

Eddie, The Early Years

Chapter Two Summer

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On a sunny Summer's day, Mark's mother, Mariana, runs into Eddie's mother, Nina, at the local farmers market, which is quite a frequent occurrence. Nina and Mariana both shop on Friday afternoon, right after the new shipments arrive, and at least one other time during the week. By Saturday morning, the food has been picked over, and neither want to put second rate food on the table for their families. Two or three trips per week assures that the food is always fresh.

Nina mentions to Mariana, "the blueberries look good today." Mariana replies, "be sure to get a cantaloupe. They have the better fresh ones this week." After comparing notes about what is fresh or a good deal, they continue shopping on their own. Nina and Mariana also have their own gardens at home. Their gardens produce more than their families can eat, so they exchange the fruits of their labor with each other as well. Occasionally, Nina will bring Mariana a fresh chicken. Nina's parents live a few miles away, and have a small chicken farm and grow their own vegetables.

Meeting up again a few minutes later, Mariana asks Nina, "how's Eddie been doing?" Nina replies, "he's always out riding his bicycle or at the pool swimming laps. He's also cutting a few lawns, cleaning pools, and doing some odd jobs for money this Summer." Nina asks, "and Mark? How has he been doing?" Mariana replies, "oh, he's lifting weights every day and running down the path along the parkway. He says he has to get stronger and in better shape. And, Joe occasionally takes Mark to work with him." This is no surprise to Nina, since Eddie has the same goal of being physically fit. "If he wants to get stronger, I'll show him what work is," Mariana chuckles.

Just then, walks up Kathryn Black, the mother of one of Mark and Eddie's classmates, Charles, also known as Chuckie. Announcing her

unwanted entrance into the conversation, Kathryn sarcastically greets them, saying, “well, well, well, if it isn’t Mariana Svoboda and Nina Bogenskaya.” In the same sarcastic tone, Nina replies, “well, if it isn’t the Kathryn Black,” adding an obviously fake smile. Nina always refers to Mrs. Black as an inanimate object, adding, quite intentionally, the title “the” in front of her name.

Nina, not that she really cares, asks Kathryn, “how is your little Chuckie doing?” Kathryn replies, “he’s doing well, very well.” Kathryn sarcastically asks Nina, “and your son, what is his name?” Nina replies, “Eddie is doing awesome. He had a very good year in track. Thank you very much for asking.” Turning to Mariana, Kathryn, raising the sarcastic tone a notch or two, asks, “and Mark? Did he pass school this year?” “Mark is still alive,” replies Mariana, trying to end the conversation and get rid of the highly toxic unwanted intruder as quickly as possible.

Pretending to have a deep concern regarding Kathryn’s health, Nina informs her, “the lard is on sale today. You should check it out. Pick up a few tubs while you still can.” Perceiving that she has just been insulted, Kathryn moves on, feeling once again like she’s been run over by a freight train just seeing Nina and Mariana. Nina and Mariana have a good laugh, and go on their way again. They’ll meet up again in a few days, hoping not to see Kathryn again anytime soon.

Chuckie, Kathryn’s son, was the school bully in elementary school, and continued his bullying behavior into middle school. Beginning in the sixth grade, Eddie, for some reason, appeared to be Chuckie’s prime target. Eddie simply ignored Chuckie, which fueled Chuckie even more. The proverbial apple, in this case, did not fall far from the tree. Chuckie is just like his mother, both bullies of sorts, but each in their own way. Chuckie once started a fight with Eddie, which proved to be a very big mistake. While other kids are getting taller and stronger, Chuckie is increasing the girth around his mid-section. For some reason, Kathryn blames all of Chuckie’s problems on Eddie. Kathryn, even though her family is well off financially, has a deep resentment of both Nina and Mariana. Nina and Mariana have something that Kathryn, with all her money, could not buy - happiness.

Kathryn, pretending not to know Eddie’s name, knows his name really well. Last Spring, Chuckie tried to get a whole Summers’ tan in one day. All Chuckie got out of that deal were a really bad sunburn and the nickname “pinkie” for a while. In the locker room, after gym class, Chuckie was asking if anyone had any advice for sunburn pain. Eddie piped up with some advice, and told Chuckie, “put some BENGAY on it, and take a really hot shower.” Later that night, Kathryn phoned Nina, giving Nina a piece of her mind. Kathryn tried to convey how bad Eddie was in pulling that stunt. Nina also had something to convey to Kathryn,

which is how stupid Chuckie must have been to use BENGAY on a sunburn.

That was not the first time Kathryn phoned Nina. Over the last three years, Eddie, Mark, Braden, and a few others, routinely took Chuckie out in gym class. Fully convinced that Eddie was behind the carefully orchestrated bullying of her son, Kathryn phoned Nina many times, complaining that Eddie is a bully. What Kathryn does not know is that her son, Chuckie, could easily have won the National Bully of the Year award were one to exist.

For a while, Mark was also a prime target of Chuckie's bullying. Mark would bring his lunch to school, which was usually yogurt, lean meats, vegetables and fresh fruit. Chuckie was always bugging Mark, offering him advice like, "why don't you just get a burger and fries like everyone else." Mark started replying, "because I don't want to look like you," or, "get that chicken fat back to the chicken, junior." No longer effective in badgering Mark, Chuckie quickly moved on, harassing anyone who looked vulnerable. For a while, Mark and Eddie became too formidable a target for Chuckie's moronic mind games.

Neither Nina nor Mariana fully understands the athletic abilities of their sons. They also do not understand the part that they each played over the years in Eddie's and Mark's physical development by feeding them a good diet and encouraging them to exercise. The thought of fast food or eating a school lunch is not on Nina's nor Mariana's list of things to consider. By allowing Eddie and Mark to play outside, ride their bicycles, and get exercise, Eddie's and Mark's parents paved the way for their sons to become superior athletes. But, this is what is normal and natural to them. The results of their clean natural diet, coupled with exercise, will be evident in the upcoming years.

Meanwhile, while the parental units are off shopping at the markets or at work, Eddie is usually working himself, working out, or out riding his bicycle. Eddie typically rides 20 or 30 miles per day a few times during the week, sometimes with friends, and sometimes alone. Eddie would often ride along the paved path along the parkway, which ultimately takes him to the beach. The beach is eleven miles away, which is a very easy ride for Eddie. Eddie will occasionally catch up with Mark on the path, who uses the path for running. Eddie would drop his pace to Mark's running speed, and they would talk for a while. Shifting gears, Eddie would then head down to the beach.

On a hot day, Eddie typically rides his bicycle to the county pool. Eddie is not a fan of the heat. Anything above 90 degrees is a prescription for swimming rather than cycling. Swimming laps in cool water always sounds a lot better than riding in the heat. On rainy days,

Eddie could be found tuning up his bicycle between sets of lifting weights. Eddie has about 250 pounds of weights and a bench, which was given to him by a neighbor. His neighbor moved across country and, since the weights were too expensive to move, he gave them to Eddie. Eddie also does some Summer reading, studying books on working out, not books like Nancy Drew mysteries.

The Fourth of July brings Eddie and his date, Claudia, to a local park, along with Mark and his date, Sharon, to watch the fireworks. They all bicycle together to the park, find a place to lock their bicycles, and walk to the festivities. Mark and Eddie each carry with them a duffel bag, with a few beach towels to lie on the ground, and a small cooler with a few drinks.

On the way, they stop at a restroom since they all keep themselves well-hydrated. Claudia and Sharon get into the line for the ladies' restroom, which is about twenty women long and growing. Eddie and Mark walk right into the men's restroom. Out in a minute or two and seeing the long line to use the ladies' restroom, Eddie walks up to Claudia and Sharon, and whispers to them, "when we wave to you, run up and use the men's restroom." Claudia whispers, "what are you guys up to now?" Eddie whispers back to Claudia, "just trust me." Eddie then runs back to join Mark.

Meanwhile, Mark counts the number of men currently occupying the men's restroom. "How many?" inquires Eddie when he returns. Mark replies, "three." To keep track of the occupancy, Mark tells Eddie, "I'll count up, and you count down." Mark and Eddie have it all planned out. When someone walks into the restroom, the count goes up. When someone walks out, the count goes down. "Four," Mark says to Eddie, as someone walks in. "Two," replies Eddie, as a father and son walk out, followed quickly by "one," as someone else leaves.

Some guy stops and asks Mark and Eddie, "what are you guys counting?" Eddie replies, "we work for the park department, and we're monitoring peak restroom demand." The guy nods his head, indicating that he actually believes Eddie, and moves on. The process of counting up and down continues for a few more minutes. A few others wonder why Eddie and Mark are counting the number of visitors to the restroom. Eddie finally announces to Mark the long awaited "zero."

Mark and Eddie wave to their dates, who run quickly from their line into the men's restroom. Half of the 30 or so women now waiting in the women's line, figuring out what just happened, also rush to the men's restroom. Eddie and Mark have a good laugh as they see ten women now lined up in front of the men's restroom. While they wait for their girls, Eddie and Mark are amused by the men who walk up, and find no facility

to use. In a few minutes, the group moves on, leaving the crowd with two ladies' restrooms and no men's restroom.

The group walks through the crowd, looking for a place to sit and chill. They catch a glimpse of Axel Braden with another girl from school, Wendy. Eddie, already pulling the towels out of his duffel bag, asks Braden, "do you got room for a few more, bro?" Braden replies, "sure. Pull up a towel," as he is laying on a towel himself, staring at the sky.

Mark casually mentions to Braden, "if you're working on your suntan, bro, you got to do that during the day when the sun is up." Braden, who is African American, replies jokingly, "you're looking a little pale, Mark. Are you sick or something?" Wendy comments, "you guys are too funny." Wendy is as light skinned as one can be, with blonde hair that has seen a couple bottles of Sun-In this Summer.

The group is quite chilled out, with a very different energy level than during the last track meet of the season. Not much conversation goes on, just relaxation and watching fireworks. Eddie asks Braden, "what have you been up to this Summer?" Braden replies, "working out. I bought a barbell set and a bench." Braden is already built like a tank and has chest muscles bigger than most of the girls' breasts. A few minutes later, Braden asks Eddie, "so, what have you been doing?" Eddie pauses to think for a moment, since his brain has checked out a while ago. Eddie finally replies, "working out, riding my bicycle, cutting a few lawns, and cleaning a few pools." Braden tells Eddie, "wow! You're really busy this Summer." As the finale goes off, a little more life comes into the chilled-out group as they slowly drift back to reality.

After the finale, everyone stands up to say goodbye. "See you later, bro," Eddie utters to Braden, as if he had just awakened. Braden replies, "catch you later." Mark tells Braden, "good seeing you," as he gives Braden a fist-bump after picking up his towel. Claudia and Sharon, who are a little less vocal, give Wendy a hug. Braden and Wendy then head off in the other direction. Eddie and Mark, along with their dates, walk back to where they locked up their bicycles. On the way home, they decide to take the long way, just to get more exercise.

Mark, Eddie, and their dates ride around town for a while to see if there is anyone to catch up with. At 11:00 p.m., there is not much action around town. Everyone is just getting home from any fireworks they were out watching earlier. Anyone that was watching fireworks on TV is probably in bed already. As they pass Angelo's Service Station on the corner, Eddie and Claudia go straight, Mark and Sharon hang a right. "Catch you in a few days," Mark yells out to Eddie. "It's been fun," Eddie replies. The girls also exchange goodbyes and everyone is on their way.

The next morning, on Monday, Eddie wakes up early to beat the heat because he has the usual three or four lawns to cut. Eddie cuts lawns and cleans a few pools two or three days a week, giving him the remaining four or five days to himself. What Eddie doesn't finish today, he'll finish on Wednesday or Thursday, depending on the weather.

Walking down the street to a lawn a few doors down with the lawnmower and some other equipment stacked on top of it, Eddie runs into Larry, a guy from his class. Totally missing the obvious, Larry asks Eddie, "what are you doing?" Eddie replies, "cutting lawns." With a puzzled look on his face, Larry asks, "why?" Eddie replies firmly, "to make money. That's why." Giving Eddie some words of wisdom, Larry responds, "it's hard work. You'll get all dirty and sweaty." Coming from a family with a history of desk jobs, Larry will probably follow in their footsteps. The conversation goes nowhere. Fortunately, Eddie has arrived at the lawn he needs to cut, and says to Larry, "I got to go."

Starting the lawnmower with one strong pull, Eddie goes to work. Eddie's lawnmower is not self-propelled. He has to push it, giving him a good workout as he mows. When he finishes the job, Eddie knocks on the door, collects his money from Mrs. Lacy, and heads off to the next lawn on today's list. At the end of the workday, which is 1:00 p.m. today, Eddie heads home for lunch.

After lunch, Eddie gets on his bicycle, and heads to the pool. The temperature is approaching 90 degrees, so the pool will be a welcome relief from the heat. Upon arriving, Eddie notices the pool is crowded, which is not exactly ideal for swimming laps. But, that doesn't stop him. Diving into the pool at the sparsely populated deep end, Eddie begins swimming his laps. Navigating through the kids playing at the shallow end, he spots a vacant spot along the wall, does his flip turn, and swims back to the deep end. After a while, the deep end clears out and Eddie swims his laps across the pool along the short dimension. After an hour of swimming laps, with only one short break, Eddie is now all cooled off, and heads home.

Later that week, Eddie's sees one of his friends, Peter, riding up on a new bicycle. Eddie comments to Peter, "wow! This is really impressive! When did you get a new bicycle?" as he is looking over the bicycle that is equipped with Campagnolo components and high performance tires. Peter replies, "yesterday. Today is my first real ride." Peter is one of the few who can keep pace with Eddie. With Peter's new bicycle, Eddie might now be the one trying to keep up with Peter. With state of the art components, and a few pounds lighter, Peter's new bicycle gives him a distinct advantage. They go for a quick ride together, and Eddie can see an immediate difference in Peter's performance.

Later that evening, Eddie contemplates that, in order to get in better shape and stronger, a different bicycle might be a better alternative. Eddie remembers that there is a used track bicycle on display in the window at the bicycle shop downtown. With fixed gearing, the track bicycle would force Eddie to work harder when going up hills. There would be no more down shifting to make the ride easier. To Eddie, any money spent on physical fitness is money well spent. Eddie decides that he will head to the bicycle shop and check it out tomorrow.

The next morning, Eddie arrives at Vito's Bicycle Shop at 10:00 a.m. sharp, when the shop is supposed to open. The shop owner, Vito, is nowhere to be found. With the door locked, Eddie looks over the track bicycle through the window. Eddie has seen this bicycle many times before, but never really got a good look at it. The bicycle looks like it is in great shape, with not a scratch on it. Even the tires on the bicycle appear to be new.

A few minutes later, Vito, a 60-year-old bicycle enthusiast, arrives on his bicycle, and opens the shop. Vito asks, "do you need a few parts, Eddie?" Eddie enthusiastically replies, "no. I'm just looking at the track bike in the window." Vito asks Eddie, "do you want to take it out for a spin?" Eddie replies, "sure." Vito has known Eddie for a few years. Whenever Eddie makes an improvement to his bicycle, Vito is Eddie's source for parts and advice.

Before Eddie takes the bicycle out on the road, Vito explains a few things to Eddie about a track bicycle. Giving Eddie the rundown, Vito explains, "this bike has been modified for road use. It has a front brake, but no rear brake, so you have to be careful. And most track bikes have only one rear gear. This one has two. It has a 13-tooth and a 17-tooth, one on each side of the hub. You'd use the 17-tooth gear in hilly areas and the 13-tooth in flat areas. The 17-tooth is free wheeling, and the 13-tooth is fixed. If you want to change gears, you'll have to flip the wheel around. The front chainwheel is a 48-tooth. It also comes with a 54-tooth that I have somewhere in the back." Vito also mentions, "two water bottle mounts and a pump peg have been brazed onto the frame." Fully understanding what Vito explained, Eddie is now ready to take the bicycle on a test ride.

Without hesitation, Eddie gets on the bicycle and takes off down the busy street. The bicycle feels solid, smooth, and very responsive. Eddie notices that starting from a standstill is a lot more work than with his ten-speed. This is partly due to the current setup using the 13-tooth rear sprocket. Going around corners is tricky, since the pedals are always in motion on a track bicycle. Eddie, however, quickly gets the hang of it. Getting up to speed takes a little longer, but Eddie quickly realizes he can ride faster with less effort on the track bicycle.

About ten minutes later, Eddie arrives back at the shop. All excited, Eddie informs Vito, "it rides great!" Vito already knows that. Eddie asks Vito, "how much is it?" Offering Eddie a great deal, Vito puts a generous offer out on the table, "for you, two hundred dollars. I can also sell your bicycle if you'd like." Eddie replies, "let me see what I can come up with."

Before he leaves, Eddie asks Vito, "how much can you get for my bicycle?" Vito responds, "the way you have it built out, probably two hundred fifty, maybe more." Vito's answer surprises Eddie in a positive way. Examining the track bicycle one more time, Eddie searches for that one little flaw that just cannot be found. Eddie lets Vito know that he'll be back tomorrow, and heads home.

Later that night, Eddie thinks over the deal that Vito proposed. Eddie reasons to himself that North of the turnpike is hilly, where the 17-tooth rear sprocket should be fine. South of the turnpike the roads are flat and level, and the 13-tooth will provide a good gear ratio. Eddie also reasons that the 13-tooth sprocket will get him to the beach on the South shore even faster, since it is all flat level ground to the South. At that time, Eddie comes to the realization that he only uses about four speeds of the ten that are available on his bicycle. That about decides it, Eddie is going to take Vito up on his deal.

The next morning, Eddie heads over to Vito's Bicycle Shop again, with a little over two-hundred dollars. Looking over the bicycle one more time as Vito walks up, Eddie tells Vito, "I'll take it." Vito replies, asking, "okay. What do you want me to do with yours?" Eddie asks, "can you sell it for me?" Vito replies, "let me make a quick phone call. I'll be back in a sec."

While Eddie looks over the bicycle in greater detail, Vito walks to the back of the shop to call a prospective buyer. Being in the bicycle business for 40 years, Vito knows who is in the market for what. In five minutes, Vito returns with some good news. Vito exclaims to Eddie, "I found a buyer! I can get you two-hundred-seventy-five dollars for your bicycle!" Vito asks Eddie, "I got him on hold. What should I tell him?" Taking no time to deliberate, Eddie tells Vito, "go for it! I'll take it." Eddie lifts the 18-pound bicycle out of the window display, as Vito goes to the back of the shop to set up the deal.

When Vito returns, he informs Eddie, "he's on his way. He'll be here in an hour or so." Eddie replies, "wow! That was fast!" Vito agrees, telling Eddie, "it was fast. He's admired your bicycle for a while. He's been riding around on a bike that looks like it's been made out of old plumbing tubing." The buyer, like Eddie, frequents Vito's shop. Eddie and Vito walk up to the vintage cash register, and they make the exchange. Vito tells Eddie, "that's two-hundred dollars with the tax." Not wanting to be bothered with details, Vito hates to figure out sales tax. Every price he

quotes is a round number and always includes the sales tax. No sane person would ever want to be Vito's accountant.

After the transaction, Eddie transfers his water bottle and his tool kit to his new bicycle. Eddie asks Vito, "what do you want me to do with mine?" Vito tells him, "I'll put it in the back. Come back later and pick up your money." Vito then mentions, "oh, and I'll find that 54-tooth front sprocket for you. And, there are a few more links to the chain for when you use the 54. I'll find those too." Eddie thanks Vito, and rides home on his new bicycle.

The bicycle Eddie just bought was custom made for a guy named Danny, who also owns a bicycle shop. Danny used to race bicycles, but he broke his ankle last year in a crash, and has been unable to race since. Danny's bicycle shop is primarily oriented toward kids rather than serious riders, so Danny asked Vito to sell the bicycle in his shop. The bicycle Eddie just purchased is a brand new custom-built track bicycle made for Danny. There is not a great demand for track bicycles in the marketplace. Eddie got a great deal because the bicycle has been in the window for more than a year. Eddie paid less than a quarter of what Danny paid for it when it was new.

Later in the afternoon, Eddie arrives again at Vito's shop, riding his new track bicycle. Vito asks Eddie, "so, how do you like it?" Eddie replies, "awesome! I should have bought this a long time ago. I can already tell I'm going to get a better workout." Looking around, and not seeing his old bicycle, Eddie exclaims, "he bought it!" Vito smiles and replies, "that, he did! And he's as happy as you are. And, I have your money. Two-hundred-seventy-five dollars, just like we said."

While Vito and Eddie walk over to the cash register, Eddie asks Vito, "how much do I owe you for selling my bicycle?" "Aw, nothing, Eddie," Vito chuckles, "I was just glad to get that out of my window. You're happy. He's happy. Danny's happy. We're all happy." Eddie uses part of his \$275.00 to buy a rear brake for the bicycle, a light, and a few spare tubes. Vito puts Eddie's purchases in a bag, along with the 54-tooth sprocket and the extra links to the chain that he found in the shop. Eddie thanks Vito, and heads home to install the rear brake.

Installing the rear brake and making a few adjustments to the seat and handlebars, Eddie gets his bicycle in good shape for long rides. The only major difference is that, with the high performance lightweight tires, Eddie will now have to carry two spare tubes instead of just one. High performance tires are quite a bit lighter and thinner, and are more prone to being punctured when compared with the thicker road tires. Carrying several spare tubes is a necessity. The water bottles, pump, and tool kit

all fit nicely on the frame of Eddie's new bicycle. The spare tubes also fold up nicely, and fit snugly into the tool bag.

For the next few days, Eddie rides around town on his new bicycle, thoroughly convinced that he made the right decision to buy it. With the fixed gearing, a standing start is more work, but also gives a better workout. Once Eddie is up to speed, less pedal effort is required, allowing him to ride faster. This translates into a longer ride for the same amount of energy. It also translates into getting to the beach a lot faster. On the hills, Eddie gets a better leg workout than he ever thought possible on a bicycle.

Leaving early one morning for the beach, Eddie takes the usual route on the path along the parkway. Halfway to the beach, Eddie encounters Mark, who is out on an early morning run. Slowing to Mark's running pace, Eddie pulls alongside Mark. Mark immediately notices Eddie's new bicycle. Mark asks Eddie, "hey! Is that a new bike?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I picked it up a few weeks ago."

The two buddies stop in order to take a break, and talk for a while, sharing what they have been doing this Summer. Mark, who has been stepping up his game, boasts to Eddie, "my bench press is up to 200 pounds." Eddie replies, "wow! You must be working out hard." Hearing Mark's recent accomplishment, Eddie thinks to himself that he'd better start working out a lot more.

Bringing up the subject of track, specifically the 100-yard dash, Mark informs Eddie, "I hear a rumor that a guy named Paul Mahoney, who will be a senior this year, runs a 10.4 consistently. That's the best they got up there. Everyone else's best is like in the upper ten-second range. The other thing I heard is that the best guy they have runs the 440 in just under 60 seconds. All the better runners graduated last year, so I hear." Eddie, amazed by what Mark just told him, exclaims, "wow! Then it looks like we're all in!" Mark replies, "it would look that way."

Mark, learning that he is more competent than he originally thought, is fully determined to steal the show during Winter track tryouts. Not wanting to cool down too much, Mark and Eddie continue on their way, with even more motivation just knowing that they will be serious contenders for the track team next year.

For the remainder of Eddie's ride to the beach, Eddie contemplates what Mark just told him. Eddie and Mark can both beat Paul Mahoney's 10.4-second 100-yard dash time. And, Eddie, Mark, Braden, and Johnson can all easily break 60 seconds in the quarter mile. It's now no surprise to either Eddie or Mark why Mr. Frazier displayed such enthusiasm at the last middle school meet of the year.

The next weekend, Eddie is downstairs working out with weights, looking at a bicycle that does not need much work. Looking even closer, there is not even much room for improving the bicycle. Working out, however, is taking more of a priority as the Summer moves along. Eddie can only bench press 185 pounds, whereas Mark can bench press 200 pounds. Eddie feels that he has to keep up, or at least try.

While working out, Eddie has the radio cranked up, listening to the song *Layla*, by the group *Derek and the Dominos*. Songs like *Layla* have a lot of energy to them, and are perfect when working out. Between sets, Eddie decides to install the light on his bicycle that he picked up at Vito's a while ago. The light will extend the time he can ride, since the days will become shorter as Autumn arrives. After his workout, Eddie heads upstairs for dinner.

Eddie is greeted by his grandmother, who is over for dinner tonight. As Eddie walks into the room, his grandmother's finger goes up in the air slowly, shaking back and forth. She sternly warns Eddie, in her Eastern European accent, "you should not listen to dat music! You're gonna take a da dope!" The advice comes across as if Eddie's grandmother has extensive medical research indicating that listening to *Derek and the Dominos* causes a person to take dope. Eddie's younger brother, John, listens as his grandmother gives Eddie some wisdom and advice, laughing under his breath. While Eddie's grandmother has a great concern, it is totally unfounded. Eddie is not taking dope. Eddie's grandmother also once told Eddie he should not lift weights, because it was going to give him a heart attack.

The dinner menu tonight is two freshly prepared chickens that Eddie's grandfather slaughtered earlier today, and fresh vegetables from the garden. Eddie's mother and grandmother both prepared the meal. Eddie's father and grandfather went outside earlier, looking through the garden for anything that might be ripe that will make a good addition to the meal.

When dinner is put on the table, Eddie eats a half chicken all by himself. He has been consuming more protein, trying to gain more muscle mass. For dessert, there is apple pie, made from apples picked earlier today by Eddie's grandfather. After dinner, Eddie takes the glass pie dish, scrapes the leftovers with his fork, not wanting anything to go to waste.

As the Summer moves along, Eddie continues to cut lawns, clean pools, swim at the county pool, and ride his bicycle. Since buying his new track bicycle, bicycling has become Eddie's favorite sport. Organized bicycle racing, however, is difficult to come by. Since indoor bicycle tracks, which are rubber or wooden tracks, are difficult to find, Eddie and

his friend, Peter, often take their bicycles to the high school parking lot of a nearby town, which has distance markings that are used for indoor track practice. That particular school's team practices in their parking lot. Eddie and Peter time each other over various distances, using each other's bicycles. Eddie and Peter determine that Eddie's new track bicycle, in every case, allows them to attain greater speed at any distance. This discovery, however, applies to riding over flat level ground. If the time trials were on hills, Peter's newly acquired ten-speed bicycle would probably be the clear winner.

Over the rest of the Summer, Eddie runs into Mark a few more times along the path next to the parkway. One morning, when Mark and Eddie meet on the path, Eddie makes an offer to Mark, asking, "do you want to try out the bike?" Mark replies, "sure. I'll give it a whirl." Eddie has the bicycle configured with the 54-tooth front sprocket and the 17-tooth rear sprocket, which gives a good gear ratio on level ground. Getting on the bicycle, Mark heads down the concrete path along the parkway, yelling back to Eddie, "I'll be back in a bit." Eddie heads over to the shade, since he doesn't like the heat. He sits on a large boulder under a tree, waiting for Mark to return.

Riding along the path, Mark picks up considerable speed. It doesn't take Mark long to realize that, on Eddie's bicycle, he can ride very fast. Mark discovers he can ride faster than he's ever ridden before. Mark thinks to himself, "so this is why Eddie rides all the time." It also did not take Mark long to realize that he does not get as hot, as compared with running, while riding the bicycle. The increased speed cools him off as he rides. As Mark comes to the bridge abutment three miles down the path, he turns around. On the way back, he decides to give it all he has. Mark, turning the cranks with all the energy he could muster up, rides back faster than he ever thought possible on a bicycle.

Sitting on the boulder, Eddie sees Mark approaching. Eddie gets up, and walks back to the concrete path. Already knowing what Mark thinks by the expression on his face, Eddie asks, "so, how does it ride?" With no hesitation, Mark replies, "I want one! It rides really nice," as he catches his breath. Mark asks, "where'd you get it?" Eddie responds, "Vito's Bicycle Shop. It's the one that was in the window for more than a year." Mark tells Eddie, "I definitely have to check it out. I'm heading over to Vito's sometime later today."

Eddie mentions to Mark, "we should get together at the county pool with the guys before school starts." Mark replies, "that's a good idea. Once school starts, the pool will be closed." Eddie informs Mark, "I'll call everyone tonight." Mark suggests, "make it for a Saturday. I'm still working with my dad a few days a week."

Mark and Eddie talk for a while longer as Mark looks over Eddie's bicycle in more detail. Eddie then gets back on his bicycle, and rides toward the beach. As Eddie rides off, Mark continues with his run, having something more to think about.