

Eddie, The Ten Year Reunion

Chapter Three Normal Lives

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Chuckie is a sly little character. With the drapes always closed and his house dark, Chuckie clearly gives the impression that something illegal is going on inside his house. Chuckie's only job on record is a stock clerk at a home improvement store. Yet, Chuckie lives the lifestyle of someone who is a brain surgeon. Captain Hayes knows Chuckie is selling drugs. The problem is that there is absolutely no evidence of such. Without any evidence, there is nothing the police department can do.

A while ago, Braden decided to get proactive, and invest some money into buying a shortwave radio, a wide band radio receiver, and a police scanner. Mark, and his crew, installed a 50-foot antenna tower in Braden's back yard. Now able to pick up police transmissions, cordless phone transmissions, and cell phone transmissions, Braden is out to collect enough evidence to bust Chuckie. And, the icing on the cake is that Braden can listen to the police communications over at the University when he is at home.

Sitting in his living room, overlooking the patio and pool in the back yard, Braden tunes his radio receiver, searching for the frequencies of Chuckie's cordless home phone and Chuckie's cell phone. Intercepting a phone call, Braden listens as Chuckie takes an order for one pound of marijuana. Not much is communicated, other than what is being ordered and that the delivery date will be tomorrow. Braden suspects that, hearing that the order is for one pound, Chuckie could now be a big time distributor. Braden takes notes of what he hears, hoping to gain an understanding of Chuckie's method of operation.

Wendy walks into the room, asking, "did you hear anything?" Braden replies, "yeah. The Chuckie is making a drop tomorrow morning. But, I don't know when or where." Wendy, who wants Chuckie gone as much as anyone, suggests, "why don't you follow him?" Braden replies, "I might

just do that. I don't have to be at work until noon. I'll just follow his fat ass and see where he goes." Wendy asks, "are you coming outside?" Braden replies, "yeah," and heads outside with Wendy and Hunter, joining them in the pool.

The next day, Braden wakes up earlier than he needs to, waiting for Chuckie to leave for work. At 7:45 a.m., as expected, Chuckie pulls out of his driveway, and drives to his place of business. Braden maintains a loose tail, knowing exactly in which direction Chuckie is headed. Not deviating from the shortest drive to get to work, Chuckie arrives at the home improvement store where he works. Getting out of his car, Chuckie drinks a soft drink as he heads for the door as he holds a six-pack in his other hand. Braden now knows one of the reasons Chuckie is so overweight. Drinking a soft drink before 8:00 a.m. will certainly pack on the pounds. Braden heads home, suspecting the drop off will occur later in the morning in the parking lot.

When he arrives home, Braden tells Wendy, "Chuckie just went to work. He wasn't carrying anything with him other than a six-pack of cola. I bet the drugs are in his trunk." Wendy suggests, "keep listening to the radio. Follow him for the whole day if you have to. Bring the camera next time and get some photographs. Then, give all the evidence to Erika. She'd really love to bust him." Braden replies, "I'm gonna do that. I'm gonna bust his fat ass one way or another." Wendy agrees, stating, "nothing else is working. We have to get rid of him somehow."

On that subject, Braden tells Wendy, "Eddie says I should just burn the Chuckie's house down." Wendy replies, "that's not such a bad idea." Braden explains, "the only problem is that, if I get caught, I'll go to jail." Wendy replies, "seriously. That would definitely be a problem." Wendy suggests, "we could just move." Braden exclaims, "I ain't letting his fat ass run me out of here! I put way too much work into this place!" Wendy replies, "yeah. I agree. The Chuckie has to go." Braden exclaims, "that's right! I'm gonna get his fat ass out of here one way or another!"

Braden abruptly tells Wendy, "I'm gonna finish up the yard before I go to work." Wendy replies, "Hunter is still sleeping. I'll come outside and help." Braden and Wendy go outside, where Braden trims a few of the bushes in the front yard. Wendy weeds the beds, and cleans up the debris left behind by Braden. As Braden is working, Wendy notices that her engraved mirrored markers, designating the plant species, reflect light across the street. At the moment, one of the mirrors shines on Chuckie's front door. Wendy aims a few other mirrors at Chuckie's house, just to annoy him.

Seeing what Wendy is up to, Braden asks, "what are you doing?" Wendy replies, "I'm adjusting the mirrors so that light shines in the

Chuckie's windows." Braden points out, "in an hour, the sun is gonna move. Then, the reflection of the sun is gonna be somewhere else across the street." Wendy replies, "oh, yeah. That's right. I was just thinking of a way to annoy his ass." Braden and Wendy finish up the yard. Braden then heads inside, gets a shower, and heads off to work.

A week later, on Saturday morning, the tribe meets at the high school track for a very good reason. The track was officially finished the day before, and everyone wants to get a good look at it. Eddie and Kathy walk out to the track with Eddie, Jr. where Eddie sees several workers working on a few last minute details. With the workers are Johnson and Barbara, who apparently are the first in the group to arrive.

Walking up to Johnson, Eddie asks, "what's going on, bro?" Johnson replies, "they're installing the plaque." Eddie asks, "what plaque? I thought there was going to be a small plaque at the starting line." Johnson replies, "the plans have changed. It was going to be a surprise. But, now that you're here, go ahead and read it." Eddie and Kathy walk over with Johnson to the plaque next to the VIP seating area, which states,

It is with Deep Heartfelt Gratitude that the
Administrators, Faculty, Coaches, Students, and Friends
of Northside High School Give Thanks to

Edward Bogenskaya
Katarina Karakova Bogenskaya
Mark Svoboda
Paula Giovani Svoboda
Robert Bradshaw
Erika Gabriel Bradshaw

for the
George W. Frazier
Northside High School
Track and Field Sporting Venue

Architect: Louis Zaino
General Contractor: Mark Svoboda
Advisor: Dr. Gerhard Zunde

Seeing the plaque, Kathy exclaims, "that's so nice! Who thought of this?" Johnson replies, "me and Barbara." Eddie tells Johnson, "thanks, bro! I wasn't expecting this!" Johnson looks over toward the track, and replies, "it's the least we can do. This track is on par with the one at the University. There's not a high school in the country with a better track than this."

Bobby B. and Erika, arriving simultaneously with Mark and Paula, join the group, and check out the plaque. Paula exclaims, "wow! Whose idea was this?" Mark exclaims, "wow! Check it out." Bobby B., a bit reserved, tells Erika, "we're famous!" Mitchell and Amber walk up, followed by Braden and Wendy, who also check out the plaque.

While the group is talking among themselves, Eddie, Jr., Mark, Jr., and Dawn have found a very big sandbox to play in where the long jump and triple jump are held. Eddie yells out to Eddie, Jr., "hey Eddie! Do you want to be the first one to try out the new track?" Eddie stands up suddenly, and replies, "yeah! Me first!" Mark asks Mark, Jr. and Dawn, "hey! Do you guys want to race Eddie?" Running over to their parents, Mark, Jr. and Dawn energetically want to join the race.

Quickly organizing a 100-meter dash, Eddie, Kathy, and Paula run over to the finish line with their stopwatches. Mark will be the Starter. Eddie, Jr., Mark, Jr., and Dawn get in lanes one, two, and three. Mark announces, "on your marks." Already knowing the procedure, the three runners get into position. Mark announces, "set," and the kids are ready. Mark announces, "go," lowers his arm, and three stopwatches start at the other end of the track.

Eddie, Jr., Mark, Jr., and Dawn have all been taught that, when you are running on a track, it is not a time to be playing around. They have been taught that a race is serious business, and there is only one winner. Giving it their best, the kids race to the finish line. Being a little older, Eddie, Jr. has a bit of an advantage. As they approach the finish line, Eddie, Jr. is in the lead. Crossing the finish line with a time of 17.8 seconds, Eddie, Jr. is today's clear winner. Mark, Jr. takes second place, and Dawn finishes third. But, Dawn is not upset in the least because she knows she gave it her best.

Eddie tells Eddie, Jr., "that was really good! You ran it in 17.8 seconds." Eddie gives his son a high-five, congratulating him on his run. Eddie, Jr. asks, "was it my best?" Eddie replies, "not quite. Your best is 17.5." Not quite what one would expect out of someone who is almost four years old, Eddie, Jr. replies, "I need to train more." It's no secret where Eddie, Jr. got that phrase from. Eddie, Jr. has heard his parents say it many times.

Mark tells Eddie and Kathy, "wow! Your kid is faster than McCrutchin." Kathy replies, "now, that's a name I haven't heard in a while." Paula asks, "I wonder whatever happened to him." Eddie replies, "the last I heard, Todd McCrutchin finished out his one-year sentence for attempting to steal Tessa's Dune Buggy. Richard says he lives over in Centerville somewhere. But, his father is still in jail." Braden comments, "speaking about jail, Mr. Crum gets out in early October. That's only a

few months from now.” Mark grins, and replies, “we can mess with him, and there’s not a thing he can do about it.” Mark quickly thinks of a few ways to mess with Mr. Crum, the high school principal who gave the group such grief. Bobby B. mentions, “maybe we’ll get lucky and he’ll come by the service station.” Mark replies, “that’s one day I’d hate to miss.”

After the race, the group takes a casual walk around the track. Stopping at the launching zone for the field implements, Bobby B. takes a good look around. The shot-put pad is his first stop, where he stands in the circle remembering his days of throwing the shot-put for the high school. Walking to the launching zone for each field implement, Bobby B. is quite impressed with the new setup. Wanting to make the first throw, Bobby B. comments, “I wish I had a shot-put or a hammer.” Johnson, who has the keys to the storage building, walks over and retrieves a 16-pound shot-put for Bobby B.

Walking over to the launching zone for the discus, Kathy recalls her high school days when she threw the discus. Remembering her fan club who came down after the meets to say hello to the discus girl, a tear comes from Kathy’s eye, which she hides from those standing around. Wanting to try her hand at the discus on the new track, Kathy yells out to Johnson, “bring a discus, too, please!”

Johnson returns with the shot-put and discus. Bobby B. takes his position on the shot-put pad, preparing to make a throw. Using the discus technique, Bobby B. hurls the shot-put through the air, letting out a primal scream. The shot-put comes to rest at a distance that would have won the gold medal at any university meet since Bobby B. graduated several years ago. Quite impressed with his throw, Bobby B. jogs out into the red zone and retrieves the 16-pound steel ball.

Kathy gets on the discus pad, getting ready to make her throw. The stands are empty, for Kathy’s fan club is long gone. Eddie, Jr. asks his father, “what’s mommy doing?” Eddie replies, “mommy is throwing the discus.” Eddie, Jr. asks, “mommy can throw the discus here, too?” Eddie replies, “yeah. Mommy can throw the discus wherever there is a discus pad.”

Going into the wind up, and into the spin, Kathy envisions the stands full with spectators. Releasing the discus, Kathy lets out a loud primal scream. Soaring through the air, the discus finds its resting place at about the 65-meter mark. Eddie tells Kathy, “that was awesome!” Kathy runs out to the field to retrieve her discus, missing her days of high school track and field.

Kathy returns with the discus. Eddie, Jr. tells his mother, "I want to try." Kathy hands her son the discus, and tells him, "okay. You have to stand inside this circle, and throw it that way." Eddie, Jr. confidently steps onto the discus pad and, holding the discus with both hands, spins and tosses it into the red zone. The discus lands a few feet from the launching pad, and everyone claps for the upcoming track and field star. Eddie, Jr. jumps up and down, clapping for himself, exclaiming, "I did it! I did it!"

Johnson puts the field implements away, and the group continues their trek around the new track. Passing by the newly installed aluminum stands, Johnson comments, "the stands are four times the size as the old ones." Wendy replies, "and, no one will get splinters in their butt anymore." Paula laughs and asks Wendy, "people got splinters in their butt sitting on the stands?" Wendy replies, "I did once when I was doing my homework while you guys were practicing." Mark comments, "wow! This track used to be a dangerous place. Splinters in people's butts. Javelins flying around. Ticks on the track. How did we ever survive?" Paula exclaims, "I remember the ticks! That was so funny!"

Returning to the starting line, Kathy asks, "now, what?" Paula replies, "do you have to ask, girl?" Eddie, Jr. kindly informs Paula, "it's pizza time!" Paula tells Eddie, Jr., "that's right! How could I ever forget?" Dawn tells the group, "mommy never forgets pizza." Kathy whispers to Paula, "you're so busted." Paula then announces, "okay, everybody! It's off to get pizza!" The kids clap, and all yell out, "pizza!" And, it's off to the pizzeria for the group.

Over the last few weeks, Braden has become quite the radio aficionado. Continuing with his espionage, Braden listens to his radio one Friday night after pizza as Wendy puts Hunter to bed. Waiting as his receiver, which is in scanning mode, finds a signal, Braden hopes to hear another of Chuckie's phone conversations. Specifically, Braden hopes to hear of another drug deal going down.

At about 9:30 p.m., Braden tells Wendy, "hey! Come listen to this!" Wendy rushes over, hearing a conversation between Chuckie and Andrew Goldstein. Coming into the middle of the conversation, Wendy hears Goldstein tell Chuckie, "I got to get back in town. Yeah, yeah. I should have stayed down there in the city. It's getting like way too hot where I am." Goldstein is not talking about the temperature, but rather the fact that the authorities are after him. Chuckie asks Goldstein, "where are you?" Goldstein replies, "I'm up here at the border. Yeah, yeah. Up here. Almost to Canada." Chuckie offers, "if you can get down here, you can stay with me for a while." Wendy exclaims, "oh shit! That's all we need! As if Chuckie isn't enough, now we're going to have Goldshit around here

too.” Goldstein replies to Chuckie, “I’m going to hook this Jeep, and stick a dealer tag on it. Yeah, man. I got to get out of here real fast like.”

Braden tells Wendy, “this could be good news.” Quite puzzled, Wendy asks, “how could this be good news?” Braden smiles, and replies, “I can bust both of their asses for the price of one.”

Wendy suddenly tells Braden, “wait. Listen to this.” Focusing again on the phone conversation, Braden and Wendy hear Chuckie tell Goldstein, “I got a really good business going on here. I need some help. I can cut you in on the deal, if you want.” Goldstein asks, “what’s going on, man? Yeah, yeah. I mean, like, what do you got going on there?” Chuckie replies, “Lillian’s working the high school. I got so much shit going on. Shit. You ain’t going to believe it.” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. I got to get there first. Where’s your crib at?”

As Chuckie and Goldstein exchange information, Wendy comments, “Eddie was right. We should burn Chuckie’s house down.” Braden replies, “you know I can’t do that! They’ll put my ass away forever!” Wendy comically suggests, “just hire someone to burn his house down.” Braden replies, “yeah, right. That shit ain’t going over either.” Braden and Wendy continue to listen to Chuckie and Goldstein’s conversation, as Braden takes detailed notes on what he hears.

Abruptly ending his phone call with Goldstein, Chuckie tells Goldstein, “I got to go. I got to take this. Business.” Goldstein replies, “yeah, yeah. Call me later.” Chuckie hangs up, and takes the next phone call.

Answering the call, Chuckie greets his caller by announcing, “yeah.” The caller tells Chuckie, “hey, man. I need some ludes and some MJ, man. Like, real soon, man. Can you deliver?” Chuckie replies, “yeah. I got it. How much you want?” The caller replies, “can I get a can of each, man? The usual amount.” Chuckie replies, “I got you covered. Tomorrow?” The caller replies, “yeah, man. Same place?” Chuckie replies, “yeah. I’ll have the goods.” The caller replies, “thanks, man. I’ll have your dough.” The caller hangs up, leaving nothing to Braden’s imagination of what will go down tomorrow.

Braden tells Wendy, “tomorrow’s Saturday. I ain’t working. This is my big chance to bust his ass.” Wendy tells Braden, “go for it. We have to get him out of our neighborhood somehow.” Braden asks, “you don’t mind?” Wendy replies, “no. I have something that I need to work on, and Hunter will probably spend the day running around and swimming in the pool.” Wendy wants Chuckie gone more than anyone, and will stop at nothing to get the brat out of the neighborhood. Braden listens to his radio for another hour, then joins Wendy for the rest of the evening.

Very early the next morning, Braden is out working in his yard, as he usually does on Saturday morning. Waiting for Chuckie to make a move, Braden constantly looks over at Chuckie's house, wondering where and when the drug deal will take place. At 7:40 a.m., Chuckie's garage door opens, and Chuckie pulls out of his driveway. Judging from the time Chuckie is leaving, Braden suspects Chuckie is headed to work. Braden quickly puts his lawnmower away, and tells Wendy, "I'm rolling." Wendy tells her husband, "I'll finish the lawn." Braden drives away, maintaining a loose tail on Chuckie.

Chuckie arrives at the home improvement store, parking in the back of the lot where employees are required to park. Braden searches for the perfect place to park, and pulls into a parking space where he can see Chuckie's car, the employee entrance, the loading zone, and the front entrance. Braden hopes, and highly suspects, that the deal will go down in the parking lot, and not inside the store.

Waiting for two hours, not much has happened in the parking lot other than shoppers coming and going. Braden surveys the area with his binoculars, getting a good idea of what normally transpires at such an establishment. Watching carefully, Braden catches Chuckie at the loading zone, who is handed a loading ticket by the customer. Chuckie returns with a dozen bags of fertilizer, loading them into the rear bed of the customer's pickup truck. Seeing nothing suspicious transpire, Braden is convinced that was not the exchange he was looking for.

Right before lunch, another vehicle pulls up to the loading area. Chuckie walks out to the loading area and, similar to the previous transaction, is handed a loading ticket by the customer. Chuckie goes inside, and returns with a bag of pine bark, placing it in the trunk of the customer's car. Braden observes that Chuckie then hands the customer two soft drink cans, which the customer also places in his trunk. The customer then hands Chuckie a soft drink can, which Chuckie then carries back inside.

Taking a few pictures with his camera using a telephoto zoom lens, Braden documents the transaction. Braden knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that what he just saw was a drug deal going down, for employees and customers do not typically exchange soft drink cans when loading merchandise. As the customer's car pulls out of the parking lot, Braden writes down the tag number in his notes, and gets another photograph of the vehicle.

Obtaining the evidence that he sought, Braden heads home, now with a full understanding of how Chuckie's drug dealing operation is being run. From what Braden gathers, Chuckie takes orders over his phone at his home. Chuckie then brings the drugs to the home improvement store,

where his customer buys some insignificant item, such as a single bag of pine bark. Chuckie then loads the customer's purchase into the customer's car, also handing the customer a soda can diversion safe, in which the drugs are delivered. Chuckie is handed a second soda can diversion safe, which contains the payment for the drugs. No one in the home improvement store would ever suspect any wrongdoing.

Braden returns home, where he tells Wendy what he discovered. Wendy tells Braden, "keep collecting evidence. And, let Captain Hayes know what you found out." Braden replies, "yeah. I should do that. But, I think I'm gonna get some more evidence before I say anything." Wendy reminds Braden, "you still have to figure out how he delivers the drugs to his sister. And, the question of the day is who is supplying Chuckie?" Braden replies, "that's a good question. You're right. I still got a lot more work to do." Wendy tells Braden, "let's go and get lunch." Braden and Wendy head to the pizzeria to join the rest of the group, taking Hunter with them.

At Eddie's Service Station, Eddie, Mark, and Bobby B. often get together in the mornings before work to work out. As they are walking out of Eddie's gym behind the service station, they see Captain Richard Hayes, who occasionally stops by, drive in. Mark mentions, "that's Captain Hayes. I wonder what he wants." Eddie replies, "he probably has some interesting information." Bobby B. replies, "he's bored. Erika says he misses the streets." Mark decides to hang around for a few minutes to say hello to the officer.

Richard gets out of his car, announcing, "what's up?" Eddie replies, "what's up." Richard replies, "you're not going to believe this one." Eddie, who enjoys hearing Richard's interesting stories, replies, "this has got to be good." Hearing the exchange between Eddie and Richard, Mark will certainly now hang around to hear the news. Eddie takes a slight detour, and opens the doors to the service bays. The rest of the group heads into the office, and takes a seat.

Walking into the office, Eddie asks, "so, what's up?" Richard explains, "we just solved a really interesting burglary case." Eddie replies, "really? That good?" Richard replies, "yeah. As I said, you're not going to believe this one." In anticipation, Mark comments, "this sounds like it's going to be interesting."

Richard then explains, "get this. Some character figured out exactly what houses he wanted to break into. He checked out the house really well, and figured out how many deadbolts and handle locks were on the house. Then, he bought new high-security locks, packaged them up, and mailed it to the owner of the house. But, the locks were addressed to names like John Smith, Jim Jones, or some other common name. Then,

this character would wait for the homeowner to install the new locks.” Mark laughs, and exclaims, “no! Tell me he didn’t!” Richard continues, “yeah. He did. You figured it out. When the homeowner was gone, this thief walked right up to the door, used a key that he kept for himself, let himself in, and cleaned the place out.” Mark, Eddie, and Bobby B. laugh quite hysterically, wondering how someone could be so stupid.

Richard goes on to explain, “it doesn’t end there. There was another angle to this character’s racket. This character showed up at a few medical offices. One was over in the South side of the county. This character explained to the doctor that the landlord wanted the locks changed because of security reasons. So, the doctor allowed this character to change the locks. He even got the doctors to give him their landlords name and address, and mailed the landlord two keys and a letter stating that the locks were changed. So, this thief would occasionally show up at night at these medical offices, use the key, and walk right in. He stole a few drugs, and left on his merry way. In each case, the doctors thought one of their employees were walking off with the drugs. A few of these cases have been open for years. I tell you. You just can’t make this stuff up.”

Richard explains, “these cases were so sparse. One would occur at the North end of the county. Another would occur at the South end, near the beach. A few identical cases occurred over in the neighboring counties, and a few over in the city. I tell you. This character had a real racket going on.”

Recalling his early days at the University, Mark asks Richard, “the guy’s name wouldn’t be Steve Leggett, would it?” Richard suddenly has a look of grave concern on his face, and replies, “yeah. How did you know?” Mark replies, “Leggett is one of the guys who planted steroids in mine and Eddie’s locker when we were freshmen.” Waving his finger in the air, Richard boldly exclaims, “I knew I heard that name somewhere before!”

Thinking about Leggett, Richard exclaims, “now, I remember! The University’s police department took care of the situation with the steroids internally. The only charges we were able to find on this Leggett character was one instance of public drunkenness.” Mark replies, “yeah. I was there. That’s when that asshole crashed my wedding, along with McCrutchen.” Remembering when he and Braden tossed Leggett and McCutchen into the ocean, Bobby B. smiles, stating, “I remember that. We had to get rid of them a few times before the police were called.”

Eddie then mentions, “Braden found out that Leggett’s father is a locksmith. They never proved it, but, Leggett was a suspect in a few break ins on campus. One incident supposedly involved the theft of about two dozen stopwatches from the coach’s office in the arena. From

what I remember, Braden also suspected Leggett in a few dorm room break ins. All the cases had no forced entry. And, Leggett is the one who picked the locks when he and McCutchen planted steroids in our lockers." Captain Hayes comments, "we never did find out who was supplying this Brad Evans character with opiates, asthma inhalers, and other pharmaceuticals. How much do you want to bet it was this Leggett character?" Mark replies, "it sounds like you hit that nail on the head."

Richard comments, "I need to get the detectives working on this case to see what these McCutchen characters are really up to these days." Eddie replies, "we haven't heard too much about any of the McCutchen family for a long time. Braden says McCutchen's father had really hard time in jail. But, that's about it." Richard shakes his head, and states, "now, I'm not so confident that this Leggett character was working alone." Eddie replies, "it sounds like it's time to pay McCutchen a visit."

Putting together a few pieces of a puzzle that he did not even know existed, Captain Hayes heads to work. Mark heads to his current job site, which is at the police precinct building in the town where he lives, where he, his father, and Eddie's father are constructing a small jail. Eddie and Bobby B. get to work, both wondering whatever happened to McCutchen after college.

While at home, whenever he gets the chance, Braden continues to eavesdrop on Chuckie's phone calls, hoping to collect more evidence to put him away for a long time. Braden scans the frequency spectrum, searching for Chuckie's phone calls. Intercepting a phone call late one evening, Braden listens as Chuckie talks with his sister. Since school is not yet in session, Braden tries to get a head start on figuring out Chuckie's delivery methods.

During their conversation, Chuckie's sister, Lillian, asks Chuckie, "guess what I got?" Chuckie asks, "what do you got?" Lillian replies, "I got me two guys wanting to sell for me." Chuckie asks, "can you trust them?" Lillian replies, "yeah. I know them for a while. They're good." Chuckie asks Lillian, "do you need anything?" Lillian replies, "I need some weed. Bring it when you come to dinner Sunday." Chuckie tells his sister, "I'll have it. And, I have a present for you."

Chuckie hangs up the phone, leaving Braden to wonder what kind of present Chuckie has for his sister. Braden takes notes of what he hears, trying to piece together how Chuckie delivers the drugs to his sister. Today, Braden discovers a big piece of the puzzle. But, once school starts, Chuckie might use a different method to deliver the goods to his sister.

Wendy walks by, asking, “did you hear anything?” Braden replies, “yeah. Chuckie’s sister has two people dealing for her. Chuckie must have some big operation going on over there.” Wendy tells Braden, “keep listening. I want that guy out of there.” Braden replies, “I wish I could go over there right now and bust his fat ass. In fact, I should have kicked his ass a few more times when I was in high school.”

A few minutes later, without any warning, a gunshot is heard outside from across the street, followed by the sound of glass breaking. Braden exclaims, “get down,” and he’s not talking about the Jungle Boogie. Braden carefully peers out the window, seeing nothing. Wendy suggests, “maybe it was a car backfiring.” Braden replies, “that ain’t no car backfiring! That was a 38 or a 45!” Braden tells Wendy, “stay down, and don’t get in front of any windows.” Braden is very glad he bought a four-sided brick house. Braden is equally as glad that Hunter’s bedroom is in the back of the house, where Hunter is fast asleep.

Braden calls the police, gets his hand gun, Benelli M4, and night vision goggles. Strapping on his bulletproof vest, Braden goes into the back yard, finding nothing unusual. Braden opens the door to his detached garage, and walks in. Crawling along the ground, Braden makes his way to the front and, staying behind the brick as best as he can, peers out the window. Seeing no night vision signals, Braden retreats, reenters his house, and peers out each window, seeing what he can see.

Making a grand entrance with flashing lights and sirens, a police car drives up. Still wearing his night vision goggles, Braden carefully walks outside to greet the officer. Greet, however, is hardly the word for it. Braden and Officer Erika Bradshaw get down low, protected by the police car. As Braden gives Erika the rundown, the sirens of the backup unit can be heard off in a distance. Erika radios the backup unit, making them aware of the situation.

Looking back at his house, Braden sees what he thinks is a broken window on his garage door. Braden tells Erika, “cover me.” Braden walks backward toward his house, looking left and right for what may be trouble. Verifying the garage window was, in fact, broken, Braden returns to the street where Erika and the backup officer are convinced the threat is now gone. Braden exclaims to Erika, “they shot out my garage window! I can’t believe this shit!”

Braden, Erika, and the backup officer enter Braden’s house and, in searching the garage, discover a bullet lodged in the back wall. Examining the trajectory of the bullet through the broken window and where it came to rest in the wall, Braden and the officers conclude the bullet was fired from across the street in the vicinity of Chuckie’s front yard. The backup officer removes the bullet, bagging it as evidence.

Seeing the evidence, Erika tells Braden, “you got a big problem here. This is a 45.” Braden angrily replies, “I see that. After this shit, I’m gonna have to get some bulletproof glass.”

Wendy opens the garage door from the house, and asks, “is it safe to come out there?” Braden replies, “yeah. Somebody shot at our house.” Now even more upset, Wendy exclaims, “yeah! That piece of shit across the street!” Braden agrees, replying, “I ought to just go over there now and kick his fat ass, just like in the old days.” Erika replies, “that would be nice. Different rules today, though. And, if he has a gun, you might not make it back.” The backup officer shows Wendy the bullet, who is now even more angry.

Erika whispers to Braden, “lose the M4. It’s not available today.” Braden replies, “oh, yeah. I almost forgot about that.” Braden’s Benelli M4, a tactical semiautomatic shotgun fitted with a laser sight fitted to the Picatinny sight rail, is not available at Braden’s time. Braden and Erika have traveled to the future and brought back quite the collection of weapons not available at their time. Erika’s concern is that the backup officer might take interest in Braden’s weapon.

Erika tells Braden, “we’re going to go across the street and knock on the Chuckie’s door.” Braden asks, “what good is that gonna do?” Erika explains, “I’ll tell him shots were fired, and I’m checking to see if everyone in the home is all right. It’s best to try diplomacy first.” Kind of ticked off at the whole situation, Braden replies, “that shit ain’t gonna work. The whole purpose of diplomacy is to prolong a crisis.” Braden and Wendy would be perfectly happy to see Erika take a bazooka out of her trunk, aim it at Chuckie’s house, and fire it a few times. But, that’s not the way it works.

Erika and the backup officer walk across the street, and knock on Chuckie’s door, standing to the side behind the brick just in case a bullet is fired through the door. Knocking a second time, there is no answer. Hammering on the door a third time, there is still no answer. While Erika would prefer to kick the door down and arrest Chuckie, she knows she cannot do so. And, kicking the door down would require a warrant, something Erika does not have at the moment. Erika walks backward across the street with her eyes on Chuckie’s doors and windows, while the backup officer walks forward.

Erika returns to Braden’s garage, announcing, “he’s either not home, or he’s not answering his door.” Braden, however, knows Chuckie is at home. He heard Chuckie talking on the phone moments before. Braden, not knowing the backup officer, decides to remain quiet regarding his clandestine activities monitoring Chuckie’s phone calls, and simply replies, “I know his fat ass is over there.” Erika replies, “I suspect he is,

but you know how it is.” Braden replies, “yeah. I know. I ought to just go over there and knock on his door with my foot, and kick his door in. Then, we’ll see if his ass is home. Then, when he says I kicked his door in, I’ll say, ‘no, I didn’t. I knocked on your flimsy door, and it just fell over. Your door must be weak, just like your fat ass is weak.’” Braden and Erika know that, under the circumstances, there is not much that can be done other than to file a police report.

Erika gets the information she needs for her report. Braden cleans up the broken glass in the driveway and, again, checking the trajectory of the bullet. Braden concludes that the gun was fired from Chuckie’s front yard, likely from the left side of the house. Braden informs Erika of his findings, who adds it to her report. And, now that the backup officer is gone, Braden informs Erika that he knows that Chuckie is home, since he intercepted a phone call a few minutes before hearing the gun going off. Erika gets back on the road, hoping the rest of her shift is a little more quiet. Most of all, Erika hopes she does not get another call to Braden’s house tonight.

Working on a few home projects, Eddie makes a list and heads to the hardware store. On Eddie’s list are the materials to add electrical sockets to the basement, which is currently unfinished. Eddie will then move on to finishing the basement to some degree, making the home gym look a little better. Eddie could have just as easily hired someone to do the work, but he likes these type of home projects. And besides, Eddie, Jr. likes to help, learning a lot as Eddie’s apprentice.

While on the electrical aisle, Eddie picks up about 500 feet of electrical wire, outlet boxes, circuit breakers, and other miscellaneous items needed to do the job. An employee, stocking the shelves, asks Eddie, “is there anything I can help you with?” Eddie replies, “no. I’m good.” Eddie picks up a few more items, thinking that he knows the employee from somewhere.

Finding the answer way back in his mind, Eddie asks, “hey. Are you Paul Mahoney?” The employee replies, “yeah.” Eddie shakes Mahoney’s hand, and tells him, “hey. I’m Eddie Bogenskaya. Maybe you remember me.” Mahoney exclaims, “yeah, Eddie! I remember you! How have you been?” Eddie, quite surprised at Mahoney’s demeanor, which is upbeat and energetic, replies, “good, and you?” Mahoney energetically replies, “I’ve been great! I got married three years ago. I have a one-year-old son. And, we just bought a small house over on Fifth Street. Everything’s going great!” Eddie replies, “I’m glad to hear that.”

Mahoney asks Eddie, “what are you working on?” Eddie replies, “I have an unfinished basement, and there are no electrical outlets, except for where the HVAC system is. So, I’m going to put in some outlets. Once I

get that done, I'm going to put bead board or something on the walls just to make it look a little better." Complimenting Eddie, Mahoney replies, "that should look really good when you get done."

Getting what he needs for the project, Eddie tells Mahoney, "hey! It's good seeing you." Mahoney replies, "back at you!" Eddie heads to the checkout line, wondering what happened to Paul Mahoney. Mahoney, who used to be a drug dealer and user, and Eddie's adversary on the track, is friendly and courteous, characteristics he totally lacked years ago. Adult responsibility apparently caused Mahoney to grow up.

The first Monday of the month arrives, the date that Eddie usually distributes his new stock market advice. Mark may stop by to get the list if he is in the area. Otherwise, Paula will get a copy from Kathy. Captain Hayes will certainly take a break and stop by. Arriving slightly before Eddie opens today is Athena Leighton, who has an easy Summer teaching a few physical education classes. Athena walks into the office, where Eddie is looking over a few job applications and resumes.

Seeing Athena, Eddie asks, "what's up?" Athena replies, "you look busy." Eddie explains, "I am. We have a job opening for someone to pump gas and that sort of stuff. I never thought it would be so hard to find someone. I don't want to hire an idowanna or a do dah." Not quite familiar with the terms, Athena asks, "what's an idowanna and a do dah?" Eddie explains, "an idowanna doesn't want to do any thing, like in 'I don't want to.' And, a do dah asks, 'do the bus stop here?' They don't have their own transportation. So, if they even show up for work, they're always late." Athena laughs, telling Eddie, "that's funny! I've never heard that before."

Eddie further explains, "there's also a mo' tea. They work in restaurants, asking you if you want more tea. And, the 'mon backs work at loading docks, telling you to 'come on back.' Worst of all are the do dats. They don't do anything themselves, but tell people to do this and do that. You see a lot of do dats standing around where there's road construction." Athena laughs, asking Eddie, "where did you hear this from?" Eddie confesses, "I can't take any credit for that one. Braden made all that up. Ever since Braden graduated, he's been making all kinds of funny stuff up."

Shortly after Athena arrives, Captain Richard Hayes walks in, announcing, "what's up?" Eddie replies, "what's up?" Richard tells Eddie and Athena, "you guys are never going to believe what this Todd McCutchen character is up to now." Eddie replies, "try me." Richard replies, "this clown is back in the track and field circles. He picked up a job working for this Dr. James Nicholson character at that university over in the city. What do you guys call that place, again? Dogpatch

University?" Eddie replies, "yeah. That's the one." Athena sighs, and comments, "oh, wonderful. We'll have to watch out for the spies again." Eddie laughs, and replies, "wait until Mark hears about this. He'll want to get back in the action again just to mess with McCutchen."

Richard hands Eddie a list of wanted and stolen vehicles. Eddie places the list in his top desk drawer, and retrieves his list of stock recommendations, handing a copy to Richard and Athena. Richard comments, "you know, with all the money I've made in the stock market, I could retire. But, I get great satisfaction putting criminals away. So, I guess I'll be working for a long time." Athena replies, "I know what you mean, Richard. I could retire too. But, I could never leave track and field again. As Axel Braden would probably say, I look forward to kicking ass on the track." Athena has completely lost her administrative demeanor, but certainly can turn it on again when necessary, especially during the annual track coach's meeting, which will be coming up shortly.

Eddie hints, "me, Mark, Johnson, and Braden get out on the track every once in a while and run a few time trials in the 4 by 400-meter. Kathy and Paula have also kept up their training. And, get this. Bobby B. poured a shot-put pad in his back yard." Athena replies, "Kathy mentioned something about you guys running a 4 by 400-meter relay during the dedication of the new high school track." Eddie replies, "that's the plan. They'll be a few exhibition events during the ceremony. And, Mitchell is going to get the television station to film the dedication. He's also producing a documentary on track and field, and is hoping to get some good footage during the event. Mitchell was hoping to interview you and Mr. Frazier for the documentary." Answering for both herself and Mr. Frazier, Athena excitedly replies, "we'd love to take him up on his offer!"

Hearing Eddie's commentary, Richard tells Eddie, "you're the best source for inside information in this entire town." Eddie replies, "well, only if it has something to do with track and field or anyone who drives into the service station. And, anything I know that goes on at the high school, I hear from Johnson." Eddie then reveals, "I never really left the track circuit. I still train, and we go to every meet that we can." With great words of wisdom that she discovered first hand, Athena replies, "never walk away from what you love. You'll either deeply regret walking away, or you'll get back into it." Richard comments, "ain't that the truth. As I said a moment ago, I just can't retire."

Eddie asks Richard, "by the way, how did you get into law enforcement?" Richard laughs, and asks, "are you sure you want to hear this?" Always interested in people's life stories and how they got to where they are today, Athena quickly replies, "I'd love to!" As Bobby B. drives up in his Dune Buggy, Eddie replies, "we'd love to hear it. Here comes Bobby B. I'm sure that Bobby B. would like to hear it too."

Recalling the years of his youth, Richard begins to explain, “when I was seventeen years old, my parents went away on vacation. I had a Summer job, so I didn’t go.” Eddie interrupts, and asks, “what was your Summer job?” Richard replies, “I worked for a construction company, doing concrete work. I’m telling you. That was really hard work.” Eddie comments, “seriously.” Richard continues, “so, I was home alone for a week. My parents left me a lot of good food, and everything went well, until the day before they came home.”

Now with everyone’s interest, Richard explains, “the day before my parents came home, it started raining, and raining hard. You can’t do concrete work when it’s pouring rain, so they sent everyone home early that day. So, I get home, open the front door, and some character had a box packed with valuables sitting in the hallway. I had no idea where he was in the house. So, I quietly snuck into the garage and got my baseball bat. It was a good thing it was raining so hard, otherwise the intruder would have heard me come in.” Quite surprised, Athena asks Richard, “were you scared?” Richard replies, “no. At seventeen, not much scared me.”

Richard continues, “when I came up from the garage, I heard the intruder in my bedroom. So, I walked up the stairs, stood in the hallway, and waited for this character to come out. He came walking out of my room with my stereo in his hands and, I tell you, I was ticked off. I hammered the intruder’s knees with my baseball bat, and he fell to the ground. I hit him a few more times, and he yelled out, ‘I give up! Stop! Stop!’ So, I dragged this character outside through the garage, out into the rain, and chained him to the fence with my bicycle lock and chain. I put the chain around this character’s neck, so he couldn’t escape if he wanted to. Then, I went inside and called the police.” Eddie laughs, and comments, “that’s really funny, chaining the guy to the fence.” In high school, Eddie belted Chuckie to the fence a few times every year.

Richard explains, “the police arrived, and they took a look at the evidence inside the house. As it turned out, this character broke in through the back door, which he jimmied open somehow. Further investigation showed that this character had a van sitting around the corner. The proverbial white van had the name of a roofing company on it. No one is going to be suspicious of a roofing van when it’s raining outside. The police searched the guy’s van, which was full of stolen items from a few other jobs he pulled off that day. As it turns out, that day, five other homes in the area were hit. The officer then explained to me that they’ve been looking for this character for a long time. The police knew this character as the ‘rainy day burglar’. He would hit five or six houses in the same area, all on a rainy day. Then, during the next storm, he would move on to some place five miles away for his next crime spree.”

Richard concludes, “on his way out, the officer told me, ‘with work like that, you might want to consider a job in law enforcement.’ Since I was going to be a senior in high school the next year, and had no idea what I wanted to do with my life, I made my decision right then and there.”

Athena asks, “how did your parents react to your decision?” Richard replies, “after they heard of me catching the burglar, they supported me 100 percent. They were glad to hear that I finally found a definite career path. If that guy didn’t break in, who knows. I could have been doing concrete work for the rest of my life.” Bobby B. tells Richard, “that’s a really awesome story!”

Suddenly getting a call on the radio, Richard steps aside for a moment. Eddie mentions to Bobby B. and Athena, “I never knew that about Richard. You learn something new every day.” Bobby B. comments, “he sure likes his job.” Athena replies, “in the long run, that’s all that really matters.” Bobby B. asks, “I wonder what’s up. That’s Erika on the radio.” Eddie jokingly replies, “she probably pulled the Chuckie over for speeding, and he put up a fight.” Bobby B. laughs, and replies, “I really want to see that!”

Richard returns to the conversation, and announces, “it looks like I got to roll. Erika is over at Officer Braden’s house. There’s a big confrontation with this Charles Black character and Officer Braden. Erika is saying that Black is demanding that another officer be sent to the scene.” Bobby B. laughs, and sarcastically replies, “I can’t imagine why.”

Richard tells Eddie, “thanks again for the list. I wish I could stay longer, but I got to roll.” Richard heads out, wondering what kind of disturbance is going on at the other side of town. Athena also heads out, thanking Eddie for his stock recommendations.

Eddie tells Bobby B., “I’m going to call Braden and see what’s going on.” Also wondering what is going on, Bobby B. sits back, waiting to hear the news. Eddie calls Braden, and Wendy answers the phone. After a quick hello, Eddie asks, “what’s going on over there? Richard got a call on the radio, telling him to head over there.” Wendy replies, “Axel was working in our front yard, and looking over at the Chuckie’s house. Chuckie came out of the house, and started yelling, ‘what are you looking at?’ Axel told Chuckie, ‘get your fat ass back in your house.’ Then, the Chuckie got out in the street and started yelling at Axel. So, Axel ignored him. Then, the Chuckie came across the street, and walked onto our property. Axel told the Chuckie to leave, but he wouldn’t go. So Axel pushed the Chuckie out into the road, and Chuckie called the police. They’ve been at it ever since.” Eddie asks, “isn’t the Chuckie supposed to be at work?” Wendy replies, “yes, he is. But, this has been going on for more than an hour. Erika has been out here twice already.” Eddie tells

Wendy, “wow! It sounds like the Chuckie went off the deep end again.” Wendy replies, “yeah. I’d say so.”

Eddie asks, “what started all this?” Quite frustrated with the situation, Wendy replies, “I have no idea. This shit with Chuckie never ends. It just never ends.” Wendy is very ticked off at Chuckie, and will probably throw a party when he leaves the neighborhood. Eddie and Wendy talk a little more, then Captain Hayes arrives at the scene. Wendy tells Eddie, “Captain Hayes just drove up. We’ll call you later and let you know what’s going on.” Eddie replies, “good luck. And, hey. Get Hunter out there and have him call the Chuckie the boogie man. Then, have Hunter tell Richard to take the boogie man to jail.” Wendy laughs, and replies, “thank you! I’m going to do that!” Eddie hangs up, wondering how this is going to turn out.

Eddie fills Bobby B. in on the situation, who will also get the rundown from Erika tonight. Quite familiar with what goes on around town, Erika, along with the rest of the police department, knows Chuckie is up to no good, but proving it has been very difficult. Eddie and Bobby B. then get to work, hoping no crazy people drive into the service station today.

On a Saturday, at lunch, the group gets together for pizza. Last to arrive today are Eddie and Kathy, driving separate vehicles. Walking into the pizzeria, Eddie and Kathy are greeted by Mark, who yells out, “what took you guys so long?” Eddie replies, “I had to stop by the service station and pick something up.” Bobby B. smiles, knowing exactly why Eddie had to stop by the station on the way. Paula tells Eddie and Kathy, “we ordered for you.” Kathy asks, “what did you order for me?” Paula laughs, and replies, “do you really have to ask, girl?”

Eddie asks, “what did we miss?” Johnson replies, “we were talking about the new track, and what the plan is for the dedication.” Eddie asks, “what event am I running?” Johnson replies, “all of them. We scheduled you for a decathlon, all on one day, in back to back events. And, because time is limited, you get no rest between events.” Knowing that Johnson is joking, Eddie replies, “I can do that. No problem, bro. Who am I up against?” Johnson replies, “all of us. It will be eleven against one.” Eddie confidently replies, “no problem, bro. I’ll win.”

Eddie asks Johnson, “hey! What do you do when the track coach knocks on your door at 10:00 p.m.?” Everyone is at a loss to answer Eddie. Following a pause, Johnson replies, “I don’t know. Tell me.” Eddie tells Johnson, “you pay him for the pizza.” As the group laughs, Mark tells Johnson, “for some reason, he’s wired. Today’s not the day to mess with him.”

On the other end of the table, Barbara mentions to the group, "George will be getting his first haircut later today. I really hope this goes well." Wendy tells Barbara, "if it doesn't, just go back another time." Braden advises Barbara, "if you want it to go well, you'd better stop calling it a haircut. When George gets older, you're gonna tell him, 'we're going to get your hair cut.' Then, one day, he's gonna start screaming. Then, you're gonna ask yourself, 'why is George all upset?' And, it's because, when he falls, he cuts his knee. If he cuts his hand, it hurts. To a kid, a cut is never a good thing!" Barbara replies, "wow! I never thought of it that way!" Braden advises Barbara, "you might want to start telling George that he's gonna get his hair trimmed instead."

Over lunch, the group plans the events for the dedication. Johnson tells the group that his high school team will be present at the dedication, and are really looking forward to running in a few events. Braden suggests that the acclaimed 4 by 400-meter relay team race the high school team. Johnson likes the idea, wanting the high school team to get a taste of what real competition is like. Hearing Kathy announcing that she will be throwing the discus, Bobby B. offers to throw the shot-put and hammer.

After dinner, the group heads out to the parking lot. Eddie whispers to Kathy, "do you think he'll notice?" Kathy replies, "he will. He's a police officer. He doesn't miss details anymore." Eddie tells Kathy, "yeah. You're right." Eddie yells out to Braden, "hey, Braden!" Braden turns around, and Eddie throws him the keys to his newly completed Volkswagen Bus. Braden asks, "what's this?" Eddie replies, "the keys to your Bus, bro. We got it finished yesterday. It's ready to roll."

Braden looks around the parking lot, seeing the blue Volkswagen Bus he purchased a while ago. Eddie and Bobby B. have installed an engine from a Porsche 930, and have made a few other modifications. The Bus, now able to do zero to sixty in five seconds and handle like a sports car, is Braden's dream.

Braden gives Eddie and Bobby B. a high-five, telling them, "this is a big surprise! I thought you guys said it was gonna be done by the track dedication." Eddie tells Braden, "we worked overtime getting it done. We wanted to get it done before school starts." Braden tells Eddie, "I'll bring you the check later." Eddie tells Braden, "no rush, bro."

Seeing the Bus, Wendy exclaims, "you guys got it done early!" Bobby B. replies, "and, it even runs!" Braden and Wendy walk over to the Bus, taking a closer look. Hunter asks his mother, "is this ours now?" Wendy replies, "yeah. It's our very own Bus." Hunter has been told by his parents that they will be getting their very own Bus soon. Braden opens the door, and Hunter is the first one to get in. Braden comments, "it looks

like Hunter wants to ride home in the Bus.” Wendy replies, “you can drive him home. I’ll practice driving it later this afternoon.”

Braden asks Hunter, “are you ready for your first ride in our Bus, son?” All excited, Hunter replies, “yeah! Let’s go!” Braden starts the engine, which characteristically sounds quite similar to his Dune Buggy, which also has a Porsche engine. Braden tells Wendy, “I’ll see you at home. We might be taking the long way home.” Wendy reminds her husband, “don’t be too long. You’ll have to make space for it in our second garage so the Chuckie doesn’t vandalize it.” Braden replies, “that’s right! I forgot about that.” Braden drives off with Hunter, headed home the long way.

Kathy asks Wendy, “is the Chuckie still giving you guys problems?” Wendy replies, “yeah. One day last week, we heard something hit the roof in the middle of the night. The next morning, there were a bunch of rocks in our back yard, and in our pool. That’s not the first time that’s happened. I’ll give you one guess who that was.” Kathy tells Wendy, “we got to get that guy out of there somehow.” Wendy replies, “Axel’s working on it. And, I’m coming up with a few ideas myself.” Kathy reassures Wendy, “rocks are a whole lot better than bullets.” The rest of the group hangs out in the parking lot for a while, then head home.

Later that afternoon, Braden, with Hunter’s help, cleans out the garage. Wendy takes their new Volkswagen Bus for a test drive, dropping off a few hard to find children’s toys at Johnson and Barbara’s house, who literally live around the block. But, Wendy got her chance to practice driving their new Volkswagen Bus. When Wendy returns home, the Braden family finds themselves out back, in their pool. Relaxing in their pool, Braden and Wendy discuss a few more ways of how to get Chuckie out of the neighborhood.