

Eddie, The 25 Year Reunion

Chapter Thirteen Moving Forward

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With Summer's end here, the tribe's Summer has been extended due to unusually warm weather. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Kathy organizes a pool party at her and Eddie's home, catered by Joe's son, Joe Jr., who now runs the pizzeria. Joe, the owner, visits the pizzeria a few times a week, and can usually be seen having a slice or two with Vito, who, now in his late eighties, still runs the bicycle shop a few doors down. Wanting everything to be perfect for the event, Kathy and Eddie go outside in the early morning to check the pool.

As he inspects the pool, Eddie asks Kathy, "what's the dead frog count this year?" Kathy energetically replies, "zero! But, there's been a few live ones, along with a few turtles. Oh, and I found one snake. I forgot to tell you about that." Eddie asks, "what did you do with the snake?" Kathy replies, "nothing. It was a garter snake. Garter snakes eat frogs, so I figured it would be best to leave him around."

Checking the water, Eddie announces, "the water looks perfect." Recalling an event from many years ago, Kathy replies, "that's because there's no Chuckie or bitchkrieg to put laundry soap in the water." Kathy then asks, "what's the temperature?" Eddie replies, "eighty-eight degrees." Kathy exclaims, "wow! That's really warm!" Eddie explains, "I figured warmer would be better since all we're going to be doing is standing around and talking." Kathy replies, "unless Tessa wants to race." Eddie quickly responds, "she'll never race me in our pool. It will be a battle of the flip turns. And, I'll win." Kathy asks, "how do you know she hasn't been practicing her flip turn?" Eddie confidently replies, "I'll still beat her."

As they take a seat at the patio table, Eddie asks, "so, who's coming today?" Kathy replies, "the whole tribe, plus Lena, Nena and her husband, whatever his name is." Eddie reminds Kathy, telling her, "I

think his name is Steve.” Kathy continues, “and, Athena is coming. And so is Karen. So are Darryl and Angela. Oh! And, Darryl has a really big surprise! Eddie asks, “what’s the big surprise?” Kathy replies, “if I tell you, then it wouldn’t be a surprise, now will it?” Knowing that Kathy is up to something, Eddie asks, “okay, Katarina Karakova, what are you up to?” Kathy whispers to Eddie, “you’ll see. And, by the way, it’s Katarina Bogenskaya now.” Eddie replies, “I know. But Katarina Karakova is the most beautiful name I’ve ever heard.” Kathy smiles, informing Eddie, “you’re still not getting it out of me.”

Eddie mentions, “Angelo said he might stop by. Kurt may come by too.” Kathy asks, “what’s the matter? Didn’t you invite the Chuckie and that crowd?” Not realizing Kathy was pushing his buttons, Eddie replies, “if any of those clowns show up, they’re headed to Antarctica this time.” Kathy tells Eddie, “I think you’ve already accomplished your goal in that arena.” Eddie asks, “what’s that?” Kathy reminds Eddie, “about a year ago, you said something like whenever one of those clowns show up, you’re getting rid of them in an esoteric manner.” Eddie smiles, replying, “yeah. I did say that. Well, if they haven’t learned their lesson by now, next time, it’s off to Antarctica.”

As Kathy and Eddie are relaxing outside, Mark and Paula ride up on their bicycles. As they are walking through the gate, Kathy yells out to Paula, “what’s up with you? You’re back on two wheels.” Paula yells back, “yeah! I ain’t getting fat, girl! Did you see all those people at our reunion last year, and those people at the guy’s reunion?” As Mark and Paula take a seat, Kathy replies, “yeah. I didn’t recognize most of those people.” Paula informs Kathy, “just look around, girl! Everyone is 50 pounds more than when they were in high school, and they’re all out of shape.”

Putting her feet up on the table, Paula tells Kathy, “and, another thing. Did you notice at the reunions how everyone tried to impress everyone with their stupid accomplishments, like how their whole life is wrapped up in their job title? And, they’re all miserable!” Mark whispers to Eddie, “she’s on a roll.” Kathy asks Paula, “what’s gotten into you girl? Are you getting heatstroke again?” Paula replies, “no! I ain’t getting heatstroke, girl. When I’m in my nineties, I’m going to be like Dr. Braun, swimming laps in a pool somewhere! And, I haven’t been eating squirrel! So, don’t even go there!” Kathy smiles, knowing for certain that Paula now has another button to push.

Mark mentions to the group, “Paula’s going back to teaching gym.” Paula takes over, explaining, “yeah. Lena and Dr. Braun motivated me. Now that the kids are in college, I ain’t sitting on my ass around my house.” Kathy reminds Paula, telling her, “but, you work out in your gym

and swim laps in your pool.” Paula replies, “yeah. I know. But, everyone who is happy lives their life outside, not inside. I’m only happy when I’m outside.”

Eddie interjects, “yeah, like Braden. The guy’s outdoor living space is twice the size of his home.” Mark corrects Eddie, informing him, “it’s more like ten times, bro. When he bought the property on the other side of his home, I demolished the house and put in a 3000-square-foot patio, a Bocce Ball court, a basketball court, and a new pool.” Kathy comments, “Braden never did like being inside. Neither did Wendy.” Paula replies, “exactly!”

Rationalizing Paula’s decision to go back to teaching, Kathy relents, calmly telling Paula, “okay. I can clearly see it now. You’re not having heatstroke. You’re going back to teaching because you’re having a mid-life crisis.” Paula exclaims, “I ain’t having a mid-life crisis, girl! What’s gotten into you?” Kathy replies, “hmm. I guess I was wrong. It looks like you’re back to having heatstroke again from that grueling bicycle ride here. And, it’s not even noon.” Paula replies, “stop it, girl! The next thing you’re going to bring up is the boogie man!” Kathy asks Paula, “speaking of the boogie man, did you ride past that haunted house on the way here?” Paula quiets down, telling Kathy, “that place is really creepy. When it comes up for sale, I’m going to buy it and have Mark knock it down.” Kathy replies, “you’d better not. Then, the boogie man will have to move somewhere else. Who knows? The boogie man might just move closer to you.” Paula exclaims, “there ain’t no boogie man, girl, and you know it!” Having pushed all of Paula’s buttons inside of ten minutes, Kathy simply smiles.

With the Mitchell, Braden, and Johnson families all arriving together in one Volkswagen Bus, Paula is saved by the bell. Walking through the gate, Braden announces, “I got some big news!” Eddie replies, asking, “what’s that, bro?” Along with the rest of the group, Braden takes a seat, and tells everyone, “Erika and Bobby B. already know about this. I heard it from Erika yesterday!”

Braden asks the group, “do you remember all that shit that went down with daddy Mahoney last year?” Mark replies, “yeah. Big Mike Mahoney sold you his house, suddenly left the country, and we knocked his house down.” Kathy comments, “that was a lot of fun! It’s just too bad we can’t do it again.” Braden exclaims, “yeah! And, get this! Erika found out why his fat ass had to leave town! Michael Mahoney was wanted by the FBI for money laundering and income tax evasion. And, you ain’t never gonna guess why he was laundering money and evading taxes!” Not even waiting for anyone to ask, Braden energetically explains, “it turns out that Michael Mahoney’s ass was Maurice Crum’s

drug supplier! Daddy Mahoney was the one making the drop over there on Second Street in the middle of the night!" All that could be heard around the table are comments to the effect of, "wow," "so, that's who it was," or, "I can't believe it."

All fired up, Braden continues, "and, I can't believe this shit! Mr. Crum claims he didn't know who was doing the drug drop on Second Street. And, I hate to say it but, for once, I believe the guy. But, get this. Daddy Mahoney was supplying the drugs to Crum. And, Crum turns around and supplied the same drugs to Paul Mahoney to sell at school!" Mark comically comments, "yeah. That's really kind of stupid. Daddy Mahoney could have just cut out the middle man and gave the drugs to Paul to sell." Barbara comments, "I guess Michael Mahoney never expected the drugs to make their way into his son's body." Braden replies, "ain't that the truth!"

Johnson asks, "how did they find out all of this?" Braden laughs, and explains, "when they sent Crum, Chuckie, and Goldshit back to prison, they sent their asses to three different houses. When they put Crum's ass in the Riverview Correctional Facility, some old guy started to kick his ass! You ain't never gonna guess who it was!" Again, not waiting for a response, Braden exclaims, "it was his uncle, Alistair Crum!" Mark laughs, commenting, "wow! He's still alive!" Braden replies, "yeah! His ass must be like eighty years old by now! But, listen to this! Alistair Crum is known as the godfather of that prison. Everybody respects his ass. And, if he puts out the word for someone to work over Mr. Crum, Crum's ass is grass." Eddie comments, "it sounds like Maurice Crum is in for a rough time." Recalling all the trouble Mr. Crum caused her in the past, Kathy succinctly replies, "good!" Finally answering the question, Braden reveals, "so, when Mr. Crum showed up, Alistair Crum chirped like a songbird, and told everything he knew! And, someone in that prison put out the word that daddy Mahoney was involved, so daddy Mahoney's ass flew right out of here."

Finally getting some closure on the situation surrounding Mr. Crum, Paula mentions, "back when we were in high school, I had no idea all this crap that went on around our town." Kathy tells Paula, "that's because we were too busy with track and field. We lived in our own little world." Paula replies, "it's kind of scary, but I think we still live in our own little world." Clarifying the issue, Barbara tells the group, "everyone lives in their own world. When we were in high school, we had no idea what the chess club or the cheerleaders did outside of school."

Braden then reveals, "the way I see it, we were jabbing our fingers into their gambling and drug operations just a little bit, and they didn't like it. That's why they were always after us, John Davies, Gump, and all

the other athletes. And, that's why Crum rolled out the red carpet for Mahoney's ass when he came back to finish school." Braden then quietly comments, "it seems like it was just yesterday that, after Mahoney's ass ran the 100-yard dash in something like fourteen seconds, I yelled out at him, 'Mahoney! You've been cut!' I really thought Mr. Frazier was gonna call me out on that one. I was waiting for it, but, it never came." Mark tells Braden, "bro! You save Mr. Frazier the trouble of cutting Mahoney! Mr. Frazier didn't want Mahoney around any more than we did." Johnson comments, "and, what good would he be to the team, running a fourteen-second 100-yard dash?" Sounding a bit like Eddie, Kathy comments, "none. I ran faster than that in seventh grade."

Walking through the gate next is Erika with Bobby B., who announces, "I'm glad you guys could show up today!" Mark yells back, "we've been waiting all day for you, bro! The tribe is finally all together." As Bobby B. and Erika take a seat, Braden tells Erika, "I told them all about daddy Mahoney and Mr. Crum's welcoming committee over at Riverview." Erika replies, "well, it's just so sad, too bad for old Maurice Crum. His life expectancy just got cut short." Barbara tells Erika, "where's your sympathy, girl?" With an interesting and undefinable tone in her voice, Erika replies, "when it comes to certain people, it went down the drain a long time ago."

Picking up on Erika's unusual tone of voice, Paula asks, "are you referring to anyone in specific?" Erika bluntly replies, "yeah. Today, Donna and Dana Harmon are at the top of the list." Bobby B. interjects, "those two have been put away for good." Kathy asks, "really? What happened?" Erika replies, "attempted robbery and impersonating an officer." As the rest of the group is shocked, Kathy exclaims, "wow! What happened?" Before Erika gets a chance to answer, Barbara comments, "that doesn't seem like it would carry a life sentence." Erika replies, "it would if you pull a gun on an officer, and attempt to use it."

Now more shocked than before, the group wants to obviously hear more. Kathy exclaims, "what? What happened?" Erika begins to explain, "those two idiots held up the coin store on Sunrise Highway." Eddie quickly asks, "is Francisco okay?" Erika replies, "yeah. And, his staff are all fine too." Eddie has known the family that runs that shop for years, for he has bought and sold much gold there along with the rest of the tribe.

Erika continues, explaining, "so, Donna and Dana walk in, dressed as police officers, pointing a gun at Francisco. Those two clowns demanded that he open all the cases. He did. Then, they started grabbing everything. During the process, Francisco pushed the silent alarm, and let them take whatever they wanted. He was armed, but they didn't

know it. Francisco told me that he was going to shoot both of them when they were headed out the door. So, he wasn't worried." Paula asks, exclaiming, "when did all this happen?" Erika replies, "last night."

Eddie asks, "so, did Francisco shoot them?" Erika replies, "no. Officer Branson did. He and Officer Bessler arrived at the scene with his gun drawn. Donna and Dana turned around, pointed their guns at the officers, and Branson took them both out in under a second." Braden exclaims, "wow! That must have been a pretty good gun down! I wish I was there to see that!" Erika continues, telling the group, "I was up in the 90 district at the time, and arrived as backup. I saw the mess, and supervised the cleanup."

Not exactly sure how the situation ended, Kathy asks, "so, what happened to Donna and Dana?" Erika replies, "Donna died immediately. Dana died on the way to the hospital. As I said, they've been put away for good." Mark comments, "you could have seen that coming a mile away when we were in high school." Paula agrees, stating, "yeah. I'd say."

Erika then announces, "speaking of criminals, Giuseppe Vio Otto has been put away for fifteen years. We won't be seeing him around anytime soon either." Braden exclaims, "that guy is gonna be really old when he gets out! Erika replies, "they pretty much gave him a life sentence."

Braden then reveals, "speaking about criminals, those two idiots, Frank Hamilton and Margo Radacek each got five years in prison. They'll be out just in time for our thirty-year reunion." Eddie replies, "wow! Aren't we lucky." Barbara asks, "did that case go to trial? I've not heard anything about it." Braden replies, "no. Since Eddie had 36 photographs of their operation, their attorney went for a plea bargain. But, the district attorney wouldn't budge. It was five years or go to trial. Ain't no jury gonna cut an elected official any slack! So, they had to take it."

Erika asks the group, "did anyone hear about Todd McCrutchen?" Eddie asks, "what's up with McCrutchen? Did he self destruct?" Erika replies, "not exactly. But, he's on the road to it. After Chief Hayes had him transported to the facility over on Central Avenue, they did a tox screen on him. McCrutchen had at least a dozen illegal substances in his bloodstream when he made that scene about Eddie having a gyrophone." Eddie comments, "and, McCrutchen thinks I'm the crazy one. Wow!"

Erika informs the group, “but, here’s the really funny part. Chief Hayes told the medical staff to inform McCrutchen that they found traces of psycho Chubin in his blood stream. The doctors asked him why. And, Chief Hayes told them that this character has made several complaints that certain individuals have been injecting him with psycho Chubin. The doctors asked him what this psycho Chubin is. Chief Hayes explained to them that there’s no such thing, but to just watch McCrutchen’s reaction when they tell him. Then, you’ll know for certain he’s crazy.”

Mark comments, “we all knew McCrutchen was crazy when we were in eighth grade.” Erika reveals, “Chief Hayes wants McCrutchen put away. The problem is that, most of his petty nonsense crimes will only get him a few months at best. Then, it’s back on the streets. The chief thinks he stands a better chance putting McCrutchen away at Central Avenue. And, he’s doing everything he can to see to it.” Eddie asks, “is that where McCrutchen is now?” Erika replies, “yeah. He’ll be in for a while.”

As the morning moves along, the guests slowly trickle in. By late morning, most everyone is hanging out in the pool, or having conversations at the tables. Kathy, looking out for the pizza delivery truck, prepares for lunch along with Paula. Eddie, Jr., working in the detached garage on a new project, also keeps an eye out for the pizza delivery truck.

Seeing Tessa jump into the pool, Eddie yells out, “yo, Tessa! Are you ready to race?” Tessa replies, “you’re crazy! This pool is nowhere near competition temperature. What is this? Like eighty-five degrees?” Eddie replies, “eighty eight, the last time I checked. But, I’ll give you a one yard advantage for every degree over eighty-two degrees¹.” Tessa replies, “forget it, buddy! Get your pool down to eighty degrees, and we’ll have a race.” Eddie informs Tessa, “if I shut the heater off, it might be down to that by sundown tomorrow.” Now getting worried, with false confidence, Tessa exclaims, “next year, buddy! You’re going down!” Eddie relents, never really expecting to race Tessa today.

Lunch arrives and is served. Out of the blue, Mark comments to those at his table, “my dad finally decided to retire.” Eddie cracks a small smile, trying to hide his laugh, but is not too successful. Wondering what is potentially comical, Braden asks Eddie, “what’s so funny?” Eddie replies, “you really don’t want to hear this.” Johnson tells Eddie, “if it’s as good as your other stories, yeah, we do.”

¹ Pool water temperature for official competition must be between 77 and 82 degrees.

Eddie explains, “when I was a kid, my grandfather once said that he was thinking about retirement. So, I’m wondering about this retirement thing, and couldn’t make much sense out of what he was talking about. I must have been four or five years old at the time. So, I concluded that retirement is putting new tires on a car.” Bobby B. laughs, commenting, “that’s a true mechanic in the making!”

Eddie tells Bobby B., “it doesn’t stop there, bro.” Braden laughs, and asks, “really? I gotta hear this!” Eddie explains, “a year or so later, I finally learned what retirement was. My grandmother always watched baseball games on TV and, when we were at their house once, I was watching the game since we didn’t have a television when I grew up. So, the announcer said that the pitcher retired the batter. I thought that the pitcher must have been so incredibly good, that the batter, whoever he was, had to retire because he couldn’t hit the ball.” Those at Eddie’s table laugh, leaving the others to wonder what could possibly be so funny.

Johnson mentions, “sportscasters have a vocabulary of their own. And, sometime they ask really stupid questions.” Eddie comments, “I’m sure Angela has a few good stories.” Hoping for some more comedy, Braden yells out, “yo, Angela! Come here and join us for a minute!” Not knowing what is up, Angela takes her plate of pizza and heads over to the guy’s table.

Angela pulls up a chair, asking, “what’s up?” Braden tells her, “we need some information.” Wondering if there is a problem, Angela replies, “ut oh. What’s going on?” Mark smiles, telling Angela, “we just wanted to hear some of your bloopers on the sports field.” Angela laughs, and replies, “believe me! I’ve had my share of them! Fortunately, most of them got cut out and never made it on the air.”

Mark asks, “tell us one that made it on the air.” Angela explains, “okay. So, this one is when I first started out. After a football game, I was assigned to interview the losing coach. I asked him, ‘coach, what happened out on that field today?’ He replied, ‘it’s simple, Angela. The other team scored more points than we did.’ Then, he just walked away. He was obviously really mad at losing the game. But, not missing a beat, I recovered from that one pretty easily, telling my audience, ‘well, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, right out of the coach’s mouth. I guess you can’t argue with that.’”

Mark tells Angela, “tell us another one.” Angela replies, “this one might be in contention for one of my dumbest questions ever. It was the end of the season and, before the game, I asked the coach, “is this a must-win game, coach?” The coach looked at me, and said, ‘what do you

think, Angela? Do you think we come out here to lose?’ He knew we were being taped. So, we both had a laugh over that one, and we did another take. This time I asked, ‘how important is this win for you, coach?’ And, he answered something like, ‘this is going to be a good test for us, Angela. Either way, win or lose, we’ve made it to the playoffs. But, if we can come out of this with a win, we’ll have a lot more confidence going into the post season.’ The group laughs, now wanting to hear more.

With another bumpy encounter, Angela tells the group, “during another football game, one team was behind by two points. So, before they went into the locker room for halftime, I asked the coach whose team was behind, ‘what’s going to keep you in this game, coach?’ His response was ‘touchdowns and field goals.’ I mean, like, that was a really dumb question on my part. The guys in the control booth had no problem letting me know that. So, I wished the coach good luck, and we went to break.” Mark laughs, telling Angela, “that’s really kind of funny.” Angela replies, “it happens to all of us. Listen to the sports announcers sometime. You’ll be surprised at what you are hearing.”

Angela then mentions, “you guys probably never heard about this one. It was during the Spring divisional meet at the University when Eddie was a senior.” Eddie asks, “what did I miss?” Angela explains, “during the meet, one of the other coaches wanted to be on the radio. So, I asked him, ‘coach, do you have anyone who can beat Edward Bogenskaya?’ The coach replied, ‘no. Unfortunately, Angela, we don’t. But, we’re really looking forward to the 400-meter.’ So, I asked him, ‘from what I hear from one of the State University coaches, they have several athletes who can run the 400 meter in the 45-second range. Is your team up for that?’ The coach didn’t even know how to respond, so I reverted to the technical difficulties script.”

Johnson asks, “what’s the technical difficulties script?” Angela explains, “when the interviewee freezes, we say something like, ‘I just got the word from the studio that we’re experiencing technical difficulties, and will go back to the studio until we get the issues resolved.’ But, that only works on the radio. It’s kind of hard to do that when we’re live on TV, even with a time delay. But, sometimes the guys in the control room catch on and save our butts.” Johnson admits, “I never knew that.” Looking at Mitchell, then Johnson, Angela tells Johnson, “Gary can give you an idea of what really goes on behind the scenes.” Johnson replies, “I’ll have to ask him sometime.” Mitchell, who never likes to be the center of attention, replies, “yeah. But, not right now.”

Over at another table, Kathy yells over to Eddie, “hey, Eddie! Go inside and get Lana!” Eddie tells Mitchell, “it looks like you’re saved by the bell, bro, at least for the moment. I’ll be right back.” Eddie heads inside, wondering why Kathy could not go inside and get Milana herself.

Eddie returns with Milana, telling Kathy, “here’s our biological offspring.” Milana asks her mother, “what’s up?” Eddie hangs around for a moment, also wondering what’s up. Kathy tells Milana, “Darryl has a question for you.” Milana looks at Darryl, asking, “sure. No problem. What’s up?” Darryl tells Milana, “I’m playing drums in concert with a famous band, the name of which I can’t reveal right now because the official announcement hasn’t been made yet. I talked with the group, and they would like Milana and the G-Strings to open for us. Are you up for it?” In shock, Milana screams out, “what? Are you serious? Are you for real?” While Milana hyperventilates, Darryl replies, “yeah. The concert will be at the amphitheater over at the beach in the Spring. There are two dates, on a Friday and Saturday. You guys will have all Winter to practice.” Milana exclaims, “yeah! We’ll do it! But, I have to talk to the group. Forget that! We’re doing it! Tell them ‘yes.’” Knowing that Milana wants nothing more than to inform her band, Darryl tells her, “go ahead and ask your group. No rush.” Milana takes out her phone, telling Darryl, “let me call them like right now!”

Interrupting Milana’s immediate plans, from another table, Akinmola yells out, “hey! What are we missing over there?” Kathy announces to all present, “everyone, come over here. You have to hear this.” Once everyone is gathered around, Kathy announces, “Darryl will be playing in concert down at the amphitheater at the beach in the Spring. He’s worked it out that Lana and her group can open for them.” The entire crowd cheers, congratulating Milana for making the big time.

Milana then steps aside to break the news to her band. Kathy tells Eddie, “that was the surprise I was talking about. I just found out early this morning when you were doing some last-minute yard work.” Eddie replies, “I knew you were up to something, Katarina Karakova.” Kathy smiles, and informs Eddie, “it’s Katarina Bogenskaya now. Don’t tell me you forgot.” Kathy then tells those around, “Eddie says that when he knows I’m up to something.” Eddie likewise informs those around, “it’s pretty obvious when Kathy’s up to something. Avoid every question, answer irrelevant questions that weren’t asked, and change the subject.” Kathy replies, “I’m busted.” Eddie tells Kathy, “you’ve been busted for years, sweetie.” Kathy replies, “yeah, I have. Haven’t I?”

Milana quickly returns, exclaiming to Darryl, “they’re all in! We’ll do it!” Darryl replies, “awesome! I’ll get the ball rolling on it.” Milana then asks her mother, “can the band come over, like right now?” Kathy

replies, “sure. I don’t see why not.” Milana replies, “good. Because they’re all on their way. Can we go swimming, too?” Kathy replies, “sure.” Milana tells her mother, “good. Because I told them to bring their swimsuits.”

As Milana and Darryl step aside for a moment, Paula whispers to Kathy, “it sounds like your wild child is in high gear.” Kathy whispers back, “her logic has always been that it’s easier to ask for forgiveness rather than permission. I had a feeling she’d invite the band over after hearing about this. So, I ordered a whole lot of extra pizza.” Paula gives Kathy a hard stare, asking, “what’s extra pizza?” Kathy laughs, and replies, “okay. I’ll let you win this one.” Paula replies, “that’s because I did win, girl! And, you know it! You know there’s no such thing as extra pizza. And, don’t even think about telling me that I’m getting heatstroke, girl! I’m not getting heatstroke and there is no such thing as the boogie man! And, there’s no such thing as squirrel pizza!” Kathy smiles, knowing that she wound Paula up without even trying.

Later, after lunch, standing with a few others in the shallow end of the pool, Kathy reminisces with the others about their college years. In turn, Kathy asks the others, “do you remember that textbook from our neuromuscular and metabolic diseases class?” Barbara replies, “I do. By the end of that semester, everyone in the class thought they had some neuromuscular disease.” Paula exclaims, “yeah! Every time one of my muscles twitched, I thought I was getting multiple sclerosis!” Kathy laughs, and replies, “yeah! That was the class.”

Kathy then mentions, “in that textbook, they were talking about certain diseases. One disease was described as invariably fatal by the first decade of life. Then, the textbook had a picture of someone in their forties who supposedly had that disease. So, I asked the professor what ‘invariably’ meant. And he said, ‘from a medical standpoint, it means inevitable, without variation.’ So, then I asked him, ‘if the disease is invariably fatal during the first decade of life, how did they manage to find someone in their forties with the disease?’” Paula informs the group, “Kathy was just messing with the professor. I thought she was going to get the whole class in trouble.” Kathy smiles, and replies, “yeah. I was messing with him. I totally admit it. But, I only wanted to bust his chops because he always lectured past the end of class, and that class was at the end of my day.”

Barbara asks, “did the professor have an explanation?” Kathy replies, “actually, he did. He explained that, since the disease has a genetic component to it, in some cases, the disease could be due to a defect in the mitochondrial DNA. Then, he pointed out that, since mitochondrial DNA is inherited only from the mother, in order to pass it on to the

offspring, the mother must have gotten to at least childbearing age in order to do so.” Barbara replies, “that makes a lot of sense.”

Kathy then concludes, “then, the professor told me that was a very good observation. And, Paula kicked my foot under the table so hard, that I thought I’d have to skip track practice for a few days.” Coming to her defense, Paula explains, “I thought that was going to end in some kind of superfluous - verbose argument, like the one we had in chemistry class in high school.” Kathy smiles, telling Paula, “I still say it’s superfluous.” Paula replies, “verbose.” Kathy rebuts, telling Paula, “superfluous.” Paula relents, announcing, “I can’t believe that, twenty-seven years later, we’re still having this discussion.”

Realizing she might be a little behind the curve in certain aspects of life, Paula throws out the question, “I wonder if we’ll ever grow up.” Wendy replies, “what do you want to grow up for? Did you see all those stuffed shirts at the reunion? They’re all grown up. Who wants to be like that?” Kathy observes, “that’s a good point. They make all this money, so they can spend it on fancy clothes, expensive cars, and bigger homes.” Paula mentions, “good. You convinced me. I’ll grow up the day before I die. Until then, I’m having fun!”

Referring to having fun, Kathy tells Paula, “so are your kids.” Paula rolls her eye, stating, “don’t even get me started.” Kathy asks, “why not? I mean, I thought I was a terrible parent, letting Eddie, Jr. mess with cars when he should have been doing his homework. And, when Lana was in grade school, she came home and headed straight for her keyboard. Some days, she didn’t even get her homework done. If I cut them no slack when it came to schoolwork, they’d end up being one of those stuffed shirts.”

Wendy tells the group, “it’s the same with Hunter. He just published his first book. Granted, it was self published, but it’s giving him the experience he needs. And, when he was working on it, I never asked him if he had all his schoolwork done.” Kathy exclaims, “what? He finished it already?” Wendy replies, “he finally did. I ordered copies for everyone. I was going to surprise you guys when they came in.”

When he was in high school, one of Hunter’s complaints was that there were books published instructing young athletes how to better their skill in the various major sports. Hunter, however, could not find a similar suitable book for the track and field athlete. Wendy, who was an avid reader her entire life, encouraged Hunter to write a training manual for high school athletes who wanted to run track. Finding out of Hunter’s aspirations, Eddie gave Hunter the track training manual he

began but never finished. Combining his own material with Eddie's, the first edition of Hunter's work has been completed.

Paula comments, "I can't wait to read it." Knowing that Paula occasionally worries, Wendy tells Paula, "don't worry. There are no surprises. Any of the stories in Hunter's book you've already seen." Paula replies, "good. I'd hate to think that I'll be labeled as an Amazon Woman forever."

Not sure of what actually made it to press, Kathy asks Wendy, "did McCrutchen make the cut?" Wendy replies, "of course, he did. All that shit Eddie and Mark pulled at the starting line made it. It's all in the chapter entitled, *Don't Fall For Any of This*." Never liking Todd McCutchen from the moment she met him, Paula replies, "we'll have to buy a copy for McCrutchen and give it to him." Kathy replies, "you can personally deliver it to him over at the sanitarium over on Central Avenue. That's where he'll be for a while, so I hear."

Barbara comments, "well, history is always written by the winners. Can you imagine if McCrutchen wrote about the high school and collegiate track and field experience from his perspective?" Mark brilliantly informs those around, "winners win and losers lose. McCrutchen is a loser." Those around all laugh hysterically, knowing that track and field from Todd McCutchen's viewpoint was a total disaster.

Paula then comments, "if history was written by the losers, it would be one long dissertation about how nothing is ever fair." Kathy quickly replies, "now you're talking about Mr. O'Brien, and that screwed up son of his." Barbara asks, "what ever happened to them? Does anyone know?" Kathy replies, "Jimmy O'Brien lives in an old rusted down van, and takes a shower at the gym where is brother works. And, Mr. O'Brien works in a department store as a shoe clerk, is flat broke, and lives in his wife's parent's basement." Paula asks Kathy, "how do you know all this, girl?" Kathy replies, "a while ago, Eddie said they came into the service station. Mr. Frazier just happened to be there, and buried Mr. O'Brien."

Off to the side, sitting at a table with Milana and her group, Darryl is discussing the logistics of working a professional concert. Darryl informs the group that he, along with a few other musicians, will sit in during a couple of the band's practice sessions, making sure everything will run smoothly come concert day. Not surprisingly, the girls have a hundred questions. Darryl assures the group that they will have nothing to worry about.

Once the plan is set, Darryl asks the group, “by the way, how’s the music program over at the high school?” Milana replies, “a whole lot better than at the middle school.” Roberta replies, “yeah! We’re all back in the band again!” Darryl replies, “that’s great! I’m sure you’ll all get an A.” Yasmine comments, “yeah. An easy A, for four years!” Svetlana tells Yasmine, “as long as Chuck Cooper stays away from Roberta’s drum set.” With a drastic change in countenance, Roberta tells Yasmine, “next time, when I get done with him, Cooper will never be able to play the drums again.”

Knowing there’s a story behind the girls’ discussion, Darryl curiously asks, “what’s up with this Chuck Cooper guy?” Milana replies, “you really don’t want to know. But, Roberta is going to tell you anyway.” Roberta begins, explaining, “we were all setting up to practice for the Fall concert. When I went to the bathroom, this guy, Chuck Cooper, sits down at my drum set, and starts banging around on it. When I came back and heard it, I ran over, and caught him tweaking my tom lugs with my drum key. So, I yelled out, ‘hey! Get off my drum set, now!’ So, that jerk started to turn every lug on my toms. So, I beat him up.” Milana interjects, “beat him up isn’t even the word for it. Kicked his ass is more like it.” Svetlana comments, “yeah. Seriously.” Yasmine informs Darryl, “Cooper plays the trumpet. He’s in eighth grade now. We’ll see him again next year.” Roberta brazenly comments, “if he so much as touches my drum set again, I’ll squirt glue into that special trumpet of his.” Darryl advises Roberta, “don’t do that. You’ll ruin the instrument. Beat him up instead.” Milana comments, “good point.”

Roberta tells Darryl, “so, that’s when Mr. Sharpe tuned my drum set. It never sounded right after that, well, until after you tuned it.” Backtracking, Svetlana tells Darryl, boasting, “Roberta beat up Cooper so bad, he couldn’t play the trumpet for the Fall concert.” Roberta laughs, and continues, “and so, Mr. Sharpe told me that, because I had a bad attitude and started a fight, I’ll be playing the Timpani, tambourine, bells, and triangle during the concert, and Donald White will be playing the drums. So, I just quit the band, and took home economics.” Milana informs Darryl, “by January, all four of us were taking home economics.”

Darryl tells the four girls, “it sounds like the middle school needs to get a new music teacher.” Yasmine replies, “they did. They fired Mr. Sharpe.” Darryl replies, “good.” Milana tells Yasmine, “tell him why! You can’t leave that part out!” Yasmine explains, “Mr. Sharpe didn’t show up at school for three weeks after the Spring concert, because he was in jail. He had no one to bail him out of jail.” Darryl laughs, commenting rhetorically, “I wonder if you girls had anything to do with that.” Milana replies, “we claim full responsibility.” Yasmine also replies, telling Darryl, “yeah. Our fault. Totally.”

Darryl, who has been giving Roberta drum lessons, tells her, “remind me, during our next session, to show you how to tune your drums.” Roberta replies, “yeah. I really need to learn how to do that. I mean, like, I can tweak them a little if I need to, but I really want to know how to tune them right.” Darryl assures Roberta, “we can do that. No problem.”

After a thirty minute discussion, the band decides to get in the pool and cool off. Darryl joins Angela and the others for a slice of pizza. And, overhearing parts of the girl’s conversation with Darryl, Kathy wonders whether Charles Cooper is yet another Chuckie lurking in the wings.

Taking a break from chilling out in the pool, Kurt tells Eddie, “if you don’t mind, I’d like to see your shop.” Eddie replies, “no problem. Let’s walk over.” Eddie and Kurt dry off, walking over to Eddie’s detached garage where many automotive projects have been completed over the years. On the walk, Eddie informs Kurt that Richard’s Austin Healy runs great.

Walking into the birthplace of ten Dune Buggies, Eddie attempts to turn on the light, which is already on, telling Kurt, “well, here it is.” Eddie looks around, wondering why the light to the shop is already on.

Seeing Eddie, Jr. hard at work, Eddie asks Eddie, Jr., “what are you working on?” Eddie, Jr. replies, “I’m installing temperature sensors for the two electric motors on my 914.” Kurt curiously asks Eddie, Jr., “where on the motor are you mounting them?” Eddie Jr. explains, “they’re infrared sensors, two for each motor. One senses the drive bearing, the other the rear support bearing.” Kurt asks Eddie, Jr., “what made you decide to go the infrared route?” Eddie, Jr. explains, “a month ago, I took it out on a drive. Then, I put it up on the rack. I got infrared film for my camera, and took pictures of the motors, controller, batteries, and other potential hot spots. The spots that lit up on the infrared photos are where I put the sensors. I figured those were the potential points of thermal failure.” Kurt nods his head, and tells Eddie, Jr., “that’s pretty good. I’ll have to remember that.” Kurt realized a while ago that Eddie, Jr. is way ahead of the curve when it comes to engineering.

Kurt then asks Eddie, Jr., “where did you get infrared film for your camera?” Eddie Jr. replies, “I special ordered it from Lynn. She got it for me. Lynn also developed it, since it has to be processed different than normal film.” Eddie elaborates, telling Kurt, “Lynn Berson owns the photography studio next to my shop. She’s special ordered infrared film for me in the past. I had an engine come into the shop that was intermittently overheating, and I couldn’t figure out why. So, Lynn

suggested that I take infrared photos of the engine. So, I did, and found the problem. Since then, I've used infrared film for various reasons, like finding thermal holes in my house."

Kurt curiously asks, "about this car that was overheating, what was the problem?" Eddie, Jr., who has heard this story before, laughs, alerting Kurt of its comical nature. Eddie explains, "about five years ago, the guy who owned the car came in. He did a lot of the work on the car himself. Don't get me wrong. He knew what he was doing. But, he had a five-year-old mechanic in training who wanted to help. So, the father was flushing the cooling system and, while he was attending to something else, the kid put tiny ball bearings in the radiator. Occasionally, they would bunch up in one location, and block the water flow, causing the engine to overheat." Kurt laughs, exclaiming, "that's one I've never heard before!" Eddie replies, "I doubt I'll ever see that one again. But, I still wonder to this day whether there's a stray ball bearing floating around in that cooling system somewhere." Kurt comments, "or, worse. Who knows what else that kid could have put in the engine that doesn't belong there."

Kurt asks Eddie, "what's the funniest thing you've ever seen?" Eddie explains, "that's easy. A long time ago, a woman came in complaining about an intermittent sound in her engine. She described it as 'something pinging around in the engine,' which only happened occasionally when she accelerated or came to a stop." Kurt comments, "oh, wonderful. The good old unreproducible intermittent problem that never happens when the car is driven into the shop." Eddie admits, "honestly, for a long time, I couldn't find the problem. And, I've worked on her car before. I was certain the problem wasn't in her engine but, when I took it out on a test drive, I heard the sound once myself."

Kurt asks, "did you ever find it?" Eddie explains, "yeah. Get this. At that time, the woman was going through a divorce. Her husband worked over at the department store's auto repair facility where he installed tires." Kurt interjects, "it's hard to call those places repair facilities." Eddie replies, "yeah. I know. Seriously." Eddie then continues, telling Kurt, "the guy put new tires on her car before the divorce was finalized. So, he put a moderately sized ball bearing inside the tire, then mounted it on the rim. At low speeds, the bearing would roll along the bottom of the tire, making no sound. At high speeds, centrifugal force would cause the ball bearing to rotate with the tire. Occasionally, under the right circumstances, the bearing would hit the inside of the rim, and make a pinging sound." Kurt laughs, asking, "how did you ever find that?" Eddie replies, "one day, she came in with a flat tire and, when I fixed it, I found the ball bearing. I popped the other three tires off their rim and, as it turned out, there was a bearing inside both front wheels."

Kurt laughs, and remarks, “that’s the last place anyone would ever look.” Eddie tells Kurt, “needless to say, she was livid.”

Kurt asks, “did she say anything about it to him?” Eddie replies, “no. But, she let him know that she knew what he did.” Kurt asks, “how did she do that?” Eddie explains, “after the divorce was finalized, she drove over to his house in the middle of the night. She got out her son’s Wrist Rocket² and slung those ball bearings right through his living room window.” Being an engineer, Kurt asks, “did it break the glass?” Eddie replies, “no. It left a round hole in the glass, but didn’t shatter it.”

Kurt then tells Eddie, “when I was at Georgia Tech, one of the guys in my dorm had a Wrist Rocket. I bet the guy ten bucks that, if I shot a nickel through a window, it would leave a rectangular hole in the glass. He quickly took the bet. So, I take his Wrist Rocket, and pulled it back as far as I could with a nickel in the sling. I released it and, boom! A rectangular hole in the glass! I made nine dollars and ninety five cents over that one!” Eddie reminds Kurt, “I thought the bet was ten dollars.” Kurt laughs, and replies, “it was. But, it was my nickel.”

Overhearing the conversation, quite surprised, Eddie, Jr. asks, “what? It didn’t break the glass?” Kurt explains, “if an object, such as a coin, is turned into a projectile, it will move through the air in the orientation that would provide the least amount of air resistance. That position would be ninety degrees, or edgewise, with respect to the glass. If the velocity was sufficiently high enough, the projectile will pass through the glass, doing no more than leaving a rectangular hole in it’s path.” Eddie, Jr. contemplates what Kurt said, and comments, “I’m going to try that sometime.” Kurt informs Eddie, Jr., “if you do, remember, velocity and a small frontal surface is the key.”

Eddie asks Kurt, “how did you know that would work?” Kurt confesses, “one of my professors did the calculations a few days earlier in class. So, I wanted to try it.” Now curious, Eddie asks, “what class was that?” Kurt replies, “Dynamics of Deformable Bodies.”

Kurt then mentions, “the professor of that class was really interesting. He tried to separate the students who were engineers and those who were only book smart. So, he put an interesting question on a test, which was worth 40 points. Miss the question, and you fail the test. The question was something like, ‘a liquid with a viscosity of 1.2 poise and density of 997 kilograms per cubic meter is pumped through a one-inch diameter PVC pipe with a one-quarter inch side wall and a

² Wrist Rocket: A very high-powered slingshot.

maximum pressure rating of 630 pounds per square inch, at the rate of 20 liters per minute. What is the pressure on the outside of the pipe?' He also added a whole bunch of other extraneous information. But, the answer to the question is actually quite simple. It's 14.7 pounds per square inch, which is the air pressure at sea level. What's going on inside the pipe is immaterial." Eddie laughs, and replies, "I can see that. Anyone who is a certified scuba diver would know that." Kurt informs Eddie, "and, yes, I got the question correct. But, 80 percent of the class got it wrong."

With yet another example, Kurt tells Eddie and Eddie, Jr., 'on another test, the professor had the question, 'calculate the weight of the atmosphere.' For that question, he gave us three dozen constants and formulas that were seemingly important to the solution, such as the diameter of the Earth, the percentage of Oxygen, Nitrogen, and Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere and their atomic weights, the total water vapor content of the atmosphere, the density of the atmosphere, the air pressure at sea level, the air pressure at one kilometer above the surface of the Earth, the asymptotic height equivalent of an air pressure of zero for the purposes of the question, and a formula to calculate the surface area of a sphere. The answer to that question was also very simple. The weight of the atmosphere is the air pressure at sea level, which is 14.7 pounds per square inch, times the surface area of the Earth. Again, that question was worth 40 points. And, yes. I got that one correct, too. And, believe it or not, the same 80 percent of the class got that question wrong." Eddie comments, "and, just think. They're the ones designing our bridges and buildings."

Kurt then tells Eddie, "every test that professor ever gave had questions like those. He tried to make the point that memorizing the textbook does not make a person an engineer. He constantly made the point that an engineer takes all the science that is available, and uses it to solve real world problems." Recalling Mr. Frazier's motivational talks, Eddie comments, "I can see that. There are only three degrees offered by colleges and universities - a degree in memorization, a degree in problem solving, or a degree in the arts. You can't memorize problem solving." Kurt thinks for a moment, and replies, "I never thought of it that way but, yeah, that about sums it up." Kurt laughs, then comments, "every engineering class at Georgia Tech was a math class in disguise."

As Eddie and Kurt look around the shop, Kurt comments, "this must be the best use of a thousand square feet that I've ever seen in my life." Eddie replies, "if I didn't have the service station, I would have added onto it a long time ago." With steel shelving on every wall, an uncluttered workbench to work on, more than adequate lighting, and

tools for every possible situation, Eddie's home shop lacks nothing. Kurt and Eddie head back to the pool, letting Eddie, Jr. get back to work.

Back at the pool, Eddie sees that Milana's band is relaxing in the water. Over to the side, the four girls again talk with Darryl about their group opening for the concert in the Spring. Asking questions literally faster than Darryl can answer them, the girl's excitement cannot be contained.

Also hearing the energy of Milana's band, Kathy mentions to Paula and Barbara, "they sound like we did when I told you guys that my dad found out we can run high school track. Listen to them!" Barbara replies, "I remember that like it was yesterday! That really made my year! And, I got a scholarship out of it!" Paula replies, "that was a rough road, but it was definitely worth everything we went through." Kathy comments, "well, if Lana is going to break into the music industry, she'll have a lot of hoops to jump through." Paula replies, "not unless you guys start your own music industry."

Breaking up the fun, an uninvited guest bursts through the gate, demanding to know, "where's that Erika? Where is she?" Kathy comments, "oh, wonderful. So much for our peaceful day." Paula asks Kathy, "who is that, anyway?" Kathy replies, "I don't know. I don't recognize her. But, she's got to go." Eddie, Bobby B., Mark, and Erika, stand up as Braden announces, "it looks like it's time for us to take out the trash."

Approaching the perpetrator, Braden announces, "you're under arrest, only because I don't like your fat ass." Erika tells Braden, "I agree. Let's get rid of her." Erika then laughs, whispering to Braden, "'you're under arrest, only because I don't like your fat ass.' That's kind of funny." Braden replies, whispering back, "I've always wanted to say that. Today, I finally got my chance."

Not recognizing the intruder, Eddie asks, "does anyone know who this is?" Erika replies, "this is Terry Haynes. The illustrious bitchkrieg herself, in the flesh." Eddie looks at Haynes, and asks, "wow! What ever happened to you?" Braden informs Eddie, "that's what happens to you when you spend half your life in prison." Haynes, who now looks twenty years older than she is, puts up little resistance due to her poor physical condition as Erika places her into an arm lock, and escorts her down the driveway.

On the trek down the driveway, Haynes screams out to Erika, "you killed Dana and Donna! I can't believe you did that! They were my friends!" Erika replies, "nope. Officer Branson did. It wasn't me. So sad,

too bad.” Haynes persists, yelling out, “you killed my friends! I can’t believe you did that!” Erika tightens the arm lock, causing Haynes to scream out in pain.

As Haynes whines and carries on, Braden asks, “what are we gonna do with her fat ass?” Mark replies, “she’s kind of hot headed. She needs to cool off a little. How about Alaska?” Braden laughs, telling Mark, “that sounds good to me!” Ducking behind Eddie’s detached garage, Braden makes a temporary portal, preparing for the trip.

Placing Haynes in the portal, Mark jokingly announces, “group hug,” leaving Haynes at a total loss to figure out what is going on. With Haynes surrounded, Eddie whispers, commanding the portal to take them to, “Alaska, outside Anchorage.” Arriving just off a road leading downtown, Erika tells Haynes, “here’s your stop, bitch.” The group makes a mental note of the portal location, as Braden leads the way down the road. Escorted by Erika, Haynes is suddenly quiet, not knowing where she is or how she got there.

Approaching civilization, Erika announces, “this looks like a good place to finish her off.” As she is moved away from the road, Haynes screams out, “what? Are you going to kill me too?” Erika replies, “not quite.” Erika then tells Bobby B., “tie her shoelaces together, like really tight.” Haynes puts up a minor struggle as Bobby B. ties Haynes’ shoelaces together, making sure that it will take her a while to free herself. Pointing to a tree, Erika then tells Bobby B., “and, now you can belt her to that tree over there.” Bobby B. carries Haynes over to the tree and, aided by Eddie and Mark, belts Haynes to the tree. Eddie comments, “it’s too bad there’s not a fence around here.” Recalling that she once witnessed Eddie belting Chuckie to the fence in high school, Haynes yells out, “you’re crazy! All of you! You’re all crazy!”

Beginning her interrogation, Erika asks Haynes, “okay. Question number one. How did you know where I was?” Haynes replies, “I’m not telling you!” Erika replies, “that’s fine. No problem. If you change your mind, we’ll be back home, about 4,000 miles away. Good luck getting home, bitch. Bye.” It’s pretty clear that Erika and Haynes are still at odds with each other, for Erika has put Haynes behind bars several times.

As the group begins to walk away, Haynes yells out, “okay, okay! I was the driver for Donna and Dana! I’ve been following you since last night!” Erika turns around, and tells Haynes, “good. Now we’re getting somewhere. If you ever return back home, I will personally arrest you and you’re going to prison. I highly advise you to stay here.” Haynes screams out, “what? Are you just going to leave me here?” Mark

comments, “wow! She’s way smarter than she looks.” Erika replies, telling Mark, “I wouldn’t count on it.”

In response to Mark and Erika’s attitude, Haynes exclaims, “why are you doing this to me? Why?” Eddie replies, “because you were trespassing.” Just for fun, Erika tells Haynes, “yeah. Trespassing. That’s what you’re doing right now on someone’s property. Maybe you’ll get lucky and they won’t shoot you.” Haynes pleads, “just let me go! I won’t come back.” But, her pleas land on deaf ears, for all she has done over the last three decades is cause trouble for the tribe.

The group heads back to the portal, leaving Haynes belted to a tree off the main road. Fortunately, for Haynes, she will be easily spotted and released, but that is when her problems will really begin. All in all, Haynes got off easy today.

On the way back to the portal, Eddie asks Erika, “why don’t you just bring her back and have her arrested?” Erika replies, “it’s way too complicated to explain how she ended up in Alaska. Besides, once someone releases her off the tree, it will take her next to no time to commit a crime up here. I’ll let the local authorities deal with her.” Braden comments, “hopefully, this is the last we’ll see of her.” Mark tells Braden, “she’ll probably end up in their local psycho ward.”

Arriving to their place in time, Braden comments, “now, I’m wondering if her ass is gonna come back here.” Erika replies, “if she does, she’s headed straight for prison.” Mark asks, “what’s she going to do if she does come back? File a police report?” Eddie laughs, commenting, “I can hear Chief Hayes explaining this one to me.” Bobby B. laughs, mentioning, “it’s just another case of someone taking psycho Chubin.” Mark replies, “darn! We forgot to give her psycho Chubin. My fault.” Erika tells Mark, “that’s okay. She was born with a lifetime supply of psycho Chubin in her brain.”

Eddie then asks, “is there anybody left?” Mark asks Eddie, “what do you mean, bro?” Eddie replies, “we’ve pretty much gotten rid of all the troublemakers over the last year.” Braden replies, “there’s still Dean Grimsby. Ain’t no one seen him in a long time.” Erika informs Braden, “I looked him up a while ago. After he got out of prison, Grimsby moved to the other side of the country. He’s probably running a gambling operation over there. It’s best to let the sleeping dog lie.”

Seeing the group walking back through the gate, Kathy asks, “who was that?” Erika replies, “Terry Haynes, the bitchkrieg.” Kathy then whispers to the group, “what did you guys do with her?” Eddie replies, “we transported her to Alaska.” Erika then suggests to the group,

whispering, “it’s probably best to tell everyone else who doesn’t know about the portal that she escaped from the mental hospital over on Central Avenue.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I’ll go with that.”

It doesn’t take long for Angela to ask Eddie, “what was that all about?” Erika jumps in, and answers, “nothing. That woman was a frequent flyer. I put her in jail and the sanitarium a few times. I suppose she was upset at me. She probably escaped from the sanitarium. Poor girl. She’s mentally unstable. She really needs help. We got her where she needs to be.” Angela replies, “good. I’m sure, in the long term, she’ll appreciate it.”

Dinner time rolls around, and Eddie puts a few steaks on the grill. Mark asks Eddie, “is there any pizza left?” Eddie replies, “no. The pizza was finished off about two hours ago.” Mark takes a few more steaks and, putting them on the grill, tells Eddie, “we’d better cook a few more. The women would pick pizza over steak but, since there’s none left, they’re stuck with steak.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “if Kathy knew there was no pizza left, she’d order more.”

Over dinner, Johnson asks the group, “now that our twenty-five year reunion is over, what’s the funniest thing that happened over our high school years?” Mark laughs, and asks Johnson, “with us involved, or others?” Johnson replies, “it doesn’t matter. Us, or anyone else.”

Johnson asks Mark, “what are you thinking, bro?” Mark asks the group, “do you remember the techno guys on the stage crew?” Johnson replies, “yeah. They built the sets for the school plays, and ran the lighting, sound, and that sort of thing.” Mark replies, “yeah. Those guys.” Johnson laughs, telling the group, “those stage crew guys were kind of on the mischievous side and, twenty-five years later, they still are.”

Kathy asks, “what happened?” Mark explains to the group, “this happened a few days after Eddie quit high school and Mr. Crum was having a shit fit. Mr. Bowman, my wood shop teacher, was the faculty advisor to the stage crew. During class one day, he took us all to the stage, where we helped out building the sets. They were way behind schedule, or something, and they had a lot of work to do and not a lot of time to do it.” Eddie comments, “I’m pretty certain I’ve never heard this one.” Mark tells Eddie, “you haven’t, bro. Neither has anyone else, because I was so ticked off at Mr. Crum, I just kind of put it on the back burner, and never told anyone.”

Eddie asks, “so, what did I miss?” Mark continues, explaining, “so, Paul Miller, the stage crew sound guy, was in my shop class. It was an

easy A for him, since he was on the stage crew. So, I told him what I wanted to do, and asked him if it was possible to do a rewiring job in the administrative office. And, he said that what I wanted to do was easy. So, after track practice that day, I went and helped out on the stage. Those guys stayed pretty late that day.”

Hoffer comments, “I’m still in the dark about this one.” Eddie tells Hoffer, “yeah, bro. I think most of us are.” Mark then reveals, “so, me and Miller sneak into the administrative area, and wire Mr. Crum’s phone line to the P.A. system.” Many in the group laugh hysterically, now knowing the rest of the story. Mark continues, telling the group, “the next day, during first period, Mr. Crum gets a call from someone in the superintendent’s office, telling him that there are students smoking pot again under the tree near the South gate. Mr. Crum’s answer to them was, ‘yeah. I’ll check it out.’ It didn’t sound like he really was going to do anything about it. The whole school heard it over the P.A. system!” Braden laughs, and exclaims, “and, it ain’t no secret who that was!” Bobby B. replies, “yeah. It was probably Haynes, Goldshit, and that crowd. It couldn’t have been the Chuckie, because he was still in the hospital.”

Mark continues, also revealing, “and, after that, Mr. Crum gets on the phone, calling his doctor, complaining that his knee still hurts, and that he needs his prescription refilled.” Kathy comments, “yeah, right! That was a whole year later! He just wanted drugs so he can get Goldshit to resell them to students!” Braden tells Kathy, “you’re probably right about that!”

Mark then informs everyone, “I don’t know when they got it fixed, but we all heard three or four of Mr. Crum’s phone calls.” Eddie laughs, and comments, “I’m surprised he didn’t blame the track team.” Mark then reveals, “I guess I never said anything about this because I was so ticked off that Mr. Crum wouldn’t let Eddie graduate.” Braden sits back, telling everyone, “we were all really ticked off when that happened.”

Mark asks Johnson, “has any weird stuff happened at the high school?” Johnson replies, “all the time.” Braden asks, “has there been any good ass kickings recently?” Johnson replies, “every other week. But, one really sticks out in my mind.” Mark asks, “what’s that?”

Johnson sits back, and explains, “in one of my gym classes, there are about six guys who are on the track team. Last Spring, we headed out to the track where I was going to time everyone in the 100-meter dash for a grade. Once we finished the 100 meters, they all got their chance to throw the shot-put for a grade.” Already knowing the answer, Bobby B. interrupts, asking, “does my record still stand?” Johnson replies, “yeah,

bro. But, it's getting real close." Bobby B. seems to be very worried that someone is brushing up against his record.

Johnson then continues, telling the group, "so, as you all know, my son, George, is the team's shot-putter. During class, the class clown, Douglas Burroughs, threw the shot-put around 10 feet. That got him a grade of D. Burroughs went out to retrieve the shot-put. When he returned, he was supposed to hand it to the next person in line. Instead, he yelled out, 'let's play catch,' and threw the shot-put at George, who was standing on the shot-put pad. The shot-put landed on George's foot. George got so mad, he picked up the shot-put, and yelled out, 'here, catch,' and hurled it right back at Burroughs. Burroughs went down and was screaming in pain. He didn't get back up."

Mark asks, "what happened to Burroughs?" Johnson describes, "the school nurse came out, and checked out Burroughs. He was pretty bad, so she had him sent to the hospital. As it turned out, Burroughs ended up with a broken collar bone and a fractured acromion." Mark asks, "what's an acromion?" Johnson points to the front bony part of his shoulder, telling Mark, "it's the bone right here."

Johnson then explains, "two days later, they both ended up in the principal's office, along with me and Mr. Zunde. Burroughs got a three-day suspension for starting a fight. George got off with a slap on the wrist." Mark asks, "a slap on the wrist? Really? How did he get so lucky?" Johnson replies, "the principal, Dr. Scott, told George that should have not continued the fight, and suspended George for three days. George told him, 'fine. If you suspend me, I'll be doing a whole lot worse than throwing a shot-put at that asshole.' George was pretty ticked off, because the State meet was that weekend. Then, the principal told Burroughs to wait out in the administration area."

Not aware of what happens at the administrative end of Northside High School, Mark comments, "so, the principal turned out like another Mr. Crum?" Johnson replies, "not exactly. Once Burroughs left the room, Mr. Zunde told Dr. Scott that 'suspending George wouldn't be in the school's best interest,' because George was going to the State meet in the shot-put. Dr. Scott told Mr. Zunde, 'I know. I just had to give the impression that something was done,' and that he wasn't really suspending George. Since Dr. Scott is all for athletics, he's on our side." Mark comments, "that was a good idea, letting Burroughs think that George got suspended. Otherwise, Burroughs' parents would have had a shit fit." Johnson replies, "seriously."

Eddie tells Johnson, “that was pretty slick of Dr. Scott.” Johnson replies, “yeah, I know. And, get this. He told George that he could take a day or two off school and train for the State meet if he wanted to. So, he took Friday off, and rested the whole day before the meet on Saturday.” Everyone around laughs, knowing that Dr. Scott is clearly the anthesis of Mr. Crum. Eddie points out, “if Mr. Crum was the principal, George would have been suspended for sure.”

Thinking back to his high school days, Braden exclaims, “how about all that shit that went down when Mr. Crum accused Eddie of messing with his car?” Eddie asks, “which time, bro? He’s accused me of messing with his car a lot. One. Wedging it between two trees. That wasn’t me. Two. Putting super glue in his door lock. Not me either. Three. Removing his wheels. Well, I had some help with that one. And, that’s only the beginning.” Kathy adds, “us delicate and fragile flowers couldn’t have possibly have wedged his car between those two trees.” Paula replies, “yeah. It couldn’t have been us, just like a girl couldn’t throw a discus more than twenty feet.”

Braden announces, “I was thinking about that time when somebody rewired Mr. Crum’s car.” Eddie laughs, and tells the group, “that wasn’t me. But, I know who did.” Already hearing a few interesting stories regarding Mr. Crum in the last few weeks, Nena asks Eddie, “what happened?” Tessa tells Eddie, “yeah. What happened? I haven’t heard this one.” Eddie tells Tessa, “it was during Spring track. You were probably swimming in the pool.”

Eddie explains, “when we were juniors, John Schmidt, one of the guys on the football team, was in my auto shop class. Mr. Crum tried to suspend him for something. I don’t remember exactly why. So, anyway, I told Schmidt, ‘why don’t you wire Mr. Crum’s brake lights to his starter solenoid. That would cause his starter to engage every time he pressed on his brake pedal.’ Schmidt thought that was a really good idea.” The group laughs, but that is not the end of the story. Eddie then mentions, “our conversation turned into a big class discussion of esoteric ways to mess with people’s cars. We came up with some pretty good stuff.”

Eddie continues, explaining, “so, on a Volkswagen Beetle, it’s not hard to wire the brake lights to the starter solenoid. Everything is right there, in the back of the car. So, at lunch, Schmidt goes out into the parking lot, and connects the wire. It was pretty simple. So, after school that day, Mr. Crum gets into his car, and Schmidt’s surprise was waiting for him. Every time Mr. Crum stepped on his brakes, his starter engaged, and there was a serious grinding sound. Then, Mr. Crum waddles out to the track, yelling out, ‘Edward Bogenskaya, I want to see

you in my office right now!’ So, Mr. Zunde ran interference for me until the end of practice.”

Braden exclaims, “I remember that! We had to push Mr. Crum’s piece of shit all the way over to the auto shop!” Eddie laughs, and continues, “well, you guys pushed. I just steered. Anyway, we get Mr. Crum’s car to the shop, and put it up on the rack. Me and Mr. Zunde looked for the problem. I already knew what the problem was, and I pointed it out to Mr. Zunde. I’ll never forget what Mr. Zunde told him. He said, ‘Crum, your ficidulator is shorted out. You should have done the scheduled maintenance when it was due. Then, this problem would not have occurred.” Mr. Crum then starts yelling at Mr. Zunde, ‘what? Can it be fixed? I have to get home!’ Mr. Zunde then told Mr. Crum to go back to his office, and he’ll call him when it’s fixed.”

Nena asks, “what’s a ficidulator?” Eddie replies, “there’s no such thing. Mr. Zunde made that up. But, Mr. Crum is so stupid that he wouldn’t know any different.” Angelo listens carefully, knowing good and well that there is no such automobile part called a ficidulator.

Eddie then explains, “when Mr. Crum was away, Mr. Zunde asked me if I knew anything about this. I told him that, during auto shop, we were talking about ingenious ways to mess with cars. Wiring the brake lights to the starter solenoid was one that I mentioned. So, I must have put the idea in someone’s head. Mr. Zunde’s response was, ‘it couldn’t have been anyone in the auto shop class. It’s obvious that the ficidulator is shorted out.’ Then, we removed the wire, got the car down off the rack, and pushed it into the parking lot while Mr. Zunde called Mr. Crum from the shop phone. Then, Mr. Crum comes back to the shop, yelling like a mad man, ‘did you get it fixed? Is my car running now?’ Mr. Zunde tells Mr. Crum, ‘Crum, you could at least show a little appreciation. Eddie repaired your car for you.’ But, all we did is remove the wire.” Braden exclaims, “I couldn’t believe it! I don’t think I’ve ever seen Mr. Crum that mad before! Well, except for when his ass ran into the discus!”

Nena asks, “did Schmidt ever get in trouble for that?” Eddie replies, “no. Crum never did find out who did it. He still believed his ficidulator was shorted out.” Bobby B. comments, “at least it wasn’t his Johnson Rod.” Nena asks, “what’s a Johnson Rod?” Bobby B. replies, “it’s another bogus car part. I think Eddie installed one in Mr. Crum’s car once and charged him for it.” Recalling the installation, Angelo laughs, informing everyone, “we only sell Johnson Rods to customers who are a royal pain in the ass.”

Now curious, Angelo asks Eddie, “what other interesting ways did you guys come up with to mess with cars?” Eddie replies, “one of the

funniest ones was to wire stuff to the horn, like the reverse lights. So, when the car is put into reverse, the horn blows. Wiring the headlights or brake lights to the horn would be pretty funny too. And, some guy came up with putting oil in the window washer reservoir. That could cause an accident, though. And, let's see. What else?" Eddie laughs, and reveals, "one guy came up with getting a few tubes of silicone caulk, and caulking the doors, the trunk, and the hood shut." Bobby B. laughs, and exclaims, "that would be a mess to clean up!" Eddie replies, "yeah. I'd say. You can do a lot of damage with a tube of caulk."

Eddie then recalls, "I think our best one was our solution for tailgaters." Knowing that tailgating is a common problem, a few people mention, "I want to hear this," or, "what's that?" Eddie explains, "this one is pretty cool. You mount a box underneath the trunk that has a hinged door controlled by a cable actuator running to the passenger compartment. Inside the box, you put a whole bunch of rocks. When there's a tailgater behind you, you open the box with the cable actuator, causing all the rocks to spill out and bombard the tailgater's car. That will get him to back off." Angelo laughs, exclaiming, "I could sell a lot of those!" Nena yells out, "I want one!" Bobby B. replies, "we'll get right on it Monday morning!" It seems that, all of a sudden, a few people want Eddie's tailgating solution installed on their car.

Braden announces, "how about that time in physics class when Jimmy O'Brien tried to act like hot shit?" Does anybody remember that? Mark asks, "which time, bro?" Stressing the phrase "in other words," Braden replies, "in other words, how about that time when O'Brien got his ass kicked by Miss Amherst?" Mark laughs uncontrollably, leaving those who were not in their high school physics class wondering what could possibly be so funny.

Mark then explains, "whenever Miss Amherst explained things, a lot of time she would reexplain it, and say, 'in other words' before the second time she explained it. So, once when Miss Amherst was explaining something a second time, Jimmy O'Brien raises his hand. Everyone was surprised that O'Brien was even asking a question because he's kind of all-around stupid." Braden laughs, and exclaims, "I remember that! That's the only time I've ever seen Miss Amherst get mad!"

Mark then explains, "so, O'Brien tells Miss Amherst, 'why do you always say 'in other words' when you're explaining things? Why can't you just pick the right words from the beginning, and you won't have to always say things twice. It gets kind of confusing.' After like a minute of silence, Miss Amherst tells O'Brien, 'the reason I reexplain myself is because not everyone understands the material I am presenting on the

first pass.’ You can tell that Miss Amherst got really mad at O’Brien’s comment. Then, Miss Amherst starts explaining electromagnetic radiation at some really deep college level, and put all these equations with Greek letters up on the board. No one knew what she was talking about. Then, right before class ended, she asks the class, ‘did everyone understand that?’ And, no one understood a thing that she said. Then, Miss Amherst tells the class, ‘if no one understood my presentation, Jimmy O’Brien will be happy to clear it up for you before our next class.’”

Part of the group laughs, with those knowing Jimmy O’Brien commenting on what an idiot he is. Eddie asks, “was that before or after O’Brien got rhabdomyolysis?” Mark replies, “definitely after. Electromagnetic radiation was right before we graduated.” Eddie comments, “the rhabdomyolysis must have damaged his brain.” Mark rebuts, telling Eddie, “O’Brien was born brain damaged.”

Mark then finishes his story, telling the group, “so, everyone in the class bothered O’Brien for the rest of the week with physics problems. O’Brien got messed with big time. It got back to Mr. O’Brien, who gave a lecture to his tenth grade social studies class about the subject of harassing students.”

Angela asks, “did anything good happen at your high school?” Johnson replies, “yeah. The track team held a car wash one weekend at the high school to help the cheerleaders raise money for new uniforms. The cheerleaders were out near the street, getting everyone to come in. And, there was one guy who drove up in a Lotus.” Eddie interjects, “I definitely remember him. He drove a Lotus Esprit S1.” Mark comments, “yeah. I remember him, too.”

Johnson explains, “so, this guy gets out of his car. He makes us change the water in the buckets, and put in new soap. He even told us how much soap to put in the buckets. Then, he makes us rinse out our rags, and inspected them before he let us begin washing his car. And, the whole time we were washing his car, he was supervising everything we did.” Angela replies, “he sounds kind of picky.” Johnson replies, “he was. But, he seemed like a really nice guy.” Braden comments, “I remember that! He even made us clean inside his wheel wells!”

Johnson concludes, “so, when we were finished, the guy gave us three hundred dollars! I still can’t believe that! So, I waved to the cheerleaders to come over, and they thanked the guy immensely. That really made their day.” Angela mentions, “you know, the next time I see kids out there holding a car wash, I’m going to do that. It will make their day.”

Braden informs everyone, “so, at the end of the day, the cheerleaders had enough money for new uniforms, and we got a good workout. Then, the girls’ badminton team and the girls’ volleyball team was wanting us to do a car wash for them!” Angela asks, “did you do another car wash?” Braden replies, “yeah. We did. But, that guy in the Lotus didn’t show up. We still made some pretty good money for the girls, though.” What is not said is that the guys, who made money through the portal back then, put a few hundred of their own dollars into the pot.

As the evening comes to a close, the guests leave one by one. All agree to get together more often, for life is short, and better spent with family and friends rather than working.

Around midnight, once everyone is gone, Eddie kisses Kathy, and asks her, “do we have a normal life yet?” Kathy replies, “yeah. For us. If normal is what everyone else has, I don’t want normal.” Eddie and Kathy get back in the pool, where the water feels warmer now that the air has cooled off.

Kathy puts her legs around Eddie’s hips, telling him, “hey! We’re having another reunion!” Not knowing what Kathy is talking about, Eddie asks, “what are you talking about, Katarina?” Kathy replies, “we’re having a twenty-year reunion. Twenty years ago, we were right where we are right now. It was about this time at night, and I remember looking up, and finding my star. Then, I fell asleep and I woke up when you carried me inside.” Eddie replies, “I remember that. It doesn’t seem like it was twenty years ago.”

Eddie looks up in the sky, telling Kathy, “there’s your star.” Kathy replies, “you mean our star.” Eddie replies, “yeah. Our star.” Years ago, Eddie and Kathy spent the whole night outside, and realized that Kathy’s star, the first star to appear in the evening sky, is also the last star to disappear in the morning sky, which is Eddie’s star.

Eddie walks inside with Kathy by his side. Worn out from their long day, Eddie and Kathy give each other a goodnight kiss. Eddie turns off the light, and whispers to Kathy, “sweet dreams, sweetie.” Kathy whispers back, “sweet dreams.”