up for the evening.

After the meeting, Jenny asks Joe, "you're still coming with us to get pizza, aren't you?" Joe smiles, and replies, "I wouldn't miss it for the world." Joe then asks Jenny, "do you mind if Brittany comes?" Jenny replies, "of course not! We'd love to have her join us." A small group gathers around Joe, and a few others are invited to get pizza with the group. As expected, Donna and Theresa eavesdrop on those who typically hang out in the back of the room.

On the way to the pizzeria, Amy asks Joe, "is there any chance that I can get you to look at my DNA sometime?" Joe replies, "sure. I can do that." Joe then asks Amy, "what's the problem?" Telling part of her story, Amy replies, "a lot of people in my family suffer from depression. And, I don't want to take antidepressants. They just made my sister worse, and they did absolutely nothing for my father." Joe asks, "how about your mother? Is she depressed?" Amy replies, "I'm not exactly sure if she was or not." Joe reassures Amy, "if the problem is in your genes, it should be easy enough to find." Seeing how easily Joe found Jenny's problem, Amy feels very encouraged.

Joe then asks Amy, "has your DNA ever been sequenced?" Amy replies, "yeah. I did one of those genetic tests a year ago." Joe instructs Amy, "email your raw genetic file to me, and I'll get working on it sometime this weekend." As they approach the pizzeria, Amy emails her genetic file to Joe. Amy sincerely hopes that Joe can find her problem just as easily as he found Jenny's problem.

At the pizzeria, the group finds a large table, then a few guys go up and place an order for drinks and a few large pizzas. Tonight, Jenny is

forgoing the wine, and having a glass of water instead. And, after Joe found out why Jenny can't sleep, Jenny is happy to buy Joe's dinner tonight. Truth is, Joe enjoys being out with the group far more than the pizza.

While they are waiting for dinner to be ready, Amy checks her phone, and mentions to Ed, "the diving pictures I posted of us have gone viral." Showing her excitement, Amy tells Ed, "I got a message from someone in the yearbook! They want me to give them permission to use the pictures of us diving in the yearbook." Ed replies, "tell them yes." Amy smiles, and replies to the message, giving the yearbook staff permission to publish her photos.

Scrolling through her messages, Amy tells Ed, "I got another message. They want me to work with the yearbook as a photographer." Ed asks, "are you going to do it?" Amy thinks for a second, and replies, "I think not. I like to do photography for fun. Once it becomes work, that takes all the fun out of it." Ed tells Amy, "kind of like me and diving." Amy replies, "yeah, exactly."

Jenny jokingly asks Pete, "didn't you invite Dana to join us? I thought she'd be really happy that I'm like not having a glass of wine tonight." With his own sense of humor, Pete replies, "you know, I forgot. Totally my fault. Shame on me." Amy asks, "would they even let her out of the hospital to get pizza?" Jenny replies, "not the kind of hospital that she's probably in, girl. They probably have her like in a straight jacket or something and pumped full of meds."

Not five more seconds go by, and Jenny announces, "dang. Don't look now, but Donna, Theresa, the Pharisees, and the praise band just walked in." Pete tells Jenny, "maybe they'll post a picture of you drinking water." Jenny laughs, and replies, "yeah. I know, right? And then, they'll accuse me of turning my water into wine!" Those at Jenny's table laugh hysterically, and are quite sure that Rodney overheard Jenny's joke.

The waiter brings several pizzas to the table, and the group digs in. Joe again tells Jenny, "thank you so much for inviting us. I haven't had a good slice of pizza in two weeks." Jenny replies, "no problem, Joe. We're glad to have you join us." Joe reveals, "I don't really go out to eat a lot. I try to keep my diet very low in fat. That's hard to do when you eat at restaurants. But, when I do go out, nothing is better than a good slice of pizza." Jenny suggests to Joe and the others around the table, "maybe we should make getting pizza after our fellowship meeting a weekly thing." Everyone at the table agrees that going out for pizza on Friday nights would be a good thing to do.

Interrupting the conversation, Rodney walks over, and asks Ed, “may I please have a word with you?” Ed replies, “sure, Steele. Have a seat.” Rodney tells Ed, “I meant in private.” Ed bluntly tells Rodney, “I’m in the middle of dinner right now, junior. Whatever it is, it can wait.” Rodney insists, “this is extremely important!” Ed calmly replies, “it’s not more important than my dinner. So, take a hike, Steele. Whatever it is, it can wait.” Realizing he is getting absolutely nowhere with Ed, Rodney walks back to his group, taking a seat at the head of the table.

Amy asks Ed, “what’s up with Rodney?” Ed replies, “he was about to dump a whole bunch of emotional vomit all over my dinner, so I told him to take a hike.” Amy laughs, and tells Ed, “emotional vomit. That’s really funny!” Ed whispers to Amy, “and, see? He really is a Pharisee. He likes sitting at the head of the table.” Back at his own table, Rodney takes notice of Ed and Amy laughing and, as usual, will come to the wrong conclusion. Amy tells Ed, “Rodney sounded like he was really ticked off at something.”

Overhearing Ed and Amy’s conversation, Joe whispers to them, “Rodney is always angry about something. He has a deeply rooted spiritual problem. He’s always trying to fix his spiritual problems using Earthly measures. You can’t do that. Spiritual problems must be dealt with on the spiritual level.” Ed whispers back, “that’s a good point. I can see that.” Joe advises Ed and Amy, “don’t let him bother you.”

Joe’s comments to Ed and Amy regarding Rodney does not come without a history behind it. When Rodney was a freshman, Joe began working on his master’s degree in chemistry. At that time, Joe taught two classes of freshman chemistry lab. Joe just happened to be Rodney’s instructor for that class. What Joe has never mentioned to anyone is that, back then, Rodney quite often referred to Joe as “fat Albert”. Rodney’s secret was out when Joe caught Rodney yelling across the lab to his friend, “hey! Where’s fat Albert today?” As it turns out, Joe just happened to walk into the lab through the back door three seconds earlier and heard Rodney’s comment. Later that year, during Spring semester when Rodney joined the Interdenominational Campus Fellowship, Rodney was quite embarrassed when he saw Joe at the meeting. Rodney was, of course, hoping that Joe did not recognize him. Since then, Rodney has pretended to show Joe a lot of respect.

After dinner, the group heads back to campus. On the way, Amy tells Joe, “thank you again for looking at my DNA. I can’t wait to see if you find something.” Joe replies, “no problem. I’ll let you know as soon as I find anything.”

Pete asks Joe, “are you going to join me and Ed at the gym tomorrow morning?” Joe replies, “I’ll definitely be there.” Jenny replies, “so will I.

That is, if I like wake up on time.” Amy assures Jenny, “don’t worry, girl. I’ll get you out of bed in time.” Until Joe found Jenny’s genetic problem, oversleeping was something that was completely foreign to Jenny.

Later that night, when Ed walks Amy back to her dorm, Ed tells Amy, “Rodney has a secret.” Amy asks Ed, “oh really? What’s Rodney’s secret?” Ed replies, “I don’t exactly know. But, I know he has one.” Amy asks, “how can you know that?” Ed explains, “during the meeting tonight, Rodney pulled me aside, and asked me if I can please call him Rodney. I told him, ‘no problem, Steele. You got it.’ He got ticked off at me, so I told him, ‘Steele, you’re walking a fine line. And, I know your little secret. So, you’d better watch out.’ I was just messing with him. That’s probably what he wanted to talk about back at the restaurant.” Amy exclaims, “wow! You’re right! He has to have a secret! Or else, how would he be so worried about it?” Ed replies, “exactly. And, not to mention, he fell for the oldest trick in the book.”