

Eddie, The Early Years

Chapter Three The Portal

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With about two more weeks of freedom before school starts again, Eddie decides to hit the beach one more time. In a few weeks, good beach weather will be hard to come by, so Eddie takes advantage of a warm and sunny Wednesday afternoon. Everyone else is out doing some last minute school shopping with their parents, so Eddie will have to go it alone this time. Packing a lunch, some Gatorade, and a rolled-up towel in his duffel bag, Eddie is off to the beach.

The ride to the beach usually takes Eddie past Mark's house. Seeing Mark in his front yard raking dirt, Eddie stops to say hello. Eddie asks Mark, "what are you up to?" Mark, who is sweating profusely, replies, "the septic tank was pumped yesterday. My dad told me to straighten up the yard and get it leveled out. I'm going to head to the pool after I get finished with this. I'm almost done." Mark looks at raking dirt and repairing the yard as just another opportunity to work out, not as some task to get through as quickly and easily as possible. Eddie heads to the beach, letting Mark get back to his workout.

Riding down the road for about a half mile, Eddie enters the path along the parkway. After about a mile, Eddie suddenly notices it is becoming more difficult to pedal. When a bicycle suddenly gets harder to pedal, it usually means a flat tire. Eddie has experienced this many times in the past. Getting off of his bicycle, Eddie takes a look at the tires. Pressing his thumb into the front tire, the pressure in the tire seems to be fine. Pressing his thumb into the rear tire reveals quite a different story. The tire pressure is very low. Removing the frame-mounted pump, Eddie pumps up the tire. Eddie hears the air leak out of the tire as he pumps it up, which means only one thing. He heads off into the shade to change the flat tire.

Walking off the path, Eddie quickly finds the perfect shady place to change the tire. He finds the boulder on which he sat when Mark tried his bicycle earlier in the Summer. In that area, there are actually three large boulders, about ten feet apart. The boulders make a nice workshop for Eddie as he makes his emergency repair.

Removing some tools and a new tube from his tool bag mounted behind the seat, Eddie places the tools he'll need on top of one of the boulders. Eddie removes the rear wheel, which takes less than a minute. He leans the bicycle on the second boulder, being careful to not let the chain sit in the dirt. The third boulder provides a convenient place to sit, as he removes the tire from the wheel. Removing the flat tube and tire only takes a few minutes. Eddie installs the new tube, replaces the tire, and begins pumping up the tire. After obtaining the requisite 90 pounds of pressure, he reinstalls the wheel on the bicycle. Eddie is now ready to get back on the road.

Before getting on his bicycle, in the midst of the three boulders, Eddie stretches his hamstring muscles, as he has done many times in the past. After about a minute or so, Eddie stretches his shoulders, raising his arms up to the sky, then raising them one at a time. Raising his right arm, he says to himself, "I wish it were ten years from now," thinking that, by then, they will have bicycle tires that do not go flat.

As Eddie goes on his way, the background noise from the parkway changes abruptly, and clouds appear in the sky, as if a storm is about ready to roll in from the South. The temperature also drops by a few degrees, a definite sign that an abrupt weather change is about to occur. Eddie checked the weather earlier today, which was supposed to be in the upper 80-degree range and sunny. Still optimistic about the weather, Eddie continues on his ride to the beach.

A minute or two later, it appears that a significant thunderstorm is rolling in from the South. This is not good news for Eddie, since the beach is now seven miles away, and in the direction of the storm. That would mean the storm is right over the beach. Eddie decides to turn around, and call it a day. With a good tail wind, Eddie makes good time up the path adjacent to the parkway. Leaving the path, and riding onto the side street, something looks eerily different to Eddie. Eddie thinks to himself that the difference he perceives is due to the darkened sky from the bad thunderstorm rolling in.

As Eddie rides up the road, the wind begins to pick up. The flashes of lightning and sounds of thunder get closer together, meaning the storm is about to hit. Almost to the intersection where Angelo's Service Station is, Eddie thinks to himself that he might stop at Angelo's and wait for the storm to pass. As Eddie approaches Angelo's Service Station he looks up,

and is surprised to see that Angelo's sign is gone. The sign has been replaced by one that reads "Eddie's Service Station". Thinking this is quite odd, Eddie surmises that perhaps Angelo sold the station. Eddie decides to pull into the station anyway.

Eddie, and a lot of the other kids in the area, know Angelo well. Angelo is always very helpful to the high school kids, giving them advice about fixing problems they may encounter with their first car. Angelo also guides the younger kids on making basic bicycle repairs, teaching them how to do the repair, rather than repairing it for them. If it is something beyond their ability, Angelo sends them downtown to Vito's Bicycle Shop. Angelo runs the service station almost all by himself, with occasional help from his wife. Hiring a high school or college student from time to time, Angelo is happy to help them out when they need a job.

Eddie rides into the service station and, looking through an open garage door, looks for Angelo. Not seeing any sign of Angelo, Eddie peeks through the glass door to the office, and sees no one inside. "I've been waiting for you," announces a mechanic looking out from behind an open hood. The mechanic, who looks as if he is training for the Mr. Universe contest, walks up from the back of the shop.

Eddie asks, "hey, where's Angelo?" Quickly realizing that this is Eddie's first trip through the portal, the mechanic replies, "yeah, well, um, about Angelo. We've got a few things to talk about." Eddie immediately thinks the mechanic has some news about Angelo, which he does. But, the news regarding Angelo is a drop in the bucket compared to what Eddie is about to learn.

The mechanic instructs Eddie, "step into the office with me," as he closes the garage doors. As they both walk into the office, the mechanic puts a sign in the window that reads *Closed*. He then walks up to an electrical panel and flips the circuit breaker to shut off the pumps, knowing that the talk he is about to have with Eddie is far more important than customers at the moment.

The mechanic curiously asks Eddie, "have you ever seen me before?" Thinking for a moment, Eddie replies, "no." After a short pause, Eddie changes his answer, and exclaims, "wait! Yeah! I saw you at the track meet! You were there when I ran the 10.1 in the 100-yard dash! You're the guy who came up and told me my time!" The mechanic smiles, and replies, "yeah, that was me." The mechanic is now 100 percent certain that this is Eddie's first trip through the portal.

Changing the subject, Eddie asks, "where's Angelo?" Eddie thinks that perhaps Angelo took the day off. Evading the subject, the mechanic

answers, “he’s not here right now.” Reconsidering the answer he gave Eddie, the mechanic adds, “I bought the station from Angelo. Angelo moved back to Greece.” Since Eddie was going to find out anyway, the mechanic figured he might as well tell him now. The mechanic clearly sees that, by the expression on Eddie’s face, Eddie cannot understand how Angelo could have moved back to Greece, for Eddie saw Angelo less than a week ago.

As the storm outside gets fierce, the mechanic tells Eddie, “let’s get down to business.” The mechanic repeats Eddie’s day verbatim to him, describing in vivid detail, “you were riding to the beach and, on the way there, you got a flat tire. Then you stopped in the middle of three large rocks to fix it. After fixing the flat tire, you raised your right arm and wished it was ten years from now. Oh, and by the way, in ten years, we still don’t have a bicycle tire that won’t go flat. Then, you headed to the beach but, because a storm was rolling in, you decided to ride home.” Eddie is amazed that the mechanic knows this, especially since no one was around when Eddie got the flat tire. The mechanic tells Eddie, “and, when the storm got bad, you decided to stop in here.” Quite surprised, Eddie asks, “okay. Now, how do you know all this?” The mechanic replies to Eddie, “I’ll explain.”

Handing Eddie a newspaper, the mechanic tells Eddie to have a seat. The mechanic tells Eddie, “take a look at the date on the newspaper.” Thinking that he is dreaming, Eddie sees a date ten years into the future. Eddie exclaims to the mechanic, “tell me this isn’t real!” Getting right to the point, the mechanic replies, “no, this is very real. You moved through a time portal. But, don’t worry. You’ll be back home in less than two hours.”

Not knowing how to respond, Eddie exclaims, “what? Are you serious?” The mechanic explains, “time portals and parallel universes, they’re real.” Repeating himself, the mechanic says, “the area among the three rocks where you fixed the flat is a time portal. You raised your right arm, stated when you wanted it to be, and you got there. If you walk into the portal again, you’ll be back in your time, ten years ago. I promise. And not only that, the weather will be a lot better.”

Eddie is still highly skeptical, still thinking he is dreaming or something. Repeating what the mechanic said, Eddie asks, “so, time portals really exist?” The mechanic tells Eddie, “listen to the radio. Here, let me turn it up.” Turning up the volume on the radio, which is tuned to a local radio station, the mechanic asks, “when have you ever heard any of this stuff before?” Answering for Eddie, the mechanic says, “never.”

Showing Eddie more evidence, the mechanic tells Eddie, “and take a look at this office. Have you ever seen it so clean when Angelo was here?”

And, look outside. The junkyard in the back is gone. There are grass, trees, and a picnic table out there now.” Walking to the window, Eddie and the mechanic take a look. Pointing out some more changes, the mechanic shows Eddie the back of the station, telling him, “I had that wall put up around the back of the property, and built that brick storage building.” Eddie confesses, “well, you certainly have some good points.”

Eddie finally composes himself. After all, it’s not every day you go through a time portal. The mechanic reassures Eddie that everything is going to be fine. There is a lot of talk about time portals and parallel universes in movies and books, but this one is for real.

Finally getting some semblance of reality, Eddie notices the name tag on the mechanic’s shirt. The shirt is embroidered with the name *Eddie*. Still not putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, Eddie asks the mechanic, “so, your name is Eddie too?” Dropping the bombshell, the mechanic replies, “yeah, it is. I am you. You, ten years in the future.”

Eddie, astounded by what he just heard, nevertheless, begins to make sense out of the whole experience. Eddie asks the mechanic, “so, you’re me. And, I’m going to be a mechanic?” The mechanic smiles, and replies, “it sure looks that way. That’s what you’ve always wanted to do. Right?” Eddie replies, “yeah.” Telling Eddie what he already knows, the mechanic explains to Eddie, “look, you’ve always worked on mechanical things. No one is better at it than you are. This is the best job in the world. And, you’ll be known around town as ‘Eddie the Mechanic’, the best mechanic around.” Eddie takes a deep breath, and exclaims, “wow!”

After learning that the mechanic is Eddie in the future, Eddie notices some resemblance of himself to the mechanic. The resemblance, however, is somewhat vague. At six feet, five inches tall, the mechanic is a good eight inches taller than Eddie. The mechanic’s hair is short, but Eddie’s is down to his shoulders. Although Eddie has a well-built physique, the mechanic’s appearance suggests that he works out several hours a day.

As the storm passes, the mechanic stands up and invites Eddie to walk back into the three-bay repair shop. Showing Eddie the repair bays, the mechanic tells Eddie, “I’ve cleaned up around here. Take a good look. Everything is in its place.” Eddie looks around the shop, which looks meticulously in order.

The mechanic opens the garage doors, and they walk outside. The mechanic tells Eddie, “if you still have any doubts, look at the cars driving around. You’ve never seen a lot of these.” The mechanic points out a new red Chevrolet Corvette as it drives down the road, telling Eddie, “there’s a new ‘Vette coming to a stop at the intersection.” Eddie

responds, “wow! It looks really cool.” The mechanic adds, “and a lot of these cars that you see driving down the street, well, they’re imports. And, that green MGB over there is mine. That means someday it will be yours. But, more about that later.”

Eddie and the mechanic walk back into the office where they sit and talk for a while longer. Recalling the 100-yard dash during the last meet in middle school, the mechanic explains to Eddie that the portal is how he was able to go back in time and watch the race. The mechanic goes on to explain to Eddie, “it is you who wanted to watch the race. You wanted to see who won.” The mechanic carefully explains to Eddie, “now, get this. At some time in your future, you will go back to watch that race, and there you will be, watching yourself run. The race was as close as you could get. It was definitely a tie.” Eddie replies, “that was a really good race.” The mechanic assures Eddie, “trust me. That was only the beginning. Your track career is only getting started.”

Eddie thinks about all that the mechanic has said, and asks, “where’s Mark?” Giving Eddie some reassurance, the mechanic replies, “Mark is doing good. He’s got his own business, doing what his father does. He helped me with a lot of the clean up around this place. He built the storage building in the back for me. We’ve done a lot of work together over the years.” Eddie replies, “wow! It sounds like to me that everything is good.” The mechanic replies, “life is good. There were a few bumps along the way, but life is good.”

Eddie asks the mechanic, “so, you bought the station from Angelo?” The mechanic, spilling the beans, tells Eddie, “yeah. About two years ago. I bought the land, the building, and all the tools. I paid for it with cash and gold.” The mechanic, explaining the improvements that he has made, tells Eddie, “I put a small parking lot in the back for overflow. I also bought the old house in the back, knocked it down, and put in some greenery. You know, a nice quiet place where I can sit when I eat lunch. Sometimes Mark will make it over for lunch. We sit out back in the shade, and we talk.” The mechanic stands up, and tells Eddie, “let’s go outside and take a look out back.” Eddie and the mechanic walk to the back door and into the beautifully landscaped back yard of the shop.

Eddie looks around at the eight-foot brick wall surrounding the land behind the shop and the brick storage building. The shop is even brick on all four sides. Eddie sees a nice large grassy area with a few trees off to the left of the storage building. In the center of the lawn is a picnic table set on a concrete pad. The back of the shop looks like an oasis compared with the busy intersection in the front of the service station. The mechanic mentions to Eddie, “here’s all your landscaping skills put to work.” Taking a closer look, Eddie sees artistic metal sculptures mounted

on the brick wall, some nice yard ornaments, and an automatic sprinkler system. This is clearly not your average service station.

Eddie inquisitively asks, “okay. Where did all the money come from to buy all this?” Getting down to business, the mechanic replies, “the time portal. Well, that and gold.” Eddie, trying to piece together the puzzle, asks, “gold? How gold? I don’t get it.” The mechanic explains, “yeah, gold and the stock market. In your time, the price of gold is about \$65.00 per ounce. In August of 1980, the price of gold is \$850.00 per ounce. Now follow me here. If you buy gold in your time, and bring it through the time portal forward to 1980 and sell it, you make almost \$700.00 per ounce. That’s after the buying and selling commission.”

Eddie takes a little bit of time to fully comprehend the mechanic’s explanation, but he eventually sees where this is going. Eddie, in amazement, answers the mechanic’s explanation with words of undeniable wisdom, “so, you can get as much money as you want.” The mechanic explains, “yes. It would sure seem that way. But, I use the money to help other people too. If someone can’t afford their car repair, I’ll give them a break on the price.” Eddie now has a good understanding of how the mechanic owns his own shop, land, and tools, all at the age of 24.

The mechanic explains to Eddie that there is one catch. When you go back in time, you can’t take back anything that has not already been created. In other words, you can’t take a \$100.00 bill from 1980 and bring it back to a time before it was printed and expect to use it. No one would have seen a \$100.00 bill from 1980, ten years in the past. It would not be recognized or accepted. The mechanic, therefore, is an avid collector of older currency that would be accepted at an earlier time. Newer currency would be deemed counterfeit at an earlier date.

The mechanic instructs Eddie, “I’ll give you \$300.00 before you go back. Take it back to your time and buy four ounces of gold. Then, bring the gold back here to me. Just go through the time portal to August of 1980. We’ll sell it for about three grand when you return.” The mechanic explains to Eddie, “then you bring the money back with you to your time, and buy more gold. Later, you’ll invest the money in the stock market. You’ll know which stocks to invest in by looking at the newspaper of the future, and comparing it with the newspaper in your time when you get back home. You’ll make millions. You’re going to be a mechanic who looks like a really good investor.”

With nothing to lose, Eddie agrees to give it a try. After all, he’s really not out anything if it doesn’t work. Eddie did have one question, and asks the mechanic, “if this is all true, then why the mechanic’s shop?” The mechanic answers, “it’s simple. If you have to do something, you might

as well do what you love to do. You can't exactly sit around on your ass all day long and rot away."

Eddie asks the mechanic, "what about the portal? How does it work?" The mechanic replies, "I don't know any more than you do." "But," the mechanic adds, "when you get back, make a careful drawing of the rocks, angles, and distances that make up the portal. Try to figure it out." Eddie, somewhat mentally fatigued, says, "this is a lot for me to think about. I need to put all this together."

The mechanic explains to Eddie, "just remember that everything you see here, in the future, will happen. Why the shop is here is because of what you did back in your time. You decide what kind of life you want. Where you will be in the future is based upon all the day to day decisions you make. If you don't act, you may end up living on Second Street."

The time draws near for Eddie to return to his time. Eddie tells the mechanic, "I guess I'd better get back," as they walk back into the shop. The mechanic instructs Eddie, "just ride back to where the portal is, and walk back into it. You will immediately return to your time."

Walking back to his safe, the mechanic takes out \$300.00 cash, all in old bills. Handing the money to Eddie, the mechanic reminds him to buy four ounces of gold. The mechanic instructs Eddie, "buy the gold in the coin shop near the mall, next to the stereo shop. Jimmy is the owner. He will treat you right."

Eddie puts the money in his pocket, as he and the mechanic walk back to his bicycle, which Eddie had propped up against a tool chest earlier. Eddie repeats to the mechanic, "August 1980," and repeats it to himself several times. The mechanic bids Eddie farewell, telling him, "see you later." Eddie gets on his bicycle, and rides off in the direction of the beach. The mechanic walks back into the office, removing the *Closed* sign he placed in the window earlier. After turning the pumps back on, he walks back into the shop area and continues working on the engine.

As Eddie rides down the road, he notices the different cars, and how the appearance of many of the homes have changed. He takes the turn to enter the path along the parkway, and heads South toward the beach. As he approaches the portal, Eddie slows down, and gets off his bicycle. Walking toward the portal, Eddie skeptically thinks to himself, "why am I doing this? This can't be real." Eddie walks into the space among the three boulders, and walks out the other side. "Well, I did it," Eddie says to himself.

Eddie gets on his bicycle again, and heads home. Leaving the parkway path, he takes the same side streets as he did earlier today. Passing by

Mark's house, Eddie sees that Mark has completed the work in the front yard, and must have headed to the pool. Eddie also notices the dirt in Mark's front yard is dry as a bone. It's obvious that no rain has fallen at Mark's house this afternoon. As he comes up to the intersection where the service station is, Eddie looks up and sees the sign that reads "Angelo's Service Station". This gives Eddie a somewhat comforting feeling. Everything seems like it is back to normal.

When he gets to the intersection, Eddie decides to stop in and visit Angelo. Riding into the service station, Eddie sees all three garage doors open. Angelo yells out to Eddie over the sound of the loud engine he is working on, asking, "hey, Eddie! How come you're not at the pool or beach or something?" Eddie yells back, "I didn't make it there today. I'm just riding around town." Stepping out from behind the hood, Angelo asks Eddie, "do you need anything?" Eddie replies, "no. I just stopped by to say hey."

Angelo and Eddie talk for a while, but Eddie's mind is elsewhere. Looking around the station, as he is absent-mindedly talking to Angelo, Eddie notices what a messy condition the station is in, both inside and out. Perceiving that something may be wrong, Angelo asks Eddie, "are you okay?" Eddie responds, "yeah. I just had a long day, and it's hot out." After they talk a little more, Eddie then heads home, as Angelo gets back to working on the engine.

Eddie arrives home, which is not far from Angelo's Service Station. After putting his bicycle away, Eddie goes into his room to take a well needed nap. But first, he stashes away the \$300.00 along with the other money he earned from cutting lawns. Before he drifts off to sleep, Eddie wonders if he should tell anyone about the portal. Eddie quickly comes to the conclusion that if he tells anyone, they will not believe him, or worse. They will likely think that he is crazy.

An hour later, Eddie's mother yells upstairs, "Eddie, it's dinner time!" Eddie wakes up from his nap, and stumbles downstairs to dinner. During dinner, Eddie doesn't say much. His mother asks him, "Eddie, are you feeling okay?" Eddie tells her, "yeah. I just had a hard workout. I went for a long ride, and it's hot out." Eddie's mother tells him, "eat, eat! You have to cut lawns tomorrow!" Tomorrow is Thursday, so Eddie has to wake up early to cut the lawns he did not cut on Monday.

After dinner, Eddie goes back to his room, and thinks about what he discussed with the mechanic. Eddie decides to get up early and finish cutting the lawns before lunch, then go and buy four ounces of gold at the coin store, as the mechanic instructed. If there is enough time, he thought that he would go to the portal, and make a drawing, also as he

was instructed by the mechanic. After all, school starts in about two weeks, and time will be limited.

Going downstairs to the workbench, Eddie finds a tape measure, some string, and looks around for a protractor to measure the angles. Finding the necessary tools, he places the equipment in the tool bag on his bicycle, along with paper and a pencil. After his long day, Eddie goes back upstairs, takes a shower, and goes to bed.

The next morning, Eddie wakes up early to get his lawn duties completed as fast as possible. He has other things on his agenda for today, and dilly dallying is not one of them. Eddie quickly eats breakfast, and is off to cut lawns.

While cutting the lawns, Eddie contemplates the remainder of the day, rehearsing his plans in his mind. There are only two things on his list. One is to buy the gold, and the other is to draw a diagram of the portal. While this is simple enough, the two tasks consume his thoughts for the entire morning. One thought, however, could not escape from his mind. Eddie thought that, if he can bring \$300.00 into the future, and then bring \$3,000.00 back to the present, he may not have to work so hard for the rest of his life.

After cutting the lawns, Eddie eats lunch, and tells his mother he is going out for a ride. Eddie's mom reminds him to be home on time for dinner. Eddie is often late for dinner. His afternoon bicycle rides will occasionally take a little longer than expected, especially in the heat.

Eddie rides his bicycle to the coin store near the mall, as the mechanic instructed. The coin store is not too far from the portal, about two miles away. Locking his bicycle outside, he enters the store, which is now occupied by two people, Jimmy, the proprietor, and Eddie. Jimmy asks the young customer, "what can I do for you today?" With some hesitation, Eddie responds, "I want to buy some gold." Jimmy replies, "gold is a good investment. It's only going to go up." Eddie asks Jimmy, "how much is four ounces?" Punching a couple of numbers into his adding machine, Jimmy comes up with the price. He tells Eddie, "\$289.50, which includes my commission." Eddie responds, "okay. I'll take it."

Jimmy then inquires of the fourteen-year-old, "what kind of business are you in?" After all, it is not every day that someone Eddie's age comes in and buys four ounces of gold. Eddie replies, "I cut about eight lawns a week, clean pools, and do a lot of odd jobs. A mechanic told me I should invest in gold." Jimmy responds, "he's a very wise man."

Looking over the gold, Eddie hands over the \$300.00 cash. Eddie says to the proprietor, "I'll be back for some more, okay?" which seems like half

question and half statement. Jimmy responds, “you can come back for as much as you want. It’s a much better investment than putting your money in the bank.” Eddie replies, “awesome,” and then gives Jimmy a fist bump. The fist bump goes a little awkward for the middle-aged owner of the coin store, but Jimmy now understands the gesture.

After placing the gold in the tool bag behind the seat, Eddie unlocks his bicycle. With his first task completed, Eddie rides in the direction of the portal to draw the diagram. The portal is only about two miles away, which takes Eddie less than ten minutes, even in traffic. On the way, he replays in his mind what the mechanic told him, that, while in the portal, you raise your right arm, state when you want it to be, and you will get there. Eddie was in the portal once before without knowing it, waiting for Mark while he was taking a test ride on Eddie’s bicycle. There was no time travel during that instance of being in the portal. Eddie figures he’s safe, and won’t be transported in time just by drawing a diagram.

Arriving at the portal, Eddie leans his bicycle against one of the boulders. Looking over the boulders, which appear to be light grey in color, Eddie notices a dark spot near the center of one of the boulders. Looking at the other two boulders, similar spots are seen. Scraping away some dirt with his foot, it appears there is also rock between two of the boulders underground. The boulders do not appear to be just large rocks, but rather part of a larger rock hidden beneath the surface. Eddie, being no geologist, is not sure what type of rock the boulders are made of.

Using the tape measure, Eddie measures the distance between the base of the boulders. Coming up with three different measurements, six feet, ten inches; seven feet, eight inches; and, seven feet, eleven inches, Eddie records them on his paper. Measuring the distance from one dark spot to another, Eddie records the distance of ten feet, three-and-one-half inches. To the other dark spot, the same distance is measured, ten feet, three-and-one-half inches. Eddie then takes the tape and measures between the other two remaining points, and comes up with the same distance, ten feet, three-and-one-half inches. That, Eddie thinks to himself, is quite interesting. Eddie then records the distances on his paper.

Eddie also remembered the mechanic told him to also measure the angles. Tying a string to a wrench, he places the wrench on the boulder, and lines up the string over the dark spot. Placing the string across the dark spot on the second boulder, Eddie uses a small rock to hold the string in place. He repeats the procedure with all three dark spots, using anything he can find to anchor the three strings. Making sure everything is lined up perfectly, Eddie gets his protractor, and measures the three angles. Eddie measures the first angle to be slightly more than 52

degrees. The second and third angle all measured the same as the first angle, somewhere between 52 and 53 degrees. He then creates a drawing of the boulders, with the distances and angles he measured. Eddie collects his tools, puts everything in his tool bag, and heads back home.

When Eddie arrives home, his mother asks him, "did you have a short ride today?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I still have a few things to do before school starts again." Eddie's mother asks, "like what? I thought you were all ready." Eddie replies, "I have to work on my bicycle." Eddie's mother responds, almost prophetically, telling him, "oh, Eddie. You're always working on something. You're going to be a mechanic someday." Eddie tells her, "well, I have to buy some better tires. The lighter tires get a lot of flats." The tires that came with the track bicycle are of a much lighter weight and thinner, and are designed for track use. With Autumn and Winter just around the corner, Eddie does not want to get stuck fixing flats in the cold weather. Eddie tells his mother that he is going to Vito's in a few minutes, assuring her that he will be home in time for dinner.

Eddie makes the trip to Vito's Bicycle Shop and picks up two new tires that are more appropriate for road use. He also buys a small cloth bag to fit on the handlebars. When he gets home, he spends the rest of the afternoon replacing the tires and tuning up his bicycle, working a lot slower than usual. Eddie installs the cloth bag on the handlebars, which he bought for carrying food. While he is working, Eddie contemplates the portal and where this could lead. Occasionally looking at the gold, which is still in the tool bag, Eddie realizes this is real.