

Eddie, The Ten Year Reunion

Chapter Nine The Reunion

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The day of the long awaited reunion arrives, and Eddie is looking forward to seeing some people he hasn't seen in a few years. As Eddie and Kathy are getting ready to leave, Kathy stands in front of the mirror, and asks Eddie, "does my butt look okay?" Eddie laughs and tells Kathy, "trust me, there's still no problem in that area." Kathy asks, "what's so funny?" Eddie replies, "I remember when you asked that same question when I began my sophomore year in high school. You were trying on running shorts and tank tops." Kathy exclaims, "I remember that! I still have those shorts somewhere."

On their way out, Kathy asks, "which car are we driving?" Eddie replies, "my MGB." Kathy acts sad, and asks, "hey! Why not the Dune Buggy?" Eddie replies, "because, when we get there, your hair isn't going to look as good as your butt." Kathy reminds Eddie, "the top is down on your MGB." Eddie replies, "I guess you'll have to bring a hairbrush." Kathy smiles, and exclaims, "tomorrow, buddy, when the reunion continues at the beach, we're taking my Dune Buggy!" Eddie asks, "what? You don't want to take your Volkswagen Bus to the beach?" Pretending to deeply think about the question, Kathy replies, "um. No. Not tomorrow." Eddie reminds Kathy, "Eddie, Junior is coming. Remember?" Kathy sighs, and replies, "I guess we're taking the bus." Eddie and Kathy get into the MGB, which still looks as good as the day it left the factory.

Eddie and Kathy arrive at the event center hosting the reunion, parking next to Paula's Jeep CJ. As they are walking toward the door, Eddie mentions to Kathy, "I haven't seen most of these people in ten years. I probably won't even recognize them." Kathy replies, "there seems to be a lot of people here." Not too fond of crowds, Eddie mentions, "I don't know how long I want to stay around. I guess it depends on who's here." Kathy suggests, "you can stay as long as you want. If that's ten minutes or five hours, then so be it."

Eddie and Kathy walk through the door and into the reception room. Eddie and Kathy are quickly intercepted by a guy named Steve Gaucher, who energetically greets Eddie, exclaiming, "Edward Bogenskaya! How have you been, buddy?" Eddie asks, "who are you?" Gaucher, a bit of an egomaniac, energetically exclaims, "I'm Steve Gaucher! I'm sure you remember me! I was the class president!" Eddie replies, asking, "we had a class president?" With way too much energy, Gaucher replies, "sure, we did! Don't tell me you don't remember me." Eddie replies, "honestly, I've never heard of you." But, with more than 400 people in Eddie's class, it's hard to know everyone.

Standing alongside Gaucher, also greeting their former classmates, is Jim Lynch, the class vice president, Douglas McArdle, the class treasurer, and Laurie Pick, the class secretary. Neither Lynch nor Pick remember Eddie, but are well aware of whom he is. McArdle, who was on the high school basketball team, knows exactly who Eddie is.

Eddie and Kathy walk in, and mingle with the crowd. Seeing Mark, Paula, and a few other tribe members, Eddie heads in that direction. Eddie is intercepted by Daniel Gaspari, who exclaims, "Eddie! It's been a while!" Eddie replies, "Gump! How have you been?" Gump replies, "really good. I'm teaching physical education and coaching wrestling and football over at Columbia High School. Life couldn't get any better!" Eddie replies, "that's great! Columbia usually sent a few athletes to State when I ran track." Gump informs Eddie, "they have a really good athletic program there. It's not as good as Northside, but it's good." While in high school, Gaspari's interests were always football and wrestling. Gaspari has managed to make a career out of both.

Remembering that Gump was dating Jan Lucida when he was in college, Eddie asks, "is Jan here?" Gump replies, "yeah. She's here somewhere. We got married three years ago." Eddie gives Gump a fist bump, telling him, "that's awesome!" Kathy asks Gump, "do you guys have any kids?" Gump replies, "yeah. We got a one-year-old daughter. She's at grandma's house right now. How about you guys?" Kathy replies, "we have a son, Eddie, Junior. He's almost five years old now and fast on the track." Eddie, Kathy, and Gump walk over to where Mark and Paula are, joining the group.

Eddie and Kathy walk up with Gump, who is warmly greeted by the tribe. Eddie casually asks, "who else is here?" Mark replies, "I don't know. I don't recognize most of these people." Echoing the sentiment, Bobby B. adds, "me either." Eddie looks around, seeing a few familiar faces, but cannot recall anyone's name.

Within a few minutes, Lynn Berson and Penny Hart walk toward the tribe's gathering, both with cameras hung around their necks. Quick to

get a photograph before saying hello, Lynn is true to form. Eddie announces, “well, look who made it!” Lynn and Penny get hugs from the tribe members, not seeing some of them since graduation. Lynn, however, still brings her prized Ford Mustang into Eddie’s Service Station to get serviced.

The tribe mingles with a few of their old friends, mostly those who excelled at sports. But, after all, birds of a feather flock together. As expected, with the athletes all congregated together, they are identified by others in the class as “the jocks”. Many in the class, who still live in the town, cannot understand why the jocks are so financially successful.

As the group meanders over to the hors d’oeuvres tables, Mark whispers to Bobby B., “hey. Do you want to eat all the food?” Bobby B. asks, “me?” Mark replies, “no, bro. All of us. We could eat all this food in under ten minutes.” Overhearing the conversation, Paula advises Mark, “if you guys are going to eat all the food, you have your work cut out for you. What’s out are just the hors d’oeuvres. They’ll bring out lunch somewhere around noon.” Mark asks, “how do you know?” Paula replies, “because this is the same place and caterer that did my reunion last year. Remember?” Mark replies, “oh, yeah. That’s right. I forgot about that.” Paula smiles, and tells Mark, “and, that means they’ll be pizza.”

Bobby B. observes, and points out to Mark, “look at who’s drinking all the alcohol.” Mark exclaims, “what’s he doing here?” Eddie looks over to the bar, laughs, and comments, “wow! Jimmy O’Brien. I haven’t seen him in a long time.” Bobby B. comments, “that’s a good thing.” Eddie replies, “at least the Chuckie won’t be here today.” Chuckie, whose ticket to the reunion burned along with his house, is being held in jail with no bond. It’s safe to say that Chuckie will be off the streets for a while.

Lynn takes another picture of Eddie and Kathy as they are eating some hors d’oeuvres. Eddie asks Lynn, “how’s the photography coming?” Lynn energetically replies, “I’m still doing weddings and a lot of studio work. And guess what?” Eddie asks, “what?” Lynn explains, “Penny is going to start working with me! I’ve gotten really busy, and Penny is getting tired of working at the newspaper. Weddings and proms are so much more relaxed and fun to do.” Many photographers would disagree with Lynn, but being a wedding photographer is her cup of tea. Eddie replies, “that sounds really great!”

With a little less excitement, Lynn confesses, “I really ran into a bump in the road, though.” Eddie asks, “what’s that?” Lynn replies, “I rented a place a few years ago where I have my studio, and the landlord is not renewing my lease. So, I’m stuck between a rock and a hard place.” Expressing a bit of emotion, Lynn explains, “I put so much money into that place. I built out a really nice studio and darkroom and, just like

that, they decided to kick me out. I hear the landlord sold the place to some real estate developer. I have two weeks left to find a place for a new studio, and I'm running out of options." Eddie asks, "do you know who bought it?" Lynn replies, "some group named Carmen and Lang." Quite familiar with Carmen and Lang, L.L.P., Eddie informs Lynn, "those guys buy anything they can on a main road, and turn it into expensive commercial space." Not knowing the details of Lynn's setup, Eddie asks, "how big is your studio?" Lynn replies, "it's twelve hundred square feet."

Eddie asks Lynn, "do you know about Emily's studio closing?" Lynn replies, "yeah. That's why I suddenly got so busy in the last year and worked out a deal with Penny. Emily was the only other photographer in the area that does weddings and proms. So now, everyone's calling me." Eddie replies, "Emily did mine and Kathy's wedding, and Mark and Paula's wedding too."

Eddie reveals, "I bought the house where Emily had her studio. I bought it before Carmen and Lang could get a hold of it. Mark just finished renovating it last week. I'm putting it up for rent next week. Did you want to take a look at it sometime?" Lynn suddenly exclaims, "are you serious?" Eddie replies, "yeah. Totally serious." Lynn tells Eddie, "hold on." Yelling across the room to Penny, Lynn exclaims, screaming out, "hey, Penny! Come here!" Lynn yelled out so energetically, that silence fell over the room.

Penny runs up, asking, "is something wrong?" Lynn replies, "no! Eddie bought Emily's studio! He's putting it up for rent!" Looking at Eddie, then Lynn, Penny exclaims, "what? Are you for real?" Eddie replies, "yeah. Mark just finished renovating it for me. The inside looks like new construction. And, I put in a really large parking lot." With no restrained emotion, Lynn tells Eddie, "sure! We'll take a look at it! Is Monday morning okay with you?" Not wanting to wake up too early, Eddie asks, "is nine o'clock okay?" Now even more excited, Lynn replies, "sure! I'll be there, bright and early!" Penny, of course, has absolutely no objection. Lynn asks Eddie a dozen questions about the place and, if she had her way, she'd leave the reunion and take a look at the place immediately.

Mark spies O'Brien and a few of his buddies over at the bar indulging in another drink. Mark whispers something to Eddie, Johnson, and Braden, and the four guys walk in the direction of the bar. Paula, wondering what Mark is up to, watches closely. A few minutes go by, then the bartender asks Mark, "would any of you guys want a drink?" Standing near O'Brien and his buddies, Mark replies, "no, thank you. Not right now."

O'Brien, always wanting to gain the upper hand, mentions to his buddies, "they're the jocks. Remember them? They're afraid to drink. It

might affect their highly superior athletic performance.” Seeing the opening he was hoping for, Mark tells O’Brien, “hey! We’re not lucky like you are. The more you weigh, the more the alcohol affects you.” O’Brien replies, “it’s the other way around, you idiot.” Mark firmly informs O’Brien, “who told you that, junior? You’re full of shit. People who weigh more have a bigger stomach, so there’s a lot more surface area in the stomach to absorb the alcohol. So, the alcohol gets absorbed into the bloodstream a whole lot quicker. It’s not like because Bobby B. weighs about three times as much as you do that he has three times as much blood either. And, because you weigh less, the alcohol circulates in your blood stream faster because it has less tissue to travel through, so it gets eliminated faster.” Mark comes across as very convincing, especially to O’Brien, who is inebriated at the moment.

Trying not to laugh, the bartender comments to O’Brien, “he does have a point.” Hearing the bartender’s affirmation, O’Brien thinks about Mark’s comments, thinking to himself that Mark might actually be telling the truth. Adding fuel to the fire, Johnson tells O’Brien, “that’s why, in the movies, it’s always the heavier people who are rowdy in bars. Don’t tell me you haven’t seen that.” Eddie chimes in, telling O’Brien, “and, you’re Irish, O’Brien. Everyone knows the Irish hold their whiskey better than anyone else.”

Now feeling quite superior, O’Brien, who is clearly on his way to being legally intoxicated, boasts to the four athletes, “well, you guys keep drinking water and your Gatorade, and leave the real drinking to the professionals.” Taking O’Brien’s advice, Eddie tells the bartender, “give me four waters.” The bartender hands each of the four athletes a glass of water. Eddie hands the bartender a twenty-dollar tip, and walks away with his buddies, wondering how O’Brien can be so stupid.

Lunchtime arrives, and an impressive spread of food is brought out. With hundreds of people at the reunion, Kathy and Paula watch carefully for the pizza, not wanting to miss their chance at getting a few slices. Paula asks Mark, “are you still up to eating all the food?” Looking over the buffet, Mark replies, “um, no. Not today.”

Over lunch, the news gets out that Eddie, Mark, Braden, Johnson, Mitchell, and Bobby B., at one time, all broke the world record in some track and field event. Inundated with many questions from their former classmates, the tribe had no idea that they would become the center of attention. Not quite liking that the tribe is the center of attention is the class president, Steve Gaucher, who likes to be in the limelight. Also stealing the spotlight from Gaucher are Jimmy O’Brien and his buddies, staggering around the buffet trying to stay vertical. It is quite evident to all around that O’Brien is making a fool of himself. Some things never change.

Arriving just in time for lunch is Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde, who meander through the crowd seeking out the tribe. Braden exclaims, "hey! It's Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde," and gives his former coaches a fist bump and hug. The tribe warmly greets the two coaches who were with them during their athletic career, having a small reunion among themselves within the class reunion. Gump is reunited with Mr. Frazier, who remembers the skilled athlete well.

During lunch, Steve Gaucher was scheduled to give a short address to the class. Gaucher, however, took some bad advice from Jimmy O'Brien, who informed Gaucher that, when it comes to alcohol, the more you weigh, the more the alcohol affects you. O'Brien even had a convincing argument that the stomach of a larger person is likewise larger, causing the alcohol to be absorbed much faster. Hearing O'Brien's newfound words of wisdom, Gaucher decided to test that theory, overindulged a bit, and likely could not recite the Pledge of Allegiance in his current state.

Now not quite sure of the soundness of O'Brien's advice, Gaucher, stumbling over his words, walks up to Mark, asking, "what's this about the more you weigh, the more it affects you?" Thinking he knows of what Gaucher is referring, Mark asks, "what are you talking about?" Gaucher replies, "drinks." With a puzzled look on his face, Mark repeats, asking, "drinks?" Gaucher replies, "yeah. Drinks." Mark asks, "who told you that?" Gaucher replies, "Lenny Brien, or whatever his name is. He said you said it." Now knowing full and well to whom and what Gaucher is referring, Mark tells him, "look. I don't know anyone named Lenny Brien. And, I don't even know who you are." Barely able to stand up, Gaucher replies, "I'm Steve, Steve Gaucher. I'm the class president. I have to give a talk. Yeah. Like right now."

Overhearing Gaucher and Mark's conversation, Johnson interrupts, telling Gaucher, "that's probably not going to go over real well. You can barely stand up." Slurring his words, Gaucher replies, "tell me about it." Johnson steps up, and tells Gaucher, "I'll give the speech." Johnson then advises Gaucher, "if I were you, I'd sit down and relax, drink a whole lot of water, and stay away from the bottle." Gaucher walks away, taking Johnson's sound advice. Once Gaucher is far enough away, Johnson tells Mark, "some of these people are dumber now than when they were in high school." Mark replies, "yeah. I'd say."

Johnson walks up to the lectern, ready to give the president's welcome speech. Reading over a copy of Gaucher's pre-prepared speech that is sitting on the lectern, Johnson quickly decides that he is not going to be using either Gaucher's words or content. Addressing his track team and physical education classes for years, Johnson has no problem coming up with his own unique material and speaking in front of a group.

The microphone is opened and, with absolutely no preparation, Johnson addresses the group, announcing, “good afternoon! I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable trip getting here today for our ten-year reunion. We have a beautiful spread of food off to my left, and an open bar to my far left. If you haven’t already had lunch, please come up and help yourself.” Holding up Gaucher’s pre-prepared speech, Johnson informs the class, “this is the speech you were supposed to hear today.” Tossing the papers aside, Johnson eloquently states, “this is a bunch of bullshit, so I’m not reading it.” Quite a few people laugh, remembering Johnson’s candidness from when he was a student.

Welcoming everyone, Johnson announces, “for those of you who don’t know me, I am Eric Johnson. I want to extend a warm welcome to our classmates who chose to take the time and be with us here today. I also would like to welcome our special guests, spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, and other significant others who have joined us here today. I understand that Mr. Frazier, who was likely your gym teacher while you were at Northside High School, will be addressing you shortly. And, looking around, I see a few other of our teachers who have joined us for this very special day.” Among the teachers present today is Miss Amherst, who is now married to Dr. Zunde.

Briefly telling his story, Johnson elaborates, “I’m sure that, in the past ten years, our lives have progressed in many different directions. After graduating from Northside High, I attended the State University for four years, where I studied exercise science and ran track. I am now back at Northside High, where I am a physical education instructor and the track coach. I have gone full circle, coming back to what I love doing.”

Reminiscing, Johnson jogs everyone’s memory, stating, “as I think back, much of what I do today I did when I was in high school. I still meet my friends for pizza on Friday or Saturday night at the pizzeria. I still head down to the beach, meeting my friends from high school and college there, every chance I get. I still train hard. And, I still look forward to Summer break, when I get a little time off and get to go on vacation.”

During Johnson’s speech, Kathy whispers to Paula, “crap! Trouble just walked through the door.” Paula glances over at the entrance, and whispers back, “shit! What is he doing here?” Kathy replies, “I have no idea!” Paula whispers to Kathy, “there’s even more trouble. He’s headed straight for the bar.” Kathy informs Paula, “I’m going to let Eddie know.” Paula whispers back, “I’m coming with you, girl.” Kathy and Paula briskly walk over to where Eddie is standing along with Mark and Bobby B.

Seeing the look of concern on Kathy’s face, Eddie asks, “what’s up?” Kathy replies, “Mr. Crum just walked in. The last I saw, he was over at the bar.” Eddie looks over at the bar, seeing Mr. Crum guzzle a glass of

something. Mr. Crum procures another drink, and briskly walks away from the bar, getting lost somewhere in the crowd. Eddie replies, "I see that. I wonder what he's doing here." Paula mentions, "I was wondering the same thing." Mark suggests, "he probably still doesn't have a job, so maybe he came to get some free food." Referring to Mr. Crum, Paula comments, "what a scavenger." The group focuses again on Johnson's speech, keeping their eye out for Mr. Crum, whom they cannot immediately find.

Suddenly emerging from the crowd, Mr. Crum points a gun at Eddie, yelling out, "nobody move! Edward Bogenskaya, I want my house back! And, I want my money back, too!" Great fear comes over many, not quite expecting to see Mr. Crum brandishing a weapon today. Interrupting his speech, Johnson announces, "okay, everyone. I think we have a problem here." Responding to Johnson, Mr. Crum yells out, "I'd say so! I want my house back, Edward Bogenskaya! And, I know you have my money! I want that back too!" Eddie is silent, waiting for Mr. Crum to be distracted and vulnerable.

Seeing the action, Lynn and Penny, always equipped with their cameras, start photographing Mr. Crum holding a gun to Eddie. Since photographs constitute evidence, Mr. Crum panics, abruptly turns toward Lynn, aims, and, after a short delay, fires his gun. Taking a bullet in her arm, Lynn falls to the ground. The crowd goes silent, wondering who Mr. Crum's next target may be. Barbara rushes to Lynn's aid, as Penny continues to shoot photographs. A few people, hearing the gunfire, rush to the doors to escape.

Seeing an opening, Eddie grabs Mr. Crum's right arm, squeezing his wrist with enough force to cause Mr. Crum to relinquish and drop his weapon. The gun falls to the ground, which is quickly procured by Braden. With the weapon no longer a threat, Eddie releases Mr. Crum's arm. Seeing the fierce look on Eddie's face, Braden exclaims, "this looks like the end of the road for Mr. Crum!" Johnson exclaims, "yeah! I'd say so!" Braden or Johnson, could step in and stop any potential altercation, but decide not to. Truth be told, Braden is hoping that Eddie kicks the shit out of Mr. Crum.

Now struck with fear, Mr. Crum backs away as Eddie slowly approaches. Eddie exclaims, "hey, Crum! I'm going to do the same thing to you that I did to the Chuckie, you piece of shit!" Eddie takes three quick steps, and quickly apprehends Mr. Crum. The crowd backs away, giving Eddie enough room to kick Mr. Crum's ass. Bobby B., Johnson, and Mitchell stand aside with their arms crossed, with front row seats to the action.

Eddie drags Mr. Crum a few feet, and rams him up against the concrete block wall. Eddie delivers several solid punches to Mr. Crum's mid section. Mr. Crum cries out in pain, sincerely hoping that Eddie is finished. Eddie turns Mr. Crum around, then forcefully smashes his face into the concrete wall several times, much harder than when he did the same to Chuckie. Recalling how he broke Chuckie's arms, Eddie twists Mr. Crum's right arm into a position that it was never intended to move. A loud crack is heard coming from Mr. Crum's shoulder. In the same manner, Eddie twists Mr. Crum's left arm. Eddie hears the proverbial crack, but all the spectators hear is Mr. Crum screaming in pain. Eddie holds Mr. Crum up by his arm, and delivers a solid right uppercut, sending Mr. Crum to the ground. Eddie picks Mr. Crum off the floor and, holding him up with his right hand, delivers a solid left uppercut. Finishing off Mr. Crum, Eddie grabs Mr. Crum's right forearm and, using both of his arms and knee, Eddie snaps Mr. Crum's forearm bones in two. Before Eddie walks away, he gives Mr. Crum a swift and forceful kick in the ass, and another into his low back.

The crowd cheers, as Mr. Crum lies on the ground, screaming in pain, gasping for air, and sweating profusely. Eddie walks toward Kathy, telling her, "I've had enough of that piece of shit." Kathy replies, "I see that." Quickly recalling earlier events, Eddie asks, "how's Lynn?" Kathy replies, "Barbara said it was a flesh wound. The ambulance is on its way. But, it doesn't matter." Eddie asks, "why doesn't it matter?" Kathy replies, "Mark and Paula left right after you started to kick the shit out of that moron. They're going to the past to warn us of what is going to happen. Hopefully, we can stop it somehow." Eddie replies, "good. Maybe I'll get to kick the shit out of Crum twice in one day."

Meanwhile, behind the events center, Mark and Paula, using three large stones that they were able to find, make a portal. Paula announces, "Mark and Eddie's driveway, at eight o'clock this morning." Mark and Paula are immediately transported to Eddie and Kathy's house, slightly more than one hour before they left for the reunion.

Mark and Paula run up to the front door, ringing the doorbell at least a half dozen times. Inside, Kathy tells Eddie, "I wonder whose house is on fire." Eddie replies, "it's probably not the Chuckie's house. His is history." Seeing Kathy is busy getting ready, Eddie then tells Kathy, "I'll get it." Eddie opens the door, seeing Mark and Paula in a panic.

Eddie invites Mark and Paula in, and yells across the house to Kathy, "it's Mark and Paula." Before either Mark or Paula could explain anything, Kathy yells back, "what's up?" Paula yells out to Kathy, "get over here, girl! We got a big problem."

Not quite gathering her thoughts together, Paula explains, “we came from the past, from the reunion. Mr. Crum showed up, and he had a gun. And, he pointed the gun at Eddie. And so, then he saw Lynn Berson taking pictures of him. So, then he pointed the gun at Lynn, and shot her.” Kathy tells Paula, “whoa, girl. Slow down! Come up for air.” Mark steps in and volunteers, telling Paula, “I’ll explain it.”

Mark explains, “as Paula said, Mr. Crum showed up at the reunion. The reunion didn’t go exactly as planned. The first thing Mr. Crum did when he came in was to hit the bar. Then, Mr. Crum disappeared into the crowd when Johnson was giving the welcome speech. We lost track of where he was.” Eddie interrupts, and asks, “wait a second. Johnson was giving the welcome speech?” Mark replies, “yeah. The class president, whoever he is, was so drunk that he couldn’t even stand up. So, Johnson stepped up to the plate and gave the speech.”

Mark continues, explaining to Eddie and Kathy, “so, Mr. Crum came out of nowhere, pointed a gun at Eddie, screaming that he wants his house back and that he wants his money back. Then, Mr. Crum caught Lynn taking pictures of him. So, Mr. Crum turned toward Lynn and shot her in the arm.” Kathy exclaims, “what a piece of shit!” Mark then informs Eddie, “after that, you started to kick the shit out of Mr. Crum, so we told Kathy that we’re going to the past to warn you guys.” Eddie asks, “I kicked the shit out of Mr. Crum?” Paula replies, “yeah. I’d say. You were kicking his ass when we left. From where I was standing, you were doing a much better job than when you kicked Chuckie’s ass when you were a senior in high school.”

Now very concerned, Kathy asks, “what’s the best way to fix this?” Mark explains, “when Mr. Crum suddenly turns to shoot Lynn, Eddie has a really good chance of taking Mr. Crum down before he gets the shot off.” Kathy suggests, “why don’t we just take Crum down before things get crazy.” Eddie replies, “I don’t want to do that. If Crum has a gun, and wants his house and money back, he’ll just show up somewhere else. The last thing I want is Crum showing up at the service station with a gun. I want to put him away forever. And, I want to make sure he can never fire a gun again.” Kathy replies, “that’s a good point.”

Eddie asks, “is there anything else I need to know?” Paula replies, “when we get to the reunion this morning, we’re going to tell Johnson, Barbara, Bobby B., Erika, Braden, and Wendy what happened. And, when we get back in a few minutes, if anyone got hurt, we’ll come back to the past again and figure out plan B.” Kathy replies, “got it.” Mark mentions, “when Johnson gives his speech, you guys were standing between him and the table with the food. Lynn was on the other side of Johnson, taking photographs.”

Off topic, Kathy asks, “is there pizza?” Paula replies, “yeah, girl. Of course, there is.” With no more questions, Paula tells Eddie and Kathy, “we’re going back now. When we get back, we’ll see how Eddie finishes off Mr. Crum.”

Mark and Paula head back through the portal, arriving back behind the event center. If everything went well, when Mark and Paula arrive inside, Mr. Crum should be apprehended and Lynn should be getting more photographs instead of laying on the ground. Walking in through the front door, Mark and Paula rush to the banquet room, wondering how things turned out in the alternate future that they just created.

Briskly walking to the front of the room, Mark and Paula see Mr. Crum lying on the floor, gasping for air, sweating, and screaming in pain. Running up to Kathy, Paula asks, “did it work?” Kathy replies, “oh, yeah! When Mr. Crum turned to shoot at Lynn, Eddie grabbed Mr. Crum’s arm. Mr. Crum fired two shots into the ceiling, then Eddie broke Mr. Crum’s hand. After that, Eddie kicked the shit out of Mr. Crum, far worse than he did with the Chuckie.” Paula asks, “is Lynn okay?” Kathy replies, “yeah. Lynn and Penny documented the whole thing with their cameras. They got lots of photographs.” Paula asks, “are the police on their way?” Kathy replies, “yeah. Braden called the police and told them to bring an ambulance. And, Erika so wanted to be the one to arrest Mr. Crum, but he’s in no condition for her to do that right now.”

Now breathing a sigh of relief, Paula announces, “I need some pizza.” Kathy tells Paula, “go for it. There’s a lot left.” Paula, not getting much for lunch earlier, helps herself, as Johnson finishes giving the welcome address. In between bites, Paula tells Kathy, “who would have ever expected this during a class reunion.” Kathy replies, “yeah, seriously.”

A few minutes after Johnson finishes his abbreviated address, the police arrive. Erika and Braden advise Officer Wilson that the situation is under control, escorting him over to where Mr. Crum is lying. Seeing Mr. Crum’s condition, Officer Wilson comments, “who took care of him?” Braden replies, “Eddie did. And, it looks like he did a mighty fine job to me.” Officer Wilson asks, “where’s the weapon now?” Braden replies, “it’s right where it landed when Eddie forced Mr. Crum to surrender it. Bobby B. and Gump are guarding the gun.” Officer Wilson replies, “good.”

Officer Wilson advises Braden and Erika, “I’m going to get the crime scene unit out here and get a few photographs.” Braden explains, “there ain’t no need to do that. Lynn and Penny shot a few rolls of film. They caught everything that happened with their cameras.” Wanting clarification, Officer Wilson asks, “hold on. Are you saying that they photographed the entire altercation while it was in progress?” Braden

stands tall and replies in a military tone, “yes, sir!” It’s not every day that the police are handed irrefutable evidence on a silver platter.

Officer Wilson asks Braden and Erika, “where are Lynn and Penny now?” Pointing to the tables near the buffet, Braden replies, “they’re over there, getting a bite to eat with Paula.” Officer Wilson, Braden, and Erika walk over to Lynn and Penny, where the officer questions two of the prime witnesses in the case.

Mr. Frazier and Dr. Zunde walk up, wanting to take a close look at Eddie’s work. Mr. Frazier comments, “Crum doesn’t look too good. He really ought to see a doctor.” Dr. Zunde replies, “I agree. He’s missing half his teeth, and his jaw is far off to the side. Perhaps he should see a dentist while he’s at it. And, it looks like he won’t be getting a job pushing a pencil anytime soon. Both of his arms are out of commission for a while.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I see that. He should have kept himself in better physical condition.”

Mr. Frazier shakes his head, telling Dr. Zunde, “I’d like to say I feel sorry for the guy but, honestly, I don’t.” Dr. Zunde replies, “I know what you mean, George. He’s had this coming to him for years. And, it’s clear that he’s never gotten over his philosophy of act now and analyze later.” Mr. Crum, who has caused nothing but trouble in many people’s lives, comes up a little short when it comes to receiving sympathy.

The ambulance arrives, and the paramedics are immediately advised as to where Mr. Crum lies on the ground. The paramedics quickly attend to Mr. Crum. Erika walks over, and advises the paramedics that Mr. Crum is under arrest. One paramedic asks, “what happened to this guy?” Dr. Zunde replies, “he pulled a gun on Eddie Bogenskaya. Eddie was a whole lot faster on his feet than Maurice Crum, the guy lying there, ever expected. It appears that Eddie kicked the shit out of him.” The paramedic asks, “do you mean Eddie Bogenskaya, the world’s fastest man?” Dr. Zunde replies, “that would be the guy.” The paramedics attend to Mr. Crum, having a difficult time moving him onto the stretcher. Mr. Crum is wheeled out on a Gurney, still screaming in pain.

Once the class realizes Mr. Crum is being wheeled out by the paramedics, a few people start singing, “Na Na Na Na, Na Na Na Na, Hey Hey, Goodbye,” and adaptation of a song popularized by the group *Steam*. The singing quickly catches on and, in no time, the entire class joins in. Once Mr. Crum is taken away, the singing dies down, and everyone applauds.

Johnson gets behind the microphone and, addressing the class, informs everyone, “well, everyone, it looks like our illustrious former high school principal really got his ass kicked this time.” The crowd again

cheers, giving the distinct impression that no one in the room really liked Mr. Crum anyway. Johnson assures everyone, “now that all the excitement is over, please let everyone outside know that it’s safe to come back in.” Johnson then informs the class, “in just a moment, Mr. Frazier, our guest speaker today, will talk to you for a few minutes. While you are waiting, there’s still a lot of good food over at the buffet and the bar is still open.” Order is restored, and the reunion is back on course.

A few minutes later, Mr. Frazier walks up to the lectern, addressing the class, announcing, “some problems just never seem to go away. I thought we got rid of that problem a while ago. Hopefully, this time, they’ll put Crum’s ass away for a long time.” The crowd laughs, cheers, and lightens up a bit now that the excitement is all over. Mr. Frazier continues, “for those of you who don’t know, I am George Frazier. I taught physical education and coached track at Northside High school when you were in attendance there. Those were the same years I had to put up with Mr. Crum, just like you guys did. I am now at the State University, where I coach track, just a few miles from your high school. In looking around the room, I see many of you who attended that University after graduating high school.”

Getting to his intended address, Mr. Frazier continues, “five years ago, I had the privilege of giving the commencement address at the State University where I am now the track coach. During that address, I instructed the graduates how to succeed at anything they chose to do. I also encouraged them to follow their passion, and to run their own race. It has been ten years since you’ve graduated from Northside High School. Some of you are following your passion. Sadly, some of you may not be following your passion as closely as you would like. Today, I will tell you how to identify your passion, and how to succeed at anything you do. Some of you may have already heard parts of this presentation. Please bear with me if you have heard it before.”

Mr. Frazier begins, asking the group, “by a show of hands, how many of you are following your passion?” Several attendees raise their hands, as if they were back in school. Mr. Frazier continues, “good. A few of you are. But, there is no reason why all of you can’t be following your passion and doing what you love. But, first you have to know what your passion is. For me, as many of you know, my passion is track and field.” Silence falls over the group, as Mr. Frazier touches on a topic that spurs the interest of many.

Now having the group’s undivided attention, Mr. Frazier continues, “many of you may remember Lynn Berson and Penny Hart, who are both here with us today. Lynn’s and Penny’s passion is photography. They both put their skills to use here earlier when Mr. Crum crashed your reunion. When I walked the halls of Northside High School, every time I

saw Lynn or Penny, they had a camera around their necks. They were your yearbook photographers. And, if you were on a sports team, they were there with their cameras taking pictures during your sporting event. If you read the school newspaper, the photographs were probably taken by either Lynn or Penny. Now professional photographers, Lynn and Penny have followed their passion!”

Citing another example, Mr. Frazier continues, “many of you also may remember that, when you attended Northside High School, your track team was unstoppable. Many members of that team are here with us today. In your class, among them are Eddie Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, Axel Braden, Robert Bradshaw, and Gary Mitchell. There are also a few others here today who were not in your class. They have all followed their passion! Every single one of the people I have mentioned has set a world record in some track or field event.”

Mr. Frazier then tells the group, “years ago, over at the University, we had a student who worked at the University’s radio station. Her name is Angela Meadows. I’m sure that many of you recognize that name, especially if you watch sporting events on television. Now, here’s what you don’t know. When Angela was attending the State University, I am told she spent all of her spare time working at the campus radio station. When our University’s track team started to dominate the division, Angela was there, broadcasting the meets live. During one of our divisional meets, Angela’s live feed was picked up by several commercial radio stations and one television station. And, look where Angela is now! Her passion to be on the air is what got her where she is today!”

Mr. Frazier asks, “can you have more than one passion?” Answering his own question, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “yes! Of course, you can!” Elaborating further, Mr. Frazier explains, “in the graduating class the year after you, there is a guy named Adekunle Akinmola. Some of you may know him. His passion was running distance. His passion was also to preach the gospel. When Adekunle Akinmola graduated high school, he negotiated a dual enrollment status where he can take his core classes at the State University, and the classes in his major at the seminary. By obtaining dual enrollment status, it enabled Adekunle to continue competing in track at the State University. Adekunle Akinmola figured out a way to live both of his dreams and follow his passion! Nothing stopped him! What is stopping you?”

Citing yet another example, Mr. Frazier informs the audience, “over at the State University, there was an excellent distance runner named Darryl Stone. If you watched the last Summer Olympics, you might recall that Darryl Stone won the gold medal in the 1,500-meter run. But, what you don’t know is that Darryl Stone has a second passion. Darryl’s second passion is playing the drums. Stone is now a studio musician, and is a

concert drummer for various artists. If you listen to music on the radio, chances are that you have heard Darryl Stone play the drums. Stone followed both of his passions. So can you!”

Moving on to the second part of his presentation, Mr. Frazier asks, “once you’ve identified your passion, how do you move forward? Those of you who have been coached by me already know the answer to this. But, before I give you the answer, let me give a few examples, so you know where I’m coming from.” Anyone who has been coached by Mr. Frazier knows exactly what he is about to say. Mr. Frazier now has the attention of everyone in the room, many who realize that what he is saying is what they’ve been waiting to hear for their entire lives. Even Jimmy O’Brien and Steve Gaucher are paying attention.

Repeating what he has expressed to his track team many times, with great energy, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “they said no one can run a mile faster than four minutes. Roger Bannister, who was the first man to run a four-minute mile, did not believe that for a minute! They also said a man cannot run 100 meters in less than ten seconds. Jim Hines did not believe that at all, and ran 100 meters in 9.9 seconds! No one thought that the shot-put could ever be thrown farther than 22 meters. That’s a little over 72 feet for those of you who have completely forgotten about the metric system since graduating. In 1976, Aleksandr Baryshnikov threw the shot-put using the discus technique, and did exactly what everyone said couldn’t be done! And, today, everyone is using the discus technique to throw the shot-put!”

Throwing out a question, Mr. Frazier asks, “what do these athletes all have in common?” Giving the audience the answer the track team knows so well, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “what these athletes all have in common is the one, and only one, attribute that will determine your success at anything you do! That one attribute is that you must attack your challenge with no fear! Did you hear that? You must attack the challenge you face with no fear! Roger Bannister. No fear! Jim Hines. No fear! Aleksandr Baryshnikov. No fear! And, I might add, Lynn Berson. No fear! Penny Hart. No fear!”

Addressing the subject of fear from another angle, Mr. Frazier explains, “some of you have fears. Some fears are unreasonable. Some fears, like we all saw a little while ago when Mr. Crum fired a gun, are reasonable. Let me give you an example of an unreasonable fear. Earlier this Summer, I went on vacation. In the hotel, there were about twenty floors. In the elevator, there was no thirteenth floor.” Mr. Frazier exclaims, “if you are staying on the fourteenth floor, you are actually on the thirteenth floor! What is the big fear of staying on the thirteenth floor? If you are afraid of staying on the thirteenth floor, a black cat, or walking under a ladder, you will never get anywhere in life! You will

continually add more fears on top of your irrational fears! You will eventually be paralyzed by your own fears!”

Tying his presentation together, Mr. Frazier tells the group, “some of you are not following your passion, and doing something that you have no business doing. You may have realized that, at some point in your life, you found yourself on a path that you really don’t want to be on. There is nothing worse than running someone else’s race! If you don’t like your job or career path, find something else to do!” Referring to his favorite Bible verse, Mr. Frazier exclaims, “if you ever read the Bible, in the book of First Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 24, it states, ‘Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you win.’” Mr. Frazier then advises the group, “you have no business running in a race that is not yours. You will never win! Find your passion! Run that race! Then, you will win!”

Knowing that, during reunions, people often talk about their successes and compare themselves with others, Mr. Frazier informs the group, “you don’t measure success by how much money you’ve earned! You don’t measure success by what car you drive or the size of your house. What good is waking up in the morning and driving to a job you hate? What good is living in a mansion if you really want to live in a bungalow at the beach? The only measure of success is how well you follow your passion and love what you do!”

Knowing that this is a reunion and that he doesn’t want to be long winded, Mr. Frazier pauses, and sums up his presentation, “if I leave you with anything today, it is to identify your passion, follow it, and attack the challenges you face with no fear. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. And, enjoy the rest of your class reunion.” The class applauds as Mr. Frazier steps down from the lectern. Many of his former students recall that Mr. Frazier often gave such presentations during gym class. But, now they are at an age that they can finally understand what their former physical education instructor was trying to convey to them many years ago.

Standing along with the tribe, Lynn takes Mr. Frazier’s speech to heart. Lynn mentions to Eddie, “wow! You guys were really lucky to have Mr. Frazier as a gym teacher and a track coach.” Eddie replies, “Mr. Frazier is the best coach around. Another thing that he always told us was that our own mental obstacles are what gets in the way of our success.” Lynn exclaims, “that’s exactly where I was when my landlord told me that he wasn’t going to renew my lease! Mental obstacles. Lots of them.” Giving Lynn some advice, Eddie suggests, “just bulldoze down any obstacles in your way. Get to the end goal any way that you can.”

Now that Jimmy O'Brien has sobered up a little bit, he walks over to Mark, telling him, "you're so full of shit!" Apparently, O'Brien has taken Mr. Frazier's presentation to heart, and now fearlessly confronts Mark. Mark asks O'Brien, "what are you talking about, junior?" O'Brien replies, "about the alcohol. The more you weigh, the more it affects you!" Mark responds, "that's what I said, 'the more you weigh, the more the alcohol affects you.' So, what's your problem, junior?" Stumbling over his words, O'Brien exclaims, "that's not the way it is." Mark replies, "you could be right, junior. It could be the less you weigh, the less the alcohol affects you." Eddie chimes in, commenting, "that sounds reasonable to me." O'Brien tells Eddie and Mark, "you guys are crazy!"

Having enough of O'Brien, Mark tells him, "buzz off, junior. No pun intended." O'Brien tells Mark, "I'm going to get you back for this! You just wait!" Faking fear, Mark exclaims, "I'm so scared!" Eddie laughs, telling Mark, "you'd better get Erika to protect you." Bobby B., Erika, Johnson, and a few others laugh, irritating O'Brien even more. As an afterthought, O'Brien tells Mark, "and, stop calling me 'junior!'" Mark replies, "no problem, junior." O'Brien staggers away, knowing that Mark pulled a good one over on him.

Eddie mentions to Mark, "and, just think. O'Brien wanted to be a track star." Eddie asks Mark, "how did he ever get to be on the track team in middle school, anyway?" Mark explains, "from what I heard, Mr. O'Brien came down to the middle school, and told Mr. Harris that he wants his son to be on the track team. Mr. Harris told him that O'Brien wasn't good enough, but Mr. O'Brien kept pestering Mr. Harris. So, Mr. Harris put O'Brien on the team just to get rid of Mr. O'Brien. And, Mr. Harris put Jimmy O'Brien in the 440-yard dash as a fourth wheel. O'Brien always finished in last place, so it didn't really matter much." Eddie replies, "I remember in high school, Mr. O'Brien did everything he can to get O'Brien on the team, but Mr. Frazier wouldn't allow it." Mark recalls, "Mr. Frazier didn't really care much for Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Frazier even messed with him every chance he got."

Eddie curiously inquires, "I wonder what Mr. O'Brien is doing now." Mark replies, "Paula saw him last week at the grocery store on Post Avenue. He was working in the produce department, putting out vegetables. She avoided him. I don't think we'll be shopping at that store anymore." Eddie suggests, "I bet he's stealing food. After all, in his world, nothing is fair. So, he takes it upon himself to make everything fair in his own eyes." Mark replies, "I don't think he'll ever get a job as a teacher again."

Mid afternoon, Gump walks over to Eddie, and mentions, "that was a nice job you did on Crum earlier today." Eddie replies, "he deserved it. You probably don't know this but, during Crum's trial, it turned out that

Crum paid Goldshit hundreds of dollars to trip Braden on the track. And, Crum paid Goldshit hundreds of dollars to take me out. So, Goldshit paid the Chuckie to throw the Javelin at me.” Gump exclaims, “now that you mention it, I remember hearing about the Javelin incident in the locker room! That didn’t end well for Goldstein and Chuckie!” Gump then asks, “so, Mr. Crum was behind all that?” Eddie replies, “yeah. He was fixing sporting events and dealing drugs.” Gump replies, “what an asshole.” Jan comments, “I don’t believe anyone liked Mr. Crum.” Gump replies, “ain’t that the truth.”

Gump asks Eddie, “are you guys going to the dance tomorrow?” Eddie replies, “no. We’re not the dancing type.” Gump replies, “me neither. I don’t really want to go.” Eddie informs Gump, “a bunch of us are headed to the beach tomorrow after lunch. Why don’t you guys join us?” Gump asks Jan, “do you want to hit the beach instead of the dance?” Jan brightens up, and replies, “sure! I hadn’t been to the beach all year. And, I wasn’t really looking forward to the dance either.” Gump asks Eddie, “are you bringing your kids?” Eddie replies, “yeah. Mark is bringing his kids, and Braden and Johnson are bringing theirs too. We’re meeting at the pizzeria at noon before we head down, if you guys want to join us.” Quickly accepting Eddie’s invitation, Jan replies, “we’d love to! I haven’t had pizza in a while!” With a one-year-old child at home, luxuries, such as the beach and pizza, often take a back seat.

The rest of the reunion goes rather well. If there are any more crazy people attending, they lay low. No more guns appear. But, the fact that the former principal is the one who showed up with a weapon and proved that he was intending to use it, says it all about his character. It’s no wonder the crowd cheered as Eddie kicked the shit out of Mr. Crum and sang when he was carted off. Worse yet, attesting to the contempt many had for the former principal, no one came to his rescue or even suggested that the fight be stopped.

During the drive home, Eddie is somewhat quiet. Kathy asks, “are you okay?” Eddie replies, “yeah. I just can’t figure out what’s wrong with Mr. Crum. He’s always after me for something. Yet, he comes into the service station wanting his car fixed. I just don’t get it.” Kathy replies, “he’s a classical psychopath, just like the Chuckie and Goldshit. They all have no empathy, self centered, impulsive, and they’re thrill seekers. And, they don’t care who they harm on their way. If you ask me, they all belong in the sanitarium.” Eddie replies, “or jail.”

Eddie comments, “the next time Crum starts something with me, I’m not going to be so nice.” Kathy laughs, and asks, “do you have any idea what people were saying today?” Eddie replies, “no.” Kathy informs Eddie, “the gist of it, to put it in Braden’s terms, was that was the biggest ass kicking anyone has ever seen! And, didn’t you hear everyone singing

when they took him away?" Eddie quietly mentions, "I still think I should have finished him off." Curiously, Kathy asks, "what more could you have done?" Eddie replies, "I could have broken both of his legs." Kathy laughs, and tells Eddie, "they would have just fixed his legs in the hospital anyway. And, besides, they'll finish him off in prison." Eddie replies, "yeah. You're right."

Eddie thinks about Kathy's comment for a moment, and tells her, "someday, the prison will organize a 4 by 400-meter relay race. One team will be Mr. Crum, Giuseppe Vio Otto, Frank Glooma, and the Chuckie." Kathy laughs hysterically, and exclaims, "that would be hilarious! And, hey now. How can you leave out Goldshit?" Mimicking Goldstein, Eddie replies, "he can be the alternate. Yeah, yeah. The alternate."

Eddie and Kathy drive up their driveway, glad in a way that the reunion is over. Since Eddie, Jr. is on vacation at his grandparent's house, Eddie and Kathy will pick him up tomorrow morning before lunch. Since it has been a long day, Eddie and Kathy decide to go to bed early tonight.

The next day, after lunch, the group heads to the beach. Eddie and Kathy take their Volkswagen Bus, which is still running great. Eddie, Jr. likes the bus because he can see out of the windows very easily. Eddie has also equipped the Volkswagen Busses he's built with two-way radios. Eddie, Jr. really likes the radio, especially since he gets to talk to Mark, Jr. and Dawn on the way to the beach. On the way, Eddie passes Mark and Paula, who are driving Paula's Jeep today. Quite excited to see his friends on the road, Eddie, Jr. waves to Mark, Jr. and Dawn.

Arriving at the beach, Eddie tells Kathy, "it looks like we're not the first ones here." Driving through the parking lot, Eddie comments, "Bobby B. and Erika are here somewhere. There's their Dune Buggy." Eddie parks on the back row, farthest from the beach, next to the Dune Buggy. As they are getting out of the Bus, Mark and Paula drive up, parking next to Eddie and Kathy's Bus.

Walking to the beach with Mark and Paula, Eddie asks, "I wonder where Bobby B. and Erika are." Kathy replies, "they're in front of the sand dunes, where we always park our stuff." Walking a little farther, Eddie replies, "you're right. There they are." Kathy smiles, informing Eddie, "I'm always right." Paula laughs, knowing that Kathy hasn't changed much since high school.

Seeing that Bobby B. and Erika beat them to the beach, Eddie, Jr. comments, "they beat us here!" Kathy replies, "it wasn't a race." Eddie, Jr. sadly informs his mother, "yes, it was! And, we lost." Eddie smiles, knowing that, at five years old, his son has quite a competitive spirit. Kathy asks Eddie, Jr., "a race? Hmm. Do you want to be the first to leave,

and get home first?" Eddie, Jr. ponders his mother's question for a moment, and replies, "no!" Kathy smiles, telling Eddie, Jr., "see? Everything is not a race." Eddie, Jr. confidently replies, "yes, it is," giving Kathy a little more parenting work to do later.

Within a half hour, the whole group is together. Joining the group today is Lynn Berson, Penny Hart, Gump and his wife, Jan, and a few others from the reunion. Lynn and Penny, of course, bring their cameras, documenting every moment of their lives in photographs. Also joining the group is Hoffer and Tessa, who would not miss a day at the beach. Not expected to be at the beach today, or anytime soon, are Mr. Crum and Chuckie, who are being detained in the county jail.

Once everyone gets settled, a few of the guys hit the waves, leaving the women to watch the kids. Thinking everything in life is a race, Eddie, Jr. is the first among the kids to get to the water. Eddie, Jr. has no problem letting the other kids know he got there first. At one and a half years old, today is Johnson's son's, George, first time at the beach. George carefully gets his toes wet, landing on his bottom when a one-foot high wave gives him his first lesson at the beach. Barbara picks up George, who ventures to go out into the water a little farther this time. Mark, Jr. and his sister, Dawn, have a competition between themselves to see who can go the farthest out into the ocean.

Out in the deep water, Eddie asks Mark, "what did you think of the reunion?" Mark replies, "I think it was a waste of time. But, I'm kind of glad I went." Eddie asks, "how is that?" Mark explains, "most of the people that were at the reunion, I didn't want to see when I was in high school. I certainly don't want to see them now. The people that I want to see, I already do. So, now I know that."

Joining in on the conversation, Gump tells Mark, "I totally get your point. It seems like all everyone talked about are their jobs, what kind of house they have, and how their climbing the corporate ladder. It's like the new competition is to see who can get the biggest house or drive the fanciest car." Mark replies, "I guess that's their measure of success." Eddie mentions, "Mr. Frazier said the only measure of success is if you follow your passion. I wonder if they finally got it." Gump suggests, "maybe that got through to some of them."

Mark comically asks, "what's McCrutchin's passion?" Eddie replies, "getting his ass kicked, just like the Chuckie." Gump asks, "Chuckie? Wasn't that guy the class idiot?" Mark replies, "that would be the guy." Gump asks, "does anyone know whatever happened to him?" Eddie explains, "yeah. The Chuckie is a drug dealer. He bought a house across the street from Braden using his drug money. A few weeks ago, the Chuckie's house mysteriously burned down. And, now he's in jail because

the police found a drug lab in his house.” Gump comments, “you could see that coming from a mile away.”

After a while, those who are riding the waves in the water return to the shore, and join those laying in the sand and watching the kids. Kathy exclaims, “great! It’s time for the second shift to get in the water!” Paula replies, “you got that right, girl!” Kathy, Paula, and many of the others in the group, hit the waves, getting their chance to get in the deep water. Now, it’s the guys’ turn to watch the kids.

Sitting under her umbrella, Wendy asks Braden, “is there any more cold water in the cooler?” Braden looks through the cooler, and replies, “no. There’s a few soft drinks and some Gatorade though.” Wendy tells Braden, “darn. I really wanted some water.” Braden tells Wendy, “don’t worry. We got more coolers. They’re in Eddie and Kathy’s Bus, where they’ll stay cold a little longer.”

A few feet away, overhearing Wendy and Braden’s conversation, Eddie tells Wendy, “I’ll go back to the Bus and get another cooler.” Braden asks, “do you need some help?” Mark interjects, “I’ll help him. You can watch the kids.” Truth is Mark wanted a break from watching the kids. So did Braden, but Mark outsmarted him.

Walking to the parking lot, Mark mentions to Eddie, “this place is really getting busy.” Eddie replies, “you know, I never remember the beach being this crowded when I was in high school. The back row, where we’re parked, was never full years ago.” Mark replies, “they’re going to have to expand the parking lot someday.” Eddie suggests, “maybe you can pick up that job.” Referring to the parking lot Mark installed for Eddie, Mark replies, “parking lots are easy money, except when they’re eight inches of steel reinforced concrete.” Eddie comments, “well, it’s not likely to crack anytime soon.”

Getting close to their vehicles, Eddie and Mark suddenly hear the sound of glass breaking. Pointing to where their vehicles are located, Mark tells Eddie, “that sounded like it came from where we’re parked.” As they briskly walk toward their vehicles, Eddie whispers to Mark, “you’re right. It was. Get down low.” Eddie and Mark sneak between Kathy’s Bus and Bobby B.’s Dune Buggy. Hearing the sound of a headlight being smashed, Eddie looks at Mark, and whispers, “let’s take care of this.” Mark whispers back, “yeah, seriously.”

Rushing the vandal, Eddie and Mark appear to come out of nowhere. Catching the perpetrator with a sizeable rock preparing to smash the headlights of Kathy’s Volkswagen Bus, Eddie tackles the culprit before any damage occurs. Upon seeing the front of Paula’s Jeep, Mark exclaims, “he busted both of Paula’s headlights!” Eddie replies, “and, he’s got a can of

spray paint.” Having the vandal pinned to the ground, Eddie demands to know, “what exactly are you going to do with that can of spray paint, junior?” The guy replies, “let me go!” Eddie replies, “no, junior. Not today. Today is not your lucky day.” Eddie could kick the shit out of the guy, but he is so scrawny that it would not be a fair fight.

Seeing who is on the ground, Mark sarcastically exclaims, “Jimmy O’Brien! What a nice surprise! It looks like it’s time for me to kick your scrawny little ass, you piece of shit.” Eddie stands up, holding O’Brien by the arm. O’Brien tries to break away, but is absolutely no match for Eddie.

Eddie looks at Mark, and asks, “what are we going to do with him?” Seeing he has little choice, O’Brien suggests, “let me go! I’ll pay for the headlights, and we can forget the whole thing! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! Just let me go!” Recalling once that Captain Richard Hayes told Eddie that O’Brien attempted to serve a police officer a hamburger that was intentionally dropped on the floor, Eddie replies, “not today, junior.”

Seeing that Mark is wearing his necklace housing a yellow stone, Eddie drags O’Brien out of the parking lot, and behind the event center where Eddie had his wedding reception. Now quite fearful, O’Brien thinks that Eddie is dragging him behind the event center so that Mark can kick his ass. Mark follows, wondering exactly what Eddie is up to. Arriving behind the event center, Eddie whispers to Mark, “make a portal.” Now aware of Eddie’s plan, Mark smiles, and replies, “got it.” Mark finds three large rocks, and makes a triangular portal into the unknown, unknown to O’Brien anyway.

Mark asks, “where are we taking him?” Eddie replies, “your choice, bro. You got the necklace.” Eddie whispers to Mark, “I’m going to pretend to hit him. When I’m about to hit his jaw, take us to wherever you want.” Mark whispers, “got it.” Eddie tells O’Brien, “say goodbye to this world, junior.” Great fear comes over O’Brien as Eddie prepares to demonstrate to O’Brien what he did to Mr. Crum yesterday. At the same time Eddie pretends to give O’Brien an uppercut and intentionally missing O’Brien’s jaw, Mark announces, “Hawaii, today,” and transports them to Hawaii.

Suddenly in Hawaii, arriving through the portal, Eddie drags O’Brien by his arm through the brush out to the road. Eddie tells Mark, “wow! It looks like I hit O’Brien way too hard, and knocked him out. Just look at him, laying on the ground there, like that.” O’Brien, fully conscious and standing, is at a loss to understand what has just happened. Catching on to Eddie’s game, Mark replies, “I see that. Maybe we should call 911.” Eddie asks O’Brien, “what are we going to do with you, junior?” O’Brien exclaims, “let me go!” Mark tells O’Brien, “shut up, junior. You’re not even conscious. You’ve been knocked out. You’re not allowed to talk.”

Now dumbfounded, O'Brien exclaims, "what happened! Where am I?" Mark replies, "I told you! You're unconscious, junior. Eddie knocked you out. So, shut up." O'Brien exclaims, "if I'm unconscious, how come I'm talking? I'm not unconscious!" Mark replies, "you think you're conscious, but you're not. It's the alcohol, junior. Just like I told you, the less you weigh, the more it affects you. You drank way too much at the reunion. You're delirious." O'Brien exclaims, "that's not what you said! You told me, 'the more you weigh, the more it affects you!'" Messing with O'Brien's head, Mark replies, "actually, it's the less you weigh, the less it affects you. You got it backwards." O'Brien, not knowing where he is or how he got there, has given up on arguing with Mark.

Eddie drags O'Brien down the road. O'Brien, weighing in at an impressive 130 pounds, resists, but to no avail. Eddie asks Mark, "where should we drop him off?" Mark replies, "O'Brien wanted to go to the beach, so how about the beach?" Eddie replies, "perfect." On his trip down the road, O'Brien exclaims, "let me go!" Mark tells O'Brien, "shut up, junior. I told you. You're unconscious." O'Brien exclaims, "no, I'm not!" Mark tells O'Brien, "then, explain how you got here." Eddie mentions to Mark, "maybe he's having a seizure. He seems to be moving a little." Not surprisingly, O'Brien cannot make any sense out of his current situation.

Coming to the intersection, Eddie and Mark cross the road, and escort O'Brien to the beach. Mark tells O'Brien, "here's your stop, junior. Have a nice vacation. Don't forget to send your friends a postcard. And, when you get home, please feel free to file a police report." Eddie and Mark run across the street and back up the hill to the portal. O'Brien tries to follow, but is way too slow to catch Eddie and Mark. Walking into the brush, Eddie and Mark reenter the portal, arriving back at the beach. O'Brien, now in Hawaii, wondering where Eddie and Mark disappeared to, has no foreseeable way of returning home anytime soon.

Returning to their place and time, Eddie, examining the headlights on Paula's Jeep, tells Mark, "bring the Jeep by the station Monday, and I'll replace the headlights. It doesn't look like he did any other damage." Mark replies, "I see that. But, he was going to destroy Paula's paint job with that can of spray paint." Eddie asks, "how do you know?" Mark replies, "do you remember at the reunion when O'Brien was drunk and he said, 'I'm going to get you back for this. You just wait.?' " Eddie replies, "yeah." Mark replies, "O'Brien was apparently making good on his promise. It's a good thing we caught him."

Mark suggests, "let's check the other vehicles before we head back to the beach." Eddie replies, "yeah. We should do that." Eddie and Mark inspect everyone's vehicles, not finding any other damage. Walking over to Kathy's Bus, Eddie and Mark get a cooler full of cold drinks, and head back to the group.

Arriving back with the cooler, Eddie and Mark place it in the shade under Wendy's umbrella, next to Wendy. Wendy asks, "what took you guys so long?" Seeing a few friends around who do not know about the portal, Mark replies, "we took a little detour." To anyone listening, it sounds like Eddie and Mark took a restroom break. Mark whispers to Eddie, "I'm going to tell Paula what happened," and heads out to the water where Paula is riding the waves with a few of the women.

Mark swims out to where Paula, Kathy, and Erika are riding waves. Paula asks, "what's up? Were the kids too much for you to handle?" Mark laughs, and replies, "yeah. That's it. They wanted some water and I couldn't get the top off the bottle." Paula instructs Mark, "you hold the bottle with one hand, and screw the top off with your other hand." Mark replies, "really? I never knew that." Paula tells Mark, "the kids know that. They could have shown you how."

Mark then informs Paula, "we had a slight problem, but we took care of it." Paula asks, "what happened?" Mark explains, "me and Eddie went to get another cooler out of Kathy's Bus, and we caught Jimmy O'Brien smashing your headlights." Paula exclaims, "what? Are you serious?" Mark further explains, "yeah. He smashed both of your headlights. But, Eddie will replace the headlights for you on Monday. Don't worry. Nothing else got damaged." Quite ticked off at O'Brien, Paula exclaims, "what a shit!"

Paula asks Mark, "did you kick the shit out of him?" Mark replies, "no. We did better. We disposed of him." Kathy laughs, exclaiming, "what did you guys do with him?" Mark replies, "we transported him to Hawaii, and left him there at the beach." Quite angry with O'Brien, Paula exclaims, "good. I hope it takes him a week to get home!" Kathy laughs, telling Paula, "he won't be smashing any more headlights anytime soon."

Erika asks, "wait a second. You put Jimmy O'Brien in the portal, transported him to Hawaii, and just left him there?" Mark replies, "exactly. And, we told him to file a police report when he gets home." Erika laughs, and tells Mark, "I seriously hope I get to investigate his complaint!" Mark replies, "I can see how that's going to go over." Kathy tells the group, "he's going to end up in the sanitarium, just like the Chuckie." Ticked off that O'Brien was vandalizing her vehicle, Paula replies, "good. I hope O'Brien and the Chuckie get to be roommates."

Mark casually mentions, "O'Brien has a job stocking shelves in a liquor store. I guess he's been drinking all his profits." Hearing Mark's comment, Erika replies, "really? This really gives me a clue of who is selling alcohol to minors." Mark asks, "what's that?" Erika explains, "some liquor store around town has been selling alcohol to minors. It started at the beginning of Summer. There's a whole lot of beer bottles

and cheap screw-top wine bottles showing up behind schools and in parks. That's a dead giveaway of underage drinking. There's several dozen stores within a few miles of the area in question. If O'Brien works in a liquor store, with his history of shady activity, I'm putting him at the top of my surveillance list now. We'll be watching him." Mark smiles, and replies, "I'm glad I could help."

Kathy points out, "it seems like we're being watched too. First, McCrutchen, and now O'Brien." Paula exclaims, "that's a good point! How did O'Brien even know we were here?" Mark explains, "we invited a lot of people to the beach yesterday. He probably overheard us. And, he said he was going to get me back for telling him that the more you weigh, the more the alcohol affects you." Paula laughs, telling Mark, "well, that really backfired." Out in the water for nearly an hour, everyone on shore probably is wondering where Mark is. But, conversations while riding waves go very slowly. Mark announces, "I'm going back in, and see if I can get that top off the bottle of water." Paula replies, "good luck!"

Mark returns to shore, wondering where all the kids are. Before Mark can ask, Wendy tells Mark, "Eddie and Axel took the kids on a walk down the beach. Lynn went with them to get some pictures." Looking around and not seeing many people, Mark asks, "where's everyone else?" Wendy replies, "a bunch of them went on a training run." Mark replies, "good. I'm going to lay out for a while." Mark spreads out his towel, and relaxes in the afternoon sun.

Within a few minutes of Mark returning to shore, the rest of the group riding waves comes in to shore. Seeing no open bottle of water near Mark, Paula finds a bottle, opens it, and pours a little on Mark. Mark, quite relaxed, suddenly sits up, wondering what just happened. Paula laughs and hands Mark the water bottle, telling him, "I see you must have been having a lot of trouble opening the water bottle." Mark drinks some water, and lies back down, not wanting to do anything more than relax at the moment.

As they are laying out their towels, Paula asks, "what else do we do when we're at the beach? It's been a while. I forgot." Kathy explains, "other than you chasing me when I make fun of you, we ride waves and lay out in the sun and relax." Paula replies, "oh, yeah. That's right." Kathy adds, "and, we also get pizza. But, today, we got pizza before we got here." Truth be told, the pizza at the pizzeria is a lot better than the pizza at the beach.

Paula observes, "it looks like the kids are chasing each other today." Kathy replies, "good. Because, I don't feel like running right now." Seeing she can easily have the upper hand, Paula boldly informs Kathy, "that's because I'm faster than you are." Refuting Paula, Kathy replies, "no,

you're not. I can beat you any day of the week, girl, and you know it. And, I don't feel like running right now because I'm pregnant."

Paula is silent for a moment, and exclaims, "wait! You're what?" Kathy replies, "pregnant. Like, in having a baby. You know, like when a sperm and egg come together." Quite surprised, Paula exclaims, "what! When did you find this out?" Kathy smiles, and replies, "in biology class. A sperm and egg come together, and form a zygote. Then, it divides, differentiates, and poof. Nine months later, you have a baby. Don't tell me you missed that day in class."

Not realizing that Kathy is messing with her, Paula tells Kathy, "no! I know where babies come from, girl! When did you find out that you were pregnant?" Kathy replies, "last week. But, I didn't want to say anything at the reunion." Paula asks, "do you know if it's a boy, or is it a girl?" Kathy replies, "it's way too early to tell. But, I think it's a girl." Paula asks, "how do you know?" Kathy replies, "my blue stone. Or, maybe the yellow stone. Or, it could be the red stone." Paula replies, "it's the blue stone. I can tell." The news that Kathy is having a baby spreads, and Kathy is inundated with many questions, which is to be expected.

Hearing the news that Kathy is pregnant, Amber tells Mitchell, "I think it's time we have kids. After all, we've practiced enough." Surprisingly, Mitchell replies, "I was thinking the same thing." Nothing could have made Amber happier than to hear Mitchell agree. But, Mitchell is the quiet one in the group. No one will hear about it from Mitchell until it is quite obvious that Amber is pregnant.

Mid afternoon, Eddie asks Tessa, "are you still swimming?" Eddie, of course, already knows the answer. Last year, at the outing at the county pool, Tessa beat Eddie in the 100-yard freestyle. Tessa replies, "of course, I am." Eddie suggests, "someday, we'll have to race in the ocean." Without any thought whatsoever, Tessa confidently exclaims, "I'll beat you, buddy! You don't stand a chance!" Tessa quickly realizes that, perhaps, Eddie might know something that she doesn't. But, Tessa also knows that Eddie's strength is in his flip turn. Since there are no walls in the ocean to push off of, Tessa just as quickly realizes that she might have a distinct advantage in the ocean.

Eddie tells Tessa, "you're on!" Tessa asks, "when?" Eddie looks at the ocean, and replies, "there's no better time than the present." Now worried and hiding it quite well, Tessa confidently tells Eddie, "let's go for it! I'm going to win." Kathy whispers to Paula, "she'll never beat Eddie in the ocean." Hearing the challenge, Hoffer stands up and announces, "race in the ocean in ten minutes! Eddie versus Tessa!" With the official announcement made, there is no way of either Eddie or Tessa backing out of the race.

At the sea, Tessa asks Eddie, “what distance?” Eddie confidently replies, “your choice. A hundred yards. A mile. It doesn’t make any difference to me.” Now even more worried, Tessa replies, “how about 200 yards.” Eddie replies, “you got it.” Kathy, Paula, and Barbara walk off 200 yards down the shore, and will be the judges. Erika, who will be the Starter, tells Eddie and Tessa, “I’ll announce, ‘ready, go.’” Eddie and Tessa swim out 50 yards into the ocean, and are ready to race.

Erika yells out, “ready!” Three seconds later, Erika yells out, “go.” Eddie and Tessa begin swimming down the shore, where Tessa takes a brief lead. Ten seconds into the race, Eddie catches and passes Tessa. Thinking Eddie will burn himself out because ocean swimming is more strenuous than in a pool, Tessa is no longer worried. Eddie, however, begins to widen his lead. Tessa, knowing that, swimming 200 yards in the ocean is more like swimming 400 yards in a pool, steps up her pace anyway.

A crowd develops at the shoreline, as passers by stop to watch the race. One woman, hunting for shells, asks Mark, “what’s going on out there?” Mark replies, “Eddie Bogenskaya is racing Tessa Klement. Well, it’s Tessa Hoffer, now.” The woman exclaims, “do you mean Eddie Bogenskaya, the world’s fastest man?” Mark replies, “yeah. And, Tessa holds the woman’s national record in the 100 and 200-meter freestyle. This race is about 200 yards.” Knowing she is seeing something special, the woman pauses and watches the race.

At 100 yards, Eddie has developed a significant lead. Tessa, expecting Eddie to slow down at any moment now, still thinks she can win this. At 150 yards, Eddie still has not slowed his pace. Tessa, however, has picked up her pace slightly, giving it all she has. Glancing toward shore, seeing where Kathy is standing, Eddie, knowing he is almost to the finish line, picks up his pace.

The three judges will have no problem calling the winner as Eddie rapidly approaches the finish line. Eddie passes where the judges are standing, and Barbara yells out, “and, the winner is Eddie!” Hearing the announcement, Eddie swims toward shore, looking back to find Tessa. Seeing Tessa 30 yards behind, Eddie cannot wait to hear what Tessa has to say once she gets back on shore.

Eddie walks on shore, receiving high-fives from everyone, including Eddie, Jr. A few minutes later, Tessa walks on shore, also receiving high-fives. Tessa exclaims, “so, that’s your secret?” Eddie asks, “what are you talking about?” Tessa reveals, “I never swam competitively in the ocean before. That was hard!” Eddie replies, “neither have I. But, I trained a lot in the ocean over the last few years.” Tessa confesses, “if I trained in the ocean, I would have been a much better swimmer!” Eddie reminds Tessa,

“you’re one of the best around, and still are.” Now, with renewed hopes of becoming more competitive, Tessa tells Eddie, “I’ll be training in the ocean a lot more!” Tessa’s four years of eligibility in collegiate athletics have all been used. Eddie is now wondering what Tessa’s aspirations are.

As the evening approaches, the party winds down. Being at the beach for a few hours, all the kids have more energy than usual. It’s very likely that they’ll all fall asleep on the drive home. Everyone agrees that they must go to the beach more often. Gump, in particular, plans to make it a priority to keep in contact with his old friends from high school.

Walking back to the vehicles, Paula inspects her Jeep, seeing the two broken headlights first hand. Paula exclaims, “O’Brien is such a shit!” Braden replies, “O’Brien ain’t half as bad as the Chuckie, though.” Paula agrees, telling Braden, “I know, right. Seriously, though. What is wrong with these people?” Braden replies, “I don’t know. But, all of their asses belong behind bars. You could see that coming a mile away when they were in high school.” Eddie reminds Paula, “bring your Jeep by the station tomorrow morning, and I’ll replace your headlights.”

As she is getting ready to leave, Lynn reminds Eddie, “don’t forget about our meeting tomorrow at nine o’clock.” Eddie replies, “I haven’t forgotten. I’ll be there.” Lynn smiles, and tells Eddie, “I can’t wait!” Lynn gets in her car and drives away, fully intending to make a side trip on her way home to get a look at Emily’s former photography studio from the outside.

On their way home, Eddie comments to Kathy, “this has been an interesting weekend.” Kathy replies, “I’d say so. Mr. Crum is going to jail and Jimmy O’Brien got a free trip to Hawaii.” Eddie asks, “I wonder how long it will take before Mr. O’Brien shows up at the service station complaining about Jimmy landing in Hawaii.” Kathy replies, “he’ll show up Monday. Right now, Mr. O’Brien is talking with Jimmy on the phone, trying to make sense of how he’s now in Hawaii.” Eddie agrees, telling Kathy, “you’re probably right.”

Kathy asks, “what’s up with your class officers, anyway? They were kind of weird.” Eddie replies, “I had no idea we had a class president. The only one of the four that I knew was Douglas McArdle. He was on the basketball team, and was really good. He looks like he’s still in good shape.” Kathy sighs and comments, “I guess, when we were in high school, we had no idea what went on outside of track.” Eddie replies, “little Eddie will probably be the same way.” Kathy looks in the back seat, seeing Eddie, Jr. has fallen asleep. Truth is, after a long day, on the way home, Kathy is doing everything she can to stay awake.