

# Eddie, The Mechanic

## Chapter Seven The Summer Reunion

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With the Summer here, Eddie is putting in about twenty hours a week at Angelo's Service Station. A few familiar faces have come into the station over the last year, including some of Eddie's friends that he went to high school with. Angelo, taking Eddie's advice, has been getting a good return on his money in the stock market. But, not everyone has a high regard for Eddie's advice. One such person is Mr. Crum.

While driving his Volkswagen Beetle one Saturday, Mr. Crum is beginning to hear serious grinding sounds coming from his engine yet again. Even Mr. Crum can tell that his engine is having a serious problem. Mr. Crum drives into the service station, and yells out to Angelo and Eddie, who are both working on vehicles in the shop, "the engine you put in is a lemon!" Adding a bit of comedy to the day, Eddie whispers to Angelo, "I thought we put in an orange." Angelo replies, "well, that guy is two grapes short of a fruit salad," pretty much calling Mr. Crum an idiot. Eddie then tells Angelo, "let me go and see what his problem is this time."

Seeing Mr. Crum in a tizzy, Eddie walks over to the office and asks the chronically irate high school principal, "Mr. Crum, what a surprise. What can I do for you today?" Mr. Crum replies, "the car! It sounds bad again! The new engine is a lemon!" Eddie asks Mr. Crum, "it sounds bad? What does it sound like?" Mr. Crum replies, "the engine is making those grinding sounds again!" Eddie, pretending to act pleasant, tells Mr. Crum, "well, let's go and take a look at it."

Eddie walks out to Mr. Crum's car, and tells Mr. Crum to start the engine. Mr. Crum starts the engine, which sounds like the main bearings are again badly worn and in need of replacement. Eddie asks Mr. Crum, "when was the last time you changed your oil?" Mr. Crum replies, "after 500 miles, like you told me. And, then again 6,000 miles later. You guys

did the work. Don't you remember?" Eddie takes a look at the odometer, noticing there is a little more than 40,000 miles on the vehicle.

Yanking Mr. Crum's chain just for fun, Eddie mentions, "I can see what you mean. Your engine doesn't sound too good. Have you had it checked out by a mechanic?" Mr. Crum exclaims, "that's why I'm here!" Eddie replies, "I was just checking to see if anyone else looked at it." Eddie tells Mr. Crum that he'll be right back, and walks inside to talk with Angelo. Mr. Crum is somewhat limited in the number of auto repair facilities that will service his vehicle. He has ticked off a few mechanics in the past, and is no longer welcome at those shops.

Eddie walks inside, and tells Angelo, "Crum's main bearings are gone again. He's only got 40,000 miles on that piece of shit. He must be doing something to it." Angelo laughs, and replies, "really? I've got to see this." As Eddie and Angelo walk out to Mr. Crum's car, from a distance, Angelo can hear that the bearings are gone again. Hearing the bearings grinding, Angelo tells Eddie, "you're right. He's got to be doing something to that engine. It's not the engine. It's the driver that's the problem." Eddie warns Angelo, "he's a bit angry. He probably thinks it's our fault." Of course Mr. Crum is angry. He came in angry, and Eddie added a little bit of fuel to the fire, purely for entertainment purposes.

Normally, Angelo would tell Mr. Crum to take a seat in the office and wait. But, since Eddie has been giving Angelo some good stock tips, Angelo has made a considerable amount of money. Angelo now feels as if he can take a few minutes and see what kind of comedy Mr. Crum is bringing to the station today. And, with Eddie around, Angelo is now under a lot less stress. In a way, Eddie's unusual sense of humor has made Angelo's life a little less hectic and much less stressful.

Mr. Crum, seeing Angelo walking up, exclaims, "the engine you put in is a lemon!" Angelo comments, "it sounds like your bearings are on their way out again. I wonder why that could be." Mr. Crum replies, "don't tell me that! The engine was just replaced!" Eddie adds, "well, it's obviously not the Johnson Rod. I put in a stainless steel one. It should last a long time." Angelo turns around, pretending to listen to the engine more carefully to conceal his laughter. Once he regains his composure, Angelo tells Mr. Crum to turn his engine off.

Angelo, tired of Mr. Crum's attitude over the years, asks, "how often do you change your oil?" Mr. Crum replies, "every 6,000 miles, like I'm supposed to." As Eddie is checking the oil, Angelo asks Mr. Crum, "how often do you check your oil?" Mr. Crum replies, "every month or so." Angelo knows something must be going on. He replaced the bearings in the engine a few years ago, replaced the engine last year, and now the bearings sound like they are gone again.

Eddie walks from the back of the car, and shows Angelo the oil on the dipstick, noting that it is an unusual color. Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “your oil is a very interesting color. Who changed it last?” Mr. Crum yells, “I told you! You guys did!” Eddie asks, “did you add any oil since the oil change?” Mr. Crum replies, “yes! The 10W40, like you told me. And, I put in an oil additive.” Now, Eddie feels as if he is getting somewhere.

Eddie and Angelo look at each other, both at a loss to understand what kind of oil additive, when added to oil, would give it a shiny silvery hue. Eddie asks Mr. Crum, “what kind of oil additive do you put in your oil?” Mr. Crum replies, “I don’t know the name of it. A regular oil additive, I guess.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “really? Drive home, get your regular oil additive, and bring it back here. I need to see it.” Eddie is quite sure that Mr. Crum is not going to return with a bottle labeled “Regular Oil Additive”. Truth be known, Eddie and Angelo are both secretly hoping that Mr. Crum does not return at all.

As Mr. Crum drives home to get the bottle of his special oil additive, Eddie mentions to Angelo, “I wonder what he’s adding to his oil.” Angelo replies, “I don’t know. But, his engine sounds really bad again. And, the bad news is his 4,000 mile warranty is out.” Eddie comments, “maybe he puts dishwashing detergent in it, and makes his own detergent motor oil.” Angelo laughs, and replies, “I wouldn’t put it past him. That guy is a real piece of work.” Eddie and Angelo get back to work, both wondering what kind of oil additive Mr. Crum is using.

Hoping earlier that Mr. Crum would not return, Eddie and Angelo are not so lucky. Mr. Crum returns with his automobile, and his special oil additive that he has been adding to the oil. Mr. Crum takes a seat and waits, as Angelo is writing up a service ticket. Eddie walks into the office and Mr. Crum, handing the bottle of oil additive to Eddie, exclaims, “here it is! This is the oil additive.” Eddie takes a look at the bottle, carefully reading the label. Eddie waits until the customer, for whom Angelo is writing the service ticket, leaves. Eddie can immediately tell that this conversation is going to be very interesting.

The customer leaves, and Angelo asks Eddie, “so, what do you got?” Eddie tosses the bottle to Angelo, and replies, “that’s his regular oil additive.” Eddie tells Mr. Crum, “Mr. Crum, what you are adding to your oil is a metal polish.” Mr. Crum abruptly interrupts Eddie, telling him, “I know that! What do you think I am? Stupid?” Eddie explains, “Mr. Crum, what’s in that bottle is an abrasive metal polish. It’s grinding away at the inside of your engine. No wonder your bearings are all shot again. And, that silvery color of your oil is the inside of your engine being turned into microscopic metal dust.” Mr. Crum argues, “moving parts are supposed to be polished! I read it in a magazine!” Eddie rebuffs, “yeah, polished at the factory.” Angelo, reading the label on the bottle of metal polish,

finally gets his answer as to why Mr. Crum's engine is always prematurely failing.

Not liking Eddie's answer, Mr. Crum tells Angelo, "he doesn't know what he's talking about!" Angelo firmly informs Mr. Crum, "yes, he does. You're pretty much putting liquid sandpaper into your oil. How much oil have you been adding to your engine?" Mr. Crum replies, "about a quart every 500 miles now. And, I put some of the additive in each time I add oil." Eddie interjects, "yeah, well now you need a ring job. And, your valve guides are probably shot too." Angelo adds, "not to mention the oil pump." Mr. Crum exclaims, "can't you guys give me any good news?" Eddie replies, "no. Not if you put an abrasive metal polish in your oil." Angelo could just go back to work, but Mr. Crum is providing way too much comical amusement at the moment. And Angelo, knowing that Eddie has an unusual sense of humor, allows Eddie to direct the conversation.

Mr. Crum asks, "so, what do I do?" Eddie replies, "your engine needs to be rebuilt again." Mr. Crum asks, "how long can I go before I have to do that?" Eddie replies, "let me think about this for a minute." Eddie pauses for a moment, pretending as if he is thinking, and replies, "until about sixty seconds before it seizes up again." Angelo tries not to laugh at Eddie's comment, but is not too successful. Eddie tells Mr. Crum, "if I were you, I'd get your oil changed immediately and get that abrasive shit out of your engine. But, that's not going to fix the problem. Your engine still has to be rebuilt. And, if you don't rebuild it soon, you'll be buying another new engine."

Eddie asks Mr. Crum, "let me ask you this. Have you put any of this metal polish in your transmission?" Questioning Eddie, Mr. Crum replies, "the transmission has oil in it?" Eddie replies, "yeah, it does. So, now I'm guessing that, since you didn't know there is oil in your transmission, you didn't put any of this metal polish in your transmission." Mr. Crum replies, "no. I didn't put any in there." Eddie smiles, and tells Mr. Crum, "well, you wanted some good news, and there it is. Your transmission is probably fine." Angelo laughs, watching as Eddie mentally takes apart Mr. Crum.

Mr. Crum, not too happy at the moment with the news he's received, asks, "can you change my oil now?" Not wanting to disrupt the schedule, Angelo interjects, "yeah. In about an hour." Not liking the answer he received, Mr. Crum tells Angelo, "I can't wait that long. I'll be back." Mr. Crum drives off, grinding away his bearings with his special oil additive that was never meant to be added to the oil. So, the mystery of Mr. Crum and his short-lived engine has finally been solved.

Eddie will be back on the track team in the Autumn, and it's time for him to reevaluate his workouts. Remembering how he got so fast to begin with, Eddie decides to head to Vito's Bicycle Shop to get a few new tires for his bicycle. Planning on riding his bicycle to work when the weather permits, getting in an extra 20 or 30 miles a week will help Eddie keep his competitive edge. And, throwing in a workout today, Eddie rides his bicycle to Vito's.

Arriving at Vito's Bicycle Shop, Eddie finds a sign on the window stating that the shop will be closed for an indeterminate amount of time. The sign, an official looking notice from some governmental organization, states that the operation of the business has been suspended. Looking through the window, Eddie sees the shop looks no different inside than he remembers from a month ago. Heading down the street to the pizzeria, Eddie hopes Joe might know why Vito's Bicycle Shop is closed.

Eddie walks into the pizzeria, and Joe yells out, "hey, Eddie! Where's everyone else?" Eddie replies, "I'm here by myself today." Joe asks, "what will it be today?" Not visiting for a meal today, Eddie asks, "I was wondering why Vito's is closed. There's a sign on the window that says he's closed for an indeterminate amount of time. Do you know anything about it?" Joe replies, "he's closed? That's news to me! Vito was in here for lunch one day last week. He ordered shrimp scampi and a salad. He didn't mention anything about closing when he came in." Eddie comments, "I hope he's okay. Maybe I'll ride by his house and check on him." Joe tells Eddie, "if you find anything out, let me know." Eddie replies, "will do," and heads out to Vito's house, which is only about four miles away.

Vito is outside, cutting his lawn, when Eddie arrives. Eddie, relieved to find out that Vito is physically okay, rides his bicycle in circles for a minute, cooling down after his four-mile sprint. Looking up, Vito sees Eddie walking up the driveway with his bicycle. As he reaches down to turn off his lawnmower, Vito yells out, "hey, Eddie! You're the last person I was expecting to see today!" Getting right to the point, Eddie asks, "hey! How come your shop is closed?" Vito's countenance suddenly drops, as he tells Eddie, "come over here, and let's sit down for a minute." Eddie walks over, taking a seat in the shade on the front porch with Vito.

Eddie asks Vito, "what happened? Why are you closed?" Vito explains, "Eddie, I'm no genius. I know a lot about bicycles. But, I'm no businessman. I don't even know how I got by all these years." Not quite understanding what Vito is getting to, Eddie asks, "what happened? What are you talking about?" Vito continues, "the tax man shut me down. Whenever I sold something, I would tell the customer, 'that's twenty dollars, with the tax,' or, 'that's eighty dollars, with the tax.' Eddie, I don't know how to figure out tax. All I know is that, if I order a part, and

it costs me ten dollars, I sell it for twenty dollars. If a bicycle costs me a hundred dollars, I sell it for two hundred dollars. So, I'm told that, until I get my books straightened out, file the proper tax forms, and pay the taxes they say I owe, they won't let me reopen." Vito confesses, "Eddie, I don't even have any books, and my records are a bunch of bills and receipts in a shoe box." Eddie can clearly see that Vito has no idea even where to begin to solve his problem.

Eddie thinks back to when he got his first bicycle. Eddie, his parents, and Vito went outside to the back parking lot so Eddie could try the bicycle. Eddie, almost four years old at that time, rode away on the bicycle. Eddie's father and Vito had to run and chase Eddie down. Eddie knew that was the bicycle that he wanted Santa Claus to bring him for Christmas that year. Eddie remembers that Vito told him to make sure that he asks Santa Claus for a light for the bicycle too, in case it gets dark out when he is out riding. Later that month, on Christmas morning, that very bicycle was under the Christmas tree with Eddie's name on it. Eddie rode his bicycle every chance he got. Eddie's parents could not keep him off his bicycle.

Eddie also thinks to himself that Ralph has just graduated from college, and has an accounting degree. An accountant is exactly what Vito needs to help him out. Eddie tells Vito, "I might be able to help you with this problem." Vito tells Eddie, "aw, Eddie, you have your own life. I'll get this to work out somehow." Eddie explains, "wait! Listen. I know this guy who just graduated from college with a degree in accounting. The guy is really, really smart. I'm sure he could get you out of this mess." Vito tells Eddie, "I don't know. I don't even know how big this mess is." Eddie replies, "maybe it's a big mess to you, but it could be a small mess to an accountant."

Giving Vito some advice, Eddie tries to persuade Vito, telling him, "when someone has a broken bicycle, they bring it to you, right? When they want to eat pizza, they go to the pizzeria. When their car breaks down, they bring it to Angelo. When you have an accounting mess, you find an accountant." Vito, who's been around for a while, already knows that, and replies, "yeah, Eddie. I know. I know." Eddie didn't tell Vito anything he doesn't already know.

Eddie then tells Vito, "but, think about all those kids who won't get to ride their bicycles because they're broken. And, when Christmas comes, they'll find a bicycle made with plumbing tubing under their Christmas tree." That was all Vito needed to hear to change his mind. Vito tells Eddie, "okay, Eddie. You've convinced me. I'll give this guy a try." Eddie tells Vito, "I'll have him call you. His name is Ralph." Eddie then gets Vito's home phone number, writes down Vito's home address, and heads home.

Vito has little tolerance for poorly built bicycles. Vito always referred to department-store bicycles as “bicycles made out of old plumbing tubing”. He called the front forks of such bicycles “almost suitable for a pry bar”. On one occasion, when fixing one of these low-quality bicycles, Vito found that the bicycle came from the factory with no grease in the bearings. Eddie’s reference to a bicycle made with plumbing tubing is all that Vito needed to hear to reconsider Eddie’s offer.

Arriving home, Eddie makes a phone call to Ralph. Eddie finds out that Ralph is still living at his parent’s house, and just started working at his father’s accounting firm. Eddie asks Ralph if he can come over and discuss Vito’s situation. Ralph agrees, so Eddie drives over to Ralph’s house.

Driving up in his MGB, Eddie notices that Ralph still has his Volkswagen Beetle. Eddie knocks on the door, and Ralph invites him in. After catching up on life for a few minutes, Eddie explains Vito’s situation in detail to Ralph.

Eddie then throws a generous offer on the table. Making the offer, Eddie explains, “if you get Vito out of his mess, then you don’t have to repay the money I loaned you last year.” In shock, Ralph replies, “are you serious?” Eddie replies, “yeah. Totally serious.” Ralph tells Eddie, “sure! I’ll be glad to help him out.” Eddie then warns Ralph, “his accounting isn’t too good. It could be a bigger mess than you think.” Ralph reassures Eddie, “I’m sure my father has seen worse over the years.”

Eddie gives Ralph Vito’s contact information. Ralph assures Eddie that he will call Vito in the next day, and set up a meeting. Ralph figures that getting Vito out of a mess seems like a small price to pay for Eddie to write off a year of college tuition and expenses. And, everyone in the area probably got a bicycle from Vito at one time or another. Vito’s Bicycle Shop is not a business that the community can afford to lose.

Just like with Kathy and Eddie, hiring a wedding planner certainly saved Mark and Paula quite a lot of time. They have both been busy over the last year with school and building their house. While they have done a lot of work planning their wedding, there was a lot more work to do than they ever expected. But, Jennifer, the wedding planner, certainly made everything easy for Mark and Paula.

Mark and Paula have planned their wedding to be on the beach, which will be much like Kathy and Eddie’s wedding. They have considered other options, but they kept coming back to a beach wedding. But, knowing Paula, none of her friends really expected anything other than a beach wedding. Paula’s extended family was surprised to hear of the beach

wedding but, with Paula's Beach Patrol Jeep, and her beach girl persona, a beach wedding was inevitable.

When the weekend of their wedding arrives, everything is going according to plan. At the beach, the temperature is in the 80-degree range, with a clear blue sky. With a low surf and a light ocean breeze, it is a perfect day for a beach wedding. The altar, tents, and guest chairs are out on the beach. The reception room is ready to go, where the DJ is just finishing setting up his equipment. Jennifer, the wedding planner, is taking one last trip around the reception hall to make sure everything is perfect.

In addition to the family and friends, Joe and Arianna, from the pizzeria, are on the guest list today. Among the other guests today are Vito, from the bicycle shop, Angelo, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Zunde, and Miss Amherst. And, Paula's favorite auto body guy, Vinnie, is also in attendance today. Knowing that Paula is also Italian, Vinnie always rolls out the red carpet for her. Paula has clearly become Vinnie's favorite customer.

The guests begin to arrive and walk out to the beach where everything is ready to go. The bridesmaids and groomsmen are patiently waiting in their tents. Paula and Mark's music selections are playing in the background, as everyone waits anxiously for the ceremony to begin.

Leaving from the bridesmaid's tent, walking down the aisle, is Paula's Matron of Honor, Kathy. Kathy is followed by the bridesmaids, who are Barbara, Wendy, Amber, Erika, and Tessa. Once they are set, and in position, the groomsmen walk out from their tent. Led by Mark, Eddie, the Best Man, is followed by Johnson, Braden, Mitchell, Bobby B., and Hoffer.

Paula's wedding attire is a white sun dress, adorned with much lace, and white sandals. Paula's bridesmaids are all wearing a yellow-orange sun dress, similar to the color of the sun on Paula's Jeep, and yellow sandals matching Paula's style. Mark is wearing white silk pants, complemented with a light blue shirt, matching the color of Paula's Jeep. The groomsmen are wearing light blue Arena warm-up suits, also matching the color of Paula's Jeep.

Once the wedding party is all in position, the DJ fades out the music and plays the piece Paula chose to walk down the aisle by. As the composition *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, as performed by Danielle Licari, begins to play, Paula stands at the end of the aisle. After hearing the voice of Danielle Licari during Kathy's wedding, Paula fell in love with the singer's style. The guests stand, as all heads turn to catch their first glimpse of the bride. Mark, along with the rest of the wedding party,



smiles, as Paula walks down the aisle, approaching the altar. Paula meets Mark at the altar, holding his hand, and the ceremony begins.

As the music fades out, Dr. Kristibueze Akinmola, officiating today's ceremony, announces, "I am so honored that Paula and Mark saw it fit for me to officiate their wedding ceremony today. I have known them for a long time, and I am so very glad to be here today, as I'm sure all of you are. I greet all of you on this beautiful day in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Dr. Akinmola announces, "we are gathered here today, with God among us, to join this man, Mark Svoboda, and this woman, Paula Giovani, in Holy Matrimony. Let us open with prayer. Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of Mark and Paula in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by His presence and first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and His Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people. The union of husband and wife is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given to each other in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God."

Dr. Akinmola continues, "this is a very special day in the lives of Paula and Mark. Paula and Mark have chosen to have a passage from 1 Corinthians 13 read for their ceremony. Please be stilled in your spirit as I read from God's word." Dr. Akinmola reads, "Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not boast. Love is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, and it is not easily angered. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails."

Dr. Akinmola continues, "Paula, will you have Mark to be your husband, to live together with him in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, be faithful unto him as long as you both shall live?" Paula, with tears of happiness flowing down her face, replies, "I do."

Turning toward Mark, Dr. Akinmola continues, "Mark, will you have Paula to be your wife, to live together with her in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness

and in health and, forsaking all others, be faithful unto her as long as you both shall live?" Looking into Paula's eyes, Mark replies, "I do."

Placing Paula's wedding ring on her finger, Mark tells Paula, "Paula, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Paula then places Mark's wedding ring on his finger, telling him, "Mark, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Dr. Akinmola proclaims, "bless, O mighty Lord, these rings as a symbol of Mark's and Paula's vows by which they have bound themselves to each other, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Dr. Akinmola then proclaims, "by the power of God, and by the power given to me by the State, I now pronounce you husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder." Paula and Mark smile, and gaze deeply into each other's eyes, both waiting for this moment for a very long time.

Dr. Akinmola, blessing the couple, prays, "may God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you. May the Lord mercifully, with his favor, look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come having life everlasting. Amen."

Dr. Akinmola announces, "you may now kiss your bride." Mark and Paul kiss each other, giving each other a big hug. Paula looks at Mark, with the biggest and warmest smile that anyone has ever seen on her. The guests cheer, many of them knowing that Paula has been waiting for this day for a while. Dr. Akinmola announces, "I now present to you Mr. and Mrs. Svoboda." Mark and Paula walk down the aisle, holding hands, as they walk toward the beach.

Once Paula and Mark are at the end of the aisle, they head toward the bride's tent. The groomsmen and bridesmaids leave next, led by Eddie and Kathy. They are followed by Johnson and Barbara, Braden and Wendy, Mitchell and Amber, Bobby B. and Erika, and finally Hoffer and Tessa. The ushers usher Paula's and Mark's parents and grandparents down the aisle through the sand. Paula's and Mark's family and the wedding party hang around for a while on the beach while Emily, the photographer, takes as many photographs as she can.

Following the photographic session, Paula and Mark walk through the sand to the reception. Mark and Paula could have taken the Dune Buggy, but they opted to walk. The guests, who have been waiting for the bride

and groom, clap and cheer when Paula and Mark walk through the door. Paula tells Mark, “a year ago, we were standing right here, and I remember saying I would love to get married on the beach.” Mark replies, “and we did it. Here we are.” Paula and Mark kiss again, prompting the guests to cheer.

Eddie tells Braden and Mitchell, “this is where me and Kathy had our wedding last year.” Braden comments, “I’m so sorry that I missed that. I was probably in the middle of failing my physical exam when you guys were getting married.” Eddie replies, “you know, Kathy’s really glad that you failed your physical. She really wants the team back together again.” Mitchell comments, “yeah, I kind of noticed that.”

Wendy tells Eddie, “last year, I was all moved into my apartment, and I got a Summer cold, and missed your wedding. And, now I realize I don’t want to leave this area.” Amber, who was at Kathy and Eddie’s wedding, bumps Mitchell’s hip with hers, and tells everyone, “beach weddings are the best. Don’t ya think?” Amber may have just given Mitchell a slight hint.

When it is time for the bride and the groom to have the first dance, the DJ announces, “okay, everyone! It is time for Paula and Mark to have the first dance! Paula and Mark, please come up to the dance floor!” The guests all cheer, as Paula and Mark make their way to the dance floor. The DJ continues, playing Mark and Paula’s selection for their first dance, *Love Will Keep Us Together*, by The Captain and Tennille, which Paula and Mark chose together. There is no doubt that this will not be a slow dance. The DJ starts the music, and Paula and Mark get down.

During the newlywed’s first dance, Jennifer, the wedding planner, runs into a slight problem at the door. Two guys, both in dripping wet swimsuits who were not invited to the wedding, make their way into the reception hall. Jennifer tells them, “this is a closed event. You’ll have to leave!” One of them demands that they be let in because it is a public space. Jennifer follows them, insisting, “you guys will have to leave! This is a private party!” The two guys ignore Jennifer’s request, making their way into the reception hall. The slight problem has turned into Jennifer’s worst nightmare - a wedding crasher.

Leaving a trail of water on the floor behind them, the two intruders make their way over to the spread of hors d’oeuvres. They help themselves to whatever they want and, if they don’t like the taste of what they picked up, they rudely throw it on the floor. Trying not to disrupt the reception, Jennifer quietly exclaims, “you two! Leave immediately!” Neither of them leaves as instructed, but rather make their way to the table with the pizza. Each indulging on a slice of pizza, they apparently

have invited themselves to stay for lunch. Jennifer is now livid, frantically looking around for anyone who can help.

Hearing the commotion, Braden gazes over to see what might be the problem. Seeing what is going on, Braden tells Eddie, "I think we got a little problem." Eddie looks over, and sees McCutchen and Leggett working their way through the spread of food. Hearing Jennifer trying to persuade the intruders to leave, Eddie tells Braden, "it looks like we have some work to do." Braden smiles, and replies, "let's go and take care of their asses." Eddie and Braden exchange a fist bump, and get to work.

Eddie and Braden briskly walk over and quickly intercept McCutchen and Leggett. Braden, exercising authority as he learned at the police academy, asks Jennifer, "what's going on here?" Jennifer exclaims, "these two guys are crashing the wedding! I asked them to leave, but they continued to walk in."

Braden looks at McCutchen and Leggett, telling them, "I suggest both of you turn your ass around, and walk out that door right now." In no uncertain terms, McCutchen tells Braden, "it's a public building. I'm not leaving." Braden replies, "if you don't walk out right now, I'm gonna carry your sorry ass out." McCutchen ignores Braden's demand, and proceeds to finish his slice of pizza.

Bobby B. and Johnson walk up. Bobby B. asks, "what's up?" Braden replies, "it looks like we got some trash to take out." McCutchen and Leggett try to walk around the 1,000 pound defensive line to get another slice of pizza, but the four track stars block them from going any further. Leggett pushes Eddie, prompting Bobby B. to pick up Leggett, and throw him over his shoulder. Braden follows suit and picks up McCutchen, throwing him over his shoulder, as they head for the door. Eddie and Johnson run ahead of them, opening the door so the trash can be taken out. McCutchen and Leggett perhaps forgot all about the day in the gym this past Winter when their physical deficiencies were made apparent by Eddie and his friends.

Braden and Bobby B. carry McCutchen and Leggett through the parking lot. Bobby B. asks Braden, "what do you want to do with them?" Braden suggests, "how about we try them out as a hammer?" Bobby B. grins, and replies, "that sounds good to me, bro!" Braden and Bobby B. carry the wedding crashers out to the beach, where they will compete in the hammer throw. Unfortunately for McCutchen and Leggett, they will be the hammers.

On the way, Leggett is punching Bobby B., albeit quite ineffectively. Bobby B. comments, "I think this guy is trying to punch me, but I can't really tell." Braden laughs, and tells Bobby B., "maybe a fly landed on your

back.” Bobby B. laughs, and replies, “yeah, that must have been it.” McCutchen tells Leggett, “when they put us down, we’ll take care of them.” Braden laughs, and comments, “yeah, right! I really want to see that.”

Once they are near the water, Braden and Bobby B. body slam McCutchen and Leggett into the sand. Braden tells them both, “if I see either of your asses in there again, you ain’t gonna be so lucky next time. Now, get ready for your first track and field lesson in the hammer throw.” Braden grabs McCutchen’s ankles, and spins him around like a hammer. Once Braden gets enough velocity, he releases McCutchen, who sails through the air, crashing into the water. Bobby B. exclaims, “good shot!”

Bobby B. tells Leggett, “okay, it’s your turn, junior.” Leggett tries to stand up and run away, but Braden quickly restrains him. Bobby B., who has thrown the hammer many times in the past, takes Leggett by the ankles, spinning him around. Getting some good momentum, Bobby B. releases Leggett, hurling him into the water. As Leggett crashes into the ocean, Braden gives Bobby B. a high-five, telling him, “I think you won this one, bro.” Bobby B. replies, “yeah, but my hammer was a little lighter. We’ll call it a tie.” Braden and Bobby B. exchange another high-five, and head back in to join the party. Leggett and McCutchen swim toward shore, not quite enjoying their first track and field experience in the hammer throw.

At the door, Braden tells Eddie, Bobby B., and Johnson, “I’d better stay out here and watch them. They may try to get in again, or mess with someone’s car.” Braden is particularly concerned since Paula’s Jeep is right in front of the building, which is already decorated for when she and Mark drive away. Eddie replies, “I’ll stay out here with you, bro.” Johnson suggests, “me and Bobby B. will come out in ten minutes, and give you some relief so you can enjoy the party too.” Having taken care of business, the group exchanges fist bumps, and Johnson and Bobby B. head inside.

Jennifer steps outside, and tells Braden and Eddie, “I’m so sorry that you guys had to deal with that. Occasionally, we get a wedding crasher. Those two guys were really a piece of work.” Braden smiles, and tells Jennifer, “no problem. It was my pleasure.” Jennifer replies, “thank you guys so much for handling that situation. I appreciate it so much.” Braden then informs Jennifer, “we’re gonna stand guard at the door until they’re long gone. You shouldn’t have to deal with them. If they come back, we’ll take care of them.” Jennifer, glad to hear that peace has been restored, heads back inside, where everything seems to be again going smoothly.

Mark and Paula, catching a glimpse of what went on when McCutchen and Leggett tried to disrupt the party, walk over to Johnson to find out what was going on. Mark asks Johnson, "what was that all about?" Johnson informs Mark, "McCrutchen and Leggett tried to crash the party. We put a quick end to that. Eddie and Braden are standing guard at the door. We'll go and relieve them in a while." Paula, trying to keep her voice low, exclaims under her breath, "that piece of shit!" Mark tells Paula, "hey. Don't worry about McCrutchen and lug nut. They'll work them over if they come back." Paula replies, "oh, they're coming back." Mark whispers to Paula, "I hope that's not your superpower at work."

Paula finds Kathy and, after filling her in on what happened, tells Kathy, "McCrutchen and Leggett aren't done with their pranks. I can feel it. So, Mark said, 'I really hope that's not your superpower at work'." Paula then tells Kathy, "please tell Eddie and Braden to keep a really good eye on McCrutchen and Leggett." Kathy replies, "will do. And, don't worry about it. Today's your wedding day. Calm down, girl. The guys will take care of them if they return. You just have fun!"

Kathy walks outside, filling in Eddie on what Paula asked to relay to him, as Braden is walking the parking lot. Eddie informs Kathy, "Paula is probably right. They haven't left yet." Pointing over toward the water, just beyond where a large family is having a picnic on the beach, Eddie tells Kathy, "they're right over there, sitting on their towels, drinking something. And, it doesn't look like they're going anywhere anytime soon." Kathy comments, "McCrutchen makes Chuckie look like a walk in the park." Eddie tells Kathy, "everyone has their weakness. McCrutchen's weakness is his own mind." Kathy walks back inside, and assures Paula that everything is under control.

Paula and Mark cut their wedding cake together. Locking their arms, they give each other the first bite of cake. Paula and Mark's cake is four tiers, with two tiers of white cake, and two tiers of chocolate cake. The chocolate tiers were Paula's idea, since chocolate, in addition to pizza, seems to be her favorite indulgence. After Paula and Mark have their slice of wedding cake, a line forms so everyone can get their slice. Kathy and Wendy get an extra slice of cake, bringing a slice out to Eddie and Braden, who are working their shift patrolling the parking lot.

Since it is getting hot outside, Eddie and Braden make their way inside and eat their slice of cake so the frosting doesn't make a mess. They watch through the door, looking for signs of trouble. Braden tells Eddie, "I just thought of something. If they're gonna do something, it's gonna be now because they see that we're gone." Eddie replies, "that's a good point," and asks, "did you learn that at the police academy?" Braden replies, "yeah. Sometimes, you want to give the impression that you've taken your guard down. That's when they move in, and then you make

the bust.” Eddie and Braden enjoy their slice of cake, talking more about what Braden learned at the police academy.

Kathy and Wendy come over, and talk with Eddie and Braden. Braden asks Wendy, “would it be too much trouble to get me another slice of cake?” Wendy replies, “sure, no problem,” as she takes Braden’s empty plate. Eddie asks Kathy, “can you get me one too?” Already knowing how Eddie will answer, Kathy asks, “chocolate or vanilla?” Eddie replies, “chocolate, with lots of frosting.”

As Kathy and Wendy walk away to get Eddie and Braden another slice of cake, Eddie peeks out through the window. Eddie tells Braden, “you were right. Here comes trouble again.” Braden looks through the window, and tells Eddie, “just let them come. Once they walk in, we have just cause to act.” Seeing that Johnson is standing with Barbara, Braden yells out, “hey, Johnson!” Johnson turns toward Braden, and Braden waves, signaling Johnson to come to the door. Bobby B., Hoffer, and John catch wind of what is about to happen, and also move toward the door.

The door opens, and McCutchen and Leggett stagger in. Braden, immediately taking control of the situation, asks, “what did I tell you two assholes before?” With his voice sounding a bit on the slurred side, Leggett replies, “you ain’t telling us where we don’t go.” In a raised voice, Braden exclaims, asking, “have you been drinking?” Leggett replies, “that ain’t not none of your business.” Johnson comments, “he’s drunker than a skunk.” Eddie takes a look at McCutchen, and whispers to Johnson, “no wonder his times are so erratic on the track. Half the time, he’s probably running with a hangover.” Overhearing Eddie, McCutchen exclaims, “shut up, or I’ll kick your ass!”

Leggett attempts to throw a punch at Braden, who quickly intercepts Leggett’s arm, forcing him into an arm lock. Leggett exclaims, “let me go! I’m going to kick your ass!” Braden tells him, “go ahead. I’m waiting.” Braden announces, “someone call the police, and tell them to bring the wagon<sup>1</sup>.” Eddie makes the call, as Braden and Bobby B. escort the two perpetrators outside. As he is being dragged outside by Bobby B., McCutchen yells out, “you guys better let us go!” Bobby B. laughs, and tells McCutchen, “maybe we will. Just like we did before, right into the ocean.”

Outside, Leggett exclaims, “let me go!” Tightening the arm lock, Braden tells Leggett, “you ain’t going nowhere, junior.” Leggett lets out a scream, prompting Braden to tell him, “shut your puny ass up, or I’ll show

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<sup>1</sup> Wagon (slang): A police vehicle commonly used to cart away drunk people.

you what real pain is.” With Leggett and McCutchen drunk and restrained, Braden tells everyone, “we can’t let them go. They’re drunk. They could get behind the wheel and kill someone. And, they’re so drunk that, if they stay on the beach, they could pass out. We’ll just wait until the uniform guys get here.”

Eddie returns outside, telling Braden, “they’re on their way.” While they are all standing outside waiting for the police, Mark steps outside for a moment. Mark looks McCutchen and Leggett in their eyes, and tells them, “today is my wedding day. Just remember this, you piles of shit. Pay backs are hell. And, trust me. It will come. And, when it does, it will be the worst day of your lives.” As Mark walks back inside, Braden tells McCutchen and Leggett, “I’d hate to be on the other side of that ass kicking when it comes down! It sounds to me like Mark just made you two assholes a big promise.” Eddie tells Braden, “and, trust me, Mark will keep his promise.”

While they are waiting for the police, Eddie starts messing with McCutchen, asking Braden, “hey, when you took out that Goldshit guy, how long did that take?” Braden thinks for a moment, and replies, “I think it was somewhere around ten or fifteen seconds.” Eddie asks, “what exactly happened to Goldshit?” Braden boasts, “his ass ended up with a broken jaw, a fractured skull, and a dislocated shoulder. He needed two surgeries to get his ass moving again! And, his ass still ain’t right.” Eddie tells McCutchen and Leggett, “wow! Aren’t you guys lucky.”

Catching on, Braden asks Eddie, “what happened to the Chuckie when you kicked his ass after he threw the javelin at you?” Eddie replies, “wow! Let me think. The Chuckie got a broken nose, three broken ribs, two broken arms, and a broken hip. He also got a neck sprain, and was in one of those neck braces for over a month. And, the Chuckie ended up with a broken jaw and six broken teeth. And, something must have happened to his brain. He hasn’t been right since.” Johnson laughs, and comments, “that guy’s ass has never been right.”

Hearing Eddie and Braden’s exchange, McCutchen yells out to Braden, “hey! I’m not afraid of you!” Braden, as he is maintaining Leggett in an arm lock, turns toward McCutchen, looks him in the eye, and loudly yells out, “boo!” McCutchen is suddenly startled, prompting Eddie, Bobby B., and Johnson to laugh.

Purely for entertainment purposes, Braden asks McCutchen, “by the way, junior, what was your ass doing on the track during the high school meet?” McCutchen does not venture to answer, but rather yells at Braden, telling him, “shut up, and let me go!” Eddie pipes up, answering for McCutchen, “he’s obviously not any good at the college level. So, he’s back running in high school.” Braden tells Eddie, “his ass ain’t even good



enough for middle school either.” Eddie laughs, knowing that Braden’s assessment is not far from the truth.

The police arrive, driving up and parking in the lane near the door. Getting out of the car, the officers can clearly see the problem. Walking up cautiously, the senior officer asks, “okay, what’s going on here?” Braden opens by saying, “hi. I’m officer Axel Braden. My assignment is at the State University.” The two officers are immediately relieved, knowing that the situation is at least been handled by a professional.

As Braden shows the officer his badge, he explains, “these two guys crashed the party twice. I would have just kicked them out, but now they’re both drunk. I didn’t want them to get behind the wheel. And, it’s getting hot outside. They could pass out on the beach, or who knows what else.”

The senior officer tells Braden and Bobby B., “okay, you can release them now.” The senior officer asks Leggett and McCutchen, “have you two been drinking?” McCutchen, who is clearly drunk, replies, “I might have had one beer.” The senior officer asks Leggett and McCutchen, “do you see that white line?” They both respond, “yeah.” Pointing to Leggett, the officer commands Leggett, “you first. Walk it!” Leggett walks the line, staggering along, not being able to walk a straight line. The officer then commands McCutchen, “okay, your turn! Walk the line.” McCutchen tries to walk the line, but staggers and nearly falls over. The rookie officer tells Leggett and McCutchen, “okay, both of you. Out with your ID.”

The senior officer pulls Braden aside, telling him, “you made a good decision calling us. What’s the 411 on them?” Braden explains, “there’s a wedding reception going on inside. These guys go to the University, and decided to crash the party. We escorted them out once, but they returned about an hour later. When they came inside the second time, they were drunk. So, we restrained them and called you guys.” The officer asks Braden, “was there any altercation?” Braden replies, “yes sir, there was. Leggett, the taller one, threw a punch at me, but I blocked it, and put him into an arm lock. That’s how we ended up where we are.” The senior officer tells Braden, “okay. We’ll take it from here.” Braden tells the officers, “it’s nice to meet you guys! I appreciate your help.” The officers arrest Leggett and McCutchen, and take them away. Everyone then goes back inside to enjoy the party, this time in peace.

When they get back inside, Kathy tells Eddie, “the next time we have a track party at the house, remind me to leave those two assholes off the list.” Eddie replies, “I don’t think they’d show up even if they were invited.” Eddie then asks, “so, what did I miss?” Kathy replies, “all the girly stuff, like throwing the bouquet and garter. Oh, and you missed the toast.” Kathy asks, “what did I miss?” Eddie replies, “Officer Braden had

McCrutchen and lug nut arrested and taken away.” Kathy comments, “in a way, I’m sorry I missed that. I can’t wait until track practice in a few weeks.” Eddie reminds Kathy, “oh yeah. I guess I’ll be there too. That’s going to go over real well.”

Mixing a little business with pleasure, Eddie asks Vito, “so, did you meet with Ralph?” Vito explains, “Eddie, I did. Things are beginning to look a little brighter now. I gave Ralph all the papers, bills, and everything I had, and he told me that it doesn’t really look too bad.” Eddie replies, “well, that’s some really good news.” Vito thanks Eddie, telling him, “thank you for helping me out. I don’t know what I would have done if you didn’t get Ralph to help me out.” Eddie replies, “hey, someday I might have an Eddie, Junior running around. I’m counting on you to be there when it comes time to buy him his first bicycle.” Vito smiles, and asks, “Eddie, are you telling me something?” Eddie replies, “no. There’s no little Eddie on the way yet.”

Finally getting their chance to talk, Mr. Frazier and Braden step aside. Mr. Frazier asks, “I remember you were planning on joining the Navy. I heard through the grapevine that you’re back, and we didn’t get much of a chance to talk at the State meet. What happened?” Mr. Frazier has already heard the story from Kathy, but wants to hear it directly from Braden. Braden explains, “I failed the physical exam because I’m color blind, so they wouldn’t let me in the Navy. So, I went to the police academy instead. And, now I got a job at the University as a police officer. And, next season, I get to run with the team. And, I’ll be getting a degree in Criminal Justice.” Mr. Frazier gives Braden a fist bump, telling him, “great job!” Mr. Frazier remembers that Braden, during his four years of high school, broke up many fights and kept the peace. Mr. Frazier is very glad to hear that Braden has chosen an appropriate career path.

After they’ve been talking for a while, Mr. Frazier couldn’t help but to ask Braden, “what was all that commotion out there earlier?” Braden explains, “McCrutchen and Leggett crashed the party. The first time, me and Bobby B. took them out to the beach, and tried them out as a hammer. We landed their ass into the ocean.” Mr. Frazier laughs and interrupts, telling Braden, “I wish I could have been there to see that!” Braden continues, “then, about an hour later, both of their asses came back, all drunk. So, we called the police, and they took them away in a wagon. We won’t be seeing them again.”

Mr. Frazier asks, “McCrutchen? Isn’t that the guy who ran for Centerville?” Braden replies, “yeah. That’s the guy. And, that’s the guy who tried to sneak into the invitational meet without an invitation, and run in his brother’s place. But, that’s not the real problem. The problem is McCrutchen goes to the University, and he’s on the track team. And, so is that Leggett guy. I can see how well that’s gonna go over when

practice starts in the Fall.” Mr. Frazier reminds Braden, “you guys can handle it. McCrutchen is a drop in the bucket compared with what Mr. Crum put you guys through.”

Even Mr. Frazier calls McCutchen “McCrutchen” now. Mr. Frazier is glad to hear that Braden is back, and will be running for the University. Mr. Frazier is also glad to hear that Braden will be getting a degree in Criminal Justice.

The party winds down, and it’s time for Paula and Mark to leave. The guests line up, forming a path out to the Jeep. As they walk out, bird seed flies everywhere. As Paula and Mark approach the Jeep, the tribe gives Paula and Mark high-fives, fist bumps, and hugs. Mark helps Paula into the Jeep, not that she really needed help. Mark gets behind the wheel, and they wave as they prepare to drive away.

Mark and Paula drive away in Paula’s Beach Patrol Jeep, driving down the beach to the parking lot two miles away. From there, they’ll get back on the road. Everyone waves as the newlyweds drive down the beach together. Many of the guests are wondering where they are going. Mark and Paula have frequented this beach, along with Eddie and Kathy, for five years. They know exactly where they are going.

With Paula and Mark heading down the beach, the party winds down. Eddie’s brother snatches a few slices of pizza while the adults all say goodbye to each other for the afternoon. The track team members head outside, with Eddie’s brother joining them, and take a casual walk toward the ocean.

As she is walking down the beach with the rest of the group, Kathy is looking down at a large collection of shells and rocks that have washed ashore during high tide. Eddie asks Kathy, “are you looking for shells?” Kathy replies, “no. I’m looking for a blue stone. But, I haven’t found exactly what I’m looking for yet.” Eddie takes a brief look, not seeing any blue stones either. The group turns around, and heads back to the party, finding many people heading out. The tribe is among the last to head out, as Paula and Mark are on their way to their honeymoon.

When Paula and Mark return from their honeymoon, their house will be almost ready. The inside of their house is finished, and ready for them to begin their life together when they return. Mark and Paula have been working hard at getting the outside finished. While the landscaping in the back yard is completed and the pool is ready, the front yard remains unfinished. The landscaping in the front can use a lot of work, since there really is none to speak of.

While Mark is away, Eddie hires his brother, John, to install the landscaping in the front yard. Eddie is nice enough to give John a little help. Eddie has the gravel driveway removed and, with the help of his and Mark's father, sets the forms for paving the driveway. In the middle of the week, more than a dozen cement trucks arrive to pave the 200-foot driveway and parking area in front of Mark's separate detached three-car garage. By the end of the week, the front of the house looks drastically different from before. John made out really well during that week, making more money than in an entire Summer of cutting lawns.

A week later, Paula and Mark return very late on Sunday night. Mark pulls into the driveway, knowing ahead of time that Eddie was going to oversee the completion of the project. Paula quickly tells Mark, "this isn't our house. We have a gravel driveway." Mark replies, "surprise!" Paula carefully looks at the driveway, seeing as much as the headlights can expose. As they get closer, Paula exclaims, "we have bushes!" Mark replies, "surprise!" Paula asks, "when did all this get done?" Mark explains, "I had my dad, Eddie's father, Eddie, and John finish it up while we were away. Everything's all done. So, we can wake up tomorrow, and sit by the pool side." Paula, who thought she'd be trying to get the yard finished before Autumn semester begins, exclaims, "awesome!" Paula and Mark head inside, ready to spend their first night at home.

Summer also brings with it the annual rematch between Eddie and Tessa in the pool. Everyone waited until Mark and Paula returned from their honeymoon before having this year's reunion. Last year, in the pool, Eddie won. This year, Tessa has vowed to beat Eddie, but also knows that, if she does win, Eddie has been slacking off. A little more than a year ago, Eddie unofficially broke the high school State record in both the 50-yard and 100-yard men's freestyle. This year, however, will bring more than a rematch in the pool. Some of the members of the tribe haven't seen each other as much this Summer, so this year at the pool will be a reunion of sorts.

Eddie and Kathy arrive, seeing that Tessa and Hoffer are already at the pool. Mark and Paula have already arrived, as have Johnson and Barbara. As they walk up to the table, Kathy notices Tessa has a curiously beautiful smile. Before Kathy could say anything, Tessa exclaims, "guess what?" Kathy replies, "whatever it is, your smile is telling me it's good news!" Not being able to wait to make the announcement, Tessa exclaims, "I got a swimming scholarship!" Kathy and Eddie both exclaim, "awesome!" Impatient, and wanting to know, Kathy asks, "to where? To what school?" All excited Tessa replies, "yours!" Kathy then asks Hoffer, "does this mean?" Before Kathy can finish her question, Hoffer replies, "yeah. I accepted their offer!" Kathy and Eddie give Hoffer and Tessa a high-five, all glad that Hoffer will be on the University track team next year.

Bobby B. arrives, but without Erika on the back of his motorcycle this year. Erika has bought her own motorcycle, and rode in right behind Bobby B. Erika and Bobby B. walk up to the table, also wasting no time wanting to find out whether Tessa got a scholarship. Erika, who knows the University was interested in Tessa, asks, “well? Did you get it?” Tessa replies, “I sure did!” Erika gives Tessa a high-five, knowing this means that Hoffer will be on the track team with her.

Braden arrives next with Wendy. Everyone cheers and gives Wendy a hug when she walks up. Everyone briefly saw Wendy during Paula and Mark’s wedding. Wendy has been sort of out of the loop for the last year, attending a community college that is far away. Hearing that Braden is returning to the area and will be attending the University, Wendy made application to transfer. Wendy announces to everyone, “I got accepted to the University, and all my credits transfer! I’m starting in the Fall.” Kathy exclaims, “that’s awesome! I didn’t know you were going to transfer.” Wendy tells Kathy, “well, I didn’t want to say anything in case I didn’t get accepted.” There is really no reason why Wendy wouldn’t have gotten accepted. She graduated from high school summa cum laude, and got straight A’s in her first year in college.

Mitchell drives up with Amber, bringing Akinmola along with them. As they walk up, Paula announces, “hey! The rest of the distance team is here!” Eddie, seeing no sweat on Akinmola’s clothing, exclaims, “hey! Check it out! He finally did it!” Kathy asks, “who did what?” Eddie replies, “Akinmola took a ride from someone!” Taking a seat, Akinmola explains, “Mitchell came by to see if I wanted a ride. I told him no, and that I wanted to run here. But, he got this new car, and offered to give me a ride in it to see how it drives. Then, Mitchell drove me here. I really wanted to run here, but he drove me.”

Mark asks Akinmola, “you know why he drove you here, don’t you?” Akinmola asks, “no. Tell me why.” Mark, the master of messing with everyone, replies, “he wants you to get out of shape so you won’t beat him in the mile.” Looking suspiciously at Mitchell, Akinmola replies, “then I’ll run home, and go out for a run later.” Mitchell tells Akinmola, “he’s just messing with you.” Mark replies, “no, I’m not.” Akinmola, knowing that Mitchell will be running at the University next year, tells Mitchell, “I’ll see you on the track in the Fall, my friend. We’ll see then. Do you understand me?” Mitchell and Akinmola, who extensively trained together while in high school, never cease messing with each other. Today, however, Mark just ignited the fire that will lead to more intense competition between Mitchell and Akinmola.

Kathy, listening to the conversation, exclaims, “what! Is there something I don’t know about?” Akinmola replies, “I got a dual enrollment, so I am going to two schools. I take my core classes at the

University, and I run track there. And, I take my seminary classes at the seminary.” Kathy, in amazement, asks, “how did you manage that?” Akinmola explains, “I went to the University, and put in my application. With my application, I put pictures of my gold medals from the State meets in the mile and half mile. They called me in last week. Dr. Braun remembered me from your party.” Kathy exclaims, “that’s great! I can’t believe it! We’re all going to be together again next year!” Everyone is surprised and very happy to hear the good news.

Lena Borg, now the head lifeguard at the county pool, comes over to talk with Tessa. Lena and Tessa were on the swimming team together for a few years in high school. Knowing that Tessa was the team’s best swimmer last year, Lena asks, “did you get a scholarship anywhere?” Tessa lets Lena know, “yeah. I got a full scholarship to the State University. Jimmy will be running track there. And, I got two other offers, but the others were only partial scholarships.”

Lena tells Tessa, “well, I guess we’ll be swimming against each other at some point.” Tessa exclaims, “wow! I didn’t put that together.” Lena explains, “you’ll quickly find out that you’ll be swimming against some of your former teammates, like me. And, believe it or not, some of the people you swam against in high school might actually be on your team.” In a sudden sense of amazement, Tessa replies, “wow! I never thought of that either!”

Lena then asks, “are you and Eddie racing today?” Tessa replies, “yeah. Last year, Eddie won. I hope he hasn’t been practicing.” Lena tells Tessa, “well, you’re due to beat him then.” Tessa explains, “last year, when Eddie was a senior, he came to swim team tryouts. He broke the State record in the 50 and in the 100 freestyle. He said he just wanted to know where he stands. Miss Hamilton was blown out of the water. Then, Eddie went back to running track.” Lena exclaims, “you can’t be serious!” Tessa replies, “he did.”

Hearing all of Tessa’s news, Lena asks, “do you mind if I race with you guys this year?” Tessa grins, and replies, “not at all. We can double team him.” Lena then tells Tessa, “just let me know when you guys want to swim.” Lena, who will be swimming against Tessa next year, wants to join the race to know exactly where she stands.

Right before lunch, the day’s big event arrives. Lena blows her whistle, announcing that the pool will be closed for ten minutes. It takes ten minutes for everyone to get out of the pool, with the younger kids moving as slow as a turtle. Once everyone is out of the water, Eddie and Tessa move to the pool’s edge, ready to race. Eddie even lets Tessa choose her lane. Lena joins them, but there are no other competitors this

year. With Tessa in lane three, Eddie in lane five, and Lena in lane four, everyone is ready to go.

Andrea, the other lifeguard on duty today, tells everyone to get ready. Perceiving that a race is about to begin, a few spectators line the side of the pool. Andrea asks if everyone is ready, which they are. Andrea announces, "take your mark." Once everyone is set, Andrea blows her whistle. Eddie, Tessa, and Lena dive into the water, all knowing a lot is at stake in this race.

As Eddie and Tessa fight it out, Tessa has a slight lead over Eddie during the first lap. Lena is right there with them. Tessa, realizing that she stands a chance to win this year, gives it all she has. Lena also gives it all she has, knowing that she is up against the State's gold medalist in the 100-yard freestyle. At the wall, Tessa arrives first, with Eddie and Lena tied. After everyone does their flip turn, Eddie has a slight lead.

During the second lap, Eddie has a slight advantage. Tessa and Lena, however, are gaining ground on Eddie. Somehow, Lena emerges as the leader during mid lap. With the lead frequently changing, it's still anyone's race. At the wall, as far as anyone can tell, it's a three-way tie.

During the third lap, the pool is lined with even more spectators. Tessa is not about to let Eddie win again this year. And, Lena is not about to let Tessa win either. But, during the third lap, Eddie has a slight lead. As they all approach the wall, Tessa and Lena erode away at Eddie's lead, but they both know Eddie's greatest strength is in his flip turn. Knowing this, at the wall, Tessa and Lena kick off as if they are the ones trying to break the concrete. After kicking off the wall together, Tessa emerges as the leader.

As best anyone can tell, Eddie and Lena are tied as they both fight it out to beat Tessa. Tessa, not knowing where she stands, is out to kick ass. Approaching the wall, Tessa touches first, with Eddie and Lena apparently tied for second place. The crowd cheers, many of them not even knowing the level of competition they have just witnessed.

Kathy, who timed the race, announces, "with a time of 49.8 seconds, Tessa won! Eddie and Lena tied, as far as I can tell. They both swam a 50.0." Eddie and Lena congratulate Tessa, as everyone exchanges high-fives in the pool. Hearing the times, Lena tells Tessa, "for an unofficial race, we all turned in great times." Lena and Tessa are both faster than they were last year. Eddie turned in a time slower than last year, but he has been more focused on running over the past few months.

The swimmers get out of the pool and head back to the tables. Everyone congratulates Eddie and Tessa, who provided everyone at the

pool a few minutes of entertainment today. But, now that the race is over, everyone makes their way to the concession stand to find lunch. Lunch is pizza, which is not surprising for this group.

Over lunch, Mitchell and Akinmola are having a discussion about the mile. Wanting some information, Akinmola asks Mitchell, “so, what are you running the mile in now?” Acting as if it’s nothing special, Mitchell replies, “at the University, I ran a 3:57.5. But, I might be a little faster now.” Akinmola replies, “that’s really fast, my man!” Akinmola, who asks many questions, asks, “how about everyone else at the school? How fast do they run?” Mitchell informs Akinmola, “Darryl Stone runs just under four minutes consistently. But, he’s faster now that he’s been using Eddie’s training sled. I think he ran about 3:58 in one meet I watched. But, I can still beat him.” Mitchell is highly confident in himself. Even if Stone is a little faster, Mitchell is still able to beat him by strategy.

Mitchell then asks, “so, what are your times these days?” Changing the subject, Akinmola asks, “what is this training sled you are talking about?” Mitchell explains, “it’s a sled with weights on it. You put on the harness, and run in the sand. It simulates running against resistance.” Akinmola comments, “I’d like to try it sometime. Where do I find one?” Mitchell tells Akinmola, “it’s part of the training at the University now. I hear Eddie made four of them for the University. He also made one for Erika, Tessa, and John. I also hear that everyone who’s used it has had their times come down.” Mitchell then asks again, “how are your times these days?” Akinmola replies, “I need to find Eddie and find out about this training sled. Please excuse me, my friend.” Akinmola realizes that his 4:10 minute mile might not be as competitive as needed for college, so he avoids Mitchell’s question, and looks for Eddie.

Akinmola, finding Eddie, asks, “hey, I hear you have a training sled. Can I try it out sometime?” Eddie replies, “sure, if you want to. But it works best if you use it in sand, so you have to get it to the beach, or to the sand track.” Akinmola suggests, “maybe Mitchell can take me there, and we can train together.” Eddie mentions, “either that, or I can take you to the sand track someday. The University team will start training soon, and you’ll also have a lot of chances to use it then.” Akinmola realizes he has to shave off ten or fifteen seconds off of his mile time to truly be competitive. With two runners competing at the sub four-minute pace, Akinmola must step up his game. Settling for third place is not exactly on Akinmola’s list of things to do.

Akinmola, looking for more ways to improve his times, asks Eddie, “so, tell me, my friend. How much does your training sled improve the runner’s times?” Quick with the answer only because Kathy, the keeper of statistics, has already figured it out, Eddie replies, “somewhere between 4 and 12 percent over using it two or three times a week for six months.



Kathy figured it out. But, that's using the training sled along with Mr. Frazier's interval training drill." Akinmola does some quick math in his head, and figures 5 percent will be three seconds per mile, bringing his times to a more competitive sub four minute pace.

Akinmola, asking even more questions, asks, "are you serious, man? How can that be?" Eddie explains, like he did to Tessa a year ago, "when I was in high school, at the track meets, everyone points at me and says, 'that's Eddie. He's the fastest guy in the country.' I know what they say because I hear it. They all must think I run from when the sun comes up until the sun goes down. What they don't know is that I really don't like running, so I look for short cuts. The only reason I run fast is because of all the other things I do. The training sled is one of those shortcuts. Running in the sand and bicycling are some of the other ones." Akinmola insists, "I need to try this soon. When can we do it?" Eddie replies, "call me sometime this week. Either me or Mitchell can take you to the sand track at the University." Looking for a way to improve his performance, Akinmola quickly takes Eddie up on his offer.

A while later, when the girls are hanging out at the tables, some of the guys hang out in the pool, talking about their years of running track while they were in high school. Braden asks Eddie, "are you still training on your bicycle?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I've stepped it up a bit over the last month or two. We officially start training with the team in a few weeks, and I want to be in top shape." Johnson comments, "that's because he's afraid McCrutchen might beat him." Eddie laughs, and replies, "yeah, right. That's never going to happen." Braden asks Mark, "are you still training on your bicycle?" Mark replies, "yeah. Me and Paula ride to the beach and back a lot. Sometimes Eddie and Kathy come with us."

Braden, who is considering buying a better bicycle, asks Johnson, "where did you get that nice bike you got?" Johnson replies, "I built it myself over the past few years." Eddie, who already knows the story behind Johnson's bicycle, smiles and asks, "you built it over a few years? Really?" Astutely perceiving that Eddie is messing with him, Johnson replies, "yeah." Eddie laughs, and asks, "why didn't you just build it all at once?" Evading the question, Johnson replies, "some things are really complicated." Johnson, who didn't want to explain how and why he built a bicycle over a period of years, hopes the conversation will move on to another topic.

Having no such luck in getting out of explaining the story behind his bicycle, Braden asks Johnson, "I want to hear this. How did it take you years to build your bicycle?" Still messing with Johnson, Eddie comments, "I really want to hear this too." Johnson explains, "okay. My parents got me a ten-speed when I was in eighth grade. But, it wasn't what I really wanted. I rode that bicycle to my grandparent's house to cut their lawn.

And, it was ten miles in each direction. So, I wanted a better bicycle, one that's a lot lighter with better components. But, it wasn't like my parents were going to go out and buy me a new bicycle just because I wanted a better one."

Braden asks, "so, what did you do about it? That's a really nice bike you got now." Johnson continues, "since I obviously wasn't getting a new bicycle anytime soon, I systematically broke the parts on my bicycle over a few years. My seat broke first, so my parents got me a good seat with an aluminum alloy seat post. Then, I told my parents I fell, and I bent my handlebar. So, they bought me an aluminum alloy handlebar and stem to replace the steel one that came with the bicycle." Braden interrupts, asking Johnson, "what? You fell, on purpose?" Johnson replies, "no! I smashed the handlebar against the brick wall at the middle school, and bent it." Johnson now has everyone's interest.

Now curious, Mark asks, "how did you break the rest of the bicycle?" Johnson explains, "I rammed the rear derailleur into the curb. I told my parents the front and rear derailleurs have to match, so they were replaced with really nice Campagnolo derailleurs. Then, I hit the curb with my pedal, and bent it. I got new cranks and pedals out of that one. A few months later, I told my parents the brakes didn't stop well, and I bent my front rim because I couldn't stop in time. I got new brakes and new front and rear wheels out of that accident. So, by the time I was a senior, everything on my bicycle was replaced."

Mark asks Johnson, "how did you bend your rim?" Johnson replies, "I ran it into the curb, over and over. I bent the rim so good, that I had to walk my bicycle home. It was too lopsided to ride. And, if I can't ride my bicycle, that means I can't ride to my grandparent's house to cut their lawn. So, it didn't take too long for my parents to get me two new wheels and brakes that stop well."

Having seen the nice bicycle frame Johnson has, Mark asks, "how did you get a new frame?" Johnson replies, "that was a little more complicated. Actually, it was a whole lot more complicated. I couldn't exactly destroy my frame, so I had to come up with a different plan. I bought a frame from Vito, using my own money. I had to get a frame the same color as my old one, or otherwise my parents would have noticed. Then, I rode over to Eddie's house with my new frame. We took all the components off my old frame and put them on my new frame." Still messing with Johnson, Eddie interjects, "wow! I remember that now! I thought you'd never get away with that." Johnson continues, "so, then I junked my old frame. My parents never did figure out that the bicycle I was riding was not the one they bought for me when I was in eighth grade. So, the bicycle I have right now is totally built with replacement parts."

Eddie laughs, prompting Mark to tell Eddie, “that’s about as bad as that shit you pulled with your piano lessons!” Staring at Eddie as if Eddie is from a different planet, Braden exclaims, “what? You took piano lessons?” Eddie replies, “yeah. When I was in the fourth grade, my parents made me take piano lessons.” Braden comments, “I never knew that!” Eddie replies, “some things you just want to forget. Piano lessons are one of them. Piano lessons weren’t exactly on the top of my list of things to do.”

Braden asks, “how did you get out of taking piano lessons?” Eddie begins explaining, “the teacher, Mrs. Hildebrand, was a real pain in the ass. She was supposedly some sort of concert pianist from Great Britain. She must have been like ninety years old or something, and she had four pairs of glasses. Oh, and she was always cold. She even wore a sweater in the Summer. And, in the Winter, she was always asking my mother to turn up the heat.” Braden exclaims, “I’m glad I didn’t get no piano lessons!”

Eddie continues, “when I was playing, she would count over and over, ‘one, two, three. One, two, three.’ She was a human metronome. So, just to annoy her, I started playing the left hand and the right hand like an eighth-step off from each other. It drove her crazy. But, that didn’t work. She kept coming back every week. The next thing I tried was playing what should be played with the left hand with my right hand. And, what I should have been playing with my right hand, I played with my left. That drove her crazy too. I was so happy when I heard Mrs. Hildebrand tell my mother, ‘this kid has no talent.’ But, she kept coming back every week.”

Braden then asks, “how did you finally get rid of her?” Eddie explains, “when she was leaving one day, she told me, ‘will you please go and fetch my jersey.’ I asked her, ‘what’s a jersey?’ Sounding like an old schoolteacher, she told me, ‘my sweater! Don’t tell me you’ve never heard of a jersey! Jersey and sweater are interchangeable.’ So, I told her, ‘fine, then. New Jersey, New Sweater, what’s the difference? I’m moving to New Sweater.’ Then, I asked her, ‘what brand of Hilde are you, anyway?’ So, she got really mad that I made fun of her name. Then, when she was leaving, she told my mother, ‘you shouldn’t really waste your money on piano lessons for that lad. Edward has absolutely no talent. There is no hope for him.’ So, the next week, Mrs. Hildebrand didn’t show up. I was so happy.” Mark laughs, asking Eddie, “she called you a lad?” Eddie replies, “yeah. She can call me whatever she wants to, just as long as she never came back.”

Braden asks Mitchell, “speaking about lessons, how are the martial arts lessons going?” Mitchell replies, “I’m working on my fourth-level black belt. It’s probably going to take a few years.” Bobby B. comments, “I remember when you started taking lessons. That was back when we

were all freshmen.” Mark mentions, “that’s really fast, going from zero to third-level black belt in four years.” Mitchell replies, “in my school, you have to fight off three first-level black belts to earn your third-level black belt. That’s usually the big challenge for most students. I fought off three first-level black belts when I was at the second level. So, I guess that put me on the fast track.”

Eddie asks, “by the way, how are Cullen and Royser doing these days?” Bobby B. asks, “who are Cullen and Royser?” Eddie replies, “Joey Cullen and Mike Royser. Those are the two guys we ran into during the first week of school when we were freshmen. They’re the two guys we caught messing with Mitchell when we were walking home that day.” Bobby B. exclaims, “I remember that! You worked those guys over good.”

Mitchell explains, “when I was a junior, I ran into those guys again. I was walking home after school one day, and those two guys came out from behind the bridge abutment near the middle school, and tried to shake me down. They didn’t get too far.”

Always wanting to be on top of any news about an ass kicking, Braden asks, “what happened? I wanna hear this!” Mitchell replies, “you don’t want to hear it. It wasn’t that big of a deal.” Braden insists, “sure I do!” Mark tells Braden, “I want to hear this too. I’ve never heard about Mitchell kicking anyone’s ass.”

Mitchell explains, “it was dark out, and I was walking home after track practice. Amber had an orthodontist appointment that day, so her mother picked her up after practice to take her there. I walked under the bridge near the middle school, and Cullen, the bigger one, approached me with a knife. I greeted him with a flying two-point move. In the first move, I kicked his knife out of his hand. The knife went flying. In the second move, I kicked him upside his head. He landed on the ground.” Braden exclaims, “wait a second! You did all that shit when you were in the air?” Mitchell replies, “yeah, bro. That’s what we do in Karate.”

Mitchell continues, “then Royser, the fat guy, came after me. He was wildly throwing punches. I was messing with him, evading every punch. Then Cullen gets up, and rushes me. I picked him up, and threw him up against the bridge abutment. Royser came after me again. Royser was a little easier to take care of. I smashed his face into the bridge abutment a few times, and rubbed it into the concrete until it bled. Then, I left them lying on the ground, and I walked home.” Braden exclaims, “I wish I was there to see that ass kicking!” Mitchell again states, “it wasn’t really a big deal.” Not to a third-level black belt, anyway.

Mark asks, “what happened after that?” Mitchell explains, “apparently, they didn’t know who I was. But, I remembered who they were. I didn’t

see either of them around the school for a few days. Then, I passed them in the hallway, and Royser was looking really rough. Neither of them said anything to me, so I figured they had no idea who took them down.” Braden points out, “that’s more than a take down! That’s a major league ass kicking!”

Kathy then yells out to the guys, “hey! We’re packing up! It’s time to head out and get pizza!” As the guys get out of the pool, Mitchell tells Eddie, “let me show you the new car I got.” Eddie asks, “what did you get?” Mitchell replies, “it’s a surprise.” The guys head out, all interested to see what kind of car Mitchell bought.

Now that the party is over, Eddie, along with a few others, walks out to the parking lot to take a look at Mitchell’s newly acquired vehicle. Eddie takes a look, as Mitchell tells him, “I paid twelve hundred for it.” Looking over the vehicle, Eddie replies, “it looks like you got a good deal. The body looks like it’s in perfect condition.” Eddie then asks Mitchell, “how does it run?” Mitchell replies, “so far, so good. Can you check it out for me sometime?” Eddie replies, “sure. Bring it by the station and we’ll take a look at it.” Mitchell bought the four-year-old German-built Opel 1900 from another college student, who just graduated. With only 25,000 miles on it, the car looked like a really good deal to Mitchell.

Now that the party is over, the next party begins. Everyone heads over to the pizzeria. Akinmola hitches a ride with Mitchell, only because everyone will be finished eating by the time Akinmola would get there if he ran.

In the parking lot, Tessa tells Eddie and Kathy, “hey, I just want to thank you guys for helping me with my swimming over the past few years.” Eddie replies, “no problem.” Tessa explains, “no, really! If it wasn’t for you guys, I probably wouldn’t have gotten a scholarship. Four years ago, you guys taught me how to do a flip turn. And, then Barbara found out that I needed to work on my kick off the wall, and you guys told me how to do that.” Tessa gives Eddie and Kathy a hug, telling them, “thank you guys so much!” They then head to the pizzeria, with the rest of the group.

When Eddie and Kathy get home from dinner, out of the blue, Kathy exclaims, “hey, buddy! Where’s my Dune Buggy?” Eddie replies, “oh yeah. We were in the middle of building that.” Kathy asks, “how do you mean, we?” Eddie replies, “well, you did pick out the color, and you got the registration.” Kathy asks, “oh yeah! I did. So, what’s left to do?” Eddie explains, “it’s almost done. I have to install the seats, wire up the gauges, and then I have to take it over to the station and do a wheel alignment.” Waiting almost a year for her Dune Buggy, Kathy asks, “how long will all that take?” Eddie, pretending like he is thinking about it, tells her, “about

a day.” Kathy asks, “then, how are we not like done?” Eddie tells her, “if you asked me next week, I would have told you it was done.” Kathy replies, “oh yeah. Duh.”

Eddie and Kathy spend the following afternoon in the detached garage, which is Eddie’s home workshop. Ordering three frames from Kurt, Eddie has three Dune Buggy projects going. The first Dune Buggy is Kathy’s, which is nearly completed. The second Dune Buggy has a Porsche 911 drive train and front end installed, and is ready to accept a body. The third frame is standing against the wall, waiting for the drive train and front end to be installed, which are alongside the frame, each sitting on an old carpet remnant, on wooden blocks. Eddie, however, busy with Kathy’s Dune Buggy, hasn’t ordered the bodies for the other two projects yet. And, a few good seats are sitting in the corner, waiting to be installed when the time comes.

While Eddie installs the Dune Buggy’s gauges, Kathy gives the new yellow body its first coat of wax. Since the instrumentation is from a Porsche 911, Eddie had to make a few modifications to the fiberglass dashboard. Fortunately, Kurt has already done this once, and assured Eddie all will work out fine. Moving on to the last item before taking it out on the road, Eddie then installs the seats. After putting the tools away, the Dune Buggy is now ready for its first road trip.

All excited, Kathy exclaims, asking, “so, now we’re ready to go?” Eddie replies, “almost.” Kathy asks, “I thought we were done. What else is there to do?” Eddie explains, “the first trip is to the service station so I can do the wheel alignment. We can do that now, if you want.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah, buddy! Let’s go and do that now! I want my Dune Buggy!”

Eddie and Kathy get into their newly built Dune Buggy, and Eddie drives to the service station. On the way, Eddie mentions, “it pulls slightly to the right. After the alignment, that will be fixed.” Kathy mentions, “it also turns a lot of heads. Everyone’s looking at us.” Eddie comments, “just like when Paula got her Beach Patrol Jeep.”

Arriving at the service station, which is closed on Sunday, Eddie opens up, and drives the Dune Buggy into the alignment bay. With no factory manual, Eddie is on his own to determine the alignment specifications. Eddie works on the alignment, as Kathy looks around the service area and thinks back, remembering when she and Eddie repaired the engine to her Porsche 914 in Angelo’s shop. Kathy recalls how she went out in the morning to take a look at the Porsche 914 at John Malea’s place and, by evening, a perfectly running Porsche 914 was sitting in front of her house.

Recalling how she helped with the 914, Kathy asks Eddie, “hey, how can I help?” Eddie replies, “sit in the driver’s seat.” Kathy replies, “hey

now! How is that helping?” Eddie explains, “well, since we built this ourselves, I don’t have a factory manual with the specs. When you sit in the driver’s seat, it loads the suspension, and the angles change. I want to see what happens to the camber when you sit in it.” Eddie has the alignment specs for the Porsche 911 suspension, but the Dune Buggy weighs much less, necessitating changes in the alignment specifications. Kathy sits in the driver’s seat, and Eddie rechecks the camber angle.

Eddie then tells Kathy to get out of the Dune Buggy, and shows her how to read the angle, which is projected onto a grid placed in front of the vehicle. Eddie then gets into the driver’s seat, and asks Kathy to take the measurement. Kathy calls out the measurement, and Eddie makes a few minor adjustments. After checking everything one last time, Eddie tells Kathy, “okay, we’re ready to go!” Eddie drives the car out of the bay, locks up the station, and they are ready to drive away.

Eddie gets into the passenger’s seat, leaving the vacancy in the driver’s seat for Kathy. Kathy exclaims, “me? I’m driving?” Eddie replies, “well, if I remember correctly, yesterday you said, ‘hey, buddy! Where’s my Dune Buggy?’” Kathy admits, “yeah. I did say that, didn’t I?” Eddie tells her, “so, let’s go! Take me for a ride!” Kathy tells Eddie, “get ready! You’re going for the ride of you life!” Kathy gets in, and Eddie explains, “the only thing you have to remember is that it probably won’t corner as well as your 914. And, Kurt said that his Dune Buggy is a bit overpowered for what it is.” Kathy drives away, headed toward the town’s main road, where the pizzeria and Vito’s Bicycle Shop are located.

Driving down the road, Kathy exclaims, “woo-hoo! Hey! I got my own Dune Buggy!” Eddie asks, “I take it you like it?” Kathy exclaims, “I like it!” Kathy turns right onto the town’s main road, which is populated with people driving, walking, and riding bicycles. The bright yellow Dune Buggy turns the heads of everyone seeing them drive down the road. With everyone looking at her, Kathy now knows exactly what Paula feels when she drives around town in her Jeep.

As Kathy is driving around town, Eddie asks Kathy, “so, how does it drive?” Kathy replies, “awesome! I am definitely driving this to school when it starts.” Eddie comments, “there’s no trunk for your school books and stuff.” Kathy replies, “hmm. How do we solve that problem?” Eddie thinks about it for a few minutes, and replies, “well, I welded a trailer hitch onto the frame for our bicycle carrier. I can put together a large tool box that will go into the receiver hitch. You can put a lock on the tool box, and that will be the trunk.” Kathy replies, “that sounds like it will work,” but adds, “I want a yellow tool box to match the Dune Buggy.” Eddie comments, “that should be easy enough. We’ll get Vinnie to match the paint color.”

After driving around for a while, Kathy heads toward Mark and Paula's house. When they arrive, they see them working outside near the pool. Hearing that someone is driving up, Mark and Paula turn around to see who it might be. Seeing Kathy in the Dune Buggy, Paula exclaims, "no! You didn't!" As she turns off the engine, Kathy exclaims, "oh yeah, we did!" Kathy has been keeping the Dune Buggy project a secret from everyone until it was finished. Paula exclaims, "when did you guys buy that?" Kathy replies, "me and Eddie built it!"

As Paula and Mark check out the Dune Buggy, Paula tells Mark, "okay, now I want a Dune Buggy." Mark looks at Eddie, telling him, "wow! This is really nice." Paula, now wanting a ride in Kathy's Dune Buggy, gets in and tells Kathy, "okay, let's go! I want to see this!" Kathy gets in, driving Paula away in her new toy. On the way down the driveway, Paula raises her hands in the air, as the kids often do on a roller coaster.

While they are on their ride, Mark tells Eddie, "listening to Paula, it sounds like there's a Dune Buggy in my future." With the understatement of the day, Eddie comments, "it sounds like Paula kind of likes it." Mark asks, "so, you guys built it yourself?" Eddie explains, "I had Kurt Richter, the guy who modified Kathy's Porsche, build the frame for me. Actually, I had him build three frames. Vinnie had two totaled 911s come in, and that's where I got the drive trains. I picked up a third drive train last week. And, I bought a Manx body, put it together, and now we have a Dune Buggy." Mark replies, "that sounds pretty easy." Eddie replies, "it was. It just took a while to disassemble the 911s." Mark asks, "how much was it?" Eddie replies, "to be honest, I don't even know. We spent almost a year buying parts and working on it." But, knowing Eddie, everything has been done to perfection.

Eddie explains to Mark, "the frame is really interesting. Kurt designed it for a Porsche 911 drive train and front end, not the Volkswagen engine. And, in the front of the frame, there is a counterbalance weight to offset the weight of the engine in the rear. So, it has nearly a fifty-fifty weight distribution front to rear. That makes it handle better than if all the weight was in the back." Mark comments, "I guess Paula and Kathy are finding that out now."

As Kathy and Paula drive back up the driveway, Mark can easily tell by the expression on Paula's face that she wants one. As they get closer, Paula yells out, "hey, Mark! Buy me a Dune Buggy!" Mark whispers to Eddie, "what she's really saying is, 'Eddie, build me a Dune Buggy too!'" Eddie tells Mark, "that's what your special three-car garage is for." Mark replies, "yeah. I can see that project coming from a mile away."

Getting out of the Dune Buggy, Paula asks, "okay, how can I get one?" Eddie replies, "you buy it from Acme. It will be delivered in less than a



minute.” Kathy laughs, and tells Eddie, “not!” Paula asks, “no, really! How can I get one?” Eddie explains, “you have to build one yourself, or find someone who’s selling one.” Kathy tells Paula, “you just can’t get the same color as mine.” Paula asks Eddie, “can you build one for me?” Eddie replies, “yeah. But, so can Mark. I have one that’s 75 percent done at home. All it needs is the body. Then the lights, gauges, and everything else, has to be connected.” All excited, Paula exclaims, “are you selling it?” Eddie replies, “that was the plan.”

Looking at Mark, Paula puts her arms around his neck, and asks, “can we buy a Dune Buggy? Please?” Mark replies, “sure. But you can’t get rid of your Jeep.” Paula exclaims, “never! I put way too much work into getting my Jeep!” Eddie asks, “okay, so what color?” Thinking about what color she wants, Paula asks Eddie, “does it come in like a deep orange?” Remembering the colors from the brochure when she chose the yellow, Kathy replies, “that was one of the choices.” Eddie tells Mark and Paula, “go down to Vinnie’s, and look at the brochure. The colors are in there. If you don’t like any of the colors, Vinnie can paint it any color that you want.” Paula announces, “we’re going to do that tomorrow. And, I’ll do my part. I’ll make a lot of trips to the bank.”

Monday, right after the weekend of the tribe’s Summer reunion, Mitchell drives into Angelo’s Service Station with his Opel 1900 when Eddie is just opening up. With classes at the University starting soon, Mitchell is going to need reliable transportation. Seeing Mitchell, Eddie yells out, “yo, bro!” Mitchell yells back, “yo! I was hoping you’d be here today. Can you check out the car for me and see if anything’s wrong?” Eddie replies, “sure. No problem.” The first thing Eddie tells Mitchell is, “the first good thing about it is that it’s a German Opel, not that Japanese piece of shit.” That was good news to Mitchell, who is a bit nervous not having the car inspected before he bought it. Eddie writes the service ticket, and drives the car into an empty bay.

Looking over the Opel, Eddie finds the car is in reasonably good condition. Eddie suggests that the car be tuned up, and that the fuel filter be replaced. Eddie also points out to Mitchell that the car will need tires in about five thousand miles, and tells Mitchell to budget for it. Mitchell tells Eddie to go ahead and do the work, which he starts immediately.

While Eddie is working, Eddie and Mitchell talk track and field. Mitchell curiously comments, “it looks like our team will be back together again.” Eddie replies, “it seems like that was high on Kathy’s list of things to do. She’s worked really hard at that.” Mitchell then asks, “do you know what Akinmola’s times are in the mile these days?” Eddie replies, “I think he won State with a time of somewhere around four minutes and ten seconds. That was in the Spring. I don’t know what he ran during the

indoor State meet.” Mitchell then comments, “he seemed to be avoiding the question when I asked.” Eddie explains, “maybe he feels like he’s inadequate, which he’s not. He’s number one in the State.”

Looking over Mitchell’s car, Eddie asks, “is your transmission shifting okay?” Mitchell replies, “I think so.” Eddie informs Mitchell, “it’s a little low on oil.” As Eddie fills the transmission, he tells Mitchell, “it was down almost a pint. But, the good news is I don’t see any leaks. We’ll keep an eye on it.” Checking the drive train, Eddie informs Mitchell, “your U-joints and your differential look good.”

Getting back to track and field, Eddie mentions, “Akinmola wants to try the training sled. I expect that he’s going to be calling you soon. Or, maybe he’ll call me.” Mitchell tells Eddie, “I’ll take him to the sand track. I need to get some more variation in my training myself.” Eddie offers, “come by and pick it up sometime. I can even make one for you, if you want.” Mitchell asks, “how much does it cost?” Eddie replies, “not much. Like zero dollars. I just give them away to whoever wants one. But, try it a few times and see what you think.” If Akinmola is working toward improving his performance, Mitchell does not want to be left in the dust.

Eddie lowers the Opel, and drives it out of the bay. He tells Mitchell, “it’s all finished. It should run like new.” Mitchell asks, “was it bad?” Eddie replies, “you said it was owned by a college student. It’s obvious that some of the general maintenance wasn’t done when it should have been. The fuel filter was a mess, and it really needed a tune-up. But, it’s back up to factory specs now. Otherwise, it looks like you got a really good deal.” Mitchell gladly pays Eddie for his work, and drives away with confidence.

Now that Mark and Paula are settled in, they take a trip to the beach with Eddie and Kathy. This is not just any trip. Eddie, Mark, and Kathy plan to race Paula’s Jeep in the sand. Mark and Paula head to the beach in Paula’s Jeep, followed by Eddie and Kathy in Kathy’s new Dune Buggy. Kathy’s Dune buggy has never seen the sand so, today, Kathy plans to discover what the Dune Buggy can do.

Arriving at the beach, they go directly to the parking lot that allows beach access to vehicles. Stopping in the parking lot to make a plan, Kathy and Paula decide to drive down the beach, each in their own vehicle. As she drives for the first time on the beach with her Dune Buggy, Kathy exclaims, “wow! This is awesome!” Kathy turns left and right, and drives in circles for a few minutes. Eddie asks, “so, do you still like it?” Kathy exclaims, “yeah, buddy!”

After a while, Kathy and Paula both stop. It’s not hard for everyone to see that the Dune Buggy is very nimble on the beach. Kathy asks Paula,

“do you want a ride?” Paula replies, “do you even have to ask?” Paula gets into the Dune Buggy, and Kathy gives Paula a ride, driving every which way up and down the beach. Kathy, teasing Paula, asks, “so, are you really sure you want a Dune Buggy?” Paula replies, “oh yeah! It’s at the top of my list!”

Kathy stops, and tells Paula she can drive. Paula gets behind the wheel, and drives up and down the beach. Paula exclaims, “okay! Now, I really want a Dune Buggy! This thing is awesome!” Kathy replies, “oh, so you were just faking it before?” Paula smiles, and replies, “yeah, that’s it. I was faking it.” After a five-minute ride, they then head back to where Paula parked her Jeep.

Kathy asks Mark, “hey, do you want a ride?” Mark replies, “sure. I want to see what we’re getting.” Mark gets into the Dune Buggy. Kathy gets behind the wheel and drives down the beach, heading straight for the dunes. As Kathy takes off, she kicks up a bit of sand. Fortunately, Eddie and Paula were not in the line of fire.

While Mark is getting his ride in the Dune Buggy, Eddie asks Paula, “so, what did you think?” Paula replies, “that was really a lot of fun! I can’t wait for you to finish ours!” Eddie tells Paula, “it’s coming along. I installed the body the other day. It should be done in a few days.” Getting all excited that her new toy is on its way, Paula asks, “will it be done before classes start?” Eddie replies, “that’s the target.” Seeing Kathy and Mark approach, Paula exclaims, “here they come! Mark looks amused!”

Kathy and Mark return, and they get out of the Dune Buggy. Mark asks, “okay, is everyone ready for the race?” Paula looks at Mark, and says, “let’s get it on.” Kathy casually comments, “wow! That really came out wrong.” Paula, a little embarrassed, turns a cute shade of pink. Paula then says, “okay. Let me try this again. Are you guys ready to race my Jeep on the beach?” Everyone indicates they are ready, and they map out the 40-yard course.

Eddie draws a long line in the sand indicating the starting line. They measure out 40 yards by everyone taking 40 long paces. Eddie then draws another line in the sand, indicating the finish line. To start the race, Eddie suggests, “we can start the race like when we raced Kathy’s Porsche.” Paula asks, “how did we do that again?” Eddie replies, “honk your horn three times and, on the third time, we all start.” Everyone is reminded on how the race will start, and Paula drives her Jeep into position.

Paula revs up her engine, and honks the horn. The runners all quickly get ready to run. The second honk causes a rise in everyone’s adrenaline

levels. Paula honks her horn a third time, and everyone is off. Quick off the starting line, Eddie, Mark, and Kathy sprint ahead of Paula in her Jeep. The runners are all at their top speed a few steps into the race, which is not very fast in the sand. Halfway through the race, Paula, in her Jeep, passes the three runners. Eddie, Mark, and Kathy are all at their top speed and, with Paula still accelerating, they stand little chance of catching her. Paula, in her Jeep, crosses the line in the sand first, followed by Eddie, Mark, and then Kathy.

Winning the race, Paula exclaims, “yes! I finally beat you guys!” Conceding defeat, Mark tells Paula, “that, you did.” Kathy exclaims, “I want a rematch!” Paula tells her, “you seriously lost, girl. What do you want a rematch for?” Kathy exclaims, “I’ll race you in my Dune Buggy!” Eddie tells Paula, “you’ll never beat her Dune Buggy.” Paula replies, “that ain’t stopping me from trying. Let’s get it on! Oops. Let’s go!” Off the track, it’s not winning that really counts. It’s the fun that really matters.

Eddie suggests, “since you’re going to race, why don’t you race to the other parking lot, and back again. That’s about four miles.” Paula exclaims, “we’re on! Let’s go!” Mark tells Paula, “I’m coming!” Eddie replies, “me too!” Mark gets into Paula’s Jeep, as Kathy and Eddie get into the Dune Buggy. They line up at the starting line used for the sprint, and Paula yells out, “how are we starting this?” Eddie replies, “just start whenever you want. We’ll start right after you.” Kathy privately asks Eddie, “how is that fair?” Eddie whispers to Kathy, “don’t worry. They don’t stand a chance.” Eddie is obviously quite confident.

Paula then yells out, “okay, here we go!” Paula leaves and races down the beach. Kathy follows, riding down the beach in her Dune Buggy right behind Paula. Eddie tells her, “pass her on the left, but give yourself about 25 feet to the other side of her.” The Dune Buggy kicks up a little sand, so Eddie wanted Kathy to stay a little way away from Paula. Kathy moves over to the left, and is ready to pass Paula. Seeing flat sand ahead, Eddie tells Kathy, “go for it.” Kathy speeds up and, as she overtakes Paula, exclaims, “woo-hoo!” In her Dune Buggy, Kathy speeds along the beach, seeing Paula getting farther and farther behind in her rear view mirror.

As they approach the parking lot two miles away, Eddie tells Kathy, “it looks like you won.” Kathy replies, “I see that!” Kathy turns around, and heads back to where they started. On the way, they pass Paula and Mark, who are now pretty far behind. Kathy waves to Mark and Paula as they pass, rubbing it in just a little bit. Kathy exclaims, “my Dune Buggy really kicks ass!” Eddie replies, “this is what it was built for!” After a fun ride up and down the beach, Kathy returns to the starting line, waiting for Paula and Mark.

When Paula returns to the starting line, she tells Kathy, “okay, girl! You won! That was some roller coaster ride!” Eddie reminds Paula, “remember, your Dune Buggy is almost finished. Once it’s finished, the race will be a bit more fair.” Kathy exclaims, “that was really fun!” Paula asks, “now, what do we do for an encore?” Without hesitation, Kathy yells out, “pizza!” No one objects, so they all decide to head back home, and stop at the pizzeria. But, before they leave, they drive up and down the beach for a while longer, exploring what is in the other direction.

As the end of the Summer draws near, Eddie and Kathy are out picking up a few items they’ll need for school. As they are heading home, Eddie glances over at Vito’s Bicycle Shop and notices the sign indicating that the business is temporarily closed is no longer in the window. Eddie asks Kathy, “hey, can we stop by Vito’s for a second?” Kathy replies, “sure. But, I thought you said he’s closed.” Eddie mentions, “the sign is gone. I want to see if he’s reopened.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! Let’s go and check it out!” Eddie goes around the block, and heads back to Vito’s.

Eddie and Kathy walk in, and Vito exclaims, “hey, Eddie! I’m back in business again!” Eddie asks, “when did you reopen?” Vito replies, “two hours ago! You’re my first customer!” Eddie then inquires, “did Ralph get you out of the mess?” Vito replies, “yes, and more! I got a new cash register that figures out the tax for me. And, not only that! Ralph is going to take care of my accounting for me from now on.” Eddie replies, “awesome!” Vito tells Eddie, “I don’t even know how to begin to thank you. He said he owed you, so he did it as a favor.” Kathy tells Vito, “we’re just glad you’re open again.”

Eddie tells Vito, “while I’m here, I need two tires for my bike, and I need two for Kathy’s bike too.” Eddie also gets a few other maintenance items for his and Kathy’s bicycles. Vito replies, “sure, let me get them for you.” Vito already knows the sizes of Eddie’s and Kathy’s bicycle tires. As he told Eddie in the beginning of the Summer, Vito knows bicycles, but is no expert in accounting. Vito goes to the back to get the tires and the other items Eddie needs.

Vito hands the tires and parts in a bag to Eddie, and tells him, “take them. It’s on me. It’s the least I can do.” Eddie tells Vito, “no. I want to buy them. Ring it up. That’s how you got in the mess you were in.” Vito, not wanting to argue, rings up Eddie’s order, and tells him, “that’s fifty-eight dollars and twenty-three cents.” Eddie hands Vito sixty dollars. Vito’s new cash register tells him that Eddie is due a dollar and seventy-seven cents change.

As Vito counts out the change, Kathy laughs, and Eddie asks, “what’s so funny?” Kathy confesses, “it’s so funny to not hear Vito say, ‘that’s sixty dollars with the tax.’” Vito laughs himself, telling Kathy, “now, I’m

going to have to learn how to make change. All these pennies and nickels are going to drive me crazy. I don't even know why they bother to make pennies." Eddie and Kathy leave with their parts, both happy that Vito's Bicycle Shop is open again.

Right before the Autumn semester at the University is about to start, Eddie has finished Mark and Paula's Dune Buggy. Paula was really hoping that it would be done before the semester starts so she can drive it while the weather is still nice, and Eddie delivered. And, while Eddie was getting all the last minute details completed, Paula went down and registered the vehicle so that it would be all ready to go once it is finished.

Wanting to get ahead of the game, Kathy and Paula decide to go over to the University and buy their books and get their parking stickers for the upcoming semester. Kathy drives over to Mark and Paula's house to pick up Paula, since they both want to ride to the University in Kathy's Dune Buggy in the beautiful weather. When Kathy arrives, Paula gets in, and they drive away. Instead of driving to the University, Kathy drives back to her house.

Paula asks, "did you forget something?" Kathy replies, "yeah. I have to go back home for a second." Driving up the driveway, Kathy turns around, and parks her Dune Buggy. Kathy asks Paula, "while we're here, do you want to see your Dune Buggy?" Paula replies, "sure. I'll take a look." They get out of Kathy's Dune Buggy, and head to Eddie's workshop.

Kathy opens the door to the detached garage, and they walk in. Seeing a vehicle on wheels, Paula mentions, "it looks like it's almost done." As she turns on the lights to the garage, Kathy replies, "it is done," as she hands Paula the keys. Jumping up and down, Paula exclaims, "so, I can drive it now?" Kathy tells Paula, "that was the plan. Surprise!" Paula walks around the Dune Buggy, noticing that the metallic paint glistens under the lights.

Kathy shows Paula a few things about the Dune Buggy. One is that Eddie installed a two-way radio in both Dune Buggies, so they can talk on the road while they are out together. Following Mark's suggestion, Eddie also painted "Paula's Dune Buggy" across the back. Eddie also painted, "Kathy's Dune Buggy" on the back of Kathy's. Full of energy, Paula gets into her Dune Buggy, and drives it out of the garage. After closing up Eddie's workshop, Kathy and Paula drive to the University in their matching Dune Buggies to buy their books for the semester.

Arriving at the University, heads turn as Kathy and Paula roll into campus. It's quite unusual to see one Dune Buggy, much less two driving

in at the same time. They find a parking place in their favorite lot near the track, and park side by side. As they get out, Paula mentions, “wow! The paint job is so awesome!” The orange metallic paint sparkles in the bright sunlight. Kathy and Paula head to the bookstore, noticing that anyone who walks by can’t resist taking a closer look.

One such person who could not resist inspecting the matching Dune Buggies is Todd McCutchen, who is walking by with Leggett. Seeing “Kathy’s Dune Buggy” painted on the back of one, and “Paula’s Dune Buggy” painted on the back of the other, it is not hard for McCutchen to figure out who owns the brand-new Dune Buggies. McCutchen sarcastically comments to Leggett, “well, just take a look at that. How cute. They now have matching Dune Buggies.” McCutchen and Leggett look over the Dune Buggies, noticing that they both look brand new.

Quite puzzled, Leggett asks McCutchen, “where do they get all the money for stuff like this?” McCutchen, thinking back to last Spring, replies, “I don’t know. The house. The cars. They said they got paid to run in high school, but this is far beyond that.” Leggett, who is a bit smarter than McCutchen, explains, “no one buys a house like they have when they’re nineteen or twenty years old.” The wheels begin turning in McCutchen’s head, likely coming to the wrong conclusion, as usual. Having quite a lengthy conversation about subjects that are none of their business, McCutchen and Leggett hang around Kathy’s and Paula’s Dune Buggies a bit too long.

Officer Braden, on patrol driving his police car, drives through the parking lot. Seeing a lot of students loitering in the area, Officer Braden stops and parks in the lane, a few spaces down from the Dune Buggies. Observing from his patrol car, Officer Braden immediately knows what the attraction is. Officer Braden notices the names painted on the back of the Dune Buggies, and quickly concludes whose they are. Thinking back to Paula and Mark’s wedding, McCutchen and Leggett loafing around behind the Dune Buggies obviously spells trouble. Officer Braden hangs around for a while, waiting for the two clowns to move on. But, McCutchen and Leggett loiter too long for Braden’s comfort.

Curious about the vehicles, Officer Braden gets out of his patrol car to take a closer look. Seeing Braden in a police uniform, fear is struck into McCutchen and Leggett. Immediately upon seeing Officer Braden, McCutchen and Leggett briskly walk away, which Officer Braden files in his mind as highly suspicious behavior.

Walking around the vehicles, Officer Braden is quite impressed at how good they look. It’s hard for Officer Braden not to notice the larger engine in the back, the two-way radios, elaborate lighting, and the tool boxes attached to the receiver hitches, each painted to match the

vehicle's paint color. Officer Braden rightly concludes that this must be Eddie's work. Walking back to his patrol car, Officer Braden sees Kathy and Paula as they walk up.

Seeing Braden in his police uniform, Kathy yells out, "hey! Don't tow me! I have my parking sticker right here!" Braden laughs, and replies, "you ain't got to worry about that. It's either me, Officer Levy, or Officer Morrison who would write you a ticket, and that ain't happening. Not to you guys." Paula asks Braden, "so, you're our inside man on the force, are you?" Braden replies, "yeah, that's me! And, I caught McCrutchen and that Leggett guy hanging around in back of your Dune Buggies. They were really checking them out. When they saw me, they made themselves scarce. I got their asses on my list." Paula comments, "I knew that McCrutchen is nothing but trouble. What a piece of shit." Paula really does not like McCrutchen at all, and has absolutely no problem expressing it.

Braden then asks, "when did you guys get these?" Kathy replies, "Eddie built them. He finished mine a while ago, and he finished Paula's last night." Braden exclaims, "those are some mighty fine looking Dune Buggies!" Kathy explains, "they have a Porsche 911 engine in them, and they handle really well." Getting to the most important point, Braden asks, "so, does it kick ass?" Kathy replies, "oh yeah! It does zero to sixty in under five seconds. And, it won't pop a wheelie. And, Kurt says it will go 140 miles an hour, but I don't think I'm going to go that fast." Braden asks, "who's Kurt?" Kathy explains, "Kurt Richter. Kurt is the guy who modified my 914. He built the frame for the Dune Buggy so the Porsche 911 engine will fit."

Taking a closer look at the frame underneath, Braden exclaims, "wow! This is built like a tank! And, it's even got a roll bar." To say the least, Braden is quite impressed with the workmanship, but is most impressed hearing the zero to sixty time. After his careful inspection of Kathy's and Paula's new toys, Braden comments, "wow! I'd love to have something like that someday! I'd have to get a dark blue one, though."

Braden's comment, "this is built like a tank," put a bug in Paula's head. Paula decided that, on her way home, she is going to stop somewhere and get a decorative front plate that reads, "Drive Defensively. Drive a Tank." Paula thinks to herself that she'll sneak the plate onto Mark's Jeep someday.

Braden heads back to patrolling the campus, which, during this time of year, amounts to mostly giving the incoming freshman directions on how to get somewhere on campus. And, Braden will keep a watchful eye on McCrutchen and Leggett. Kathy and Paula pretend to head back home. It's no secret that Paula will drive around for an hour or so before she



actually makes it home. Kathy, likewise, does not exactly take the shortest route home either.

When Kathy gets home, Eddie is already home from work, and getting cleaned up. Kathy tells Eddie, "Paula really loves her Dune Buggy! She picked it up today." Eddie replies, "good! I'm glad to hear that. And, now I'll have more time to work on the third one." Kathy adds, "we went to get our school books today. So, right now she's probably driving her Dune Buggy all around town." Knowing that would likely be the case, Eddie replies, "yeah, just like she did when she got her Jeep. Then, she was known as the Jeep girl. So, now you guys are going to be known as the Dune Buggy girls." Laughing at Eddie's remark, Kathy replies, "no! Don't tell me that!" Eddie replies, "okay, then. The Dune Buggy chicks. That sounds better anyway. The Dune Buggy chicks."

Changing the subject, Kathy asks, "what are you going to do with the third Dune Buggy frame?" Eddie replies, "I'll build another Dune Buggy someday." Kathy asks, "when?" Not giving it a second thought, Eddie answers, "I don't know. Little by little I guess, when I get the time. Just like the other ones." Kathy then asks, "how much is there left to do?"

Finally understanding where the conversation is going, Eddie tells Kathy, "okay, Katarina. Out with it." Knowing she's been busted, Kathy cunningly asks, "out with what?" Eddie replies, asking, "who am I building the third Dune Buggy for?" Acting as if she has not been found out, Kathy asks, "what makes you think you're building a Dune Buggy for Braden? Oops! Well, um." Eddie bursts out laughing, and nothing more needs to be said.

Now that the cat is out of the bag, Eddie simply asks, "what color?" Kathy replies, "dark blue." Eddie laughs, and Kathy starts explaining, "okay, so when me and Paula were at the school, Braden came by in his police car and we talked for a while. And, so Braden saw the Dune Buggies, and he thought they were really cool. And, he likes how fast they can go from zero to sixty. And, then he said that he'd love to have one, but he'd want a dark blue one." Eddie asks, "and?" Kathy continues, "so, I thought that maybe Braden would want the third one. He really, really liked ours. But, I didn't tell him that you already had most of the parts for another one." Eddie replies, "wow! You must be excited. You're back to talking in one big long run-on sentence."

Eddie thinks about this for a moment, and casually comments, "maybe I'll build it, and just give it to him." Kathy screams out, "I was thinking the same thing!" Eddie asks, "how were you thinking that?" Kathy explains, "do you remember when I was sick?" Eddie replies, "I don't think we'll ever forget that." Kathy continues, "yeah, well, Mr. Frazier told me, 'you're the heartbeat of this team.' But, I really wasn't the heartbeat of the team."

Braden was. He's the one who always got everyone fired up during a track meet. And, as long as I've known him, he always had everyone's back." Eddie adds, "yeah. I guess he has."

Kathy continues, "so, what did Braden ever get in return? Crum tried to suspend him at least a dozen times a year. Then, there was all that crap Goldshit and the Chuckie pulled in your physics class. He tried to help out Miss Amherst, and Crum tried to suspend him. Then, Goldshit trips him on the track. Then, Crum tried to suspend him for that too. And, Braden always wanted to be in the Navy, and they wouldn't take him. And, when he gets all fired up, people always ask, 'what's wrong with that guy?' And, in the Spring, he warned us all about McCrutchen, when he heard him saying that he's going to take you and Mark down. And, Braden took care of McCrutchen and lug nut when they tried to crash Paula and Mark's wedding. And then, today, he just caught McCrutchen and lug nut hanging around mine and Paula's Dune Buggies." Eddie replies, "wow! You're right! He always has everyone's back. And, for the record, you just called Leggett 'lug nut.'" Kathy laughs hysterically, and replies, "I did, didn't I?"

Composing herself after her long-winded dissertation, Kathy then asks Eddie, "so, let's build it for him and give it to him. Can we? Please?" Eddie replies, "sure. Let's order the body right now." Eddie gets on the phone, and orders a dark blue Dune Buggy body. Kathy and Eddie then go out to the workshop, and make a list of exactly what they need to complete the project. Already having most of the parts, the list is quite sparse. At the top of the list is a battery. A few parts are needed for the lighting. Other items will become evident later, but Eddie and Kathy have the ball rolling.

Eddie asks Kathy, "do you want to start now?" Quite puzzled, Kathy asks, "how can we like start now?" Eddie slides the rear drive train, which is sitting on a carpet remnant, over to the center of the garage. He then slides the front end over to the center of the garage. Tilting over the frame, he tells Kathy, "help me with this end," as they position the frame over the drive train and front end. Kathy asks, "why is it so heavy?" Eddie replies, "part of the reason is that 150-pound counterbalance weight in the front, so it handles properly. The other part is that it's built really well." Eddie tells Kathy, "now, we bolt the drive train and the front end to the frame." Eddie gets to work, and Kathy is right beside him, helping out.

After an hour, the front end and drive train are attached to the frame. All excited, Kathy exclaims, "that was easy!" Eddie tells Kathy, "now, we put on the wheels. I'll have to take them off later when I install the brake lines, but it's easier to work on it with the wheels on." Eddie jacks up the rear end, and they install the rear wheels. He then jacks up the front end,

and they install the front wheels. Kathy exclaims, “wow! You make this look so easy! It’s beginning to look like a Dune Buggy!” Eddie replies, “that’s enough for today,” as he puts aside the carpet and wooden blocks that were supporting the drive train and the front end.

As they go inside, Kathy asks, “so, what’s next?” Eddie explains, “mostly a bunch of little things, like installing the gas tank, the accelerator cable, the clutch cable, brake lines, and all that stuff before we set the body in place. It’s all the little stuff that takes a lot of time, but it’s not really that hard.” Kathy asks, “so, now what?” Eddie replies, “let’s get washed up and get some pizza!” Kathy exclaims, “that sounds like a plan to me!” Braden’s Dune Buggy is on its way, which Kathy plans to keep a secret until the appointed time.

The afternoon of Eddie’s interview with Angela, at the campus radio station, arrives right before classes begin at the University. Kathy, who is quite excited, heads to the radio station, wanting to be there when Eddie has his interview. Angela Meadows, who will be conducting the interview with Eddie today, escorts Kathy into the studio, where the interview will take place. They talk for a while, as they wait for Eddie to arrive. Through the glass window of the studio, Kathy sees Eddie walk in, telling Angela, “he’s here.” Angela tells Kathy, “oh, good. Let me get him. I’ll be right back.”

Angela walks out of the studio and into the reception area. Excited to see Eddie, Angela exclaims, “wow! I didn’t think you’d get here that fast. I just put the call in this morning. It’s the top light bulb on the tower that needs to be replaced. If you don’t have your own climbing harness, we have a good one. And, we have any tools that you might need.” Not missing a beat, Eddie replies, “so, you say the tower light is out?” Angela, having to continue with her original script, replies, “yeah. It burned out yesterday.” Eddie replies, “sure. I can fix that. But, I have an interview with Angela at three o’clock. I can fix it after that.”

Angela relents, “finally. Wow! Someone who beat me at my own game! Hi! I’m Angela, and I was just messing with you. I’ll be interviewing you today. Let’s go back to the studio.” As they walk back, Eddie asks, “so, is the tower light out?” Angela replies, “yeah. But, I wasn’t really expecting you to change it. Perhaps Kathy told you that I messed with her too.” Eddie replies, “not exactly. She kind of left that part out.”

Angela and Eddie enter the studio, and Angela announces, “he won.” Not even knowing what Angela is talking about, Kathy tells Angela, “I told you. He always wins. What did he win at this time?” Angela explains to Kathy, “I told Eddie, ‘I didn’t think he’d get here that fast. I just put the call in this morning. It’s the top light bulb on the tower that needs to be

replaced.’ And, Eddie offered to replace the bulb.” Kathy laughs, and explains to Angela, “trust me. You can’t mess with these guys like that and win! It just ain’t happening!”

Before Angela starts the interview, she asks Eddie, “so, tell me a good one.” Kathy suggests to Eddie, “how about the metric time one?” Eddie laughs, and tells Kathy, “college students would never fall for that one.” Angela interjects, “try me.” Eddie explains, “we all convinced this guy on another track team that there’s a such thing as metric time. So, instead of 60 minutes in one hour, there are 100 minutes in one hour. Also, in metric time, instead of 60 seconds in a minute, there are 100 seconds in a minute. The guy actually believed it. Before the race, you can see the wheels turning in his head trying to convert normal time to metric time.” Angela laughs, and exclaims, “I can think of a few students around here who will definitely fall for that one! I’m going to use that one sometime!”

Eddie adds, “oh, and the Prickly Sea Spider thing. Mark told McCrutchen that he got bitten by a Prickly Sea Spider, and that his tendons are going to rot away and tear. And, Paula started that rumor about the track being infested by ticks.” Kathy adds, “and, we had the other high schools convinced that Bobby B., the shot-put guy, is in college, and throws the shot-put to make his tuition money.” Angela laughs, and asks, “and, they actually believed all that?” Eddie replies, “oh, yeah. And, a lot more than that. Even some of the coaches believed it as well.”

Quite surprised that Kathy and Eddie share her sense of humor, Angela asks, “can I bring up some of this during the interview?” Eddie replies, “sure. I’d rather talk about track. I really don’t want to talk about academics.” Angela replies, “don’t worry. No one turns on the radio to listen to people talk about academics. Around here, they turn on the radio to escape from academics.” Eddie, now at ease, was certainly glad to hear that.

Angela explains to Eddie that she will do a lot of talking, and that she’ll ask questions. Angela also explains that, if Eddie messes up what he is saying, to just start over, and it will be fixed during the editing process. Eddie positions himself across the console from Angela. Angela informs Eddie that, to begin with, she will be asking a few simple questions. Angela, who will be working the mixing board and tape machine herself, starts the tape, and the interview begins.

Totally unscripted, Angela begins by announcing, “good evening again, and welcome to the program Waves, where we talk to students making waves on campus. This is Angela Meadows and, today, I have the distinct pleasure and honor of having Edward Bogenskaya sitting in the studio right in front of me. For those of you who do not know, last year,

Eddie was the fastest high school sprinter in the nation in the 100-yard dash. Eddie ran for Northside High School for four years, and will be running track for us right here at our University. Eddie is a sprinter, and runs the 40-yard dash, the 100-yard dash, and also the 220-yard and 440-yard dash as well.”

Angela asks, “Eddie, so tell us. Just how fast are you in the 100-yard dash?” Eddie replies, “my fastest time was 9.2 seconds. I can run that consistently now.” Angela comments, “9.2 seconds! Wow! That is fast. Okay, everyone. I’ve done my homework. Eddie’s time is only two-tenths of a second off the world record of 9.0 seconds<sup>2</sup>! And, get this. Listen carefully, especially my listeners who are math majors. You are more likely to get struck by lightning than you are to beat Eddie Bogenskaya in a 100-yard dash. Did you get that? You are more likely to get struck by lightning than you are to beat Eddie Bogenskaya in a 100-yard dash. Can you even believe that? Now, that is seriously impressive.”

Angela then asks Eddie, “so, tell us, Eddie. How long have you been running?” Eddie answers, “I started running track in sixth grade. When I tried out for the track team, I wasn’t even sure that I would make the team. But, I made the team, and have been running track ever since.” Angela asks, “how fast were you back then?” Eddie replies, “during tryouts, I was up against a bunch of seventh and eighth-graders. I can remember the race as if it were yesterday. I ran the 100-yard dash in 10.7 seconds. Mark was the only one who beat me that day. He ran it in 10.6 seconds.” Angela finishes up this block by saying, “wow! Two sixth-graders beating all the seventh and eighth-graders. That’s definitely an impressive start to your track career.”

After a pause, Angela asks, “Eddie, I also understand that you are the owner of a few other high school State records. Can you tell us a little about those?” Eddie answers, “in my junior year, I broke the State record in the 40-yard dash. In my senior year, I broke the State record in the discus. And, in my senior year, I unofficially broke the State record in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle.” Angela interjects, “for those of you who do not know, the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle are not track events. Those are swimming events. So, my faithful listeners, Eddie is not only fast on the track, but also in the pool.”

Moving along, Angela asks, “okay. So, I hear this rumor that there is a 4 by 440-yard relay team that you are a part of that is virtually unstoppable and has won the high school State competition for the last

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of the storyline, the world record in the 100-yard dash was 9.0 seconds, set by Ivory Crockett in 1974, and still stands at the time of this writing.

four years. Can you shed a little light on this rumor for our listeners?" Eddie and Kathy both smile, as Eddie answers, "the 4 by 440 relay team responsible for those victories is Mark Svoboda, Eric Johnson, Axel Braden, and me. We've been running the 4 by 440 relay together since the sixth grade, except for two years when Kathy and Paula substituted for Braden and Johnson. We've never lost a race." Clarifying, Angela asks, "never?" Eddie replies, "exactly. Never."

Angela then asks, "and, it is my understanding that this relay team will be back together this year. Am I correct?" Eddie replies, "yes." Angela asks, "will you win all the relay races during this upcoming track season at the University?" Eddie confidently replies, "we will. But, we'll have to wait to see if the coaching staff decides whether we will run together again in that event."

Angela then poses her next question to Eddie, "you sound very confident that the relay team will win. Will you please explain to our audience where your confidence comes from?" Eddie replies, "sure. Every member of the 4 by 440 relay team can run the quarter mile in the 46-second range. We recently ran that event in 3:03.6. I've been attending the meets during this past year. No other team in the division even comes close to that time."

Angela then asks, "in two years, the division will be running on a metric track. In fact, I have heard that the University already has plans to convert to a metric track next year, and we are ready to switch over when the time comes. Will running on a metric track make any difference?" Eddie replies, "no." Angela asks, "not at all?" Eddie replies, "none. If Braden beats the competition, say, in the 440-yard dash, the only difference on a metric track is that, at 400 meters, Braden will win the race quicker. And, in the 100-meter dash, it will take me an extra second to win the race. But, we will still win."

Angela pauses the tape, and tells Eddie, "let's take a break. And, by the way, you're doing a whole lot better than most people do!" Kathy mentions to Angela, "it sounds like you've done this before." Angela calmly answers, "not really. I read the manual on how to do interviews this morning. This is my first one." Kathy replies, "oh yeah, you have! You're messing with me again!" Angela smiles, and replies, "busted. But, you have to admit, I got you good the other week!" Kathy admits, "yeah. You got me with that one!"

Eddie asks, "did I miss something?" Angela explains to Eddie, "when Kathy first walked into the radio station, I told her, 'you must be our new DJ. You're on the air in five minutes. You'd better get ready! I've got to run, or I'll be late to class.'" Kathy adds, "I thought she was serious."

Angela adds, “most everyone falls for that one. I have a few other good ones too. But, next we’re going to talk about some of yours.”

Once they are ready again, Angela starts the tape, and begins, announcing, “by now, we all have no doubt that Eddie Bogenskaya is fast on the track. But, I also hear that Eddie is just as good at psychological warfare. Eddie, give us an idea of some of the psychological warfare that occurs on the track.” Eddie explains, “one of my favorite ones was when Kathy and I were running the 40-yard dash final at State. At the starting line, we were arguing over whose turn it is to win. And, we mentioned to the competitors that we get three thousand dollars if we win, and two thousand dollars for second place, and one thousand for third place. We finally decided that I would win, but we’d pool and split the prize money.”

Angela mentions, “so, that’s what you guys talk about at the starting line! I’ve often wondered.” Eddie adds, “but, it doesn’t end there. One of the finalists asked Kathy if we really got paid. Kathy told them we do, but that it didn’t matter to them anyway. The finalist was really getting ticked off and asked, ‘what makes you say that?’ Kathy told him something like, ‘in order to collect the winnings, you have to win. You’re not going to win. So, it doesn’t matter to you.’ But, what’s really funny is the officials knew what was going on, and they laughed about it.” Angela asks, “so, tell us! Who won that race?” Eddie replies, “I did. Kathy took second place. But, it was my turn to win.”

Moving right along, Eddie continues, “perhaps the best distraction we came up with was the Amazon women controversy.” Angela interrupts, and asks, “wait a second! An Amazon women controversy? I’ve got to hear about this one! Do tell us!” Eddie explains, “after Kathy, Paula, Tessa, and Barbara had an outstanding meet, one of the local area coaches told our coach, Mr. Frazier, to let him in on it the next time he heads down to the Amazon. That particular coach told Mr. Frazier that he wanted to pick up a few Amazon women too. Mr. Frazier told the coach that only two of the women were from the Amazon, and that the other two were from Paradise Island. The other coach actually believed him, and the rumor spread throughout the State. So, whenever Kathy, Paula, Barbara, or Tessa were on the track, the crowd would wildly cheer ‘Amazon! Amazon! Amazon!’ It was so ridiculous and far fetched, that the other teams actually believed it. And, for two whole years, a lot of the fans got into it. But, the weird part is that some of the athletes who believed it are on the track team here at the University.” Eddie is, of course, talking about McCutchen.

Angela mentions, “wow! I’ll have to get Kathy on the air sometime. I want to hear more about the Amazon women. I definitely want to know what it was like to be on the track when the crowd was cheering ‘Amazon’

like that. That must have been some experience.” Eddie mentions, “I’m sure she’d really like that.”

Moving on to the next topic, Angela begins, stating, “all athletes have their special training methods to improve their performance. Really good athletes have state-of-the-art training methods. Exceptional athletes often have secret training methods. Eddie, you are clearly an exceptional athlete. Do you have any secrets?” Eddie laughs, and replies, “no. Tessa beat them all out of me.” Angela asks, “please remind us. Who is Tessa?” Eddie explains, “Tessa Klement. She’s on the University’s swim team. We race every Summer in the county pool. Sometimes she wins, and sometimes I win. But, actually, I don’t have any secrets. I’m glad to share anything I know with anyone who wants to listen.” Eddie is making a subtle reference to McCutchen and Leggett, and perhaps a few others, who are jealous because of Eddie’s success.

Angela continues interviewing Eddie for an entire hour, getting more than enough material for the half-hour radio broadcast. Angela covers Eddie’s outlook for the upcoming track season, the positive dynamics between team members, and nutrition. Of special interest, Angela also discusses Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde with Eddie, and why Northside high has such a successful track and field program. Eddie will be sure to put the word out to his high school coaches of when the interview will be aired.

As she rewinds the tape, Angela tells Eddie and Kathy, “that went a whole lot better than I expected! And, I have enough material for two shows. You did awesome!” Eddie replies, “good. I’m worn out.” Angela explains, “it’s very hard work being in front of a microphone. You have to stay focused, on topic, use proper diction, sound energetic and upbeat, and so on, all at once. And, by the way, you have the lowest um count I’ve ever heard!” Eddie asks, “what’s an ‘um’ count?” Angela explains, “um, well, um, some people like, um, uh, speak like, well, you know, um, like this. You can’t exactly put that on the air.” Eddie and Kathy laugh, imagining what an interview with someone speaking like that would sound like over the air.

Angela informs Eddie and Kathy that the show will be aired sometime in the beginning of the Autumn semester, again when the indoor track season begins, and again when the Spring track season begins. Angela also extends an invitation to Kathy to be interviewed. Seeing how well Eddie’s interview went, Kathy gladly accepts. Also very interested in interviewing the other track team members whom Eddie referenced today, Angela takes their names, hoping to get a few more athletes on the air. Angela’s show, Waves, airs twice weekly, so she is always looking for new and interesting material.



A few days later while at home relaxing, Eddie recalls how professional Angela sounded when she was recording the interview a few days ago. It is very clear to Eddie that Angela can sit in front of a microphone and, as naturally as having a conversation with someone, starts broadcasting without any problem at all. Eddie turns on the radio, searching for the University's radio station. Finding the station, Eddie sits back to listen. The announcer today, however, does not seem to be as eloquent as Angela.

As he is listening to the campus radio station, Eddie thinks to himself that, just like in track, there are highly skilled and not so skilled students working at the radio station. Heading out to his MGB for a moment, Eddie searches for what is left of his notebook from his senior year in high school. Coming back inside, Eddie lies on the sofa, beginning to write down some ideas that he is thinking of as he listens to the radio station.

Kathy walks in from running a few errands, seeing Eddie on the sofa, who is appearing to be taking notes. Kathy asks, "hey, what are you up to?" Eddie explains, "I'm writing something." After a pause, Kathy asks, "what are you writing?" Eddie replies, "notes." After another pause, Kathy asks, "hmm. Notes about what?" Eddie replies, "notes about what I'm thinking about, so I don't forget anything."

Kathy laughs, then tells Eddie, "okay, Edward Bogenskaya. What are you up to this time?" Imitating Kathy, Eddie asks, "what makes you think that I'm up to something?" Kathy replies, "because you're sounding like me when I'm up to something!" Eddie explains, "I'm up to two things. The first is I'm answering questions like you do when you're up to something." Kathy then mentions, "hmm. I can definitely see that."

Kathy sits next to Eddie as he lies on the sofa, and asks, "what's the second?" Finally getting to the answer Kathy was looking for, Eddie replies, "I'm writing a track training manual." Kathy exclaims, "really?" Eddie replies, "yeah. When I had my interview with Angela, at the radio station, I mentioned that I'm glad to share anything I know with anyone who wants to listen. So, maybe the best thing to do is to write it all down." Kathy exclaims, "Eddie! I think that's awesome!"

Kathy takes a look at the page of notes Eddie has composed. Eddie tells Kathy, "I don't really have too much yet. I just started." Kathy replies, "yeah, but nothing can be finished unless it's started." Eddie writes in his notebook, "nothing can be finished unless it's started." Continuing the thought, Eddie writes, "so, if you don't start, you'll never finish." Eddie tells Kathy, "thank you. I'll put that in the book."

Kathy explains to Eddie, "Eddie! This is really a great idea! I bet Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde will be willing to help you with it." Eddie asks, "how

about Dr. Braun, Dr. Paxton, or Coach Herndon?” Kathy sighs, and quietly informs Eddie, “truth is that Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde are better coaches. They were born to be coaches.” Eddie then sits up, telling Kathy, “well, Katarina, one page is done. Only a hundred or so to go.” Kathy tells Eddie, “that means you’re on your way!”

Right before the semester starts at the University, Eddie and Kathy take a little time to just relax by their pool. Kathy tells Eddie, “hey! In a few days, we’ll be at the University together.” Eddie replies, “you make it sound like I’ll be sitting in classes.” Kathy reminds Eddie, “well, you’ll have classes. You’ll just be taking them at Angelo’s.” Eddie comically replies, “yeah. That’s right! I’ll be taking Pumping Gas 101 and Major Tune Ups 201!” Kathy laughs, still thinking that is kind of funny. But, having Eddie back on the track team is really all that Kathy wants.

Eddie then asks, “so, when does track practice start?” Kathy replies, “first thing Wednesday morning. Registration is Monday and Tuesday, but I preregistered.” Eddie asks, “do I have to register?” Taking care of all Eddie’s paperwork and administrative details, Kathy replies, “no. You’re good to go. I even got your parking sticker for you.” Eddie asks, “so, I just show up for track practice?” Kathy replies, “that’s the deal.” To Eddie, it all sounds too good to be true. But, Eddie’s dreams of continuing to run track have become a reality. So have Kathy’s, having the tribe back together again on the track.

They get into the water, and Kathy sits on Eddie’s lap, puts her head on his shoulder, and tells him, “I love you!” Eddie tells her, “I love you.” Putting her arms around his neck, Kathy looks Eddie in the eye, telling him, “I suck. I’m so far behind on my promise.” Kathy promised to give Eddie one kiss for every star in the sky. With billions of stars up there, Kathy knows she is very far behind. Kathy touches her lips to Eddie’s, and kisses him passionately. For the rest of the afternoon, Kathy catches up on her promise.