

Eddie, The Ten Year Reunion

Chapter Five Trouble Abounds

Copyright © 2020 by Dr. Robert E. Zee

Braden has had enough trouble with Chuckie over the years, which actually began when they were in the sixth grade. It seems to Braden that Chuckie is actually seeking out trouble, as he did back then. If Chuckie is actively looking for trouble, Braden is more than happy to give him some. After all, Braden wants Chuckie out of the neighborhood, and the sooner the better.

One Sunday afternoon, Braden is outside straightening up his yard. Chuckie comes from across the street, yelling out, "hey! What's that thing in your back yard?" Braden replies, "what are you talking about?" Pointing out Braden's 50-foot antenna tower, Chuckie tells Braden, "that big tower, with all the antennas on it." Braden looks up at the tower in his back yard, and replies, "oh, that. You probably don't want to know what that's about. That's official government business." Chuckie firmly instructs Braden, "tell me! I demand to know what they're for!" Not wanting to be bothered with Chuckie, Braden replies, "they're for government business. You wouldn't understand it anyway. So, get your ass out of here."

Chuckie is now even more curious of why Braden has three antennas on top of a 50-foot tower. Not accepting Braden's evasive answers, Chuckie insists, "I demand to know! I want to know what all those antennas are for!" Braden now suspects that Chuckie is strung out on some sort of drugs because his odd behavior seems much odder than usual. Braden laughs, and asks Chuckie, "are you sure you want to know?" Chuckie replies, "yeah. And, you'd better tell me." Braden clearly sees that he has an opening to mess with Chuckie's convoluted mind.

Braden asks, "which antenna are you talking about?" Looking at the tower, Chuckie replies, "the top one." Braden replies, "that's a television antenna. It's there so I can pick up football games." Suspecting that Braden is feeding him bullshit, Chuckie asks, "how about the other one?"

Braden replies, “that one is for picking up shortwave radio. So, what’s it to you?” Chuckie is now sure that Braden is not quite leveling with him.

Chuckie asks, “what’s the other antenna off to the side for?” Braden replies with a very serious tone, “oh, you don’t want to know about that one.” Chuckie boldly insists, “you’d better tell me!” Braden, who is now convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that Chuckie is under the influence of drugs, replies, “that antenna beams out mind-control signals. It’s a government experiment.” All of a sudden, Chuckie looks extremely worried.

Chuckie exclaims, “you better not be using it on me!” Braden laughs, and informs Chuckie, “your house is right in the path of the signal. There ain’t nothing I can do about that. If you don’t want the mind control signals going through your brain, you’re gonna have to move.” Braden, who wants Chuckie out of the neighborhood, may have just found his best opportunity yet.

Now in a panic, Chuckie asks, “what does it do? How does it work?” Now realizing that Chuckie is detached from reality, Braden explains, “it rewires all your brain circuits. If I turn the signal up, it will make you complacent and obey the law. If I turn the signal way up, you’re gonna confess all your crimes. And, since your house is so close, the signal is gonna geld your brain.” Chuckie exclaims, “it will not! You’re making this up!” Braden replies, “that’s okay. You just keep on believing that. It doesn’t matter what you think anyway.” Pointing to the antenna tower, Braden adds, “there it is, right up there on the tower. You’re gonna see that every day, and you’re gonna say to yourself, ‘I wonder if Axel Braden is telling me the truth.’ Then, one day, you’ll wake up and realize you should have listened to me.”

Chuckie tells Braden, “it’s not a mind control antenna. Because, then, it would work on you, too.” Braden laughs, and holds his necklace housing the yellow stone, and tells Chuckie, “do you see this stone? Anyone who wears one of these is unaffected. I have one. Wendy has one. Eddie has one. Erika even has one. We all have one. But, you got a big problem. You ain’t got one. So, I’m controlling your mind right now. And, there ain’t nothing your ass can do about it.” Chuckie exclaims, “you are not!” Braden replies, “then, what’s your ass doing out here asking about my antennas? The mind control signal told you to come out here so I can tell you all this shit!” Chuckie is now questioning his own sanity. Perhaps Chuckie should not have spoken with Braden when under the influence of methaqualone¹.

¹ Methaqualone: a sedative/hypnotic drug.

Hearing the bad news, Chuckie exclaims, "I'm going to call the police! You can't be doing this! I'm calling them!" Braden laughs, and replies, "go ahead! See if I care. They're in on it too. All the police are gonna do is tell you to file a complaint. And then, they're gonna put your complaint in the trash can, right where they put all your other complaints. And, if Erika comes out here, she's got a necklace with a yellow stone too."

Chuckie runs across the street, back into his house. Braden, wondering if Chuckie will actually call the police, hopes that he does.

A half hour later, Officer Wilson drives up, parking in front of Chuckie's house. Braden walks over to Officer Wilson, informing him of the situation. Chuckie peers out of his second-floor window, seeing Braden talk with Officer Wilson, which does not escape Chuckie's notice. Chuckie watches as Braden points to his antenna tower, then to Chuckie's house. It's anybody's guess what is going through Chuckie's mind. But, Chuckie is now fully convinced that the police department is in on the mind control experiment, just as Braden explained.

Braden walks back to his house to finish his yard work as Officer Wilson knocks on Chuckie's door. Chuckie does not immediately answer. Officer Wilson knocks a second time, yet no one comes to the door. Braden looks across the street, seeing Chuckie peer out of his window. Not able to contact the complainant, Officer Wilson walks across the street to speak with Braden.

Officer Wilson tells Braden, "he's not answering the door." Braden replies, "that's because he's upstairs, looking out his window." Officer Wilson advises Braden, "I'll just have to write this one off as another crazy person." Braden replies, "his ass has always been crazy. There's something wrong with that guy. Somebody ought to put his ass back in the crazy house." Officer Wilson tells Braden, "I think we all can agree with that." Knowing that Chuckie is watching as Braden speaks with Officer Wilson, Braden points to the antenna tower and Chuckie's house several times. Chuckie is now convinced that Braden is not just a police officer, but some secret agent of the government.

Mid October brings interesting news to the tribe. Mr. Crum, the former principal of Northside High School, was the school drug dealer and part of a gambling ring involving high school and college athletics. Fixing sporting events through unreasonable disciplinary action targeted at athletes, Mr. Crum was not exactly the most popular guy around. Now released from prison, Mr. Crum has no job, no money, and no Uncle Alistair to help him financially. Mr. Crum's uncle, Alistair Crum, who ran the gambling ring that was busted by Captain Richard Hayes, is still in prison, and will likely be there for a very long time. Eddie, and everyone

else who had unfortunate dealings with Mr. Crum, hoped to never see Mr. Crum again.

But, Eddie and Bobby B. have no such luck. Mid Monday morning, Bobby B. peers out of the service area, laughing and exclaiming, “no! It can’t be! Tell me this isn’t happening!” Eddie looks outside, seeing what Bobby B. sees, and replies, “I can’t wait to see where this is going.” Hooked up to a wrecker is Mr. Crum’s Volkswagen Beetle, which was ready for the auto crusher years ago. Stumbling out of the wrecker is Mr. Crum, who appears to have aged significantly. Bobby B. tells Eddie, “rock-paper-scissors,” to determine who will get the pleasure of helping Mr. Crum. Eddie replies, “not this time. I’ll go see what he wants. This is going to be funny.”

Eddie lets a little time go by, and is in no rush to go outside to see what the person who made his life so miserable during his high school years wants. For many years, Mr. Crum, the former principal at Northside High School, gave Eddie and the tribe nothing but trouble. Why Mr. Crum would even show up at Eddie’s Service Station is anybody’s guess. It could be, perhaps, that no other mechanic in the area would give Mr. Crum the time of day. Or, it could be that Eddie was the one who discovered that Mr. Crum’s engine was dying a premature death because of the abrasive metal polish Mr. Crum was adding to his oil.

Mr. Crum walks into the office, and takes a seat. Over in the service bays, Bobby B. asks Eddie, “what? No ranting and screaming?” Eddie replies, “maybe his years in prison taught him something.” Bobby B. laughs, and tells Eddie, “that’s doubtful. He’ll be back to his old shitty self in no time.” Eddie replies, “you’re probably right. Let me go and see what he wants.”

Eddie walks into the office and, pretending not to recognize Mr. Crum, announces, “what can I do for you today?” Mr. Crum replies, “I need some help here. My car won’t stay running.” Eddie asks, “don’t I know you from somewhere?” Mr. Crum replies, “yes! I’m Mr. Crum! Of course, you know me!” Eddie replies, “wow! Mr. Crum, it’s been a while. How was prison?” Mr. Crum, who, following his prison sentence, now looks twenty years older, brashly replies, “it was terrible! I don’t want to talk about it!” Eddie smiles, and asks, “so, what can I do for you today?” Mr. Crum replies, “my car, it won’t keep running.” Eddie asks, “what do you mean, ‘it won’t keep running?’” Mr. Crum replies, “it will run for a minute or two, and then it quits running. That is, if I can even get it started.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “that could be a problem. Let’s go take a look at it.”

Eddie cranks the engine, which eventually starts. Sounding a bit rough, the engine conks out after a few seconds, not the minute or two cited by Mr. Crum. Eddie inquires of Mr. Crum, “I see what you mean.

Where was this car when you were in prison?" Mr. Crum replies, "it was at my parent's house. They kept it for me while I was away." Mr. Crum cannot bring himself to use either the word prison or jail, as he had quite a rough time while he was incarcerated. Eddie asks, "did they drive it at all?" Mr. Crum replies, "no." Knowing exactly what the problem is, Eddie tells Mr. Crum to come inside, where Eddie will write up a service ticket.

As Eddie writes up the service ticket, Mr. Crum impatiently asks, "how much is this going to cost me?" Eddie replies, "probably a lot less than you'd think." Mr. Crum brashly asks, "what am I looking at? A few hundred bucks?" Eddie replies, "no. Your gas is bad. It sat in the gas tank for what? Six or seven years? I need to drain your gas tank, fill it up, put in a few bottles of fuel system cleaner, and replace your fuel filter." Mr. Crum brashly exclaims, "that's it? It's got to be more than that!" Eddie replies, "we'll fall off that bridge when we come to it." Mr. Crum, getting marginally irate, exclaims, "Edward Bogenskaya, the problem can't be that simple!" Tired of Mr. Crum's attitude already, Eddie replies, "well, it could be that your Johnson Rod came loose. I'll take a look at it in a few minutes." Eddie goes back into the service area, setting up the bay to work on Mr. Crum's car, hoping to get him out of the station as fast as possible.

Five minutes later, Eddie and Bobby B. push Mr. Crum's dilapidated Volkswagen Beetle into a service bay. Bobby B. asks Eddie, "what's his problem, anyway?" Eddie replies, "he let this piece of shit sit idle for a half a decade, and expected it to run when he got out of prison." Bobby B. laughs, also knowing exactly what Mr. Crum's problem is. As Eddie drains the gas tank, he tells Bobby B., "hey. Do me a favor. Replace his fuel filter. I want to get him out of here as fast as possible." In record time, Mr. Crum's vehicle is serviced.

Eddie and Bobby B. push the vehicle out to the pumps, where Eddie fills the tank. The engine turns over by the third try, which is no surprise to Eddie. Mr. Crum, who had his doubts, watches as his engine runs and does not stall. Eddie drives Mr. Crum's Beetle in front of a service bay, leaves the engine running, and walks inside to settle up the bill.

Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "it's running again, but you really should have your oil changed sometime soon. It's been sitting in your engine for a half a decade too. And, it sounds like your bearings are on their way out." Mr. Crum replies, "I know that. But, I can't do anything about that right now." Eddie offers, "just let me know when you want me to work on it." Eddie hands Mr. Crum the bill, which is surprisingly low. Mr. Crum graciously pays Eddie, and drives away.

Once Mr. Crum is gone, Eddie walks back into the service area, where Bobby B. inquires, "I wonder what Mr. Crum is going to do now that he's

out of prison.” Eddie replies, “he’s probably going to look for a job. But, I don’t know who would hire a felon, especially a drug dealing former school principal.” Bobby B. suggests, “maybe he’ll start gambling and dealing drugs again.” Eddie replies, “if he does that, he’ll only end up in jail again. From what Braden says, Crum really hated it in there.”

Getting back to working on the engine he was tuning up, Bobby B. comments, “maybe he’ll come to our class reunion. There’ll be free food.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “if he does, I can’t wait to see how that goes over. No one ever really liked the guy.” Eddie and Bobby B. get back to work, wondering what Mr. Crum will be up to now that he’s back on the streets.

Meanwhile, across town, Mark is installing bulletproof glass on Braden’s home. Braden, with several instances of someone shooting at his house, has taken a proactive stance and has moved to solve a problem before it becomes a bigger problem. Braden is certain that it is Chuckie that is shooting at his house. Unfortunately, Braden has no direct evidence. Already two days into the week long project, Mark has already replaced the garage door windows, the windows on the front door, and is now working on the windows in the front of Braden’s house.

Working the day shift now that the Autumn semester is in session at the University, Braden comes home while Mark is finishing up for the day. Already knowing that Chuckie is home from work, Braden heads straight for his radio, and attempts to intercept Chuckie’s telephone conversations. Over time, Braden has learned that Chuckie does most of his drug business in the early evening hours, returning calls from his customers who want to buy drugs.

Listening to a phone conversation between Chuckie and his sister, Lillian, Braden yells out, “hey, Wendy! Come here.” Wendy, who was talking with Mark, walks over with Mark and asks, “what’s up?” Braden replies, “listen to this shit.” Braden, Wendy, and Mark listen, as they hear Lillian tell Chuckie, “I got me a really big order. I need three cans of weed, as much as you can fit in it. And, I’m gonna need me three dozen sugar cubes², two hundred tabs of bennies³. And, I need me a hundred tab of ludes⁴.” Chuckie interrupts, and tells his sister, “wait, wait! Slow down! I got to write this down.”

² Sugar Cubes: Slang term for LSD, a hallucinogenic drug.

³ Bennies: Slang term for Benzedrine, an amphetamine.

⁴ Ludes: Slang term for methaqualone, a sedative/hypnotic drug.

As Lillian repeats her order to Chuckie, Mark comments, “so, this is the kind of shit you listen to on your radios.” Braden replies, “yeah. And, there’s a lot more from where this is coming. You wouldn’t believe some of the shit I hear.” Mark asks, “are you going to bust him?” Braden replies, “yeah. Once I get all the evidence to put his ass away, I’m gonna give it all to Erika.” Mark asks, “does Erika know what you’re up to?” Braden replies, “yeah.”

Getting Lillian’s order, Chuckie tells his sister, “meet me before school. I’ll hand you a six-pack. The stuff will be in there.” Lillian asks, “where we dropping off?” Chuckie replies, “at the end of the parking lot, near the administration building. I’ll hand you the six-pack, and you can stash it in your locker. And, bring a backpack to carry it in.” Braden exclaims, “so, that’s how he delivers the drugs to his sister!”

Mark asks, “what’s this about a six-pack?” Braden explains, “Chuckie has these soda can diversion safes. They look like a real soft drink can, but they’re actually a safe where he stashes the drugs. You can’t tell the difference between the diversion safe and a real can. That’s how he makes his deliveries.” Discovering a new piece of the puzzle, Braden has just heard how and where Chuckie delivers the drugs to his drug dealing sister.

Surprised at what he is hearing, Mark tells Braden, “it sounds like the Chuckie is a big time drug dealer now.” Pulling out an organizational chart for Chuckie’s network, Braden replies, “yeah. He is. This is what his network looks like. Once I get it all figured out, Erika is gonna bust his ass and everyone else’s ass on this chart.” Mark asks, “why doesn’t Erika bust him now?” Braden replies, “because I don’t have his network all figured out yet. I got to figure out who the Chuckie’s supplier is. Then, Erika will bust all their asses at once.”

Braden then casually mentions to Mark, “you’ll never guess who’s hiding out across the street.” Mark guesses, “the bitchkrieg?” Braden replies, “no. But, she shows up there a lot. That Goldshit guy that I busted up when we were seniors in high school is hiding out there.” Mark exclaims, “you’re shittin’ me!” Braden replies, “nope. His ass is in that house right now. I hear him talking on the phone occasionally.”

Now curious, Mark asks, “what else can you hear on these radios?” Braden replies, “I can hear boats, the police, phone conversations, remote news broadcasts, trucks, busses, trains, all kinds of shit. I even hear Erika talking to the dispatcher. And, when I’m working at the University, Wendy can hear me on the radio.” Mark observes, “you got a really good setup here.”

Seeing the complicated radio Braden is using to listen to Chuckie, Mark asks, “what kind of radio is that?” Braden replies, “I just picked that radio up last month. It’s a Japanese Radio Corporation NRD-545. That radio can pick up everything, even cell phones. It hasn’t been made yet in our world. I went to the future to get it.” Now with an impressive collection of radios, Braden’s surveillance abilities are unmatched by even the government.

Mark tells Braden, “we’ll be back in the morning, and we’ll start on the side windows. We should be done with the whole house by early next week. The Mylar to bulletproof your garage door panels should be in later this week. Once all that is done, we’ll get the security cameras installed.” Braden replies, “good. My alarm system can’t stop a bullet. I’m gonna sleep a lot better at night.” Wendy adds, “seriously! Me too. Every time an acorn falls on the roof, I jump out of bed.” The Braden home is clearly on its way to becoming more secure than the average police station, and certainly the most bulletproof home in the county.

A few days later, Captain Richard Hayes rolls into Eddie’s Service Station. Richard walks into the service area, yelling out, “hey! What’s up?” Taking the opportunity to take a short break, Eddie yells back, “what’s up?” Richard replies, “you’re not going to believe what was on that video that was taken during the track dedication.” Bobby B. immediately stops what he is doing, announcing, “I want to hear this too.” Eddie, Bobby B., and Richard go into the office, where they all take a break.

Eddie asks, “so, what was on the video?” Richard explains, “when Gary Mitchell was interviewing Barbara, in the background, this Nicholson character can be seen walking down from the stands with this other character, Todd McCutchen. On his way to where the athletes were standing, this Nicholson kept checking something that he had hidden in his jacket. Then, when Nicholson interrupted the interview, Mark started playing around. You can see the exact point when this Nicholson character’s blood begins to boil. Every muscle in his body was tensing up. Mark said something that really set him off.” Eddie asks, “I wonder what that could have been.” Richard replies, “oh, I know exactly what it was. The pivotal moment was when Mark announced, on camera, that Nicholson is the head of some gambling ring. After that, this Nicholson character lost it, and attempted to attack Mark.”

Sitting back in his chair, Eddie surmises, “it sounds like you have another gambling ring operating somewhere.” Richard explains, “we got the boys in the city involved. They’re investigating the situation over there at Dogpatch University. The problem is Dogpatch has no police force of its own, only a few security guards. All security guards do is to go around and lock doors. So, it’s hard to get any information out of

anyone over there.” Eddie laughs, and comments, “everyone’s calling it Dogpatch University now.” Richard replies, “I’ve noticed that.”

Eddie asks, “whatever happened with McCrutchen?” Richard explains, “these McCutchen characters are another story all together. The only thing this Todd McCutchen learned in his short stay in prison is how to cover his tracks better. He works for Nicholson over at Dogpatch University, doing something. I can’t put my finger on it. We have our eyes on him. Now that Dr. Nicholson is looking at doing time, we’ll see where this McCutchen character lands. I understand that he’s also a suspect in a few auto thefts that have occurred down at the beach South of the city. But, that’s out of our jurisdiction.” Eddie suggests, “if McCrutchen is working for Nicholson, he’s probably spying on other teams. That’s what he did years ago. According to Mr. Frazier and Athena, they had a really high tech spying organization going on.”

Rudely interrupting the conversation, none other than Mr. Crum walks into the office, asking, “can somebody help me out here?” Not really wanting to be bothered, Eddie asks, “what’s the problem this time?” Mr. Crum replies, “my engine. It’s sounding really bad.” Eddie informs Mr. Crum, “your engine has to be rebuilt or replaced.” Mr. Crum brashly asks, “just how much is that going to cost me?” Eddie replies, “probably a few thousand dollars. Did you want me to”. Before Eddie can finish, Mr. Crum exclaims, “a few thousand dollars? That’s highway robbery!” Seeing how irate Mr. Crum is, Captain Hayes decides to hang around for a while, wanting to see how the remainder of this encounter goes.

Sitting in his chair with his hands clasped behind his head, Eddie frankly tells Mr. Crum, “look. Your engine’s gone because of that special oil additive you used years ago. I’m either replacing it or rebuilding it. That’s the way it is. There’s no easy fix.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “that’s a lot of money! What do you think you are? A brain surgeon or something?” Eddie replies, “doctors and surgeons are nothing but mechanics for the body. A chiropractor aligns the skeleton. I align wheels. A dermatologist make sure your skin is okay. Vinnie, at the body shop, makes sure the skin of your vehicle is okay. A cardiologist makes sure your heart is pumping blood okay. I make sure your water pump pumps water okay.” Mr. Crum again interrupts, and exclaims, “Edward Bogenskaya, you are no brain surgeon! You barely made it out of high school!” Eddie replies, “that’s only because you tried to prevent me from graduating.”

Not wanting to bother with a customer who insults him, Eddie finally tells Mr. Crum, “you know what? Why don’t you just go over to the department store mechanics? I’m sure they can help you.” Mr. Crum exclaims, “you can’t treat me this way!” Remembering that Dr. Zunde once told Eddie that Mr. Crum cannot stand it when someone replies to him calmly, Eddie calmly replies, “Maurice, you’re suspended. And, your

account here has been suspended too. So, go over to the department store guys. I'm sure they'll be glad to help you."

Now more irate than ever and recalling the past, Mr. Crum exclaims, "I want my house back, Edward Bogenskaya! I'm going to get you for this! You just wait!" Eddie calmly tells Mr. Crum, "Crum, your house is long gone. That ship sailed years ago. You should have paid your mortgage. And, besides, you got free room and board for what? More than five years? You have nothing to complain about. You should be more grateful. So, stop whining already." Mr. Crum storms out of the office, waddling to his car. Throwing his fist into the air, Mr. Crum yells and screams a few obscenities that he probably learned while in prison. As the former high school principal cranks his engine, Eddie guesses that Mr. Crum has barely a hundred miles before the engine seizes up.

Bobby B. comments, "Crum don't look too good." Richard replies, "he got roughed up a lot in prison. I tell you. That character is lucky to be alive." Eddie replies, "and, I'm unlucky that he is." Richard asks, "what's wrong with his engine, anyway?" Eddie explains, "years ago, he added an abrasive metal polish to his oil. He somehow thought that polishing the engine's insides would be a good thing to do. But, the metal polish prematurely wore away the inside of his engine. The engine has to be replaced, which is not cheap. He seems to want me to pour a bottle of liquid moron engine repair concentrate into his gas tank and, poof. His engine is running like new again. But, that's not happening." Richard laughs, and replies, "some of these characters never cease to amaze me."

Stating the obvious, Bobby B. comments, "Mr. Crum sounds really angry." Eddie replies, "he must have been born that way." Richard suggests, "if I were you, I'd watch out for that character. That guy spells nothing but trouble. I've seen it over and over again. They get out of prison, and go right back to doing what got them there to begin with. But, when they get back to it, it's worse." Eddie asks Richard, "do you think he'll go back to dealing drugs again?" Richard explains, "he's probably already tried to get in contact with his old network. Maurice Crum is damaged goods. They won't touch him because he's on probation. But, if he wants to, he'll find a way in." Eddie replies, "that makes a lot of sense."

Eddie asks Richard, "hey. You wouldn't know of anyone who wants a job pumping gas, would you?" Richard asks, "do you have an opening?" Eddie replies, "yeah." Richard replies, "not offhand. But if I hear of anyone who might be interested, I'll send them by." Richard stands up, mentioning, "I guess it's time to get some police work done." Eddie replies, "I guess I'd better get back to some mechanic's work." Everyone gets back to work, except for Mr. Crum, who still wanders the streets and has not found a job.

Coming home from work one day, Braden finds Wendy and Hunter in the pool. Wendy tells Braden, “hey! Get your swimsuit on! Come out here and join us!” Braden replies, “okay! I’ll be out in a few minutes.” With the days getting shorter, and Winter on the way, Wendy takes every opportunity to get in the pool. Fortunately, the pool is heated, extending the swimming season a few months in each direction.

Braden briefly turns on his radio, hoping to intercept one of Chuckie’s phone calls before going out to the pool and getting in the water. With a stroke of luck, Braden finds that Chuckie is already in mid conversation with someone regarding what is termed a delivery. Hoping to find more information regarding Chuckie’s drug trade, Braden decides to wait a few minutes and listen in before getting in the pool.

Coming into the middle of the conversation, Braden hears Chuckie placing a massive order for drugs. Braden is confident that who Chuckie is speaking with is a high-level drug trafficker or supplier, not just some small time dealer. After the order is complete and double checked, Braden hears the supplier tell Chuckie, “I’m going to send one of my guys over to your shop tomorrow, at exactly eleven o’clock. He’ll be in the parking lot. You know where to find him. Have the money. And, remember. Small bills.” Repeating the amount, Chuckie replies, “okay. Eleven o’clock. Small bills.”

Chuckie asks his supplier, “where’s the drop off this time?” The supplier informs Chuckie, “you’re asking for a lot of shit.” Chuckie replies, “business is picking up.” The supplier, who speaks in short definitive sentences, explains, “good. I’m going to do this. The first drop will be at that empty house over on Sixth Street. The house number is 32. Pick it up in the middle of the night tomorrow, not tonight. You’ll find it in the crawlspace. The goods will be in a backpack. And, remember. Park on Fifth or Seventh Street. Walk to the house. I don’t want that drop off point compromised.” Chuckie asks, “how about the rest of my stuff?” The supplier replies, “I’ll get that to you in the usual way.” Chuckie asks, “where?” Leaving great uncertainty of the location, the supplier replies, “we’ll use 1710.” With his transaction complete, Chuckie hangs up the phone. To Braden, the drop off methodology bears a strong resemblance to how the former high school principal, Mr. Crum, received his drops.

First through Seventh Streets are not exactly on the best side of town. First and Second Street, on one side of the railroad tracks, have gone commercial. Eddie purchased four lots on Second Street years ago, which are now a storage yard for the Bogenskaya and Svoboda families. First Street, which was once a dirt road, has mysteriously disappeared over the years.

Between Second Street and Third Street are railroad tracks, separating the residential area from the commercial area. The homes on Third through Seventh Street are generally one-thousand square feet or less. Most of the homes are rental homes, with a few that are owner occupied. The area seems to be a magnet for various types of illegal activity, partially because, at any given time, many of them are unoccupied.

Braden waits for a while, intercepting no further phone calls of Chuckie's at the moment. No mention was made during the conversation as to what the usual way of delivering the drugs is. But, Braden has learned that an empty house on Sixth Street is a drug drop off point. With another piece of the puzzle, Braden is satisfied with what he heard today. Knowing drugs will be dropped off at Sixth Street, Braden will relay this information to Erika. Erika will have the house staked out, and the police will obtain the tag number and photograph of the drug runner.

Braden puts on his swimsuit and heads outside. Wendy asks, "what took you so long?" Braden replies, "I heard the Chuckie on the radio. He was talking with his supplier. I found out one of their drop points." Wendy asks, "really? Where's that?" Braden replies, "it's over at an empty house on Sixth Street. He's got another drop point too, but I don't know where that one is. Chuckie's supplier said the drugs will be dropped off at 1710, whatever that is." Wendy replies, "that sounds like an address." Braden replies, "you're probably right about that. Now, all I need is a street name." Wendy reassures Braden, "don't worry. You'll figure it out. There can only be so many houses with 1710 as the house number." Braden replies, "that's a good point. I never thought about that."

Braden jumps into the pool, swimming up to Hunter, telling him, "tag! You're it!" Braden pushes off the wall, and swims to the other side of the pool. Hunter starts chasing after his father, getting his exercise in for today. After a minute or two, Braden allows Hunter to tag him. Now, it's Hunter who's on the run. Wendy is happy to see Hunter play. To Wendy, it means Hunter will sleep a lot better tonight.