

Eddie, The Collegiate Sophomore

Chapter Eight Summer Break

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Right after semester break at the University, Officer Richard Hayes drops by the service station early one morning to give Eddie some news. Officer Hayes has worked hard taking down the gambling ring that was fixing the outcome of high school and college sporting events. After taking Dean Grimsby in, Officer Hayes went on a well-needed vacation. Eddie has not seen Officer Hayes since the Spring divisional meet. Walking back to the service area, Officer Hayes yells out, "hey! My engine's running rough. I think I need a new Johnson Rod!" Seeing Officer Hayes, Eddie yells back, "I'm sorry. We're all out of them!"

Eddie then asks, "how was Florida?" Richard explains, "the kids didn't want to come home. They kept asking why I can't get a job down there. And, Sandy really wanted to go away on vacation. The baby is due in about a month and, once the baby comes, that's about it for vacation for a year." Eddie replies, "I'm glad that you guys had a great time!"

After catching up for a while, Richard tells Eddie, "you'll never guess what went down after the undercover guys took Grimsby away." Eddie asks, "did Grimsby squeal?" Richard explains, "better. They had Grimsby convinced that Bill Fusco was laying on the bottom of a river and, if he didn't take them to the boss, he was going to end up there too." Having a few run ins with Dean Grimsby, Eddie laughs, telling Richard, "I wish I could have seen that."

Richard asks Eddie, "guess who the ringleader was." Eddie replies, "Kathy is convinced it's Mr. Crum's rich uncle." Quite surprised, Richard replies, "wow! Kathy was spot on. It was Alistair Crum. He's sitting in a jail cell now." Eddie adds, "she had it figured out when she heard that Crum's uncle paid Mark in cash for that wall he built."

Richard asks Eddie, “do you remember all the theatrics that Maurice Crum pulled at the end of the trial about how they were going to come after him and kill him?” Eddie replies, “yeah. He really broke down.” Richard explains, “well, it was all theatrics. He was protecting his uncle. No one was going to come after him and kill him. All of his balling and hammering his fist on the table backfired. If he had kept his mouth shut, the case may not have been reopened. This John Davies character is a genius.”

Richard then informs Eddie, “we made a few other arrests shortly afterwards. Do you want to venture a guess as to who they were?” Eddie replies, “why does the name McCutchen come to mind.” Richard explains, “Scott McCutchen, Senior, was involved, but we didn’t arrest him. The only job that character has on record is a department manager at a supermarket. His lifestyle suggests that he is a brain surgeon or something.” Eddie asks, “why didn’t you arrest him?” Richard replies, “without his gambling income, he’ll lose his house and his cars. He’s going to be pretty ticked off. He’ll get what’s coming to him. And, he’s on our list. We’ll be watching him.”

Eddie asks, “so, who else got arrested?” Richard replies, “the Centerville coach, James Ruff, and the Henderson coach, Rudy Parker. This Rudy Parker character was a real piece of work. He’s also charged with assaulting an officer.” Eddie exclaims, “wow! Mr. Ruff! Mr. Frazier is going to shit a brick!” Richard explains, “this James Ruff character was working with Scott McCutchen, Senior, and his three kids, Scott, Junior, Todd, and Jeff to fix races. The coach at Henderson, Rudy Parker, was also in on the operation. Apparently, Parker and Ruff are good friends. They tried to work with Maurice Crum but, apparently, this Mr. Crum had little control over his high school teams.” Eddie replies, “that’s because Mr. Zunde kept that little shit head in check.”

Richard then informs Eddie, “once we were done, we took in about two dozen perpetrators, but you probably wouldn’t know the others. We have a few more that we’ll be taking in.” Richard fills Eddie in on a few other details, revealing to Eddie that the gambling operation was originally bigger than Eddie thought. Finally, with some answers, Eddie is assured that future sporting events will be fair, and not rigged.

Eddie and Richard talk a bit about the financial markets. Richard has made a considerable amount of money by following Eddie’s stock recommendations. Richard thanks Eddie for his help in the investigation, and heads back out on patrol. Eddie gets back to work, thinking there will finally be peace in track and field.

This year, Eddie and Kathy usher in the Summer with a pool party at their home. On the guest list is anyone from either the University or high

school track team who wants to come, McCutchen excluded. But, Mr. Frazier pretty much cut McCutchen from the team by officially placing him on the injured reserve list. McCutchen hasn't shown up at practice since Kathy kicked the crap out of him. The rumor is that McCutchen has applied at another university. No one is sad to see him go.

As the morning moves on, the guests arrive a few at a time. Looking at the parking area, it is easy to come to the conclusion that, today, there is a Dune Buggy convention at Eddie and Kathy's house. By mid morning, nearly everyone has arrived. Everyone is expecting pizza, and no one wants to miss out.

Among the last to arrive is Karen Corey, who drives up, and gets out of her car. Standing next to her car, and looking around, Karen takes in the beautiful setting around Eddie and Kathy's home. Walking toward the door, Karen reconsiders, and heads back toward her car, planning to leave. Kathy walks out the door exclaiming, "Karen! I'm so glad you can make it!" Karen wipes the tears from her eyes, turns around, and replies, "oh, hey! This place is so beautiful and serene." Perceiving that something is bothering Karen, Kathy asks, "are you okay?" Obviously bothered about something, Karen replies, "I'll be okay."

As Kathy and Karen walk inside, Karen asks Kathy, "is this your parent's house?" Kathy replies, "no. Me and Eddie live here." Glancing over at the medal collection on the wall, Karen replies, "your home is really beautiful. Wow!" Kathy tells Karen, "let me show you around." Kathy shows Karen around the inside of the house and the gym downstairs. They then head out to the pool area, where most of the guests are congregated.

Looking at the pool, Karen mentions, "wow! Your pool is really beautiful too." Kathy mentions, "and, that table where Erika and Bobby B. are sitting is where I did my homework." Karen recalls, "that's right. You were a senior this year. I'll miss you next year." Kathy informs Karen, "I'll still be at the University. I got accepted to graduate school, and I'll be helping out with the team next year." Karen replies, "wow! That's really awesome!" Kathy asks Karen, "did you bring your swimsuit?" Karen replies, "yeah. It's in my car." Kathy offers, "go ahead and change, and join us in the pool." Karen goes to her car to get her swimsuit, and heads back inside to change.

Genise, who graduated two years ago, walks up and tells Kathy, "hey! I heard you guys won all the gold medals at the divisional meet!" Kathy replies, "we did! That was really amazing." Kathy asks, "so, how is teaching working out?" Genise explains, "I love it! I'm at a high school and I'm the assistant track coach." Kathy tells Genise, "Barbara is the coach at Northside now." Genise replies, "I heard! I saw her at State. We

had one guy going this year. Barbara really has a great team.” Kathy asks, “what school are you at?” Genise explains, “right now, I’m at Northport, but I have an application in at Springfield. That was my high school.” Kathy sighs, and tells Genise, “I want to teach elementary school, but I also wouldn’t mind coaching track. I guess that means I’ll be the field day coordinator.” Genise tells Kathy, “start training them early. That will make a big difference.” Kathy and Genise then head out to the pool, and mingle with the crowd.

At the pool, Kathy yells out, “hey, everybody! Genise is here!” The University team members who ran with Genise all come over and give her a hug. The team members who have not met Genise, having heard a lot about her, finally get to meet her. Genise catches her former teammates up on life after college, assuring them that there actually is a life after college.

Not knowing that Genise has arrived are a few of the guys, who are downstairs in the middle of a bench press competition. Pete Mendenhall made the challenge, which was quickly taken up by Bobby B. Fabio Cinquegrana, Braden, Mark, Johnson, and a few others join the competition, but everyone suspects Bobby B. or Mendenhall will win. Erika and Tessa, the rivals on the track, and now in the gym, join in, competing against each other. Eddie decided to sit this one out, only because he is the host of the party.

With 200 pounds on the bar, Erika and Tessa are still at it. Erika and Tessa have both bench pressed this weight before. It’s Tessa’s turn, and she gets onto the bench. Lifting the bar off the hooks, Tessa lowers the bar to her chest and, putting in an awesome effort, completes the lift. Erika is next, who has been making it look easy. Erika raises the bar, lowers it to her chest, and easily completes the lift.

The weight is raised to 210 pounds. A few of the guys take a warm-up set at this weight as Tessa gets psyched up. Getting onto the bench, Tessa is all fired up. Lowering the bar, Tessa seriously does not want to let Erika win. Letting out a primal scream, Tessa raises the bar, setting a new personal record. The guys cheer, and are amazed that Tessa actually completed the lift. Now Erika’s turn, she is surprised that Tessa has even gone this far in the competition. Lowering the bar, Erika is able to raise the bar, and has not yet had to resort to her primal scream to help her in the lift.

Now at 225 pounds, the bar poses a challenge for Tessa. Both Erika and Tessa know this, but Tessa appears outwardly confident. Tessa gets onto the bench, staring intently at the bar. As Tessa lowers the bar, Erika hopes that Tessa has finally met her match. Tessa raises the bar but, halfway through the lift, she is unable to follow through, and the bar

slowly drops to her chest. The spotters, Mark and Cinquegrana, lift the bar off Tessa's chest. Tessa is now hoping for a tie.

Erika gets onto the bench and, knowing that this is her last attempt, is all fired up. Erika lowers the bar and, letting out a primal scream, raises the bar. Erika completes the lift, winning today's competition between her and Tessa. The guys cheer, congratulating both Tessa and Erika on an awesome contest.

During the guy's competition, Erika curiously asks Tessa, "so, how did you get so good?" Tessa explains, "I hit a plateau in the water, so I've been cross training. I had to do something, so I've been hitting the gym every day before classes. And, now that the Summer is here, I'll have more time to train." Erika asks, "you wouldn't want a training partner for the Summer, would you?" Tessa replies, "sure. You can join me."

Erika then explains, "I'm also helping Mark and Bobby B. with construction this Summer. I'll have to work around that. They're working on Dr. Akinmola's church." Tessa tells Erika, "I don't know what I'm doing this Summer." Erika yells out to Mark, "hey, Mark! Tessa needs a job!" Mark walks over and tells Tessa, "oh, yeah?" Tessa replies, "yeah. I'm looking around." Mark tells Tessa, "most of where we need help right now is with outside muddy boot jobs. It's a good workout. Are you interested?" Tessa replies, "sure. Sign me up." So, for the Summer, Tessa will be working on construction projects, getting in a different type of cross training than she expected.

After a few rounds, with 425 pounds on the bar, the competition is still alive among the guys. Cinquegrana went out at this weight, but bench pressing 405 pounds in the previous round still puts him among an elite group. Bobby B., Braden, and Mendenhall are still in. From what has been seen so far, everyone fully expects that Bobby B. will win.

The weight is raised to 435 pounds. Using a little psychological warfare, Bobby B. announces, "I think I'll sit out this round. You guys fight it out for second place." Bobby B. relaxes on a bench, watching, as Mendenhall prepares to lift the weight. Lowering the weight, Mendenhall appears a little shaky. Raising the weight, Mendenhall gets the bar three-quarters of the way there, but cannot complete the lift. Braden, all fired up, wastes no time getting onto the bench. Lifting the bar, Braden lowers it to his chest and, with all the energy he can find, successfully completes the lift. Everyone cheers, knowing that Braden's lift is a significant accomplishment.

Mark asks, "what are we raising the weight to?" Bobby B. suggests, "how about 495 pounds?" Braden exclaims, "you're crazy!" Bobby B. smiles, and tells Mark, "I'm getting hungry. Let's get this over with. I'll

go first, since I sat out the last round. Give me 495.” Mark and Cinquegrana add 60 pounds to the bar, and get into position to spot Bobby B.

With confidence, Bobby B. gets onto the bench. Bobby B. raises the bar, quickly lowers it and, lets out his own primal scream as he raises the bar. Successfully completing the lift, Bobby B. has everyone convinced that he is not yet near his limit. The crowd cheers, and gives Bobby B. high-fives. It’s not hard to see how Bobby B. can toss Leggett or McCutchen around like a rag doll.

Braden, pacing back and forth, looks worried, but he will not allow himself to lose by default. Getting onto the bench, Braden appears very confident. Braden would look quite confident in the cockpit of an airplane too, even though he’s never flown one before. Lowering the bar to his chest, Braden is halfway there. Braden raises the bar but, halfway through the lift, the bar begins to slowly move downward. The spotters lift the bar from Braden’s chest, and Bobby B. wins the bench press contest among the guys. Everyone congratulates Bobby B., giving him a generous supply of high-fives.

The group comes upstairs, quickly spreading the news of the bench press competition. Bobby B. tells Kathy, “you might want to order a few more pizzas. We all had a good workout.” Kathy asks, “seriously?” Mark replies, “yeah. We all worked out for an hour, on top of the competition.” Kathy calls the pizzeria, adding a few pizzas to her order.

A little later in the morning, Kathy still perceives something is bothering Karen. Seeing Karen sitting alone at a table at the far end of the pool, Kathy walks over and takes a seat. Kathy opens the conversation by asking, “so, what’s your story?” Karen asks, “what do you mean?” Kathy explains, “well, to start with, you’re a freshman, and running times more like a junior or senior.” Karen replies, “since I was in sixth grade, I rode my bicycle everywhere. When I got to high school, I was faster than most of the guys. So, the gym teacher suggested that I try out for the track team.” Kathy comments, “hmm. Riding a bicycle. That’s exactly how Eddie got so fast.”

Karen casually mentions, “I really wish I had my bicycle here with me at the University.” Kathy suggests, “maybe you can bring it back with you when you come back next year.” Karen informs Kathy, “I’m not exactly going home over the Summer.” Kathy asks, “really? What are your plans for the Summer?” Karen replies, “I haven’t quite figured it out yet. Something will work out.” With Karen not going home, and no plans for the Summer, Kathy is definitely wondering what’s up with Karen.

Knowing that the Summer day camp that Kathy worked at for the past few years has an opening, Kathy mentions to Karen, “if you’re looking for a job, the Summer day camp that I used to work at has an opening. They called me late last week and asked if I could work for a few weeks until they find someone else. It’s really fun, if you like working with kids.” Suddenly excited, Karen exclaims, “really? Do you think they’ll take me?” Kathy suggests, “we can go down Monday morning, and I can introduce you.” Quite grateful, Karen replies, “that would be awesome! Thank you so much!”

Suddenly getting excited, Karen then mentions, “wow! If this works out, that would be so great! If I get the job, then I can find a place to live. They won’t let me live in the dorms unless I’m enrolled in classes.” Quite perplexed, Kathy asks, “how do you mean, ‘now, I can find a place to live’? Where are you living now?” Karen replies, “since after the semester was over, I’ve been living out of my car. I’ve been getting a shower in the gym, and eating at the school cafeteria.”

Kathy asks, “wait! You’re living out of your car?” Karen replies, “yeah. I’m not going home, so I don’t have much choice right now. Something will work out. I have some money saved because I had a job on campus this past year. But, I’ve been saving that for food.” Kathy tells Karen, “hon, you’re sleeping here tonight. You’re not sleeping in your car anymore.” Happy that she’ll have a bed to sleep in tonight, a tear begins to fall from Karen’s eye. Barely getting the words out, Karen tells Kathy, “thank you so much. Are you sure it’s okay? Eddie won’t mind?” Kathy assures Karen, “it’s okay. No problem.”

Now curious, Kathy asks, “how are you not going home?” Karen explains, “I can’t go home. I just can’t. My mother is forever yelling and screaming about everything, and my father just doesn’t see it. He’s always at work, and she’s a little nicer when he’s around. You know, I’ve never realized this before but, since I was born, I’ve been in fight or flight mode. When I came to the University, I realized how peaceful life can be. Then, I went home over Christmas break, and it was the same old shit all over again. I just can’t go back home, Kathy. I just can’t. Not even for a few months.” Kathy compassionately tells Karen, “I am so sorry. I can’t even imagine.”

Karen tells Kathy, “so, the reason I run so fast is because I have to be fast. I’m on full scholarship, and I can’t afford to lose it. So, I train every chance I get. And, I heard what Mr. Frazier said, so I’m going to train all Summer too.” Kathy encourages Karen, “it really shows in your performance on the track. If I am not mistaken, you’ve improved more than anyone on the team since the Fall.” Karen then tells Kathy, “between my scholarship, and my job on campus, I made out pretty well this year. I just can’t go back home.”

Kathy reassures Karen, “we’ll get this to work out somehow. We’ll go down on Monday and talk to Mrs. Jensen, the Summer camp coordinator. She’s really nice, but I’ll warn you. She’s a total space cadet.” Karen asks, “a space cadet? How so?” Kathy laughs, and explains, “yeah. One day, she came into the gym and told me, ‘it’s Wednesday. You’re supposed to be outside with the kids playing kickball.’ So, I told her, ‘it’s raining. So, we’re staying inside and Hula hooping.’ And, then she stares at me all weird like and tells me, ‘oh’.” Karen laughs, and tells Kathy, “that’s really kind of funny.”

Karen then shares, “last Winter, when Mr. Frazier took over as coach, we were doing relay drills on the first day of practice. Provost Leighton found something wrong with my handoff. So, she pulled me aside and I thought I was going to get yelled at. But, she was so nice. And, that’s another thing. The coaches at my high school were always yelling and screaming at the athletes. But, whenever Mr. Frazier raises his voice, it’s always something really encouraging.” Kathy replies, “he’s like that. I only saw him get mad a few times. One time was when McCrutchen rammed the baton into my ass. Another was in high school when the Chuckie threw a javelin at Eddie. Mr. Frazier stands up for his athletes. He has our back.”

Karen exclaims, “wait! Someone threw a javelin at Eddie?” Kathy explains, “yeah. During a 440-yard dash time trial, the Chuckie threw the javelin at Eddie. The javelin cut Eddie’s leg and, when he went down, he sprained his hip. Mark and Johnson went down too. When he saw what was about to happen, Mr. Frazier told Erika to go and call the police. Then, Eddie kicked the shit out of the Chuckie like you wouldn’t believe. Mr. Frazier and Mr. Zunde just stood there with their arms crossed, and watched as Eddie pulverized the Chuckie into oblivion. The hospital tried to put the Chuckie back together again, but they weren’t too successful.” Karen asks, “why do you call him, ‘the Chuckie?’” Kathy replies, “because the Chuckie is more like an ‘it’ than a person.”

The catering van from the pizzeria drives up, meaning the pizza has arrived. Kathy tells Karen, “the pizza’s here! Let’s go help Arianna with the pizza.” Kathy and Karen head toward the front door and are greeted by Eddie who, seeing the truck arrive, opens the door. Helping Arianna, Eddie, Kathy, and Karen each grab a few boxes of pizza, bringing them inside.

As they are bringing the pizza in, Kathy tells Eddie, “since school let out, Karen has been sleeping in her car.” Eddie looks at Karen, and mentions, “you can stay here, if you want.” Karen replies, “that’s what Kathy said. You guys are so nice. Thank you so very much!” Eddie tells Kathy, “I’ll go tell everyone the pizza is here.”

Over lunch, Kathy yells out, “now that we’re all together, I have an announcement!” The room suddenly quiets down, and Kathy announces, “I got accepted to graduate school, so I’ll be at the University for another year!” Everyone cheers, but there is little clapping because everyone has a slice of pizza in their hand. Kathy exclaims, “but, that is not all the news! I got a job working with the team, and I’m also going to be a scout for the team!” Everyone cheers again, glad to hear that Kathy is going to be around in some capacity for the next year.

Kathy looks over at Paula, and asks her, “well?” With a mouth half full of pizza, Paula announces, “ditto. I also got accepted to grad school. And, I’ll be working with the team too.” Paula would say more, but she is more interested in eating her slice of pizza at the moment. Everyone again cheers, glad to hear that Kathy and Paula will be helping out with the team next year.

Once the cheering dies down Amber exclaims, “since we’re all together, I have an announcement too!” With a silence in the room, and everyone waiting a little longer than expected for Amber’s announcement, Barbara yells out, “out with it, girl!” Amber tells everyone what she has been waiting a few years to announce, “Gary has proposed, and I accepted! We’re getting married!” Cheers again rise, with a few people commenting, “it’s about time.” Amber has been waiting to make this announcement for a very long time. Mitchell, however, seemed to be in no rush to pop the question.

After lunch, everyone heads back outside to the pool. Standing in the corner at the shallow end, Braden mentions to Eddie and Mark, “now that Dean Grimsby is gone, it looks like our team is really strong.” Eddie replies, “yeah, I know. It will be really interesting to see what happens next year when the events aren’t rigged.” Braden asks, “have you heard anything from Officer Hayes?” Eddie replies, “yeah. He was on vacation for a week. He came into the station a few days ago and told me what happened.” Eddie, seeing Johnson nearby, yells out, “yo, Johnson! Come here for a minute!”

Johnson swims over, and Braden asks, “how did it end up going down?” Eddie explains, “when they took Grimsby for a drive, they convinced him that the guy who took the bet, some guy named Bill Fusco, was dead on the bottom of a river somewhere. They told Grimsby that, if he didn’t take them to the boss man, he was going to end up on the bottom of a river too.” Braden laughs, exclaiming, “I heard part of that! Mack was wearing a wire. I would have like to be along on that ride!” Mark comments, “yeah, seriously.” Braden adds, “those undercover guys really know how to play the part.”

Eddie continues, “so, the boss man turned out to be Mr. Crum’s uncle, Alistair Crum.” Mark exclaims, “that guy must have boatloads of cash! He paid me for the wall that I built in all cash. That wall was about a thousand feet long. I had a dozen jobbers on that project.” Braden, using his officer’s demeanor, throws out, “I wonder who they were trying to keep out of there.” Mark replies, “you, bro, and the rest of the police.” Johnson exclaims, “you got that right!” Braden suggests, “I bet there’s a few safes in that house, loaded with cash.”

Eddie explains, “so, here’s where it gets good. They made a bunch of other arrests, but wait.” Eddie yells out, “yo, Barbara! Come here for a minute!” Barbara walks over, sits on the pool ledge, and asks, “what’s up?” Eddie catches Barbara up on what happened with Dean Grimsby, then tells everyone, “so, two of the people they arrested were Mr. Ruff and Mr. Parker. Richard said they were working together. And, you’ll never believe this. Mr. Ruff was working with McCrutchen’s father and McCrutchen’s two brothers to rig the events. But, listen to this. Mr. Ruff and Mr. Parker tried to work with Mr. Crum but, Richard said that Mr. Crum didn’t have enough control over his high school teams.”

Braden exclaims, “that explains a whole bunch of shit!” Mark replies, “seriously, bro.” Johnson concludes, “Mr. Zunde really got in the way of Mr. Crum controlling the teams. If it wasn’t for Mr. Zunde, we’d all be screwed.” Barbara comments, “I guess we’ll not be seeing Mr. Ruff and Mr. Parker anymore. Now, I’m thinking about what their teams may really have.” Johnson tells Barbara, “I guess you’ll find out soon enough.”

As the conversation winds down, Eddie comments, “it looks like Tessa is practicing for our rematch.” Barbara watches, as Tessa does a flip turn, commenting, “her flip turn has gotten really good.” Eddie replies, “I see that. I’m going to go chase her down.” Eddie pushes off the wall, and swims after Tessa.

Wanting to gauge his performance against Tessa’s, Eddie swims as fast as he can to catch Tessa. Catching up with Tessa at the far wall, Eddie does his flip turn, passing Tessa. Quickly figuring out what is going on, Tessa quickly picks up her pace, not wanting to be shown up by Eddie. Now in direct competition, Eddie and Tessa battle it out as a few of the team members gather to watch the race. The problem is, however, there is no defined endpoint of the race.

Kicking off the wall simultaneously with Tessa, Eddie is convinced his flip turn remains stronger than Tessa’s. Allowing Tessa to catch up, Eddie then attempts to out pace Tessa’s stroke. Giving it all she has, Tessa is making Eddie work hard. After a few laps, Eddie concludes Tessa is still faster in the water, but he is much more superior in the flip turn. With a few weeks before the rematch, Eddie knows what he needs to work on.

Tessa, along with everyone watching, thinks Eddie is racing her. Eddie, arriving at the wall first on this lap, stops. Tessa also stops, and Eddie wastes no time telling her, "I won." Tessa quickly replies, "we weren't racing!" Eddie replies, "yeah, you're right. That was just a leisurely afternoon swim." Tessa exclaims, "I'm beating you this year, buddy!" Eddie replies, "no, you're not." Tessa exclaims, "oh, yes I am!"

Kathy, standing with Karen Corey and Leslie Collins, comments, "this year's rematch looks like it's going to be interesting." Leslie asks, "what rematch?" Kathy explains, "a lot of us get together at the county pool over the Summer. For the last five years, Eddie and Tessa have raced in the pool. Some years, Eddie won and, some years, Tessa won. And, occasionally some others would join in on the race." Karen mentions, "I'd really like to see that." Kathy tells Karen and Leslie, "we'll let you guys know when the get-together is. It's really fun."

After the unofficial race in the pool, most everyone sits back and relaxes. At the deep end of the pool, Tessa practices her flip turn across the short dimension of the pool. Pushing off the wall and, with not even taking a stroke, Tessa arrives at the other wall, doing another flip turn. A few athletes go downstairs to the gym, work out a bit, and head back upstairs. Amber, all excited, tells everyone of her and Gary's wedding plans, which really haven't been well thought out yet.

Once everyone has left for the evening, Kathy tells Karen, "let's go out to your car and get your stuff." Kathy, Eddie, and Karen head out to Karen's car. Karen opens her trunk, where Karen's stuff, as Kathy put it, amounts to three small suitcases of clothes, and a radio. Karen also has a box in her trunk containing her notebooks and school supplies from the last semester, but there is no reason to bring those in. And, Karen gets her pillow and blanket out of the back seat, and they all head back inside.

Inside, Kathy, Eddie, and Karen go to the spare bedroom, where Kathy suggests, "the dresser and closet are totally empty, so you can put your clothes there." Karen asks, "I thought I was only staying for tonight." Kathy replies, "hon, you're not sleeping in your car anymore. You can stay here until school starts if you need to." With tears of happiness, Karen warmly replies, "thank you guys so much. You are so nice." Kathy helps Karen unpack, as Eddie heads off to do something else.

While they are unpacking, Karen puts her radio on the night stand. Kathy mentions, "that's a really cool looking radio." Karen explains, "yeah. It's AM, FM, shortwave, and it receives weather broadcasts. When I was in middle school and high school, I had my earphones in all the time, listening to the radio, so I wouldn't hear my mother screaming. Now, I mostly listen to the campus radio station. And, when I wasn't listening to my radio, I was probably out riding my bicycle." Kathy asks, "did you hear

Eddie's interview on the campus radio station?" Karen replies, "yeah! I heard that! It was really good."

Once they are finished unpacking, Kathy and Karen walk into the kitchen, where Eddie has finished sorting out the leftover pizza. Eddie asks, "pepperoni, hamburger, or veggie? Or, we can go out." Kathy replies, "it's late. We're having whatever is in the refrigerator." Tonight, Kathy, Eddie, and Karen make dinner out of whatever they find in the refrigerator.

After dinner, Eddie tells Karen, "the thermostat's on the wall in the living room. Set it to whatever you want. The food is in the refrigerator and in the pantry. Help yourself to whatever you want. The gym is downstairs, and the pool is outside. Enjoy yourself." Kathy adds, "and, the bath towels and stuff are in the linen closets on either side of the bathroom." Karen again tells Eddie and Kathy, "you guys are so nice. Thank you very much." Karen heads to the shower, and will get to sleep in a real bed tonight.

Monday morning, Kathy and Karen wake up early, and head to the day camp to hopefully find Karen a Summer job. Karen asks, "can we ride in your Dune Buggy?" Kathy replies, "I was hoping you'd want to. It's really nice outside." Kathy and Karen get into the Dune Buggy, heading to the Summer day camp where Kathy worked since she was sixteen years old.

Arriving at the day camp, Karen mentions, "this isn't too far from the University." Kathy explains, "it's not far from my parent's house either. When I worked here when I was in high school, I used to ride my bicycle. I was so glad when I got my car, though. On sunny days, I would ride my bicycle. On rainy days, I would drive. Oh, and Paula used to work here too." Arriving at the day camp, Kathy and Karen jump out of the Dune Buggy and head inside.

Walking into the office, Kathy knocks on Mrs. Jensen's door, who is doing some paperwork. Mrs. Jensen smiles, and asks Kathy, "have you reconsidered? Can you work this Summer?" Kathy replies, "no. But, Karen wants to apply. She's on the track team with me at the University." Looking at Karen, Mrs. Jensen asks, "let me guess. You're Karen?" Karen replies, "yes, ma'am." Hearing that Karen is on the track team, Mrs. Jensen hands an application to Karen, and tells her, "here. Fill this out for me, please."

While Karen is filling out her application, Kathy asks Mrs. Jensen, "you haven't found anyone to take my place yet?" Mrs. Jensen replies, "I've had a lot of applications but, no. The two open positions are for physical fitness instructors, not for arts and crafts. I got tons of arts and crafts applicants. You and Paula spoiled me." Kathy asks, "so, you need two

instructors?” Mrs. Jensen replies, “yes. By next week. I’m really down to the wire here.” Listening as Mrs. Jensen and Kathy talk, Karen becomes more optimistic that she will get the job. Kathy tells Mrs. Jensen, “I know someone else who might want the other position.” Mrs. Jensen tells Kathy, “really? Please send him or her by. As I said, I’m down to the wire here. I need two instructors by next week.”

Karen hands Mrs. Jensen the completed application. Mrs. Jensen explains to Karen, “the kids here in the day camp are from first to sixth grade. In gym class, they are in a class with kids their own age. We also teach various arts and crafts classes, and music classes. And, occasionally there are field trips to the beach, parks, and places like museums.”

As Mrs. Jensen is reviewing Karen’s application, Mrs. Jensen asks Karen, “do you think you can be a gym teacher, psychologist, babysitter, school nurse, and referee all at once?” Karen replies, “I think so.” Mrs. Jensen then asks, “do you know the rules for kickball, basketball, badminton, volleyball, and softball?” Karen confidently replies, “yes, ma’am. I do.” With the surprise of the day, Mrs. Jensen then asks Karen, “can you start next week?” Karen smiles, and replies, “I certainly can!” Mrs. Jensen and Karen work out the details, as Kathy sits back relaxing, glad to see that Karen got the job.

As Kathy and Karen get ready to leave, Mrs. Jensen asks Kathy, “you mentioned someone else might be interested. Who was that?” Kathy replies, “Amber Amy. She’s also on the track team at the University.” Mrs. Jensen asks Karen, “do you know Amber Amy?” Karen replies, “yes. We’re on the track team together.” Kathy already told Mrs. Jensen that Karen and Amber are both on the track team. Karen is beginning to understand why Mrs. Jensen might be a bit of a space cadet.

Before they leave, Kathy incidentally asks Mrs. Jensen, “would you, by any chance, be related to Dr. Jensen who was a track coach at the University years ago?” With her eyes opening wide, Mrs. Jensen replies, “I am, by marriage. He’s my father-in-law. He started this day camp fifteen years ago. It was supposed to be a physical education day camp. But, the enrollment wasn’t too high, so we added arts and crafts the next year. We added music classes right before you started years ago.” Kathy replies, “wow! It’s a small world.” Holding her blue stone in her hand, Kathy wonders if the stone has anything to do with her thinking Mrs. Jensen and the former track coach at the University are related. Kathy and Karen then head out, back to Kathy’s house.

When they get home, Kathy tells Karen, “hey, why don’t you call Amber and let her know about the job at the day camp? I’m sure it’s right up her alley.” Karen replies, “I can do that! It would be really nice to work with

someone I already know.” Karen, whose Summer just got a whole lot better, makes the call to Amber, hoping to make her Summer a lot better too.

While Eddie is at work one day, a familiar face drives into the service station, that of Jimmy O’Brien. Still working at the burger joint downtown, O’Brien is proud that he was quickly promoted to being a manager. But, being a manager in a burger joint means O’Brien is on salary, and doesn’t get paid for the long hours of overtime he puts in. For the last year, O’Brien frequently drove into Angelo’s Service Station to fill the tank of his new Mercedes, which was purchased with funds made through illegal gambling. This time, however, O’Brien is driving an old AMC Gremlin.

As he pulls up to the pumps, Jimmy O’Brien waits for someone to come out and greet him. O’Brien, for some reason, likes to see Eddie filling his gas tank. Seeing who is behind the wheel, Eddie takes a break and goes out to the pumps. Seeing O’Brien, Eddie asks, “what happened to your Mercedes?” O’Brien replies, “I don’t have it anymore.” Eddie asks, “oh yeah? What happened to it?” Evading the question, O’Brien replies, “I bought this instead. So, you’re still pumping gas?” Eddie replies, “yeah. I’m still pumping gas.” O’Brien tells Eddie, “fill it up for me.” Eddie replies, “yeah, sure. No problem.”

As he is filling O’Brien’s tank, Eddie quickly concludes what happened to O’Brien’s Mercedes. Eddie has figured out that O’Brien’s Mercedes was purchased with the proceeds from the gambling operation that Officer Hayes busted wide open. Concluding that O’Brien’s Mercedes was, in part, purchased with a bank loan, Eddie figures that O’Brien had to unload his luxury vehicle, and buy something from a *Buy Here Pay Here* lot. Eddie has also suspected that Mr. O’Brien is involved in the gambling ring but, for some reason, Officer Hayes has not yet taken Mr. O’Brien in.

O’Brien hands Eddie a large bill for his gas purchase, purely to impress Eddie. As he is slowly counting out O’Brien’s change, Eddie mentions to O’Brien, “so, the gambling operation went South. I suppose that’s why you lost your Mercedes. I’m guessing your father lost his Mercedes too.” O’Brien angrily replies, asking, “how do you know about that?” Eddie confidently informs O’Brien, “everybody knows about it. Mr. Crum is sitting in jail. The odds maker, Grimsby, is sitting in jail. The Centerville coach, Mr. Ruff is sitting in jail. I could go on. That whole ring was busted wide open. And, they know your father was involved in the gambling ring by failing athletes.” Then, to purely irritate O’Brien, Eddie tells him, “I heard they’re not finished making all the arrests yet.”

O’Brien, wanting more information from Eddie, starts to sweat, and asks, “who else are they arresting?” Eddie hands O’Brien his change and, purely to further irritate O’Brien, tells him, “I’m not allowed to say. Good

luck! And, stay out of trouble.” Eddie heads inside to continue working on the engine he is repairing. O’Brien starts his engine, leaving a cloud of blue smoke, suggestive that his rings or valve guides are worn. Making a beeline back home to tell his father what he just heard from Eddie, O’Brien is clearly stressed.

Later that week, on a day after a heavy rainstorm, when Eddie returns from work, Kathy announces, “hey, Eddie! Let’s go and look for more blue stones!” Eddie replies, “that was really spontaneous, Katarina. Why today?” Kathy replies, “because it rained really hard yesterday and last night. It might be easier to find one now.” Eddie asks, “how are we getting there?” Kathy suggests, “let’s drive. We can park at the middle school.” Eddie cleans up from work, then they get into Eddie’s MGB, and head to the middle school.

Sliding through an opening in the fence near the maintenance building, Eddie and Kathy walk toward the rocky outcropping where they found two blue stones in early Spring. On their walk, Kathy tells Eddie, “I know we’re going to find more blue stones today!” Eddie replies, “you sound very sure of yourself.” Kathy smiles, and tells Eddie, “superpowers.”

Arriving at the rocky outcropping, Kathy and Eddie carefully look around. With the recent rains, the rocks and stones have been washed clean. And, in the afternoon sun, many of the stones glitter in the bright sunlight. It doesn’t take Kathy long to exclaim, “I found one! Eddie! I knew I was going to find one today! And, I did!” Seeing the stone, Eddie tells Kathy, “that one is really beautiful!” Kathy puts her newly found blue stone into her pocket, and carefully searches for more.

Among the rocks are various types of stones, not just blue stones. Eddie finds another yellow stone in the same location that he found the first one. Seeing that the stone is very similar to the other he found a while ago, Eddie puts it in his pocket. Searching a little further, Eddie yells out to Kathy, “I think I found another blue one!” Looking around, Kathy makes note of where she was, and rushes over to see what Eddie found.

Under some gravel which has washed away is a blue stone, partially buried in the dirt. Kathy and Eddie move the dirt away, quickly finding that this blue stone is much larger than they ever thought. Using a tree branch as a shovel, they slowly unearth the stone. As they are digging, Eddie comments, “I think we found the mother stone.” Kathy replies, “yeah! This one is huge.” Seeing another yellow stone nearby, Eddie picks it up and puts it in his pocket, and continues working. After digging for a while, the blue stone begins to loosen up. Kathy mentions, “we almost got it!” Two minutes later, they finally manage to get the stone out of the ground without damaging it.

Eddie tells Kathy, “wow! You’re not exactly going to be wearing this one around your neck.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! I know! This one weighs a lot, like a pound!” Admiring the stone, Kathy tells Eddie, “this stone is so, so beautiful! I can’t believe we found this!” Eddie asks, “what are we going to do with it?” Kathy replies, “first, when we get home, I’m going to wash it. Then, I don’t know. Maybe I’ll put it on my dresser.” Eddie carries the large blue stone around, as he and Kathy search for a few more precious stones.

On their search, Eddie suggests, “maybe we can come back here with a front-end loader and dig this place up.” Kathy replies, “hmm. I don’t know. That might take the fun out of finding them.” Looking around, Eddie mentions, “there aren’t any rocks like these anywhere else around here. I wonder why they’re all in this little area.” Kathy replies, “I never thought about that.” Eddie adds, “and, then there’s the portal. All along that path to the beach, there are no other boulders.” Kathy replies, “that’s really weird,” as she is looking down, thinking she has found another blue stone.

Seeing another blue stone, Kathy announces, “Eddie! I found another one! Wait! There are two of them here!” Eddie walks over to take a look, seeing a small blue stone, like the others they’ve found. Eddie relates, “you’re having a good day! I’ve never thought, Katarina, that a blue stone would make you so happy!” Kathy reminds Eddie, “blue stones have superpowers. Remember?” Eddie shows Kathy the two yellow stones he found. Kathy mentions, “those are really pretty too. I wonder if they have superpowers.”

Kathy and Eddie search for another 30 minutes, finding no more blue or yellow stones. Kathy tells Eddie, “I guess that’s all the stones we’re going to find today.” But, finding one large and three small blue stones, Kathy is very happy. And, with two more yellow stones, Eddie and Kathy wonder if they are special too. Eddie drives home, while Kathy examines her prized stones very carefully on the way.

Out of the blue one day, Mark gets a phone call from Louis Zaino. When Mark was a sophomore in high school, Zaino was a senior. While Zaino wasn’t the fastest guy on the high school track team, he always managed to come through when the team needed him to. And, Zaino was always helping the freshmen and encouraging them every chance he got. Zaino asks that Mark meet him at the high school track. With little information why Zaino wants to meet, Mark heads over to the track, wondering what’s up with Louis Zaino these days.

Mark arrives at the high school, seeing Zaino walking around the track, checking it out. Walking across the red zone, Mark yells out to Zaino, “yo, bro! What’s going on?” Zaino yells back, “Mark! It’s great to

see you again!” Walking across the red zone holding a long cardboard tube, Zaino meets up with Mark, exchanging fist bumps like they did five years ago. Mark and Zaino catch up on the past five years as they walk toward the starting line.

Zaino mentions to Mark, “I saw your sign across the street, where the church is being built.” Mark replies, “yeah. Me, my father, and Eddie’s father are building the church for Dr. Akinmola. His son, Adekunle, is on the track team with us at the University. He showed up at the high school the year after you left.” Zaino asks, “so, you’re going to the University and you’re working?” Evading the question since he does not attend formal classes, Mark replies, “yeah. Sort of.” Mark then mentions, “the church will be done by Christmas. The plan is to have it ready for the first service on Christmas Eve.”

Getting down to business, Zaino tells Mark, “I was hired by the school board to convert this track to the metric system.” Mark exclaims, “wow! Is that what you went to college for?” Zaino explains, “yes. I went to college to be a landscape architect, but I’m specializing in sporting venues. Right now, there’s a lot of tracks around that need converting. Every track is a different story.” Mark comments, “that’s really cool.” Zaino continues, “but, I got a problem with this track. It’s too big.” Pointing to the inside cement curb, Zaino explains, “I got to rip out this curb, and move it in a few centimeters.” Thinking that moving a curb would be not much of a problem, Mark replies, “that should be easy enough.”

Zaino further explains, “on a metric track, the 400 meters is measured at 30 centimeters from the inside of lane one. Each lane has got to be 1.22 meters wide. So, the curb has to come out. I had the surveyors out here two weeks ago, and they already measured it.” Backtracking, Mark asks, “how did they come up with 1.22 meters?” Zaino laughs, and answers, “1.22 meters is four feet. That’s what the lane width is on an English system track. They just converted four feet to metric, and made that the metric standard. So much for the metric system.” Mark replies, “yeah. Really.”

Quite curious, Mark asks, “so, on a track, the actual distance is measured how far from the inside of the lane?” Drawing an approximate line in the gravel with his foot, Zaino replies, “in lane one, the 400 meters is measured 30 centimeters from the inside of the lane marker.” Mark asks, “so, if I run closer to the inside line, I’m running a shorter distance?”

Zaino replies, “yes. In lane one, on the line, it’s almost one meter shorter¹ on a 400-meter track.” Mark replies, “that’s good to know.”

Zaino tells Mark, “I design the track, but I don’t do the actual installation. If you have the time, I’d like to hire you to install the new design.” Mark asks, “what’s involved?” Zaino explains, “first, the curb has to come out, and we have to install a new one. They’ve decided to keep it a gravel track for now, but the contract says to replace the existing gravel. But, I designed the track so it can be easily converted to an all-weather surface when the time comes. I already have the calculations for the new track. Let me show it to you.” Mark and Zaino walk over to the team bench that they have sat on for years where Zaino pulls the blueprints for the new track out of the cardboard tube.

Seeing the blueprints, Mark exclaims, “wow! This looks really professional. Did you do this yourself?” Zaino replies, “yes.” Zaino has two sets of documents, each with several pages of drawings. The first set of documents is an “as built” survey of the existing track, and the second set of documents are the blueprints for the new track. Familiar with reading such documents, Mark studies the survey and blueprints. Walking over to the track for a moment, Mark returns to examine the documents again. Mark asks, “are you changing the diameter of the curve at all?” Zaino explains, “no. The curve diameter on this track is already correct. That’s a big help.”

Mark suggests, “I wouldn’t rip the old curb out just yet.” Zaino asks, “what are you thinking?” Mark explains, “the new curb is far enough in that the old curb could be used as a guide for the concrete forms. We’ll just put in the proper size spacer, and use that for the outside form. That will save you a lot of time and money.”

Understanding that accurately installing the forms for the new curb is quite a monumental task, a smile comes across Zaino’s face. Zaino tells Mark, “I never thought of that. The standard way of doing things is to rip out the old stuff, then get the surveyor in to lay out the new track. The forms for the curb are manufactured in a factory to my specs, and I have to install them. Then, once they’re installed, we pour the concrete.” Mark replies, “that seems like it would be way too complicated and really expensive.” Seeing the light, Zaino comments, “I can see that now.”

Zaino then informs Mark, “I’m working on a few other tracks right now too. One of them is over at Centerville.” Mark asks, “oh yeah? So, they’re

¹ On a metric track, the exact measurement at the inside most point of lane one is 0.94 meters shorter than the standard 400 meter length (399.06 meters).

converting to metric too?" Zaino replies, "in a way. On that track, lane one is about two-and-one-half yards short of a 440. It's already a metric track, but they sort of have it calibrated in yards. So, if you run the 440-yard dash on that track, in lane one, you're really running the 400-meter dash. And, where the markings are engraved in the curb for the staggering, the outside lane is actually something like 448 yards. Whoever calibrated that track couldn't have made it out of the sixth grade. It's a mess. Fortunately, over there at Centerville, 100 yards really is 100 yards on the sprinting track."

Quickly figuring out what Zaino actually said, Mark comments, "so, Centerville has been cheating all these years." Zaino replies, "it would seem that way. If I remember, they weren't a very good team anyway." Mark adds, "they weren't. No wonder their relay team got to State every year." Zaino tells Mark, "so, for that track, I'll get the surveyor out there next week and have it properly recalibrated." While they are on the subject of Centerville, Mark informs Zaino of the plight of Mr. Ruff, the Centerville coach, and the gambling operation that was busted wide open.

Zaino tells Mark, "another track I'm working on is the one over at our middle school. When I was in middle school, I always thought that track was a circle." Mark mentions, "that's weird. I always thought that track was a slightly flattened circle." Zaino explains, "it's really neither. That track is the most lopsided oval I've ever seen. Where the 440-yard track abuts the sprinting track, the 440-yard track is straight for 60 yards. On the other side, the 440-yard track is straight for 30 yards. And, technically, that track is 441 yards long. When they put that track in, they measured the lane distance at the curb. Whoever put that track in never had a moment of sobriety." Mark asks, "what are you going to do?" Zaino replies, "for that track, I have to rip it out and start from scratch. But, we'll get the one here at the high school done first."

Walking around the track, Mark and Zaino talk a little more about business. Mark is glad to pick up a job that is interesting to him. And, Zaino is glad to hear that, between Mark, Mark's father, and Eddie's father, they all have the expertise to get this, and similar future projects, done. Zaino informs Mark that the high school track is slated to be installed over the Winter next year. That is good news to Mark, since the church construction will be finished by then.

Over at Angelo's Service Station, things are going rather well for Angelo and Eddie. Occasionally, however, a repair does not go as well as originally planned, and the customer returns with a complaint. When a difficult client has a complaint with a repair, sometimes the situation can get a little heated. But, Angelo and Eddie can handle just about anything.

Today, as Eddie and Angelo are working together on finishing an engine rebuild that has to be completed by tomorrow, a customer walks in who is not too happy with a repair done to her vehicle last year. Walking into the service bays, a woman interrupts Angelo and Eddie, and yells, “one of you, get out here right now!” Angelo comments to Eddie, “wonderful. One of those again.” Eddie looks behind him, and tells Angelo, “that’s Mrs. Black. She must not be too happy with her Johnson Rod.”

Mimicking Mrs. Black’s demeanor, Angelo yells back, “what’s your problem?” Looking at her service ticket from another auto repair receipt, Mrs. Black yells back, “the Johnson Rod you put in last year broke! I thought you put in a good one!” Eddie asks Angelo, “do you want me to take care of her?” Angelo replies, “sure. Go ahead. Just get rid of her. We don’t have the time for her shit today.” Eddie replies, “got it.”

Eddie walks over to Mrs. Black, and asks, “so, your Johnson Rod failed?” Mrs. Black yells, “they said it was bad! I thought you put in a good one!” Mrs. Black shows Eddie the service receipt from Jake’s Garage, a repair facility on the other side of town. Eddie calmly tells Mrs. Black, “come into the office for a second. Let me see what’s up.”

Eddie gets on the phone, and calls Jake’s Garage. Jake answers the phone, and Eddie asks, “hey, Jake. Eddie here. How are you doing?” Jake talks with Eddie for a moment, as Mrs. Black listens to Eddie’s side of the conversation. Eddie then tells Jake, “hey. I have Mrs. Black here. I replaced her Johnson Rod last year. She tells me you recently replaced her Johnson Rod.” Jake replies to Eddie, who hands Mrs. Black the phone, telling her, “here. He wants to talk to you.”

Mrs. Black talks with Jake, who discusses the situation with her. Eddie listens, as Mrs. Black seems to be very agreeable as Jake explains the issue. After a two-minute conversation, Mrs. Black hands the phone back to Eddie. Eddie asks Jake, “did you clear it up for her?” Eddie listens to what Jake has to say, then tells Jake, “okay. Thanks.”

Eddie tells Mrs. Black, “so, what did he tell you?” Mrs. Black explains, “he said, on my model car, since it’s a V-8, there are two Johnson Rods.” Eddie replies, “exactly. There’s one on each side of the engine. So, one lasted a little longer than the other. Is there anything else we can do for you today?” Mrs. Black, quite embarrassed over her lack of automotive knowledge, tells Eddie, “no. But, why didn’t you replace the other Johnson Rod last year?” Eddie replies, “because it wasn’t broken. If we replaced it, and it wasn’t broke, you would have gotten mad at us.” Mrs. Black leaves, now appreciative of the fact that both of her Johnson Rods are in good shape.

Eddie returns to the service area, announcing, “she’s gone.” Angelo asks, “what was her problem?” Eddie explains, “Jake replaced her Johnson Rod. I got him on the phone. He explained to that idiot that, on a V-8, there are two Johnson Rods, one on the left side of the engine, and one on the right.” Angelo laughs, and admits, “wow! I didn’t know that. You learn something new every day.”

Mid Summer, right before the annual get-together at the county pool, Kathy and Karen head out to Karen’s parent’s house, which is about 80 miles away from the University. Karen wants to pick up her bicycle so that she has it for the next school year. Kathy and Karen borrow Paula’s bicycle carrier, install it in the receiver hitch in Kathy’s Dune Buggy, and are ready to go. Karen has a few other items that she wants to pick up from home as well. Space is limited in the Dune Buggy, but they’ll manage to make everything fit.

On the way, Kathy and Karen have a long talk, discussing track and sharing stories from their high school days. Karen also wonders how Kathy and Eddie can afford such a nice house. Kathy explains that Eddie has been studying the stock market since he was sixteen years old, and they’ve been investing for years. Kathy also shares that a few of the other team members also invest in the market, and have been doing well.

As they approach Karen’s parent’s house, Karen becomes noticeably anxious. Karen tells Kathy, “my mother is going to make a huge scene. This is going to totally suck. I apologize ahead of time.” Reassuring Karen, Kathy replies, “if she does, we’ll get your bicycle, load up your things, and get out of there fast.” Karen relates, “that will only make her madder.” Kathy explains, “in high school, our athletic director, Mr. Zunde, would say, ‘that would be her problem, not yours.’” Karen laughs, telling Kathy, “from what you guys have told me about Mr. Zunde, he seems like a pretty cool guy.” Kathy replies, “he really is. I’m going to miss him now that I’m not working with the high school team anymore.”

Karen tells Kathy, “okay. We’re coming up to it. It’s the house on the right with the Christmas tree in the front yard.” Kathy slows down, and pulls into the driveway. Kathy whispers to Karen, “maybe you’ll luck out and she’s not home.” Karen replies, “she’s almost always home. She’s probably in the kitchen, cleaning something that doesn’t need to be cleaned.” Kathy comments, “well, maybe it won’t be so bad. She might be happy to see you.”

Kathy and Karen get out of the Dune Buggy, and walk up to the front door. Karen gets out her key, and before she can put the key in the lock, Karen’s mother opens the door, announcing, “well, it’s about time you’ve come home. Did you forget where you lived?” Karen explains, “school and track take up a lot of time. And, I have to train over the Summer. Oh!

And, I got a job now! So, I've been really busy." Obviously perturbed, Karen's mother raises her voice, telling her, "oh. I see. So, you have no time for us anymore." Trying to change the subject, Karen tells her mother, "I came home to get my bicycle." Karen's mother replies, "it's in the garage, right where you left it."

Karen's mother asks, "and, who is this?" Kathy replies, "I'm Kathy. I went to the University. It's nice to meet you." Karen's mother asks Kathy, "went? Did you drop out or something?" Kathy replies, "no. I graduated. And, I'm going to graduate school next year." Already sick of her mother's curt attitude, Karen interjects, "Kathy's father is the athletic director at the University. He's the one who approved my scholarship." Backed into a corner, Kathy's mother replies, "oh. I see."

Karen and Kathy walk through the house to the garage and, seeing her father sitting in the family room, Karen exclaims, "hey, dad!" Karen's father gets out of his chair and, giving Karen a hug, tells her, "you're home! I'm so glad to see you! How are you?" Karen replies, "I'm really good. This is Kathy. She's on the track team with me. Well, she was. Kathy graduated this year, but she's going to graduate school next year." Kathy tells Karen's father, "it's so nice to meet you."

Karen and her father talk for about 45 minutes, as Karen's mother fusses around in the kitchen. Karen tells her father all about her last semester in school, when the track team won all the gold medals, and about the job she now has at the Summer day camp. Quite glad to hear that Karen is doing okay, her father asks if she needs anything. Karen tells him that she just needs to pick up a few things, number one on the list being her bicycle.

When it comes time to go, as Kathy puts Karen's bicycle on the bicycle carrier, Karen goes up to her room to get the other things she came home for. As Kathy is fastening Karen's bicycle to the bicycle carrier, Karen's father takes a close look at Kathy's Dune Buggy. Quite impressed, Karen's father comments, "your Dune Buggy looks very nice. Whoever built it did an excellent job." Kathy replies, "thank you. My husband, Eddie, built it. He's a mechanic." Looking over the vehicle, Karen's father astutely notices the engine, and mentions, "I'm taking it that's not a Volkswagen engine." Kathy replies, "it's a Porsche 911 engine. And, the front end is also from a 911. The frame was designed by a Georgia Tech engineer." Karen's father comments, "wow! Now, I'm even more impressed."

Karen comes out of the house with two boxes of her stuff, followed by her mother, who has been badgering her inside for the last fifteen minutes while Kathy and Karen's father were talking outside. Karen

places the two boxes on the floorboard on the passenger's side, making it perhaps a little cramped. But, Karen doesn't seem to care.

Karen tells her parents, "we're going to get back now." Karen's father gives her a long hug, and tells her, "I've missed you. It was so good to see you. I'm sorry you can't stay longer." Standing ten feet away, Karen's mother comments to Karen's father, "maybe we'll see her again before we die." Karen's father replies, "oh, Phyllis! She's grown up and on her own now. Give her a break!" Phyllis replies, "well, it would be nice if she could stay for more than an hour."

As they are standing in the driveway, Kathy tells Karen's parents, "you know, Karen is one of the better athletes on the track team. She did really good during her freshman year. Maybe you guys can come to one of the meets and watch her run." Karen's father replies, "I would really like that." He then tells Karen, "please let us know when the meets are. We'll make plans to come and watch you."

Giving an excuse, Karen's mother tells Kathy, "it's just so hot outside during those track meets." Negating the excuse, Kathy informs Karen's mother, "well, you can always come to the indoor divisional meet. It's held indoors, at the coliseum. And, all the other indoor meets are held indoors too." Karen informs her mother, "that's probably why they call it indoor track." Kathy tries not to laugh, and is only marginally successful. Karen's mother catches Karen's innuendo, turns around, and walks inside.

Kathy and Karen get into the Dune Buggy, and Kathy starts the engine. As they are pulling out of the driveway, Karen's father waves goodbye, walking out toward the road, watching as Kathy and Karen drive away. Sad that Karen had to leave so early, Karen's father looks down the road until the Dune Buggy is well out of sight. He then walks inside, where Karen's mother is already inside, pushing a sponge around in the kitchen.

On the way home, Kathy tells Karen, "well, at least, your dad is really nice." Karen explains, "yeah. He always wanted a little girl. I have two older brothers. One is married now, and the other one goes to another university. But, my mother didn't want any more kids, so she always told me that I was an accident." Kathy exclaims, "well, that really sucks!"

Karen confesses, "I really don't know what her problem is. She never wanted me, and still doesn't. So, I'm just sick of it." Kathy asks, "how do you know she never wanted you?" Karen explains, "when I was a kid, she always told me that she was going to put me up for adoption. And, if I misbehaved, she said she was going to call the police, and have them put me in the children's jail. Oh, and for nineteen years, she never once told me that she loves me. And, the icing on the cake is that my older brother

told me that she would never pick me up or hold me. She just let me lay there in the crib.” Kathy replies, “wow! What a shit.”

On the brighter side, Karen recalls, “oh! And, that was really funny, seeing her reaction when I said, ‘that’s probably why they call it indoor track.’” Kathy replies, “I didn’t mean to laugh, but that was kind of funny. Well, maybe they’ll come to one of the meets.” Karen tells Kathy, “I think my dad might, if it’s on a Saturday. I’ll let him know the dates next year.” Kathy replies, “that would be nice. Then, he’ll get to meet the team, and our coaches.”

Once they are home, they unload Karen’s bicycle and her stuff. Karen tells Kathy, “thank you so much for coming with me. If you weren’t there, my mother would have carried on and on.” Kathy replies, “yeah, I saw what you meant. She was a bit on the cranky side.” After putting Karen’s bicycle in the detached garage, Kathy and Karen head inside, where Karen unpacks her stuff. Kathy and Karen then put on their swimsuits, and head to the pool to unwind from the stressful afternoon.

Summer also brings the annual rematch between Tessa and Eddie in the 100-yard freestyle. Over this past year, Eddie has been focusing on track and not swimming much. Most of Eddie’s training for the rematch has been in the past few weeks. Tessa has been focusing on swimming, so Tessa will have a definite advantage this year. But, the wildcard is that, since the pool party at Eddie and Kathy’s house earlier in the Summer, Eddie has been working on his swimming a lot more.

Most everyone arrives by mid morning, generally a few at a time. Today, Eddie drives his Dune Buggy alone. In her Dune Buggy, Kathy drives Karen to the pool. Karen has been staying with Eddie and Kathy over the Summer while working at the Summer day camp. In the parking lot, eight Dune Buggies are all lined up together. Anyone walking through the parking lot can’t help to notice the perfectly matching Dune Buggies. Eddie just completed the ninth Dune Buggy, which has no one’s name on it yet.

Lena, a former lifeguard at the county pool, like Kathy, graduated this year. So did Andrea, who is now the head lifeguard at the county pool this Summer now that Lena has moved away. Andrea will be attending graduate school in the Autumn. Sherri, one of the other lifeguards working today, is still in college and will be around all Summer.

At the tables, Eddie asks Braden, “so, how are you doing in the stock market? It’s been a year now. Are you making enough money?” Braden replies, “I made a truck load of money! Thanks for all those tips!” Eddie reminds Braden, “don’t forget to sell them at the right times.” Braden replies, “you don’t have to worry about that. I don’t know what you’re

doing, but it's working for me." Braden, taking Eddie's advice, has made a lot of money in the stock market over the last year.

Eddie tells Braden, "Angelo has made a lot of money in the stock market too. He still comes in around noon, and leaves at five or six. He's now making more money in the stock market than he does as a mechanic. And, now he's under a lot less pressure. Nothing seems to bother him anymore. He's even taking vacations now." Fully understanding, Braden tells Eddie, "I can get that. That's a lot of good news."

Right before lunch, Eddie asks Tessa, "are you ready?" Faking a yawn, Tessa replies, "sure. I could really use a nap, but I think I'm up enough to whoop your butt." Tessa stands up, raising her arms over her head, faking another yawn. Perceiving that Tessa is very confident, Eddie's adrenaline level rises. Standing up, Eddie exclaims, "let's get this show on the road!" Tessa tells Eddie, "now, you're sounding like Braden." Kathy asks the group, "is anyone else racing?" Waiting for the race all Summer, Karen exclaims, "I'm in!" Amanda Drake, who is attending classes at the University over the Summer, replies, "me too!"

Mark asks, "where's the Chuckie? Didn't anyone invite the Chuckie this year?" Last year, Braden threw Chuckie into the pool, discovering that Chuckie cannot swim. Paula informs Mark, "you never know. The Chuckie could be around here somewhere. He's out of jail." Braden chimes in, telling everyone, "if the Chuckie's here, he's asking for another ass kicking."

With no more takers, the four contestants get warmed up as Kathy tells Andrea that the annual race is ready to start. Andrea blows her whistle, announcing that the pool will be closed for ten minutes. Clearing the pool takes five minutes, with the younger kids taking their time getting out of the water.

Andrea, the lifeguard, tells everyone to get ready. Eddie takes lane three and Tessa takes lane four. Karen takes lane five, and Amanda takes lane two. Sherri tells everyone to step back three feet from the pool's edge as the swimmers get into position. Kathy, Paula, and Barbara, the official judges for the last five years, get into position at the end of the pool. Andrea asks if everyone is ready, and they indicate that they are. Andrea briefly explains to Karen and Amanda how she will start the race.

Andrea announces, "take your mark." With everyone in position, Andrea blows her whistle, and the four swimmers dive into the pool, fighting it out for this year's bragging rights. Watching them dive in, it is easy to see that Karen and Amanda have swam in some capacity before.

Fully expecting to win this year, Tessa gets off to a strong start. Knowing that Tessa can outpace her in the pool, Eddie gives it all he's got right from the start. Seeing that Karen and Amanda are holding their own, Kathy tells Paula, "it looks like Karen and Amanda have swam before." Paula replies, "yeah, I'd say so." At the end of lap one, Eddie is first off the wall, followed by Tessa. Not far behind are Karen and Amanda, who both just demonstrated an unexpected impeccable flip turn.

The second lap of the four-lap race, brings an interesting development. By mid lap, Eddie is in the lead, but Amanda is side by side with Tessa. Not too far behind is Karen, who has been swimming laps in Eddie and Kathy's pool all Summer. At the wall, Eddie touches first and, after his flip turn, retains the lead. Tessa touches second, followed by Amanda, then Karen.

Realizing that Eddie is far in the lead, Tessa pours on the power during the third lap. Barbara mentions to Kathy, "what's up with Eddie this year? He's swimming quite the race today." Kathy explains, "since our pool party, he's been training in our pool a whole lot. He wants to win this year." Paula comments, "he's doing a good job of it."

Tessa, however, clearly does not want Eddie to win. At the end of the third lap, Tessa makes up a little ground, gaining on Eddie. And, to everyone's surprise, Karen is not too far behind Amanda. With Eddie in the lead, Tessa knows she has a lot to make up in the final lap.

Early in the last lap, Eddie still maintains the lead. Tessa, swimming as if this is a divisional competition, gains slowly on Eddie as the end of the race draws near. Approaching the wall, this year, beating Tessa by two yards, Eddie is the clear winner. Amanda takes third place, and Karen takes fourth place, both delivering respectable times.

Barbara announces, "the winner this year is Eddie!" In the pool, Tessa gives Eddie a high-five, telling him, "if you have more secrets, buddy, I want to hear them!" Tessa always thinks Eddie has developed some sort of new secret training method, and is holding out on her. Eddie smiles, and tells Tessa, "I don't have any training secrets. I trained right out in the open, so it can't be too much of a secret." Eddie and Tessa exchange high-fives with Amanda and Karen as they all get out of the pool.

The crowd cheers, not quite understanding the level of competition they were witnessing. Andrea announces the pool is open again, and the kids seemingly jump into the water all at once. The competitors head back to the tables, ready for lunch, which will be pizza.

After the race, Tessa asks Eddie, "so, how have you been training?" Eddie replies, "I've been swimming laps in my pool." Somewhat puzzled,

Tessa asks, “are you serious? Is that it?” Eddie replies, “I don’t really have any secrets.” Tessa exclaims, “you’re holding back on me!” Eddie replies, “well, I did change how I swam to train.” Tessa exclaims, “I knew it! I just knew it! What did you do different?” Eddie tells Tessa, “it will cost you a pizza.” Tessa exclaims, “sold!”

Eddie explains, “this year’s not so secret training secret is I practiced swimming with my clothes on.” Tessa asks, “that’s it?” Eddie replies, “yeah. If you swim with your clothes on, it creates a lot of drag, and you have to work harder. It’s the same principle as the training sled. When I raced you in my pool over the Summer, I was convinced that you were going to win this year’s rematch. You were really fast. Since I didn’t have much time, I had to think of a better way to train.” Tessa tells Eddie, “I guess I owe you a pizza.” Eddie replies, “that’s okay. We’re good.”

Over lunch, Braden asks Eddie, “so, how many of those Dune Buggies have you built?” Eddie replies, “nine so far. I just finished the ninth one.” Braden curiously asks, “whose name is on that one?” Eddie explains, “no one’s yet. Since I had all the parts, I just wanted to get it finished.” Braden asks, “what color is it?” Eddie replies, “it’s metallic silver with a gold racing stripe going down the center. Vinnie painted the stripe. Oh, and it has gold colored wheels, like mine.”

Overhearing Eddie and Braden’s conversation, Leslie Collins, who is sitting at an adjacent table, turns around and asks, “did I hear that someone has their Dune Buggy for sale?” Eddie replies, “I just finished another one.” Leslie asks, “really? How much is it?” Eddie replies, “I haven’t figured it out yet.” Eddie gives Leslie a ballpark figure, and she suddenly becomes very interested. Eddie then explains to Leslie, “the Dune Buggies are built on a square steel frame, not a Volkswagen body pan. And, it has a Porsche 911 drive train and front suspension.” Leslie asks Eddie, “can you show me yours after we finish lunch?” Eddie replies, “sure. No problem.”

Over lunch, Eddie, Braden, Bobby B., Johnson, and a few others who took Eddie’s stock market advice, discuss their profits over the last year. Bobby B. mentions that he and Erika are looking for a piece of property in the area that Eddie and Mark live. Erika also wants a house in the woods, falling in love with the serene setting. Braden mentions that he has invested nearly his whole salary in the stock market, since his only expenses are food and dates with Wendy.

In other conversation at lunch, Karen mentions to Kathy, “you have a really nice group of friends.” Kathy explains, “a lot of us went to high school together and ran on the track team. Somehow, we all ended up at the University.” Paula laughs, and chimes in, asking, “somehow?” Kathy smiles, and replies, “well, with a little help, I guess.” Paula tells Karen,

“Kathy worked triple overtime getting the group back together again.” Paula then tells Kathy, “that’s not just ‘somehow’ girl.” Kathy tells Paula, “well, you have to admit that, when Braden showed up that day, things really changed.” Paula relents, admitting, “you got that right.”

Continuing to yank Paula’s chain, Kathy comments, “and, we won’t even talk about what happened when Mr. Frazier showed up.” As Kathy gets another slice of pizza and puts it on her paper plate, Paula confesses, “okay. You win.” Kathy replies, “I always win.” Proving a point, Paula quickly snatches Kathy’s slice of pizza off Kathy’s plate and tells Kathy, “no, you don’t.” Paula takes a bite out of Kathy’s slice of pizza. Kathy just smiles, and reaches for another slice.

After lunch, Eddie asks Leslie, “so, do you want to go and take a look at the Dune Buggies?” Leslie replies, “sure. Let’s go.” Eddie picks up his keys, in case Leslie wants to see how the Dune Buggy drives. Braden mentions, “I think I’ll take a walk with you.” Bobby B. joins them, walking off the extra slice of pizza he indulged in. Walking through the gate, getting their hands stamped on the way out, they all head out to the parking lot. Leslie wonders if there is a Dune Buggy in her future.

Turning the corner, and seeing someone leaning over and looking inside of one of the Dune Buggies, Braden whispers, “everybody, get down.” They all duck behind a car, as Braden peeks around the rear of the automobile observing what is going down. Braden reports back, “that’s McCutchen’s ass! What’s he doing messing with the Dune Buggies?” Eddie replies, “I can only imagine. Whose is he messing with?” Braden replies, “the orange one. Whose is that? Paula’s?” Eddie replies, “yeah.”

Eddie suggests, “let’s ambush him.” Braden replies, “good idea. You take the right, and I’ll take the left.” Eddie tells Leslie, “go back, and get Paula.” Leslie heads back through the gate to get Paula, as Eddie and Braden get into position to rush McCutchen. Braden tells Bobby B., “follow me, and back us up.” With his hand, Braden gives the signal, and two of the fastest guys in the country rush the most incompetent athlete in the University’s history.

Covering 100 feet in less than four seconds, Eddie and Braden rush McCutchen. McCutchen turns around and, seeing that he has been caught, has little time to react. Before McCutchen can take two steps, Eddie is quickly there to greet him, placing McCutchen in an arm lock.

Eddie tells McCutchen, “remember the Chuckie, junior? Today’s your day!” Eddie tightens the arm lock, causing McCutchen to scream out in pain. In response to McCutchen’s outburst, Eddie tells McCutchen, “shut

up,” and kicks McCutchen behind his badly sprained right knee. McCutchen’s legs both buckle, tightening the arm lock further.

Giving McCutchen a break, Eddie loosens the arm lock, telling McCutchen, “Officer Braden is going to ask you a few questions. You’re going to answer them. If you don’t, I’m breaking your arm. If you still don’t answer, I’ll break your other arm. Then, I’ll move on to your legs. It’s kind of like a game of hangman, like the kids play, except I’m breaking your bones instead of drawing body parts on a paper. Got it?” McCutchen screams, “yeah! Yeah! Just let me go!” Eddie replies, “no.”

While Eddie is restraining McCutchen, Braden tells Bobby B., “get on the radio, on channel nine, and ask if a REACT² member is monitoring. If someone is, tell them to get a uniform officer out here to the pool.” Bobby B. gets on the radio, as Braden again focuses his attention to McCutchen.

Braden asks McCutchen, “what was your ass doing messing with Paula’s Dune Buggy?” McCutchen replies, “nothing! I was just checking it out!” Eddie exclaims, “bullshit,” as he tightens the arm lock, causing McCutchen excruciating pain. Braden tells McCutchen, “I’m gonna ask you again! What was your ass doing messing with Paula’s Dune Buggy?” McCutchen exclaims, “I said, nothing! I told you!” Eddie slowly tightens the arm lock, telling McCutchen, “I guess you really don’t want your arm, junior.” McCutchen screams out in pain, as sweat begins to fall from his face.

Bobby B. interrupts, and tells Braden, “I got someone on the radio. They said an officer is on the way.” Braden tells Bobby B., “good.” Braden tells McCutchen, “it looks like your ass is gonna go to jail, junior.” McCutchen insists, “I didn’t do anything!” Braden tells McCutchen, “yeah, right. Ain’t nobody gonna believe that. There’s 3.8 million square miles in this country, and your ass just happens to be leaning over Paula’s Dune Buggy.”

Paula arrives with Leslie. Bobby B. fills Paula in on what is going on. Braden tells Paula, “check your Dune Buggy, and make sure everything is there. Check everything.” Paula looks at McCutchen, telling him, “you piece of shit!” Paula searches her Dune Buggy, while McCutchen secretly hopes the police will arrive quickly to get Eddie off his back.

² REACT: Radio Emergency Associated Communication Teams. An organized group of civilians monitoring emergency communication channels. Established 1962.

Walking toward McCutchen, Paula again exclaims, “you piece of shit,” and kicks McCutchen in his balls. McCutchen screams out in pain. Eddie tells McCutchen, “shut up, junior, or I’ll break your arm!” Acting quite defiant, McCutchen back kicks Eddie. Eddie forcefully twists McCutchen’s arm, dislocating his shoulder and perhaps tearing his rotator cuff. McCutchen screams out in even more pain. With McCutchen pretty well worked over, Eddie forcefully shoves McCutchen to the ground. It’s not likely that McCutchen is going to escape from this group.

Braden asks Paula, “did you find something?” Paula exclaims, “yeah! Come here, and I’ll show you.” Showing Braden what she found between the passenger’s seat and the body, Braden exclaims, “that looks like a bag of marijuana to me! Don’t touch it. I bet McCutchen’s prints are all over that bag.” Hearing what Braden said, Paula kicks McCutchen in his ass, screaming, “you piece of shit.” Paula never really liked McCutchen, and has absolutely no problem expressing it.

Mark arrives and, seeing McCutchen laying on the ground, comments, “he don’t look too good.” Eddie replies, “at least his hair grew back.” Mark observes, “it looks like he’s stressed again.” Paula tells Mark, “that asshole just planted pot in my Dune Buggy!” Braden tells Mark, “go back to the pool, and get everyone who has a Dune Buggy. I bet Paula’s ain’t the only one he stashed weed in.” Mark heads back to the pool, gathering the Dune Buggy owners.

Hearing what was found in Paula’s Dune Buggy, Bobby B. searches his own Dune Buggy. Also finding a dime bag of marijuana between his passenger seat and the body, Bobby B. walks back, intentionally stepping on McCutchen’s back as he returns, and informs Braden, “he planted one in my Dune Buggy too. I left it there.” Braden replies, “good. His fat ass is gonna end up in jail again.”

Everyone with a Dune Buggy checks their vehicle with Braden’s help. As it turns out, four of the eight Dune Buggies have had marijuana planted in the identical location. Leaving the evidence undisturbed, Braden awaits the police. Meanwhile, McCutchen lies on the ground, afraid to move.

Now that she has calmed down, Paula whispers to Braden, “he’s not here alone. Don’t make it too obvious, but Harry Dulaney is in his car, on the other side of the lane, about ten cars down. He’s watching us.” Braden whispers to Paula, “so, that’s how McCutchen’s ass got here. Last I knew, McCutchen didn’t have no car.” Braden cautiously glances over, seeing Dulaney laying low.

The police arrive, and quickly figure out where in the parking lot the problem is. Officer Braden greets Officer Richard Hayes, telling him, “we

got a complicated situation here. It involves McCrutchen again.” Officer Hayes asks, “really ? What’s up?” Braden explains, “I have evidence that McCrutchen planted marijuana in a few of the Dune Buggies. But, I got a problem. About eight cars down on the other side of the lane is a guy named Harry Dulaney. He’s sitting in his car. I think he’s involved.” Discreetly glancing over at Dulaney, Officer Hayes tells Braden, “I’ll block him in.” Officer Hayes drives away, stopping his car in front of Dulaney’s car, blocking Dulaney in. Dulaney is now laying on his seat, hiding from view.

Officer Hayes walks over, telling Braden, “show me what you got.” Braden explains, “we caught McCrutchen hanging around the Dune Buggies. Paula found marijuana in her Dune Buggy, so did Bobby B., Johnson, and Tessa. It looks like he was working his way down the line.” Officer Hayes tells Braden, “show me what you found.” Officer Hayes and Braden take a walk around, finding four identical packages of marijuana planted in the same location in each vehicle.

Officer Hayes asks, “how is this Dulaney character involved?” Braden explains, “I don’t exactly know yet. He’s on the track team at the University. McCrutchen doesn’t have a car. So, I think he might have drove McCrutchen here. I suspect you’ll find some more marijuana in his car.” Officer Hayes tells his partner, Officer Barkley, “radio for a back up, then go over, and bring that Dulaney character here.” Officer Barkley radios for a back up unit, then walks over to retrieve Dulaney, as Braden further explains the situation.

After getting Braden’s statement, Officer Hayes tells McCutchen, “you, on the ground! Stand up.” Slow to get up, McCutchen yells out, “they attacked me!” Braden bluntly tells McCutchen, “you were restrained when you were caught violating personal property rights.”

Officer Hayes tells McCutchen, “explain to me what you were doing.” McCutchen maintains, “I was just checking out the Dune Buggies.” Officer Hayes replies, “sure you were.” Officer Hayes then asks, “where’s your swimsuit?” McCutchen replies, “I don’t have one.” With McCutchen backed into a corner, Officer Hayes announces, “well, let’s see now. Going to a pool with no swimsuit. Pot stashed in four Dune Buggies. A history of setups. Several prior clashes with the same group. It’s not hard to see where this one is going.”

Officer Hayes commands McCutchen, “empty your pockets.” McCutchen reluctantly obeys, voluntarily removing his wallet, keys, and two more bags of marijuana, identical to the ones planted in the four vehicles. Officer Hayes opens one of the bags, taking a whiff of the contents. Knowing exactly what is in the bag, Officer Hayes tells

McCutchen, "Todd McCutchen, you are under arrest for the possession of marijuana." McCutchen is placed in handcuffs and read his rights.

Officer Barkley returns with Dulaney, who is also in handcuffs. Officer Hayes asks, "what do you got?" Officer Barkley replies, "assaulting an officer, for one. And, I found three bags of marijuana under the seat." By assaulting Officer Barkley, Dulaney granted him probable cause to search his vehicle.

Already knowing the answer, Officer Hayes asks the question to McCutchen and Dulaney, "do you two know each other?" McCutchen replies, "no," at the same time Dulaney replies, "yes." Braden interjects, "they know each other. They were on the University track team together, until McCutchen got his ass kicked off the team for intentionally ramming a baton into Kathy's ass."

Braden asks McCutchen, "how did you two guys know we were here anyway?" Dulaney replies, "I ain't telling you anything." Braden tells Dulaney, "that's okay, junior. They'll find out sooner or later." Amanda Drake pipes up and tells Braden, "I know how he knew we were here." Officer Hayes tells Amanda, "tell me. I'm interested to hear this." Amanda explains, "he asked me out on a date, and I told him 'no' for the tenth time. He kept asking me all year, and I kept telling him 'no'. So, the last time he asked me out on a date, I told him I can't because I'm going to the pool with some of the track team members. So, he asked me, 'with that Mark guy and everyone else?' I told him, 'wouldn't you like to know?' That guy just won't leave me alone." Braden laughs, and comments, "it looks to me like he'll be leaving you alone now."

McCutchen, kind of miffed that Dulaney has been asking Amanda out, gives Dulaney a dirty look. McCutchen tells Dulaney, "what? You asked her out? I told you. I wanted to ask her out." Dulaney replies, "well, you never did. So, I did." Amanda chimes in, telling McCutchen and Dulaney, "I'm not dating either of you two losers." Braden advises McCutchen and Dulaney, "if your fat asses hadn't noticed by now, Amanda is way out of your league."

Once the backup officers have arrived, Officer Hayes retrieves the evidence from the Dune Buggies, noting the tag numbers of the vehicles and what was retrieved from each one. Getting statements from those involved, Officer Hayes gets enough information for his report. Dulaney and McCutchen are hauled off to jail once again, as most of the group heads back to the pool for hopefully what will be a more relaxing afternoon.

Eddie asks Leslie, "now, where were we?" Leslie replies, "you were going to show me the Dune Buggies. But, in the last hour, I got a really

good look at all of them. They're really pretty nice." Eddie tells her, "hop in, and we'll go for a ride." Eddie and Leslie get into Eddie's Dune Buggy, and they go for a short ride.

During the test drive, Leslie asks Eddie, "what was up with that guy anyway?" Eddie explains to Leslie the long history behind McCutchen, going way back to middle school. Also explaining McCutchen's father's involvement in the organized gambling ring, Eddie surmises that McCutchen is trying to get the group back.

On the subject of the Dune Buggy, Leslie tells Eddie, "this is so cool!" Eddie lets Leslie drive his Dune Buggy back to the pool. Behind the steering wheel, Leslie is even more impressed. On the way back, Leslie asks, "how fast will it go?" Eddie replies, "Kurt Richter, the guy who designed it, says it will do 140 miles per hour. But, I wouldn't take it that fast. Mine has a turbo engine. So, it will probably go a little faster." Leslie asks, "can you really drive these on the beach?" Eddie replies, "yeah. We've all been to the beach a few times together with them. Kathy and Paula like to race each other on the beach."

Arriving back at the pool, Leslie tells Eddie, "I might want the one you have for sale." Eddie offers, "you can come by and check it out sometime." As they walk through the gate, Eddie mentions, "I hope the rest of the afternoon goes a little better. Last year, two guys attacked Braden and, this year, it's McCutchen." Leslie observes, "it looks like everyone's over at the tables." Eddie suggests, "let's go join them."

Eddie walks up, asking, "what did we miss?" Braden replies, "we were just thinking of ways to get Dulaney off the team. We don't need his sorry ass no more." Eddie suggests, "ramming the baton into his ass might work." Braden replies, "that's on the list." Mark mentions, "the stress might make him go bald, just like McCutchen." Eddie replies, "I can see that happening too."

Eddie tells Kathy, "you'll be a coach next year. Why don't you just cut him?" Kathy smiles, and replies, "Mr. Frazier said that we had a whole lot of applicants this year for track. He mentioned they only took the best." Mark asks, "did that Dulaney guy win anything last year?" Kathy replies, "no." Eddie tells Kathy, "so, just cut him." Mark points out, "but, that will take the fun out of getting rid of him." Eddie replies, "okay. We'll just make him look as incompetent as Jimmy O'Brien or the Chuckie." Johnson comments, "that shouldn't be too hard to do."

Eddie announces, "well, I'm jumping in." Eddie heads for the pool, and does a cannonball into the deep end, getting a few tribe members wet. Eddie's cannonball reminds Bobby B. of last year's cannonball contest, which he distinctly won. Bobby B. announces, "so, are there any

challengers for this year's cannonball contest?" Mark replies, "I'll go for it." Braden announces, "count me in!" Kathy yells out to Eddie, "hey! Are you joining the cannonball contest?" Eddie yells back, "sure!"

Mark asks Bobby B., "so, still no rules?" Bobby B. replies, "yeah. No rules. The farthest splash onto the concrete deck wins." Sounding very confident that he will win again this year, Bobby B. gets up out of his seat and heads to the edge of the pool. Kathy, Paula, and Barbara will again be the judges, and get into position, each standing on one side of the pool at the deep end.

Confident that he already won, Bobby B. announces, "I won!" Mark announces, "not this year, bro!" Deciding that he is going first, Bobby B. carefully plans his trajectory and landing point. Using the same strategy as last year, Bobby B. gets a running start, and flies through the air, entering the deep end of the pool near the edge on a slight angle. Making a huge splash, Bobby B. gets a few people in the area wet, including Barbara and Kathy. The judges take the measurements by finding the point of the farthest splash. Barbara announces, "the splash went way past the concrete and into the bushes!" Bobby B. comes out of the water, announcing, "I won!"

Mark goes second. Using Bobby B's. strategy this year, Mark gets a running start. Getting more altitude than Bobby B., Mark flies through the air, and also enters the pool on an angle. This year, Mark's splash goes much farther than last year. Searching out the farthest splash from the pool's edge, the three judges stand at the point of Mark's farthest splash. Again, Barbara announces, "the splash went past the concrete!" Kathy asks, "who had more water on the concrete? Bobby B. or Mark?" Barbara replies, "Bobby B." Barbara suggests, "that would probably make his splash bigger and farther." It is agreed that Bobby B. is still in the lead. With Mark in second place, two more contestants have yet to go.

Eddie goes next and, like last year, decides to use the diving board, but with a revised technique. Eddie takes three bounces, getting as much altitude as he can. Taking off toward the edge of the pool this year instead of the center, Eddie enters the pool at an angle, making a huge splash. Bobby B. looks worried. This time, it is Kathy who gets wet, searching for the farthest splash. On the other side of the pool, Paula remains dry. Eddie thinks he might have beaten Bobby B. Kathy and Barbara stand at the point of Eddie's farthest splash. Barbara announces, "from the looks of things here, Eddie is now in first place." As Braden gets ready, Bobby B. measures the distance of his and Eddie's splash, carefully counting the steps to the farthest splash. Bobby B. reluctantly confirms that Eddie, in fact, is in first place.

Impressed with Eddie's technique, Braden gets on the diving board. Braden takes a few check bounces, then takes three strong bounces. Leaving the diving board at a lower angle than Eddie, Braden approaches the edge of the pool closer than Eddie did. Making a huge splash, Braden moves a lot of water in the direction of Kathy. This time, however, Kathy, standing farther back, does not get wet. Braden surfaces, hopeful that his attempt is the winning try.

After coming to a consensus, announcing the winner, Kathy yells out, "this year, Braden is the winner!" Braden exclaims, "yes!" A little disappointed, Bobby B. gives Braden a high-five, congratulating him on his victory. Bobby B.'s title of the grand pooh bah of the cannonball is taken away from him, causing him to revise his technique by next year if he is to win.

Although the contest is over, Bobby B. is not. Heading toward the diving board, Bobby B. decides to give Braden's technique a try. Taking a few bounces, Bobby B. tries out the diving board. Taking two solid bounces on the board, Bobby B. gets a lot of height, and lands vertically in the water, sending a shock wave through the pool. Refining his newly found technique, Bobby B. makes a few more attempts from the diving board, experimenting with different angles. Convinced that he will win next year, Bobby B. heads to the tables, joining the rest of the group.

Invited to join the tribe today were a few new members of the track team. Over the last year, Eddie has perceived that these five new members of the team can be trusted. Kathy has detected no bullshit with them. Sitting at the tables, Karen mentions to Kathy, "you guys really have a lot of fun. Today was like right out of a movie or something." Kathy replies, "this is our tribe." Karen asks, "tribe?" Kathy replies, "yeah. In life, you have to find your tribe." Karen tells Kathy, "I think I found my tribe." Kathy tells Karen, "that's why we invited you, Leslie, Amanda, Michelle, and Running Bull."

Karen asks, "how did you come up with calling your friends a tribe? That's really cool." Kathy explains, "wow! This goes way back. In our high school, every year, Mr. Frazier arranged a freshmen versus sophomore football game in gym class. When Eddie was a freshman, Mark, Braden, Bobby B., and Gump were all in the same gym class. This guy in the class, Anthony Ambrosini, was a sophomore who was on the football team. So Eddie intercepted the ball, and ran for a touchdown. Ambrosini was so mad, and yelled at Eddie, 'what kind of tribe are you running?' That day, the freshmen creamed the sophomores. It was a pretty good game. I had a really good view. The last period of the day was Mr. O'Brien's social studies class. That class was so boring, so I watched the game out the window. Since then, we were known as the tribe."

Karen sighs, and tells Kathy, "I've heard a lot of stories about your high school. In a way, I wish I went there." Kathy tells Karen, "well, you're at the University for three more years. Welcome to your tribe." Karen tries not to show her tears of happiness, but is not too successful.

Thinking back, Kathy tells Karen, "our high school wasn't all fun and games. Our principal, Mr. Crum, was always interfering with athletics, trying to suspend athletes, or sending them to detention. He even tried to keep Eddie from graduating. But, as I look back, it made us all stronger, even Mr. Frazier. Did you see how he treated Dean Grimsby this year?" Karen replies, "yeah. He took care of him pretty good. And, that was really funny when Mr. Frazier told Dean Grimsby to go and look for overdue library books." Kathy explains, "Mr. Frazier got that line from Mr. Zunde. And, Mr. Frazier's attitude toward Dean Grimsby comes from having to deal with Mr. Crum for more than a decade."

Karen mentions, "Mr. Frazier doesn't seem to care too much for McCutchen." Kathy explains, "last year, McCutchen planted steroids in Eddie's and Mark's lockers. Eddie almost got kicked out of the University. They kicked McCutchen out, but then Dean Grimsby let him back in again. The only reason Mr. Frazier kept McCutchen around so long is because Mark likes messing with him. But, so, McCutchen was fixing the outcome of the races, by running erratic times. So, when McCutchen jammed the baton into my ass, Mr. Frazier just got rid of him. And, you heard everyone before. Dulaney's gone next year." Karen mentions, "yeah, I can see that. He was bothering Amanda all last year. So was that McCutchen guy. Amanda will be really glad to see him gone." Kathy explains, "the guys will get rid of him. If they can't, Mr. Frazier will."

Karen thinks, and deduces, "so, that's why Eddie roughed McCutchen up in the parking lot." Kathy explains, "McCutchen got off easy. The Chuckie did not." To clarify, Karen asks, "Chuckie? That's the guy who threw the javelin at Eddie?" Kathy replies, "yeah. That's the guy."

Karen observes, "the police officer didn't seem to care that McCutchen's arm was hurting." Kathy tells Karen, "that was Officer Richard Hayes. Richard is a really good guy. Get this. When Braden was a senior, a guy named Andrew Goldstein intentionally tripped Braden a few yards into a 440-yard dash. Braden went down hard. Braden got up and, in like fifteen seconds, knocked out Goldshit, tore up his shoulder, and broke his jaw. So, on the day they busted Mr. Crum, the principal, for distributing drugs, we saw Richard. Richard told us, 'just between you and me, we were all very happy down at the precinct when Axel Braden took him out.'" Karen comments, "wow! You guys had to put up with a lot of shit."

Kathy sits back, and thinks for a moment, telling Karen, “you know, all the shit we’ve had to put up with in high school and at the University is all Mr. Crum’s uncle’s doing. I hope they put him away for a long time. But, anyway, hopefully next year will have a lot less drama.”

Overhearing the conversation, Paula adds, “that would be nice, but you know that ain’t happening, girl.” Sounding intentionally naive, Kathy asks, “now, what could possibly go wrong next year?” Paula replies, “seriously, girl? You have to ask? We won all the gold medals! Everyone is going to be after our team next year!” Kathy smiles, and tells Paula, “well, you do have a point. I guess everyone will have to train harder. We’ll have to crack our whips!”

Also overhearing the conversation is Mark, who is sitting with Paula. Changing the subject, Mark tells everyone who is sitting around, “you know, the electric company is one big scam.” Kathy asks, “oh yeah? How is that?” Mark explains, “they send electricity down one wire, we use it, and then we send it back to them through the other wire. Then, they just send it back down the wire again. So, they charge us for the electricity, and we send it right back to them. They never really create any new electricity.” Paula tells Mark, “that can’t be!” Mark tells Paula, “sure it is. The electricity is supplied by the black wire, which is the one on the right side of the plug. Try clipping off the left prong on a lamp, and see if it works.” Kathy comments, “that’s interesting. I never thought about that.”

Eddie laughs, quite aware that Mark is messing with everyone. Kathy asks Eddie, “what’s so funny?” Validating Mark’s illustration, Eddie replies, “Mark does have a point. If you stick your finger in the right side of the socket, you’ll get a shock. If you stick your finger in the left side, you won’t get a shock.” Mark adds, “unless it’s not wired right, or upside down.” Eddie suggests, “so, when you get a shock, the electric company gets ticked off, because the electricity is not sent back to them.” Paula exclaims, “you guys are messing with us!” Kathy agrees, adding, “yeah. This is beginning to sound a little like metric time.”

Karen asks, “what’s metric time?” Paula laughs, commenting, “please! Not this again!” Kathy explains to Karen, “in metric time, instead of sixty minutes in one hour, there are one-hundred minutes in one hour. And, instead of sixty seconds in a minute, there are one-hundred seconds in a minute. When the track is converted over to meters, they’ll be timing us with metric stopwatches.” Mark quickly adds, “it’s really hard to find a metric stopwatch in this country. It’s a good thing that the electronic timers are metric.” Paula laughs, and exclaims, “not! Stop it!”

Sitting quietly with Amber, Mitchell is taking all the comedy in. Throwing a monkey wrench into the works, Mitchell tells everyone, “someday, they might just go back to using the metric calendar.” Paula

quickly tells Mitchell, “there’s no such thing!” Mitchell explains, “sure there is. Instead of twelve months, there are ten months. In a metric calendar, there is no January or February.” Paula replies, “okay, seriously, you’re making this up!” Knowing that Mitchell has some explanation coming, Mark tells Paula, “no, he’s not.”

Acting as if he already knows everything about a metric calendar, Mark tells Mitchell, “explain it to them.” Mitchell explains, “in a metric calendar, there is no January or February. Think about it. In our calendar, September is the ninth month. But, the prefix sept- means seven. And, in our calendar, October is the tenth month. But, the prefix oct- means eight. Like in octopus. An octopus has eight legs, not ten.” Eddie interjects, “yeah. Like octane.” Mitchell continues, “November is the eleventh month, but the prefix nov- means nine. And, if you still don’t believe me, December is the twelfth month, and the prefix dec- means ten. Like, in the decimal system. So, December is the tenth month in the metric calendar.” Mark, quickly supporting Mitchell’s claim exclaims, “see that? I told you he wasn’t making this up!”

Kathy tells Karen, “this is exactly what you’d have to put up with if you went to our high school.” Karen tells Kathy, “all this sounds a little fishy to me.” Kathy replies, “yeah. It smells a little fishy too. Mark is the master of messing with people. And, that’s what he’s doing right now. And, now Mitchell is even in on it.”

As Mitchell argues his point regarding the metric calendar, Kathy explains to Karen all about metric time, and how Mark actually believed it for quite a while. And, no one really believes Mark about the electric company being a scam, but no one in the group has a better explanation.

As it gets late in the afternoon, everyone gathers their stuff, and gets ready to head out. Kathy tells the five newcomers to the group, “we’re all heading for pizza now, if you guys want to come.” Karen doesn’t have much choice, since she rode with Kathy. But, Karen is all in anyway. And, by now, anyone on the University track team has figured out that pizza follows any special event.

As the end of Summer draws near, Kathy has been contemplating Eddie’s theory of parallel universes, trying to make sense out of something that makes no sense at all to her. Kathy and Paula are curious whether they can enter a parallel universe at all, but Eddie thinks they might just enter a parallel universe every time they enter the portal. With classes and track about to start at the University, Kathy and Paula head to the portal alone to see what they can find out.

Arriving at the portal, Paula asks, “so, what are we going to do?” Kathy replies, “I don’t know. I was hoping you did.” Paula suggests, “why

don't we go to a parallel universe where Eddie never found the portal?" Kathy quickly replies, "I don't want to do that." Paula asks, "why not?" Kathy explains, "because, in that parallel universe, I would be dead because I took that stupid antibiotic." Paula replies, "oh, yeah. We definitely don't want to go to that universe."

Thinking about it for a moment, Kathy suggests, "why don't we see if we can go to a parallel universe where Eddie didn't invest in gold and the stock market. Then, we can find out where we live." Paula exclaims, "but, then, what if we can't get back?" Kathy explains, "if we can get there, we can get back. The portal will still be there." Paula sighs, and replies, "oh, yeah. Duh."

Entering the portal, Kathy raises her right arm, and states, "take us to a parallel universe where Eddie never invested in gold and the stock market." Arriving at their destination, not much has appeared to have changed. Kathy announces, "well, here we are! Maybe. Everything still looks the same." Paula asks, "now what?" Kathy thinks, and replies, "let's head up the street to where the record shop is." Paula asks, "why the record shop?" Kathy replies, "to look at the telephone directory. There's a phone booth there. I want to see where I live."

Riding to the strip mall where the record shop, jewelry store, and coin store are, Kathy and Paula head to the phone booth. Looking through the telephone directory to see if they can find their names, they hope to find out where they now live. Finding her name and Eddie's listed in the book, Kathy exclaims, "in this universe, me and Eddie are married!" Kathy tears out the page and, folding it up, puts it in her pocket. Paula asks, "where do you live, girl?" Yanking Paula's chain, Kathy replies, "on Second Street." Paula exclaims, "you do not!" Kathy replies, "okay. I'm busted. Me and Eddie live on Poplar Street." Paula asks, "where's that?" Kathy explains, "it's on the other side of town. Lena, the lifeguard at the pool, lives somewhere on that street."

Now impatient, Paula tells Kathy, "let me see that!" Paula frantically looks through the directory, looking for her name. Finding her's and Mark's names, Paula exclaims, "me and Mark are married too!" Kathy asks, "where do you guys live?" Paula replies, "on Ivy Avenue, wherever that is." Kathy tells Paula, "it's down the street from Poplar Street. All the streets in that area of town are named after plants."

Kathy tells Paula, "I want to go see where I live." Paula replies, "I'm following you. I have no idea where we're going." Riding over to the far side of town, Kathy and Paula pass by the homes they grew up in, noticing that everything looks pretty much the same as in their universe.

Arriving at Poplar Street, Kathy rides down the road, looking for the house. Suddenly stopping, Kathy exclaims, "that's where me and Eddie live! That's Lena's house! I wonder why we live in Lena's house." Paula mentions, "that's kind of like a cute house." Kathy wants to knock on the door, but she suspects no one is home since there are no cars in the driveway. Kathy tells Paula, "I don't see my Porsche, and I don't see Eddie's MGB." Kathy looks around for a while, then Paula tells Kathy, "let's go see where I live." Kathy informs Paula, "it's not far from here."

Just as they are ready to ride to Paula's house, Kathy's counterpart in this parallel universe drives down the street in her Porsche 914. Kathy tells Paula, "we're busted." Paula replies, "yeah. I see that." With her counterpart in the parallel universe now seeing her, Kathy tells Paula, "I guess we can't exactly ride away now."

Kathy's counterpart drives up, and yells out to Kathy, "don't tell me I took another antibiotic or something!" Kathy replies, "no! But, you're not going to believe what we just found out!" Kathy's counterpart gets out of her car, and tells Kathy and Paula, "come inside with me. Everyone's going to think I have a twin sister. I'd hate to try to explain that." Paula replies, "good point." Kathy's counterpart, Kathy, and Paula head inside, where they all sit in the eat-in kitchen at the table.

Kathy's counterpart asks, "what's up?" Kathy explains to her counterpart, "we found out something new about the portal. We told it to take us to a parallel universe where Eddie didn't invest in gold or the stock market, and here we are. I looked up where I lived in a telephone directory. And, we found out I live here. So, we came to see."

Not fully understanding what Kathy is saying, Kathy's counterpart explains, "this is Lena's parent's house. Her dad got transferred to Germany for three years, so we're house sitting. We have to move out when they come back. We're saving up money so we can buy our own house someday." Kathy immediately knows there is something drastically different about this universe.

Kathy asks, "so, where's Eddie now? Is he at work?" Kathy's counterpart explains, "yeah. He's working at Angelo's right now. He gets off work at nine tonight." Kathy replies, "wow! How many hours does he work?" Kathy's counterpart explains, "usually, Eddie works about 60 hours a week at the service station. He also works at Vito's Bicycle Shop, where he repairs bicycles."

Kathy's counterpart asks, "what's all this about a parallel universe?" Kathy explains, "we told the portal to take us to a parallel universe where Eddie didn't invest in gold or the stock market. So, that's how we got here. And, it's even the same day in our universe as it is in yours."

Kathy's counterpart asks Kathy, "then, how is it that you're not at work?" Kathy replies, "I took the Summer off before I go to grad school next year." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "wait! You're going to grad school? How am I not?" Kathy replies, "wow! This is getting deep." Kathy then asks her counterpart, "where do you work?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "at the Summer day camp. I might start teaching gym at one of the elementary schools soon. But, for right now, when school starts, I'll be substitute teaching. But, that's okay. An opening will come up for me sometime."

Quite curious, Kathy's counterpart asks, "deep? How is your universe different?" Kathy explains, "well, for one, in my universe, I don't live here." Interrupting Kathy, Kathy's counterpart asks, "where do you live?" Kathy replies, "we live on Rolling Hill Road." Kathy's counterpart suddenly exclaims, "what? Over by the University? How are you living there? Only millionaires live in that area!" Kathy continues, "I'll explain that in a minute. But, other things in my universe are different too. Like, Eddie only works twenty hours a week. And, Mark and Paula live over on Orchard Lane." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "no way! Are you serious?" Paula assures her, "yeah, we do. Mark built our house himself. And, Bobby B. helped." Kathy's counterpart sits back in amazement, wondering how what she is hearing could possibly be true.

Now curious, Kathy asks her counterpart, "in your universe, did Eddie run track at the University?" Kathy's counterpart explains, "no. Eddie never even graduated high school. He started working at Angelo's right after Mr. Crum told him that he wouldn't graduate." Kathy asks, "how about Braden? Did he run track at the University?" Kathy's counterpart explains, "no. We saw Braden once during the year after we graduated. He came back into town, and left again. He said he got a job somewhere as a police officer. After he left, we hadn't heard from him." Kathy then asks, "how about Mitchell?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "I heard he came back one Christmas, but then he left again to organize races because no one was around anymore. I haven't heard from him since." Paula mentions, "wow! This really is a totally different universe. Everyone has gone their own way."

Now wondering, Kathy asks, "okay. So, who is the track coach at the high school?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "Mr. Frazier. Everything's just like it's always been." Kathy asks, "and, so Mr. Crum is still the principal?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah. Nothing's really changed." Kathy replies, "wow! I can't believe it!" Kathy's counterpart asks, "believe what?" Kathy explains, "in our universe, Mr. Frazier is now the track coach at the University, and Mr. Crum is sitting in jail." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "seriously? You've got to be kidding me!" Paula adds, "and, Barbara is the track coach at the high school." Kathy's counterpart replies, "wow! Really? I miss Barbara. Her and Johnson are still together, but she lives a

long way away. She teaches gym at an elementary school. She would really rather have a job closer to here. And, Johnson has another year until he graduates.”

Paula asks Kathy’s counterpart, “how about Bobby B.?” Kathy’s counterpart replies, “he left for Florida after graduation. I haven’t heard from him since. But, one day when I was visiting my mom and dad, I dropped by his house to see his parents. They told me he’s now a stone mason.”

Paula asks, “and, how about Erika?” Kathy’s counterpart explains, “after high school, she went to the police academy. I’m not sure where she is now. She said something about making sure the Chuckie stays in jail a long time.” Paula tells Kathy’s counterpart, “in our world, Erika went to the University, and runs track. She’s getting a degree in Criminal Justice.”

Paula then asks, “how about Darryl Stone?” Kathy’s counterpart explains, “he finally graduated, and he still plays in a band. He really wanted to go to the Olympics, but he could never really improve past a four-minute mile. So, he just threw in the towel.”

Going down the list of friends, Paula asks, “how about, Akinmola?” Kathy’s counterpart explains, “he went to seminary. He’s still around a lot. Me and Eddie now go to Dr. Akinmola’s church. In my universe, so do you and Mark. We see Akinmola a lot, but mostly on the weekends. Sometimes, we all go out to eat after church, and get pizza like the old days. Occasionally, Barbara and Johnson join us if Barbara is in town. But, it’s not quite the same without everyone else around.”

Out of the blue, Kathy’s counterpart exclaims, “hey! You found my blue stone! Where was it?” Kathy tells her counterpart, “well, I didn’t actually find it. One day, me and Eddie walked along the path I used to walk to middle school. We stopped at the rocks, and we found a few more blue stones. We actually found a one-pound blue stone!” Kathy’s counterpart asks, “can I see your necklace?” Kathy hands her counterpart the necklace, who looks at the stone very carefully.

Paula asks, “what’s this about blue stones?” Kathy and her counterpart both reply, “they have superpowers.” Paula asks, “what kind of superpowers?” Kathy’s counterpart answers, “I’m not exactly sure, but they definitely have superpowers.” Paula tells Kathy, “I want to hear more about this later.” Kathy mentions, “Eddie found some yellow stones too. We think they may have superpowers, but we’re not sure.”

Hearing everything is so different in this parallel universe, Paula asks Kathy’s counterpart, “so, what are me and Mark doing in this universe?”

Kathy's counterpart explains, "you're still working at the Summer day camp. And, you're looking for a job as a gym teacher. But, until then, you're also working with Mark, which is where you went when you got home a few minutes ago."

Paula asks, "do I still have my Jeep?" Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "oh yeah!" Now curious, Paula asks, "how about Mark's Jeep?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "Mark never had a Jeep. You drive him to the job site in the morning. Then, after you get off work, you drive to the job site, help him out for a while. Then, you guys drive home together. You'll probably get home right after dark today." Paula asks, "where do I live again?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "you guys live on Ivy Avenue. You're renting a basement apartment. The house needs a little work so, for reduced rent, Mark is fixing it up for the lady who owns it. Actually, that house needs a lot of work if you ask me."

Kathy wonders how her life is a fairy tale, and her's and Eddie's counterparts in this universe apparently have been working like crazy to buy their own home. Kathy also notices that her counterpart has less energy than she does and, in a way, seems to be a little less motivated. But, Kathy perceives her counterpart in this universe seems to be very much at peace. And sadly, in this universe, all the friends that Kathy and Paula had in high school have scattered. The tribe is not together anymore.

Handing Kathy's blue stone necklace back to her, Kathy's counterpart asks, "would you guys help me find a blue stone?" Kathy asks, "right now?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah. I really want a blue stone again." Kathy replies, "sure, we can do that." A smile comes across Kathy's counterpart's face. Kathy, however, wonders why her counterpart can't go and find one on her own. But, nevertheless, Kathy's counterpart gets her bicycle, and they all head toward the middle school, which is less than five minutes away by bicycle.

Arriving at the middle school, Kathy, Paula, and Kathy's counterpart walk their bicycles through the small opening in the fence. Walking through the woods, they come to the rocky outcropping where Kathy found her blue stones. Paula exclaims, "I remember this place! I haven't been here like forever!" Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "me either!" While Kathy's counterpart and Paula are talking, Kathy begins searching for blue stones.

Kathy, remembering where she and Eddie previously found blue stones, decides to first look in those exact areas. Thinking that, in this universe, the stones might be in the same locations, Kathy heads straight for the spot where Eddie first found the blue stone earlier this year. Finding the large boulder next to a tree, Kathy looks down, finding a blue

stone buried in the silt next to a tree root exactly where Eddie found one. Kathy brushes off the stone, and walks over to her counterpart. Handing her counterpart the stone, Kathy tells her, "one special blue stone, just for you." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "you found one! Oh, thank you! Thank you so much!" Tears of happiness begin to fall from Kathy's counterpart's eyes, making Paula again wonder what can be so special about a blue stone.

Searching in the other locations, Kathy finds four more blue stones. Kathy also finds two yellow stones, like the ones Eddie found. Handing her counterpart the blue and yellow stones, Kathy tells her, "here you go. Blue and yellow stones, just like the ones I found in my universe." Kathy's counterpart compares the blue stones to the one Kathy is wearing. Kathy's counterpart mentions, "this one is identical to the one you're wearing. This one is special." Putting the blue stone in a separate pocket, Kathy's counterpart mentions, "somehow, I'm going to find the money to make a beautiful necklace out of it, kind of like yours." Kathy replies, "you will."

Kathy then tells her counterpart and Paula, "now, for the mother lode." Kathy looks for a large stick that she can use for a rudimentary shovel. Remembering exactly where she found the one-pound blue stone in her universe, Kathy starts scraping away the silt. Kathy mentions, "I know it's here somewhere." After a moment, Paula exclaims, "you're really going at this, girl!" Kathy replies, "yeah! And, I'm going to find it." A minute later, Kathy exclaims, "I found it! Here it is. Help me dig it out!" Paula and Kathy's counterpart find their own sticks, helping Kathy unearth the treasure.

A few minutes later, they get the blue stone loose. As they remove the stone from the ground, Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "wow! This is really, really beautiful! Thank you so much!" Kathy's counterpart asks Kathy, "what did you do with yours?" Kathy explains, "I washed it off, and it's sitting on my dresser in my bedroom. Two of the smaller ones me and Eddie had made into necklaces. We have a few others. They're really beautiful." With no more blue stones expected to be found today, Kathy, her counterpart, and Paula ride back to Kathy's counterpart's home on Poplar Street.

Once home, Kathy's counterpart washes off her blue stones in the kitchen sink. Seeing how beautiful the blue stones are, Paula mentions, "they really are kind of unique." Kathy's counterpart hands Paula one of her blue stones, and tells her, "here, this one's for you." Paula tells her, "no. Please, you keep it." Kathy's counterpart tells Paula, "no, really. It's yours. Here, take it." Paula accepts Kathy's counterpart's gift, telling her, "thank you so much!"

Kathy's counterpart asks, "what's this you mentioned earlier about Eddie investing in gold and the stock market?" Kathy explains to her counterpart that, in her parallel universe, Eddie made huge sums of money by buying gold at the present time, going through the portal, and selling it at a future date. Kathy even mentions the important detail about exchanging the newer bills for older ones since, at the present time, they haven't been printed yet. Hearing how Eddie made a lot of money, Kathy's counterpart asks, "how much money did Eddie make by doing that?" Kathy replies, "right now, we have about fifteen million dollars at last count." Kathy's counterpart is silent for a moment, then exclaims, "are you for real?" Kathy replies, "yeah." Paula adds, "she's for real, all right."

Silent for a moment, Kathy's counterpart confesses, "I wonder how I went wrong. Eddie works 60 hours a week at the service station, and has a second job at Vito's. He's really getting worn out. All I have going on right now is my Summer day camp job. And, we're really trying to save up enough money for a house. We have to move out when Lena's parents come home, and we want to live somewhere around here. But, everything is so expensive." Kathy tells her counterpart, "I can show you how to change all that." Kathy's counterpart asks, "how? Tell me." Paula interjects, telling Kathy, "let's show her where the bank is." Kathy agrees, telling everyone, "yeah. We're going to the bank. Let's roll."

Kathy's counterpart asks, "so, where are we going?" Kathy explains, "to the coin store next to the record shop." Kathy then asks her counterpart, "do you have any cash?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah. We have about four-hundred dollars in the house." Kathy tells her, "go and get it. I have about three-hundred with me. You can have it." Kathy's counterpart goes to her bedroom and gets the cash, and they all head to the coin store.

Arriving at the coin store, Kathy tells her counterpart, "I guess I can't go inside with you. So, Paula will show you how this part of it works." Kathy tells Paula, "here's three-hundred dollars. Get as much gold as you can." Kathy's counterpart and Paula walk into the coin store, where Jimmy, the proprietor, greets them.

Jimmy asks, "what can I do for you two young ladies today?" Paula tells Jimmy, "we want to buy two ounces of gold." Not recognizing the young investors, Jimmy tells them, "gold is a good investment. It's only going to go up." Jimmy then asks, "would you like Maple Leafs, Krugerrands, or fractional pieces?" Paula, who has gained a lot of experience going to the bank, as she calls it, tells Jimmy, "we have seven-hundred dollars. It might have to be Krugerrands." Jimmy punches a few numbers into his adding machine, telling Paula, "gold is three-hundred-seventeen dollars an ounce. With my commission, the total would be six-

hundred-seventy-four dollars even.” Paula replies, “okay. We’ll take it.” Paula and Kathy’s counterpart make the transaction, and it’s on to step two.

When they step out of the store, Kathy asks, “how much did you get?” Paula replies, “two ounces.” Kathy replies, “awesome! Let’s head to the portal.” They all ride to the portal where they will go into the future and back to the coin store, and sell the gold for a profit.

Arriving at the portal, Kathy announces, “uh oh. Houston, we have a problem.” Paula asks, “what’s that?” Kathy explains to everyone, “the second me and Paula step back into the portal, we’ll be transported back to our universe.” Paula replies, “oops. That’s right! I forgot about that.” Kathy’s counterpart asks, “now, what do we do?” Kathy tells her counterpart, “you’ll have to go this part alone. Here’s what you have to do. It’s really easy. Go into the portal, and go forward to September 2011. Then, ride back to the coin store and sell the gold. And, tell Jimmy you want bills that are older than this year. If he doesn’t have enough of them, go to the bank across the street, and exchange the newer bills for older ones there.” Kathy’s counterpart repeats the procedure back to Kathy, making sure she’s got it right. Kathy tells her, “good. You got it. We’ll be right here when you get back.”

Kathy’s counterpart walks into the portal, as Kathy and Paula stand from a distance and watch. Kathy mentions, “I’ve never watched this from a distance when it’s happened before.” Paula replies, “me either.” Kathy’s counterpart raises her right hand, bringing herself forward to September 2011. Immediately seeing her counterpart walking right out of the portal, Kathy wonders if something went wrong. Kathy then realizes that no time elapses when in the portal, so her counterpart returned at the same time she left.

Kathy’s questions are immediately answered when her counterpart walks out of the portal with a smile and yells out, “it worked! It worked!” Kathy asks her counterpart, “so, tell us what happened.” Kathy’s counterpart explains, “I went back to the coin store, and sold the gold. Jimmy didn’t have too many old bills, so I went to the bank across the street. They had a lot there.” Kathy asks, “how much did you get?” Kathy’s counterpart exclaims, “three-thousand-six-hundred-fifty dollars!” Kathy gives her counterpart a high-five, telling her, “life just got a little easier!”

Doing some quick math in her head, Kathy tells her counterpart, “so, with three-thousand-six-hundred-fifty dollars, you can buy about eleven ounces of gold today. If you brought the gold forward to September 2011 and sold it, that would be about forty-thousand dollars.” Giving Kathy and Paula a high-five, Kathy’s counterpart smiles, and exclaims, “got it!”

Kathy's counterpart tells Kathy and Paula, "now, me and Eddie can give some money to the building fund at church. Dr. Akinmola has been trying to find a place to build a church, but land is so expensive." Kathy tells her counterpart, "in our universe, me and Eddie bought the land across the street from the high school. We donated the land to Dr. Akinmola's church. And, Mark, Mark's father, and Eddie's father are building the church building for him right now. The first service in the new building is planned for Christmas Eve." Kathy's counterpart mentions, "in my universe, that land has been for sale for a long time. I drive by it every day on my way to work."

Kathy's counterpart asks, "on the way back, can we stop by the station? I can't wait to tell Eddie about this!" Kathy replies, "it would be a problem if people in the service station saw two of us." Kathy's counterpart replies, "oh, yeah. I forgot about that." Paula suggests, "we could hide out around the corner." Kathy agrees, replying, "yeah. Let's do that." They all head to Angelo's Service Station, where Kathy's counterpart will give her Eddie the good news.

Arriving at the service station, Kathy and Paula wait at the corner across the street as Kathy's counterpart rides into the station to give Eddie's counterpart the good news. While they are waiting, Kathy and Paula try to figure out parallel universes, and wonder how many there are. After about five minutes, Kathy tells Paula, "here they come. It looks like Eddie's taking a break."

Kathy's counterpart, returning with Eddie's counterpart, tells Kathy and Paula, "Eddie's taking a break. Tell him about the parallel universes." Walking up the street together, Kathy and Paula explain to Eddie's counterpart, as best they can, about entering a parallel universe through the portal. Kathy also explains to Eddie's counterpart all about buying gold in the present, and selling it in the future. Eddie's counterpart mentions, "I wonder why I didn't think of that." Kathy replies, "you did. But, it was in a parallel universe." Kathy's counterpart smiles, and tells Eddie's counterpart, "I think life is going to get a little easier, hon." Eddie then has to get back to work, and Kathy's counterpart, Kathy, and Paula head back to Poplar Street.

Back inside Kathy's counterpart's home on Poplar Street, Kathy explains to her counterpart, "if you go into the portal, and tell it to take you to the parallel universe where Eddie invested in gold and the stock market, I bet it will take you to my universe." Kathy's counterpart replies, "I'm going to try that sometime. Where do you live?" Kathy tells her, "get me a piece of paper, and I'll write down my address." On the paper, Kathy summarizes how to get to her universe, and writes down her's and Paula's addresses.

Kathy reminds her counterpart, “now, you can go to the jewelry store and get a necklace made with your blue stone.” Kathy’s counterpart replies, “I’m definitely going to do that.” Looking through the blue stones, Kathy pulls one aside. Kathy tells her counterpart, “this is the one for Eddie’s necklace. Have one made for him too.” Kathy’s counterpart exclaims, “yeah! I’m going to do that! I’ll give it to Eddie for Christmas.”

Kathy then tells her counterpart, “well, I guess we need to get back.” Kathy’s counterpart tells Kathy and Paula, “thank you so, so much for getting here. What you showed me is really going to make a big difference in mine and Eddie’s lives. And, now I have a blue stone again! Thank you so much for that too!” Kathy, Paula, and Kathy’s counterpart all hug each other, and Kathy and Paula head out.

On the way back, as she rides down Ivy Avenue, Kathy asks Paula, “do you want to find where you live?” Paula replies, “oh, yeah,” as she pulls the page from the phone directory out of her pocket. Watching the house numbers as she rides down the street, Paula stops in front of a small Cape Cod style home, which is barely 800 square feet. Seeing a few small windows along the foundation, Paula recalls that Kathy’s counterpart told her that she and Mark live in the basement apartment. Paula concludes that the apartment is very dark inside, and can’t really be too nice since the house needs a lot of work. Recalling that, in this universe, she and Mark are working very long hours and Mark has no truck, Paula tells Kathy, “I’m going back for a minute,” as she turns around heading back to Kathy’s counterpart’s house. Kathy follows, wondering what’s up with Paula.

Paula rides up Kathy’s counterpart’s driveway, and knocks on the door. Kathy’s counterpart invites Paula and Kathy in, and asks, “hey! What’s up?” Trying to hide her tears, Paula tells Kathy’s counterpart, “can you please tell me in your universe about how to make money in the portal too?” Seeing Paula upset, Kathy’s counterpart gives her a hug, telling her, “of course. I was planning on it.” Paula gratefully replies, “thank you so much.” Kathy and Paula head out again, this time making it back to the portal without any side trips.

Returning to their universe, Kathy tells Paula, “that was totally unexpected.” Paula replies, “yeah. I’d say.” Kathy suggests, “let’s go back to the strip mall. I want to see if the page is torn out of the phone book.” Paula asks, “why?” Kathy explains, “if it’s not torn out, it’s proof there really are parallel universes.” Kathy and Paula head to the strip mall, wondering what they will find.

Looking again through the telephone directory to see if they can find their names, Kathy finds hers. The page has not been torn out, but has her name and, next to it, the address where she now lives. Kathy pulls

the page that she tore out of the directory in the parallel universe, which shows her and Eddie living on Poplar Street. Paula, looking for hers and Mark's names, finds the same. Paula quietly utters, "this is so weird." Kathy replies, "yeah, seriously."

Before they make the ride home, Paula mentions, "in that universe, you seemed very happy and content. It doesn't sound like she has very much, but she certainly seemed like she was on top of the world. She felt so at peace." Kathy replies, "believe me. I saw that." Kathy and Paula head home, now with a lot more to think about.

In early afternoon, Eddie returns from work. Kathy is home, waiting to give Eddie the news. When Eddie walks into the living room, Kathy exclaims, "you were right!" Eddie asks, "about what?" Kathy replies, "about parallel universes!" Eddie asks, "really? What have you been up to?" Kathy smiles, ready to give Eddie an earful. Kathy hands Eddie the page she tore from the telephone directory in the parallel universe, telling Eddie, "look for our name." Eddie looks through the page, looking for his and Kathy's name.

Eddie exclaims, "where in the world did you get this?" Kathy replies, "in another world! I got it from a parallel universe! In that universe, we live on Poplar Street, and Paula lives down the block on Ivy Avenue." Eddie asks, "really?" Kathy replies, "yeah. Me and Paula went into the portal and told it to take us to a parallel universe where you didn't invest in gold and the stock market. And, so that's where we ended up. And, in that universe, you work at Angelo's 60 hours a week, and have a second job at Vito's Bicycle Shop. And, I'm working at the Summer day camp. And, also, in that universe, we're house sitting for Lena's parents for three years while they're in Germany. Oh, and Paula and Mark live in a basement apartment. Oh yeah, and Lena moved away."

Eddie exclaims, "wow! So there are parallel universes!" Kathy replies, "yeah. It was totally weird. Everything about our life was so different." Eddie asks, "so, what else is different?" Kathy explains to Eddie all that she and Paula learned from her counterpart in the parallel universe. Eddie is quite amazed at what he hears from Kathy. Continuing their conversation, Eddie and Kathy head out to the pool for the rest of the afternoon to cool off.

Back in Eddie's reality, Mr. O'Brien, hearing from his son, Jimmy, that Eddie knows perhaps too much about the gambling ring bust, decides to take a trip to Angelo's Service Station one morning. Wanting to find out more regarding any potential future arrests, Mr. O'Brien hopes Eddie will be forthcoming with any information. On the flip side, Eddie really doesn't care about sharing any information with Mr. O'Brien.

At ten o'clock sharp, Eddie rides in on his bicycle, and opens the service station. Driving right up to the pumps immediately after Eddie opens the service bay doors, Mr. O'Brien has nervously been driving up and down the road waiting for someone to open the station. As Mr. O'Brien pulls up to the pumps in his old clunker, Eddie has a very good idea why the incompetent liberal communist social studies teacher is driving in today. Eddie also knows exactly what happened to Mr. O'Brien's new Mercedes.

Walking out to the pumps, Eddie asks, "fill it up?" Getting out of his car, Mr. O'Brien replies, "yes, with regular." Messing with Mr. O'Brien's head, Eddie mentions, "you look vaguely familiar. Didn't you teach at Northside?" Mr. O'Brien replies, "yes. I'm Mr. O'Brien. I teach social studies there." Pretending to have forgotten, Eddie tells Mr. O'Brien, "oh, yeah. That's right. So many people drive into the station. It's hard to remember everyone."

Acting a bit sly, Mr. O'Brien asks Eddie, "so, am I understanding correctly that my son, Jimmy, tells me you know something about a few gambling arrests that were made?" Knowing exactly what Mr. O'Brien is up to, Eddie, pretending to be compassionate, replies, "yeah. And, poor Mr. Crum. I heard he went to jail for dealing drugs. Can you believe that?" Mr. O'Brien informs Eddie, "I think that came as a surprise to all of us at the high school." Eddie tells Mr. O'Brien, "I guess Mr. Crum will be missing all the Christmas presents he's been getting."

As Eddie begins to fill Mr. O'Brien's tank, Mr. O'Brien bluntly asks, "what do you know about the gambling arrests that have occurred in the last month?" Offering a few undisputed facts, Eddie replies, "I heard Mr. Crum was in on that too. And, Dean Grimsby, at the University, was supposedly the odds maker. And, Mr. Crum's uncle ran the whole operation. I also heard they've all been brought in during the first wave of arrests." Mr. O'Brien cannot dispute anything Eddie has told him so far.

Taking the bait, Mr. O'Brien asks, "the first wave?" Earning some credibility by previously stating nothing but facts, Eddie, now making up bullshit, replies, "yeah. I hear the arrests will be made in three waves. The first wave was all those who were running the operation. The second wave will be the little guys, like the bookies. And, the third wave will be everyone who was involved in fixing the races, and profiting from betting on the events. They're still sorting out all the evidence, so those arrests haven't been made yet." Mr. O'Brien becomes a little anxious, and asks, "have you heard anything else?" Making up more bullshit, Eddie replies, "yeah. The ones who profited from the betting are going to be turned over to the feds, but I haven't heard which agency." Hearing Eddie's response, Mr. O'Brien is now very concerned.

Now wondering whether Eddie's information is coming from any credible sources, Mr. O'Brien asks, "how did you find all this out?" Eddie explains, "a lot of the police officers come in here for gas. The department has an account with us, so they fill up here all the time. If I'm not busy, we'll shoot the bull for a while. And, all the officers in the area know Angelo. He takes good care of them." Mr. O'Brien falls for Eddie's bullshit, hook, line, and sinker. It's quite amazing that Eddie was able to say all he did with a straight face.

As Mr. O'Brien hands over the cash for his purchase, he tells Eddie, "I don't think it's very fair that they're going to be coming after a few people who made a couple of small bets. Do you?" Eddie replies, "I'd have to disagree with you. Athletes have lost sports scholarships because the events were rigged. Lots of scholarship money was at stake. Do you think that's fair?" Mr. O'Brien, as he gets back into his car, is at a loss of how to answer Eddie. As he starts his engine, Mr. O'Brien yells at Eddie, "what would you know about 'fair'?" Doing enough damage to O'Brien's fragile liberal mind for one day, Eddie lets Mr. O'Brien's comment go.

The weekend before classes start at the University, early on a Saturday morning, Kathy is out in the driveway polishing her Dune Buggy. Truth be told, all the tribe members who have a Dune Buggy are probably doing the same thing this weekend. Eddie, who is working at the service station this morning, is also polishing his MGB, but takes a different approach. Taking fifteen minutes out of his schedule every day, Eddie polishes his car a little at a time, usually when he gets home. Not seeing the road for most of the Summer, Eddie's MGB is in showroom condition.

Out of the corner of her eye, Kathy catches a glimpse of someone riding a bicycle up her driveway. Turning around, Kathy sees her counterpart waving as she approaches. Kathy yells out, "don't tell me I took another antibiotic." Kathy's counterpart yells back, "nope. Not this time!" As Kathy's counterpart approaches, she asks Kathy, "so, this is your universe?" Kathy replies, "oh! Wow! So you came from the parallel universe?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah! And, guess what?" Before Kathy can answer, Kathy's counterpart reveals, "I made two-hundred-thousand dollars!" Kathy gives her counterpart a high-five, telling her, "way to go, girl! Keep at it!"

Kathy's counterpart tells her, "I found out something about the portal!" Kathy asks, "what's that?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "first, thank you so much for helping me find the blue and yellow stones. Oh, and, to get to your universe, I needed my yellow stone." Kathy asks, "really? How is that?" Kathy's counterpart explains, "I tried to get to your universe, and I couldn't. So, I was thinking that you had a blue stone when you and Paula came that day. Then, I went back home, and got my blue stone and came back to the portal. And, so I tried it again, and it

still didn't work. Then, I rode back home and got my yellow stone. And, then I tried to get to your universe, and here I am. I always knew blue stones have superpowers! And, so do the yellow ones!"

With a sudden stroke of genius, Kathy exclaims, "so, I need a blue stone to get to your universe! And, you need a yellow stone to get to my universe! The blue stone didn't get you here. The yellow one did!" Kathy's counterpart agrees, telling Kathy, "so, you live in the yellow universe, because I need a yellow stone to get to yours. And, I live in the blue universe because you need a blue stone to get to my universe." Kathy surmises, "so, this has nothing to do with whether Eddie invested or not. It's the stone that has the power to let us travel to a parallel universe!" Kathy's counterpart replies, "wow! Are we smart or what?" Kathy gives her counterpart a high-five, and are both convinced that they've just figured something out.

Kathy tells her counterpart, "I was wondering what the yellow stones do. Eddie found a few yellow stones. We were wondering if they have superpowers too. I guess they do." Kathy's counterpart tells Kathy, "I'm going to go and look for more of them. Do you remember where Eddie found them?" Kathy explains, "yeah. Eddie found two of them between those two really big boulders. I picked those up for you. And, he found the third one near where we dug up the one-pound blue stone. The one near the one-pound blue stone I forgot to get for you. It's near the boulder, to the right of where we dug it up." Kathy's counterpart tells Kathy, "when I get back, the first thing I'm going to do is go back and look for it."

Quickly noticing the Dune Buggy, Kathy's counterpart asks, "is this yours?" Kathy replies, "yeah. Eddie built it. Kurt Richter built the frame, and Eddie assembled it." Kathy's counterpart asks, "who's Kurt Richter?" Kathy replies, "oh. Kurt Richter is the guy who modified my Porsche 914. He lives down by the beach. You've never heard of him?" Kathy's counterpart replies, "no." Kathy explains, "Kurt is the guy who modified the 914. What me and Eddie found out was that the engine was modified too, and it has no redline. And, it will do zero to sixty in 4.3 seconds. But, it has to be tuned differently to do that." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "no way, girl!" Kathy replies, "seriously! I'll give you Kurt's phone number. Your Eddie can look him up." Kathy's counterpart laughs and mentions, "that really sounded funny. 'Your Eddie.'"

Kathy's counterpart asks, "can you show me your house? It looks really beautiful." Kathy shows her counterpart around, starting with the pool, since they are already outside. Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "wow! Your pool is so beautiful!" Kathy tells her counterpart, "in the Summer, we spend a lot of time out here. And, I do my school work out here whenever

I can.” Kathy’s counterpart comments, “and, the Jasmine wall is so beautiful too.”

Kathy and her counterpart head inside, where the first thing Kathy’s counterpart notices is the medal collection on the wall. Kathy’s counterpart comments, “your home is really awesome!” Kathy replies, “thank you.” Kathy gives her counterpart the grand tour, including the home gym downstairs. Since it is nice outside, they then head outside and sit by the pool.

Kathy and her counterpart have a very long conversation, mostly about the differences between their two universes. In Kathy’s universe, life is great, but very complicated. Now in jail, Mr. Crum, and his interference with athletics, caused much strife, especially in Eddie’s life. At the University, Dean Grimsby, who is awaiting trial, has caused much discord in Eddie’s and Kathy’s lives. McCutchen, who has been caught red handed planting steroids in Eddie’s and Mark’s lockers, was expelled from the University, and readmitted due to a technicality. But, on the flip side is that Eddie and Kathy work fewer hours, and have more time for leisure. And, the tribe is still together, having enormous fun and completely dominating track and field in the area.

In Kathy’s counterpart’s universe, since Eddie’s counterpart never graduated from high school, Mr. Crum never got busted. Mr. Crum is still distributing drugs and attempting to fix sporting events. After leaving high school, Eddie’s counterpart in the parallel universe has great peace, but works very long hours. Dean Grimsby continues to be the odds maker for the gambling operation, also subtly interfering with athletics at the University whenever he gets the chance. At the University, the track team is still a marginally competitive team, with only a few members consistently winning. McCutchen, having run erratic times at the University, never placed in an event. The tribe has all scattered, going their own way after high school. Life in Kathy’s counterpart’s universe is much simpler and quiet.

Hearing about Mr. Crum, Dean Grimsby, Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Harrison, Dr. Paxton, and a few others, and their various illicit activities, Kathy’s counterpart tells Kathy, “Mr. Crum, and the fixing of sports events, has got to be stopped! I don’t know how I’m going to do it, but I’ll figure it out.” Kathy asks her counterpart, “does Officer Richard Hayes come into the station and visit Eddie?” Kathy’s counterpart replies, “yeah. He occasionally asks Eddie if he knows anything about who’s dealing drugs in the area. But, Eddie doesn’t really hear anything. He’s too busy working.”

Kathy instructs her counterpart, “have your Eddie tell Richard that Mr. Crum lives on Second Street. Mr. Crum goes out in the middle of the

night to retrieve the drug drops from the abandoned houses on Second Street. They need to change their stakeout location so that it's closer in so they can see Mr. Crum pick up the drugs. Mr. Crum is who Richard is looking for. So, the reason they can't find the drug supplier in the high school is because it's Mr. Crum. Oh! And, they'll find metal boxes full of cash stashed in his attic with marked bills from the gambling operation." Kathy's counterpart comments, "that will be a good start. I'll tell my Eddie to tell Richard all of that."

Kathy then mentions, "you said that you needed a yellow stone to get to my universe. But, Eddie thinks we travel to a parallel universe when we go to the future to sell gold. When we do that, we don't have a blue or a yellow stone. That's kind of weird. It kind of throws a monkey wrench into the works." Kathy's counterpart reminds Kathy, "when Eddie first went through the portal, he met his future self. Eddie's future self already lived the life that Eddie was about to live. But, that is not necessarily constant. In my universe, my Eddie never invested in gold and the stock market. So, the parallel universes are like parallel train tracks. I'm thinking that the blue and yellow stones let you jump from one track to another."

Kathy admits, "you might be on to something." Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah. But what?" Kathy suddenly replies, "I got it!" Kathy's counterpart asks, "what's that?" Kathy explains, "the time line of all the parallel universes is fluid and, when everything crosses into the present, it is then sealed, and there is only one past. So, it's like a zipper that's closing. If we go back into the past and change something, we unzip the zipper, and it zips up into a new reality. And, everything falls into place." Kathy's counterpart observes, "I see where you're going with this." Kathy surmises, "and, maybe at sometime in the future, there will only be one of us, not two." Kathy's counterpart exclaims, "I think you just figured something out!" Kathy tells her counterpart, "we'll go with that for now."

Kathy then mentions, "in my universe, Mr. Crum is in jail. In your universe, he's still not in jail. When both universes come together, he'll be in jail in both universes. And, if you guys hint to Richard that Mr. Crum is involved in the drug operation, that's one more tooth in the zipper from each universe that will be sealed." Kathy's counterpart replies, "this is actually beginning to make sense."

Kathy's counterpart suggests, "we can always go to the library and look it up. Maybe they have a book about parallel universes." Kathy replies, "I already tried that. They didn't have anything about it there." Kathy's counterpart replies, "yeah, right. I'm not falling for that one." Kathy laughs, and replies, "well, it was worth a shot."

After a long morning of talking with Kathy, Kathy's counterpart gets ready to head back to her universe. Kathy tells her counterpart, "hey, if you find any other color stones, let me know." Kathy's counterpart replies, "of course. And, now I'm really wondering what else the blue and yellow stones do." Kathy tells her, "if I find out, I'll definitely let you know." Kathy's counterpart heads back to her universe, in search of more blue and yellow stones and to tell her Eddie what she learned in Kathy's universe.

Later that afternoon, Eddie returns from work. Kathy fills Eddie in on the visit from her counterpart from a parallel universe that she had this morning. While Eddie is not too surprised, he is now wondering what other superpowers, if any, the blue and yellow stones have. Kathy suggests, "let's go look for more stones sometime. There might be other color stones too." Eddie replies, "yeah. Let's do that sometime. But, right now, let's go in the pool." Kathy exclaims, "that sounds like a plan!" Eddie and Kathy put on their swimsuits, and head outside to the pool.

Outside, at the pool, Kathy tells Eddie, "you know, Tessa was very surprised that you beat her this year." Eddie replies, "I'll let her win next year." Kathy asks, "how are you going to let her win?" Eddie explains, "the Olympics are next Summer. I guess I'll be focusing on that. And, maybe our 4 by 440 relay team might make the Olympics." Kathy exclaims, "wow! That's right!" Eddie comically mentions, "Braden could use a little work in the 440 though." Kathy replies, "yeah. He's been really slacking off. I'll start cracking my whip next week."

Kathy then mentions, "now, I'm thinking. I wonder if I can make the Olympics too." Eddie replies, "sure you can! But, if you're going to stand around cracking your whip and telling us to run, I don't think you're going to make it." Kathy admits, "yeah. If I want to try out for the Olympics, I'll have to train my ass off." Eddie replies, "don't train your ass off. It's kind of cute." Kathy replies, "thank you." Kathy and Eddie jump into the pool together, beginning a relaxing afternoon in the sun.

Putting her arms around his neck, Kathy looks at Eddie and tells him, "if we're going to train for the Olympics, we're going to have to step up our training." Eddie replies, "yeah. I know." Kathy then tells Eddie, "we'll also have to improve our nutrition." Eddie replies, "yeah, I know." Kathy mentions, "we'll also have to give more time to rest, and recover." Eddie replies, "yeah, I know." Kathy then mentions, "and, we'll have to have a positive mental attitude." Eddie replies, "yeah, I know."

Kathy then mentions, "and, we'll have to tie up all the loose ends in our life. And, I'm billions of kisses behind." Kathy touches her lips to Eddie's, and kisses him passionately. For the rest of the afternoon, Eddie

and Kathy catch up on the billions of kisses she promised him many years ago.