

Eddie, The 25 Year Reunion

Chapter Two Life Around Town

Copyright © 2022 by Dr. Robert E. Zee

A few weeks after Auggie cracked the safe and changed the combination to the safe procured from the former Mahoney residence, Braden arrives at Eddie's Service Station with Hunter to obtain his safe. Announcing his entrance, Braden yells out, "the safe moving crew has arrived!" Eddie yells back, "it's right over there, next to the lathe. Go ahead and have Hunter load it up." Braden tells Hunter, "you heard him, son. Go ahead and load that safe onto Eddie's trailer."

Hunter looks at the safe, wondering how much it weighs. Confidently approaching the safe, Hunter attempts to move the safe, quickly realizing the task is far above his pay grade. Hunter tells his father, "that shit's heavy!" Braden laughs, and replies, "it sounds like to me that your ass is just getting weak. You need to be working out more." Hearing the exchange, Bobby B. walks up to the safe, grabs it, and easily raises it off the ground. Lowering the safe, Bobby B. comments, "it feels kind of light to me." Weighing in at more than two hundred fifty pounds, the safe is anything but light.

Coming to Hunter's rescue, Eddie, Bobby B., and Braden effortlessly move the safe onto the trailer. Braden reassures his son, "we were just messing with you." Hunter replies, "I kind of guessed that." Eddie tells Hunter, "it's a good thing Mark ain't here. He would have messed with you big time." Hunter replies, "he's pretty good at that. I learned a lot from Mark about messing with people." Braden informs his son, "I know. I've heard about some of that shit you pull at the starting line. You're getting pretty good at messing with your competition." Wondering how his father knows, Hunter exclaims, "how do you know about all that?" Braden laughs, telling Hunter, "your coach tells me! I know everything that goes on at your meets!" Hunter, like most teenagers, thinks his parents were born yesterday, and have no idea what they do. And,

unknown to Hunter, Braden and Johnson speak to each other on nearly a daily basis.

Hunter asks his father, “what are we gonna use this safe for, anyway? I mean, like, don’t we have enough safes?” Braden replies, “I’m gonna put it in my detached garage, and bolt it to the wall and the floor. But, I don’t know what I’m gonna put in it yet.” Eddie suggests, “maybe you can store your tools in it, bro.” Knowing that thieves often steal tools because they can easily be pawned, Braden excitedly replies, “that’s not a bad idea! I just might do that.” But, any thief would have a difficult time breaching Braden’s sophisticated alarm system. They would be caught long before they get to the safe.

Driving into the station on her way to work, Lynn Berson pulls up to the pumps. Eddie walks over, greeting her, asking, “are you working a wedding today?” Lynn replies, “not today. Penny is, though. I kind of have the day off. But, I got some stuff to do.”

As Eddie begins to fill Lynn’s tank, Lynn tells Eddie, “I have some really bad news.” Perceiving that Lynn is a little down, Eddie asks, “what’s up?” Lynn replies, “someone broke into my studio, and took a lot of our equipment. This really sucks.” Suddenly alarmed, Eddie asks, “really? When was that?” Lynn replies, “Thursday night. The police came out yesterday with their crime scene unit. They didn’t have much hope that the thieves will be caught. They said it looked like a professional job.” Seriously concerned, Eddie asks, “how did they get in?” Lynn explains, “they broke in through one of the rear windows, and climbed in.” Now in tears, Lynn tells Eddie, “they knew exactly what to take.” Eddie thinks to himself that the thieves must have known how to defeat the alarm system substantiating the claim of the police that it was a professional job.

Eddie yells over to Braden and Bobby B., “hey, guys! Come over here for a minute!” Braden and Bobby B. walk up, wondering what’s up. Eddie tells them, “someone broke into Lynn’s studio Thursday night. They took a bunch of her equipment.” Braden asks, “are there any leads?” Eddie replies, “not yet.” Lynn interjects, “the police said it was definitely professionals. They used a glass cutter to cut through the window, and bypassed the alarm system.” Braden exclaims, “I gotta see this!” Lynn replies, “I can show you, if you want.” The security expert, Braden, replies, “yeah! Let me see this!”

But, examining the rear of Lynn’s studio will have to wait. Interrupting Lynn’s conversation with Eddie and the crew, also driving up to the pumps, is a familiar face, one that neither Eddie, Bobby B., nor Braden ever wanted to see again. Behind the wheel is Todd McCutchen,

whose presence leaves everyone wondering why he suddenly showed up at Eddie's Service Station today. Braden asks, "isn't that McCrutchen's flimsy ass?" Eddie replies, "um, yeah, bro. He was in here a few months ago. I told him to take a hike, and sent him on his way." Bobby B. mentions, "I wonder what his problem is today." Braden replies, "he must have come for his ass kicking. His ass is long overdue." Eddie replies, "let me go and see what he wants. This should be interesting."

Walking up to McCutchen's vehicle, Eddie announces, "I'm sorry. We're closed today." McCutchen replies, asking, "then, why are you here?" Eddie replies, "because I'm attending to other business, McCrutchen. We're closed. So, get out of here." McCutchen replies, "but, I need gas." Sounding like Dr. Zunde, and now the rest of the tribe, Eddie replies, "that would be your problem, not mine. So, I need to get back to work." Stupidly, McCutchen tells Eddie, "I thought you weren't working today." Shaking his head, Eddie reminds McCutchen, "Mark was right. It's the Prickly Sea Spider bite gone full circle. You really should see a doctor."

McCutchen should leave but, pointing to Lynn, tells Eddie, "she's getting gas." Eddie replies, "that pump pumps 2,2,4 trimethyl pentane, junior. Do you really want me to put that in your tank?" McCutchen replies, "I guess not." 2,2,4 trimethyl pentane is the proper chemical name of the form of octane that is the major constituent of gasoline. But, McCutchen would never have known that. Eddie walks away, not wanting to be bothered with the person who tried to get him thrown out of college more than twenty years ago.

As Lynn gets ready to leave and head over to her studio, Eddie tells her, "we'll be over there in a few minutes to take a look." Lynn tells Eddie, "I'll have to get someone out to replace the window. We have it taped up right now." Since Eddie owns the building, he informs Lynn, "I'll take care of that. And, while we're at it, we'll see what Mark can do to make everything more secure." Lynn replies, "I would really appreciate that. I mean, like, our equipment is covered by insurance, but it really bothers me that someone broke in." Eddie replies, "I totally get that."

Getting back to work, as Eddie and Bobby B. tie down the safe so it doesn't shift in transit, Braden observes, "McCrutchen's ass drove into Vinnie's Body Shop, and he's sitting there in his car watching us." Eddie asks, "really? I wonder what he's up to." Braden replies, "his ass is probably spying on your gas station, just like he used to spy on our track team." Eddie reassures Braden, "well, Eddie, Junior will be here in a while to strip down the other 914 he picked up before Vinnie paints it. Hunter's 914 is over at Vinnie's right now. We'll just let Eddie, Junior

take care of McCrutchen.” Braden reminds Eddie, “it’s a good thing we put in that kick-ass security system in your service station. You never know what McCrutchen’s crazy ass is gonna do next.” Braden is now wondering whether McCrutchen, with his extensive criminal history, is the one who broke into Lynn’s Photography Studio. After all, they always say that criminals often return to the scene of the crime.

As Eddie is about to leave, Eddie, Jr. pulls up, driving his electric Dune Buggy. Over the last two years, Eddie, Jr. has been obtaining classic vehicles, and converting them to electric vehicles, with his dad’s help, of course. But, during Eddie, Jr.’s. time, parts such as lithium ion batteries, charging circuits, and suitable high torque electric motors are difficult to come by. Using the portal and traveling into the future, Eddie, Jr. has procured all the parts required to do the conversion. But, Eddie, Jr. must be careful who he does the conversions for. Future technology into the wrong hands could spell disaster.

Eddie, Jr. walks up, announcing, “oh good. You guys are still here.” Eddie replies, “it sounds like someone wants us to help him push a 914 into the service bay.” Eddie, Jr. boasts, “I could do it myself, but some help would be nice.” Already shown up once today, Hunter brags, “I’ll push it in for you.” Eddie, Jr. replies, “thanks, bro. I think I’ll take you up on that.”

McCrutchen watches from across the street as Eddie, Jr. steers the 914 while Hunter single handedly pushes the 914 into the first service bay. Now wondering what is really going on at Eddie’s Service Station, McCrutchen is taking a few notes. After all, an establishment that is closed to the public but nevertheless operating in various capacities certainly raises a red flag.

Hunter asks Eddie, Jr., “by the way, how’s my 914 coming along?” Hunter replies, “yours has been totally stripped. Kurt Richter came by two weeks ago. My dad and Kurt made some modifications to stiffen the frame to hold the weight of the batteries. It’s at Vinnie’s right now, getting its paint job. And, Vinnie is going to powder coat the underside.” Hunter exclaims, “I can’t wait!” Eddie, Jr. reassures Hunter, “when I get yours back from Vinnie, I can get to work on it. Then, this one will get its paint job.” Hunter asks, “who’s getting this one?” Eddie, Jr. replies, “no one’s name is on it yet. I’ll probably drive it around over the Winter.” After all, an open-air Dune Buggy is not quite suited for the cold Winter weather.

Before the safe is transported to Braden’s house, Eddie points across the street at McCrutchen’s vehicle, telling Eddie, Jr., “Todd McCrutchen is in that car over there. If he comes over here, get rid of him. If he gives

you a problem, call the police. Mess with him as much as you want.” Sounding like the tribe, Eddie, Jr. replies, “got it.” Eddie, Jr. then gets to work on the 914 as Eddie, Bobby B., and Braden head over to Lynn’s studio where they will examine the evidence from the break in.

After Eddie, Bobby B., and Braden take a look at the damage done to the rear window of Lynn’s Photography Studio, Eddie and Bobby B. drive away with Braden’s safe, off to Braden’s house where they will install the safe. Noting that McCutchen is still parked at Vinnie’s Body Shop, Eddie seriously wonders what McCutchen is really up to. And, on the way to Braden’s house, Eddie makes a call to Mark to come out and see how he can make Lynn’s studio more secure.

Arriving early on the first day of track practice, Eddie, Jr. drives into the parking lot, parking his electric Dune Buggy in the same place in which the tribe parked more than twenty years ago. Now in his second year of college competition, Eddie, Jr. continues in the Bogenskaya family tradition of being a world-class sprinter. Unlike his father, Eddie, Jr. actually attends classes, pursuing a degree in electrical engineering, which he will put to use in designing electric automobile conversions.

Taking a seat on the bleachers, Eddie, Jr. sits next to Mark, Jr., and Dawn Svoboda, who are both freshman this year. Joining them is Bernard Lowe, also a freshman this year. Last year, Mark, Jr., Dawn, and Lowe all ran for Northside High School under the expert coaching of Coach Eric Johnson.

Eddie, Jr. comments to his three former high school teammates, “it looks like we’re all together again.” Dawn comments, “yeah. I know. I’m so glad our 4 by 400-meter relay team is all back together again.” Giving the bad news, Eddie, Jr. reveals, “yeah. But, there’s a little problem. The men and women don’t run together in college.” Momentarily forgetting what Eddie, Jr. just reminded her of, Dawn replies, “I knew that.” Eddie, Jr. reassures Mark, Jr. and Lowe, “with any luck, we’ll be on the 4 by 400-meter relay team together.” Lowe asks, “who else would be on it?” Eddie, Jr. replies, “probably Lewis Gatling. He’s the fastest 400-meter guy here. He was on the 4 by 400 last year.” But, under the right circumstances, Eddie, Jr. is faster than Lewis Gatling. Eddie, Jr. was trying not to boast.

Interrupting all the conversations going on, Mr. Frazier, Coach Athena Leighton, Dr. Kathy Bogenskaya, Mark Svoboda, and Dr. Karen Corey walk in, commanding immediate attention. Mr. Frazier stands behind the same lectern he stood behind more than twenty years ago, sorting through a few papers. The old lectern, which Mr. Frazier once destroyed while delivering the news that the United States will be

boycotting the Summer Olympics, was repaired and rebuilt by the seasoned coach with two part epoxy, and is far stronger now than the day it left the factory.

Mr. Frazier greets his team, telling them, “good morning.” A few members of the team reply, “good morning.” Mr. Frazier announces, “I am George Frazier. I am one of the coaches of this track team. Standing to my left is Coach Athena Leighton, who is also one of the coaches of this team. Standing next to Coach Leighton is Coach Kathy Bogenskaya, who will be primarily working with the sprinters. And, standing next to Coach Bogenskaya is Coach Mark Svoboda. Coach Svoboda is our field events coach. If you are a field event athlete, you will primarily be working with Coach Svoboda. And, standing to my far left is Dr. Karen Corey. Dr. Corey is our Events Coordinator, and plays an instrumental role in assigning your events. Dr. Corey also helps coach this team, specifically in the relay events.” The coaches receive applause following Mr. Frazier’s introduction, but now Mr. Frazier intends to get down to business.

Mr. Frazier informs his team, “for more than twenty years, this University has dominated track and field in our division. Because of the past superior performance of our track team, several attempts have been made to remove this University from our division. Year after year, our University’s athletic program has been continually subjected to scrutiny. The qualifications of our professors teaching at this University have been put under question. The University’s financial records were audited on several occasions. Our dual enrollment program has been scrutinized to the nth degree. The other universities have spied on our team, attempting to study our workouts. It never stops. Hopefully, you get the picture.” Mr. Frazier then exclaims, “the reason this University is always put under a high-power microscope is because the other teams in this division have still not figured out how to beat us! And, I can only imagine what their complaints will be this year!” The athletes cheer, giving the clear impression they are looking forward to another winning season.

As the applause and cheering subside, Mr. Frazier begins his presentation as he often does, announcing, “now, it’s time to get down to business. Let’s start with the basics of track and field. In track, there are only two events that are run. They are the 100-meter dash and the 400-meter dash. The 60-meter dash is just an abbreviated 100-meter dash, and the 200-meter dash is just a prolonged 100-meter dash. If you can run one of those races, you can run any of the others.”

Addressing the other races, Mr. Frazier announces, “in this division, the longest distance race we run outside is the 5,000 meters. Inside,

during the indoor season, the longest race we run is 1,500 meters. Regardless if you run the 400-meter, 800-meter, 1,500-meter, 3,000-meter, or 5,000-meter events, you are running a 400-meter dash. The only difference between any of the events that I just mentioned is how much of a warm-up you must take before the last 400 meters! The 1,500-meter run is nothing more than a 400-meter dash with a 1,100-meter warm-up! The last 400-meters is where the race is won! Next time you watch a track meet on television, watch closely. You'll see exactly what I mean!" Giving the team a heads up, Mr. Frazier then announces, "and, if you run the 1,500-meter event, there is talk about replacing it next year with the 1,600-meter run."

Further describing the long distance races, Mr. Frazier elaborates, "and, if you watch the 3,000 or 5,000-meter competitions, you'll see three groups emerge somewhere past the midpoint of the race. In the first group are the winners. These guys have trained, and have trained extensively. One-third of the field, or less, will be in this group. The second group will have quite a spread to it by the end of the race. This group is average at best. And, trailing the third group are, well, how do I say this? Let me just say it. If you're 500 meters behind when the winner crosses the finish line, you probably shouldn't have been in that race to begin with. And, you'll even see the same in other sports, such as speed skating or cross country skiing." Some of the athletes snicker, having seen first hand what Mr. Frazier is speaking of.

Discussing a few other events, Mr. Frazier explains, "and, if you run the hurdles or the steeplechase, the only difference is a few obstacles are placed in your way! But, they are only obstacles if you let them be obstacles! By the way, in this division, the steeplechase is run only during the outdoor divisional meet. That is because many of the tracks are not set up to handle that particular event." Mr. Frazier's explanation, while simple, makes a lot of sense to the freshmen who have never heard Mr. Frazier's explanation of the events run in track before.

Many of the freshmen are now wondering what other words of wisdom Mr. Frazier has to offer. The freshmen knew ahead of time that track and field at the University was very competitive, but to hear a coach say that a runner should not have even been in a race is quite foreign to them. After all, at many high schools, it seems that anyone who wants to run track gets the chance.

Lowering the boom, Mr. Frazier explains, "now that we have an understanding of the two races we will be running, listen up. If any of you are willing to settle for second place, not put in 100 percent effort during your training and meets, or expect the rest of the team to carry

you to victory, please get up, walk back into the locker room, clean out your locker, and go home!” Silence comes over the arena, with the freshmen wondering how the coach can be so demanding.

Clarifying one issue, Mr. Frazier raises his voice and says, “I did not say that, if second place is the best you can do, then get up and leave! I intentionally used the word ‘settle’ because once you settle, you’ll lose. It’s all downhill from there! Mark my word! When you settle, the problem is not with your body. The problem is with your mind! If you’re here to win, and I hope that all of you are, then settling and losing should not be an option! We are a team! It should not surprise you to know that your teammates want to win! They expect 100 percent effort out of you! And, believe me, if you don’t give it 100 percent effort, your teammates will know! And, by the way, so will I, and so will the other coaches standing with me here today.”

Mr. Frazier continues, stating, “and, speaking about second place, if you do come in second place, congratulations! You are the first loser! They give medals for first place, second place, and third place. Where in the world did that ever come from? Only one person wins the race! One! The person coming in second place did not win! They lost! If you have ever read the Bible, in the book of First Corinthians, in chapter 9, verse 24, it states, ‘Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you win.’ Did you hear that? There is only one winner! If you walk away with second place, learn something! Work harder, train better, learn from the situation, and figure out what you need to change to do better next time!”

Listening to Mr. Frazier, Coach Athena Leighton again feels the tremendous energy that she first felt when she heard Mr. Frazier address the team when her son, Darryl, ran for the University. It is that energy that Coach Leighton attributes to Darryl winning the gold medal in the 1,500 meter run at the Olympics. As Mr. Frazier speaks, Coach Leighton wonders if there is another potential Olympiad seated in the arena today.

Mr. Frazier continues, “now, for some of you, the reason that you do not win is because of that thing between your ears they call a brain. Someone has programmed you and told you that you can’t win. My problem is that some of you actually believe it! Some of you have heard that you can’t beat Lewis Gatling in the 400 meter. Why can’t you? Some of you have heard that you can’t beat Eddie Bogenskaya, Jr. in the 100 meter. Why can’t you? You may have heard through the grapevine that Dawn Svoboda holds the national high school record for women in the 100-meter dash, and is unbeatable. If you think that way, you will

never win! The only thing stopping you from winning is you placing a limitation on your own abilities! The clock that's timing you, and the person running next to you is nothing compared to your own mental obstacles! And, by the way, the clock does not care one bit about your reputation, only your performance. You will never hide from the clock!"

Mr. Frazier then asks the athletes, "I have a question for all of you. Who is the greatest boxer of all time?" Many years after Muhammad Ali's career was over, everyone who answers still answers, "Muhammad Ali." Mr. Frazier informs the group, "well, maybe he is, and maybe he isn't. Who knows? But, I can tell you this. During his career, Muhammad Ali has continually announced to the world that he's the greatest boxer of all time! Have you ever heard anyone dispute him? No! Have you ever heard anyone else claim that they are the greatest? No! Anyone whoever stepped into the ring with Muhammad Ali has already been preprogrammed to believe that they will be up against the world's greatest! And, so have all of you! And, if anyone believed that Muhammad Ali is the greatest, when they step into the ring with him, at best, that makes them number two! They've already lost! Only when you believe that you are better, faster, and stronger than your opponent, then, and only then, will you win! And, that goes for on the track and off the track. But, more about that later."

Mr. Frazier then tells the group, "for the last two decades, this team has brought home nearly all the gold medals during the divisional meet. During several seasons, this team has brought home all the medals! Is there any reason why this team can't walk away with the gold medal in every event in January? No! There's not!" Looking around at the superior team he has this year, Mr. Frazier adds, "this year, we're looking really good. There's no reason why we can't walk away with all the medals! We've done it before! If you find you're up against someone who has beaten you in the past, do something! Mess with their heads! Introducing some psychological warfare into your event just might be the only difference between winning and losing! And, if you want some instruction in psychological warfare, speak to Coach Svoboda! He is the master of messing with people. And, as a coach, he's still doing it!"

Changing the subject to academics, Mr. Frazier tells the team, "some of you are here at this University to get a degree in business, communications, exercise science, or some field that you plan to work in when you graduate. What do they teach you in your classrooms? Knowledge and problem solving. That's about it. And, let me tell you this. Listen carefully! Nothing of what they teach you in the classroom will get you anywhere when you graduate! Nothing they teach you at this University will determine whether you succeed when you get out!"

Nothing they teach you at this University is worth anything without the drive to succeed! Sometimes I wonder why they even hold classes!"

Getting back to the subject of track and field, Mr. Frazier confidently orates, "whether it is on the track, in the classroom, at your job when you graduate, the one principle leading to success is the same!" Mr. Frazier exclaims, "are you ready to hear it?" Although many of the team members have heard Mr. Frazier's motivational speeches before, most of the team members exclaim, "yes!" Mr. Frazier pauses, then exclaims, "the one, and only one, attribute that will determine your success at anything you attempt is you must attack the challenge you face with no fear! Did you get that? No fear! Fear is the biggest obstacle to winning! Many of you sitting here today have no fear! If you are new to this team and expect to win, you must learn to attack the challenges you face with no fear! And, if you have any fear, get rid of it! Instill it in your competition! Let them be the ones who are fearful!"

Lowering his voice a bit, Mr. Frazier announces, "now, all of you are going to run a few time trials when we get on the track. When you're at the starting line, regardless who is in your race, I want you to confidently step up and attack the challenge you are facing with no fear! And, you field athletes, listen up! Just because your opponent is sitting on a bench somewhere when you're up in your event, you must still give it 100 percent every time you're up! Every attempt at your field event should be done as if it is your last chance in a meet to move from second place to first place. Give it all you got! And, if you're number one in the division in your event like many of you are, compete against yourself! Strive for a personal best! And, trust me. Don't let your guard down. Believe it or not, your opponent wants to beat you!"

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Frazier announces, "now, since the weather is nice outside, we're going to hold practice in the outdoor stadium. When you get out to the stadium, I want you to remember this." Mr. Frazier then exclaims, "more high school, University divisional, national, and world records have been set in our stadium than any other stadium on Earth! Your goal this year is to be part of the group who have set records in that stadium!"

As the team and coaching staff head outside, Mr. Frazier tells his other coaches, "I wanted to get down to business out on the track today, so I cut my presentation short. Over the next few weeks, I'll give them the rest of it." Athena replies, "every single one of them were paying close attention to you, George. I'm sure they'll all be looking forward to what else you'll be presenting to them." Mark replies to Mr. Frazier, "when I ran for the University, I always looked forward to your talks." Kathy adds, "so did I. They really energized our team." Recalling the

days when Mark and Kathy ran for the University, Mr. Frazier smiles and replies, "I remember those days. You guys were unstoppable."

Almost to the track, Athena asks, "by the way, George, are you looking forward to the annual coach's meeting this year?" Mr. Frazier laughs, and replies, "I can't wait!" Mark, only hearing about the meeting and never attending, asks, "what goes on at that meeting?" Mr. Frazier explains, "they go over the meet schedule for next year, talk about any changes to the events or rules, examine and approve or disapprove any new applications for meet officials, and a bunch of other administrative nonsense. Then, they move on to scrutinizing our athletic programs and attacking our coaching staff personally. That's the part I'm really looking forward to."

Athena tells Mark, "feel free to attend this year with us, Mark, if you would like. I'm sure you'll find it very enlightening." Mark replies, "I think I will." Kathy, who attended the meeting for the last three years, smiles, and tells Mark, "you really ought to come. There's probably a good chance that you'll get to mess with someone." Knowing that there is even a remote possibility of messing with someone, Mark smiles, and replies, "count me in."

The team arrives at the track, and begins their first training session for this academic year. During the training session, Mark thinks of potential ways to mess with the other team's coaches during the annual coaches' meeting. By the end of track practice, Mark has a few ideas up his sleeve. But, no one would expect less from Mark.

Recalling the situation of how Lynn's Photography Studio was broken into a few weeks ago, Eddie decides to take the matter into his own hands. Whenever Eddie deals with a problem, it is usually handled in a way other than a conventional matter. With not much on the agenda today, Eddie decides to catch the thief red handed.

Whenever illegal activity is about to come down, Braden is always on top of the situation. Braden arrives at Eddie's Service Station, walks into the office, and asks Eddie, "are you ready to get to work?" Eddie replies, "yeah, bro. I bought a tripod and a 36-exposure roll of 1000-speed film. We're going to catch this guy, whoever he is." Braden reminds Eddie, "don't forget your gun. We don't know what we're gonna be up against." Eddie gets a pair of two-way radios along with headsets out of the filing cabinet, handing one to Braden, so they can communicate with each other.

Eddie gets his gun and camera and heads straight to the portal in the back of the service station with Braden. Not knowing exactly what

time the thief will appear, Eddie and Braden go into the past to a few different times during the night of the break in, walking over to check whether Lynn's Photography Studio has been breached. Eddie and Braden conclude that the break in occurred somewhere between midnight and 2:00 a.m.

Eddie asks Braden, "any changes to the plan, bro?" Braden brilliantly replies, "no. We're gonna stick to the plan, unless something doesn't go according to plan. But, it should come together." Eddie contemplates Braden's statement, and replies, "got it." Eddie and Braden enter the portal, going into the past at 12:00 a.m. on the night of the break in.

Eddie gets an extension ladder, and climbs up onto the roof of the service station. Setting up his tripod, Eddie gets into position to get a few photographs of the person breaking into Lynn's studio as it happens. Braden sets up another ladder next to the wall behind the service station for when the time comes to jump the wall. Braden, who will work primarily on the ground, hangs out in the gym behind the service station, getting in a brief workout. While he is waiting for the action to begin, Braden gets in a few sets of bench presses, periodically checking outside for any ground activity.

At 12:40 a.m., Eddie quietly radios Braden, informing him, "we have some activity, bro." Braden replies, asking, "what do we got?" Eddie replies, "a car just pulled into Lynn's parking lot with the lights off. I can't see where they parked. They're on the West side of the building." Unfortunately, for Eddie, the building blocks the view to the parking lot. Braden informs Eddie, "I'm getting into position." Eddie replies, "got it." Braden peeks out each of the windows of the gym, then quietly sneaks out the door.

Eddie gets a few photographs from the roof as the two thieves use a circular glass cutter to cut a hole in the window. Using a compass, one thief ingeniously determines the polarity of the magnet associated with the sensor. Reaching through the hole, he then tapes another magnet to the alarm sensor, rendering the sensor useless. Opening the lock to the window, the thief proceeds to open the window. The other thief procures a small step ladder and, crawling through the window, enters the building. Eddie radios to Braden, "they're in, bro. One crawled through the window, and the other is just standing there." Braden replies, whispering, "10-4."

The thieves get to work. One thief, operating from inside the building, finds the desired equipment, handing the merchandise to the other thief, stationed outside, who carries the goods to the car. Eddie radios to Braden, "we need a plan B, bro. There's two of them. One is

staying outside. He's collecting the equipment, and loading up the car as the other one passes it out the window." Very familiar with police strategy in these type situations, Braden steps back into the gym, and communicates plan B to Eddie.

Fifteen minutes elapse. Sensing that the slow-working thieves are nearly finished with the job, Braden radios to Eddie, "did you get all the pictures you need?" Eddie replies, "yeah. What's up?" Braden replies, "we gotta get into position. Come on down." Eddie comes down from the roof, then places the camera containing the evidence in the service station office. Moving into position, Eddie then moves to the front of Lynn's studio, waiting for instructions from Braden.

The perpetrator working inside Lynn's studio finally crawls out through the window. Braden radios to Eddie, "it's time to move in." Eddie replies, "got it." Seeing Eddie emerge from the other side of Lynn's studio, Braden jumps the wall. With his gun aimed, Braden yells out, "freeze!" The perpetrators quickly turn around, and make a run for it. One perpetrator is quickly apprehended by Eddie. Braden takes a short jog, easily apprehending the other perpetrator.

Returning with the other perpetrator, Braden exclaims, "look what we just picked up!" Eddie asks Braden, "do you know these two?" Braden replies, "I ain't never seen them before. But, it's dark out here. Let's get their asses over to the light so we can take a good look at them." Walking over to Lynn's well-lit parking lot, Braden laughs, and exclaims, "well, will you take a look at this! Look at whose ass we just picked up!" Eddie also laughs, exclaiming, "wow! Frank Hamilton! How have you been? Did you get a new job?" Mr. Hamilton replies, "let me go! I demand to speak to my attorney!" Braden informs Mr. Hamilton, "you'll get that chance. But, your ass ain't been arrested yet. So, for right now, you ain't got no rights." Eddie asks Braden, "do I have the right to kick his ass?" Braden laughs, informing Eddie, "you don't have to. Where his fat ass is going, he's gonna be getting a special ass kicking every day."

Braden asks the person whom he is detaining, "and, who are you?" The woman reluctantly replies, "Margo Radacek." Eddie replies, "Margo Radacek. Where have I heard that name before?" Knowing every square inch of the town, Braden replies, "she's got a photography studio over on the service road to the expressway." Eddie replies, "that's right! Lynn told me about her a while ago. Frankie, here, is her father."

Eddie asks Braden, "what are we going to do with these two clowns?" Braden replies, "let's get the uniform guys out here and haul their asses away." Clearly understanding that he is looking forward to a prison sentence, Mr. Hamilton begs, "hold on! Wait a second! We can work this

out. Please, listen to me. We can come to an agreement.” Braden asks, “oh yeah? I really wanna hear this. Go ahead. I’m listening.” Mr. Hamilton, now a county commissioner, offers, “I’ll put an offer on the table of ten thousand dollars to forget about this whole thing.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “forget it, junior.” Eddie tells Braden, “let’s get the uniform guys out here.” Now beginning to panic and sweat profusely, Mr. Hamilton puts out the offer, “twenty thousand. I’ll make it twenty thousand dollars!” Eddie replies, “not on your life, junior.” Braden mentions, “now, I’m wondering how his fat ass got twenty thousand dollars laying around.” Recalling Mr. Hamilton’s tenure with the town in which Eddie lives, Eddie replies, “he probably stole it or embezzled it. Or, maybe he got it the same way Mr. Crum got it.”

Braden releases Margo, telling her, “you sit your ass on the ground. If you move, I’m breaking your daddy’s scrawny little arms off.” Margo obeys, and takes a seat on the ground. Braden takes custody of Mr. Hamilton, telling Eddie, “go make the call.” Eddie runs over to the service station where he will get the uniform police officers to the scene.

While Eddie is away, Braden asks Mr. Hamilton and Margo, “do one of you wanna tell me what your asses are doing out here at one o’clock in the morning stealing Lynn’s photography equipment?” Mr. Hamilton tells his daughter, “don’t say anything.” Braden replies, telling Margo, “that’s okay. You don’t have to say anything. As of now, your ass is out of business. So, you won’t be needing any of Lynn’s equipment after all.” Tightening the arm lock on Mr. Hamilton, Braden informs him, “and, they’re gonna have a special election to fill your position. Maybe Eddie will run for your seat. If I remember correctly, he kicked your flimsy ass once before in an election.” Mr. Hamilton exclaims, “you’re hurting my arm! This is police brutality!” Braden informs Mr. Hamilton, “yeah, right. This ain’t my jurisdiction. So, it can’t be police brutality. And, if you don’t shut your ass up, it’s gonna be time for a good old-fashioned ass kicking.” Mr. Hamilton quiets down, knowing that anything he says will not improve his situation.

The uniform officer arrives with sirens and flashing blue lights. Driving into the parking lot of Lynn’s Photography Studio, the officer immediately sees the problem. Seeing he is now stuck between a rock and a hard place, Mr. Hamilton exclaims, “shit!” Braden instructs Mr. Hamilton, “shut your fat ass! You’ll get your chance to talk in just a minute. In the mean time, I don’t wanna hear any profanity coming out of your fat ass.” Mr. Hamilton informs Braden, “you can’t talk to me that way! I’m a county commissioner!” Braden succinctly replies, “oh, yeah? Stop me.”

Knowing both Eddie and Braden, Officer Gerrard walks up and asks, “what do we got here?” Braden replies, “we caught these two assholes right here at the corner of Burglary and Larceny breaking into Lynn’s studio, stealing a bunch of her photography equipment. It’s all sitting right there, in the trunk of their car.” Officer Gerrard tells his partner, Officer Greene, “go check it out. See what we got.”

Describing the method of operation, Braden continues, explaining, “they cut a hole in one of the back windows and bypassed the alarm system. The woman entered the business, and passed the equipment out to Mr. Hamilton.” Taking a look at the perpetrator and raising his eyebrows, Officer Gerrard asks Braden, “do you mean Frank Hamilton, the county commissioner?” Braden replies, “that’s the guy.” Officer Gerrard comments, “I can see that this is going to be a really long night.” After all, politicians are masters of getting off on technicalities, so the police have to dot every I and cross every T.

Officer Gerrard asks Eddie and Braden, “what brings you guys out here this late at night?” Making up a bit of a story, Eddie explains, “my alarm went off, so I drove to the station. Maybe those two got too close to the proximity sensor wire on my back wall and set it off. When I got here, those two were prowling around. So, I called Braden. Then, I got my camera, went up to the roof, and took some photos.” Officer Gerrard exclaims, “wait a second! You have pictures of those two breaking in?” Eddie replies, “yeah. Thirty-six shots. I’ll get Lynn to develop the film in the morning.” Realizing there is potential concrete evidence in this case, Officer Gerrard is somewhat relieved.

With a cut and dry case, Officer Gerrard cuffs Mr. Hamilton and Margo, placing them in the back of his patrol car. Officer Gerrard then examines the rear window with Eddie and Braden. Eddie mentions to Officer Gerrard, “I’ll get Mark out here in the morning to replace the window or, at least, secure it.” Officer Gerrard instructs Eddie, “don’t disturb anything until the crime scene unit gets out here tomorrow morning.” Using the exact phrase that Mr. Hamilton hates, Eddie replies, “got it.”

Officer Gerrard and Officer Greene take care of business, bagging the evidence, verifying the ownership of Mr. Hamilton’s vehicle, and notifying the main precinct that they are on their way. Once the patrol car is out of sight, Eddie retrieves his camera from the office. Eddie and Braden walk back through the portal, arriving at their place and time.

Walking back into the service station, and returning to their time and place, Eddie tells Braden, “I wonder how this worked out.” Braden replies, “I guess we’re gonna find out soon.” Eddie informs Braden, “I

need to go back in time to the day after the break in and give the film to Lynn.” Braden replies, “that’s right! I almost forgot about that!” Eddie tells Braden, “I’ll be right back, bro.” Eddie heads back into the portal, planning to deliver the evidence to Lynn.

Eddie returns from delivering the film, telling Braden, “it’s all done, bro.” Braden replies, “I’m glad we got that taken care of. Lynn was really upset when she got broken in to. But, at least, now she’ll get her stuff back.” Eddie suggests, “let’s take the rest of the afternoon off.” Braden replies, “that sounds like a good idea to me! There’s a football game I want to watch!” Eddie and Braden head out, and will find out exactly how they changed the future over the next few days.

The Autumn semester brings the annual coach’s meeting of the divisional track coaches. During the meeting, the topics of discussion include reviewing the order of events at the meets, any proposed rule changes, setting the meet dates for the following academic year, and any other issues that may be of concern to the teams in the division. This year, there are several applications for new meet officials that must be approved. Oddly, over the last two decades, the agenda has appeared to leave ample room for scrutinizing the University’s track and field program.

Representing the University this year is Mr. Frazier, who is now sixty years old, Dr. Leighton, Dr. Karakova, Mark Svoboda, and Kathy Bogenskaya. Dr. Karakova, being the regional rules expert, attends the meeting every year. Kathy, who attended the meeting for the last three years, decided to attend again this year. Mark is attending the meeting today purely for entertainment purposes and the hope of messing with someone.

When the introduction of today’s attendees comes to the University’s table, Dr. Peter Gregory, the chairman, announces, “representing the State University, please welcome Mr. George Frazier, Dr. Athena Leighton, and Katherine Karakova.” The attendees clap, which is generally accepted to be the appropriate protocol. Once the clapping subsides, Kathy corrects Dr. Gregory, announcing, “that’s Doctor Katarina Bogenskaya, not Katherine Karakova.” Dr. Gregory sarcastically replies, “well, I was close.” Kathy replies, “close only counts if you’re throwing a hand grenade, Dr. Gregory.” The attendees laugh at Kathy’s remark. And, you can be sure that Dr. Gregory will not make that mistake again.

Trying to recover from his mishap, Dr. Gregory cordially asks Mr. Frazier, “and, who is the new member of your coaching staff this year, Mr. Frazier?” Ticked off about Dr. Gregory’s treatment of Kathy, Mr. Frazier replies, “joining us for the meeting this year is Coach Mark

Svoboda. I'm sure many of you recognize the name. Mr. Svoboda is our field events coach. He's the one responsible for coaching our field events team to their enormous victories for the last five years." What Mr. Frazier is alluding to is that, under Mark's coaching, the field events team has taken the gold medal and silver medal in every event for every meet during the last five years. And, the sly Dr. Gregory knew full and well the identity of the new member sitting at the University's table.

During the other introductions, pointing to a table at the other side of the room, Kathy whispers to Mark, "look who's back." Seeing a past problem, Mark whispers back, "he must have gotten out of jail." At the other side of the room is Dr. James Nicholson, who was convicted of brandishing a weapon and various charges associated with gambling fifteen years ago. Kathy taps Mr. Frazier on the shoulder, whispering to him, "look who's back again at the Dogpatch University table." Laughing under his breath, Mr. Frazier whispers to Kathy, "we'd better start watching out for the spies again."

Once the introductions are completed, one item of interest on the agenda is that of the indoor 1,500-meter event. Dr. Gregory announces, "the first item on today's agenda is the 1,500 meter run. In other divisions around the country, the 1,500 meter run is being replaced with the 1,600-meter run during the indoor season. The proposal has been made in our division to replace the 1,500 meter event with the 1,600-meter event. At this time I'd like to open the floor for discussion on the matter." No discussion, however, should be necessary. The 1,600-meter event is the new standard.

Mark sits back, wondering if the meeting, which just began, can get any more boring. If Mark had his way, he'd go back to the introduction of Kathy, and mess with Dr. Gregory. But, Mark, a bit older now, has to behave himself, in theory anyway. Mark may be outwardly behaving, but you can be sure that, inwardly, his mind is not.

Mr. Crumpler, who always has something to complain about, asks, "why, exactly, are we doing this?" Dr. Gregory replies, "the change is being made solely for the reason I stated. The 1,600-meter run is the new standard. Our division, sooner or later, will have to conform to the new standard." Mr. Crumpler, a bit on the inept side, replies, asking, "so, the finish lines will have to be re-marked for that one race?" Showing his ignorance, Dr. Gregory replies, "I'm not sure that will be the case for every track."

Somewhat annoyed at the lack of knowledge of Dr. Gregory and Mr. Crumpler, Dr. Karakova interjects, "may I address this subject, sir." Hoping that some light can be shed on the subject, Dr. Gregory replies,

“sure. Go ahead, Dr. Karakova.” Dr. Karakova stands and, walking around, orates, “the 1,500-meter run on a 200-meter track is seven and one half laps. The 1,600-meter run, on the same size track, would be eight laps. So, the starting line and the finish line would be the same, as in the other races run indoors. And, I might add, the 1,500-meter run is the only indoor distance event run on the 200-meter oval track where the starting line and finish line are not in the same location. I don’t really see how this would be a technical issue at all for any track.” It is, perhaps, an issue for the mathematically challenged Mr. Crumpler or logistically challenged Dr. Gregory.

During the discussion, Mark whispers to Kathy, “the only thing I see is that it will take our distance team ten more seconds to beat the competition.” Kathy replies, “seriously. I don’t see what the big deal is.” Overhearing Mark and Kathy’s conversation, Athena whispers to them, “these guys would argue about the time on the clock should the issue come up.” Mark laughs, telling Athena, “maybe I should propose that we shift to using metric time next season.” Kathy laughs, and whispers, “I haven’t heard about metric time in a long time!”

After a long and unnecessary discussion, the resolution is finally passed, replacing the 1,500-meter event with the 1,600-meter event during both the indoor and outdoor seasons this year. As the discussion moves on to a few more boring topics, Mark sits back and studies the format of exchange between the coaches, waiting patiently for the main event to begin.

Mid morning, Dr. Gregory finally gets to the subject he has been waiting all year to address, boldly announcing, “I do believe, my fellow coaches and colleagues, that the time has come for another full financial and academic audit of the teams in our division. My concern again is that one team in particular has clearly dominated the division for an extended period of time. It is inconceivable to me that one team in particular can attain such domination while, at the same time, operating within the same budgetary and academic constraints and rules as the other teams in the division.” As Dr. Gregory expresses his concern, Mark smiles, knowing that the shit show he has been waiting for is about to begin.

Clearly knowing to which university Dr. Gregory is referring, Dr. Leighton interrupts Dr. Gregory’s presentation, and asks, “may I ask, sir, for the record, to which university you are referring?” Dr. Gregory replies, “Dr. Leighton, it is clear as day that I am referring to your University. I think everyone in the room, including you, knows that.” Dr. Leighton replies, “really, Dr. Gregory? I’m glad you clarified your stance as to which university you are speaking of. What seems to be your

problem this year, sir, if you don't mind me asking?" Just fueling the fire for the fun of it, Dr. Leighton clearly has mastered the art of psychological warfare and does so in quite an eloquent manner. Truth be told, Dr. Gregory is not only very intimidated by Dr. Leighton's presentation style, but also by Dr. Leighton herself.

Caught off guard by Dr. Leighton's forthright response, Dr. Gregory shuffles a few papers, thinking of how to answer. During the interlude, Mr. Frazier whispers to Dr. Alexander Karakova, "it sounds like Athena is going in for the kill early this year." Dr. Karakova replies, "Dr. Gregory hasn't learned his lesson yet. He pulls this crap nearly every year, and it gets him nowhere." Overhearing Mr. Frazier and Dr. Karakova's conversation, Kathy whispers to them, "but, at the very least, it's really kind of fun to watch." With a momentary pause in the discussion, Kathy wants to respond, "waiting", but, at this phase in her life, she knows she quite can't get away with it.

About a minute passes by, prompting Dr. Leighton to break Dr. Gregory's silence by asking, "please elaborate, Dr. Gregory, on what your specific complaint is. And, please don't entertain me with your plethora of ridiculous complaints, such as the existence of pollen on the track, as you have done in the past. Also, please do not entertain either I or the other coaches representing my University with generalities, such as 'one team in particular has clearly dominated the division' or with vague and nonspecific budgetary or academic issues. As I've mentioned in previous meetings, our University has endured any scrutiny we've been subjected to. And, we will certainly endure any audit that you have planned this year."

Attempting to also orate in an eloquent manner, Dr. Gregory responds, "Dr. Leighton, I think it is clear that everyone here in this room is tired of the dominance of one team in the division. Unilateral dominance completely kills the spirit of competition during our divisional meets. I also might add that, in the four-way meets, the goal has become to come in second place when your team is participating. With your University's track record, it is clear that something is going on that is not quite above board. That, in itself, would suggest a full-scale audit and investigation is in order."

Not liking Dr. Gregory's accusation in the least bit, Dr. Leighton replies, "please allow me the opportunity to take what you just said, Dr. Gregory, and turn it around 180 degrees, and repeat it back to you, if I may." Referring to the notes that she just took, Dr. Leighton tells Dr. Gregory, "Dr. Gregory, I think it is clear that everyone here in this room is tired of the poor performance of one particular team in the division, specifically yours. Unilateral inferior performance completely kills the

spirit of competition during our divisional meets. I also might mention that, when your team is participating in a four-way meet, the four-way meets are actually three-way meets. With your University's track record, it is clear that something is going on financially where scholarship money is being diverted to some other cause. That, in itself, suggests that both an in-depth audit and an investigation are in order." As the level of snickering rises, Dr. Leighton asks Dr. Gregory, "shall I go on?" Dr. Gregory replies, "that was quite uncalled for, Dr. Leighton." Dr. Leighton replies, "and, so were your comments, Dr. Gregory. If you persist in singling out our University, please expect the same in return. And, for the record, I am still waiting for your response."

Meanwhile, Mark is paying close attention, watching as Dr. Leighton begins to make mincemeat out of Dr. Gregory. Mark observes that, at the higher academic level, people still mess with other people, albeit in a slightly more civilized manner.

Interrupting the exchange, Mr. Crumpler stands and, taking the floor, exclaims, "I can't believe this! We're all tired of not standing a chance of winning anything in the divisional meets!" Mark yells out to Mr. Crumpler, "so, train more. Deal with it." Now hot under the collar, Mr. Crumpler, who apparently was not paying attention earlier when Mark was introduced, asks Mark, "and, just who are you?" Mark calmly replies, "Mark Svoboda. Maybe you remember me from when that crazy Major Nachlobrocklin guy ran for your university."

Now fuming and expressing his frustration, Mr. Crumpler hammers his fist on the table, and exclaims, "you people have to be stopped!" Remembering what Dr. Zunde once said, Mark calmly replies, "I agree. Your job is to stop us on the track. So, stop us. Go for it, junior. Waiting." In response to Mark, Mr. Crumpler again slams his fist on the table, getting his anger across, but not his point, if he even had one. And, Mark has learned from Dr. Zunde that the calmer one responds to another person's anger, the more likely the other person is to fly off the handle.

Attempting to stop the heated exchange between Mark and Mr. Crumpler, Dr. Gregory yells out, "hold on, here. Hold on. Everyone, please calm down!" Mark replies, "I am calm," which cannot be disputed. Mr. Crumpler throws his hands in the air, exclaiming, "doesn't anyone get it?" Mark calmly comments, "he's obviously not calm," fueling the fire even more. Attempting to regain control of the meeting, Dr. Gregory announces, "okay. Let's back up and take this one item at a time." Mark whispers under his breath, "don't strip your gears," causing Kathy to laugh, which does not go unnoticed by Dr. Gregory.

Once everyone calms down, Mr. Frazier announces, “if you’d like, I can clarify the issue at hand.” Expecting a more civilized response from Mr. Frazier than he received from Mark, Dr. Gregory replies, “sure. Go ahead Mr. Frazier.” Mr. Frazier boldly announces, “if you want to win more, there’s one very important technique you must teach your athletes, which some of you obviously have not been doing.” Mr. Frazier pauses, waiting for a response from Dr. Gregory or the audience. Fifteen long seconds go by, prompting Dr. Gregory to ask Mr. Frazier, “well? Are you willing to share that with us, Mr. Frazier?” Mr. Frazier announces, “sure. It’s simple. If you want to win, have your athletes put one foot in front of the other faster than their opponent!”

Mr. Frazier’s response draws a plethora of hissing, laughter, discussion, and anger from the audience. Among those laughing is Athena, who whispers to Mr. Frazier, “you’ve really done it now, George! Our secret is out!” Mr. Frazier smiles, and replies, “I’m just waiting for one of them to tell me that it doesn’t work.” Athena laughs, replying, “as long as your opponent’s legs aren’t a lot longer than yours!” Dr. Gregory, of course, ignores Mr. Frazier’s comment, writing it off as yet more antagonism from the University’s table. But, Dr. Gregory started it. He should not expect less in return.

Once everyone again calms down, looking down his written list of complaints, Dr. Gregory announces, “the first item on the list, Dr. Leighton, is the advanced placement high school classes offered by your University that are clearly a training ground for your University’s track team. These so-called advanced placement physical education classes in track and field are clearly a training class for your future track and field athletes. Would you care to explain to us, Dr. Leighton, the details of this highly secretive training program?”

Perceiving Dr. Gregory’s sarcasm, Dr. Leighton replies, “no. I would prefer not to respond, sir. But, since you brought it up, let me clarify one issue. The classes we offer are not ‘advanced placement’ classes as you alluded to. Advanced placement classes are conducted at a high school. Dual enrollment classes are conducted at a college or university. Please learn the difference, sir. But, anyway, since you asked, the track and field classes offered to high school students in a dual enrollment arrangement clearly falls under the jurisdiction of the University’s academic program. As I told you repeatedly in the past, If you even attempt to disallow those classes being open to eligible high school students, you’ll have to completely eliminate any and all dual enrollment classes offered by every college or university in the entire country. You, sir, are not even remotely prepared to fight that battle.”

Not accepting Dr. Leighton's answer and having no recourse, Dr. Gregory moves on to the second item on his agenda, stating, "it is my understanding that Mark Svoboda is one of the instructors of those physical education classes. Mr. Svoboda does not have an advanced degree, precluding him from teaching that class. Any comment?" Dr. Leighton replies, "Mark Svoboda is officially listed as a teaching assistant and equipment manager for the Introduction to Field Events, Advanced Field Events, Introduction to Track, and Advanced Track classes. Either I or Doctor Katarina Bogenskaya is officially listed as the instructor of those classes. And, please be reminded that Dr. Bogenskaya, as her title suggests, does have an advanced degree, thus allowing her to teach at both the undergraduate and graduate level." Dr. Gregory frankly tells Dr. Leighton, "you don't really expect any of us to believe that Mr. Svoboda is not the primary instructor of the field events class, now do you, Dr. Leighton?" Dr. Leighton replies, "teaching assistants assist the instructor, which is exactly what Mr. Svoboda does, Dr. Gregory." It is clear that Dr. Gregory knows that Mark plays a bigger role than that of a teaching assistant.

Wanting to gain the other teams' support in his case, Dr. Gregory informs Dr. Leighton, "and, is it my understanding that Mr. George Frazier is also an instructor of those classes?" In a play of words, Dr. Leighton nonchalantly replies, "I don't know. Is that your understanding?" Now angry, Dr. Gregory asks Dr. Leighton, "let me get right to the point, Dr. Leighton. Is Mr. George Frazier an instructor of any of those classes you mentioned?" Dr. Leighton replies, "no. Mr. Frazier's official position is that of a teaching assistant of those classes. As I informed you just a moment ago, Dr. Gregory, either Kathy Bogenskaya or myself is listed as the instructor of those classes." Backed into a corner, Dr. Gregory shuffles a few more papers, trying to think of a suitable response to Dr. Leighton.

Years ago, Dr. Gregory has discovered that Mr. Frazier has only a bachelor's degree and lacks any advanced degree, and therefore technically not qualified to be a professor at the university level. Being one of the highest paid employees at the University, Mr. Frazier is unconcerned about his lowly academic title of *Teaching Assistant*. Mr. Frazier's only concern is winning. And, it is clear to Dr. Leighton that Dr. Gregory is looking for a technicality in order to bring a complaint against the University.

Recalling the past, and realizing he will get nowhere with the issue of the dual enrollment classes offered to high school students or the qualifications of the instructors, Dr. Gregory moves on to his third complaint, announcing, "another issue that seems to be a chronic departure from what is normal, Dr. Leighton, is the subject matter of

theses leading to advanced degrees at your University.” Ready for some entertainment, Dr. Leighton sarcastically replies, “really, Dr. Gregory? I don’t know what goes on at your university, but any theses proposals and the granting of advanced degrees at our University falls under the academic program at our University, not the athletic program. So, I can’t even begin to imagine to what you are referring. Will you please elaborate?”

Mr. Frazier sits back with his arms crossed, and whispers to Dr. Karakova, “I think Athena is all warmed up and is ready to rip Gregory to shreds.” Dr. Karakova whispers back, “Gregory doesn’t have a leg to stand on. Even he knows that. He’s tried this angle a few times in the past. And, every time it’s gotten him nowhere.”

Continuing the heated yet superficially cordial exchange, Dr. Gregory, combating Dr. Leighton, complains, “let’s just take a look at some of the thesis material from the past few academic years at your University. Thesis number one. *Commonly Available Performance Enhancing Supplements and Drugs and their Effect on Aerobic Performance*. Thesis number two. *Novel Techniques to Inappropriately Engage the Fight or Flight Mechanism Prior to Athletic Competition*. I think we’ve seen that topic a few times before. Thesis number three. *Chronic Engagement of the Fight or Flight Mechanism and its Detrimental Effects on Athletic Performance*. Thesis number four. *The Biochemistry of Mitochondrial Proliferation in Muscle Tissue through Exercise Modification and Nutritional Supplementation, and the Resultant Performance Increases on the Athletic Field*. Thesis number five. *The Effect of Intense Exercise in Extreme Weather Conditions and its Relationship to Sympathetic / Parasympathetic Nervous System Tone*. Thesis number six. *Intensive Interval Training and its Causative Relationship to Angiogenesis in Tissue Undergoing a Shift from Aerobic to Anaerobic Metabolism and the Associated Neuroplasticity of the Efferent Peripheral Nerves*. Now, I don’t know about anyone else here but, from what I understand from some of my colleagues, there is more to that particular thesis than is revealed in the research.”

Kathy whispers to Athena, “what business are those theses of his? And, how is he bringing up my Ph.D. thesis?” Athena replies, “I can only imagine.” Kathy, who got the idea from her counterpart in the red universe, went back to the University and got her Ph.D. in Exercise Science several years ago. Kathy’s thesis was identical to her counterpart’s thesis in the red universe. But, after all, it was, in a sense, her own work, just in a different realm.

Continuing with his complaint, Dr. Gregory confidently orates, “and, here’s a very interesting thesis, Dr. Leighton. *The Metabolic Effects of*

Psychochubin on Athletic Performance on the Sports Field. When one of our students was at your library, this particular thesis was found to be completely redacted, with the first page of the text reading, ‘The material content of this thesis has been classified and is now unavailable to the general public.’ I’m sure we can all agree that, by the title of this particular thesis and the redaction of the associated content, the material discussed in this thesis is surely suggestive of some sort of serious rule violation. And, I can’t even begin to imagine what this Psychochubin substance is. It sounds like some type of elite performance-enhancing drug. And, in the title section, even the name of the student obtaining a doctorate degree from this research has been redacted.”

Mark smiles, hearing Dr. Leighton tell Dr. Gregory, “the best person to address that particular thesis, Dr. Gregory, is Mark Svoboda. If you would like, I’ll let Mr. Svoboda address your concerns regarding that specific thesis because, be assured, sir, I will not be addressing it.” Not given much choice in the matter, Dr. Gregory replies, “I would certainly like to hear what Mr. Svoboda has to say. I’m sure everyone else in this room would also be interested.” Kathy, knowing what is coming, is trying her hardest not to crack up.

Mark takes the floor, explaining, “thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this very important subject. The thesis entitled *The Metabolic Effects of Psychochubin on Athletic Performance On the Sports Field* deals with a very specific distraction technique that is very effective not only on the sports field, but in many other environments as well.” Dr. Karakova, Mr. Frazier, Dr. Leighton, and Kathy sit back, curious to see how Mark will present his subject matter.

Mark advises the group, “to properly understand what this thesis is about, I’ll have to give you the history behind it.” Dr. Gregory, wanting the whole story, tells Mark, “please, Mr. Svoboda, go right ahead.” Mark continues, “back when I was in ninth grade, Dr. Zunde was my health class instructor. Dr. Zunde was discussing hallucinogenic drugs, and why they are dangerous. During the class, he discussed marijuana, LSD, and psilocybin. Back then, I didn’t know how to spell psilocybin, so Eddie Bogenskaya spelled it out for me. I’m sure you guys all remember Eddie. I told Eddie that I’m never going to remember psilocybin for the test. So, Eddie told me to do a word association thing. Back then, we had a crazy gym teacher, whose name was Mr. Chubin. Well, we thought he was crazy. But, he really wasn’t crazy. Mr. Chubin just pushed athletes to the limit of their physical performance, where gains are made. That’s why his cross country team was always undefeated back then, and still is today. But, anyway, Eddie told me, ‘psilocybin sounds like psycho Chubin. So, remember it that way, psilocybin - psycho

Chubin.’ After Eddie explained that to me, I got it down. When the test came, one question was ‘List three hallucinogenic drugs.’ So, I wrote marijuana, LSD, and psycho Chubin. Dr. Zunde thought that was kind of funny. So did the rest of the class. And, Pete Chubin is still at Northside High and is the cross country coach. He always has an undefeated season.” Remembering the story about psycho Chubin quite well, Mr. Frazier laughs to himself, albeit very quietly.

In a somewhat angry tone and still in the dark, Dr. Gregory hastily asks, “exactly where are you going with this, Mr. Svoboda?” Mark firmly replies, “hey, chill out. I’m getting to that. I’m almost done.” Mark continues, explaining, “so, getting back to the thesis on the subject of *The Metabolic Effects of Psychochubin on Athletic Performance on the Sports Field*, you really have to be a special kind of stupid to believe that was a real thesis topic. There’s no such thing as Psychochubin. Me and Eddie made that up in ninth grade.” Mark smiles, informing everyone, “that thesis was put in the library as a distraction technique, and it looks to me like it worked real well. Even you fell for it.” Making Dr. Gregory appear like a complete fool, Mark expresses the silliest grin as laughter breaks out among the other teams’ coaches.

A few minutes later, as the laughter and discussion finally subsides, Mark announces to the group, “there are a few other theses in our library that were placed there purely for distraction purposes. But, I’ll let you guys figure out which ones they are. One of them sounds very technical and convincing, but it’s really a bunch of mumbo jumbo techno-bullshit. Why don’t you send a few of your spies over to our library to see if they can figure out which one it is?” Mark then takes his seat, prompting a few private discussions among the coaches regarding his unexpected explanation.

Once Mark is seated, Athena whispers to Mark, “I wasn’t aware of any other theses placed in our library that were intended to be distractions to the spies.” Mark replies, “there weren’t any others that I know of. I just made that up. I just messed with them again, and they didn’t even know it.” Athena, Mr. Frazier, Dr. Karakova, and Kathy all laugh hysterically, knowing that Mark is still the master of messing with people.

Still on the subject of theses, Athena asks Dr. Gregory, “what specifically, Dr. Gregory, was your concern regarding the thesis entitled *Intensive Interval Training and its Causative Relationship to Angiogenesis in Tissue Undergoing a Shift from Aerobic to Anaerobic Metabolism and the Associated Neuroplasticity of the Efferent Peripheral Nerves?*” Dr. Gregory replies, “it is my understanding that what is discussed in that thesis cannot occur without the use of anabolic

steroids, and the part of the subject matter addressing anabolic steroids has been totally redacted from the thesis.” Dr. Leighton replies, “well, Dr. Gregory, it might surprise you, but your understanding would be wrong.” Dr. Gregory tells Dr. Leighton, “you sound very confident of yourself, Dr. Leighton.” Dr. Leighton replies, “I should be confident. I was the faculty advisor for that research, and Dr. Kathy Bogenskaya, sitting with us here today, was the researcher.” If Dr. Gregory even bothered to read the thesis, he would have known that.

Now wanting to hear more, Dr. Gregory asks, “can you discuss this topic with us, Dr. Leighton?” Dr. Leighton replies, “absolutely not.” Dr. Gregory asks, “may I ask why not?” Dr. Leighton replies, “for two reasons. First, the subject matter discussed in the thesis is far more advanced than the ability of the average Ph.D. to comprehend. And secondly, I presume you can read. So, purchase a copy of the thesis and read it for yourself. Good luck understanding it.”

During the verbal ping pong match between Dr. Leighton and Dr. Gregory, Mark whispers to Kathy, “the price of that thesis just went way up.” Kathy replies, “yeah. But, it’s not like he’d understand anything in it anyway.” Kathy’s father, Dr. Karakova, mentions, “and, not to mention, a lot of the pertinent research associated with Kathy’s thesis is locked away in the exercise science lab. Good luck to Dr. Gregory if he ever wants to see the research.”

Hearing her name mentioned, Kathy listens as Dr. Gregory tells Dr. Leighton, “perhaps we can get Kathy to discuss the subject matter with us.” Interrupting Dr. Gregory, Kathy boldly announces, “I’d be glad to. If we can get enough people to sign up, I’ll conduct a seminar. My fee will be two-thousand dollars per attendee.” Dr. Karakova quietly laughs under his breath at his daughter’s remark, knowing that many of the coaches in the room would rather continue to lose rather than pay for valuable knowledge that would better enable their teams to win.

Realizing he is getting nowhere with the University’s coaching staff, Dr. Gregory announces, “well, this looks like a good time to take a fifteen-minute break. When we return, we’ll discuss the schedule for the next academic year and review the applicants for the open meet official positions.” The University’s coaching staff takes a well-needed break, especially after discussing a few topics that should have never been on the agenda.

During the break, Mr. Frazier mentions to his group, “it looks like the spies are at it again. Honestly, I never expected them to find Mark’s thesis on psycho Chubin in the library.” Mark reassures Mr. Frazier, “I told you someone would find it.” Mr. Frazier smiles, and concedes, “well,

it looks like I lost this bet.” Dr. Karakova curiously asks, “how much was the wager?” Mark replies, “the usual. A pizza.” Kathy informs her father, “that’s what all bets are. A pizza.” Dr. Karakova smiles, and replies, “I should have known.”

Returning from the break, Dr. Gregory calls the meeting to order, then announces, “I believe we can now move on to discussing the schedule for the next calendar year.” Sharply interrupting, Mr. Crumpler exclaims, “we haven’t finished discussing the audit of Dr. Leighton and Mr. Frazier’s University yet! There are still a lot of unanswered questions!” Tired of the shit show, Mr. Frazier yells out to Mr. Crumpler, “fire away!”

Attempting to regain control of the meeting, Dr. Gregory yells out, “hold on, here. Hold on. What exactly is your concern, Mr. Crumpler?” Mr. Crumpler exclaims, “my concern? My concern is my team has absolutely nothing to look forward to in this Winter’s divisional meet! It’s the same thing every year. We, like many of you here, show up for the meet, and go home with nothing! Absolutely nothing!”

Not knowing how to respond to Mr. Crumpler nor really wanting to respond, Dr. Gregory asks the University’s coaching staff, “would anyone like to take the opportunity to respond to Mr. Crumpler’s concern?” Speaking for the University, Dr. Leighton bluntly replies, “no.” Repeating Dr. Leighton’s answer, Dr. Gregory replies, “no? That’s it?” Dr. Leighton replies, “that is correct, sir. And, for the record, ‘no’ is a complete sentence, a discussion terminus, and does not need further elaboration, unless, of course, you’re dealing with a three-year old.” Laughter breaks out among the coaches, suggesting that Dr. Leighton is clearly winning this year’s verbal battle.

Not liking the fact that his complaint is being shoved aside, Mr. Crumpler exclaims, “how can we have a dialog if Dr. Leighton won’t even address the subject?” Still with no answers, Dr. Gregory looks at the University’s coaching staff, and asks, “would anyone else care to respond?” Already agreeing ahead of time that they would not address the subject introduced by Mr. Crumpler, Mr. Frazier responds for the University’s coaching staff, “Mark already answered your question earlier. Perhaps you missed it.” Mr. Crumpler asks Mr. Frazier, “and, what exactly did Mark say?” Mr. Frazier tells Mr. Crumpler, “if I am not mistaken, Mark told you to ‘train more.’” Mr. Crumpler sarcastically replies, asking, “train more? That’s the answer? Train more?” Saving Mr. Frazier the trouble of responding, and taking Mr. Crumpler’s question to be a statement, Mark quickly responds, “I’m glad you agree.”

Mr. Crumpler stands up, angrily announcing, “doesn’t anyone get it? What is the point of my team showing up at a meet if we don’t even stand a chance of winning?” Mark also stands up, and responds to Mr. Crumpler, telling him and everyone else, “good observation on your part. If you don’t show up at the meet, you can’t possibly win.” Referring to Mark, Mr. Crumpler looks at Dr. Gregory, begging him, “can’t you do something about him?” Mark tells Mr. Crumpler, “hey, junior! I’m not the one having a shit fit here.”

Mentally defeated in dealing with Mark and the rest of the University’s coaching staff, Mr. Crumpler sternly informs Dr. Gregory, “I don’t think we can move on unless this subject is addressed, sir!” Again not knowing how to respond, Dr. Gregory tells Mr. Crumpler, “we’re apparently not making any forward progress on this subject, Mr. Crumpler. I plan to introduce the subject of another audit at the high-level divisional meeting later this Fall.” Mr. Crumpler reminds Dr. Gregory, “what good is that going to do? All of your audits have gotten us nowhere!” Mark whispers, “neither has your training,” which is heard by those at the adjacent tables as evidenced by the outburst of laughter.

The voice of another coach in the division is then heard announcing in a distinct Russian accent, “may I have something to say, Coach Gregory?” Gladly giving up the floor, Dr. Gregory replies, “go right ahead, Mr. Pushkin.” Mr. Viktor Pushkin, a Russian immigrant, whose team is the second strongest in the division, stands, and relates to his audience, “when I was back in Russia, I coached track and field at Moscow State University. When I came to this country, I coached high school track for a few years. I consider myself fortunate to have met George Frazier when I was coaching high school. We have been very good friends since. We speak many times during the year, and I have learned a lot from him.”

Dr. Gregory and the others in attendance are now wondering what Mr. Pushkin has to say. And, so is Mr. Frazier. Mr. Pushkin continues, explaining, “I don’t believe, my friends, that these ceaseless audits and complaining will get you anywhere. I would strongly suspect that, should Mr. Frazier take a position as the track coach at your university, in a few years, your university will be winning just as much as Mr. Frazier’s University is right now. Would your university complain then? The superior athletes all want to attend where there is the best coaching and winning teams. We see this all the time in football and basketball. No one can deny that. Why not in track and field?” Silence falls over the room, which is finally filled with logic rather than emotion.

Not hearing any response, Mr. Pushkin raises his voice, and continues, “now, listen to me, all of you! I have something very important to say to you. Until you tell high school students where they can and can’t go to college, none of the complaining you are doing here will do you any good. Back in my home country, the freedom to choose your future is very limited compared to this country. You should be grateful for the freedoms that you do have in this country. Trust me. None of you want to go down the path of telling high school students what their future will be. I left all that behind. I don’t want to see it again. Once in a lifetime is enough.” Applause erupts as Mr. Pushkin takes his seat. Mr. Pushkin could say a lot more, but he apparently got his point across. And, it does appear that only three or four of the twelve universities in the division chronically air a complaint against the University since Mr. Frazier has been the head coach.

Athena whispers to Mr. Frazier, “he does have a very good point, George. Hopefully, what he said will put an end to this nonsense.” Mr. Frazier replies, whispering, “I hope so, unless Mark has something more to say.” Mr. Frazier seems to enjoy the yearly entertainment. So does Dr. Leighton. But, they can only take so much of Dr. Gregory’s nonsense.

Mr. Pushkin’s remarks have apparently caused Dr. Gregory to back down from his threats of scrupulous audits, at least for the moment. The meeting moves on, with the attendees hoping to cover the remaining ground quickly, since most of them will have the remainder of the day off. Truth is, unnecessary audits cost universities money, money that is better spent elsewhere.

By mid afternoon, the meeting is adjourned, which could not have come soon enough for the University’s coaching staff. Dr. Karakova gives the coaching staff the rest of the afternoon off. But, they all were planning to take the rest of the day off anyway.

A week later, Todd McCutchen, not an invited customer, once again returns to Eddie’s Service Station. Driving in and parking in the customer parking area, McCutchen gets out of his vehicle, walks into the office, and takes a seat.

Eddie tells Bobby B., “McCrutchen just walked into the office. Let’s go see what he wants.” Bobby B. asks, “what? No rock - paper - scissors today?” Eddie replies, “no. All McCutchen could possibly be is free entertainment.” Bobby B. smiles, getting the hint of what may be directly ahead.

Eddie and Bobby B. walk into the office, wondering why, in the last few weeks, Todd McCutchen has a sudden interest in doing business at Eddie's Service Station. As McCutchen looks up, Eddie asks, "can you be helped?" McCutchen replies, "I want to get my car looked at." Eddie asks, "really? Which car is yours?" Pointing to his car, McCutchen replies, "the red one, out there." Taking a look out the window, Eddie tells McCutchen, "okay. I've taken a look at it. You can leave now." Suddenly angry, McCutchen brashly replies, "what? Is that how you treat your customers?" Eddie informs McCutchen, "you're not a customer, McCutchen. And, I really don't have the time to work on your vehicle. So, you can leave now." McCutchen should just get up and walk out, but he does not.

Hoping for some free entertainment, Bobby B. asks McCutchen, "what's wrong with your car?" McCutchen replies, "it doesn't steer well. It's hard to turn the steering wheel," which is a totally fabricated complaint. Bobby B. advises McCutchen, "there's a guy down on Sunrise Highway who specializes in that kind of problem. His name is Rusty Pivot. The name of his shop is Trusty Rusty's." Hearing that joke from Bobby B. before, Eddie laughs, but the take off on the mechanical defect of a rusty pivot goes right over McCutchen's head.

Belaboring the point, McCutchen asks, "so, why can't you work on my car?" Back to seriousness, Eddie replies, "one. Because I'm not open right now. And, two, my service station is not open to the general public." McCutchen asks, "what do you mean, your service station is not open to the public?" Eddie replies, "exactly that. We service the police department's vehicles, the county's vehicles, and a few of my friend's vehicles. We're not open to the public, McCutchen. You're not on the list. So, you can leave now." McCutchen takes a really good look around the office, taking note of a filing cabinet with a combination lock, heavy steel entry doors, and high-security deadbolts.

In the act of closely examining Eddie's office, McCutchen is caught off guard as Eddie raises his voice, firmly instructing McCutchen, "I said, you can leave now!" Bobby B. opens the door, asking McCutchen, "do you need any help?" McCutchen replies, "no." Waiting for McCutchen to leave, Eddie sarcastically tells McCutchen, "waiting." McCutchen gets out of his seat, and walks out the door. Bobby B. closes the door, as he and Eddie make sure McCutchen promptly leaves the property.

McCutchen leaves, but does not drive too far. Driving across the street into Vinnie's Body Shop, McCutchen pulls into a parking space with a good view of Eddie's Service Station. Bobby B. tells Eddie, "it looks like McCutchen is going to hang around for a while." Eddie replies, "let's get rid of him." Bobby B. asks, "how are we going to do

that?” Eddie replies, “I’ll call Vinnie. Vinnie will take care of him, his way.” Bobby B. smiles, knowing good and well the method by which Vinnie takes care of certain problems.

Eddie picks up the phone and calls Vinnie. Eddie explains the situation to Vinnie, including the fact that McCutchen was caught once before hanging out in Vinnie’s parking lot, monitoring the activity at Eddie’s Service Station. Vinnie is more than happy to help Eddie out. Knowing that something interesting is right around the corner, Eddie and Bobby B. each pull up a chair in front of the office window, sit back, put their feet up, and wait for the free entertainment to begin.

Eddie and Bobby B. watch as Vinnie comes out of the office, followed by Anthony, Luigi, and Mario. Bobby B. tells Eddie, “this is going to be good.” Across the street, Anthony quietly places a hydraulic jack under McCutchen’s right rear axle, and begins to jack up McCutchen’s car. Simultaneously, Vinnie taps on the driver’s side window, startling McCutchen, who has been staring across the street at Eddie’s Service Station.

McCutchen rolls down the window, yelling out, “what’s going on here?” Slapping a lug wrench into his hands, Vinnie replies, “I was going to ask you the same thing.” Wanting to get out of the area as soon as possible, McCutchen starts his engine and puts his car in reverse. McCutchen, however, goes nowhere, as his right rear tire, no longer in contact with the ground, spins. Vinnie tells McCutchen, “you should have bought a car with a limited slip differential, not this cheap piece of shit. Shut your engine off, and get out of the vehicle.” Fearful of disobeying, McCutchen shuts off his engine, and gets out of his car.

Vinnie authoritatively instructs McCutchen, “step over here with me.” Finding himself surrounded by Vinnie and three guys the size of Eddie, great fear comes across McCutchen’s face. Vinnie tells McCutchen, “this is the second time you’ve been parked in my parking lot. I don’t know who you are or what you’re doing here but, if I ever catch you around here again, your car is going to mysteriously end up in the ocean with you in it. And, no one would have seen a thing.” Now in fight or flight mode, McCutchen has no idea how to respond other than to have a panic attack.

Vinnie snaps his fingers, telling Anthony and Luigi, “go ahead and get to work.” Anthony procures a cement block as Luigi removes McCutchen’s right rear tire. In a panic, McCutchen exclaims, “what are they doing?” Vinnie calmly replies, “they’re disassembling your car. What does it look like they’re doing?” In desperation, McCutchen tries to get around Mario but is quickly blocked. Moving on to McCutchen’s left

rear tire, Luigi jacks up the vehicle as Anthony supports the axle with another cement block. Anthony and Luigi remove the left rear tire as McCutchen begins to panic even more.

Across the street, at Eddie's Service Station, Eddie mentions to Bobby B., "it looks like they're removing all his wheels." Bobby B. replies, "and, McCutchen isn't looking too good. He kind of looks stressed." Eddie replies, "I can see that. And, it definitely looks like he's outnumbered." Eddie and Bobby B. sit back, wondering what Vinnie and his guys will do next.

Back at the body shop, Anthony asks Vinnie, "what's next, boss?" Vinnie tells Anthony, "remove the hood. Then, remove the doors. Once you're done with that, remove the windshield and throw it in the dumpster. It has a bad crack in it." In a panic, McCutchen exclaims, "hey! Wait a second! There's no crack in my windshield!" Slapping his lug wrench into his hand, Vinnie replies, "there will be in just a minute. Just you wait."

Realizing that he is in a no-win situation, McCutchen tells Vinnie, "okay, okay! I'll leave! Tell them to stop!" Vinnie snaps his fingers. Anthony and Luigi slowly walk over to where Vinnie, Mario, and McCutchen are standing. Anthony looks at McCutchen, pointing his finger at McCutchen's face, sternly telling him, "what's the matter with you? The party is just getting started. And, you want to leave already?" Intimidated by Anthony, McCutchen is tongue tied.

Realizing that McCutchen is easy to intimidate, acting quite puzzled, Vinnie asks McCutchen, "what do you mean, 'stop'? I thought I heard you say that you wanted to sell this car to me for scrap metal." McCutchen screams out, "no, I didn't! I never said that! Please put my tires back on and I'll just leave!" Vinnie looks at Anthony, and calmly asks him, "Anthony, what did you hear this guy tell us?" Anthony replies, "he said he wanted to sell this car to us for scrap metal. Yeah, boss. You heard him correctly." Vinnie turns to Luigi, and asks, "Luigi, what did you hear this guy tell us?" Luigi replies, "he said he wanted to unload this piece of shit, boss." Vinnie then tells Mario, "Mario, tell me what you heard." Mario replies, "he said he wanted to sell this rust bucket for scrap, boss. He said he'd take fifty dollars for it. That's what I heard." Vinnie tells McCutchen, "well, what do you know? It looks like everyone here heard the same thing." McCutchen exclaims, "I don't want to sell my car for scrap metal!" Anthony tells Vinnie, "we already put a lot of work into this vehicle, boss. And, now he's changing his mind." With quite the mobster tone, Vinnie shakes his head, and replies, "somebody's gotta pay."

Vinnie pauses for a moment then, sternly looking at McCutchen, tells him, “there seems to be some confusion here. So, let me clear things up for you. You’d better put your car back together, and get it off my property, or otherwise I’m going to have it impounded. Got it?” McCutchen fearfully replies, “yeah. Yeah. I got it. I got it. I’ll be out of here as soon as I can.” Vinnie replies, “good. And, if you’re not gone by the time I leave, I’m impounding your car. Then, I’ll have you impounded by the police department for trespassing. Have a nice day.” Vinnie, Anthony, Luigi, and Mario head inside, taking the hydraulic jack with them. Not realizing how fortunate he is, McCutchen is left with the task of reinstalling his two rear wheels.

Across the street, at Eddie’s Service Station, Bobby B. tells Eddie, “well, that was pretty interesting.” Eddie replies, “yeah. I’d say. And, look at McCutchen. He’s trying to figure out how his jack works.” Seeing McCutchen work very slowly, Bobby B. surmises, “he’s going to be there for a while.” Eddie replies, “it serves him right. If I remember correctly, he tried to steal Tessa’s Dune Buggy once and, when his family’s legal bills began to mount up, they resorted to stealing cars.”

Seeing McCutchen having a verbal shit fit, Bobby B. tells Eddie, “I’m stepping outside for a minute. I want to hear this.” Seeing more potential free entertainment across the street, Eddie tells Bobby B., “I’m coming.” Eddie and Bobby B. walk out into the service area, lean against the building, hoping to hear the context of McCutchen’s temper tantrum.

Bobby B. asks Eddie, “what’s he saying? I can’t make any sense out of him.” Eddie replies, “you’re not missing much. McCutchen never made any sense anyway.” Eddie listens carefully, trying to make sense of McCutchen’s words. Repeating what McCutchen is saying, Eddie tells Bobby B., “the best I can figure out is he’s chanting, ‘rat a ta tat ta tat da tool. Rat a ta tat da tool. Rat a ta tat ta tat da tool. Rat a ta tat da tool.’” Listening again, Eddie tells Bobby B., “hold on. Wait a second. He’s got new lyrics. This verse is, ‘rat a ta jack, da jack, da tool. Rat a ta jack da tool.’” Bobby B. laughs, and exclaims, “what a loser!” Eddie replies, “yeah! I’d say!”

With an unusual idea, Eddie suggests, “hey, why don’t we go over there and pretend to help the poor little weasel out?” Realizing a comical exchange is on the horizon, Bobby B. replies, “yeah! Let’s do that!” Eddie and Bobby B. walk across the street, knowing there is more good free entertainment waiting for them.

Seeing Eddie and Bobby B. walk up, McCutchen exclaims, “what do you guys want?” Eddie replies, “we thought we come and help you out,

junior.” McCutchen brashly replies, “I don’t need any help.” Bobby B. comments, “yeah. I can see that. It looks like you’ll be done and out of here sometime before the sun sets.” McCutchen sternly tells Bobby B., “get out of here, or I’ll call the police!” Eddie laughs, telling McCutchen, “go ahead, junior. I’m sure Chief Hayes will come out here himself. I’m sure he’d like to see you again.” Years ago, McCutchen was placed behind bars by then Officer Richard Hayes. McCutchen just learned from Eddie that Officer Richard Hayes is now the police chief.

Not happy with Eddie and Bobby B’s. offer to help, McCutchen tells them, “you guys can’t even pump gas. I can handle this by myself. So, just get out of here.” Bobby B. smiles, telling Eddie, “well, good for him. Let’s go back to the office and read the manual on how to operate the gas pumps.” Eddie replies, “good idea, bro. I was wondering how the gas pumps worked.”

When Eddie and Bobby B. return to the service station, listening again to McCutchen’s verbal nonsensical entertainment, Eddie tells Bobby B., “now, he’s saying, ‘Rick flick a chick, star. Rick ‘ill flick a chick, star. Rick flick a chick, chick a chick a chick a chick.’” Bobby B. asks, “really? Who’s Rick, anyway? And, which chick is he flicking?” Quick with an answer, Eddie replies, “well, we brought up Chief Hayes. Rick is probably Chief Richard Hayes. McCutchen seriously hates Richard. Richard put McCutchen’s whole family behind bars at one time or another.” Bobby B. laughs, telling Eddie, “you got that right!” Eddie then mentions, “I really don’t know who the chick is, though.” Bobby B. comments, “he must be taking some really weird drugs. Probably psycho Chubin.”

Bobby B. listens to McCutchen’s continued chanting, laughs, and exclaims, “he’s trying to be a rap artist!” Eddie replies, “yeah. And, a pretty lousy one at that.” Bobby B. sighs, and tells Eddie, “well, I got a little work to do. I’d better get moving, otherwise my boss is going to fire me.” Eddie laughs, and replies, “little chance of that.” Eddie and Bobby B. get to work, both wondering what they were doing before McCutchen showed up.

An hour and a half later, McCutchen finally has both of his rear wheels reinstalled. McCutchen’s biggest obstacle was that the scissor jack that came with his car could not jack his car up high enough to remove the cement block placed under the axle by Vinnie’s men. But, fortunate for McCutchen, he was able to overcome that problem by finding a few two by fours laying around down the street to raise the height of his jack.

Watching as McCutchen drives away, Eddie tells Bobby B., “well, McCrutchen is finally out of here.” Bobby B. replies, “we really should have insisted that we help him.” Eddie laughs, replying, “yeah, right. Like that would have gone over well.” Recalling some history, Bobby B. tells Eddie, “we could have only installed one lug nut on each wheel. That’s what McCrutchen and Evans were doing during a party at your house sometime around our ten-year reunion.” Eddie replies, “yeah! That’s right! I remember that now. McCutchen likes to remove lug nuts from wheels. It’s funny how that got turned around on him.” Eddie and Bobby B. have a good laugh, then, instead of getting back to work, head out for the day.