

Eddie, The Freshman Year

Chapter Three Let the Workouts Begin

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Now that Eddie has some knowledge and vitamins, he goes ahead wide open with working out. His workouts primarily consist of lifting weights, bicycling, and running. Eddie does not like to run long distances, so the running part of his workout is primarily sprinting. With the cooler weather of Autumn now arriving, the county pool has been closed, so there is no opportunity to swim. Over the next few weeks, during the first semester of high school, Eddie will refine his workouts, getting them down to a science.

On Monday and Thursday, Eddie works his upper body. On Tuesday and Saturday, he works his lower body. The lower body workout on Saturday allows for a very long and strenuous bicycle ride after lifting weights. Eddie takes Wednesday and Sunday off, and does not usually lift weights on those days. On Sunday, however, Eddie will occasionally go on a bicycle ride.

In addition to working out, Eddie is faithfully taking his nutritional supplements. The methylfolate, as the mechanic told him, is taken in the morning. With each meal, he takes one vitamin tablet. Between meals, he takes three each of the amino acid supplements. He also notices that, since taking the supplements, he is sleeping much better. Eddie is also more relaxed in general, and feels less stressed at school.

For the first time, Eddie notices that he can see rapid physical improvements to his body in the mirror. Eddie also notices significant improvements in the amount of weight he can lift. Leaving from a standing start, he can also deliver a lot more torque to the rear wheel of his bicycle. Every week, Eddie finds himself increasing the weight for each exercise. Improvements are noticed all around from week to week. Since last Spring, Eddie has grown two inches, and gained 25 pounds. A

significant amount of the weight gain was in the last few weeks, since Eddie began taking the supplements.

In the middle of the Autumn semester, in gym class, the dreaded timed one-mile run is announced by Mr. Frazier without any notice. There will be another timed mile run in the Spring. Everyone's time is expected to improve over the school year. The amount of improvement from Autumn to Spring determines the student's grade for that event. Students are not stupid. They intentionally perform poorly in the Autumn, and do their best in the Spring to get a better grade. Gym teachers are not stupid either, for they know exactly what the students are up to. This year, however, Mr. Frazier has a surprise for the sophomores.

The class gathers in the gym. Mr. Frazier makes the most unpopular announcement of the day, stating, "today, we will be running the mile, and you will be on the clock." Mr. Frazier will have his favorite device in his hand, his stopwatch. He then makes an announcement that comes as a surprise to everyone, "sophomores, you are expected to beat your best time from last year!" He then starts naming names, "Anthony Ambrosini, last year you ran a 6:45. John Falberg, an 8:45. Jeff Davis, you ran a 5:54, and I know you can do better than that. Charles Smith, you ran an 11:55, which is almost a walking pace." Calling each sophomore's name, Mr. Frazier goes on, delivering the time they are expected to beat. This means the sophomores will have to actually run fast, not jog as they were expecting.

Mr. Frazier continues, "and, for all of you freshmen, I have a surprise for you too." Declaring to the freshmen, Mr. Frazier announces, "I have your times here from last year, courtesy of Mr. Harris." Mr. Harris, the middle school track coach and gym teacher, started giving Mr. Frazier the student's performance records this year. Surprising the freshmen, Mr. Frazier announces, "Edward Bogenskaya, last year you ran a 5:22, which is not bad. Axel Braden, a 5:18, also not bad. Robert Bradshaw, a 7:52. Daniel Gaspari a 6:24. Arthur Jones, an 8:55. Mark Svoboda, a 5:20, not bad. It sounds like the freshmen have some decent times here. John Walsh, an 8:43." Mr. Frazier continues until everyone's name is called, with the exception of one or two transfer students. Mr. Frazier then proclaims, "if I do not see an improvement compared to last year's time, you'll be running a mile every week until you do improve!"

The sophomores quickly realize that some of the freshmen, for some reason, have some awesome times in the mile. A few of the sophomores comment that the deck was stacked against them in the football game earlier in the semester. What they do not know is that half of the core members of the middle school track team are in their gym class. This core group is also among the best athletes of all the freshmen in the school.

Mr. Frazier tells the class, “everybody head out to the track.” On the way out to the track, rumbling can be heard echoing the chords of discontent of many of the students. The thought of running a mile to some is worse than taking a final exam in math. To others, like Eddie or Mark, the mile run is like adding one plus one.

Mr. Frazier hunts down the other two gym teachers, Mr. Chubin and Mr. Zunde, who will help him record the times of the students as they pass the finish line. Mr. Chubin searches through the office for his stopwatch and, after a minute or so, finds it. This is not the case with Mr. Frazier, whose stopwatch is always worn around his neck like a piece of jewelry. If Mr. Frazier were to lose his stopwatch, it would be about as traumatic as cutting out an internal organ.

The students are all ready to run, well, at least as ready as they can be. Mr. Frazier announces, “Mr. Zunde will be handing you a ticket with a number after you cross the finish line. Mr. Chubin and myself will record the time associated with that number. I’ll know your time by your number.” He instructs the class to get ready. Most of the sophomores are lined up in front, with Mark, Eddie, and Braden on the outside. The outside is not exactly the best starting position but, with a pack of more than 30 students, you take the best position that you can get.

Mr. Frazier informs the students, “a mile is four laps.” With no further ado, he announces, “set,” pauses for a moment, and announces, “go!” The pack is off. It only takes fifty yards into the race for Mark, Eddie, and Braden to separate from the pack. They are accompanied by two sophomores, Anthony Ambrosini, who is a running back on the football team, and Jeff Davis. Ambrosini has a score to settle with Eddie and his tribe. Eddie’s tribe destroyed Ambrosini at his own game, football, earlier this year. Ambrosini now fully intends to beat Eddie, Mark, and Braden at their own game.

At the quarter mile mark, Eddie, Mark, and Braden, and the two sophomores, still lead the race. Jeff Davis is falling a little behind, but is still having a good run. One hundred fifty yards behind the front runners are the majority of the students. A smaller group of students is even farther behind. The goal of the last group is just to finish the race.

During the second lap, Eddie, Mark, and Braden begin messing with Ambrosini’s mind. Mark sprints ahead of the group, with Ambrosini trying to keep up. Mark then slows his pace, leaving Ambrosini in the lead. Ambrosini then slows down, keeping pace with Mark. Just as Eddie and Braden catch up to Ambrosini and Mark, Eddie sprints ahead of the group. Braden, who does not want to be left out of the psychological warfare, runs right on the heels of Ambrosini. At the end of the second lap, Eddie slows his pace, and Braden takes the lead for a while.

Continuing the cat and mouse game, Mark and Eddie allow Ambrosini to pass them by. On this lap, Braden passes a student who is still on his first lap. Following Ambrosini closely, Mark and Eddie push Ambrosini to his limit.

The first two laps were Ambrosini's race. The third lap, however, is not. Stopping the fun and games, Mark, Eddie, and Braden begin running at a highly competitive speed. Eddie and his tribe pour on the power, with Ambrosini desperately trying to keep up. Halfway into the third lap, Ambrosini has run out of juice. Jeff Davis, previously in fifth place, passes Ambrosini. Mark, Eddie, and Braden, now competing against each other, pass a few of the students who are still on their second lap. The truth is Eddie, Mark, and Braden don't care who wins this race. To them, it is all fun and games.

At the beginning of lap four, the large pack of students begins to pass Ambrosini one by one. Ambrosini appears to have completely run out of energy, being beaten again by Eddie's tribe. Mark, Eddie, and Braden are all still running together, with only a few steps between them. With 220 yards left to go, none of the three runners is yet to make a move.

Halfway through the last lap, Braden says to Eddie and Mark, "lets just tie." That sits well with Eddie and Mark. Any of the three runners could win this race. With 50 yards to the finish, Mark, Eddie, and Braden are still head to head. Mr. Frazier can be heard in a distance, screaming, "run, run, faster!" As they approach the finish line, Mark, Eddie, and Braden are running in perfect unison, as if this is a synchronized running event. With ten yards to go, Mr. Frazier is looking for a winner. Mark, Eddie, and Braden all cross the finish line at nearly the same time.

Mr. Frazier, looking at his stopwatch, is not disappointed. A few yards farther down, on the track, Mr. Zunde hands Mark, Eddie, and Braden their ticket. Jeff Davis finishes in fourth place, with a respectable time. Following Davis, every few seconds a runner crosses the finish line. Mr. Chubin records their time, and Mr. Zunde hands them their ticket. Recording the times on paper, Mr. Chubin yells out, "five minutes and twenty seconds," to Mark, Eddie, and Braden. That time was not any better than they ran last year, but they had a lot of fun running the race.

Walking off the track toward the football field, Mark mentions, "I could have ran a lot better time if we weren't messing with Ambrosini." Eddie and Braden agree that they could have run a better time as well. If they weren't messing with Ambrosini, any one of them could have run a better race. To them, this run did not mean too much. They are sprinters. They had more fun messing with Ambrosini. If that was today's goal, they have all succeeded.

Ambrosini, who conceded a while ago, is still nowhere to be seen. He finally crosses the finish line with a time of 9:44. Ambrosini was more concerned with beating the competition rather than competing against his previous time. Burning himself out too early, Ambrosini simply did not have the strength nor stamina to run a decent time. If he had paced himself, he probably could have run a respectable race.

While Eddie and his friends are talking, they are joined by Jeff Davis, who just ran the mile in 5:50. Jeff Davis tells Mark, Eddie, and Braden that he is on the track team and that they should try out. Joking around, Mark asks Davis, "do you think we'd make it?" Davis responds, "you might." Braden whispers to Eddie, "we just kicked his ass, and he says we 'might' make the team?" Davis tells Mark that the mile is his event. Davis could have run the mile faster than he did, but this is gym class, not a track meet. Eddie thinks to himself that he, Mark, and Braden just beat one of the milers on the track team, without even trying. This makes Eddie now wonder how fast he could have run the mile. Beating Davis also gives Mark, Eddie, and Braden much more confidence that they will make the track team.

After the run, Mr. Frazier tells everyone that they will play a quick game of football. Mr. Frazier picks two students at random, and appoints them to be team captains. After the run, most of the students are physically worn out, so it will not be much of a game.

Gump and Ambrosini are on opposite teams, playing quarterback. When Mark, Eddie, Braden, Bobby B., and Gump are not on the same team, the energy level of the game is drastically reduced. That is exactly the case today. As Mr. Frazier watches the two lazy teams pretend to play football, he has decided to schedule another sophomore versus freshmen game. Mr. Frazier also contemplates a few sophomore versus freshmen basketball and baseball games for this class. As the teams hit the locker room, Eddie has plans for later that day. He will move forward with his plans to build his squat rack.

Eddie's plans for his squat rack are already done by mid week. Now, all Eddie has to do is to build it. Not knowing where to begin, he rides his bicycle to Angelo's Service Station after school. Perhaps Angelo could shed some light on the best way to build it, and where to get the materials. Arriving at Angelo's, Eddie finds Angelo in the office taking his dinner break. It is almost the end of the day for Angelo, so he is mostly finished with his mechanics' work. The rest of the day will be pumping gas and waiting for customers to pick up their repaired automobiles.

Angelo, finishing a bite of food, greets Eddie, asking him, "hey Eddie, what's up?" Eddie sits across the desk from Angelo, and shows Angelo his plans for the squat rack. Eddie tells Angelo, "I'm building a squat rack. I

was hoping you can tell me the best way to do it and where to get the metal.” Angelo takes a close look at the plans, and tells Eddie, “this is easy. You need a few pieces of square tubing, in the three-inch range, that fit inside each other.” Eddie asks, “where do you get tubing like that?” Angelo quickly answers, “DeLeo Brothers, down the street next to Vinnie’s Body Shop.”

Vinnie’s Body Shop is across the street from Angelo’s Service Station, on the other corner. At the end of the short dead end street is DeLeo Brothers, a metal fabrication and supply shop. Angelo tells Eddie, “I can pick up the materials for you tomorrow.” Eddie asks Angelo, “how much will it cost?” Having built many things with metal before, Angelo replies confidently, “not much. Not much at all.” Eddie tells Angelo to go ahead and get the tubing. This is the step in the right direction that Eddie was hoping for. Angelo says he’ll pick the tubing up in the morning, before he opens.

The next day, after school, Eddie rides his bicycle to Angelo’s to see his tubing. This is again the end of the day for Angelo. Angelo has just finished eating dinner when Eddie arrives. As Eddie walks into the office, Angelo stands up and, pointing to the service area, tells him, “your tubing is over there, against the wall. Come, and I’ll show you.” Angelo and Eddie walk back to the far side of the shop, where all of the machining equipment is set up.

Three pieces of square tubing are leaning against the wall, one much longer than the others. Delivering some unexpected news, Angelo tells Eddie, “I started working on the rack. Let me show you what I did.” Eddie is surprised, thinking he would have to figure out some way to get the tubing home, which comes in ten-foot lengths. That would be quite the task, since Eddie’s only mode of transportation is his bicycle. Eddie takes a look at the base of the squat rack that Angelo has already made, and all he can say is, “wow!” Angelo has also cut the uprights to the squat rack to length. He also drilled a hole in the side of the upright for a pin to adjust the height of the rack.

Using a band saw, and cutting wheel, Angelo shows Eddie how to cut the square tubing so it will fit together. Before making any cuts, Angelo first sets up a fence to get a straight cut, and sets a stop-block at the desired depth. He then carefully cuts the metal slightly to the inside of the tubing wall, two-and-three-quarter inches deep. He then makes the same cut on the other side. Angelo then places the tube in a vice. Angelo removes the metal between the two cuts on each side of the tube using a pneumatic cutting wheel. Using a grinding wheel, Angelo cleans up the rough edges. The result is a U-shaped channel that will slide nicely onto the base. Angelo then shows Eddie how the pieces will fit together. Eddie is amazed that this took Angelo less than five minutes.

Angelo announces to Eddie, “okay, man, it’s your turn.” Angelo hands a pair of safety glasses to Eddie, telling him, “get to it.” Eddie takes the tubing, and lines it up on the band saw. Angelo tells Eddie, “the most important thing is to keep the tube square against the fence.” Eddie moves the tube effortlessly through the saw, compared with the hacksaw he thought he’d be using at home. Angelo tells Eddie, “when you back it out, be very careful to keep the tube square against the fence, and pull it back very carefully.” Eddie then cuts the other side of the tube, which goes equally as well. Taking the tube over to the vice, Eddie clamps it in. Using the cutting wheel, Eddie begins to remove the metal between the cuts. Watching as Eddie works, Angelo quickly realizes that Eddie is quite competent working with tools. After finishing the cut, Eddie turns to the master mechanic and asks, “how does that look?” Inspecting Eddie’s work, Angelo says, “it looks good. Now do the opposite side.” Eddie flips the tube over in the vice and makes the second cut with the cutting wheel. Using the grinding wheel, Eddie cleans up the cuts. Angelo and Eddie take the tube over to the base to check the fit, finding the piece fits perfectly. Eddie, proud of his work, wants to continue with the project.

Getting the base of the squat rack, Angelo brings it over to the drill press. Angelo tells Eddie to bring the uprights. Making a few measurements, Angelo draws a line on the base on each side where the uprights should be. Fitting one upright into place, Angelo drills a small hole for a temporary screw that will hold it in place when he welds it. Angelo instructs Eddie to fit the other side. Eddie gets the hang of working with metal very quickly. He places the upright into position, and drills the hole. Angelo tells Eddie, “now, we weld it. Well, now I weld it.” At this time, Angelo thinks it is best to weld the piece himself.

They take the upright over to the bench, and Angelo prepares to weld the uprights to the base. Angelo uses an arc welder for this project. Angelo explains to Eddie, “the first weld is the most important.” He further explains, “with the first weld, you tack the work together, at exactly 90 degrees. Then you weld the rest.” Angelo makes the tack weld. He shows Eddie, “this is why we cut the metal to two-and three-quarters inches,” pointing to a one-quarter inch gap between the upright and the bottom of the three-inch base. Angelo points out to Eddie, “this is where one of the welds will go.” Angelo instructs Eddie not to look at the welder when he is working. Welding the two pieces together, Angelo works very slowly and carefully. When he’s finished, Angelo tells Eddie to come over and take a look. Eddie is impressed by Angelo’s work. Angelo tells Eddie, “we’ll let that cool, then I’ll do the other side.” Eddie is amazed how Angelo makes everything look so easy.

After a few minutes, Angelo turns the base over and welds the other side. After the second side cools sufficiently, Angelo and Eddie lift the squat rack off of the bench and place it on the floor. Angelo asks Eddie,

“well, how does it look?” The mechanic in training answers, “awesome!” Angelo tells Eddie, “that’s enough for today. Tomorrow, we cut the braces for the uprights and install them. And that steel over there,” pointing to the unused ten-foot piece of tubing, “that will fit inside the upright, to adjust the height of the rack.” “One more thing,” Angelo informs Eddie, “I’ll have to find a steel plate to hold the bar.” Eddie then heads home, astounded by the amount of progress that occurred in the last hour. It was at that moment Eddie decided, for sure, that he wants to be a mechanic.

Eddie returns to Angelo’s on the next day, hoping to continue working on his project. As Angelo is working on an engine, he sees Eddie riding up on his bicycle. Angelo points to the other side of the shop where there is a completed squat rack. Looking at the squat rack, Eddie says to Angelo, “wow! You finished it!” Angelo responds, “yeah. I had a little time and I thought I’d finish it for you.” Angelo asks Eddie, “are you ready to test it?” Eddie, somewhat puzzled, does not see any barbells around to test it. Eddie asks, “how are we going to test it?” Angelo says, “wait here for a second. I’ll show you.” Using the hydraulic lift, Angelo raises the car he has been working on.

Angelo tells Eddie, “help me bring the squat rack over here.” Angelo and Eddie place the squat rack underneath the rear axle of the automobile that is on the lift. As Eddie watches in amazement, Angelo slowly lowers the automobile until it is almost touching the squat rack. Aligning the squat rack perfectly with the rear axle of the vehicle, Angelo lowers the car a bit more. The rear end of the automobile is now partially supported by Eddie’s squat rack. As if that is not enough, Angelo lowers the car even more, as the tires of the car are raised off of the lift. The rear end of the automobile is now entirely supported by Eddie’s squat rack. The master mechanic asks Eddie, “how does that look?” Eddie replies and asks, “wow! How much weight is that?” Angelo looks at the car on the rack, and says, “probably a little more than a thousand pounds are sitting on the squat rack.” Satisfied with the strength of the squat rack, Angelo lifts the car, and they move the squat rack over to the side.

Eddie has trouble expressing his great appreciation for what Angelo did for him. Eddie asks, “okay, so how much do I owe you?” Angelo tells Eddie, “the steel was about thirty dollars.” A little confused, Eddie responds, “no, for the whole thing.” Angelo tells Eddie, “just the thirty dollars. I’m just happy that someone like yourself is interested in how to make something. Anyone could buy something like this in a store, but this is a fine work of art, and much stronger.” Pointing to a customer’s vehicle, Angelo tells Eddie, “help me put it in that truck, and we’ll take it over to your house.”

As they load the squat rack into the pickup truck, Angelo asks Eddie where he lives. Eddie lives about one mile from the station, which is a short drive away. "Follow me," Eddie tells Angelo, "I'll ride my bicycle." Angelo, thinking he'll be driving five miles per hour, reluctantly agrees. Getting on his bicycle, Eddie rides down the road, and Angelo follows. After about a quarter of a mile, Angelo is impressed by how fast Eddie can ride his bicycle. Eddie, riding as fast as he can, is breaking the speed limit, which amuses Angelo. Angelo must also break the speed limit to keep up with Eddie.

They arrive at Eddie's house, and unload the squat rack. Eddie's parents, who are quite surprised, come out to say hello to Angelo. If an automobile needs to be repaired, and Eddie's father or uncle can't fix it, they take it to Angelo. Occasionally, Eddie's father, Dominik, helps out Angelo with certain projects. Angelo shows Dominik and Nina the squat rack, telling them their son had a great design. Eddie's father looks over the squat rack, and is quite impressed. Angelo tells Eddie to acid wash the squat rack and put a coat of primer on it as soon as possible to prevent it from rusting. Eddie's father says he has some phosphoric acid, which will remove any surface rust. Eddie, his father, and Angelo take the squat rack into the garage, where Eddie will paint it before bringing it inside.

Nina hands Angelo a bag of fresh vegetables that were picked from the garden earlier today. The Autumn crop ripens in stages. Nina staggers the planting of the vegetables, so there is always something to harvest. Angelo is happy to take them, as he heads back to the shop to finish his day.

Before Angelo is even out of the driveway, Eddie's father has found the container of phosphoric acid and a spray can of primer. Eddie proudly shows his father the part he cut and fitted together. Inspecting his son's work, Eddie's father remarks that the workmanship looks very good. Eddie's father tells him he should wash the squat rack down tonight and get the primer on before he goes to bed. This will prevent any rust from occurring.

When Saturday comes, Eddie works out in the basement, perhaps more than usual today. He has a project to keep him busy at home, so he won't be riding his bicycle. The squat rack is in the garage, and has received the first coat of paint before Eddie's workout. After his upper body workout, Eddie will put on the second coat of paint. Tomorrow, if all goes well, Eddie will get to use the squat rack for his lower body workout.

Sunday arrives, and Eddie is looking forward to using his squat rack later in the day. Eddie is moving a little slow today because of his strenuous workout the previous day. Eddie's mother tells him to hurry up

and get ready for church. His mother anxiously exclaims, "Eddie, hurry up and get ready! We want to get a good seat!" Eddie comes downstairs and eats breakfast, which his mother has already prepared and is waiting for him. Eddie's mother tells him again, "we didn't go to Sunday school today, so we need to get there a little earlier to get a good seat." Eddie moves a little faster, but he is still half asleep.

Eddie, his brother John, and his parents arrive at the church twenty minutes early, and enter the sanctuary. The sanctuary is empty when Eddie's family walks in. Most everyone either is in Sunday school or have not yet arrived. They walk to the front to get a good seat but, as usual, people have unofficially reserved seats by putting their Bible, a jacket, or some other item in the pew. When the people get out of Sunday school, they will go to the seat they reserved for themselves earlier in the morning. This happens every week, even though the pastor asks people not to reserve a seat with their personal items.

Eddie's parents walk to the back of the sanctuary and strike up a conversation with someone who just walked in. While his parents are talking, Eddie comes up with a plan so they can get a good seat. Since all the seats in the front have been reserved by inconsiderate people, Eddie decides to rearrange the reservations. Eddie says to his younger brother, "let's rearrange all this stuff." His brother asks, "what do you mean?" Eddie tells him, "we'll move all the stuff in the front seats to the back, and then the front seats will be open."

Eddie and his brother pick up the jackets and books from the pews in the front and randomly distribute them throughout the sanctuary. Eddie whispers to his brother, "hurry up. We got to move faster." Picking up more books and jackets, Eddie and his brother move them to the back seats in the sanctuary. When they have finished their good deed for the day, fulfilling the pastor's wish, Eddie and his brother take a seat in the front, at the end of the pew. Eddie, for some reason, always likes to sit on the end. They want to have a good seat to watch the confusion when the masses pour in from Sunday school.

A few people who didn't attend Sunday school today begin to trickle in, and take a seat in the front. Eddie's parents, having no clue what Eddie and his brother, John, were up to, walk to the front. Their father says to them, "oh good! You found us a seat up front." Eddie replies, "yeah, no one was sitting here," which was true. No one was actually sitting there. Within a few minutes, the front pews begin to fill as people arrive.

With five minutes before the service begins, the front doors leading into the sanctuary open. A mass of people, who are just getting out of Sunday school, enter the sanctuary, moving to the seat that they reserved

using their books and jackets earlier that morning. It takes only a few seconds for a look of confusion to come across their faces. Walking around the pews, they desperately look for their reservation materials that they left in the pews only an hour ago. The same questions echo through the sanctuary, “did you see a book here?” or “was there a jacket here when you came in?” Everyone got the answer they were not looking for, “nope. I hadn’t seen it.” A few people eventually find their items, but not anywhere near where they left them.

Eddie and his brother sit back and watch the confusion, trying not to laugh. Still clueless about what is happening around them, Eddie’s parents talk with someone they have not seen in a while. The pastor comes in, along with the music director, and encourages everyone to take a seat. His request, however, is slow to be fulfilled. The pastor notices people seem confused, so he steps up to the microphone, and says, “please have a seat, and we’ll get started.” He continues, stating, “some of you look a little confused today. Let us be reminded of 1 Corinthians 14:33, which states, ‘for God is not the author of confusion.’” Today, however, Eddie and his brother were the authors of confusion.

When Eddie gets home after eating lunch out with his family, he wastes no time moving his squat rack into the basement. The paint won’t be fully cured for a week, but Eddie is careful not to scratch it. Taking a little time to rearrange his workout area, he positions the squat rack against the wall next to his bench. This requires moving a few things around, but he finally gets everything set up the way he wants it. Eddie’s home gym is now complete, at least for a while.

Eddie starts his workout with a warm-up set of squats. After each set, he raises the weight. Since he never had a squat rack before, Eddie does not know the maximum amount of weight he can squat. After a few sets, Eddie has run out of weight. The 250 pounds of weight that he has is not quite enough. While this presents a problem, it is a good problem to have. All those years of bicycle riding significantly developed Eddie’s leg muscles. He begins dropping the weight after each set, and continues with as many repetitions and sets as he can. Eddie, absolutely fatigued, moves on to calf raises, and then reverse calf raises, conveniently using his new squat rack to support the weight between sets. At the end of the workout, Eddie, who is barely able to make it up the stairs, is done for the day.

After his strenuous workout, Eddie decides to take a couple of extra amino acid capsules. A while later, he eats an entire cantaloupe, and takes an extra vitamin. After the cantaloupe, he is ready for a nap. It’s no wonder that Eddie’s mother sees her grocery bills going up, which is to be expected when there is a teenager in the house. Between yesterday’s workout and the workout today, Eddie pushed himself to the limit. The

body rebuilds itself during rest and sleep, for which the nap will allow. Needing a nap is also a sure sign Eddie has had some really good workouts.

Eddie continues to work out, pushing himself to the limit each time. He bought four additional 50-pound weight plates, bringing his total inventory up to 450 pounds. Eddie also bought a few fixed dumbbells to complement his equipment. As the weeks go by, he finds himself getting stronger and faster. Occasionally, Mark, Bobby B., or Braden will work out with Eddie at his house. Eddie and his tribe, as they are now known, make good training partners. They push each other beyond what they would normally do on their own.

Right after the Thanksgiving break, gym class brings another surprise. Since it is a rainy day, Mr. Frazier announces, “today, you will be lifting weights!” With Mr. Frazier, just the act of lifting weights is not enough. There has to be a competition. So, as expected, Mr. Frazier continues, “there will be a winner. There will be a winner in the bench press, a winner in the squat, and a winner in the dead lift!” Mr. Frazier, explaining the reality of life to the students, adds, “the rest of you, who are not the winners, will unfortunately be the losers.”

As if that is not enough, Mr. Frazier adds, “your grade will be based on how well you perform. Just like in your other classes, some of you will fail. Your grade is based upon two things, which are your body weight and how much weight you can lift. Mr. Zunde has a chart on the wall, showing how much weight you’ll need to lift to earn a certain grade. When we get into the weight room, be sure to take a look at it.” The short dissertation by Mr. Frazier finally comes to an end, but has set the tone for the next hour or so of class.

Mr. Zunde, a thirty something year old well-built man who still has his German accent, is the Athletic Director for the school. Mr. Zunde, who looks like a gold medalist in Olympic weight lifting, made the grading chart. A casual look at the chart suggests that Mr. Zunde probably used his own abilities to define a grade of A. Mr. Zunde is also the school’s strength training coach. He works primarily with the football team during the Autumn. In the Winter, he works with the track team’s field athletes and the wrestlers in the weight room, helping to develop their strength. In the Spring, he is found primarily working with the track team’s field athletes.

The class enters the weight room, followed by Mr. Frazier. Even though this is a weightlifting competition, Mr. Frazier still has his stopwatch hanging around his neck. Mr. Zunde and Mr. Chubin are already in the weight room, waiting to record the weight each student can lift. Some of the students are familiar with the equipment. To other

students, the weight room looks more like a sophisticated torture chamber.

Mr. Frazier breaks the class into three well thought-out groups. The three groups represent Mr. Frazier's assessment of the overall fitness of the students. He assigns group number one to the bench press station, group number two to the squat station, and group number three to the dead lift station. Eddie's group is all too familiar to him. Eddie, Mark, Braden, Bobby B., Gump, Anthony Ambrosini, and Jeff Davis are all in group one, among a few other athletic types. It is no secret to the class that someone in group number one will be winning each event.

After Mr. Frazier gives some minimal instruction, the competition begins. The energy in the weight room suddenly rises dramatically. In Eddie's group, the competition will be more like warfare. You can be sure that, with Eddie and Mark, psychological warfare will also play a role. With Ambrosini in the group, just as on the football field, some serious and heated competition is expected.

Once a student fails at the current weight, they must go across the room and watch the rest of the competition. A student is allowed to pass at a lower weight, and begin competing at a higher weight if he so chooses. If the student cannot lift the weight they go in at, unfortunately they will receive a grade of F for the event.

Mr. Frazier has the bar loaded with 100 pounds on the bench, which everyone in this group should be able to lift. Ambrosini goes first, intending to show everyone how it's done. He is able to lift the weight with no problem. He is followed by Braden, who makes the lift look as if he is lifting a baby's rattle. Eddie is next. Eddie lifts the weight with no problem. He is followed by Mark, Gump, Bobby B., all who also have no problem lifting the weight. Everyone in the group is able to lift this amount of weight.

After a few rounds, the weight is up to 175 pounds. Eddie's tribe, and Ambrosini are the only ones left in the competition. Everyone else has gone out at a lower weight. Ambrosini lies on the bench and, with a good fight, is able to lift the weight. Mark, the master of psychological warfare, comments to Braden, "that looked kind of weak." Mark's comment was fully intended to perturb Ambrosini. Ambrosini returns the fire to Mark, telling him, "yeah, well you try it! Let's see what you can do!" Mark laughs, knowing he can easily lift the weight. Going out of sequence, Mark gets on the bench and pretends to struggle with the weight on his chest. This prompts Ambrosini to hurl the insult, "talk about weak!" Mark then lifts the weight off his chest with ease and places the bar on the uprights. Braden and Gump are both able to make the lift. Eddie goes last, and is also able to make the lift.

Mark suggests, "let's stop this Mickey Mouse stuff and raise it to 200." No one objects, and 200 pounds is placed on the bar. Ambrosini lies on the bench, and attempts the lift. He lowers the bar to his chest and, giving it his best, fails to raise the bar an inch. The spotters lift the bar from his chest, and Ambrosini joins the group of losers standing off to the side. Mark, who stares at Ambrosini with a look that can kill, is next. Ambrosini is watching, fully expecting the bar to crush Mark's chest. Mark raises the bar, lowers it to his chest, pauses and, with perfect form, raises the weight. Eddie, who has been working out like a madman, gets on the bench next. Much to the surprise of many, Eddie is also able to lift the weight with perfect form.

The weight is now raised up to 220 pounds. Mr. Frazier is quite amazed that the competition has even come this far. From against the wall, Ambrosini fires off his mouth again, saying, "they're all going to go out this time." Mark, looking across the room at Ambrosini, replies with his normal answer to such comments, "shut up, junior." Mark gets on the bench, and makes the lift. He is followed by Gump, Bobby B., Braden, and Eddie. After this round, Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. all remain. Braden, who has the build of a bodybuilder rather than a power lifter, is unfortunately out.

The next round begins with a weight of 235 pounds on the bar. At this weight, Bobby B. surprisingly goes out. Bobby B. has bench pressed this much weight before, but misjudged the weight and failed to complete the lift. After this round, Eddie and Mark are the only two who remain in the competition. Mr. Frazier instructs Braden and Bobby B. to be the spotters for the next round.

The weight is raised to 250 pounds. Neither Mark nor Eddie has bench pressed this much weight before. Mark goes first, and fails to complete the lift. Eddie is next. Eddie's tribe is now chanting, "Ed-Dee, Ed-Dee, Ed-Dee!" Getting on the bench, Eddie lowers the bar to his chest. As his tribe continues to chant, Eddie raises the weight, albeit slowly at first. The tribe chants louder, somehow transferring all their energy to Eddie's muscles. Eddie then completes the lift. Getting off the bench, Eddie raises his right arm into the air, and screams, "yes!"

First place in the bench press goes to Eddie, second place to Mark, and third place to Bobby B. Being the winner, Eddie is the only one in the group who does not know his maximal lift. What surprised Eddie is that he can lift a lot more weight when people are watching. Mark had noticed the same thing. Ambrosini, against the wall, looks worried and bothered. Bothering Ambrosini most, however, is the chanting that began when Eddie was on the bench.

The groups all switch stations. Group number one now moves on to the squat station. Mr. Zunde informs the new group, “the winner of the last group was able to squat an astounding 125 pounds.” Seeing that the new group is better physically fit, Mr. Zunde asks, “how much weight would you like to start with?” No one answers, so Mr. Zunde humourously suggests, “would you like to start with 500 pounds, or shall we add some more?” Eddie, knowing he can squat 240 pounds, responds, “I’m a bit tired today. How about 200 pounds?” Eddie also knows that Mark and Braden can also squat that amount.

Ambrosini comments to some of the others in the group, “those guys are real morons.” Mark kindly informs Ambrosini, “hey, twinkle toes. The girl’s gym is down the hall!” Before Ambrosini can respond, Mr. Zunde tells Mark and Ambrosini to settle their differences on the squat rack. Mr. Zunde decides to start the competition at 125 pounds, the weight at which the previous group left off. Mr. Zunde tells the group, “this weight will be a good warm-up. Do as many repetitions as you want.”

Ambrosini, again, goes first. He is able to squat 125 pounds with no problem. Eddie goes second and takes a pass. Mark, following Eddie’s lead, also takes a pass. Braden, Bobby B., and Gump all follow suit. By taking a pass, Eddie and his tribe have really ticked off Ambrosini.

After the first round, the weight is raised to 150 pounds. Ambrosini walks up to the bar. Lifting the bar off the rack, he displays some unsteadiness. He manages to complete the lift, but with considerably more effort than at 125 pounds. Eddie, again, takes a pass. Mark, Braden, Bobby B., and Gump follow suit, and also take a pass. At 150 pounds, Ambrosini is the only one able to lift the weight. Everyone else is out.

Mr. Zunde raises the weight to 200 pounds. Ambrosini, who is quite angry, steps up to the bar, and raises it off the rack. With considerable effort, he is somehow able to complete the lift. Now it is Eddie’s turn. Eddie comments, “I wonder how heavy that is.” Eddie knows exactly how heavy the bar is. He is only saying that for the benefit of annoying Ambrosini. Eddie decides to go in at this weight. Getting under the bar, Eddie lifts the bar off the rack. He takes a step back, drops down, and raises the bar effortlessly compared to Ambrosini’s last attempt. Eddie tells his tribe, “it’s kinda light. It’s good for a warm-up.” Mark, Braden, Bobby B., and Gump all give it a try, and all succeed. Sitting at his desk recording the student’s accomplishments, Mr. Zunde is quite amused at Eddie and his friends.

After this round, five students remain. Mr. Zunde raises the weight to 225 pounds. Ambrosini, the second-string running back, looks worried. Ambrosini is psyching himself up. Mark, on the other hand, is psyching

Ambrosini down. Mark humorously says to Ambrosini, “the bar is not going to get any lighter by staring at it.” Ambrosini then gets under the bar, and attempts his lift. As he goes down, it looks as if he will fail. Mustering every last ounce of energy he has, Ambrosini is able to complete the lift, although with lousy form. If Mark had not antagonized Ambrosini, Ambrosini would have probably failed. Eddie goes next. Eddie gets under the bar, and, without hesitation, lifts the bar, drops down into a full squat, and raises the bar in perfect form. Mark, Braden, Gump, and Bobby B. are all able to squat 225 pounds easily. No one is out after this round.

Mr. Zunde calls for 250 pounds but, after quick reconsideration, calls for 240 pounds. Ambrosini steps up to the bar, and raises it off the rack. Eddie, and his tribe, are all standing with their arms crossed, watching Ambrosini. They fully expect him to fail. Taking a step back, he goes down to the squat position. Not able to get the bar up, Ambrosini allows the bar to crash onto the safety cage. Mr. Zunde calls for the spotters to place the weight back on the upper rung. The spotters even have trouble lifting this weight. Now it’s Eddie’s turn. Eddie steps up, and gets under the bar. Squatting this much weight many times before, Eddie is very confident. Lifting the bar, he goes down into the squat position, and raises the bar. The rest make their attempt, and all succeed.

Mr. Zunde now calls for 275 pounds. Eddie goes first at 275 pounds. Mr. Zunde calls for Bobby B. and Braden to spot. The safety cage would normally catch the weight should the lifter fail, but it doesn’t hurt to have additional spotters. Walking up to the bar, Eddie looks it over, and gets under it. Eddie comes down into the squat position. After a brief hesitation, he lets out a primal scream, and raises the bar. The whole class looks over to see what happened, many of them wondering how much weight Eddie just lifted. Mark goes next, and repeats in Eddie’s footsteps. Gump and Braden go out during this round, leaving Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. to move on to the next round.

Ambrosini stands off to the side, thinking to himself that he is going to have to step up his game. In this gym class, Ambrosini is at the top of the sophomore food chain. There are five freshmen that are making Ambrosini seem like he is in elementary school, and he does not like it. Eddie and his tribe have not only buried Ambrosini in the competition, but have splattered his ego with psychological warfare.

In the next round, the weight is raised to 300 pounds. Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. have already received a grade of A for their lifts. This round, and any round following, is only to decide a winner. Eddie goes first. The other students are heard making comments that can be heard around the room, such as, “here he goes.” With the whole class watching, Eddie steps up to the bar, and wastes no time raising the bar from the rack. After

stepping backwards, he goes down into the squat position. Eddie lets out a primal scream that, this time, can be heard down the hall in the administrative offices. Eddie raises the weight, much to everyone's amazement. Mark goes next, and is unable to lift the weight. Eddie and Braden, spotting for Mark, help him return the weight to the squat rack. Bobby B. is up next. Bobby B. gets under the weight, steps back and gets down into the squat position. He raises the weight with a slight hesitation, but is able to complete the lift with no problem. Bobby B. looks strong in this event. It is now understood why he is known as the doctor of the shot-put.

For the next round, Mr. Zunde asks the final two competitors how much weight they want on the bar. Confident in his own abilities, Bobby B. suggests 325 pounds. Eddie goes along with it, but he has never squatted 325 pounds before. The bar is loaded, and Eddie goes first. After lifting the bar off the rack, he takes a step back, and lowers his body into the squat position. Giving it all he has, halfway up to the upright position, Eddie just does not have enough strength to complete the lift. Bobby B., the shot doc, is next. Getting under the weight, the shot doc lifts the bar off the rack, and steps back. Bobby B. lowers the bar, and gets into the full squatted position. Eddie, Mark, and Braden begin to cheer him on. The class joins in, chanting, "Bobby B.! Bobby B.! Bobby B.!" This gives the shot doc just the extra motivation he needs to succeed. As the shot doc slowly raises the weight, the cheers get louder. Halfway up, it's home free for the shot doc, as he is able to complete the lift. In the squat, first place goes to Bobby B., second place goes to Eddie, and third place goes to Mark.

The first group moves on to the dead lift station. This station is manned by Mr. Chubin. Mr. Chubin is finally happy to see some students who might be able to lift more than 150 pounds. Eddie asks Mark, "how much can you dead lift?" Mark replies, "somewhere around 350 pounds." Braden joins in and says, "I can do in the upper 300 range on a good day." Mark asks Bobby B., "how about you?" Bobby B. answers, "350, yeah. I can do 350 when I'm asleep."

Ambrosini, eavesdropping on their conversation, tells Bobby B., "no, you can't. Only in your dreams." Mark replies to Ambrosini's unsolicited comment, "hey! If you can't run with the big dogs, junior, stay on the porch." Mr. Chubin comments to Eddie's tribe, "when your convention is over, we can begin." Mr. Chubin decides to start the competition at 135 pounds.

Ambrosini, still determined to win something today, goes first. Ambrosini steps up and grasps the bar, performs the dead lift, and lowers the bar. He makes the lift look easy, partially because of his increased adrenaline levels, courtesy of the antagonistic behavior of Eddie and his

tribe. When Eddie's turn comes, he takes a pass. Mark, Braden, and Bobby B. also take a pass when their turn comes. In this group, everyone who made an attempt is able to lift the weight.

The competition goes on for a few rounds. At 250 pounds, Ambrosini is beginning to struggle. He completes the lift at this weight, but he looks as if he is at his limit. Eddie remarks to his group, "are you guys ready for a warm-up set?" They all nod yes. Eddie's comment really annoys Ambrosini, who is having trouble keeping his emotions under control. Eddie's comment, on the other hand, amuses Mr. Chubin, who tries to keep his laugh under his breath, but is hardly successful. Eddie steps up to the bar. Grasping the bar, Eddie performs the 250-pound lift easily. Mark, Braden, and Bobby B. are also able to lift the weight with absolutely no problem. After this round, Ambrosini, Eddie, Mark, Braden, Bobby B., Gump, and Davis all remain.

Mr. Chubin, recognizing that Ambrosini is the weak link among the remaining students, asks him, "how much weight do you want for the next round?" Mr. Chubin already knows Ambrosini will go out next, so he gives him the option. Ambrosini, who doubts his own ability to lift that much, boasts, "I'll take 275 pounds." The bar is loaded with 275 pounds. Ambrosini grasps the bar, and begins the lift. The lift ends quickly when Ambrosini is unable to maintain his grip on the bar. Eddie asks Mr. Chubin, "can I pass at this weight?" Mr. Chubin asks the group, "does anyone else want to pass?" Eddie said this not because he wanted to pass, but to further annoy Ambrosini.

The tribe talks it over, and Eddie asks Mr. Chubin, "can we move it up to 300 pounds?" Mr. Chubin replies, "go for it." Everyone remaining has already received a grade of A for their efforts in the dead lift. The remainder of the competition is again only to determine a winner. The bar is loaded with 300 pounds. All of the remaining contenders are able to perform the 300-pound lift.

Mr. Chubin comments, "I was wondering when the men were going to show up. Last week, the girls were lifting more than some of the guys. Now that I'm thinking about it, next week, maybe we'll have the girls play the sophomores in a game of football." Ambrosini, not surprisingly, is irritated by Mr. Chubin's comment.

The rumor around school is that Mr. Chubin is a little on the crazy side. With the athletic students, he pushes them beyond their athletic limits, developing their abilities even further. His inherent personality is quite intimidating to the students who have below par athletic ability. He often inadvertently pushes the less athletic types beyond their emotional limits.

The next increment raises the weight to 325 pounds. The weight now on the bar is a significant amount of weight for a freshman to dead lift. Eddie decides that he will go first. Stepping up to the weight, Eddie grips the bar, checking his grip carefully. With one big explosion, Eddie lifts the bar, holds it for the required time, and lowers the bar. Mark goes second. Mark steps up and grasps the bar. Remembering his earlier exchange of words with Ambrosini, Mark gets an additional adrenaline rush. Mark gives it his best, and lifts the weight, but appears to be at his limit. Bobby B. is up next. Stepping up to the bar, the shot doc wastes no time, and performs the dead lift slowly, but with perfect form. At 325 pounds, no one goes out. Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. all remain.

Mr. Chubin instructs the students, "since you are all looking a little weak today, load the bar with 350 pounds." He is not expecting anyone to succeed at this weight. Neither does Ambrosini. Without much delay, Eddie steps up to the weight. Gripping the bar, and using the same strategy as his prior attempt, Eddie gives it all that he has. Eddie is not able to fully complete the lift, and has to drop the bar. Mark is next, and steps up to the bar. Grasping the bar, and getting into the proper position, Mark pulls with all the strength that he has. Mark, however, is also unable to lift the weight. Now, it's all up to the shot doc. Bobby B. has never lifted this much weight in a dead lift before, and he is soon to find out whether he can. Stepping up to the weight that defeated the previous two contenders, Bobby B. grasps the bar. Again, the class begins to chant, "Bobby B.! Bobby B.! Bobby B.!" After checking his grip, he makes one or two check motions, making sure he is set. Borrowing Eddie's primal scream, Bobby B. picks up the bar, raising it slowly, which seems like an eternity to the shot doc. Bobby B. completes the lift, but not without making a monumental effort. Nearly the entire room cheers and claps their hands after Bobby B's. performance. In the dead lift, first place goes to Bobby B., and second place is a tie between Eddie and Mark.

In the back of the room, standing near the door, are two guys who did not clap. One of them is Ambrosini. The other is a five foot, eight inch well-built guy, with a military haircut, who looks like he is the poster boy for the ROTC program. His name is Paul Mahoney. Paul Mahoney, unknowing to anyone, was watching the competition for the last half hour. Knowing that the weightlifting competition was on the schedule in gym class this rainy week, Mahoney cut class to check out Eddie and his tribe. Mahoney quietly slips out the door, as Ambrosini mixes with the class again.

The next day, in health class, Mark asks Eddie, "how did you get stronger that fast?" Eddie tells Mark, "I've been working out a lot more, a whole lot more." Mark replies, "no. You must be doing something else too." Eddie confesses, "well, I've been taking a few supplements too. You know, vitamins and that kind of thing." Eddie wonders whether he should

tell Mark about the portal, after all they have been friends since kindergarten. If Eddie did tell Mark, Eddie reasons that Mark would think he is crazy. Mr. Zunde, who also teaches health, walks in, and class begins.

In health class this month, the topic is, yet again, illicit drugs, and why you should not take them. The topic of illicit drugs shows up in every health class syllabus. This is because, after the students hear how bad drugs are, none of them will ever take them. Today's topic is hallucinogenic drugs, and how they will damage your brain. Mr. Zunde, the instructor, is describing the types of hallucinogenic drugs, and what the effect is on someone who takes them. He goes over marijuana, LSD, and then comes to psilocybin.

While Mr. Zunde is discussing psilocybin, Mark whispers to Eddie, "how do you spell that?" Eddie replies, asking, "spell what?" Mark whispers, "that psilo thing." Eddie looks at the notes of the girl sitting next to him and tells Mark, "p-s-l-l-o-c-y-b-l-n." Mark tells Eddie, "I'm never going to remember that for the test." Explaining word association to Mark, Eddie tells him, "psilocybin sounds like psycho Chubin, so remember it that way, psycho Chubin." Mark says to Eddie, "yeah! Psycho Chubin, like the crazy gym teacher. I got it!" Eddie tells Mark, "yeah, bro. You got it. Mr. Chubin is psycho, like he took some crazy drug, so, you get psycho Chubin." Mark now has it down.

When the next health class arrives, so does the test. Mr. Zunde instructs the students to place their books on the floor, and hands out the test. Tests in health class are not too difficult, and everyone usually passes. As Mark is working on the test, he comes to a question that looks kind of simple. The question reads, "List three hallucinogenic drugs." Mark, remembering his word association for one of the drugs, is quite confident. He writes his answer, and moves on to the next question. At the end of the class, Mr. Zunde collects the tests, and the students move on to their next class.

The next time health class meets, which is the last time for this semester, Mr. Zunde hands back the student's tests. Handing Eddie his test, Mr. Zunde tells him, "very good, Eddie." Next to Eddie is Dawn, who receives the compliment, "excellent," from Mr. Zunde. Mr. Zunde then comes to Mark, and hands him his test. Mr. Zunde tells Mark, "reasonably good, Mark. But, psilocybin is the name of the hallucinogenic drug. The name of the drug is not psycho Chubin. Mr. Chubin is one of your gym teachers." The class bursts out laughing, including Eddie, and surprisingly, Mr. Zunde himself. With Mr. Zunde and Mr. Chubin both being physical education teachers, it is a sure bet Mr. Chubin has already seen Mark's test paper.

With the Autumn semester coming to a close, Mark, Eddie, Braden, and Bobby B. have proven themselves on the athletic field. The athletic field this time, however, was gym class. In gym class, the skill level of the athletes is the broadest range that one could imagine. Next semester, the athletic field will be the track. Eddie and his tribe will be competing against the best of the best for a position on the track team. One thing is for certain. Paul Mahoney will not be willing to give up his spot as the team's star sprinter. And, Paul Mahoney is not going to go down as easily as Ambrosini.

Over the Christmas holiday Eddie will be doing everything he can to increase his performance on the track. Mark will be doing the same. It's a sure bet that Paul Mahoney, after catching a glimpse of the weightlifting competition, will be doing some last minute intensive training as well. Tryouts for the track team will begin during the first week of the Winter semester. By the end of that week, the team will be selected. The athletes will have three days to secure their spot on the team. Anyone who does not make the team will have to wait for the Spring, when they can try out again.

Right before the Christmas holiday, Mark tells Eddie that he wants to get a new bicycle. Mark's parents told him that he can have one for Christmas. Since Eddie knows a lot about bicycles, Mark asks Eddie to go to Vito's Bicycle Shop with him to help pick it out. Eddie agrees to help Mark make his selection. They plan to meet on a Saturday afternoon at Vito's. Eddie will ride his bicycle there, and Mark will be driven by his parents.

When the appointed Saturday comes, Eddie rides to Vito's to meet up with Mark. Eddie walks in and Vito, who was working in the back, comes to the front to greet him. Mark has not yet arrived. Vito asks Eddie, "are you here to trade your bicycle in already?" Eddie replies, "no. I'm keeping it for a long time. But, Mark wants a good bicycle, something like mine. He's on his way with his parents." Vito, knowing his inventory down to the last valve cap, shows Eddie the two track bicycles that he has. One bicycle, which is very similar to Eddie's, has dual rear sprockets, and is suitable for road use. The other one is designed purely for track use, with no brakes and a single rear sprocket, coming in at a weight of just fifteen pounds.

Mark arrives with his parents, who look around at all the bicycles lined up on the floor and hanging from the ceiling. Vito, walking up to greet them, says hello to Mark and his parents. Taking a look at Eddie's bicycle, Mark's father asks Mark, "so, this is what you want?" Mark replies, "yeah. Something like it. It doesn't have to be exactly the same." Looking over Eddie's bicycle, Mark's father is quite impressed with the workmanship.

Meanwhile, Vito shows Mark a bicycle similar to Eddie's. Mark takes the bicycle over to Eddie's and compares them side by side, as Vito talks with Mark's parents. Eddie tells Mark, "you've ridden mine before. Ask Vito if you can take it out for a ride to compare." Mark yells over to Vito, "hey Vito! Can I take it out for a spin?" Vito walks over, and asks Mark, "have you ever ridden a track bike before?" Mark replies, "yeah. I rode Eddie's a few times." Vito then tells Mark, "sure. Take it out and give it a try."

As Mark takes the bicycle outside, Eddie decides to take a short ride with Mark. Mark and Eddie ride up the side street up to a long, rarely traveled road. Testing the bicycle for speed, Mark gives it all that he has. Eddie, the more experienced bicyclist, easily keeps up with Mark. Mark, nevertheless, is able to get up some good speed. The two cyclists turn around, and ride back to Vito's. It did not take Mark a lot of deliberation to decide whether he wants the bicycle or not. He definitely wants it. Mark mentions to Eddie, "so, this is how you get to the beach and can run so fast?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I really don't run a lot. Actually, I hate running distances."

When they return from their ride, Mark and Eddie walk into Vito's. Vito immediately asks, "so, how did you like it?" Mark, with no hesitation, replies, "a lot." Looking over at his father, Mark asks, "can I get it?" Mark's father walks over to Vito, and starts talking about the bicycle, primarily the price. Mark's father looks over the bicycle, realizing that this bicycle is no toy store brand of bicycle. It is a genuine racing machine built by craftsmen. His son, Mark, is also a racing machine in his own way. Mark's father tells Mark, "yes, we can certainly get this for you." Suddenly the happiest person in town, Mark will now have the opportunity to expand his athletic endeavors.

Eddie tells Mark he is going to ride home. Mark asks his father, "can I ride my bicycle home?" Mark's father replies, "no. It's not Christmas yet." Although Mark is disappointed, he understands. He will have to wait for Christmas day. Eddie heads home, while Mark's parents buy the bicycle, and load it carefully into the back of the pickup truck.

Over the Christmas holiday, Eddie makes a few trips to the various coin stores he frequents to buy gold. Buying voluminous amounts of gold, Eddie knows which merchants he can trust, and those that he can't. Occasionally, he has walked into the department store that has the coin and stamp counter, and walked out because a certain clerk was on duty. He somehow knew not to trust this person. But, with the price of gold inching up slowly, he accumulates as much gold as he is able to this month. Making a few trips to the future to sell the gold, Eddie gets a considerable return on his investment. He also brings back a supply of

vitamins and supplements, which he sees is making a big difference in his athletic performance.

One night over the holiday, Eddie loads his handlebar bag with gold and a little bit of money, and makes a trip to Angelo's Service Station. Eddie is planning to hide some gold and money in the MGB, as the mechanic instructed him. The streets are somewhat quiet late at night and, since it is dark outside, it would be a good time to hide some of his profits.

Eddie arrives at Angelo's and parks his bicycle between two junk cars near the MGB. The street lights are on the other side of the road, so the station is relatively dark. Eddie squats down, and walks low over to the MGB. To the casual observer, it is obvious that Eddie is up to something. He tries the key, and is able to open the door. He removes the sill plate, as the mechanic instructed, which goes easier than expected. Before he walks back to his bicycle, he looks around to make sure the coast is clear. Back at his bicycle, he gets the gold and the money, and walks over again to the MGB. He places the gold and the money in the sill, and replaces the sill plate. Closing the door quietly, he locks it, then makes sure it is secure. Sneaking back to his bicycle, Eddie whispers to himself, "that was kind of easy." Eddie rides his bicycle around for a while, burning off his excess adrenaline he got from his undercover activities.

By buying gold in the current time, and selling it in the future, Eddie is amassing a huge fortune. Eddie, however, has no idea how much money he has saved. Even though Eddie has nothing against hard work, he figures that having some extra money will give him more time to do what he wants to do in the future. Eddie has also decided to cut lawns again next Spring, and not slack off. Cutting lawns is a workout, and will give him more money to invest in the future.