

Eddie, The Collegiate Freshman

Chapter Two Christmas Break

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Now that Eddie and Kathy have a lot more time on their hands, they have a little more time to play. Eddie and Kathy's definition of play, however, most people would define as work. They are quite aware that the track season starts immediately when they get back to college, so they must keep up with their training.

Eddie has perfected the design of the new version of his training sled. The newer version, suitable for use on a gravel track, can be used at the high school where there is no sand track or on the gravel track at the University. The prototype, used by Mr. Frazier during the Autumn, worked out quite well. Making three new sleds for the high school, and three more for the University, Eddie wants to get them done quickly. Taking some time to think of how to build the sleds in the most efficient way possible, Eddie comes up with a procedure resembling an assembly line.

Also, on Eddie's list of things to do is to order three more Dune Buggy frames from Kurt. Eddie figures that he can begin working on the Dune Buggies toward the end of Winter. He would like to have them available for sale by the late Spring when the new owners, whoever they may be, can enjoy them when the weather is nice. Eddie has also put the word out that he is looking for a few wrecked Porsche 911s, but the drive train and front end must be completely intact. He can't really move ahead with the Dune Buggy projects without a drive train and front end.

Eddie and Kathy also work out during the break, perhaps more than in previous years. A lot is at stake now that Eddie is part of the team. The University was nice enough to give Eddie the platinum package, but now he must deliver. Mark and Paula are training as well. Braden, who now works as a campus police officer, has been spending more time in the gym and on the track than he ever has.

Eddie, however, still has to go to work in the mornings. Unlike most people, Eddie really enjoys his work. Even when difficult people come into the service station, such as Mr. Crum, it provides some degree of free entertainment for Eddie. Angelo has learned this over the last year and, as a result, is no longer stressed by an unreasonable or irate customer. Today, as Eddie and Angelo are on their lunch break, some free entertainment drives into the service station.

Instead of walking into the office, a woman yells into the service bays, “hello! Hello! Is anybody here? I need some help! Hello! I need some help here!” Angelo comments to Eddie, “wonderful. One of those.” Angelo opens the door to the service area and tells the woman, “if you need some help, please come into the office.” The woman yells back, “of course I need some help! I wouldn’t be here otherwise!” Eddie tells Angelo, “I see what you mean.”

As the woman walks into the office, Eddie tells her, “Mrs. Black, it’s so wonderful to see you today. What can we help you with?” Mrs. Black sarcastically asks Eddie, “so, Edward, you’re a mechanic now? Is that all you turned out to be? Just a mechanic? Is that the best you were able to do?” Eddie calmly replies, “I guess so. It’s the best I was able to do.” Not that he really cares, Eddie asks, “by the way, how’s the little Chuckie doing?” Mrs. Black replies, nearly sobbing, “Charles has problems, and you’re not the least bit innocent in contributing to them. I’m sure you know that!” Eddie replies, “well, it sounds like the Chuckie is still alive. That’s probably the best he’s able to do.”

Perceiving that the woman is a pain in the ass, Angelo asks her, “so, what’s your problem today?” Mrs. Black tells Angelo, “my car has a problem, and nobody can fix it!” Phrasing his question in the way Eddie would, Angelo asks Mrs. Black, “if nobody can fix it, then what do you expect me to do?” Mrs. Black asks Angelo, “well, can you take a look at it?” Angelo replies, “sure. Pull it up in front of the first bay, but don’t drive into the garage. I’ll look at it in a few minutes.”

As Mrs. Black moves her car to where Angelo requested, Eddie tells Angelo, “that’s the mother of the asshole who threw the javelin at me.” Angelo replies, “I’ll add a Johnson Rod¹ to the bill.” Eddie advises Angelo, “that car has a very expensive Johnson Rod.” Angelo laughs, and tells Eddie, “if she’s as big of a pain in the ass as I think she is, I might have to replace her Garrison linkage² too.” Eddie laughs, and tells Angelo, “yeah,

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

² Garrison linkage: Another bogus car part.

she'll definitely need one of those!" Angelo finishes his lunch, then drives Mrs. Black's car into the service bay.

Angelo looks over the engine compartment, listens to the engine, and inspects a few items such as the air filter and fuel filter. Shutting off the engine, Angelo pops open the distributor cap, noting that the points are extremely worn. Having seen Mrs. Black's problem countless times before, Angelo asks Mrs. Black, "when was the last time this car had a tune-up?" Mrs. Black replies, "I don't know." Angelo knows that the answer is that the car has never been tuned up. Angelo also knows the reason that no one can fix Mrs. Black's car is that she is a royal pain in the ass. The truth is that no one wants to deal with her. Again, it's not the car. It's the driver that's the problem.

Angelo tells Mrs. Black, "I know exactly what your problem is. We can have it fixed in under two hours." Not that she would understand the answer anyway, Mrs. Black asks the question, "so, what's the problem?" Angelo explains, "your points are extremely worn, your carburetor is filthy, and your fuel filter needs to be replaced. Your ignition timing is way off, so I'll have to correct that. I'll need to pull the spark plugs, but I suspect they'll have to be replaced too. And, your Johnson Rod is totally gone. We'll definitely have to replace that. Oh, and your Garrison linkage is completely shot. I can't believe that no one has noticed that before. And, while we're at it, we might as well change the oil and filter."

If Angelo had told Mrs. Black that her car simply needed a tune-up, it would not sound nearly as serious as itemizing each individual item of the tune-up. It would also not be believable to Mrs. Black if Angelo told her that her car only needed a tune-up since she's apparently been to a few shops already. But, to Mrs. Black, Angelo sounds like a genius.

Mrs. Black, at her wits end, tells Angelo, "go ahead and fix it. If you don't mind, I'll wait." Angelo writes up the service ticket, and tells Eddie, "do me a favor. Go across the street and get the parts for Mrs. Black's car." Looking at the service ticket, Eddie asks, "what size is the Johnson Rod?" Thinking about it for a moment, Angelo replies, "it's a quarter-inch. Get the gasket and the bearing that go with it too." Eddie grins, and comments, "yeah, the Johnson Rod bearing. We definitely can't forget that." On his way out, Eddie looks at the service ticket, and comments, "wow! The Garrison linkage is shot too," and walks across the street to pick up the parts.

Once Eddie is across the street, Mrs. Black tells Angelo, "if you don't mind, I don't really want Edward working on my car." Angelo asks, "why not?" Mrs. Black explains, "he didn't even know what size that part should be, whatever it was." Curiously, Angelo asks, "what part was that? The

Johnson Rod?" Mrs. Black replies, "yeah, that's the one." Angelo reassures Mrs. Black, "stop worrying. I'll start working on it in a few minutes."

Eddie returns with the parts and walks into the office as Angelo is finishing up some paperwork. Seeing Mrs. Black sitting in the office, Eddie tells Angelo, "I got a stainless steel Johnson Rod, just so she won't have another problem with it. And, they had an aluminum alloy Garrison linkage, so I got that one." Angelo replies, "good. That year model has had a lot of problems with the Garrison linkage." Angelo then tells Mrs. Black, "see that? Eddie got you a stainless steel Johnson Rod and he got you a better Garrison linkage. It might cost you a little more money, but you'll be thanking him for it someday." Eddie gets back to work, Angelo begins working on Mrs. Black's car, and Mrs. Black sits and waits.

Back in the service area, Angelo asks Eddie, "what's the deal with her anyway?" Eddie explains, "she's a bully, and she raised a bully. So, in high school, she blamed me because her little Chuckie took drugs. In my senior year, he threw a javelin at me and cut my leg. So, I had to kick the shit out of him. I'm surprised that, when she saw me, she just didn't drive out." Angelo comments, "sometimes, I wish people like her would just drive away. Maybe the other guys got it right. I should have just told her that we don't know what's wrong with it, and let her drive away to the next shop."

After a while, Angelo mentions to Eddie, "she's obviously a pain in the ass. She's watching me through the window as I'm working on her car." Eddie mentions, "yeah, and here she comes. She's going to give you some advice on how to install the Johnson Rod." In a weird mood, Eddie walks over to Angelo, and whispers, "when she walks over, tell her that her Johnson Rod looked really bad. Then, ask her if she wants to see it. I'll toss you a Johnson Rod." Angelo is amused at how Eddie just makes up this stuff, and can relate to it with a straight face.

Ignoring the sign that says customers are not allowed in the service area, Mrs. Black walks over to Angelo and asks, "how much longer is it going to be? I've been waiting for forty-five minutes!" Angelo replies, "it will be a little while longer. I told you. I had to replace your Johnson Rod. It looked really bad. Do you want to see it?" Curiously, Mrs. Black replies, "sure. I'd like to see it. Show me." Angelo tells Eddie, "hey, Eddie. Toss me her Johnson Rod." Eddie walks over to the bench, picks up an old damaged pushrod, and tosses it over to Angelo. Eddie tells Angelo, "wow! That looks really bad if you ask me." Mrs. Black, looking at the filthy bent pushrod, replies, "that looks pretty bad. I'm glad you found that." Angelo tells Mrs. Black, "we know what we're doing here. Just go inside and have a seat and relax. It shouldn't be too much longer."

Once Angelo is finished, he pulls Mrs. Black's car out of the bay. It is clear to Angelo that no service has ever been performed on Mrs. Black's vehicle. As they settle up the bill, Angelo tells Mrs. Black, "we put in the better Johnson Rod, but I only charged you for the standard one." Mrs. Black tells Angelo, "thank you. I really appreciate that." Mrs. Black feels confident that her car will finally be running well again after deferring general maintenance for a few years. And, her shiny new Johnson Rod and aluminum alloy Garrison linkage should provide years of trouble-free service.

Taking a break from their daily activities, Eddie gets curious and wants to take a trip into the future with Kathy to see what the service station will look like many years from now. Mark and Paula are also curious, specifically what their town will look like way into the future. Everyone has a few places that they want to check out. Ready to make the trip, they all get on their bicycles, and head to the portal.

Arriving at the portal, Eddie suggests the year 2030. No one disagrees, so Eddie does the honors, bringing everyone forward to the year 2030, on a Saturday morning during the Spring. They chose a random Saturday morning just in case there is a track meet at the high school. And, they chose the Spring because the weather is generally nicer. Heading up the paved path, the first stop on the list is Eddie's Service Station.

Riding along the road, they pass the house Mark lived in when he was a kid. The house is still standing, and appears to be well kept. On the way, Kathy yells out, "hey, Eddie! The cars are so quiet!" Everyone notices that, when they pass by an automobile, the sound of the engine is conspicuously missing. As he is riding, Eddie wonders to himself how that could be, but he comes up with no good answers. Eddie also notices the distinct smell of automobile exhaust is absent.

Arriving at Eddie's Service Station, everyone is happy to see not only that Eddie's business is still there, but it has expanded. Next to Eddie's service station is a shop that has a sign that reads, *Eddie's Tire and Power Cell*. Thinking about what a power cell is, Eddie surmises that automobiles are no longer commonly powered by gasoline engines. The group stops across the street, taking a look from a distance.

Pointing to a bay in the service station, Eddie mentions, "I wonder if that's Eddie, Junior." Kathy throws out the question, "now, I'm wondering if Eddie, Junior knows about the portal." Paula tells Kathy, "only if you guys told him." Kathy replies, "oh, yeah. I guess so." Mark points out, "it looks like all the older cars are over at Eddie's Service Station, and all the newer cars are at Eddie's Tire and Power Cell." Eddie tells Mark, "I guess the newer cars run on power cells, whatever they are."

After checking out the service station, they head to the high school to see if there is a track meet. On the way, Kathy points out, “hey, I figured it out!” Eddie asks, “what’s that?” Kathy replies, “all the new cars are electric!” Eddie concludes, replying, “that explains Eddie’s Tire and Power Cell! If the cars are electric, all they would need are brakes, tires, and whatever a power cell is.” Kathy points out a particular automobile, and tells Eddie, “part of the power cell in that car is a solar cell.” Kathy was referring to a vehicle powered by transparent stackable solar cells, technology that is clearly foreign to them.

As they arrive at the high school, the group cheers, seeing that there is a track meet today. In the parking lot of the school, Eddie checks out what looks like the modern day version of the Volkswagen Bus. Eddie exclaims, “hey! Check it out! They brought back the Volkswagen Bus!” Everyone comes over to take a closer look. Looking over the vehicle, Eddie mentions, “it must be electric. There’s no exhaust pipe.” Impressed with the styling, Kathy comments, “this really looks pretty cool. When this comes out, I might get one!” If Kathy wants an electric Volkswagen Bus, she’ll have to wait until the early 2020s. Unless, of course, she and Eddie can somehow get one back to their time through the portal.

As they head out to the track, Kathy is quite confident that no one will recognize them, but they are cautious nevertheless. Locking their bicycles, they stand off to the side with the other spectators. Not many spectators are in the stands, as the attendance is minimal today.

Kathy comments, “wow! The track still looks new. It looks like the indoor track.” The outdated gravel track has previously been replaced with a modern day all-weather track that provides for more consistent running conditions. Recently, the track has been once again upgraded to the new modern-day standard. Finding a seat in the bleachers and taking out their stopwatches, they are ready to see how the modern day athletes measure up to those of their day.

After the hurdlers are done, the sprinters running the 100-meter dash congregate around the starting line. Knowing that the faster runners are in the first heat, Eddie moves to the edge of his seat. The gun is fired and, out of the blocks, there is no clear leader. At 50 meters, two runners emerge from the pack. At the finish line, either everyone ran a good race or perhaps everyone is just mediocre. Looking at his stopwatch, Eddie announces, “the winning time is 11.1 seconds. What’s that in the 100-yard dash?” Kathy replies, “you multiply by 0.9, and that will give you the approximate time.” Thinking to herself, Kathy announces, “that would be about ten seconds.” Mark comments, “wow! That really sucks.”

One of the parents who is not too happy with Mark’s comment, turns around and tells Mark, “well, you know, not everyone can be an Eddie

Bogenskaya.” Eddie is shocked to hear his name. Mark asks, “oh yeah? What do you mean?” The parent tells Mark, “you know. Eddie Bogenskaya. He went to this high school. Eddie, and some of his old track buddies, put this track in for us.” Mark, now curious, asks, “oh yeah? Who were they?” The parent replies, “Mark Svoboda, Robert Bradshaw, and Louis Zaino. You’ve never heard of them?” Avoiding the question, Mark replies, “really? Mark Svoboda, Robert Bradshaw, and Louis Zaino? I wonder who they are.” The parent replies, “well, it’s obvious that you guys aren’t from around here. Their names are on the plaque over by the bench.” Mark tells the parent, “we’ll have to check it out later.”

Kathy whispers to Eddie, “it sounds like you’re famous.” Eddie whispers back, “I don’t want to be too famous.” Kathy asks, “why not?” Eddie explains, “if I’m famous, people will follow me around. They’ll also follow you around. Then, when we go to the portal, people will figure it out.” Kathy agrees, telling Eddie, “you do have a point.”

After a while, runners line up for the 400-meter dash. With eight lanes on the track, and a staggered start, Kathy observes, “from the position of the blocks, it looks like they’ll drop to the inside on the back straightaway.” Kathy reminds everyone, “remember, 400 meters is about two and a half yards shorter than 440 yards. That would be about two to three tenths of a second faster than running a 440-yard dash at high school speeds.” Kathy has become really good at converting metric to the English system that they all know so well.

The gun is fired, and the runners are out of the blocks. As the runners come around the curve, they drop in at the back straightaway, just as Kathy predicted. At 200 meters, there is one front runner approximately five yards ahead of the pack, with the remainder of the field following in a line. Mark announces, “that looked like a 30-second split.” As the runners come around the final curve, the front runner, knowing he has the race wrapped up, slows his pace. After the winner crosses the finish line, Mark announces, “wow! I got 61 seconds.” Kathy points out, “he could have probably done a little better, but he slowed down at the end.”

Paula mentions, “they’re all real slow. It’s like they’re not even trying. No wonder the stands are empty.” Kathy replies, “I wonder what happened. Now I want to go to the future 20 or 30 years from now and see how track will be then.” Paula asks Kathy, “do you want to do that? After all, this meet is kind of boring.” Mark suggests, “yeah, let’s do that.”

Before heading back to the portal, they stop by the pizzeria for an early lunch. After lunch, they head back to the portal, hoping that, further into the future, track and field has regained the prestige it appears to

have lost at the high school. On the way, Eddie is amazed at how different the automobiles are in the year 2030.

Arriving at the portal, Eddie and the group return to their time. This time, Kathy does the honors, bringing them forward to the year 2060, in the Spring, during a track meet at the school. When they arrive, they head up the paved path, back toward the high school. Once on the main road, Kathy observes, "hey! Take a look at the cars! They're all weird looking! Most of them don't even have steering wheels." Paula comments, "this place is spooky." Kathy further observes, "yeah. The cars are all electric, and they're driving themselves. Some of the cars are even driving around empty!" Eddie, of course, wonders how a car can drive itself around.

Arriving at the high school, they immediately see that the sports field has been expanded. The track is still in the same place, so they head over to watch the meet. After locking their bicycles, they take a seat on the bleachers. Apparently, the hurdles are now run on a separate track, as multiple events are occurring simultaneously. Paula comments, "everyone even looks weird. It's like we're in a science fiction movie." Kathy asks Paula, "so, what's creepier? This place or Second Street?" Thinking about her answer, Paula replies, "so far, it's a tie."

A computerized voice makes the announcement, "100-meter dash natural contestants, please report to the starting line for that event." Paula asks the group, "and, what's up with that voice? It really sounded weird!" The runners line up behind the blocks. Eddie comments, "maybe they run faster than snails in this year." Mark replies, "from the looks of some of them, I wouldn't count on it." Many of the runners look emaciated, and not very hardy.

The gun is fired, and four stopwatches are started. Eddie tells Kathy, "I'm timing the loser." Halfway through the race, Mark looks at his stopwatch, and mentions, "they all look like losers." Kathy clicks her stopwatch as the winner crosses the finish line, announcing, "wow! Twelve seconds flat." Mark comments, "that's what? An eleven-second 100-yard dash?" Kathy replies, "10.8 seconds, but who's counting." Mark comments, "well, that sucked." Eddie replies, "the loser ran a 13.8."

A computerized voice then makes the announcement, "100-meter dash GE contestants, please report to the starting line for that event." Paula asks, "okay, what is a GE contestant?" Kathy replies, "I don't know. But, those guys headed over there look a lot taller and bigger." As the next group gets behind the starting blocks, everyone gets their stopwatches ready.

The gun is fired, and suddenly Eddie realizes this group is a little faster than the previous group. The group is bunched up, all running

decent times. As they approach the finish line, one runner is clearly ahead by a few meters, but it is a very tight field. When the winner crosses the finish line, Eddie asks Kathy, "what did he run?" Kathy replies, "a 10.8." Eddie getting the same time, replies, "I mean if it was a 100-yard dash, what would that be?" Eddie does not yet think in meters. After working the math problem in her head, Kathy replies, "that would be like a 9.9-second 100-yard dash." Eddie replies, "wow! That kind of sucks." Eddie ran the 100-yard dash in 9.6 seconds when he was a freshman in high school.

Overhearing Kathy and Eddie's conversation, a spectator mentions to Eddie, "you do realize, I hope, that you are talking about our genetically enhanced offspring, don't you?" Paula, who was wondering what GE stood for, whispers to Kathy, "that's what GE must be, 'genetically enhanced'." Eddie replies to the spectator, "so what. The winning time is still not very good." The spectator tells Eddie, "from the way you talk, I perceive that you are not genetically enhanced." Not even knowing what the term means, Eddie replies, "no, I'm not."

The spectator informs Eddie, "if I were you, I would not insult our genetically enhanced offspring. They can be very sensitive at times. And, I am sure you know that there are laws prohibiting it." Eddie replies, "I'm not insulting them. I'm just saying they're slow." The spectator, who is beside herself, replies, "wow! I can not believe this! A natural claiming that they're superior to a genetically enhanced individual." Eddie replies, "I'm not saying I'm better. I'm just saying I'm faster, and," pointing to Mark, "so is this guy."

The woman flicks a weird looking tattoo on her wrist a few times with her finger, in what appears to be some sort of weird ritual to Eddie and everyone else. Shortly after, the woman is speaking directly with a meet official through some type of invisible electronic communication device that Eddie is not familiar with. The woman tells the meet official, "there are two naturals up here clearly claiming that they are superior to our genetically enhanced offspring." To Eddie, it looks as if the woman is talking to herself. After speaking with the meet official, the woman informs Eddie and Mark, "by law, since you have publically claimed yourself to be superior to our genetically enhanced offspring, you must substantiate your claim." Kathy exclaims, "wow! Is she weird, or what?"

The Meet Announcer announces in an electronic voice, "will the natural challengers to our genetically enhanced runners please approach the Meet Director's desk near the finish line immediately." The woman tells Eddie, "that would be you two insensitive guys. They're calling you. Get up there, and race our genetically enhanced offspring. I really hope, for your sake, that you win. If you don't win, I'm sure you know what happens." Mark tells Eddie, "let's go for it."

As they head down the bleachers to the track, Kathy whispers to Eddie and Mark, “that bitch really sounded mad, as if she’s out to kill. If anything goes down, we’ll all head to the bicycles, and get out of here fast.” Paula comments, “I wonder what she meant when she said, ‘I really hope, for your sake, that you win.’” Kathy replies, “maybe their special little genetically enhanced offspring will take out their space age ray guns and disintegrate us.”

The Meet Announcer asks Eddie and Mark, “I understand that you two naturals claim superiority over our genetically enhanced offspring.” Eddie replies, “no. I’m just saying that we’re faster than they are.” The Meet Announcer informs Eddie, “that is clearly a claim of superiority. By law, you are required to substantiate your claim. If you cannot substantiate your claim, I am sure you understand your destiny.” Eddie replies, “good. We’re up for it.” Mark adds, “bring it on.”

The Meet Announcer brings Eddie and Mark over to a table, and asks them to place their hands on an electronic scanner. Eddie asks, “why are we doing this?” The Meet Announcer tells Eddie, “we want to make sure you’re natural. I’m sure you know that there are a few genetically enhanced offspring that have not had the best outcomes, and purport to be naturals.” Eddie and Mark place their hands onto a scanning device, which analyzes their DNA. After seeing the results, the Meet Announcer calls another official over for a conference.

The other official whispers something to the Meet Announcer, leaving Eddie and Mark wondering what they are discussing. Eddie and Mark listen carefully to the conversation, as the Meet Announcer explains, “they are both clearly natural, but they come up as unregistered.” The other official hypothesizes, “maybe the system is down. No one can live out in the open for twenty years and not be registered. For sure, they would get caught long before now.”

Returning to the starting line where Eddie and Mark are warming up, the Meet Announcer asks, “exactly where are you guys from?” Eddie replies, “we’re from here.” The Meet Announcer informs Eddie and Mark, “official competition between natural individuals and genetically enhanced individuals is strictly prohibited by law. However, I’m sure you are aware that, if a claim of superiority is made by a natural, they must clearly demonstrate their claim, and do so immediately. Competition, in the face of a challenge, is permitted but only when the law is suspected of being broken.”

The Meet Announcer then tells Eddie and Mark, “both of you register as 100 percent natural. An individual who is 100 percent natural is almost unheard of for someone nineteen and twenty years old.” Mark asks, “how do you know how old we are?” The Meet Announcer replies,

“kindly, don’t play dumb with me. I just scanned you.” Mark comments, “oh yeah. I forgot.” Mark looks at Eddie, both still wondering how the Meet Announcer knew their age.

The Meet Announcer calls the three genetically enhanced offspring who placed in the 100-meter dash to come over to the starting line. The Meet Announcer tells Eddie and Mark, “good fortune to both of you. And, please let me remind you. A natural falsely claiming superiority over a genetically enhanced individual is a hate crime. If you cannot substantiate your claim beyond a shadow of a doubt, you could be placed under arrest.” Mark looks at Eddie, telling him, “wow! I guess we’d better win then.” Looking over the competition, Eddie replies, “we’ll win. We’ll definitely kick their asses.” The Meet Announcer tells Eddie, “kindly, watch your language around our genetically enhanced offspring. They can be very sensitive at times.”

The runners get behind the blocks. The genetically enhanced offspring look over Eddie and Mark, noticing that they are very well built. One of the genetically enhanced competitors complains to an official, “are you sure they both checked out as natural?” The official replies, “yes. They’re both 100 percent natural.” The look of fear comes over the face of one of the genetically enhanced individuals. In 2060, it is apparently rare to see a genetically unenhanced individual with Eddie’s or Mark’s stature.

A computerized voice then announces, “on your marks.” At least the way they start the race hasn’t changed much over the years. The computerized voice then announces, “set.” Eddie and Mark are ready to kick the genetically enhanced offspring’s sensitive asses. Looking down the track, Mark and Eddie see a large number of people gathered at the finish line. A computerized sound of a gun goes off, which sounds more like a balloon popping than a gun, and the runners are out of the blocks.

Twenty-five meters into the race, Eddie and Mark are clearly beating the modern day genetically enhanced offspring. At fifty meters, one of the genetically enhanced individuals drops out of the race. Kathy notices that the genetically enhanced loser is crying and sobbing like a baby. At seventy-five meters, it is clear that Eddie will be the winner. Mark, in second place, is far ahead of the genetically enhanced crowd. At the finish line, Eddie crosses first, with Mark right behind him. Eddie’s time comes in at 10.1 seconds, and Mark’s at 10.2 seconds. Coming in third place, a genetically enhanced individual delivers a time of 10.9 seconds, slightly worse than his previous run.

After the race, Eddie and Mark exchange high-fives and fist bumps. Seeing the celebration by Eddie and Mark, one official mentions to another, “wow! Just look at their insolent pride.” The other official

replies, “I see that. I just cannot believe it!” Looking over at the two genetically enhanced individuals coming in third and fourth place, Eddie and Mark see them hugging each other, with one of them having tears flowing down his face. The individual who dropped out of the race joins them, as they have their post-race pity party.

Eddie and Mark walk over to the genetically enhanced athletes to shake their hand. For reasons unknown, the genetically enhanced athletes refuse the handshake and suddenly step back. Eddie tells them, “it was nice to run with you guys.” One of the genetically enhanced athletes, who is crying a river, tells Eddie, “I’m not going to be able to get over this! I’m special, and I was beaten by a natural! They told me that I’m special! This cannot be!” Mark tells him, “hey! Don’t worry about it. Chill out. Just train some more.” Losing his composure, the guy who dropped out of the race yells out, telling Mark, “you two natural people are so insensitive! Just stop it! Stop it! Please!”

One of the officials tells Mark, “kindly, leave them alone. Can’t you see that they all need an extended emotional recovery period?” Mark replies, “I was just suggesting that he train some more. I was trying to help him out.” The official tells Mark, “really? If you really wanted to help, you both could have slowed down toward the end of the race so they wouldn’t have felt as bad about losing. That would have been the kind thing to do. Now, just look at what you’ve done to them!” The meet official calls the Meet Grief Counselor³ over, and tells her to take the three losers inside the school to the emotional recovery room.

Eddie tells Mark, “let’s get out of here. These guys are freaks.” Hearing Eddie’s comment, one of the genetically enhanced athletes starts crying like a baby, acting like his whole world just caved in. The Meet Grief Counselor tells Eddie, “wow! You really need to go to a reprogramming camp. Who do you think you are?” Having enough of the moronic society that he has landed in, Eddie tells her, “I am Edward Bogenskaya. I put in this track with Mark Svoboda, who is standing right next to me. We used to run here. We have come from the past to tell you to stop genetically enhancing your babies. Look what you’ve done!”

After hearing Eddie’s claim, the Meet Grief Counselor takes something out of her pocket, points it at Eddie and Mark, and taps on the screen a few times. Screaming out to the other officials, the Meet Grief Counselor yells, “he checks out! He really is Edward Bogenskaya! The other guy

³ Meet Grief Counselor: Not a real meet official during Eddie’s time, but likely will be an official in the future the way things are going. I.e., two steps beyond a participation trophy.

really is Mark Svoboda!” The meet officials approach Eddie and Mark. Mark tells Eddie, “well, this didn’t go exactly as planned. Let’s roll.” They quickly head to the bicycles, where Kathy and Paula are waiting.

The Meet Director yells out, “immobilize them!” The Meet Grief Counselor takes out a weird looking device, and points it at Eddie and Mark. Seeing that Eddie and Mark are still briskly walking away, the Meet Grief Counselor yells back, “I can’t! Somehow, they’re resistant! They must not be chipped.” The Meet Director walks over, informing the other official, “they were unregistered. That may be why you could not immobilize them.” The Meet Grief Counselor, holding the immobilization device tightly, breaks down and cries, telling the Meet Director, “I just don’t feel safe anymore.”

Kathy already has the bicycles unlocked, and ready to roll. Everyone around stares at the time travelers, as they get on their seemingly antiquated bicycles and quickly ride away. In 2060, they find that nearly every other bicycle on the road is electric powered. If someone dares to take it upon themselves to pedal, that option is available on some of the electric bicycles. But, even with all their modern day technological gizmos, the four track athletes can out run, and out bicycle, all of them.

As they head out to the road, Paula exclaims, “this place gives me the creeps!” Kathy exclaims, “yeah, me too! Let’s get out of here!” Paula adds, “okay, this place is like far worse than Second Street!” Kathy asks, “does that mean you’d rather live on Second Street?” Paula doesn’t dare answer Kathy’s question. She knows better.

On their way back to the portal, they pass by Kathy’s parent’s house, noticing that not much has changed over the years. In fact, the houses and yards have not appeared to change much at all, but the people certainly have. Once they arrive at the portal, they waste no time walking among the three boulders to escape from where they are.

Arriving back at their time, Eddie mentions, “that was really weird. People don’t seem like people anymore. There was something wrong with every single one of them.” Paula replies, “yeah, I’d say. With people around like that, we’ll definitely need to buy a tank.” Kathy asks, “how would we need a tank?” Paula explains, “for fun. We can chase their little genetically enhanced monsters around.” Mark mentions, “I can see it now. We’re driving down the street in a tank, and the genetically enhanced babies all run for cover. Then they cry for a week, and have to go to a special recovery hospital for a month.” Kathy can’t resist adding, “yeah, just like Mahoney.” Mark then asks, “and, what was all this ‘kindly’ shit? What were we supposed to do? Say, ‘I’m going to kindly kick your ass?’” Eddie laughs, and remarks, “it’s too bad Braden wasn’t with us.”

Kathy points out, “well, I’m glad that we live in the time we do.” Paula replies, “yeah, seriously.” Everyone can definitely agree with Kathy. Eddie suggests, “I need to go to the future sometime and find out more about this.” Paula asks, “why, pray tell?” Eddie explains, “I’ve got to talk to my future self to find out what’s wrong with all those people.” Kathy points out, “we already know. They’ve been genetically enhanced, whatever that is. When whatever genetically enhanced comes along, we’ll definitely stay away from it.” They all head home for the day, done traveling to the year 2060, at least for now.

A few days later, Kathy and Eddie go out Christmas shopping, buying gifts for their parents and Eddie’s brother. Eddie’s brother is really easy to shop for. Buy him some gym equipment and he’ll be happy. John has even gone out on a limb, and asked Eddie and Kathy for a Dune Buggy for Christmas. Eddie told John that he’ll build him a Dune Buggy someday, but it’s definitely not going to be ready by Christmas. And besides, John doesn’t even have a driver’s license yet. So, all he will be able to do is look at it and sit in it. Kathy’s and Eddie’s parents are a different story. They have everything they need and, just like most people’s parents, they are difficult to shop for.

As they are getting ready to go to bed, Kathy asks Eddie, “what do you want for Christmas this year?” Eddie replies, “I don’t know. Surprise me.” Eddie then asks, Kathy, “what do you want?” Kathy replies, “that’s a really hard question. I don’t know. Maybe we can think about it tomorrow.” Eddie then asks, “if you can have anything you want, what would it be?” Putting her hand over Eddie’s heart, Kathy replies, “I already have that.” Eddie kisses Kathy passionately, and they decide to solve the Christmas gift problem tomorrow.

The next day, Eddie and Kathy go out shopping for each other. Instead of shopping at their time, they decide to shop at a time in the future. When they arrive at the portal, Kathy asks, “what year are we shopping in?” Eddie replies, “how about 2060?” Kathy quickly replies, “ain’t no way I’m going back there anytime soon.” Eddie suggests, “if we go to 2060, maybe we can get a genetically enhanced dog. It could have three eyes, two tails and six legs.” Kathy suggests, “yeah, right. And, we can name it Leggett.” Also making a suggestion, Eddie mentions, “we can get a one legged dog and name it McCrutchen.” Kathy replies, “yeah, but if we name it McCrutchen, it can’t have a brain either.” Eddie replies, “good point.”

They decide to go seven years in the future, to a time they know is more in tune with what they know as compared with the year 2060. Arriving at their destination, they head for the mall. On the way, Eddie asks, “I wonder what happened to make the year 2060 such a weird place.” Kathy surmises, “they genetically enhanced their babies, turning

them into little monsters. It seems like they improved one thing at the expense of breaking a dozen others.” Eddie asks, “really? What did they improve?” Kathy, who is very observant, points out, “well, they all looked like they were models, and they were all about the same height.” Eddie adds, “they looked tough, but their performance on the track kind of sucked.” Kathy mentions, “and, they all acted like babies, kind of like they were in the fourth grade. No. On second thought, make that kindergarten.” Eddie comments, “more like three years old.” Kathy replies, “you might be right about that.”

When they get to the mall, Kathy heads straight for the store where she bought her drawstring blue jeans and her cutoff shirts for her senior year in high school. She quickly picks up a few more fashionable items similar to what she bought a few years ago. Kathy is not worried about them going out of style because they have not come into style yet. Since her clothes always attract a lot of attention, she figures she’s on the right track. They pick up a few more items for each other at the mall, and then head back to the portal.

Arriving at the portal, they pick a date 40 years into the future, and head to the jewelry store down from the coin dealer. Taking a look around, they see that jewelry hasn’t changed too much 40 years into the future. Eddie confines his search to something unique and not available at their time, as does Kathy. If they really wanted something that was available at their time, they would simply just drive to the store and buy it.

After searching the entire store, Eddie tells Kathy, “I found your present.” Kathy asks, “what is it?” Eddie replies, “I can’t tell you. Then, it won’t be a surprise.” Kathy tells Eddie, “hmm, well I found yours too. But, I’m coming back here sometime without you to get it.” Eddie replies, “yeah, me too. I’ll come back another day and get it.” Heading back to the portal, Eddie and Kathy are both happy that they found the perfect present for each other.

Christmas morning, Eddie and Kathy wake up around 10:00 a.m., being a bit on the lazy side. They both woke up a little earlier, but went back to bed. After a quick breakfast, Eddie and Kathy go into their living room and open their presents together. Kathy opens a few of the presents she picked out for herself. Eddie does as well but, since they bought a lot of gifts in each other’s presence, they aren’t too surprised.

Finding one of Kathy’s special presents under the tree, Eddie hands it to Kathy, telling her, “merry Christmas!” Kathy mentions, “this must be the one you went back to the jewelry store to pick out.” Eddie is quiet, as Kathy removes the wrapping from the present very slowly, shaking the box a few times as she is unwrapping it. She tells Eddie, “wow! This year,

I have no idea what it is.” Eddie reveals, “that’s because I filled the box up with cotton.” Kathy tells Eddie, “you just told me! It’s jewelry!” Eddie asks, “what else would I buy at a jewelry store?” Kathy replies, “oh yeah. Duh.”

Once the present is unwrapped, Kathy opens the box, finding a golden chain. On the chain is a golden heart, which has a laser engraving of Kathy winning the 100-yard dash last year at the Spring divisional meet. The engraving was from a picture taken during that race, which appeared in the University newspaper.

Kathy looks at the heart with the engraving, and gives Eddie a great big hug and a kiss. Kathy tells him, “it’s so beautiful! I love it!” Eddie whispers, “that’s because you’re on it.” Putting the necklace around her neck, Kathy holds the heart tightly with her hand. Eddie tells her, “look on the back.” It didn’t even occur to Kathy that there was more to see. On the back, there is a laser engraving of Eddie releasing the discus during the State invitational meet his senior year in high school. Seeing the beautiful image, a tear flows down Kathy’s cheek. Kathy gives Eddie another big hug and kiss, whispering, “I love you so much!”

Walking over to the Christmas tree, Kathy gets Eddie his special present. Kathy tells Eddie, “okay, try to guess what’s in it.” Eddie shakes the box, which makes no noise at all. Having no idea what’s in the box, Eddie comments, “I’m guessing that it’s not a motorcycle.” Kathy replies, “it sounds like someone in this room really wants a motorcycle.”

Eddie takes off the wrapping paper and opens the box. Inside, Eddie finds a golden heart-shaped pendant, which is very similar to the one he gave to Kathy. On Eddie’s pendant is a laser engraving of Kathy on one side. On the other side is an engraving of Kathy handing off the baton to Eddie, which was taken during a relay race in high school.

Eddie whispers, “thank you so much! This is awesome! I love it!” Kathy tells Eddie, “we picked out the same thing when we were in the jewelry store!” Eddie gives Kathy a kiss, and tells her, “I see that!” Eddie explains, “I was going to get it engraved on one side, but the jeweler said he can do both sides.” Kathy tells Eddie, “wow! He told me the same thing! He figured us out.”

Kathy and Eddie exchange the rest of their gifts, occasionally answering a few phone calls from people wishing them a merry Christmas. They get the rest of their breakfast, and get ready to head out to Eddie’s parent’s house for lunch where Kathy’s parents will join them. For dinner this year, they will head to Kathy’s parent’s house where Eddie’s parents will then join them. They load up Kathy’s Porsche with the presents, and head out for the day. Both wearing their pendants, Kathy’s and Eddie’s

gifts to each other will certainly attract a lot of attention and invite a few questions.