

Eddie, The Senior Year

Chapter Seven Summer Begins

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With school over and done with, Kathy and Eddie have more time to plan their wedding, go to the beach, and have a little fun. The first order of business, however, is to have some fun. Wanting to go somewhere new, Kathy wonders whether there is a portal in the Florida Keys. Looking at a map of Florida, Kathy mentions to Eddie, "I wonder if there's a portal somewhere in the Florida Keys." Eddie replies, "well, do you want to go and check it out?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I do." Easily convinced, Eddie tells her, "so, let's go." Kathy asks, "now?" Eddie replies, "why not? What else are we going to do?"

Kathy gets her beach stuff together, her map of the Keys, and heads for her car. Eddie tells her, "you'll need your bicycle, hon." Kathy replies, "oh, yeah. That's right. Silly me." Kathy gets her bicycle and rides to Eddie's house. Eddie gets to drive home. Eddie, however, is nice enough to carry Kathy's beach stuff in his car. Surprisingly, Kathy, riding her bicycle, beats Eddie to his house. Once they are at Eddie's house, Eddie gets his bicycle and they head to the portal.

At the portal, Kathy raises her right hand, and states, "the Florida Keys, today." Sure enough, they find themselves in the Florida Keys, but have no idea where in the Keys they have landed. Kathy takes out her road map, trying to figure out where they are. Riding down the street, away from the ocean, Kathy quickly finds out that they are close to US Route 1, but then quickly realizes that US 1 goes from one end of the Keys to the other. With a little more work, they find out that they are in Key Largo, near John Pennekamp State Park. They note where the portal is, which is right off an unnamed road leading to US 1.

Riding around for a while, Eddie and Kathy see a sign for scuba and snorkeling trips. They head down the road, and find the place offering the trips to be right near the water. Kathy asks Eddie, "do you want to go

snorkeling?” Eddie replies, “sure. You’re my tour guide for today.” After locking their bicycles, they go inside. Kathy gets tickets for the next boat out, which is in about fifteen minutes, and comments, “talk about perfect timing!”

They check out the shop for a few minutes, then hear the announcement telling the passengers for the next trip out to gather near the door to the dock. Scott, the snorkeling instructor and first mate, tells everyone, “you’re all in luck today. Captain Mike actually showed up for work this morning. We went out earlier today, and he actually returned with everyone this time.” First Mate Scott then adds, “I’m only kidding! How many of you got worried?” A few people raise their hands, and Scott tells them, “there’s nothing to worry about. We have a perfect safety record.” First Mate Scott adds, “and, this is a three-hour tour. We will have two hours in the water. If you need to buy sun screen, go and do that now.” First Mate Scott then gives the passengers a quick tutorial on how to snorkel, and everyone heads out to the boat.

On the way to the boat, Kathy tells Eddie, “oh, wonderful. Aren’t we in luck. A three-hour tour.” Eddie asks, “what’s wrong with that?” Kathy asks Eddie, “didn’t you ever watch Gilligan’s Island?” Not knowing what Kathy is talking about, Eddie replies, “what’s Gilligan’s Island?” Kathy replies, “it’s a television show. Don’t tell me you’ve never seen it!” Surprised that she doesn’t know, Eddie tells Kathy, “we don’t have a television.” Kathy is unusually silent for a moment. Thinking about this, Kathy tells him, “oh, Eddie, I’m so sorry!” Eddie tells Kathy, “don’t be. I probably wouldn’t have watched it even if we had a TV anyway.” Explaining herself further, Kathy tells Eddie, “no, it’s not that. I’ve been going to your house for four years now, and I’ve forgotten that there was no television set in your house.” Eddie tells Kathy, “yeah, but you know I have a garden, tools, a gym, and four boxes buried in the back yard.” Since it’s time to board the boat, Kathy tells Eddie, “more about this later.”

On the way out, Captain Mike tells everyone what they will be seeing during today’s trip. The captain explains, “we’re going to be anchored next to a coral reef. Please do not touch the coral. Coral is a living organism and, if you step on it or bump into it, you can kill it or damage it. Near where we will be anchored is a statue of Jesus underwater. Be sure to take time and see it. First Mate Scott will point it out to you, if he doesn’t fall overboard on the way out.” The captain explains the various type of fish they will see, and assures everyone that the fish will not eat anyone.

As they approach the coral reef, the captain announces, “if you take a look on the starboard side of the boat, which is on the right if you are facing the front, you will see a sunken ship at the bottom of the ocean. That’s the ship of one of our competitors down the street. There are a

few of their ships scattered around on the ocean floor that they've sunk over the years." Kathy asks Eddie, "where else would a sunken ship be other than the bottom of the ocean?" The captain anchors the boat, and the first mate hands out masks and snorkels, and gives another short course on how to snorkel for those who didn't quite get it the first time.

Eddie and Kathy get into the water, and snorkel around, looking at the various coral formations. Eddie points out a barracuda to Kathy, which appears to stare right back at them. Swimming over the coral reef, they see dozens of types of fish, some out in the open grazing on algae growing on the reef, and some hiding in nooks and crannies. A little farther down, Kathy finds a stingray buried in the sand, but conspicuous enough to be seen.

Swimming back to the main coral reef, Kathy spies a huge brain coral. A few feet away is a tiny brain coral. Kathy pokes Eddie in his side, and points out to him the large brain coral. Kathy then points to her head, saying to Eddie that she has a large brain. Remembering that Eddie's brain is a little smaller than average, Kathy then points to the tiny brain coral, and points to Eddie's head. Eddie quickly gets Kathy's inference, and starts swimming after her. Eddie quickly catches Kathy, and they surface. Kathy laughs, and exclaims, "you got to admit! That was a good one!" Eddie replies, "that's your funniest one yet, Katarina Karakova!"

Swimming back toward the boat, they search for the statue of Jesus, and have a hard time finding it. Not being able to find the statue, they ask the captain, who is still on the boat, where the statue is. The captain tells them that it is about 200 feet away, pointing in the direction it can be found. Kathy and Eddie swim toward the statue, taking their time to look at the coral reef on the way. They find the statue of Jesus, holding his hands up in the water, and looking toward the sky. Behind the statue is a lot of coral, teeming with fish.

After two hours in the water, Kathy and Eddie are the last ones to get back on the boat. Some of the passengers got worn out after 20 or 30 minutes of snorkeling. They've been resting on the boat, watching the scenery.

The captain takes a head count, and heads back to the marina. One of the passengers asks, "what happens if someone's missing?" The captain, who perhaps should have been a comedian, replies, "it depends if anyone knows them or not. If no one knows them, we fudge the numbers. If someone knows them, we'll see if we can find them. If we can't find them, we stop to snorkel at another reef for a few more minutes, making sure that anyone who knows them doesn't make it back on the boat." Some of the passengers laugh, but some don't understand the captain's unusual sense of humor.

On the way back, Eddie tells Kathy, “we have to go back. You left your brain on the bottom of the ocean.” Kathy laughs, and tells Eddie, “I really got you good with that one, buddy!” Eddie tells Kathy, “well, I’m smarter than you are.” Kathy, who graduated summa cum laude, asks Eddie, “hey now! How do you mean?” Eddie replies, “I’m marrying someone smart. You’re marrying someone dumb. So, I’m smarter than you are.” Kathy thinks about what Eddie said for a moment, and tells him, “you’re so sweet! And, by the way, you’re not dumb.”

As the boat approaches the marina, the captain assures everyone, “I’ve docked a boat once before, so there’s no need to worry. There are a few docks here. If I accidentally destroy one dock, we still have a few more I can use.” The captain docks the boat perfectly, and thanks everyone for allowing him to torture them with his bad jokes. As they leave the boat, the captain tells Eddie and Kathy, “you guys should get the gold medal. Not many people stay in the water for the full two hours.” Kathy tells the captain, “well, we had a lot of fun! Thank you!”

Eddie and Kathy get their bicycles, and head off to find a place to eat. All the eateries seem to be on the main road, or just off of it. They skip the chain restaurants, but take notice of how few fast food places there are in the area. Riding around for a while, they find a restaurant overlooking the water, so they decide to give it a try.

They get a seat on the patio, fortunately at a table under an umbrella. With a beautiful view to the water, Eddie and Kathy look through the menu. Remembering from when they were at Lu Lu’s Bra and Grill in Amelia Island, Kathy asks the waitress, “is the shrimp caught fresh daily?” The waitress replies, “the shrimp came in a day or two ago, but the lobster came in this morning.” Since there is no pizza on the menu, Kathy decides to get the lobster. Eddie goes with the lobster as well.

While they are waiting for lunch to arrive, Kathy asks Eddie, “would you rather live at the beach or in the woods?” Eddie replies, “I’ll live wherever you are.” Kathy replies, “aw, that’s so sweet! But really, if you had to choose, which would you pick?” Eddie replies, “the woods, definitely.” Kathy asks, “why?” Eddie replies, “because I like the beach.” Kathy asks, “then why not live there?” Eddie explains, “because, if I live at the beach, then the beach is always there. Going to the beach is something special. If I’m there every day, it’s no longer special. It’s like when your dad drives your 914. To him, it’s special, but you drive it every day. So, if you drove Paula’s Jeep on the beach, that would be special to you.” Kathy replies, “yeah, that makes sense. I can see that.”

The lunchtime meal arrives, and Kathy is so happy that the waitress split open her lobster tail for her. Having a battle with a lobster tail is not on Kathy’s list of things to do after snorkeling for two hours. Referring to

her lobster, Eddie tells Kathy, “hey, he looks like the lobster that we saw at the coral reef.” Kathy asks, “how can you tell?” With Eddie slow to answer, Kathy exclaims, “hey! I’m not falling for that!” Eddie smiles, and tells Kathy, “I almost got you back with that one!” Kathy asks, “got me back? For what?” Eddie replies, “the brain coral thing.” They both laugh over Kathy’s earlier teasing of Eddie.

Changing the subject, Eddie asks, “so, do you have to practice track over the Summer?” Kathy replies, “yes and no. We don’t have to go to practice, but I do have to stay in shape.” Eddie mentions, “you know, McCrutchen could be going to your school. If his brother goes there, he might be going there too.” Not too concerned, Kathy comments, “Scott McCutchen isn’t very good. He’s not on scholarship, and runs high school times. I’m not even sure if he’s returning next year.” Eddie replies, “neither one of them are very fast.”

While they are on the subject of track, Kathy mentions, “you know, Coach Herndon was asking where you and Mark were going to college. She was surprised to hear you guys aren’t going to school anywhere. And, Dr. Braun was asking the same questions.” Convinced that college is not for him, Eddie replies, “maybe they have the World Mechanic’s Games somewhere. I can compete in that.”

Kathy informs Eddie, “well, it’s no secret that they want you and Mark to run for the University. They kept asking me and Paula about it.” Not wanting to sound too uninterested, Eddie offers, “I’ll run for the University, but, I don’t want to go to any classes, and I want all A’s.” Surprisingly, Kathy replies, “they just might go for that.” Knowing that’s not how it works in college, Eddie comments, “yeah, right. I’d love to see that.” Kathy reminds Eddie, “yeah, but remember. You run a 9.2-second 100-yard dash. You have a lot more to offer than they do.”

Kathy informs Eddie, “so, there’s a guy on the team, Darryl Stone, who’s an awesome distance runner. He runs a four-minute, five-second mile. No one even really knows what year he’s in. He’s enrolled in the University, but he never goes to any classes. He takes these classes called ‘Special Projects’ and ‘Independent Studies.’” Eddie laughs hysterically and, barely getting the words out, tells Kathy, “the next thing you’re going to tell me is they’ll let me take classes at Angelo’s Service Station while I’m working. Pumping Gas 101. Major Tune-Ups 201. Oh, how about Advanced Service Ticket Writing 401!” Laughing along with Eddie, Kathy reports, “but, seriously! That’s what Stone does! He plays in a band, and they give him class credit for playing the drums. And, they’re giving him some sort of music degree to run track. But, that’s some sort of school secret. So, you can’t tell anyone.”

Eddie pays the bill, and they head out to find the portal. On the way out, Eddie asks Kathy, “so, how did you find this out about this Stone guy?” Kathy explains, “Coach Herndon wants you guys to run for the school. She told me about him, but she said it’s a secret. Coach Herndon only told me about Stone so that I have something to persuade you with. I told her you weren’t even remotely interested in going to college. She told me to talk to you over the Summer about it. So, I did my duty. I talked to you about it. So, now I can tell her that I talked to you about it. And, Paula’s supposed to talk to Mark about it too.” Eddie and Kathy find the portal, walk in, and are back to their own time and place.

Two weeks into the Summer, Eddie begins working at Angelo’s Service Station, putting in about 20 to 25 hours a week. Previously working ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week, Angelo has been ready for some help for a while. Working four days a week, Eddie has time to work on the house and spend a lot of time with Kathy. Saturday morning is very busy at the station, so Angelo and Eddie both work during that time.

One Saturday morning, Eddie is doing some routine maintenance on an automobile while Angelo is in the office writing up a service order. Eddie hears an argument in the office, wondering what the big deal is. Listening to part of the conversation, Eddie hears the customer explaining, “it clunks when I let up the clutch, and it doesn’t start when it’s hot outside. And, there’s a bad sound when I push down on the accelerator hard. So, how much will it cost to fix it?” Eddie hears Angelo explain, “I can’t tell you how much it’s going to cost just by listening to the engine. We’ll have to take a look at it and see what’s wrong.” The customer asks, “can’t you just give me a ballpark figure on what it will cost?” The argument persists, and Eddie hears Angelo telling the customer, “let’s take it for a ride, and see what all these sounds are.” Angelo drives away with the customer, to see what the customer is talking about.

Listening to the engine as Angelo drives out with the customer, Eddie thinks to himself what could be wrong with the customer’s automobile. After all, Eddie might be working on it in a few minutes, since he is almost finished with the job he is working on. The first thing Eddie heard when Angelo drove away is that the clutch chatters badly, so the disc is probably warped and in need of replacement. The engine also doesn’t sound very good, suggestive that it is in need of a tune-up. But, it is an air-cooled engine, and air-cooled engines have a plethora of sounds coming from them even when they are working correctly. Finished with his job, Eddie pulls the car out of the bay, and walks into the office to complete the paperwork. Eddie walks back to his service bay, putting a few things away before he starts his next repair job.

Angelo drives back into the station with the customer, and they walk into the office. Angelo explains, "I can see four things going on here. First, your clutch is gone. There's absolutely no question about that. Second, your car badly needs a tune-up. Third, your engine has a mechanical problem. There's a bearing inside that sounds like it's been lubricated with valve-grinding compound." The customer asks, "what's the fourth?" Angelo replies, "you. All you're concerned with is how much it will cost to fix. I can fix it, but you have a lot of stuff going on here. And, none of it is going to fix itself." The customer asks, "well, can you take a look at it?" Angelo replies, "sure."

Eddie walks toward the office to get the service ticket and keys for his next repair. Opening the door, he sees Angelo in a discussion with the irate customer, who is none other than Mr. Crum. Eddie thought he has seen the last of Mr. Crum. Eddie ignores Mr. Crum, and goes about his business.

Angelo interrupts Eddie, asking, "hey Eddie. Can you take a look at this guy's bug? See what you can find." Mr. Crum, seeing Edward Bogenskaya now working as a mechanic, tells Angelo, "I don't want him working on my car!" Angelo tells Mr. Crum, "fine. Then fix it yourself." Sounding a bit like Mr. Zunde, Eddie interjects, "Crum, I can assure you there are no overdue library books here. And, today is Saturday. No one is playing hooky and hiding out at the service station. So, why don't you go back to your pussy factory?"

Angelo asks, "so, you guys know each other?" Eddie replies, "yeah. This is Mr. Crum, the principal of the high school, who spent four years trying to suspend me." Angelo laughs, muttering, "well, that explains a lot. Now I get the picture." Mr. Crum walks out of the office, and back to his car to drive away. Angelo and Eddie are both glad to get rid of Mr. Crum, who poses nothing but a problem. Angelo does not have the time to deal with people like Mr. Crum, and neither does Eddie.

Angelo tells Eddie, "that guy is a real pain in the ass." Eddie replies, "yeah, tell me about it." Angelo explains, "he always brings that piece of shit in here when it's about ready to seize up. Then, he expects me to pour some liquid moron engine repair concentrate into the gas tank, and poof! The engine runs like new! And, get this! That engine only has something like 30,000 miles on it! And, I've already replaced the main bearings once!" Eddie laughs, telling Angelo, "well, maybe he won't be back." Angelo looks outside, and replies, "no such luck this time. Here he comes again."

Mr. Crum barges into the office, exclaiming, "it doesn't start!" Angelo tells Mr. Crum, "call a tow truck." Mr. Crum asks Angelo, "can't you take a look at it?" Pointing to the car he is working on, Angelo explains to Mr.

Crum, “look. I have to finish that Pantera by Monday, and I’m not coming in on Sunday. I’ve already looked at your car. You don’t want Eddie to look at it, so call a tow truck.” Mr. Crum relents, and tells Angelo, “okay, okay, have him take a look at it.”

Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “give me your keys.” Mr. Crum hands over his keys to Eddie, hoping to get some answers. Mr. Crum tries to follow Eddie outside, but Eddie doesn’t want his company. Pointing to a chair, Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “sit there and wait.” Eddie is now the boss. Mr. Crum has to listen to Eddie, or walk home.

Eddie gets into the poorly maintained Volkswagen Beetle, and cranks the engine, which does not start. Eddie notices the tachometer does not budge while he cranks the engine. Eddie reasons that there is a problem with the distributor, specifically with the points. Opening the engine compartment, Eddie removes the distributor cap. Finding the points are extremely worn, he makes a minor adjustment so he can get the car started. He then removes the air filter, which he suspects is filthy, finding out that he is correct. Eddie cranks the engine, and pulls the car into the service bay.

Mr. Crum watches from his chair, surprised to see that Eddie might actually know what he is doing. Looking over the car, Eddie writes up a service ticket documenting what he finds to be wrong. Angelo comes over to see what Eddie has discovered, as Eddie is diagnosing his former principal’s automobile. Eddie shows Angelo the service ticket, which suggests a major tune-up, replacing the clutch, and that there is a problem with the main bearings or the connecting rod bearings. Eddie also makes a note that the Johnson Rod¹ needs to be replaced.

Angelo looks over the ticket, and is slightly puzzled. Angelo asks Eddie, “what’s a Johnson Rod?” Eddie explains, “I totally made it up. That guy is so stupid, he’ll believe it. Charge him a pain in the ass fee.” Angelo repeats back to Eddie, “the Johnson Rod needs to be replaced. Yeah, that sounds good. I’ve got a few customers that are going to need a new Johnson Rod the next time they come in.” Angelo then tells Eddie, “let’s give him the report. We either fix it, or boot him out of here.” Every service station has those customers they wish would never drive in again. Mr. Crum is one of them.

Angelo and Eddie walk back into the office. Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “okay, I’ve looked it over. Your car seriously needs a tune-up. The points are extremely worn, and the air filter is badly clogged. You’re down a

¹ Johnson Rod: Perhaps the most famous bogus car part of all time.

quart of oil, and the little oil that's in there is filthy. Your clutch has to be replaced because the disk is warped. The bad news, however, is that either the main bearings or the connecting rod bearings are shot. That would require an engine rebuild. If we open it up, I suggest you replace all the bearings because, if one bearing is gone, the rest of them are probably right behind it. And, you should have replaced your Johnson Rod 15,000 miles ago. It looks really bad."

Mr. Crum, the cheapskate that he is, asks, "what's the least we can do to get it running again?" Angelo informs Mr. Crum, "the tune-up, oil change, and the Johnson Rod. But, as Eddie said, your clutch needs to be replaced, and your bearings are shot. The bearings are why your engine sounds so rough." Mr. Crum asks Angelo, "can you do the tune-up, oil change, and replace the Johnson Rod now?" Angelo replies, "yeah. We can do that." Knowing that he has no choice, Mr. Crum gives the go ahead for the repairs.

Liking Eddie's unique and colorful form of bullshit, Angelo tells Eddie, "let me make sure we have the right size Johnson Rod in the back." Eddie tells Angelo, "it's a 10-millimeter, with a 4-millimeter bore." Angelo laughs, at least getting some amusement, and goes back to working on the Pantera. Eddie starts working on Mr. Crum's Beetle, trying to get rid of Mr. Crum, and the car, as fast as he can.

Once Eddie is finished, Angelo settles up the bill with Mr. Crum. The car runs better now, but it still needs a clutch and the bearings still need to be replaced. Angelo tells Mr. Crum, "I gave you a deal on the Johnson Rod. I only charged you thirty dollars. It should be twice that." Mr. Crum pays the bill, and drives off with a tuned-up engine, new oil, and a brand-new Johnson Rod. Angelo and Eddie know he'll be back later, probably with either a seized-up engine, or a clutch that is ground down to the rivets, in which case he will probably need a new flywheel as well.

Angelo asks Eddie, "how did you know he'd fall for the Johnson Rod thing?" Eddie explains, "when I was in high school, Mr. Crum thought I used the school's auto shop to modify Kathy's Porsche." Angelo laughs, and mentions, "yeah, I remember when you told me about that." Eddie continues, "so, we got into this big argument. Mr. Malik was there, so I made up a bunch of crap. I told Mr. Crum that I removed the Holley carburetors, and put in high performance azalea carburetors. And, I told him that I Freon cooled the ball joints and steering rack, and a bunch of other stuff. Oh, and I told him I put in stainless steel muffler bearings. He actually believed it all." Angelo laughs, telling Eddie, "from now on, everyone who is a pain in the ass is getting a new Johnson Rod." With much thanks to Eddie, Angelo has a new way to deal with irrational customers.

Eddie asks Angelo, “by the way, what’s up with the Pantera? It looks new.” Angelo replies, “some guy named Harrison owns it. He’s a teacher up at the high school. He wants it turbocharged, and a few other performance enhancements. I’m almost done.” Eddie exclaims, “wow! Mr. Harrison! So, that’s who owns that car! It showed up last Spring at the high school. I was wondering who owned it.” Angelo and Eddie get back to work, hoping not to see Mr. Crum anytime soon.

While Eddie is working at Angelo’s Service Station, Mark and Paula have been spending their spare time searching for their own house in the woods near where Eddie and Kathy bought theirs. Driving around in Paula’s Jeep with the top down, they get a good panoramic view of the area. Mark and Paula have also made many trips to the bank, which is their new lingo for buying gold in the present, bringing it through the portal, and selling it at a future date for a profit. While they are in the future, they exchange any newer bills for older ones at Eddie’s Service Station, bringing back a mountain of cash. Mark and Paula also open brokerage accounts, taking Eddie’s advice on buying stocks that are guaranteed to go up in the future.

Eddie, in the future, has been quite the aficionado of older bills, keeping a good stash of them in the safe he installed at the service station after he bought it from Angelo. In the future, Eddie has a few banks convinced that he is a collector of old bills. He even has the banks put the older bills aside for him, which they are glad to do. Truth is that the banks don’t want the older bills anyway, which will be eventually taken out of circulation.

On one of Mark and Paula’s house hunting expeditions, Eddie and Kathy take a drive with them in Paula’s Jeep, as they meander around the town behind the school. With very few houses for sale, it’s going to take a lot of work to find the right one. Since they all are curious, they find where Mr. Zunde lives, which is down the street and around the corner from Eddie and Kathy’s place. Mr. Zunde has a nice house in the woods too, also with his own pool.

Not finding much for sale, Kathy teases Paula, telling her, “hey, I heard that there’s a house for sale on Second Street. Maybe we can drive by and look.” Paula frankly replies, “no. I’m not falling for that.” Persisting with teasing Paula, Kathy tells her, “who knows? Maybe the area will go commercial, and you’ll get rich!”

Paula makes a quick U-turn, and Kathy asks, “hey, did you see something?” Paula replies, “nope. I’m taking you to Second Street, girl.” Paula knows how much Kathy hates Second Street, so Paula decided to tease Kathy in return. Kathy tells Paula, “I was only teasing.” As she pulls into a dead end street to turn back around, Paula replies, “I know. But, I

got you good!" No one is curious enough to take the trek all the way to Second Street.

As Paula is turning around, Kathy exclaims, "no, wait!" Paula asks, "for what?" Pointing down the street, Kathy tells Paula, "there's a for-sale sign!" Paula heads in the direction of the house, and stops just beyond the sign. Kathy mentions, "that sign looks kind of old." Not able to see much, Paula drives up a bit farther. From the road, no one can see a house. Mark suggests, "drive up the driveway a bit. Maybe we can see something." Paula asks Mark, "what? Drive down this gravel thing?" Never losing his sense of humor, Mark replies, "it's either that, or through the trees. You do have a Jeep. Take your pick." Paula decides to take the gravel driveway.

As Paula drives down the gravel driveway, no one sees any sign of a home. Two hundred feet down the curvy gravel driveway, they come to a clearing, which is about one acre. Paula mentions, "I don't see a house." Mark replies, "that's because there ain't one. It looks like they're selling the land." They all get out of the Jeep, and take a walk around. Eddie tells Mark, "it looks like a clean slate. You guys could build something yourself." Mark stares at the woods in all directions, thinking that Eddie is right. This would be a really nice place to build a house.

Paula starts walking around, looking at the view in every direction. Kathy tells her, "this is a little better view than Second Street, don't you think?" Paula, envisioning the dilapidated haunted houses that Kathy described, replies, "oh yeah! I'd say." Paula is slowly falling in love with the property. The problem is that there is no house on it.

Kathy, who is in a mood today, comments, "I heard Mr. Crum is moving in next door." Paula exclaims, "stop it, girl," and starts chasing Kathy. Mark yells out, "hey! We can put in a track if you want!" Paula finally catches Kathy, tags her, telling her, "I won." Kathy replies, "I let you win." Paula replies, "did not." Kathy replies, "did so." Paula firmly replies, "did not. I let you win." Kathy laughs, and replies, "yeah, right."

Interrupting the girl's verbal exchange, Mark asks Paula, "so, what do you think?" Paula replies, "I like it. The problem is there's no house." Mark replies, "how is that a problem? We can build one. Like Eddie said, it's a clean slate." Paula asks Mark, "can you build a house, like all by yourself?" Mark replies, "well, almost. I can get some subcontractors, like to pour the foundation, and that sort of thing. Remember, this is my job now." Paula comments, "oh, yeah. Duh. Silly me." Paula suddenly becomes excited because she will also have her house in the woods, and less than a mile away from Kathy and Eddie's house.

Paula then asks Mark, “how much will it cost to build one?” Mark replies, “it depends on what you build.” Interrupting Mark and Paula’s conversation, Kathy tells them, “it doesn’t matter. You just buy gold, bring it to the future and sell it. Then, when you come back, go down to the building supply place, and buy whatever you need.” Paula gives Kathy a high-five, and exclaims, “when am I finally going to get this through my head?” Eddie tells Mark, “what Kathy said would work. You just pay cash for all the materials, and pay the jobbers in cash.” Mark replies, “yeah. I finally got it. Now I see how we can do this.”

They head back to the road, and Paula writes down the information from the sign. Paula writes down the name of the street, which is Orchard Lane. Driving again to the end of the street, they find a cul-de-sac, with a few houses at the end. Paula wonders why this property has never been built on. Kathy, who has driven around this town for months, tells her that there are a lot of undeveloped lots around, but they’re not for sale. Paula speeds back to her house, wanting to call the real estate office now.

Arriving at her house, Paula jumps out of her Jeep, and runs toward the door as if she is running a 40-yard dash. Paula exclaims, “aren’t you guys coming?” Before anyone can respond, Paula is inside, headed to the phone. Mark, Eddie, and Kathy get out of the Jeep. On the way to the door, Kathy comments, “I think she’s a little excited. What do you guys think?” Mark replies, “maybe just a little.”

They go inside, and Paula is already on the phone, talking to the real estate office. Listening to Paula on the phone, Kathy comments, “well just listen to that. She talks faster than she runs.” Eddie replies, “yeah. She learned from you.” Kathy asks, “how so?” Eddie explains, “I think I remember a long five minute run-on sentence when you explained to your dad how you just showed up one day with a Porsche 914 in front of your house.” Kathy contends, “yeah, well, that was more like three minutes.” Eddie replies, “uh huh.”

Paula hangs up the phone, and gives Mark all the details. She tells Mark that the property is three acres, and the owner lives in another state. She tells Mark the price, and asks, “can we get it, please, please, please?” Mark replies, “sure. I can see us living there.” Paula replies, “oh, good. We have an appointment to sign the contract in an hour.” Mark asks, “what if I said ‘no’?” Paula tells him, “then, we’ll be living on Second Street, next to Mr. Crum.” But, Paula has enough money saved up to buy the property in the woods, so she is going for it.

Not missing a beat, Mark comments, “you know, I could buy a house on Second Street. Then, I can knock the house down, and store construction materials, and crap that I rip out of jobs on the lot.” Eddie replies, “that’s a great idea! I can go in on it with you! I can store a few

broken-down automobiles!” Kathy tells Eddie and Mark, “um, that would usually be called a junkyard.” Mark replies, “exactly.” Eddie comments, “well, Mr. Crum wanted the area to go commercial, didn’t he?” Some commercial enterprises, such as a junkyard, lower property values, not raise them. Mark and Paula head to the real estate office, and Eddie and Kathy head to their new house.

Since it’s nice outside, Eddie and Kathy are going for a swim. On the way, they stop by Mark and Paula’s property, and take a second look. Kathy tells Eddie, “it would be so nice to have them living only a mile away from us.” Eddie replies, “yeah, that place would be perfect for them. And, Mark’s going to build a separate three or four-car garage to store all the tools he’s going to accumulate in the next few years.” Kathy asks, “how do you know?” Eddie replies, asking, “do you remember when Mark and his father built that eight-car garage at the gardens last Summer?” Kathy replies, “yeah. That was a really big project.” Eddie explains, “Mark said to me, ‘if I can have a garage half this size, I’d be really happy.’” Kathy replies, “well, they’ll have the space for it, and a pool too.” Arriving at their house, Kathy and Eddie head straight for their own pool.

Relaxing in the water for a while, without even realizing it, Kathy and Eddie begin making plans for Mark and Paula’s house. Kathy suggests to Eddie that Mark and Paula really need a pool. Eddie mentions that the house should be all on one level, and brick on all four sides. Kathy adds that Mark will really need a separate garage, just like Eddie has, for work. After their long discussion, Eddie and Kathy realize that they have planned Mark and Paula’s house to be just like theirs. After an hour in the pool, planning for Mark and Paula, Kathy and Eddie head out to get dinner.

With the Summer in full swing, Kathy and Eddie have their own planning to do. They need to be planning for their wedding, and realize that they haven’t done much and need to get moving on it. Kathy, although she is very intelligent, has a very simplified view of the world. With Kathy, it’s pick a date, get married, and live happily ever after. But, they quickly realize that it’s not quite that simple.

Sitting at their pool side one day, Kathy randomly asks Eddie, “so, when are we getting married?” Eddie replies, “we have to pick a date.” Getting a pad and a pen, Kathy begins writing everything down. Replying, “that’s easy enough,” Kathy writes ‘pick a date’ on the top of the paper. She then asks, “okay, then what?” Eddie replies, “we have to send out invitations.” Writing that on the list, Kathy mentions, “okay, that can be done immediately after we pick the date. But dang, we have to have the invitations printed. And, if we’re going to send out invitations, we’ll need a guest list.”

Kathy comments, “this is really getting to be complicated.” Eddie mentions, “we can go over to the card store. Maybe they already have wedding plans and a checklist already printed out.” Kathy exclaims, “that’s it! You’re a genius!” Eddie replies, “it’s my little brain. It’s less complicated.” Not understanding why Eddie said that, Kathy asks, “how is that?” Eddie replies, “the brain coral. My little brain.” Kathy laughs, and asks Eddie, “are you telling me that I’m complicated?” Eddie replies, “no. The wedding is complicated, and we’re not.” Thinking about what Eddie said, Kathy replies, “yeah, you do have a point.”

Wanting to make at least some forward progress, Kathy and Eddie drive over to the card shop. They walk in, and see an entire section with wedding invitations, thank-you notes, and other wedding items. After a few minutes, the clerk, whose name is Nora, comes over and greets them, saying, “let me guess, you’re getting married.” Kathy replies, “yeah. How did you know?” Nora replies, “because, if you were looking for a birthday card, you probably wouldn’t be spending five minutes looking at wedding invitations. And, if you’re like everyone else, you probably don’t know where to start.” Kathy tells Nora, “it sounds like you’ve had a few other people walk in who were getting married too.” Nora smiles, and replies, “one or two.”

Nora tells Kathy and Eddie, “if you want, I can make this a little easier for you.” Kathy asks, “how?” Nora explains, “well, let me ask you a few questions. Do you want to do everything yourself, or do you want a wedding planner?” Kathy replies, “I don’t even know what there is to do. We’re like stuck.”

Nora hands Kathy a wedding checklist that is two pages long, which is a bit overwhelming. Kathy and Eddie look through the list, and Eddie comments, “wow! No wonder everyone spends a year planning their wedding.” Nora asks, “when were you thinking about getting married?” Kathy replies, “this Summer.” Nora informs Kathy, “okay, dear. You got a problem here. You’re going to need a wedding planner. There is no way you will ever get all of this done by yourself this Summer.”

Kathy asks, “so, what exactly does a wedding planner do?” Seeing that Kathy has no clue where to begin, Nora explains, “a wedding planner can do as much or as little as you want. A wedding planner can plan and orchestrate your entire wedding for you, or they can do as little as make a few suggestions. For example, a wedding planner can take care of the flowers, get a photographer, hire the caterer for the reception, and have the wedding cake made and delivered. They can also find a band or a DJ for the music at the reception. And, they’ll make sure that the date will work for the person officiating the wedding, and that sort of thing. Or, a wedding planner can do as little as show up at the wedding and make

sure everything runs smoothly.” Looking at Eddie, Kathy tells him, “it sounds like we need a wedding planner.”

Telling Kathy and Eddie to have a seat, she explains to them, “when you hire a wedding planner, you’ll still have a lot to do. You’ll need to pick your wedding date, get a guest list together, buy your wedding rings, pick out a wedding dress, so you’re not going to be sitting around doing nothing.” Kathy tells Nora, “we were thinking about getting married on the beach.” With some good news, Nora informs them, “that usually makes everything a lot simpler. Beach weddings are fun and really easy.”

Wanting to get started, Kathy asks, “okay, how do we find a wedding planner?” Getting the business cards for the three wedding planners the card shop uses, Nora hands them to Kathy. Nora informs Kathy, “any one of these wedding planners are good. If I were you, I’d call Jennifer first. She’s been doing this the longest, and you guys have a tight deadline. And, she’s done a lot of beach weddings.”

Not realizing how complicated planning a wedding can be, Kathy tells Eddie, “let’s get a wedding planner.” Eddie replies, “yeah. I agree. That would be the easiest way.” Nora instructs Kathy, “okay, so the first thing you need to do is call Jennifer, and then start making your guest list. That’s all you have to do right now. Jennifer will meet with you, ask you a lot of easy questions, and she’ll take care of the rest. Don’t worry! Everything will work out fine!” Kathy and Eddie thank Nora, leaving the card shop a lot more confident than when they walked in.

Eddie and Kathy head back to Kathy’s house, where she wastes no time making the phone call to Jennifer. Eddie hears only half of the conversation, but can tell that Kathy is making a lot of progress. Kathy sets a date to meet with Jennifer, which is an afternoon that she and Eddie both have free. Of most importance, Jennifer tells Kathy to get her guest list together. After the call, Kathy feels a lot more confident that everything is now under control. With the ball now rolling on the wedding plans, it’s back to real life for Eddie and Kathy.

When Eddie decided to be a mechanic, he had a good idea of the types of automotive issues he’d be working on. Eddie expected to be doing a lot of tune-ups, brake jobs, valve adjustments, and an occasional engine rebuild. And then, there are those emergency repairs, such as alternators, water pumps, or fuel pumps that have gone bad. Occasionally, Eddie expected to work on some boring stuff, such as changing oil and replacing light bulbs. But, every once in a while, the mind needs a rest. And, at the opposite end of the spectrum, taxing the mind to its limit, are the intermittent electrical or fuel system problems that never seem to malfunction when the automobile is at the service station. But, worst of all, is when the shade tree mechanic pushes the

dead in the water automobile into the service station, partially disassembled with the parts in a box.

Occasionally, the workday brings interesting problems with automobiles that Eddie never expected to see. The people that drive in with the interesting problems are equally, if not more, interesting than the problem with the automobile.

Today, at the service station, another familiar face drives in with an issue that no other mechanic has been able to solve. The car is a five-year-old Corvette, which has been poorly maintained, abused, and out of warranty. The driver is Paul Mahoney, who is another person Eddie was hoping to never see again. Fortunately, for Eddie, Angelo talks with Mahoney and writes the service ticket. Mahoney complains that the car sputters at times, but then it clears up for a while. Angelo tells Mahoney to call later this afternoon for a progress update.

Eddie is in the middle of putting a lift kit on a Jeep CJ, and that's just for starters. The owner has an extensive list of custom enhancements he wants done to the Jeep, which will take Eddie quite a while. This means that Angelo will get the pleasure of working on Mahoney's Corvette. This time, Eddie is spared having to work on a car owned by someone who has caused him so much trouble in the past.

After a while, Angelo starts diagnosing Mahoney's Corvette. Eddie yells out to Angelo, "hey! The guy who owns that car is another loser!" Angelo yells back, "oh yeah? What's his story?" Eddie yells back, "drugs. Lots of them. He's been in and out of a sanitarium." Angelo replies, "that will explain a lot. He probably spends his money on drugs instead of auto maintenance." Angelo continues to work on the Corvette, having a difficult time finding the problem.

Eddie walks over, and asks Angelo, who is still working feverishly on Mahoney's car, "so, what's wrong with it?" Angelo replies, "I don't know. Whatever it is, it's definitely in the fuel system." Eddie suggests, "knowing Mahoney, someone probably put sugar in his gas tank." Angelo tells Eddie, "yeah! I got it! Hey, thanks!" Eddie asks, "for what?" Angelo replies, "I'm going to drain the gas tank, replace the fuel filter, fill it up, and flush out the fuel lines. Maybe I'll get lucky and it will run!" Eddie mentions, "and, while you're at it, replace his Johnson Rod."

The first roadblock Angelo encounters is the aftermarket locking gas cap. Not being provided with the key to the gas cap, Angelo picks the lock, which is really quite simple. Angelo removes the gas cap, which oddly has a string attached to the inside of the cap, which goes through to the tank. Thinking this is kind of unusual, Angelo initially thinks that maybe the string was put there so the gas cap wouldn't get lost. Angelo

quickly reasons to himself that would be stupid. Pulling the string, quite a few small hermetically sealed bags of white powder tied to each other come out one by one. This is not exactly anything Angelo has ever seen before.

Angelo yells out, "hey, Eddie! Come and take a look at this!" Eddie walks over, as Angelo is pulling who knows what out of Mahoney's gas tank. Eddie laughs, and tells Angelo, "it looks like a tapeworm." Angelo asks, "what is this shit?" Eddie laughs, and replies, "knowing Mahoney, it's probably heroin, or some other drug." Angelo finally pulls all the bags out of the gas tank, some of which have broken open. Angelo comments, "there's the problem. Whatever this shit is, it's in the gas. That's why no one could find it." Eddie suggests, "maybe you should call the police in case it's drugs." Angelo agrees, clearly not wanting to be on the wrong end of this problem if it is drugs.

Angelo calls the police, telling them that it is no rush, and that he just wants to have something looked at. While he is waiting, Angelo drains the gas tank, flushes the fuel lines, replaces the fuel filter, and the car starts and runs just fine. Angelo adds quite a bit of fuel system additive to the gas tank, which will clean out whatever may be left over in time. Angelo then cleans the carburetors with a spray-type carburetor cleaner. The car seems to start and run just fine. Angelo lets the engine run for a while, making sure the sputtering that was reported does not return.

Since Angelo reported that it was a non emergency, the police arrive an hour later. When the officers walk into the service bay, the senior officer, Officer Richard Hayes, says to Eddie, "hey, you're the pizza girl's boyfriend!" Eddie mentions, "yeah. Me and the pizza girl are getting married! And, Mark and the Jeep girl are also getting married!" Richard then mentions to Eddie, "oh, and by the way, thanks for taking care of Charles Black for us last Spring." Eddie replies, "no problem." After a short conversation, Richard then tells Eddie, "we got the call, but they were very vague about the complaint." Eddie replies, "yeah. Let's go talk to Angelo."

Eddie escorts the officers to the office, where Angelo is just finishing up with a customer. Once the customer leaves, Richard asks Angelo, "hey, Angelo! What do you got going on here today?" Angelo replies, "let me show you," as he walks outside to the idling Corvette. Convinced that the Corvette is now running properly, Angelo turns it off.

Angelo explains, "I was working on this car. It had a fuel system problem, and I found it. Let me show you what it was." Angelo walks over to his service bay and, showing the officers what he found earlier, tells them, "whatever this crap is was strung down into the gas tank. Some of

the packages broke open, and it made a mess of the fuel system. Eddie thought it might be some sort of drugs.”

Richard takes a look at the packets, which are still strung together. He breaks one open, telling his partner, “it looks like heroin.” Richard asks Angelo, “whose car is this?” Angelo yells out to Eddie, asking, “Eddie, whose car is this again?” Eddie yells back, “it’s Paul Mahoney’s.” Richard looks at his partner, and tells him, “if it’s Paul Mahoney’s car, it’s heroin all right.”

Richard asks Angelo, “when is he coming back for his car?” Angelo replies, “I haven’t called him yet, but it’s ready whenever he wants it.” As Eddie walks over, Richard asks him, “Paul Mahoney? That was the guy who had a few problems several years ago in high school, wasn’t it?” Eddie frankly replies, “that’s the guy. He’s the guy who ran down the street, acting crazy. That’s when you first met Kathy, the pizza girl.”

Richard tells his partner and Angelo, “this will be Mahoney’s word versus Angelo’s. So, here’s what I want to do. Angelo, you call Mahoney and tell him his car is ready. Get him to pay for it first so you get your money. And, then show him what you found. If it’s drugs, he’ll take them with him. When he drives out, we’ll pull him over for his expired tag,” which Richard noticed when he wrote down the plate number in his notebook. Angelo replies, “got it.”

Angelo calls Mahoney, who is sitting at home since he doesn’t have a car to drive. Angelo explains to Mahoney that he found the problem, and the car is running fine now. Angelo tells him how much it cost, and Mahoney tells Angelo he’ll be over in a half hour to pick it up. Angelo relays the information to Richard, who tells his partner to radio for a back up.

The backup unit parks their vehicle behind Vinnie’s Body Shop, and sits in Vinnie’s office waiting for Mahoney to show up. Richard, keeping in radio contact with the backup unit, drives up and down the street, as if he is on patrol. The plan is for Angelo to call Vinnie to let the backup unit know whether Mahoney took the packages and, if he did, where in the car he stashed the goods.

Chauffeured by his mother, Mahoney is dropped off at the service station. As Mahoney walks into the office, his mother drives away. Angelo explains to Mahoney, “your fuel system had a problem. The fuel was contaminated. So, I cleaned your carburetors, flushed your fuel system, replaced the fuel filter, and put new gas in it.” Mahoney pays the bill, in cash. Looking over the bill, Mahoney asks, “what’s this? A Johnson Rod?” Angelo explains, “it’s part of the fuel pump. It looked pretty bad. I saved you some money by not replacing the whole assembly.”

Eddie, overhearing Angelo's conversation with Mahoney, lets his mind wander a bit. Angelo, having a distinct Greek accent, pronounces the word 'fuel' as 'fool'. Eddie cannot help but to visualize Mahoney as a fool, and a 'fool filter' is used to filter out Mahoney. Looking over at Mahoney in the office settling up the bill with Angelo, and visualizing what a 'fool pump' could be, Eddie starts laughing.

Now that he has his money, Angelo then explains, "the problem was a pile of packages that were strung down into your gas tank. Some of them broke open. Whatever that stuff is, it messed up the fuel system. That's why I had to replace your Johnson Rod. That shit damaged the Johnson Rod, and that's why it was running so rough." Pointing to the shop, Angelo tells Mahoney, "the bags are in the shop if you want them back. I'll show you."

Angelo gives Mahoney his keys, and Mahoney walks out to the shop following Angelo. Pointing to Mahoney's packages, Angelo tells Mahoney, "there's your problem." Mahoney, seeing his packages sitting on top of a fifty-five-gallon drum, picks them up and brings them to his car. After Mahoney drives off, Angelo phones Vinnie, and tells Vinnie, "tell the officer that Mahoney put the goods under the front floor mat on the passenger's side."

It doesn't take long for flashing blue lights to appear in Mahoney's rear view mirror. Mahoney floors his pedal, speeding away. Turning on his siren and lights, the other officer joins the chase, now with more cause to bring Mahoney in once they catch him. Mahoney now has two problems, an expired tag and evasion of an officer. No one speeds away, inviting officers to give chase, for an expired tag. Once they find the dope, the officers will probably let Mahoney slide on the expired tag charge.

Eddie and Angelo hear the sirens, which suddenly stop. Eddie comments, "it sounds like they got him." Angelo tells Eddie, "yeah. Richard's a good guy. He made sure we got paid before they busted him." Angelo adds, "But, I really feel bad for that Mahoney guy." Eddie tells Angelo, "I wouldn't feel bad about it. If that was heroin, then you might have just saved his life, or someone else's." Angelo replies, "yeah, you got that right. I never thought of it that way." Eddie also reminds Angelo, "hey, and you fixed his car. That's what he came in for." Angelo replies, "oh, yeah! That's right!" Eddie and Angelo get back to work, not likely to see this type of problem driving in to the service station ever again.

The next day, Officer Richard Hayes, the officer who took the call yesterday, drops by to give Angelo and Eddie an update. They talk for a few minutes, and Richard thanks them for getting involved.

Richard then informs Eddie and Angelo, “the packages were only the beginning. We searched his whole car and found a lot of drugs. So, we threw Mahoney in the tank² overnight, and he started convulsing around 2:00 a.m. They shipped him off to the loony bin. He’s apparently using.” Eddie comments, “I guess he hasn’t learned yet.” Richard tells Eddie, “well, he’s definitely learning something right now.” Richard heads out, again thanking Angelo and Eddie for their help. Angelo and Eddie then get back to work.

While Eddie is off working at Angelo’s in the morning, Kathy and Paula again have their Summer jobs working at the Summer day camp where they have worked for the last three years. Like Eddie, Kathy also works in the mornings, giving Eddie and Kathy time in the afternoons to spend together. Working longer hours than Paula, Mark has been working with his father, and picking up a few of his own jobs. In the afternoon, when Mark is still working, Paula heads to the bank every day, which is their new term for buying gold in the present, bringing it to the future, and selling it for a huge profit. Bringing the money back to the present, Paula is getting enough cash for her and Mark to begin building their house.

After work, Paula often goes over to her and Mark’s property, hammering steel rods into the ground showing where she wants the pool, house, and Mark’s separate garage to be. Paula has an acre of cleared land to work with, and doesn’t want to cut down any more trees, thereby preserving the beautiful view. Like Eddie and Kathy’s house, Paula does not want any drapes on the windows so she can take full advantage of the attractive view year round. But, Paula doesn’t want anyone looking into the house, so she takes a few treks through the woods to see where the closest house is. If it were Winter, this task would be a bit easier, since the leaves would be off the trees.

Mark and Paula have also been looking through a lot of house plans, and found one that they agree on. Paula orders the blueprints and, when they arrive, she and Mark go to city hall, and apply for a building permit. That task was a lot easier than Paula expected. Paula somehow developed a fear of governmental paperwork when she applied for her learner’s permit years ago. Now that Mark has the building permit, he can begin building their house.

One afternoon, Paula and Mark show Eddie and Kathy their site plan. Kathy likes what Paula has laid out, with the garage facing the side of the house, and Mark’s separate detached garage 50 feet away. The pool is in the back yard, behind what will be a large patio. Eddie asks Mark where he plans to drill his well. Mark, who was unaware that there was no city

² Tank: Slang term for a detention cell, i.e., jail.

water, has not planned for a well. Eddie and Mark find a suitable location, as far away as possible from the location of the septic tank. With the plans set, Mark can now begin work.

Kathy and Eddie are also busy with life this Summer. They meet with Jennifer, the wedding planner, in a private room at the card shop. Kathy has her guest list, as best as she was able to do. Jennifer goes over a few things, and asks Kathy and Eddie a lot of questions. Taking a lot of notes, Jennifer comments, "it sounds like your wedding is going to be really easy." Quite surprised, Kathy asks, "easy?" Jennifer assures Kathy, "beach weddings are easy. The cathedral weddings with a thousand people, and a reception five miles from the church are the ones that pose a bit of a challenge. With a thousand people, somebody is going to make a scene." Jennifer adds, "to be honest, beach weddings are really a lot of fun." That was certainly good for Kathy and Eddie to hear.

Kathy tells Jennifer that they've decided on August 14 for the wedding date, but they can do it a week earlier or later if that's a problem. Jennifer assures Kathy that it is doable, especially with a beach wedding. Jennifer tells Kathy that reserving a spot on the beach is no problem at all.

Familiar with the beach, Jennifer informs Kathy that there is a reception hall near the parking lot where the pool is located. Eddie and Kathy know this area of the beach really well, for it is their Summertime hangout. Jennifer makes a quick phone call, finding out that the reception hall is available on August 14. She whispers to Kathy and Eddie, "the fourteenth is available. Should I reserve it?" Kathy and Eddie both reply, "yes." Jennifer reserves the reception hall for the morning and afternoon of August 14, and the date is set.

During today's meeting, Kathy, Eddie, and Jennifer also talk about the guest list and invitations. Jennifer tells them that she will send out the invitations and, if there is anyone else that is to be added, to let her know. Jennifer also tells them that she will take care of getting the area reserved on the beach, hiring a photographer, a florist, and a DJ. Kathy makes it a point to tell Jennifer that they want the ceremony on the beach near the sand dunes, East of the concession area. Jennifer has Eddie and Kathy sign a power of attorney, which allows Jennifer to obtain their wedding license.

Eddie suggests to Jennifer, "there's a wedding photographer next to where I work. The place is called Emily's Studio. Emily comes into the service station to buy her gas. She seems like a really nice person. Can we use her for our photographer?" Jennifer replies, "you sure can! We've used Emily for years. And, you'll be happy to know that she's the best wedding photographer in the area." Eddie and Kathy were certainly glad to hear that bit of good news.

The meeting then comes to discussing the menu for the reception. Jennifer asks Kathy and Eddie, “have you given any thought as to what kind of food you want for your reception?” Kathy replies, “I guess we can’t have pizza.” Jennifer informs Kathy, “I’ve done a few weddings where there was pizza available at the reception.” Kathy replies, “okay! Pizza!”

Then, answering Jennifer’s original question, Kathy adds, “but, I guess we have to get normal wedding food too.” Jennifer hands Kathy and Eddie a packet in a check the box format, and tells them, “this list has the normal wedding food suggestions, complete with pictures. You can check off what you want, and bring it back here later this week, and I’ll pick it up. And, there’s a section for wedding cakes. You can pick one out, or have your own made.” Nothing could have been easier for Kathy and Eddie.

Jennifer then tells Kathy and Eddie, “okay, so now here’s what you guys need to do. You need to pick out and buy your wedding rings, pick out your wedding dress, and get your bridesmaids and groomsmen together. And, you need to find a minister to marry you. If you don’t have one, or the date is not good for him, don’t let it worry you. I can take care of that too. Oh, and give me a list of all the songs you want to be played at your reception.” Kathy comments, “wow! We get the easy part!” Jennifer tells Kathy and Eddie, “this is your wedding. You don’t want to look back and remember it being a hectic and frustrating time. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of everything.”

Eddie mentions, “I wonder if Paula will let us drive away in her Jeep.” Kathy exclaims, “that’s a great idea!” Jennifer mentions, “that would be a really nice way to leave the ceremony and head to the reception hall. It sure beats walking along the sand in a wedding dress. You’ll also be happy to know that we have someone with a Dune Buggy, with a trailer hitch, who carries the chairs, the podium, the tent, and everything else out to the beach. He can also drive you to the reception hall.” Kathy comments, “it looks like you got everything covered.” Jennifer smiles, and assures Kathy, “that’s what I do.”

Kathy and Eddie walk away, leaving everything in the hands of Jennifer, much more confident that their wedding will go well. On the way to the car, Kathy tells Eddie, “we got the fun part! Picking out rings and a dress! That, I can do!” Eddie mentions, “it sounds like Jennifer has everything under control.” Kathy gives Eddie a high-five, exclaiming, “yeah, buddy! And, we have a date! August 14!” Kathy’s stress just totally disappeared, and they’ll undoubtedly enjoy the rest of their Summer a lot more.

Summer wouldn’t be Summer without the annual rematch between Eddie and Tessa in the pool. Early in the Spring, Eddie unofficially broke

the State record in both the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle when he tried out for the swimming team. This year, it appears that Eddie will have the advantage, unless, of course, Eddie has been lazy and Tessa has been working her butt off. But, the date has been set and the whole tribe descends upon the county pool, where they will be relaxing and having a good time.

As the morning moves on, everyone trickles in at the county pool, one by one, or, in most cases, two at a time. Riding on a motorcycle, Bobby B. arrives with Erika on the seat behind him. Walking up to the table, Bobby B. tells Eddie, “hey! I got a new bike. I bet I’m faster than you are!” Eddie laughs, telling Bobby B., “the next thing you’re going to tell me is that you want to race in the 100-yard dash!” Bobby B. tells Eddie, “come take a look at it!”

As they walk out of the pool area, Eddie takes a look at the bicycle rack, which has about a dozen bicycles locked to it. Bobby B. tells Eddie, “guess which one it is.” Looking at the bicycle rack and spying a pink girl’s bicycle, Eddie tells Bobby B., “it looks nice! But, how come you went with pink?”

Bobby B. laughs, and points to his new BSA Starfire motorcycle, which looks like it is in really great shape. Eddie gives Bobby B. a high-five, telling him, “awesome, bro! But, you really should have gone with pink though.” Bobby B. tells Eddie, “I don’t know how long I’ll have it, but at least I can get around town now.” Working with Mark, Bobby B. needs to be able to get to the job site. His new motorcycle is how he now does that.

Hoffer and Tessa are still riding their bicycles, riding up as Eddie is checking out Bobby B’s. new motorcycle. Bobby B. mentions, “I should have bought something like this a year ago.” Hoffer and Tessa also take a look at Bobby B’s. motorcycle, and Hoffer remarks, “thanks, bro! You just gave me an idea!” Hoffer has been looking for a vehicle, and just found what he thinks might be an inexpensive solution to an expensive problem. Tessa looks at Hoffer, and tells him, “you can’t get a motorcycle,” and, after a pause, continues, “unless you get a helmet for me too!” It would appear that Hoffer is now in the market for a motorcycle.

With his eyes on a few gold medals at both State invitational meets during this next year, Akinmola arrives next, telling everyone he ran to the pool. Now that Mitchell has graduated, Akinmola will be the number one seed Statewide next year in the 880-yard run and in the mile.

Johnson arrives with Barbara, and will be in school together at the University next year. Johnson announces that he got a scholarship to the

University, and will be running on the team with Barbara, Kathy, and Paula.

Mitchell then arrives with Amber. The honors student, Mitchell, announces that he will be taking a few trips around the country during this next year organizing charity races, and will leave in a few weeks. The good news is that Mitchell also gets to run in the races, something he is looking forward to.

Last to arrive are Braden and Wendy. Braden, the chief ass kicker, has decided to join the Navy. He will be leaving in about a month. Not exactly knowing her career path, Wendy will be attending a community college quite a ways away from home.

Kathy notices that Lena Borg still has her Summer job as a lifeguard, which is good news. Lena, seeing the group, will find a way to close the pool for a few minutes during the annual rematch between Eddie and Tessa.

Kathy and Lena catch up, talking about their first year in college. Lena, who received a scholarship in swimming, tells Kathy that the competition in college is a totally different level. Kathy doesn't have the heart to tell Lena that, as freshmen, she and Paula are the two fastest women in the conference. And, with the times Lena delivered on the track during her senior year, she would have likely gotten at least a partial track scholarship.

During their conversation, Kathy tells Lena, "Eddie and Tessa are here for their rematch. Is there any chance that you can close the pool for us for a few minutes?" Lena replies, "awesome! You know, if it's not a problem, I'd like to join them this year. When were they planning to race?" Kathy replies, "they haven't really decided, but earlier would be better. Otherwise, that's all they'll talk about." Lena tells Kathy, "when you're ready, let me know." Truth is that Lena wants to see how she measures up to Tessa this year.

Kathy walks back to the table, and tells Eddie, "Lena says you guys can race whenever you want, and Lena's racing with you." Kathy informs everyone else, "if anyone else wants to race, there are three open lanes." Mark mentions, "I might give it a shot and see if I remember how to swim." Paula tells Mark, "you know how to swim. You're just messing with everyone." Kathy comments, "it's hardwired into his brain. He's the master of messing with people." It looks as if Mark is going to swim, now leaving two open lanes.

Tessa confidently tells Eddie, "I'm ready when you are. And, I've been using that contraption you built for me every day." Eddie replies, "good."

Let's go for it." Kathy walks over to the lifeguard stand and tells Lena that they are ready. Lena goes over to Sherri, the other lifeguard, who is new this year. Lena explains to Sherri that they are going to race, and that the pool will be closed for five minutes.

Eddie, Tessa, and Mark head over to the end of the pool. Kathy goes over to Lena, telling her, "everyone says they are ready. We have you, Eddie, Tessa, and Mark swimming." Lena tells Kathy, "that's perfect. That means no one gets a wall lane." Lena blows her whistle, telling everyone the pool will be closed in ten minutes for approximately five minutes. Lena tells Kathy to tell everyone to warm up. There are a couple of stopwatches brought to the event this year, but this is to be expected with this group.

After ten minutes, Lena blows her whistle, and tells everyone to get out of the pool, which is slow to occur. Since the race is between Eddie and Tessa, they get the better lanes. Tessa picks lane three and Eddie gets lane four. Mark takes lane two, and Lena lane five. Tessa complains, telling Eddie that, since she is between Mark and Eddie, they will churn up the water too much, giving her a disadvantage. Mark and Lena swap lanes, and Tessa is now more confident that she will swim better. Truth is that Tessa is worried because Eddie broke the State record in this event less than a half year ago, so she wants every possible advantage.

Sherri tells everyone to get ready. Seeing that a race is about to begin, spectators line the side of the pool, wondering what the big event is all about. Sherri tells the spectators, "please stand back four feet from the side of the pool." Sherri does not want anyone playing around, and throwing their younger brother into the pool during the race. Everyone moves back, and the big moment arrives. Sherri tells the racers that she will blow her whistle for the 'go' command.

With the four competitors at the edge of the pool, Sherri announces, "take your mark." Once everyone is set and ready to dive in, she blows her whistle. Eddie and Tessa ferociously dive into the water, trying to gain every last inch they can in the air. Lena, however, gets the most distance in the air, which is one of the reasons she is a collegiate swimmer.

Eddie and Tessa fight it out, and Eddie has a slight lead over Tessa during the first lap. Tessa quickly realizes that Eddie is a lot faster than he was last Summer. At the wall, Eddie arrives first, doing his flip turn that usually gains him an advantage. Tessa turns second, with Lena right behind her. At the end of the lap, Mark, who has not been swimming much recently, is in last place.

After the first turn, Eddie has an advantage over Tessa. During the second lap, Tessa has trouble gaining ground on Eddie. Lena, who won this race two years ago, is in third place. Mark, who seems to be swimming just for fun, is still in last place. During the second lap, Barbara mentions to Kathy, "it looks like Tessa's flip turn has definitely improved in the last two years." Kathy replies, "I think she takes this yearly rematch more seriously than a swimming meet."

At the end of the second lap, Eddie kicks off first, starting his third lap with a distinct advantage. This time, it's Tessa who kicks off the wall as if she is trying to break it. She knows she's behind and, also in the back of her mind, she knows she is racing against the person who unofficially broke the State record in this event a few months ago.

Eddie turns, and enters the final lap first. Tessa is not happy that she is behind, so she kicks off the wall with all she has, swimming with as much energy as she can deliver. Eddie knows Tessa is not relenting in the least, so he also keeps his pace with the best he can deliver. Approaching the wall, Eddie touches the wall first, turns around, and glances at Tessa as she approaches. This year goes to Eddie by a wide margin. Second place goes to Tessa. Somehow, Lena ended up in third place this year. And Mark, who had nothing at stake and swam just for fun, finishes in last place.

Tessa congratulates Eddie, telling him, "next year, buddy! You're going down!" Kathy and Paula, who were the Timekeepers for this event, announce everyone's times. Lena tells Tessa that her time will definitely get her a scholarship. Lena is also surprised at Eddie's time, which is a competitive time, even for college. Tessa finds it interesting that she swims her best when up against Eddie.

The swimmers get out of the pool and walk back to the tables. Everyone congratulates Eddie and Tessa, who both beat the times they delivered last year. Tessa, although she lost the race to Eddie today, is very happy because she just set a personal record in the 100-yard freestyle. Eddie swam this race faster when he tried out for the swimming team, but you can't be expected to break a record every time you get in the pool.

At the tables, Tessa asks Eddie, "so, what's next?" Not quite understanding, Eddie asks, "say again?" Tessa asks, "what do I do next to get faster in the pool? I mean, like, in swim practice, most of what we do is swim laps." Eddie tells Tessa, "ride your bicycle 25 miles a week, and use the high gears. Forget the granny gears. In fact, take your bicycle to Vito's and tell him you want a 13-14-15-17-19 tooth rear freewheel." Tessa asks, "really?" Eddie replies, "yeah, seriously. You'll be faster on

the track too. You're not going to get any faster in the pool by only swimming."

Now curious, Tessa asks, "are you serious? Why is that?" Eddie explains to Tessa, "at the track meets, everyone looks at me and says, 'that's Eddie. He's the fastest guy in the State.' I hear what they say. They all think I must run a lot, but I really don't like running. The only reason I can run fast is because of the other things I do. It can't be because of running, because I don't run very much. Most of my running is during track practice. Oh, and when I do run, I run in the sand at the beach." Tessa asks Eddie, "what's the chance that I can get you to spill all your training secrets?" Eddie replies, "I don't really have any secrets." Tessa exclaims, "you ain't holding back on me, are you?" Eddie replies, "no."

Tessa's comment attracted a lot of attention from a few others, including Erika. Eddie continues, "if you run in the sand, it's a lot harder," which prompts more interest in training protocols by those sitting around. Eddie then tells Tessa, "if you're nice, maybe I'll let you try Eddie's Training Sled sometime." Tessa asks, "what in the world is Eddie's Training Sled?" Eddie replies, "I built it last Summer. It's a sled with a harness that you drag in the sand when you run." Tessa exclaims, "I knew you were holding out on me!" Eddie tells Tessa, "I'm not sure Eddie's Training Sled will help you in the pool, but it will definitely help on the track." Eddie casually comments, "maybe that's how I broke the National record in the 100-yard dash. It's in my trunk, if you want to see it." Tessa stands up and exclaims, "yeah! I want to see this! Show it to me!"

Eddie, Kathy, Mark, Paula, Braden, Erika, and Tessa all head out to Eddie's car. In the trunk is Eddie's Training Sled, which he takes out and shows to Tessa. Eddie takes his weighted sled over to the grass, along with a 25-pound weight plate. Tessa puts on the harness, and Eddie tells her to run. Tessa begins to run, and Eddie yells out, "faster!" Tessa runs for about 50 yards, and turns around, sprinting back. Sprinting is, perhaps, not the word for it. Tessa is giving it all she has, but is not moving very fast. It appears the grass puts up a good amount of resistance, but not quite as much as the sand would. When Tessa returns, Eddie asks, "so, what do you think?" Tessa exclaims, "I want one!"

Impressed by Tessa's reaction, Erika gives it a try, running for about 100 yards. When she returns, Erika also exclaims, "I want one too!" If Tessa wants one, Erika is going to want one as well. Although they are friends, they are rivals on the track. Erika clearly does not want Tessa to gain an advantage.

Braden also gives it a try, but they add another 25 pounds to the stack. Braden also sees that Eddie's Training Sled is a great invention.

Eddie mentions again that it works a lot better in the sand. Kathy, Mark, and Paula have used it before when they've gone to the beach, which is perhaps why they are also very fast on the track.

Eddie puts Eddie's Training Sled back into his trunk, and they head back to the pool. On the way back, Tessa and Erika both ask Eddie if he can make one for them. Eddie makes them a deal. Eddie tells them that they can borrow his training sled for the rest of the Summer, and he will build one for each of them, and have it ready by Summer's end. Since he is busy with other things this Summer, like getting married, Eddie is not likely to use his training sled much in the next few months.

When they head back to the tables, Braden overhears a young mother trying to get her baby daughter, who is crying, to fall back asleep. Braden boldly tells the new mom, "you shouldn't be singing that song to your kid." The mother asks, "why not?" Braden tells her, "didn't you ever listen to the words to that song? Let me repeat them to you." Braden, repeating the lyrics, says,

Rock-a-bye baby, on the treetop,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.

Braden then explains, "think about it. Somebody put that cradle, with a baby in it, on top of a tree. Now, who is going to put their baby in a cradle and then put it on top of a tree? Then, the wind blows. The cradle and the baby fall to the ground. And, that baby is probably hitting a few dozen branches on its way down. That baby is a dead baby. Ain't no one surviving that. No wonder she won't stop crying!" The mother tells Braden, "wow! I never saw that before."

The group heads back to the table and, on the way, Kathy tells Braden, "I've heard that song all my life, and I can't say I've ever thought about it that way before." Paula adds, "me either." Eddie comments, "I've never even heard that song before." Kathy tells Eddie, "aw, you missed that as a kid." Eddie replies, "maybe that's a good thing."

After spending the morning and afternoon at the pool, everyone decides to head out and get pizza. Paula and Mark give Akinmola a ride in Paula's Jeep, since running to the pizzeria would take too much time. Everyone also decides that, now that a lot of the tribe members have graduated, they need to make their Summer pool party an annual event so they can all keep in touch.

When they arrive at the pizzeria, Joe, as always, is glad to see them. They take a seat, and Joe comes to the table to take their order. Now that

a lot of the group members have graduated, Joe asks what everyone is doing after graduation. Joe is glad to hear that most of the group will still be in the area. Everyone orders pizza today, which is no surprise.

After dinner, everyone goes their separate ways for the remainder of the evening. Eddie and Kathy go back to their house in the woods for a while, where they sit by their pool. Kathy waits for her star to appear, but she isn't looking too closely tonight. Laying on the chaise lounge with her head on Eddie's chest, her lips find his as the sun sets for the evening. Kathy's star appears in the sky, unnoticed tonight, but is faithful to appear in the same place in the sky as when Kathy first saw it.

The next day, Kathy meets with Jennifer, the wedding planner. They meet at the card shop, where they clear up a few final details. Jennifer informs Kathy that all of her invitations have been sent out. Jennifer shows Kathy the wedding program, goes over the menu, the music, when they will take the photographs, and assures Kathy that everything is ready to go. Jennifer also gives Kathy the good news that the minister she selected is available that weekend, and that he will be glad to perform the wedding ceremony.

During their conversation, Jennifer tells Kathy, "I was looking over your gift registry, and I have to ask you something." Kathy asks, "what's that?" Jennifer replies, "I noticed that one of your gift requests is a javelin. Is that a mistake, or do you really want a javelin?" Kathy assures Jennifer, "it's not a mistake. I want a javelin. Eddie wants a shot-put, but it's not on the list. I'm getting it for him, but don't tell him." Jennifer comments, "well, those are not exactly your everyday wedding presents. I just had to ask."

Now that everything is set, Kathy breathes a sigh of relief. In a few more weeks, she and Eddie will get married on the beach, where she always wanted to get married. Then, they get to go on their honeymoon, which they almost have planned. They are not telling anyone where they are going until the day of the wedding. Everyone will have to wait until the wedding day to find out, including Paula, who desperately wants to know. But, that's Paula. The more Kathy resists telling her, the more Paula wants to know.

Eddie is getting into the groove working at Angelo's Service Station, about 20 to 25 hours a week. Early one morning, a familiar face drives into the station yet again. Mr. Crum, while driving his Volkswagen Beetle, hears all sorts of grinding sounds coming from his engine. Even Mr. Crum, the idiot that he is, can tell that this is a serious problem.

Mr. Crum yells out to Eddie, "hey, can I get some help here?" Stepping out from behind the automobile he is working on, Eddie replies, "Mr.

Crum! You're late for school! You might end up getting sent to detention! Oh, wait! It's the Summer! Are you in Summer school this year? Did you fail something?" In the service station, Eddie is the boss.

Mr. Crum yells out to Eddie, "I have an emergency! Help me out here!" Eddie then asks the already irate principal, "okay, what can I do for you today?" Mr. Crum replies, "the car, it sounds bad! I don't think it will get me to the school." Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "well, let's take a look at it." Fortunately, it is the Summer, and Mr. Crum can afford to be a little late to work.

Eddie walks out to the car, and tells Mr. Crum to start the engine. Mr. Crum starts the engine, which sounds like every main bearing is gone. Eddie asks Mr. Crum, "do you remember when you were in here earlier this Summer?" Mr. Crum replies, "yes! Of course I remember!" Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "well, it sounds like all your main bearings are gone. The connecting rod bearings are probably shot too." Mr. Crum asks, "how much will it cost to fix?" Annoyed that Mr. Crum didn't take his earlier advice, Eddie tells him, "step inside, and we'll figure it out." Mr. Crum was warned several weeks ago that his engine has a serious problem. If he had followed Angelo and Eddie's recommendation at that time, he would not have this problem today.

Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "I'm assuming we're replacing your clutch too." Mr. Crum asks, "does it really have to be done?" Eddie explains, "if I'm going to repair your engine, I'll have to remove the engine from your car. It's just as easy putting in a new clutch as reinstalling your old clutch when I put the engine back. And, since we'll have it all apart, you'll only be paying for the clutch parts, not the additional labor." Mr. Crum, knowing that something is seriously wrong, tells Eddie, "yeah, okay. Go ahead and replace the clutch too."

Eddie figures out the cost of the repair job, and shows the estimate to Mr. Crum. Mr. Crum thinks about it for a moment, and tells Eddie, "I'm going to have to think about this. This is a lot of money." Eddie informs Mr. Crum, "there's not too much to think about. The work has to be done. There's no way around it." Mr. Crum, not heeding Eddie's advice, tells Eddie, "I'll stop by after school." Eddie warns Mr. Crum, "by the sound of your engine, you may not make it to school." Mr. Crum confidently tells Eddie, "I'll make it there. I'll stop by after school." Mr. Crum drives off, quite confident that Eddie is wrong.

Eddie goes about his business, working on a few more vehicles. After doing a brake job on one vehicle, a tune-up, and a few other repairs, Eddie finds a few minutes to change the oil in his MGB right before lunch. As he is pulling the MGB out of the service bay, a tow truck drives up with Mr.

Crum's Volkswagen Beetle hooked on the back. Eddie laughs to himself, knowing exactly why the Beetle, and Mr. Crum, have returned.

Mr. Crum steps out of the tow truck, and tells Eddie, "it just stopped running." Eddie asks, "really? I can't imagine why. What happened right before 'it just stopped running'?" Mr. Crum replies, "it's like someone hit the brakes and the rear wheels skidded for a second. Then there was a loud boom in the back! And, then the car started rolling again." Sounding a bit like Mr. Zunde, Eddie calmly informs Mr. Crum, "that is definitely not a good sign. There must be something wrong."

Eddie whispers to the tow truck driver, "you should have towed it to the junkyard." The tow truck driver, who remembers Eddie from towing Kathy's Porsche and Eddie's MGB in the past, is clearly knowledgeable about automobiles. The tow truck driver tells Eddie, "from what he says, it sounds like his engine seized and took out his tranny." Eddie tells the driver, "exactly. He's looking at a whole new drive train." Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "okay, pay the tow truck driver, and we'll take another look at it."

Eddie tries to crank the car. The starter engages and nothing happens. That is the worst possible news Mr. Crum could get. Eddie tries to push the car into a parking space and, even with the transmission in gear and a seized-up engine, the car rolls easily. Eddie takes a quick look at the halfshafts, and sees that they are both intact. That, along with Mr. Crum's description of what happened, is all that Eddie needs to know to understand what is going on. Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "let's go inside and talk about this."

Eddie explains to Mr. Crum, "Mr. Crum, your engine seized up. It now needs to be completely rebuilt or replaced. And, that loud 'boom' that you heard was something snapping in your transmission. The wheels kept rotating, but the engine is seized, so it took something out between the wheels and the engine. Since your halfshafts are intact, it's either your transmission or your clutch. If you're lucky, it's your clutch, which has to be replaced anyway." Eddie really doesn't think it's the clutch, but there is the outside chance that it is.

Mr. Crum does not take the news well. Fortunately, for Eddie, Angelo just drove up. Eddie now does not have to deal with an irate Mr. Crum alone. Referring to Angelo, Mr. Crum asks Eddie, "can he take a look at it?" Mr. Crum seriously believes that something is going to change for the better if Angelo looks at it. Eddie replies, "sure. Go ahead and tell him what happened."

Angelo walks up and asks, "so, what's the problem today? Did the Johnson Rod fail?" As he is walking away, Eddie informs Angelo, "the Johnson Rod is fine. The one we put in was stainless steel." Mr. Crum

explains to Angelo in detail what happened, and Angelo goes outside to take a look at the vehicle. Eddie, finished with Mr. Crum for the moment, washes up, and eats his lunch.

While Eddie is eating his lunch, Angelo and Mr. Crum walk back into the office. Angelo explains to Mr. Crum, “from what you’re telling me, and what I can see, your engine seized up. And that loud ‘boom’ you described probably came from your transmission. Your engine is gone, and now your transmission is probably gone as well. The cheapest way to solve this problem is to replace the engine and the transmission with rebuilt units, which carry a 4,000-mile, six-month warranty. We can have you back on the road by late tomorrow.” Mr. Crum asks, “what are my other choices?” Angelo replies, “sell it to a junkyard and buy a new car.” Eddie quietly laughs, listening as Mr. Crum tries to find a twenty-dollar solution to a few-thousand dollar problem.

Sounding a bit like he’s going to blow a gasket in his head, Mr. Crum tells Angelo, “okay, put in a new engine and transmission. It doesn’t look like I have any other choice.” Angelo writes the service ticket and tells Mr. Crum, “these engines can last a very long time. But, you need to service them regularly. Your engine only has 33,000 miles on it.” Angelo calls a taxi for Mr. Crum, who will take him to the school. If Mr. Crum were nicer, either he or Eddie would have driven him to the high school.

After Mr. Crum is gone, Eddie reminds Angelo, “we told him his engine was going to seize up a few weeks ago. He came in early this morning with the engine ready to go. I told him he may not make it to the school. He left anyway, and the car came back, hooked behind a wrecker.” Shaking his head, Angelo replies, “only 33,000 miles on it. I wonder what he does with that thing that it’s in such bad shape again already. I had to put new bearings in it last year. Everyone else gets these engines to go more than 100,000 miles.”

Eddie mentions, “well, he does live on Second Street.” Angelo asks, “how does that matter?” Eddie explains, “there are four houses on that street, and the rumor is that they are all haunted.” Angelo replies, “yeah. He’s the one haunting them.” Eddie laughs, and tells Angelo, “Paula said the same thing, that he’s the one haunting them. Wait a second! Maybe the bogeyman puts valve-grinding compound in his oil at night when he is sleeping!” Angelo laughs, telling Eddie, “I’m glad you have a sense of humor. That guy certainly doesn’t.”

Angelo orders a rebuilt engine and transmission from the Volkswagen aftermarket shop a few miles away, which is scheduled to arrive late today or early tomorrow morning. Eddie pulls the engine and transmission from Mr. Crum’s car, getting it ready to receive the rebuilt units tomorrow. Angelo tells Eddie, “the engine should be here tomorrow when you get in.

Start working on it first thing in the morning.” Eddie replies, “got it,” and heads out for the day.

Late the next day, Mr. Crum returns to pick up his automobile repaired by the student he most despised a year ago. He walks into the office, seeing Angelo delivering a vehicle to another customer. Mr. Crum takes a seat, hoping that his car is in good running condition again.

As the other customer leaves, Angelo tells Mr. Crum, “it’s all ready to go. It runs like a charm. And, the good news is that your Johnson Rod didn’t need to be replaced.” Mr. Crum pays his bill, and Angelo informs him that he will need to have the oil and filter changed in 500 miles since the engine has just been rebuilt. Angelo also tells Mr. Crum that his warranty is void if he doesn’t change the oil at the recommended time. Angelo hands Mr. Crum the keys, hoping not to see him again for a very long time.

Since they both worked many hours in the last week, Angelo has given Eddie a day off so that he can do some wedding planning with Kathy. Kathy and Eddie’s meeting with the wedding planner goes well, and they get a lot accomplished. Getting done early, they now have some free time together. They decide to head to their house in the woods, and make sure the pool does not have any unwanted visitors, especially frogs.

On the way, they pass the high school, noticing that Mr. Frazier is out on the track with a class. Kathy tells Eddie, “hey! Let’s stop and say ‘hi’ to Mr. Frazier!” Eddie replies, “sure! We haven’t seen him since graduation.” Eddie drives into the parking lot, and they head out to the track. As they get closer, they see several students whom they recognize running around the track. The students are running very slowly compared to Eddie and Kathy’s standards. These are the students who failed physical education class this past year.

Seeing Eddie and Kathy, Mr. Frazier turns his attention from the track, exclaiming, “hey! How have you guys been? I didn’t expect to see you guys here today!” Kathy replies, “we were out planning our wedding today, and we’re headed to our house. We saw you out here and thought we’d stop to say ‘hi’.”

Already knowing the answer, Eddie asks, “Summer school?” Mr. Frazier replies, “yeah. And, I got your favorite two people out there on the track.” Taking a look at the field of so-called runners, Eddie sees Chuckie and Goldstein, who both are struggling to run in the heat. Eddie asks, “where’s O’Brien?” Mr. Frazier tells them, “I couldn’t fail him. He got a note from his doctor saying no physical education for the rest of the year. But, he was so weak after being in the hospital, that he fell behind and failed math. He’s inside, out of the heat.”

Mr. Frazier asks Kathy, “so, how did the season end at the University?” Kathy replies, “me, Paula, and Barbara did really good. The team could use some work though, especially the guys. It’s back to practice for us in September.” Somewhat confused, Mr. Frazier asks, “in September?” Kathy explains, “yeah. We practice all year. In the off season, we still practice five days a week. And, we all work out in the Summer on our own. But, the coaches still hold practice three days a week in the Summer for anyone who is around.” Contemplating what Kathy said, Mr. Frazier is silent for a moment, with the wheels turning in his head.

Mr. Frazier tells Kathy and Eddie, “you know, I might just start holding track practice when school starts in September. That would give everyone three months of training before the season even starts.” Kathy mentions, “I wonder if they’ll let us come and help.” Already knowing the answer, Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, “according to Mr. Zunde, there’s more money in your internship budget than was spent last year. If I start practice in September, I could definitely use the help. Mr. Zunde will be busy with the football team.” Eddie mentions, “hey! I’ll come and help. I can chase my brother around the track!” They all laugh at Eddie’s comment and, as Chuckie runs by, Chuckie thinks they are laughing at him. Chuckie flips Eddie a bird, and continues his slow jog around the track.

Mr. Frazier tells Kathy, “see if Barbara and Paula are up for it. If I can get at least one person helping me during each practice session, it would be a great help.” Kathy replies, “will do!” Referring to Eddie, Kathy adds, “and, we got to keep this guy in shape too!” Eddie laughs, and reminds Kathy, “I told you that I’ll run for the University if I don’t have to go to class and I get all A’s.”

Mr. Frazier informs Eddie, “don’t laugh too hard. There have been cases where colleges have done that. They have their ways of making it work out.” Kathy bumps Eddie’s hip, telling him, “see there, buddy! They’re serious!” Hearing that from Mr. Frazier, Eddie is on his way to believing that Kathy might have been serious about running for the University, and not having to go to class.

Seeing that no one on the track is running anymore, but rather walking, Eddie comments, “it looks like the Chuckie and his sidekick have given out.” Mr. Frazier replies, “I still don’t know why those guys even bothered to try out for the team, other than to cause trouble. And, you can see why these guys failed gym class. I’m going to give them a D, just to get rid of them.” Kathy laughs, and tells Mr. Frazier, “you just don’t want them trying out for the track team next year!” Mr. Frazier laughs, and replies, “you got me figured out!”

After a long conversation, Mr. Frazier then tells Eddie and Kathy, “well, it looks like I have to take these clowns back inside. And, the more I think

about this, I'm convinced that I'm starting track practice in September." Eddie tells Mr. Frazier, "hey, we'll keep in touch. I drive by here every day to work, and we'll be living only a few miles away."

Kathy and Eddie head to their house to inspect the pool. While the pool looks okay, Kathy notices that there is a lot of work to be done inside the house. Eddie got a lot done during his three-week vacation from school, but now they have their wedding to plan, and Eddie and Kathy both work. And, as if they aren't already overloaded with stuff to do, Kathy notices that they do not have a bed to sleep in when they return from their honeymoon.

Kathy asks Eddie, "do you have any paper in your car?" Eddie replies, "yeah. Why?" Kathy explains, "there's a lot of stuff that has to be done around here. Now, that it's all running through my mind, I want to write it down." Eddie goes out to the car, and returns with what is left of his notebook from his senior year. Kathy frantically starts writing a list of things that need to be done as she walks from room to room.

Glancing at the list, Eddie mentions, "you do realize that you have months of work on your list, don't you?" Looking at her list, Kathy replies, "I didn't think it was that much." Eddie replies, "yeah, it is." Kathy is now overwhelmed again, and asks Eddie, "now, what are we going to do?" Eddie explains, "we only have three choices. The first is to get Mark and his father to do it. The second is for us to do it ourselves. And, the third is to split the work. I could ask my dad to do some of it, but he is way backed up as it is." Without a lot of thought, Kathy tells Eddie, "let's just get Mark and his father to do the work. Mark's going to be building his house down the road anyway. And, Bobby B. is working for him. So, if we get them to do it, we can come back from our honeymoon to a normal life, whatever that is." Eddie replies, "sold."

Kathy finishes her list, which includes stripping the wallpaper, painting the walls, ceilings, and trim, and refinishing the hardwood floors. Kathy also has a few minor items on her list, such as cleaning the windows and getting rid of that ugly lighting fixture in the kitchen. Eddie adds a few things to the list, such as adding plywood on the walls of the detached garage, which has the studs exposed. The detached garage will be Eddie's home workshop, where he can tinker with his MGB.

After completing their list, Eddie and Kathy head over to Mark's house later that evening. Paula happens to be there with him just hanging out. They explain to Mark what has to be done, and Mark suggests they all go and take a look. Kathy tells them to bring their swimsuits, and is sure to tell them that the pool has no dead frogs either in the skimmers or in the water. Mark is glad to pick up some of his own work, even though it is from his best friend.

Once they all arrive, Eddie and Kathy show Mark what has to be done inside the house. Mark takes a lot of notes, a whole lot more than he ever did when he was in school. Outside, Mark makes a few suggestions involving Eddie's separate detached garage, the most noteworthy being the addition of a lot of additional lighting. Mark mentions that Eddie is going to want at least 1,000 watts of lighting in the double-depth garage, and spread out as to eliminate shadows. Mark is confident that he can get everything done by the time Eddie and Kathy return from their honeymoon in late August.

After twenty minutes of looking around the house, they all get into their swimsuits and walk out to the pool. Jumping into the water, Paula exclaims, "okay, I definitely want a pool!" Kathy tells her, "then, just keep going to the bank." Paula explains, "Mark rented a bulldozer, and his father has been working on the lot. They're going to put the foundation in next week. Construction people spend money really fast. But, I want a pool too, and I don't know if we should do that now." Kathy tells her, "calm down, girl! You're beginning to sound like you did when you got your Jeep! Everything's going to work out. And besides, you ain't swimming in your pool this year anyway. By the time your house is done, it will be too cold out to swim." Paula calms down, and replies, "oh, yeah. That's right." Kathy tells her, "so, just come swim here."

Mark mentions to Eddie, "Bobby B. will be helping me and my dad. So, you'll see his motorcycle around and see him working on your house. He's going to help me on mine too." Eddie tells Mark, "you need to tell Bobby B. that the tools you use are very special pieces of equipment. Make sure he cleans and handles them carefully." Mark laughs, and replies, "yeah, I'm going to yank his chain a little." Eddie tells Mark, "don't yank it too hard. He might just quit." Mark comments, "I don't think he'd quit. I think he'll just yank my chain in return. He's been doing that some." Eddie replies, "well, that will put some fun into your day."

As they are moving around in the water, Kathy asks Eddie, "should we ask them now?" Eddie replies, "yeah. It looks like a good time." Seemingly out of the blue, Kathy asks Paula, "hey, will you be my maid of honor?" Jumping up and down in the water, Paula exclaims, "I'd love to!" Kathy tells Paula, "I was hoping you'd say yes!" Paula exclaims, "how could I not?" Eddie then asks Mark, "can you be my best man?" Mark gives Eddie a fist bump, and replies, "you got it, bro!"

With the focus of the conversation now on the wedding, Kathy tells Paula and Mark all about their wedding plans. As expected, Paula asks, "okay, what do I wear?" Kathy replies, "you have to promise not to laugh." Knowing that something unusual is coming, Paula responds, "uh oh! This is going to be quite the surprise!" Kathy tells her, "the bridesmaids are going to be wearing a yellow sun dress and matching yellow sandals. And

I'm going to be wearing a white sun dress and white sandals. And, I found this Greek Goddess headdress that I'm going to wear. I know this sounds silly, but I don't want a big elaborate wedding gown. It's just not me." Paula cries, and tells Kathy, "I think that's just so awesome!"

Hearing Kathy's choice of clothing for the bridesmaids, Mark comments, "I'm guessing I'm not going to be wearing a tux." All excited, Paula exclaims, "so, tell me! What are the guys wearing?" Kathy looks at Eddie, and tells him, "go ahead. You tell them." Eddie tells Mark, "the groomsmen are going to be wearing an Arena warm-up jacket and matching bottoms. It's like the ones the swimming team wears, with the V-shaped logo up the sleeve and down the leg." Mark exclaims, "wow! Those are really awesome!" Kathy mentions, "we wanted everyone to wear something that they can wear after the wedding. Not something that gets stuffed away in a closet for years." Paula tells Kathy, "I think that is so awesome!"

Knowing she is going to get a response out of Paula, Kathy tells her, "and, we're having pizza at the reception." Paula exclaims, "girl! No way! Tell me you didn't!" Kathy replies, "yeah, we did. But, there's also going to be real food too, like for the older people." Paula replies, "oh good. You can't just have only pizza at the reception." Eddie adds, "yeah, you're right. Some people might want a calzone or a salad to go with the pizza." Paula tells Kathy, "this is going to be the best wedding ever!"

Mark tells Paula, "I hope you're taking notes." Paula tells everyone, "yeah, I'm taking notes all right. Everyone's wedding is always what society expects a wedding to be. I'm so glad for you guys. You're doing what you guys want to do, and no one else!" Kathy tells Paula, "you guys can do whatever you want to as well. After all, it's your wedding!"

Looking at Mark, Paula asks him, "what do you think about a beach wedding?" Mark replies, "it sounds good to me. Getting married on the track sounds good too." Eddie comments, "if you get married on the track, you'll need to get Angelo, Vinnie, and the guys from the body shop to keep Crum away." Kathy remarks, "really? Any one of those guys could take care of that old Crum!" Eddie replies, "yeah, but it wouldn't look as good as if they all were there! I can just see it now. Angelo, standing there with a lug wrench in his hand, as Mr. Crum approaches. Holding the lug wrench in one hand, and slapping it into the other hand, I can hear Angelo telling Mr. Crum, 'what can I do for you today?'" Everyone has a good laugh but, after thinking about it, Mark comments, "the beach sounds a little better anyway."

Paula tells Mark, "we have to get busy planning our wedding soon." Kathy tells Paula, "get a wedding planner. They do all the hard stuff for you. Then you guys can do the fun stuff." After Kathy tells Paula all

about her and Eddie's wedding planner, it doesn't take a lot to convince Paula to go that route. They get out of the pool, and Kathy gives Paula the information about Jennifer, the wedding planner. Mark and Paula head out and, knowing Paula, she'll be on the phone with the wedding planner first thing in the morning.

Eddie and Kathy get back in the pool for a while. Kathy tells Eddie, "I am so looking forward to our wedding. I'm so glad we got the wedding planner. And, do you want to know why?" Eddie replies, "tell me why." Putting her legs around Eddie's waist and her arms around his neck, Kathy tells Eddie, "this is why." Kathy kisses Eddie, as they hold each other tightly. Kathy tells Eddie, "I don't know if I'm ever going to make it. All those stars in the sky."