

Eddie, The 25 Year Reunion

Chapter Three Christmas Break

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The evidence against Mr. Frank Hamilton and his daughter, Margo, is overwhelming. Now out on bail, Mr. Hamilton has attempted to spin the story surrounding the break in to his favor. Part of Mr. Hamilton's strategy is to discredit Eddie and Braden, claiming that he was framed. Word gets around town quickly, so Eddie is quite aware of what Mr. Hamilton is up to.

Several years ago, Eddie had a billboard installed on the property that he leased to Lynn. Half of the billboard on each side advertises for Eddie's Service Station, and the other half advertises for Lynn's Photography Studio. It's not that either Eddie or Lynn needs the advertising, but the billboard helps to identify their location.

Lynn walks over to Eddie's Service Station from her studio, hoping that Eddie is working today. Walking into the office, Lynn announces, "the billboard company just showed up a few minutes ago. Do you want to watch?" Eddie stands up, and replies, "sure. This is going to be good." Eddie and Lynn head outside, ready to watch the new poster go up on the billboard.

Taking a seat on the wall in front of the studio, Eddie and Lynn watch as the two workers install the new advertisement. Lynn asks Eddie, "when all this blows over, do you want to redo our ad?" Eddie replies, "we could do that. No problem. I was thinking about changing my ad anyway." Lynn offers, "I could come up with some new artwork." Eddie replies, "that would be good. And, both sides of the billboard don't have to be the same. We can add a little variety." Lynn exclaims, "that's great! I could advertise weddings on one side, and family portraits on the other!" Eddie and Lynn discuss possibilities, watching as the new billboard goes up.

Just happening to drive by as the crew is working on the billboard is Mark, who sees Eddie and Lynn sitting on the wall, watching as the new sign goes up. Pulling into Eddie's Service Station, Mark cannot resist the opportunity to check out the entertainment.

Walking up, once one side of the billboard has been installed, Mark announces, "well, I've been wondering when you were going to change the billboard." Eddie asks, "what do you think, bro?" Mark replies, "it looks great. Hamilton is really going to love it." Lynn interjects, "not as much as I love it. That guy and that jerk Margo are real losers." Eddie comments, "I wish I can be here the first time Hamilton sees it."

Mark asks Lynn, "so, how do you like the new windows?" Lynn replies, "they're great! And, since we never opened them anyway, it doesn't really matter that they're a solid piece of glass." Mark then asks, "and, how's the fresh air system working?" Lynn replies, "awesome. Now, I want one for my home. It's like there's fresh air in the studio all the time!" Mark offers, "we can do that at your home if you want. No problem." Lynn energetically replies, "sign me up!"

Mark, under Braden's recommendation, installed a one inch slab of tempered wired glass in a metal frame in place of the old wooden windows. And, the security system was upgraded to include proximity sensors along the back concrete wall, as is done at Eddie's Service Station. After all, sometime in the future, Eddie's son, Eddie, Jr., will be operating Eddie's tire and power cell facility out of that location. And, to solve the problem of ventilation, Mark installed a fresh air system in Lynn's studio, providing a constant supply of fresh air that eliminates the odor of the chemicals used to develop film.

A half hour later, the workers have completed the project. Eddie asks Lynn, "well, what do you think?" Lynn replies, "I love it!" On one side of the billboard, advertising to the community that Mr. Hamilton has not exactly told the truth regarding the break in, is a 14-foot by 48-foot photograph of Mr. Hamilton watching as his daughter, Margo, crawls into Lynn's Photography Studio. On the other side, is a photograph of Mr. Hamilton receiving the stolen goods from Margo. At the bottom of each photograph, Lynn added the words, "Caught in the Act" when she made the proofs. This should clear up any questions surrounding the situation regarding the alleged break in.

Sharing the same sentiment, Eddie, Mark, and Lynn exchange a serious group high-five. Eddie tells Lynn, "well, I guess it's back to work for me." Lynn replies, "me too. But, that was definitely worth a break to watch." Eddie replies, "seriously! I think I'm going to call Richard and let him know the billboard is up. I'm sure he'd want to see it." Now a bit on

the reserved side, Lynn mentions, "I hope we don't get in trouble." Eddie reassures Lynn, telling her, "we won't. I already ran this across John Davies. He assured me that there won't be a problem." Eddie and Lynn get back to work, curious to hear the public's reaction to the evidence against Mr. Hamilton and his daughter, Margo. And, Mark gets back on the road, off to buy one of Paula's Christmas presents.

On the last day of classes before Christmas break, Milana comes home, surprisingly announcing to her parents, "please don't get mad at me, but I quit the band. Next semester, I'm taking home economics, with everyone else who quit the band." Kathy asks, "really? What happened?" Milana explains, "Mr. Sharpe, the band director, kept telling me all semester that I'm doing everything wrong. So, I quit." Kathy replies, "good for you." Quite relieved, Milana is silent for a moment, then asks, "so, you're not mad at me?" Kathy replies, "of course I'm not. It's their loss."

Milana asks her parents, "do you want to hear what happened?" Eddie replies, "sure. What was his problem this time?" Milana energetically explains, "I was practicing my Bach piece, *Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major*, before class, on the keyboard. But, I set the keyboard to be a harpsichord, because I wanted to hear what it sounded like. And, so Mr. Sharpe told me that my expression was all wrong. So, then I asked him, 'what's wrong with it?' And, he told me a bunch of mumbo jumbo yakety yak bullshit. Then, I told him, 'I'm playing this piece on an organ during Christmas service. Organ keyboards don't have any expression, the organist does. Organ keys are on off switches. I just wanted to hear what it sounded like on a harpsichord.' So, he got mad at me, and told me, 'the way you played that, you were hurting my ears,' and that I was giving him a headache. So, then I told him, 'fine, then. I quit. Find someone else to play the keyboard for the band.' Then, he got all bent out of shape and pretended to apologize." Talking in what sounds like one big run-on sentence, Milana sounds a bit like Kathy when she was her age.

Eddie asks, "do they have someone else who can play the keyboard?" Milana replies, "yeah. They have David Alexander, but he can't even get through *Chopsticks* or *Here Comes the Bride* without making a mistake. And, he can't play in some keys because too many sharps and flats confuses him. And, there's Laurie Wolff. She's okay, but she's always an eighth step behind because she can't read music very well. She's always looking back and forth from the music to the keyboard, so she gets left in the dust." Eddie comically points out, "well, maybe everyone else can play an eighth step behind her. Then, she'll be in sync with everyone else." Milana replies, "dad! It doesn't work that way!" Eddie answers her, "I know. I was just messing with you."

Introducing another complaint, Milana asks her parents, “and, do you want to hear something else?” Knowing that Milana is on a roll, Kathy replies, “sure. What’s up?” Milana replies, “and, the drummer, Donny White, can’t read music either. So, he takes the drum music, and rewrites it into something that says, ‘chick chick boom snap snap’ so he can understand it.” Kathy laughs, asking, “what does all that supposed to mean?” Milana explains, “a ‘chick’ is hitting the high hat, a ‘snap’ is the snare drum, and a ‘boom’ is the bass drum. Oh! And, for an open high hat, he writes the letter ‘S’ five or six times for that. And, he has a bunch of other words he made up for the other drums.” Eddie asks, “can he keep a beat?” Milana replies, “as long as he wasn’t smoking pot the day before.” Kathy sarcastically asks, “and, what was Mr. Sharpe’s complaint about you again?” Sounding a bit like her parents, Milana replies, “yeah. Exactly.”

Eddie asks, “is there anyone good in the band?” Milana replies, “yeah. Svetlana is great on the guitar, but she’s not in the band anymore. And, Vance is great on the saxophone. Let me think who else.” As Milana pauses, Eddie contemplates that a middle school band is much like a middle school track team, where some members are highly skilled, and others are best utilized by sending them home permanently, such as Jimmy O’Brien. Milana continues, recalling, “oh yeah. And, Yasmine can play the bass way better than anyone else there, but Mr. Sharpe wouldn’t let her play in the Fall Concert because she’s a girl. So, she’s quitting band next semester too.”

Kathy interrupts, asking, “what? What’s up with that?” Milana explains, “for the same reason he won’t let Svetlana play lead guitar. He always wants the guys up front.” Eddie suggests, “maybe you, Svetlana, and Yasmine can form your own band.” Milana thinks for a half second, and replies, “yeah. But, we’d need a good drummer.” Kathy suggests, “maybe Darryl would know of a good drummer your age.” Milana energetically screams out, “wait a second! There’s Roberta! She quit the band in the beginning of the year! But, she’s really good and she still plays!” Kathy tells Milana, “well, there you go. The Northside Middle School girls’ band.” Milana exclaims, “awesome! We’re gonna do this! We’re going to get together and, in the Spring talent contest, we’re gonna kick ass!” Eddie comments to Kathy, “she’s sounding just like Braden.” Kathy laughs, and tells Milana, “now, all you need is a name for your band.”

Kathy curiously asks, “why did Roberta quit the band?” Milana explains, “because Mr. Sharpe put her on the Timpani, the tambourine, the bells, the cajon, that stupid triangle thing, and a whole bunch of other percussion junk that she doesn’t want to play.” Eddie comments, “I totally get that. It’s kind of like telling Bobby B. that he’s going to run

the mile in a track meet rather than throwing the shot-put.” Glad that her father understands, Milana replies, “yeah. Exactly.” Kathy and Eddie both realize that what goes on in the band room is not unlike any other facet of life.

Giving fair warning, Milana reveals, “oh. And, the school is going to be calling you guys.” Kathy asks, “oh, really? What’s on their agenda?” Milana explains, “when I went to my guidance counselor to change to home economics next semester, he asked me why I wanted to change. So, I told him. And, then he said he will have to discuss this with my parents.” Kathy asks, “do you really want to take home economics?” Milana replies, “I don’t care. I just don’t want to listen to Mr. Sharpe telling me that I’m doing everything wrong all the time.” Reassuring Milana, Eddie informs her, “we’ll tell the guidance counselor that we’re behind any decision you make.” Kathy mentions, “you could always join the band next year, when you’re in high school.” Milana replies, “yeah. I know. I probably will.”

Milana then mentions, “oh, and I invited Mr. Sharpe to Christmas service. And, I told him to feel free to give me feedback on my performance.” Kathy laughs, and tells Milana, “if Dr. Erlanger thinks you’re doing great, I’m sure there’s not a whole lot that Mr. Sharpe can say.” Milana replies, “I know. I just want him to know that I’m good at something.”

While Milana is putting her books away, Eddie whispers to Kathy, “it sounds like Lana kicked Sharpe’s ass.” Kathy agrees, stating, “you could have seen that coming a mile away. Geesh. She’s only thirteen years old, and she’s playing Bach flawlessly. I don’t know where they got this new guy from, but he’s no Mr. Spaulding.” Mr. Spaulding, who taught music at the middle school when Eddie and Kathy attended there, was a top-notch instructor. Unfortunately, for Milana, Mr. Spaulding retired at the end of the last academic year.

It’s been twenty-one years since Mark, his father, and Eddie’s father completed the construction of Dr. Akinmola’s church building. Still in perfect condition, the cathedral-like structure has been the home to weekly services, weddings, and various special events.

Christmas Eve brings the entire tribe and their extended families together once again. Eddie and Kathy drive into the church parking lot driving their Volkswagen Bus, parking next to Mark and Paula, who have already arrived. Arriving with Eddie and Kathy today is their son, Eddie, Jr., and their daughter, Milana.

On the way in, Kathy asks Milana, “are you all prepared?” With a display of great confidence, Milana replies, “of course, mom. I got this.” Kathy replies, “good. I was just checking.” Milana is just as confident at the organ console as Eddie and Kathy are on the track.

Walking through the door into the narthex, Eddie, Kathy, and their son and daughter are greeted by Adekunle Akinmola, who tells Eddie, “merry Christmas, my friends! I am so glad to see you on this beautiful day!” Eddie and Kathy both reply, “merry Christmas!” Akinmola tells Eddie, “I am very happy to see you guys today.” Eddie asks, “are you doing the service today?” Akinmola replies, “I am leading the first service. My father will be leading the second service.”

Kathy’s father and mother walk up, wishing Eddie and Kathy a merry Christmas. Akinmola wishes Kathy’s parents a merry Christmas. Eddie, Jr. caught up with Hunter Braden, and are having their own conversation off to the side, most likely about Hunter’s Porsche 914 electric conversion that Eddie, Jr. has been working on. Kathy’s mother, Chloë, asks Eddie, “are your mom and dad coming to this service?” Eddie replies, “they’re probably coming to both services.” Eddie comments, “and, here they come.” Eddie’s parents walk up, joining in with the Christmas greetings.

Just then, the organist can be heard playing the prelude to the service, *Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major*, composed by J.S. Bach. Chloë asks Kathy, “is that Milana playing the organ?” Kathy replies, “yeah. She’s been up here practicing all week.” Chloë tells those around her, “excuse me, but, I’m going inside to listen.” Chloë walks into the sanctuary, with the rest of the group joining her, taking a seat where they can see Milana play.

The Flentrop pipe organ, installed when the church was built, has a very distinct and beautiful tonal quality to it. Within fifteen minutes before the service begins, the whole tribe is together, all seated in the same area, along with many of their parents. Needless to say, everyone is impressed with Milana’s musical talent.

Adekunle Akinmola walks up and, standing in front of the altar, opens the service by announcing, “merry Christmas everyone!” The congregation responds in unison, “merry Christmas!” Adekunle replies, “that it is, my brothers. And, this is a very special Christmas for all of us.” Adekunle instructs the congregation, “please turn in your hymnals to hymn number 139, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.” Milana begins to play, and the congregation sings along with the choir. Rather than singing, the parents and grandparents prefer to watch Milana as she demonstrates her skill on the organ.

Following the hymn, Dr. Akinmola opens the service with a prayer. Adekunle then announces, “in the Gospel according to Luke, in chapter two, verses one through seven, we read, ‘Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited Earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.’”

Adekunle then announces, “please turn in your hymnals to hymn number 144, *What Child is This.*” Milana begins to play, and the congregation sings along with the choir. Eddie takes particular notice of how good the organ still sounds. And, Kathy is amazed at how Milana’s fingers and feet can move so fast and accurately, working three keyboards and the pedal section all at once.

As Adekunle continues to narrate the Christmas story as told in the Gospel of Luke, Mark whispers to Eddie, “I think we got a little problem.” Eddie asks, “oh, yeah? What’s that, bro?” Discreetly pointing to a few rows behind them, Mark whispers, asking, “what’s McCutchen doing here?” Now suspecting he is being stalked, Eddie replies, “I have no idea.” Mark suggests, “we’d better watch him carefully. He’s definitely up to something.” Word quickly spreads among the tribe that Todd McCutchen is present today. No one, however, believes that McCutchen is present at the Christmas service to worship the Lord.

Following Adekunle’s reading of scripture, the elders approach the altar, obtaining the offering plates. The Christmas offering is taken up, as the soloist, accompanied by the organ, sings *O Holy Night*, accompanied by Milana. When the offering plate comes to Eddie, Eddie places a check for one-hundred-thousand dollars in the plate, which has been his tradition for the last few years.

Later, during the offering, Mark whispers to Eddie, “check it out. McCutchen is looking through the offering plate, seeing what’s in it.” Eddie turns around, also seeing McCutchen carefully examining what was placed in the offering plate. It’s anybody’s guess why McCutchen is spending one whole minute looking through the offering plate, considering that he put absolutely nothing in it. And, it’s a sure bet that McCutchen saw Eddie’s generous check.

The elders walk up the center aisle, and place the offering upon the altar. Next, taking the bread and wine for communion from the altar, the elders distribute the elements to the congregation. Once the elders return to their position in front of the altar, Adekunle proclaims, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'this is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" The congregation eats the bread, followed by Adekunle proclaiming, "In the same way He also took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" Finishing Holy Communion, Adekunle proclaims, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Adekunle steps into the pulpit, delivering the Christmas sermon. During the sermon, McCutchen is caught taking notes by Mark, reminiscent of the activity of Mayor Bradford Jamieson many years ago. McCutchen is also caught several times staring in the direction where the tribe is seated.

After the sermon, Adekunle stands in front of the congregation, and proclaims, "tonight, we light our last candle in the Advent Wreath to remember the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, which we all come together to celebrate this Christmas Eve. As the prophets prophesied long ago, the Lord Jesus Christ came to Earth and, like the shepherds, we are filled with wonder and amazement." Tonight, Adekunle's sister, Sade, lights the Advent candle.

Adekunle then proclaims, "Lord Jesus, You came into this world as a baby. Yet, we know that You are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that You are the light of the world and that, if we follow You, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life. We look forward to that day when You will come again and we will behold You face to face with all the angels of heaven." The congregation responds, "come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen."

The lights of the sanctuary are dimmed, as Adekunle and Sade light their candles from the white candle on the Advent Wreath. Walking down the center aisle side by side, Adekunle and Sade transfer the flame of their candle to that of the person sitting at the end of the pew. On the organ, Milana begins to play as the congregation sings *Silent Night*. During the hymn, each person transfers the flame of their candle to the one standing next to them. The sanctuary is again illuminated, this time by the light of everyone's candles.

When the last verse of *Silent Night* has been completed, everyone blows out their candles, and wishes those around them a merry

Christmas. Milana plays the postlude to the service, *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, composed by J.S. Bach, on the organ. Eddie and Kathy wish each other a merry Christmas, giving each other a Christmas hug and a merry Christmas kiss. The tribe, their parents, and friends all wish each other a merry Christmas. Along with Adekunle, Dr. Akinmola mingles with the congregation, personally wishing everyone a merry Christmas.

Those present from the track team wish each other a merry Christmas. Eddie and Mark, however, quickly sneak away, intercepting McCutchen before he is able to leave the building. Displaying high energy, Eddie tells McCutchen, "hey! Merry Christmas!" With a less than energetic response, McCutchen replies, "yup. Merry Christmas." Mark asks McCutchen, "hey, do you live around here now?" Not wanting any conversation with either Mark or Eddie, McCutchen replies, "no. I have to run. Nice to see you." As McCutchen sneaks by, and heads straight for the door, Eddie yells out to McCutchen, "by the way, junior, how's your car doing?" McCutchen ignores Eddie, and rushes out the door. Eddie and Mark rejoin their group, where everyone is wishing each other a merry Christmas.

As they are getting ready for the next service, Kathy's and Eddie's parents are talking with Milana, congratulating her on an awesome performance. Kathy's and Eddie's parents again wish Eddie and Kathy a merry Christmas. And, Eddie, Jr. is nowhere to be found, likely hanging out with his friends in the parking lot at the moment.

Between services, Milana finds her organ instructor, Dr. Elianna Erlanger, and energetically asks, "how did I do?" Giving Milana a hug, Dr. Erlanger exclaims, "that was really awesome, girl! You rock!" Milana asks, "did I mess anything up?" Dr. Erlanger replies, "not that I heard. But, I must admit, I thought there was something wrong with the organ when you first started playing. With all the people in the sanctuary, there wasn't much reverb at all." Milana comments, "yeah. I guess when I get my lessons, there's no one there but us." Today, at the first service, there was standing room only.

Walking up, and interrupting Milana and Dr. Erlanger's conversation, Mr. Sharpe, the middle school music teacher, boastfully tells Milana, "that was much better than I expected!" Before Milana could answer, Dr. Erlanger comes to her rescue, and asks Mr. Sharpe, "oh really, sir? What exactly were you expecting?" Realizing he was being a bit rude, Mr. Sharpe tells Dr. Erlanger, "I'm sorry. Let me introduce myself. I'm Steven Sharpe, Milana's music teacher." Already understanding the disposition of Mr. Sharpe from her past discussions with Milana, Dr. Erlanger pleasantly replies, "I've heard a lot about you. It's nice to finally meet you." Allowing the adults to have their conversation, Milana

listens carefully to hear what is said about her, as most thirteen year olds would do.

Mr. Sharpe asks Dr. Erlanger, “are you Milana’s mom?” Dr. Erlanger replies, “no. I’m Dr. Elianna Erlanger. I’m Lana’s organ instructor. And, yes. Lana’s performance this morning was flawless, even if I do say so myself.”

Not wanting to be too outclassed, asking a question that was already partially addressed, Mr. Sharpe asks Dr. Erlanger, “so, you’re Milana’s organ instructor? Where did you study, Dr. Erlanger?” Dr. Erlanger replies, “I got my doctorate in Music Theory and Analysis at The Juilliard School, and I now teach at the State University. My undergraduate work was done at Hunter College. And, for a few select gifted individuals, I give private lessons.” Mr. Sharpe quickly realizes he is considerably outranked, something Milana knew since the beginning of this school year.

Wanting to gain some sympathy, Mr. Sharpe informs Dr. Erlanger, “Milana has unfortunately decided to not continue her music career next semester. She will definitely be missed by both me and the band.” Dr. Erlanger replies, “actually, Lana will be continuing her music career. It is my understanding that she just won’t be continuing music at the public school level.”

Dr. Erlanger could ask Mr. Sharpe where he studied, but she has heard enough from Milana to not even care. On many occasions, Dr. Erlanger has had to undo or unteach some of the less than skillful techniques taught to Milana by Mr. Sharpe. Not naive regarding psychological warfare tactics as she learned from her parents, Milana listens carefully as she hears a tactical war brewing between the two adults.

Expressing a strong opinion clearly intended to be overheard by Milana, Mr. Sharpe tells Dr. Erlanger, “it would be really nice to have Milana back for next semester. I strongly believe it would be beneficial for her to play with kids of her same age. Perhaps you can convince her.” Dr. Erlanger boldly replies, “to ‘play with kids of her same age’, as you put it, Mr. Sharpe, will only hold Lana back. At this point, her decision to cease playing with the middle school band is probably the best decision for her future.” Digging himself into a hole, Mr. Sharpe now wishes he never brought the subject up.

Not letting Mr. Sharpe escape that easily, Dr. Erlanger assumes an offensive position, asking, “do you realize, sir, the unique and technically demanding characteristics of the organ Lana played this

morning?” Mr. Sharpe does not immediately answer, a dead giveaway that he is clueless. Answering her own question, since the answer is far above Mr. Sharpe’s pay grade, Dr. Erlanger explains, “the organ Lana was playing this morning is a Flentrop tracker organ. An organ utilizing tracker action requires far more skill and is not quite as easily played or forgiving as, say, a modern-day electronic keyboard. Depending on which rank is selected, there can be an inherent delay from the time the key is pressed until the pipe expresses its voice. On the Flentrop, this is not too much of a problem with most of the ranks associated with the keyboards. This characteristic is, however, a problem with the eight-foot and sixteen-foot ranks associated with the pedal section. Lana must be very careful, when playing these ranks, to be approximately one-sixteenth to one-eighth step ahead of the keyboards. That, sir, is a skill characteristic to only very elite musicians.”

Regarding the quirks of the peddler section and, more importantly, wanting to save face, Mr. Sharpe asks Dr. Erlanger, “I’m now curious. Why is that?” In place of Dr. Erlanger answering, Milana jumps in and explains, “it’s because the mechanics of a tracker organ are located behind the keyboards. When the key is pressed, a chamber is pressurized, and whatever ranks are pulled in determines what pipes play. The chamber is a whole lot bigger for the pipes going to the eight and sixteen-foot ranks, so it takes a little more time to come up to pressure. So, there’s a really small time delay. But, in a modern-day electro gizmo pipe organ, like the one I play at the University, all the valves are electronically controlled. They’re all located at the base of the pipe, where there’s a constant pressurized air supply.” Shocked at Milana’s response, Mr. Sharpe asks Milana, “how did you learn that?” Milana takes a deep breath, and replies, “my dad taught me. He’s an auto mechanic.”

Mr. Sharpe laughs, albeit very quietly, sarcastically asking Milana, “so, your father is an auto mechanic? What does he know about pipe organs?” Milana replies, “more than you do. He bought this organ for the church. My dad and Mark keep it running just fine.” Mr. Sharpe comments, “really? Pipe organs must be very complicated.” Milana replies, “not to someone who knows what they’re doing.”

Trying to defuse the situation brewing between Milana and Mr. Sharpe, Dr. Erlanger mentions, “Lana is fully correct. That is, by the way, why the organ’s console is located very close to the organ itself, and why the ranks are tightly packed. If you take notice, the eight-foot and sixteen-foot ranks are located very close to the console, and the one foot, and smaller ranks are farthest from the console. Lana is very familiar with the instrument she plays. And, as Lana mentioned, her lessons are not only conducted at this church on the Flentrop, but also

at the pipe organ at the State University, which is a modern-day electronically controlled instrument. She is quite skilled at playing either.”

Jumping at the chance to bury her less than skilled music teacher, Milana mentions, “anyone can tell that, if you listen to classical organ music, there’s always a slight delay when the big daddies are played. You know, kind of like when Laurie Wolff plays the keyboard.” Expecting to get some sympathy from Milana, Mr. Sharpe replies, “now, you have to remember, Laurie is in the seventh grade.” Sounding exactly like her father, Eddie, when he spoke of Todd McCutchen, Milana replies, “I played better than Laurie when I was in first grade.”

Leaving the argument with his former student behind, and attempting to sound intelligent, Mr. Sharpe changes the subject and ignorantly comments, “I wonder why they can’t just put the mechanical valve at the base of the pipe, like in the newer organs.” Quickly jumping in with the answer, Milana explains, “then, at the keyboard, you’d have a super gigantic mess of spaghetti linkages moving a gazillion valves sixty feet away. Good luck with that.” Milana would again be correct, for a plethora of sixty-foot linkages requiring sophisticated counterbalance mechanisms to keep the keyboard force low would take up far more space than is practical. An organ designed in such a way would also be a maintenance nightmare.

Not wanting to continue the battle, Mr. Sharpe announces, “well, this was very enlightening. And, congratulations, again, Milana, on a fine performance.” Milana replies, “thank you.” Wanting to get rid of Mr. Sharpe, Dr. Erlanger tells the less than skilled middle school music teacher, “you have a wonderful day, sir.”

Once Mr. Sharpe is far enough away, Milana tells Dr. Erlanger, “I don’t like him.” Dr. Erlanger informs Milana, “that’s okay. You don’t have to. And, for the record, neither do I.” Milana then prepares for the second service as Dr. Erlanger heads home for the evening. And, it’s no secret that Milana will inform her parents that Dr. Erlanger kicked Mr. Sharpe’s ass today.

While Dr. Erlanger and Milana were subjecting Mr. Sharpe to a reality stick, Eddie slipped away for a minute, striking up a conversation with Adekunle. Wanting some information, Eddie asks Adekunle, “hey, what was McCutchen doing here today? Does he attend here now?” Adekunle replies, “he visited here a few times a long time ago. But, I’ve not seen him here in a long time, my brother.” Eddie tells Adekunle, “he got really nervous when he saw me and Mark. Me and Mark caught him looking through the offering plate. After the service, he left in a real

hurry.” Adekunle replies, “it’s like this, my friend. This man has been underhanded his whole life. It wouldn’t be surprising to me if that man is an apostate. One of the things apostates do is use the church for their own personal gain. In the business world, they call apostates traitors.” Eddie replies, “yeah. Like Mayor Bradford Jamieson.” Adekunle replies, “and, my friend, if you remember, Todd McCutchen was a traitor to our University’s track team.” Eddie replies, “you got that right.”

Exploring another reason why McCutchen may have been present today, Adekunle whispers to Eddie, “in the world, my friend, there are three kinds of people; believers, non-believers, and make believers. I suspect that Todd McCutchen is a make believer.” Eddie replies, “I agree. The only thing he’s ever been interested in is taking what does not belong to him.” Adekunle thinks for a moment, and whispers to Eddie, “I believe you are right.”

Milana is again heard playing the prelude to the service, Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C Major. Eddie heads into the sanctuary again with Kathy, who both stay for the second service. During the late service, Eddie can’t help to wonder why Todd McCutchen even showed up today. What also seems quite odd to Eddie is that McCutchen showed up at his service station multiple times in the last few months.