

# Eddie, The 25 Year Reunion

## Chapter One More Loose Ends

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The Summer reunion brings the annual 100-yard freestyle rematch between Tessa and Eddie at the county pool. Neither Eddie nor Tessa are at their competitive best, but the race is something they both look forward to every year. Tessa takes the race with Eddie very seriously. So does Eddie, but he strategically has a tendency not to show it. This year, Eddie won the swim in the ocean, beating Tessa and Jan, but not by a very significant margin. This gives Tessa some hope that she will beat Eddie in the pool this year. After all, the pool is Tessa's forte. Since he won the ocean swim, Eddie is making no comment this year about this year's race. Neither is Tessa. Eddie is calm and relaxed about this year's competition, which bothers Tessa. Tessa, on the other hand, is outwardly appearing confident, but silently very concerned.

Walking into the pool area, Kathy tells Eddie, "it looks like we're one of the last ones here today." Looking around, Eddie replies, "I see that. But, it looks like the Chuckie didn't make it this year. So sad, too bad." Kathy warns Eddie, "you'd better watch what you say. McCutchen and O'Brien are still out there." Eddie comments, "I don't think anyone put them on the guest list." Kathy replies, "McCutchen wasn't on the guest list at the reunion. He still managed to show up anyway." Eddie reassures Kathy, "if they do show up, we'll get rid of them somehow." Eddie and Kathy put their stuff on a table, then walk around saying hello to their friends.

Relaxing at one of the tables, Mark asks Braden, "how's the neighborhood now, bro? Are you all finished?" Braden replies, "we finally got it almost the way we want it. We got ten houses, and each house is on about two acres." Mark asks, "did you ever sell the last house?" Braden replies, "yeah. Chief Hayes bought it. I sold it to him yesterday. Now, there's me and Wendy, the Johnsons, the Mitchells, the Hoffers, Lucius and Deanna Hill, Bernard Lowe's parents, Lynn Berson's

family, John Davies, and Joseph Rice. Mark tells Braden, “congratulations, bro! It’s been a long trek, but you’re finally done.” Braden replies, “we couldn’t have done it without you. You guys knocked down 65 houses for us.”

Braden reveals, “I’m gonna need your help again with something.” Mark replies, “uh oh. What’s that?” Braden asks, “do you know that wall around my back yard?” Mark replies, “do you mean that eighteen-inch thick steel-reinforced concrete wall with a five-foot deep footing and a brick facing that a tank couldn’t get through? Yeah, bro. I know that wall real well.” Braden laughs, and replies, “yeah. That wall. We want to continue that wall around the whole neighborhood. Everyone’s in on it.” Mark replies, “we can do that. When do we start?” Braden replies, “whenever you want. You can start tomorrow, if you want. And, I want to put in a bigger tower for my radio antennas.” Mark informs Braden, “we can definitely put it all on the schedule. I can get the surveyor out there early next week.”

Braden then reveals, “I got some more work for you to do, too.” Braden explains, “there’s still two two-acre lots that are vacant. The houses on those lots weren’t worth a shit. So, I was thinking about building something new.” Mark asks, “is anyone’s name on them?” Braden replies, “Hunter says he wants one of them. And, he wants me to buy it for him. I told his lazy ass that he’s gonna have to get a job someday. I don’t know about the second one, though.” Mark assures Braden, “we can put that on the schedule too. Just pick out the plans, and I’ll get the building permit.”

Joining the group this year is Nena Schmidt, formerly known as Nena Dotsenrod during her college years. Nena was invited by Tessa, who specifically invited Nena to participate in this year’s 100-yard freestyle. Tessa figures that, with Nena in the race, she will swim better and beat Eddie. Nena, of course, accepted the challenge.

Tessa walks up to Eddie with Nena and, getting right down to business, asks, “are you ready?” Eddie confidently replies, “whenever you are. The question is, ‘are you ready?’” Not falling for Eddie’s psychological warfare, Tessa replies, “I’m always ready. Let’s get this show over with. And, remember, this is a pool, not the ocean.” Eddie replies, “good. I’ll have a wall to kick off of.” Eddie’s remark, for some reason, bothers Tessa, since the flip turn is Eddie’s strong point.

Eddie yells out, “hey, Kathy! It’s race time!” Kathy yells back, “okay! I’ll tell Lena!” Kathy walks over to Lena, informing her that it’s time for this year’s race. Lena Borg, leaving her successful career as a marketing representative behind, returned to the environment that brought her so

much joy in the past. Now the director of the county recreation facilities, Lena has joined the party today, and will be racing along with Eddie, Tessa, and Jan.

Lena closes the pool for ten minutes. While the pool is being cleared, Kelli, the head lifeguard on duty today, tells the competitors, “go ahead and get warmed up. We’ll start in a few minutes.” Eddie, Tessa, Lena, Jan, and Nena get warmed up, each seriously wanting to win the competition. After ten minutes, the pool is finally cleared of the little kids who think their world is coming to an end. The competitors get in position at the deep end of the pool. Eddie is in lane four, Tessa in lane three, Jan in lane two, Nena in lane five, and Lena is in lane six. Lena, only swimming for fun today, took the outside lane.

Kelli asks the five competitors, “is everyone ready?” Answering for the group, Tessa confidently replies, “let’s get this show on the road!” Walking along the edge of the pool, Kelli tells everyone to step back four feet from the pool’s edge. Arriving at the deep end of the pool, Kelli announces, “take your mark.” With everyone ready, Kelli blows her whistle, quickly followed by the five competitors fiercely diving into the water.

Halfway into the first lap, as expected, Eddie is in the lead, mainly because his thrust off the block is still very strong. Tessa is in a close second place, with Jan, Nena, and Lena tied for third place. As they approach the wall, Kathy asks Hoffer, “has Tessa been practicing?” Hoffer replies, “oh, yeah. After Eddie won in the ocean, Tessa has been in the pool practicing every day. She really wants to win this.” Kathy reveals to Hoffer, “Eddie has been working out in the pool every day since the race in the ocean. He figured Tessa was in the pool every day.” But, Eddie and Tessa have a tendency to be secretive about their training before the race. As the swimmers approach the wall, Eddie is in first place. In second place is Tessa, with Nena in third place, and Jan and Lena tied for fourth place.

During the second lap of the four-lap race, Kathy mentions to Paula and Barbara, “trouble at twelve o’clock. Jimmy O’Brien just walked out of the locker room.” Paula asks, “what’s he doing here?” Kathy replies, “he’s just your every day garden variety car keyer. Don’t worry about him.” Paula exclaims, “stop it, girl! I don’t think he’ll ever try that again!” On the serious side, Kathy whispers to Paula, “but, we should go out and check the cars once this race is over.” Paula replies, “seriously, girl. That guy spells nothing but trouble.” Pushing Paula’s buttons, Kathy comments, “who knows? McCrutchen can be here too.” Paula exclaims, “stop it, girl! There’s no McCrutchen here today!” Knowing Paula’s disdain for Todd McCutchen, Kathy just smiles.

During the third lap, Tessa is neck and neck with Eddie and Nena, causing Eddie to step up his pace. Lena, still a competitive swimmer, is in fourth place, threatening to take the lead. Jan will have nothing to do with coming in last place, and steps up her pace. Barbara informs Kathy and Paula, "Eddie's 50-yard split was 30 seconds! That's pretty good for a guy in his forties!" Kathy replies, "Eddie still thinks he's in his twenties. I don't think he's ever going to get old." At the wall, Eddie is the first to do the flip turn, followed by Nena, Tessa, Lena, and Jan.

Early in the last lap, Eddie maintains the lead with Nena right behind him. Tessa gives it all she has, and makes up a little ground. Lena and Jan are slowly gaining ground on the leaders, fighting it out for fourth place. The cheering from the sidelines gets louder as the end of the race draws near, with one spectator heard commenting, "I think that's Nena Dotsenrod and Tessa Klement racing."

Just past the midway point in the last lap of the race, a situation suddenly develops. Kathy suddenly exclaims, "stop! Don't dive in!" Joining in, Paula and Barbara also yell out, "stop!" Kelli blows her whistle, completely disregarded by the person on the diving board. Ignoring the warnings and ungracefully walking along the diving board is none other than Jimmy O'Brien, who apparently plans to make his grand entrance today by diving into the pool. Mark rushes to the diving board to grab O'Brien, but he is a little too late. O'Brien takes a dive into the pool, right between Eddie and Tessa. Startled by the rude interruption, Tessa momentarily stops swimming. Eddie continues onward to the wall, wondering who dove into the pool and why. Lena, Nena, and Jan, in the outer lanes, are completely unaware of what just transpired.

At the wall, Eddie touches first, followed by Nena, Lena, Jan, then Tessa. O'Brien surfaces, greeted by boos and jeers from the tribe and the crowd. Coming in last place, and finally understanding what happened, Tessa exclaims, "I want a rematch!" Barbara announces, "for what it's worth, Eddie won this year. But, that idiot, O'Brien, disrupted the race." O'Brien dog paddles to the side of the pool, greeted by Braden who tells him, "yo, moron! Get your scrawny ass out of the pool!" Braden's charges are echoed by a few other tribe members, but O'Brien, a little more bold these days, shrugs it off and heads to the other side of the pool.

After the competition, if it could even be called that, Eddie and Tessa take a seat at a table. Tessa tells Eddie, "that kind of sucked. But, from what Barbara said, you probably would have won even if O'Brien didn't mess up the race." Kathy mentions to Tessa, "Eddie was ahead by a few yards mid lap." Eddie replies, "if I knew it was O'Brien who dove in, I would have hammered him somehow." Tessa agrees, telling Eddie, "so

would have I. What an asshole.” Eddie smiles, and tells Tessa, “it’s not too late. The day’s not over. We can still hammer him some way.” Tessa comments, “when is that idiot ever going to grow up?” Eddie confidently replies, “never.”

Kathy announces, “well, how about lunch, everybody?” Paula tells Kathy, “I want to check my Jeep first, and make sure that idiot O’Brien didn’t key it.” Kathy replies, “just have lunch, girl. O’Brien ain’t going anywhere soon. He’s sitting at a table, eating a burger.” Mark assures Paula, “after lunch, we’ll go out and check all the vehicles.” Paula replies, “okay. I’ll eat first.” Kathy smiles, and informs Paula, “you have to. If you go out to the parking lot, there won’t be any pizza left by the time you get back.” Paula replies, “yeah, there will be, girl. Are you crazy?” Kathy smiles, still knowing where Paula’s buttons are.

Over lunch, Mark asks Eddie, “how many years have we been coming to this pool?” Thinking for a moment, Eddie replies, “probably about 35 years, I suppose.” Mark observes, “for the last few years, I haven’t seen anyone swimming laps. Most everyone just stands around in the water. And, a lot of them look like the Chuckie.” Looking around, Eddie replies, “I see what you mean. I wonder where all the athletes are.” Mark suggests, “maybe Johnson would know.” Eddie yells out, “hey, Johnson! Come here for a minute!”

Walking over with his plate of pizza, Johnson takes a seat, asking, “what’s up?” Eddie replies, asking, “where do all the high school athletes work out these days?” Johnson asks, “what do you mean?” Mark explains, “we haven’t seen anyone swimming laps here in years.” Johnson replies, “the ones who do work out these days go to the gym, or run on the roads. A lot of their parents have exercise rooms in their homes these days. But, over the Summer, the gyms seem to be the main hangout for the jocks. And, some of the gyms have pools.” Mark comments, “I don’t remember seeing any gyms around when we were in high school.” Johnson replies, “that’s because there weren’t any. Gyms started popping up all over the place a few years after we graduated.” Eddie comments, “I guess we were too busy to notice.”

At another table, sitting along with Nena, Tessa asks Lena, “what made you decide to leave your marketing career?” Lena explains, “last year, during my twenty-five-year reunion, Mr. Frazier was our guest speaker. And, wow! When he addressed our class, he gave this brief talk about what success really is. When he was done, I realized I was a number one, top of the class, miserable failure. I hated my job, I had very little time to do what I love, and I’m getting older. So, the county recreation facilities director position came up, and I applied for it. I never really thought I’d get it. But, I did.”

Nena tells Tessa and Lena, "I totally get what you mean. I went to graduate school, and got my master's degree in chemistry. And, after working for a year, I said to myself, 'is going back and forth from a desk to a lab all day what you really want to do?' Suffice to say, the answer was no. So, I took a job as a chemistry teacher in a high school, and coach swimming there." Tessa exclaims, asking, "really? Where?" Nena replies, "at Northport. But, I kind of look at it this way. I coach swimming, and teach chemistry on the side. And, for a while, during the Fall semesters, I was one of the assistant soccer coaches. But, I'm not doing that anymore."

Tessa asks, "any interesting stories?" Nena laughs, and explains, "yeah. During tryouts, on the first day, we time all the freshmen in the 100-meter freestyle. I already know what my core team can do. With the freshmen, I usually put one of the fastest seniors in as a pacesetter. But, since the more athletic freshmen seem to jump into the first heat, I step in as the pacesetter for that heat. Imagine the look on their faces when I swim 100 meters in the time it takes them to swim 50! So, here I am, a forty something year old swimming coach, old in their eyes, kicking all their butts. Then, I tell them, 'it looks like we have a whole lot of work to do before the first meet.'" Tessa and Lena laugh, as Tessa tells Nena, "that's pretty funny!" Nena replies, "the funny part is, after that, the non contenders cut themselves, sparing me the trouble." Lena asks, "do you have a good team?" Nena replies, "most years. Every year or so I have someone going to State. When I do, it's usually one of the triathletes. They really take swimming seriously."

Nena comments, "it's just too bad high schools don't have a bicycling team." Tessa quickly replies, "if they did, Eddie would have thought he died and went to Heaven." Nena asks, "was Eddie into bicycling?" Tessa explains, "yeah. That's part of the reason he is so fast. He even rides his bicycle to work these days. That is, when he works." Lena comments, "it would be nice if the high schools had a triathlon team. But, I can see how that would suck the good athletes out of other sports, especially since triathlons would probably be held in the Fall or Spring." Nena replies, "yeah. That ain't happening."

Over at the guys' table, returning to their previous conversation, Johnson mentions to Eddie and Mark, "there's an old guy over there getting out of the pool. He was swimming a few laps." Taking a look, Eddie asks Johnson, "you know who that is, don't you?" Johnson takes a close look, and replies, "no." Eddie informs Johnson, "that's Dr. Braun." Johnson replies, "wow! He looks pretty good for what? Seventy something?" Eddie tells Johnson, "no, bro. He's in his nineties. I keep his '56 Chevy running. He comes in for gas all the time."

Dr. Braun walks over to Eddie, announcing, “good afternoon! It’s good to see you here, outside in the fresh air!” Eddie replies, “it’s good to see you here, too.” Eddie announces to everyone around, “this is Dr. Braun,” then goes around the table, reintroducing everyone, telling Dr. Braun, “you remember Eric Johnson, Robert Bradshaw, Gary Mitchell, Axel Braden, Mark Svoboda, and Jimmy Hoffer.” The guys greet Dr. Braun, who tells them, “you guys look like you’re in pretty good shape for old men! It’s been what? Twenty years?” Dr. Braun was, of course, joking about the old men comment. Dr. Braun takes a seat, catching up on what everyone has been up to over the last two decades.

Once lunch is over, Mark, knowing that Braden will want to come along, tells him, “I’m going to check Paula’s Jeep.” Eddie and Bobby B. also decide to leave for a moment and check the vehicles. On the way to the gate, Paula asks Mark, “what if he keyed my Jeep again?” Mark replies, “then, we make a portal, and have it bring us to the time right before O’Brien keyed your Jeep. Then, we stop him before he does it. And, then, we can transport him to South America, in the middle of the Amazon Jungle.” Knowing there is a solution should her Jeep found to be damaged, Paula calms down.

Arriving at the parking lot and seeing her Jeep parked among a few Dune Buggies, Paula whispers, “shit! We have a problem.” Braden whispers, “yeah! I’d say!” Braden tells everyone, “get down.” Once everyone is crouched behind Eddie’s VW Bus, Braden whispers, “this is what we’re gonna do. Me and Eddie are gonna rush them from the right. Mark, you, Bobby B., and Paula are gonna rush them from the left. Eddie replies, “got it,” echoed by the others. Braden announces, “okay. Let’s move in. Go!”

Rushing in from the right, Braden chases down one perpetrator while Eddie grabs the other, pulling him out of Paula’s Jeep. Seeing who Eddie has in an arm lock, Paula delivers a swift kick to the person’s crotch, yelling out, “you piece of shit!” Sternly looking the perpetrator in the face while grabbing his shirt, Paula warns him, “if I ever catch you near my Jeep again, the last thing you’ll ever see in this life is my tire headed straight for your face!”

Braden returns with the other perpetrator, announcing, “look what I found!” Eddie exclaims, “wow! Todd McCutchen and Brad Evans. Or, is it Bradley Michaels? This must be our lucky day! Two assholes for the price of one.” Seeing who they are up against, McCutchen demands, “someone call the police!” Bobby B. calmly makes an offer, stating, “Erika is over at the pool. I could go and get her.” McCutchen exclaims, “no! Not her!” Braden informs McCutchen, yelling, “I am the police, junior!

And, where your ass is going, there's gonna be a whole lot of police officers! Your flimsy ass is finally gonna get its wish!"

Eddie whispers to Braden, "this is really interesting. McCrutchen and Evans are out here, and their new best buddy, O'Brien, is at the pool." Braden whispers back, "you're right about that. They must have planned this out. Now, I'm wondering what they're up to." Just then, O'Brien is heard through the fence, yelling out, "look out! They're coming!" Barely making O'Brien out through the bushes, Braden tells Eddie, "there's your answer, bro. O'Brien is the lookout." Eddie whispers back, "he was too busy shoving burgers into his face to be of any good."

Eddie asks, "what are we going to do with them?" Braden laughs, and replies, asking Mark, "do you have any psycho Chubin on you?" Mark replies, "it's in the back of the Jeep. Let me get it." Mark steps away, opens the rear door of Paula's Jeep, procuring a very sharp pocket knife from the tool box. Mark returns, and Braden boldly commands him, "inject their asses." Mark informs Braden, "psycho Chubin works better if you inject it into their arms. The arm is a lot closer to the brain." Braden replies, "their asses ain't got no brains."

Meanwhile, as Mark prepares the psycho Chubin, Braden scouts out the area, making sure there are no witnesses. Braden whispers to Paula, "make a portal on the other side of the bushes, where nobody can see it." Before she walks away, Paula tells Braden loud enough for McCutchen and Evans to hear, "inject Evans first. And, give McCrutchen a double dose this time."

As Paula momentarily steps away, Mark pretends to inject McCutchen and Evans with psycho Chubin. McCutchen puts up what would be a formidable fight if he were up against a high school student, but he is up against Eddie. To give credence to their act, after McCutchen receives his phony injection, Mark tells Eddie, "some psycho Chubin dripped on the ground. Move him away so you don't step on it. It can be absorbed through the skin." Eddie replies, "got it."

Braden tells Evans, "step right up, junior. It's your turn. I'd really hate for my ass to be in your shoes right now." Braden forces both of Evans arms behind his back and Mark pretends to inject Evans with psycho Chubin. Evans screams, yelling out, "stop! We'll just leave and get out of here!" Braden calmly replies, "you don't have to worry about that. We're gonna help you get your flimsy asses out of here." Following Mark's lead, Braden and Eddie forcefully escort Evans and McCutchen toward Paula, who has just made a temporary portal.

Arriving at the portal, Paula tells McCutchen and Evans, “I heard you guys have been taking psycho Chubin. Don’t you know that taking drugs is bad for you?” Mark warns McCutchen and Evans, “and remember, after today, junior, you won’t know what’s real and what’s not real.” While McCutchen and Evans are struggling to get away, Paula tells Evans, “you’re going to watch, as the psycho Chubin takes effect on your buddy, here.” Paula whispers her plan to Eddie, concluding with, “send him to Hawaii.”

Not at all confident in himself, McCutchen tells Evans, “there’s no such thing as psycho Chubin.” Braden tells McCutchen, “really? Then why did your ass make out a police report stating we injected you with psycho Chubin once before? I ought to have your ass arrested for filing a false police report.” Muddying the waters, Mark presents the dilemma to McCutchen, asking him, “how you know we didn’t inject you with something to knock you out, and put you on a plane to somewhere?” Adding more confusion, Eddie comments, “let me answer that right now.” Eddie then tells Evans, “hey, junior. Watch your buddy, McCutchen, here, disappear.”

Eddie steps among the three stones, commanding the portal, “Hawaii, today.” Arriving at the same location up a steep road where the portal previously brought them many years ago, Eddie forcefully escorts McCutchen down the road, covering his eyes so he cannot find the way back to the portal. McCutchen exclaims, “let me go!” Eddie replies, “I’m not holding you anymore, junior. The psycho Chubin is getting into your muscles. It’s taking control of your body.” In a demanding tone, McCutchen exclaims, “where are you taking me?” Eddie replies, “I’m taking you to Prickly Sea Spider Beach, junior. I hope you got vaccinated against prickly sea spiders. We did.” McCutchen continues to struggle, but to no avail, as Eddie drags McCutchen down the sandy path to the beach.

Arriving at the Hawaiian beach, Eddie shoves McCutchen to the ground. Eddie instructs McCutchen, “you’d better not move. Your buddy, Evans, will be here in just a minute. Since Evans never was injected with psycho Chubin before, it takes a little longer to act.” Frightened far more than when Eddie, Mark, and Braden transported him and O’Brien to Key West, McCutchen is frozen, afraid to say or do anything at all. Eddie runs toward the portal, looking back a few times making sure McCutchen does not follow.

Returning to his place and time, Eddie walks out of the portal alone. Not seeing any trace of McCutchen, who disappeared right before his eyes, Evans exclaims, “where did he go? He disappeared!” Braden laughs, telling Evans, “it’s the psycho Chubin! It’s beginning to take

effect!" Adding her thoughts, Paula tells Evans, "and, you're going to disappear next. Aren't we all lucky?" Paula then tells Eddie, "dispose of him." Eddie takes Evans from Braden, dragging him into the portal.

Eddie again steps among the three stones, commanding the portal, "Hawaii, today." Arriving at the same location as he did a few minutes ago, Eddie escorts Evans down the steep road. Seeing his surroundings, Evans screams out, "what happened? Where are we?" Eddie replies, "it's the psycho Chubin, junior. Haven't you been listening to us? It took effect. You're still at the pool. Don't worry. You'll see the pool in just a minute once we go through the gate." Evans attempts to escape, but his weakened body from years of inactivity is no match for the mechanic. Eddie covers Evans' eyes as he drags Evans down the road to the same sandy path to the beach.

At the beach, Eddie tells Evans, "see? There's your buddy, McCrutchen, standing over there by the pool." Evans exclaims, "that's the ocean!" Eddie replies, "no, it's not, junior. It's the pool. Psycho Chubin makes everything look bigger." Eddie then yells out, "yo, McCrutchen! Here's your buddy!" As McCrutchen jogs over, Eddie releases Evans, telling him, "you really shouldn't have take that psycho Chubin, junior. How do you know that's McCrutchen over there, and not Mark?" Evans exclaims, "that's Todd! What do you think I am, stupid or something?" Eddie laughs, telling Evans, "wow! A multiple choice question. Let's see, stupid or something. I'm going to go with stupid."

Eddie arrives at the beach with Evans, who exclaims, "where are we?" Eddie replies, "you guys are still at the pool." Pointing down the beach, Eddie informs McCrutchen and Evans, "and, at the concession stand down there at the other end of the pool, they sell anti psycho Chubin. Unless you take it within twenty minutes, all this will become permanent. You'd better hurry!" Evans exclaims, "we're not at the pool!" Eddie replies, "sure you are. If you have a better explanation, I'd like to hear it." McCrutchen and Evans continue to argue with Eddie, prompting Eddie to inform them, "you have nineteen minutes left to take the anti psycho Chubin. You'd better hurry. You're running out of time." McCrutchen, who has been in this predicament before, tells Evans, "maybe he's right! Let's go. We're running out of time."

McCrutchen and Evans run down the beach, both still wondering what just happened. Eddie runs in the opposite direction, to the portal, surprised to see that disposing of McCrutchen and Evans was so easy.

Back at the portal behind the bushes at the pool, Eddie returns to his place and time. Mark asks, "what happened?" Eddie explains the details of how he disposed of McCrutchen and Evans to Mark, Paula,

Bobby B, and Braden. Hearing Eddie's discussion, Bobby B. comments, "I can't wait for Chief Hayes to come into the service station. This one is going to be really good." Braden comments, "with any luck, both of their asses will end up in that crazy house over on Central Avenue." The group then checks each of the vehicles for damage. Finding no damage, the group heads back to the pool to join the party.

Walking into the pool area, looking around, Eddie asks, "where's O'Brien?" Looking around, Braden replies, "I don't see his ass nowhere around here. His ass must have split." Eddie replies, "good. He's probably out in the parking lot looking for McCrutchen." Recalling that O'Brien once smashed her headlights, Paula exclaims, "shit! He's probably out there smashing headlights." Abruptly turning around, Paula rushes back out to the parking lot, followed by Eddie, Mark, Bobby B, and Braden.

Seeing O'Brien getting into his van, Eddie tells the group, "there he is, getting into his rust bucket." Braden replies, "let's just stand out here for a minute, and make sure his ass gets out of here safely." Paula announces, "I'm going to check my Jeep one more time." The group heads over to where they are parked, making sure O'Brien didn't do any damage.

O'Brien drives around the parking lot a few times, presumably looking for McCutchen and Evans. Not finding his buddies, O'Brien drives off. As they are all walking back to the pool, Braden informs the others, "he was looking for McCrutchen and that other guy's scrawny ass." Eddie replies, "I wish I could hear their conversation when McCrutchen and Evans get back."

After lunch, many in the group get into the water to cool off and, in Paula's case, calm down. Hanging out with Karen Corey in the corner of the pool, Kathy asks, "what have you been up to this Summer, girl?" Karen explains, "I was only teaching one class over the Summer semester. I'm the advisor for one student getting his master's degree, and one getting her Ph.D. I was only there in the mornings. So, I had an easy Summer. Now that Fall semester has started, I've been busy." Kathy, who had the Summer off, replies, "I totally get that."

Kathy asks Karen, "I hate to bring this up, but, how have things been with your mom? Oops, I mean your former baby sitter." With a matter-of-fact tone, Karen replies, "she's dead. She died over the Summer." Kathy warmly tells Karen, "oh! I'm so sorry. I didn't know." Karen replies, "don't be. I didn't even go to her funeral. It wasn't worth my time. She didn't even speak to me for the last year."

Karen then elaborates, “now that I have a Ph.D. in exercise science, I can clearly see what happened to me when I was growing up. My mother, oops, former babysitter, had all of us, me, my dad, and my brothers, in constant fight or flight mode. It’s no wonder I had all the energy to ride my bicycle everywhere when I was in high school. Riding my bicycle was exercise, and is physical activity, the only appropriate response to the body being put in fight or flight mode. If I sat around at home all that time, my adrenal glands probably would be all shriveled up by now. Who knows? I could have already been dead by now.” Also having a Ph.D. in exercise science, Kathy replies, “I can totally understand that.”

Karen then reminisces, telling Kathy, “you know, when I was a kid, sometimes I would be really happy when I got in trouble. If I did the slightest thing wrong, my so-called mother would send me to my room where I had to close my door and sit on the end of my bed. I didn’t care. I would listen to my radio with an earphone in one ear. When I heard her stomping up the stairs, I would quickly shut my radio off, and sit on the end of my bed. If she came into my room, she would ask, ‘have you learned your lesson yet?’ I would tell her ‘no’, only so she would go away. Then, I’d listen to my radio some more.” Kathy replies, “in a way, that’s kind of funny.” Karen laughs, telling Kathy, “she’s the one that got punished, not me. I got what I wanted, which was to listen to my radio in peace. But, she didn’t get what she wanted, which was to get me to cry over something stupid, like not liking something she cooked.”

Kathy then informs Karen, “when Eddie, Junior and Lana were younger, we would give them two *Get Out of Jail Free* cards every year, one for Christmas and one for their birthday. Lana still gets them. If they did anything worthy of punishment, they could use their *Get Out of Jail Free* card and get out of whatever they did.” Karen asks, “if they did something bad, like staying out way too late, what did you guys do?” Kathy replies, “number one on our list was they’d lose their allowance for that week. All we had to do is mention that possibility, and they’d straighten up their act real quick.” Kathy, however, does not tell Karen that Eddie, Jr. and Milana receive a weekly allowance in the hundreds of dollars range.

Karen inquires, “what’s the worst they’ve ever done?” Kathy laughs, and replies, “well, Eddie, Junior, when he was like ten years old, didn’t want to go to bed one night. We made him go to bed anyway. You just can’t let a ten-year-old win that argument. They would just try it again and again. So, he snuck out his window, went into the detached garage, and started taking apart my Dune Buggy because he was mad at me.” Karen laughs, as Kathy continues, “so, Eddie, Junior used his *Get Out of Jail Free* card for that one. But, here’s where it gets really funny. The

next day, Eddie, Junior helped Eddie put my Dune Buggy back together again!" Karen laughs, and tells Kathy, "well, that's not too bad. He probably thought it was fun." Kathy replies, "yeah. He probably did."

Karen asks, "how about Milana? Has she ever gotten in trouble?" Kathy reveals, "Milana. Wow! My wild child. Lana is the master at cutting class, getting in trouble at school, and that sort of thing. The only class Lana likes is music class. Well, that and gym class. One day, she cut school the whole day, but managed to show up for music class. The administration caught it on the attendance records. So, get this. When we were notified, I sat her down, and asked her, 'do you think that was very smart, cutting school, but still going to music class?' She replied, asking, 'I guess not. I suppose I should have skipped the whole day?' I really wanted to tell her, 'yeah, you idiot! What's the matter with you? You wouldn't have gotten caught!' But, I asked her, 'where were you when you should have been in school?' So, she tells me, 'we were at Roberta's house, practicing for our concert.' As it turns out, both Roberta's parents work. Roberta has a keyboard at home, so Lana, Yasmine, and Svetlana all headed over to Roberta's house for the day and jam." Karen tells Kathy, "that's really not too bad either." Kathy replies, "yeah, I know. It's just the number of times it happens. I can't wait to see what happens now that she's in high school."

Kathy then recalls, "Lana's best one yet was just last week. She told us that she forgot to go to school one day." Karen laughs, exclaiming, "what? She just forgot to go to school?" Kathy explains, "sort of. Get this. Lana woke up late, so Eddie dropped her off at school on his way to work. As the story goes, she claims she didn't get much to eat that morning, so she started walking home so she can eat breakfast. She knew Eddie was going to be working all day, and that I was going to be at the University. What she didn't plan on is that I came home for lunch, and caught her and Svetlana jamming." Karen laughs, telling Kathy, "she had that all planned!" Kathy replies, "I know! Right? She told us that she got hungry, so she came home to eat, and that she was going to go back to school, but she forgot. So, I told her, 'please explain to me how did Svetlana get here?' She innocently tells me, 'I don't know.' So, I told her, 'I want your *Get Out of Jail Free* card for this one if you want me to get you out of detention, otherwise it's looking like a three-day detention for you." Karen asks, "how did that end?" Kathy replies, "I told the school she felt sick, and came home." Karen replies, "that was really nice of you." Kathy replies, "music is where her heart is. But, I told her that, the next time she pulls something like that, she's on her own."

Kathy then relates, telling Karen, "now, here's the really funny part. Get this. Svetlana found out about Lana's *Get Out of Jail Free* cards, and how she gets one at Christmas and one on her birthday. The word got

around, and now Yasmine and Roberta are all asking their parents for *Get Out of Jail Free* cards too!" Karen tells Kathy, "I hope they get them. It sounds like it could really reduce their stress knowing that, if they really screw up, they can get a break." Kathy agrees, stating, "yeah. And, the *Get Out of Jail Free* cards actually make them behave better."

Returning to the subject of Karen's so-called mother, Kathy asks, "by the way, what took your mom, oops, former babysitter?" Karen replies, "Lupus and a whole bunch of other autoimmune diseases. I guess she had no one left around to hate, so she hated herself and self-destructed. Her body destroyed itself." Kathy laughs, telling Karen, "I'm sorry for laughing, but the way you said that is kind of funny!" Karen replies, "that's okay. I meant it to be a little on the funny side."

Now concerned, Kathy asks, "how is your dad doing?" Karen explains, "well, to tell the truth, he's been doing pretty good. My dad spends the weekends visiting relatives these days. He even put the house up for sale, and wants to move to a small, two-bedroom house down near the beach. He never had much use for a four-thousand square-foot house anyway, especially now that all of us are out on our own." Kathy energetically replies, "well, good for him! I'm sure he'll really enjoy living near the beach!"

Kathy asks, "and, your Aunt Jeannie? How is she doing?" Karen energetically explains, "well, no one really knows this, but, she comes to all the University's track meets. She's up in the stands watching the meet, and watching me work with the team." Kathy exclaims, "I never knew that!" Karen replies, "I never really said anything about it." Kathy tells Karen, "we'll have to look for her in the stands. Mark used to do that during the track meets when we ran for the University. He'd always find people we knew." Kathy then reveals, "when I started teaching gym at the elementary school behind my parents house, I caught my mom a few times watching me when I was out on the field with the kids. She never knew I saw her." Karen replies, "that is so sweet."

Over in the shallow end of the pool just hanging out, Braden asks Mitchell, "what are you gonna be up to now that the Summer's almost over?" Mitchell begins to explain, "I'm retiring." But, before he can finish explaining, Braden exclaims, "what? What's your ass gonna do now? Sit around and get fat?" Mitchell replies, explaining, "no, bro. I'm retiring from the television station. But, I'm still going to organize races, find sponsors for the events, and that sort of thing." Braden asks, "what made you decide to do this?" Mitchell responds, "over the last few years, there's been more office work, and not much out where the action is. It happened really slowly. So, I decided to call it quits, and get back out where the action is." Braden replies, "I don't blame you. Over at the

University, I still take my shift patrolling the campus. I ain't sitting behind a desk all day."

Mitchell asks, "has there been anything interesting going on over at the University?" Braden laughs, and replies, "if you mean crazy stuff, yeah! There's always a lot of that shit going on, especially during Fall Semester!" Mitchell asks, "really? Like what?" Seeing Johnson just getting into the water with Mark, Braden yells out, "yo, bro! Come here! You gotta hear this!" Mark and Johnson swim over, wondering what is up. Braden yells out to Eddie and Bobby B., who are sitting at a table, "you guys gotta hear this too!" Eddie and Bobby B. jump into the pool, giving a few people the impression they are having a cannonball contest.

Arriving with Johnson, Mark asks, "what's up, bro?" Mitchell replies, "Braden has an update about life at the University for us." Mark laughs, and asks, "why do I think this is going to be funny?" Johnson replies to Mark, "have you ever known Braden to give us an update on what's going on in the academic world?" Braden laughs, and announces, "you ain't gonna believe some of this shit!"

With his audience chilling in the pool, Braden asks, "do you know the auditorium where Milana gave her recital that day?" Mark, who is the track team's field events coach, replies, "yeah, bro. I remember that. I had to leave early because we had a track meet." Johnson adds, "and, after the concert, we all just walked over to the stadium, and right up to the track, where we got a front row seat." Mitchell comments, "yeah. Security was non existent." Braden laughs, and boasts, "that's because I let all your asses in!"

Braden explains, "okay, so one Friday afternoon, about 3:00 p.m., a professor brings his class into the auditorium, and shows them how something is supposed to be played on the pipe organ. Then, the students get their chance to play it." The rest of the guys are seriously wondering where Braden is going with this, for one would think a group of students playing music on a pipe organ is a pretty much harmless activity, and not exactly high on the list of activities that would be suggestive of breaking the law.

Braden continues, "so, the professor tells me that, about twenty minutes into the class, he yelled out, 'who in here is smoking pot?' No one fesses up, so the professor looks around. There was only like eight students in that class, and it was obvious to him that none of them were smoking pot. The professor tells me that he then told a few of the students to search the auditorium as he continues with his class. The students didn't find anyone smoking pot, so, the professor calls the

campus police.” Eddie kind of suspects he knows exactly how this story is going to end, but he remains quiet.

Braden continues, “so, I arrive at the scene because I didn’t want the officer on patrol to waste his time with this shit since the Friday night frat parties were about to begin. After I searched the place, I didn’t see anyone smoking pot in the auditorium, but you could really smell it. So, I’m walking around, back where the organ pipes are, thinking the pot heads were hiding out back there somewhere. And, you ain’t gonna believe this shit! The pot smell was coming out of the organ pipes!” Eddie and Mark laugh, now knowing the end of Braden’s story. But, the others are still in the dark.

Braden concludes, “now, get this. In the basement of that building, there’s a room with a bunch of squirrel cage blowers that pump the air up to the pipe organ. The blowers are only running when someone turns on the organ. So, about a dozen students snuck into the basement, and were having a pot party right outside the room where the blowers are! And, when the professor cranked up that organ, those squirrel cage fans sucked up all that smoke and pumped it right out the organ pipes!” Mitchell, Johnson, and Bobby B. join in laughing with Eddie and Mark, who figured it out a little earlier.

Braden continues, “so, I call the officer on patrol, and we put all of their asses in the tank over the weekend. And, once they came back to Earth, I told them that their asses are gonna spend the rest of the year cleaning out the organ pipes with giant pipe cleaners! Those guys were so stupid, they thought I was serious.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “seriously! If you clean the inside of the pipes, you have to re-tune the organ.” Mark asks, “what did they end up doing about it?” Braden replies, “the organ company said just leave it since it was still in tune, and that it probably didn’t do any damage.”

Knowing that security is reasonably good at the University, Eddie curiously asks, “how did they get into the basement?” Braden explains, “it was easy. The campus radio station is located on the back side of the performing arts building, along with the school newspaper. The door on that side of the building is open 24 hours a day. All the asses we busted work at the newspaper or the radio station. So, they knew how to get into the basement.” Mark asks, “did you fix it?” Braden replies, “yeah. We fixed it all right. We had maintenance put a door to the hallway, so their asses couldn’t get to the rest of the building.” Knowing the radio station’s antenna tower is on the roof of the performing arts building since he climbed it a few times, Eddie asks, “can they still get to the roof?” Braden replies, “yeah. We put the door on the other side of the roof access.”

Mark comments, “now, they’re going to smoke pot up on the roof or in the bathrooms.” Braden replies, “yeah. I know. But, if we lock the roof, they’ll just find somewhere else.” Mark comically comments, “old Chinese proverb. He who stands on toilet is high on pot.”

After a good laugh, Mark asks, “what else has been going on over at the University?” Braden explains, “for a while, last Winter, the maintenance department couldn’t figure out why some of the classrooms were getting heated up to 90 degrees. A few times, they had to call class because you couldn’t stay in the room because it got way too hot.” Eddie interjects, “it sounds like the students these days are like McCrutchen. You got to keep them between 68 and 72 degrees.” Braden replies, “you got that right. But, the problem is that everyone was dressed for freezing weather, not 90 degrees.”

Johnson asks, “so, what was the problem with the heaters?” Braden explains, “there wasn’t no problem with the heaters. The thermostats are inside a housing, and you need a tamper-proof Torx screwdriver bit to open it up to change the setting. Otherwise, everyone would be changing the setting.” Figuring out the ending to the story, Mark comments, “so, a student who didn’t want to go to class has a security Torx set.” Braden replies, “exactly!”

Eddie laughs, and comments, “that sounds like something that Eddie, Junior would do. I’d better check to see if all my tamper-proof bits are in the shop.” Braden replies, “it wasn’t Eddie, Junior. Believe it or not, it was some girl! Get this shit! During class, she was sitting way in the back, stretching, doing hot Yoga on the floor with two of her friends!”

Mitchell laughs along with the rest of the group, asking, “how did they ever catch her?” Braden explains, “since it always happened in the same classrooms and at the same time during the day, it was obvious that someone was messing with the thermostat. But, the maintenance department was too stupid to figure it out. So, I put a camera in one of the classrooms, and pointed it at the thermostat. And, I caught her ass. She would come in, and adjust the thermostat about ten minutes before class. And, after everyone left, she would put it back. And, it turns out that her and her two friend’s asses were in the Exercise Science program, and they were getting in a hot Yoga workout.” Mark laughs, asking, “what did they do to her?” Braden replies, “they put her ass on disciplinary probation. And, they told her that, if she got caught doing it again, she’s gonna get a one year suspension.”

Johnson, the high school track coach, laughs, commenting, “I can’t say that I blame her. She got a workout, and everyone else got

toughened up a little.” Mark comments, “I totally agree. I don’t blame her either.” Braden replies, “I’m with you on that. If it was up to me, I would have just told her to not do it again. But, the administration didn’t exactly see it that way.”

Mark asks Braden, “what else goes on over there?” Braden explains, “at the end of the Summer, some student posed as an IT employee, and managed to make his way into the administrative area. And, he sat his ass down in front of a computer and started to change grades! It took them no time at all to catch his ass!” Mark asks, “how did they catch him?” Braden continues, “the administrative assistant walked by, stopped, and watch what he was doing. This guy was so stupid! He tried to talk his way out of that one, but the assistant wouldn’t listen to any of it.” Mark asks, “what did they do to him?” Braden exclaims, “they kicked him out! And, they ain’t gonna let his ass back in!”

Johnson mentions, “last year, we had a few students break into the high school’s computer, and they managed to change some grades.” Mitchell asks, “really? The high school has grades on computers now?” Johnson replies, “yeah. They have for a while. But, they got a new wireless router, and the students found out what the password was.” Mitchell asks, “how did they figure that out?” Johnson explains, “the administration claims they don’t know. But, the password was posted on the wall of the guidance office, so anyone could have seen it.” Mark comments, “that one ain’t too hard to figure out.”

Johnson continues, explaining, “here’s where it gets really funny. One guy, Charles Wood, had his physical education grade changed to an A. He got a D. I could have given him an F, but he actually put forth a little effort.” Mark comments, “not another Chuckie.” Johnson replies, “yup. Another Chuckie. But, the students call him Wood Chuck.”

Mark asks, “how did they finally catch them?” Johnson explains, “it was easy. The ones who got into the computer only changed their own grades, except for Chuck Wood’s PE grade. It was pretty obvious who they were.” Mark asks, “so, what’s up with the Wood Chuck?” Johnson replies, “they just changed his PE grade as a joke. And, when they got caught, they blamed it on Wood. But, Wood couldn’t use a calculator, much less break into a computer.”

Just then, Kathy is heard yelling out, “pizza time.” Braden comments to the group, “good. I ain’t had no real pizza in a while.” The guys get out of the pool, dry off, and head to the pizzeria with the rest of the group.

Two weeks after the reunion at the pool, early one morning, Police Chief Richard Hayes drives into Eddie's Service Station. Seeing Chief Hayes drive up, Eddie suspects he knows exactly why Richard is visiting the station today. In fact, Eddie has been waiting for Richard's visit.

Walking up, Chief Richard Hayes announces, "what's up?" Eddie replies, "what's up? What's going on?" Richard replies, "you know, you're not going to believe this. It just never ends. This shit is about to drive me into retirement." Eddie exclaims, "ut oh! What did I do? Or, was it Mark that did something this time?" Richard replies, "as I said, you're not going to believe this. Let's go into the office."

Richard helps himself to a bagel and a cup of coffee as he takes a seat and explains, "this Todd McCutchen character and this Brad Evans have filed a complaint against you, Bobby B., Mark, Paula, and Officer Braden." Eddie asks Richard, "really? What did we do this time? Wait! Let me guess. I used my gyrophone to spin them around, and I put them in my time machine, and they orbited the Earth! Yeah! That's it!" Richard laughs, replying, "close. They claim that Mark injected them with this psycho Chubin substance, and this time, somehow, you transported them to Hawaii." Eddie replies, "it couldn't have been me. My time machine is in the shop, and I'm fresh out of psycho Chubin. What's the matter with those guys, anyway?" Richard replies, "I really wish I knew."

Thumbing through his notebook, Richard explains, "get this. This McCutchen character now claims that Paula is the ringleader, and she gave the command for you to send them to Hawaii." Eddie asks, "was that before or after Mark injected them with psycho Chubin?" Richard replies, "honestly, I don't know." Eddie tells Richard, "it must have been after they were injected. If it was before Mark injected them, they couldn't have made up any of this nonsense." Richard nods his head, and replies, "that's what I was thinking."

Richard continues, explaining, "in their complaint, as I said, both of these characters claim that Mark injected them with this psycho Chubin substance." Eddie interrupts, and asks, "so, I'm off the hook?" Richard laughs, and replies, "not that easily. I need for you, Mark, Paula, and Bobby B. to come down to the station, and file an official complaint against these characters. This way, in the future, we can just write them off as a 10-73. I tell you. The officers down at the station have had enough of these characters. It's the same story every time. You'd think they would come up with something else." Eddie replies, no problem. I'd be glad to help." Eddie then curiously asks, "how about Braden? Is he going to file a complaint?" Richard replies, "no. He's an officer of the law. I'd rather he remain neutral."

Eddie then confesses, “you had me worried there for a second, Richard. I thought you were going to make us turn in our stashes of psycho Chubin and surrender our gyrophones.” Richard laughs, and reveals, “the officer taking the complaint remembered McCutchen from his previous complaint. The officer asked McCutchen and Evans if a gyrophone was used during the incident. She, was of course, joking. But, these two character thought she was serious, and replied, ‘no.’” Eddie laughs, and replies, “I wish I was there to see that!”

Eddie sits back, and announces, “you know what? I’m going to make something up right now. I have something called a hydrophone, which will transport someone into the middle of a body of water somewhere, like on a cruise ship. It’s locked up in my filing cabinet next to my gyrophone. The next time McCutchen, Evans, or O’Brien show up, I’m going to tell them all about my hydrophone. So, when they file their next complaint against me, I’ll know exactly what their complaint is ahead of time.” Richard laughs, replying, “I’ll be sure to watch out for any reports involving a hydrophone, whatever that is.”

Eddie then reveals, “you know, this is getting kind of ridiculous already. It all started with the Chuckie back in high school. That clown took so many drugs back then, along with that Goldshit guy, that they fried their brains forever. And, they made all this stuff up about a time machine I supposedly have. And, somehow, Jimmy O’Brien got in on it. I’m not sure what the connection is there. But, now that O’Brien is friends with McCutchen and Evans, guess what? It’s the same stupid narrative all over again. And, get this. It’s always during a reunion or when we’re at the pool. They must be mixing some drugs with alcohol. Then, poof! Someone mentions the tooth fairy during the reunion, and these guys somehow see a tooth fairy. And, the tooth fairy magically appears because I dialed up a tooth fairy on my gyrophone. And, the tooth fairy carries them away to some distant location, and somehow it’s all my fault.” Richard laughs, and replies, “that’s exactly why I need for you guys to come down and fill out an official complaint against these characters.”

Changing the subject, Richard asks, “by the way, how’s my Austin Healy coming along?” Eddie replies, “I got the body reinforced. Right now, I’m working on the motor mounts for the V6 and the supports for the drive train. With the turbo, it should accelerate rather quickly. Then, once I have it all assembled, I’ll disassemble it, and send it over to Vinnie to get the engine compartment and underside powder coated. Then, it will get its final paint job.” Richard asks, “can we go back and take a look?” Eddie replies, “sure. No problem.”

Back in the shop, Richard examines the Austin Healy 3000 Mark III that he found for sale a few months ago. The vehicle, stored in a barn for decades, was in pristine condition as far as the body goes. Unfortunately, the engine did not run. But, that did not stop Richard. Richard, wanting to fit the classic Mark III with an Audi Quattro drive train, presented Eddie with a challenge. Working with Kurt Richter, Eddie and Kurt solved the engineering problem, and Richard will eventually be the proud owner of the fastest and best-handling Austin Healy on the planet.

And, as Richard is in the process of acquiring the most sophisticated Austin Healy on the planet, Campus Police Chief Axel Braden likely has the most secure home on the planet, always looking for ways to make it more secure. Much of Braden's home security system is from the future, but cautiously disguised as something he built himself in his basement. With bullet-proof glass, proximity sensors, motion sensors, video monitoring, an auto dialer alerting Braden on his cell phone should a breach be detected, and an emergency generator, the Braden home is quite secure. And, if someone gets smart, and cuts the phone line, they will be out of luck. The auto dialer is a cell phone link. But, from the outside, no one would ever suspect that the Braden home is as secure as it is.

With all that security, Braden relaxes comfortably with Wendy in their back yard as they prepare to put a few steaks on the grill. Braden asks Wendy, "what are we gonna have with the steaks?" Wendy replies, "I don't know. I'll go into the garden, and see what we got. I think some broccoli might be ready." Braden replies, "that sounds good to me." Wendy goes into the garden, which is on a quarter-acre lot next to the Braden's home.

Returning with no broccoli but rather with bad news, Wendy tells her husband, "I think we have a problem." Braden asks, "what's that?" Wendy reveals, "there's a utility marking truck that just drove down the street. It stopped in front of the Mitchell's house. It could be the guy Chief Hayes is looking for." Braden exclaims, "ain't nobody got no business marking shit over there! And, Mitchell and Amber are away on vacation for a few days." Braden would be correct. Braden is the redeveloper of his neighborhood, and is very familiar with any and all activities going on.

Going into action, Braden rushes over to the wall, peeking over the top, seeing what is going on at the Mitchell's house. Seeing a man sitting in the truck, Braden expects him to get out and mark utilities. But, the guy does not. Ten minutes go by, which, in itself, is suspicious activity. If the guy in the truck was legitimately there to mark utilities,

one would expect him to get to work rather quickly. Waiting for something to happen, Braden calls the county police, alerting them of the situation.

Braden enters his detached garage, watching as the man gets out of the van, procures utility marking equipment, and subsequently paints a few lines on Mitchell's front yard. Two minutes later, the man approaches Mitchell's front door and, as Braden expected, rings the doorbell and knocks rather hard. Braden now knows he has caught the perpetrator the county police has been looking for.

Armed with a few guns, Braden makes his way across the street, hiding behind the utility van so he cannot be seen. Catching a glimpse of a county patrol car approaching, Braden signals the driver to stop and approach on foot. Meanwhile, the potential perpetrator is attempting to open Mitchell's front door with a bump key.

Officer Erika Bradshaw approaches, asking Braden, "what do we got?" Braden whispers back, "this guy is about to break into the Mitchell's house." Erika replies, "they're on vacation." Braden replies, "I know." Erika informs Braden, "well, let's just sit tight until he enters." Erika's decision would be the best one, for it would be far better to prosecute a criminal who was caught in the act of committing a crime, rather than the suspicion that a crime is about to be committed.

Braden announces, "he's in. Let's move in." Braden and Erika stealthily move in, guns drawn, well prepared for a confrontation. Entering the Mitchell residence, seeing the perpetrator, Erika yells out, "freeze!" Running through the house to find an exit, the perpetrator is chased down by Braden and Erika who, knowing the floor plan of Mitchell's house, quickly corner the criminal.

Putting Giuseppe Vio Otto into a firm arm lock, Braden announces, "your ass don't look like Gary Mitchell to me. And, your ugly ass certainly don't look like Amber." Taking a close look at Vio Otto's anemic build, Erika informs Braden, "this guy has no ass." Braden replies, "sure he does. It's sitting right on top of his flimsy pencil neck." Braden escorts Vio Otto outside, where Erika places him under arrest and reads him his rights.

Placing Vio Otto in the cage of her patrol car, Erika informs Vio Otto, "when you get booked, you may want to use your one phone call to advise your buddies to stay out of this neighborhood. It's the most secure neighborhood in the country." Making an excuse for entering the Mitchell's home, Vio Otto replies, "what are you talking about? The front door was open! I sprained my ankle and needed some medical

attention!” Pointing to Braden’s antenna tower, Erika replies, “yeah, right. Keep believing that, junior. Look up on that tower over there. See that camera? You were caught on video.” Knowing exactly what a surveillance camera looks like, Vio Otto is immediately silenced. Braden tells Erika, “I’ll get the video over to you later today.” Braden then tells Vio Otto, “just like the officer said, you’d better tell those assholes you work with to stay out of this neighborhood. The next guy ain’t gonna be so lucky. I might just kick his ass, like I could have been kicking yours right now. It’s a good thing for you that the police showed up, or else I might have just finished the job that Eddie did on your ass a long time ago.”

Erika informs Braden, “I’ll get the crime scene over here ASAP.” Braden, who has a key to the Mitchell home, asks, “do you want me to lock up Mitchell’s house?” Erika replies, “yeah, go ahead and lock it up. And, check the video, and see if it shows him picking the lock.”

Before she leaves, Erika places crime scene tape across the Mitchell’s front door. As Erika drives away, Vio Otto takes another look at the video camera that caught him red handed. Braden reviews the video, seeing that Vio Otto’s actions are well documented. Braden then secures the Mitchell’s home, and heads back across the street where he will hopefully enjoy a peaceful dinner with Wendy.