

Eddie, The Collegiate Senior

Chapter Nine Summer Break

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Sitting by their pool on the first Saturday of Summer break, Kathy tells Eddie, “we have all Summer! Is there anything special that you want to do?” With no hesitation, Eddie replies, “yeah! I want to go back to the beach.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah! That’s a good idea! I miss my beach time! And, we can take my Bus!” Eddie replies, “that would be fun. We can see who else wants to go, and all ride together.” Kathy exclaims, “yeah, buddy! Back to the beach!” Eddie suggests, “well, let’s go.” Kathy tells Eddie, “go, and find our towels and beach stuff. I’ll go see who wants to go with us.”

Running up as Eddie is loading the Bus, Kathy energetically announces, “Paula and Mark are coming, and so are Erika and Bobby B.” Eddie asks, “did you call Braden?” Kathy replies, “yeah, sort of. I talked to Wendy. Braden is working today. But, they can meet us for pizza after. And, Mitchell and Amber are doing their own thing. And, Barbara and Johnson have other plans. And, I didn’t call Karen or anyone else. I forgot who likes the beach.” Eddie tells Kathy, “wow! You sound excited.” Kathy replies, “I am! We’re going to the beach!” Eddie tells Kathy, “wow, Katarina! If I knew the beach made you this happy, we would have gone more during our college days!”

Kathy and Eddie head out, picking up Mark and Paula on the way. Then heading over to Bobby B’s. construction site, they pick up Bobby B. and Erika, who are doing little more than watching the hose fill their pool with water. Mark walks into the back yard, yelling out, “hey! It’s looking good out here!” Bobby B. and Erika’s house is almost completed. Doing much of the work themselves, the project moved along slowly but, with Mark’s supervision, everything was done properly.

Bobby B. and Erika get in the Bus, and the group heads to the beach, taking a little side trip to get Bobby B’s. and Erika’s beach gear. On the

way, Erika asks Bobby B., “hey! When is my Bus going to be ready?” Bobby B. replies, “I’m working on it.” Giving a more accurate answer, Eddie tells Erika, “it has about five more hours of work left to go. It needs an alignment, the instrumentation needs to be connected, and the underside should be rust proofed in a few areas.” Erika asks, “so, it can be done on Monday?” Eddie replies, “technically, yes.” Bobby B., who has been taking his time with the project, wishes that Eddie had not said anything. Erika will now expect the Bus to be ready on Monday.

Now curious, Erika asks, “why does it have to be rust proofed?” Eddie explains, “vehicles are made of steel. All vehicles have areas that are susceptible to rust. It’s a whole lot easier to prevent rust than to deal with it once it’s happened.” Eddie then jokingly mentions, “some cars rust so badly that, if you drive them into the garage, turn the lights out, and listen very carefully, you can hear them rust.” Erika thinks Eddie is serious, and doesn’t get the joke.

Eddie then tells Erika, “why don’t you come by Monday, and crack the whip on Bobby B.? He might have it on the road by the end of the day.” Bobby B. is unusually silent, knowing exactly what he will be doing come Monday. But, Eddie can have the Volkswagen Bus finished in less than two hours if he helps Bobby B. Left to himself, Bobby B. would be finished with the Bus in about a week or two.

Arriving at the beach, Kathy announces, “awesome! The beach is still here!” Searching for a parking place, Kathy is fortunate to find one close to the concession area. The group gathers their stuff, and heads to the water. Being early in the season, the beach is crowded today primarily because many colleges and universities have just gotten out for Summer vacation.

As they are laying out their towels, Paula asks, “what do we do when we’re at the beach, again? I forgot.” Kathy explains, “I make fun of you. Then, you chase me. And, we play tag. And, I always win.” Paula replies, “do not!” Kathy tells Paula, “yeah, I do.” Paula tells Kathy, “oh no, you don’t!” Kathy replies, “not on your life, girl. I always win.” Paula exclaims, “not!” Kathy laughs, telling Paula, “see? That’s what we used to do at the beach.” Paula relents, telling Kathy, “okay. You got me.” Kathy smiles, and replies, “yeah. I got you really good, didn’t I?”

Everyone lays out in the sun for a while. After about a half hour, they go into the water. On the way, Paula asks Kathy, “can you go in the water when you’re pregnant?” Kathy replies, “yeah. I don’t see why not.” Watching from the water, they see how crowded the beach really is today. Riding a few waves, Kathy exclaims, “I really missed the beach!” Everyone echoes Kathy’s sentiment, all realizing they haven’t spent enough time at the beach.

Lunchtime comes, and there is only one choice for food, which is the concession stand at the beach. Kathy, Paula and Erika find a picnic table, as the guys go up and place the order. Waiting in line, Eddie tells Bobby B., "I hope I didn't get you in too much trouble." Bobby B. asks, "what are you talking about?" Eddie replies, "it sounds like Erika now wants her Bus by Monday, at closing time." Bobby B. admits, "I really should finish that. After that big rainstorm the other week, it would be nice to have it done."

The guys bring lunch, which is pizza, back to the picnic table. Kathy mentions, "I should have got something else. We're having pizza for dinner." Eddie tells Kathy, "you could always order a calzone." Paula comments, "a calzone is a pizza with all the goodies on the inside, and the crust on the outside." Kathy replies, "is not!" Paula tells Kathy, "don't argue with me, girl. I'm Italian. It's the same ingredients." Mark suggests, "Paula might be right about that." Paula tells Mark, "of course! I'm totally right."

After eating three slices of pizza, Kathy asks Paula, "are you okay?" Paula replies, "yeah. How come you're asking?" Kathy points out, "you've only eaten a half slice of pizza." Paula replies, "my stomach hasn't been feeling too good recently." Kathy asks, "how long has this been going on?" Paula replies, "about two weeks." Kathy confidently proclaims, "you're pregnant." Paula suddenly stands up, and exclaims, "I never thought about that! I bet you're right!" Kathy smiles, and calmly replies, "I'm always right."

Just as surprised as Paula, Mark asks Paula, "does this mean you're having a baby?" Not thinking correctly, Paula energetically replies, "yeah. That's what happens when you're pregnant. You end up with a baby. And, how am I going to teach school with a baby? Now, what am I going to do? We have to get the baby's room ready! And, now we need a Bus, too, like Kathy's. And, there's all this stuff to do!" Kathy tells Paula, "calm down, girl! Come up for air! If you're pregnant, you have nine months to get the room ready. And, besides, you don't even know for sure that you're pregnant." Paula tells Kathy, "I'm two weeks late." Erika comments, "yeah, she's pregnant, all right. Definitely pregnant. No way out of this one."

After lunch, the group heads back to their towels to lie out in the sun for a while. Paula and Mark quietly discuss the possibility that Paula is pregnant. Bobby B. and Erika quietly talk about setting their wedding date. And, Kathy, who is eating for two, is also sleeping for two and falls asleep in the sun. And, Eddie, glad to be back at the beach, lays back, listening to the waves crash on the shore.

Thinking back as everyone drifts into relaxation, Eddie recalls when he first rode his bicycle to the beach. About ten years old at that time, the

22-mile round trip seemed like a very long way to go. As the years went by, the trip felt like it got shorter and shorter. After a while, the trip to the beach was effortless for Eddie. Twelve years later, after a lot of training, Eddie is indisputably the fastest man in the world.

After another hour on the shore, everyone decides to call it a day, and head home. On the way, Paula asks, “are we still getting pizza?” Kathy replies, “sure. But, I want to change out of my swimsuit first.” Paula suggests, “then, why don’t we all meet at the pizzeria with Braden and Wendy.” Kathy replies, “that sounds good. And, get some prenatal vitamins on your way there. Get some vitamin B6 while you’re at it, and take it at every meal. That will help with your stomach.” Paula asks, “how do you know this?” Kathy replies, “from one of our classes.” Paula comments, “I must have missed that day.” Kathy drops everyone off at their home, only to meet again in an hour or so for dinner.

Bright and early Monday morning at Eddie’s Service Station, Erika arrives with Bobby B., ready to crack the whip getting her Volkswagen Bus finished. Somewhere between Spring break and now, the Bus that Bobby B. has been working on began to be referred to as Erika’s Bus. Kathy also arrives early in the morning so that Eddie can tune up her Dune Buggy for the Summer.

Eddie gets to work, tuning up Kathy’s Dune Buggy, as Kathy puts on a fresh coat of wax. Eddie casually mentions to Kathy, “in a few months, it might be hard getting in and out of your Dune Buggy.” Kathy flexes her biceps muscles, telling Eddie, “not for me, buddy! I got this down.” Kathy effortlessly hops into her Dune Buggy and back out again, demonstrating that, in her third trimester, getting in and out of her Dune Buggy poses no problem at all.

Over at Bobby B’s. service bay, Bobby B. connects the instrumentation on his, or Erika’s, Volkswagen Bus. Erika, after receiving instruction from Eddie, applies rust proofing to the rust-prone areas. Erika asks Bobby B., “what’s next after we finish the wiring and the rust proofing?” Bobby B. replies, “the wheel alignment.” Erika asks, “then, after the wheel alignment, I can drive it?” Bobby B. replies, “I think so.” Wanting to be sure of himself, Bobby B. yells out to Eddie, “hey, Eddie! After the wiring, rust proofing, and wheel alignment, is there anything else?” Eddie yells back, “no. But, you might want to get a coat of wax on it while it’s still clean.”

The phone rings, and Kathy yells out to Eddie, “I’ll get it.” Kathy heads over to the shop phone, taking the call. Kathy talks on the phone for quite a while, prompting Eddie to ask Kathy, “is there something I can help with?” Kathy shakes her head and, using a hand gesture, indicates to Eddie that she has everything under control. Eddie tells Bobby B., “I

wonder what she's signing me up for this time." Bobby B. smiles, and replies, "she's probably playing car psychologist." Eddie laughs, and tells Bobby B., "this one is going to be really interesting."

Finished with the fifteen-minute phone call, Kathy walks over to Eddie, who asks, "what was that all about?" Kathy replies, "someone wants a van repaired." Eddie asks, "and?" Kathy replies, "she asked if she can bring it over now." Eddie asks, "what did you tell her?" Kathy replies, "I told her she could." Bobby B. and Erika, listening to Eddie and Kathy's conversation, both know something is up. Eddie asks Kathy, "so, what's wrong with the van?" Kathy replies, "it doesn't run well." Messing around with Kathy and not really expecting an answer, Eddie asks, "what color is the van?" Kathy replies, "yellow."

Sitting on the floor behind the engine of the Dune Buggy, Eddie stands up, and asks Kathy, "okay, Katarina. Spill the beans. What have you signed me up for this time?" Kathy smiles, and replies, "what makes you think I signed you up for something?" Eddie laughs, and replies, "for one, knowing the color of the vehicle is not exactly too important when servicing it. Knowing what's wrong with it might be a little more helpful." Kathy tells Eddie, "well, I don't know exactly what's wrong with it." Bobby B. interjects, "this is going to be an interesting afternoon. I'm going to hang out and see this one."

Kathy sighs, and confesses, "okay. So, that was Provost Leighton. She said her mother's van doesn't run well, and she wants to get it repaired. And, so, she's on her way now, but she said it might take a while to get it here because it doesn't run too good. So, I told her that, when she gets here, I'd drive her home. Oh, and, I told her that you can fix it." Eddie asks, "what kind of van is it?" Kathy replies, "I don't know." Eddie laughs, and tells Kathy, "you don't know. I can tell that this is going to be an interesting repair job." Kathy asks, "how do you know?" Eddie replies, "well, the long run-on sentence and lack of important details kind of gives it away." Bobby B. interjects, "at least, you know what color the van is." Kathy smiles, and is more interested in saying hello to Provost Leighton than in her mother's van. Kathy and Eddie finish up the Dune Buggy, waiting for Provost Leighton to arrive.

Now that he is finished with rust proofing and wiring up the instrumentation, Bobby B. drives the Volkswagen bus into the alignment bay. Eddie and Bobby B. get working on the alignment, while Kathy and Erika sit in Kathy's Dune Buggy and talk about what they have planned for the Summer. They both have decided that more beach time is on the list.

Right before lunch, Provost Leighton pulls into the service station driving a 40-year-old van. Glancing outside, Eddie, not seeing a vehicle like the one that drove in for a while, does a double take. Quickly

discovering who is behind the wheel, Eddie looks over at Kathy, who jumps out of her Dune Buggy to go out and greet Provost Leighton. Eddie suddenly realizes the scope of Provost Leighton's repair job might just be a little more than a routine tune-up.

Eddie walks out, telling Provost Leighton, "good morning!" Provost Leighton replies, "good morning. Well, this is the van." Looking over the van, Eddie tells Provost Leighton, "I see that. Kathy told me it was yellow." The van Provost Leighton drove in today is an Austin service van built on the Austin K30 frame. In its day, the K30 was used for a wide variety of commercial and military vehicles. Eddie is quite impressed that such a vehicle is still in service and in such good condition.

Eddie looks over the van, inside and out. Provost Leighton tells Eddie, "the van has been garaged for the last thirty years. The inside is in really good condition. But, the engine apparently needs a lot of work. And, when I pressed on the brakes, I heard a bad clicking sound in the front somewhere." Eddie replies, "the click is probably a bushing in the suspension that needs to be replaced. That's easy to fix." Eddie tells Provost Leighton, "let's go inside and write up the service ticket."

Eddie writes up the service ticket, discovering that Provost Leighton wants the van brought up to original factory specifications. Eddie advises her that, with the smoke coming from the exhaust, the engine probably needs to be rebuilt. In addition, Eddie informs Provost Leighton that the parts are not readily available these days, and that acquiring certain parts might take some time. Provost Leighton does not seem to care. Neither does Provost Leighton have a budget, for she does not seem to care how much the van costs to repair.

Eddie, Provost Leighton, and Kathy go outside to take another look at the van. Not seeing anything that needs to be done to the interior, Eddie comments, "this van has been well taken care of, as if it was someone's home." Provost Leighton suddenly walks away. Eddie, however, looking under the dash, is unaware that Provost Leighton has walked away. Kathy catches on that Provost Leighton is upset about something, and follows her.

Catching up to Provost Leighton, Kathy asks, "are you okay?" With a tear coming from her eye, Provost Leighton replies, "I'll be okay." Kathy asks, "what's wrong?" Provost Leighton replies, "Eddie said, 'this van has been well taken care of, as if it was someone's home.' From the time that I was born until I was six years old, my mom and I lived in this van. It was our home." Kathy gives Provost Leighton a hug, whispering, "I'm so sorry. I never knew."

Taking a walk down the street together, Provost Leighton tells Kathy the story she told to Mr. Frazier of how she and her mom lived in the van for six years. Provost Leighton adds, “mom kept the interior of the van spotless. Everything was clean, and well taken care of. Everything we owned was in mom’s van. My bed, when I was a child, is still in there. When Eddie said that mom’s van has been well taken care of, it went straight to my heart. Someone noticed the six years of love my mom put into our home.” Kathy and Provost Leighton head back to the service station, returning now as very close friends.

While Kathy and Provost Leighton were away on their walk, Eddie drove the van into a service bay. Kathy’s Dune Buggy now sits outside, and is all tuned up and ready for the Summer. Seeing Provost Leighton and Kathy standing by the Dune Buggy, Eddie yells out to the provost, “Provost Leighton, I can start on your van this afternoon. I’ll break it down and let you know what exactly needs to be done.” Provost Leighton walks into the service bay, and tells Eddie, “that would be great. Thank you very much. But, from now on, please call me Athena.” Eddie replies, “sure. No problem.”

Kathy asks Athena, “well, are you ready for me to take you home?” Athena replies, “sure. And, thank you very much for taking me.” As Kathy and Athena get into the Dune Buggy, Athena mentions, “I’ve never ridden in a Dune Buggy before.” Kathy smiles, and replies, “who knows? You might end up trading your Jaguar in for a Dune Buggy someday.” Kathy starts the engine, and drives away to take Athena home.

Eddie looks over the engine compartment of the van, wondering where to start. Bobby B. walks over, and asks, “what is this thing, anyway?” Eddie replies, “it’s an Austin K30, which looks like it’s in perfect shape, other than the engine.” Bobby B. asks, “what are you going to do with it?” Eddie replies, “from the sound of the engine, it looks like I’ll be doing a complete rebuild.” Bobby B. asks, “are you going to do it yourself?” Eddie replies, “no. I’m going to pull the engine, strap it to a pallet, put it on a trailer, and take it to get rebuilt.” Asking as many questions as Akinmola today, Bobby B. asks, “who is going to rebuild it?” Eddie replies, “there’s a shop down on Sunrise Highway that specializes in these older engines. They can do it faster and better than I can. Some things you just let the experts do.” Eddie then gets to work on the Austin, waiting for Kathy to return. Almost finished waxing their Volkswagen Bus, Bobby B. and Erika get back to work.

When Mayor Bradford Jamieson was arrested and charged with various crimes, a special election was arranged to fill his position. The date of the special election arrives, and people of the town will elect their new mayor. Running for the office of mayor is Eddie and the comptroller of the town, Mr. Frank Hamilton. Eddie is quite confident that he will win. Mr.

Hamilton, on the other hand, is confident that Eddie doesn't stand a chance of winning.

Prior to the election, Eddie has sent numerous mailings to the residents of the town, hinting that, if Mr. Hamilton was doing his job properly, Mayor Jamieson would not have gotten away with many of the crimes he is accused of. At the top of the list is the environmental impact fee, which was charged to certain local businesses. The environmental impact fees paid landed in the mayor's personal account, a business under the name 'Environmental Impact, Incorporated'. Mr. Hamilton is puzzled how Eddie obtained this and other information. Officer Richard Hayes and the police department endorse Eddie, so it's no secret where the information came from.

Mr. Hamilton also sent out numerous mailings to the residents of the town. Mr. Hamilton claims that Eddie, who is an auto mechanic, is unqualified for the position. Mr. Hamilton went so far as to claim that Eddie does not even have a college degree. In one of Eddie's mailings, he presented a copy of his diploma from the University, making Mr. Hamilton look like an idiot. In another mailing, Mr. Hamilton claimed Eddie has no business experience. Eddie countered by placing a picture of Eddie's Service Station in a subsequent mailing, again making Mr. Hamilton look like an idiot.

Since the incidents surrounding the former mayor was a high profile case, coverage of the election is widespread on television and other news outlets. Kathy has a different opinion. Kathy thinks the election is attracting a lot of attention because Eddie is the world record holder in the 100-meter dash and his other track accomplishments. It's quite surprising that, with a total population of about 4,000 people, the town's election has garnered so much attention.

Eddie returns home from work, albeit a little late, where Kathy is waiting for him. Kathy asks, "did you vote?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I voted on my way home." Kathy tells Eddie, "I voted this morning. The place was packed." Eddie asks, "when is everyone getting here?" Kathy replies, "probably around five o'clock. The pizza will be here about then. The polls close at six o'clock. And, Angela Meadows, from the television station, told me that she talked with the election board, and that they should have the results by the end of the six o'clock news." Eddie asks, "when does Angela get here?" Kathy replies, "somewhere around five o'clock. She doesn't want to miss the pizza."

Braden drives up, wearing his police uniform, and knocks on the door. Opening the door, Eddie gives Braden a fist bump, telling him, "yo, bro! I can't tell you how much I appreciate you helping me out." Braden replies, "no problem." Braden, along with Johnson and a few others, will be the

security at Eddie's front gate, keeping the news media out, except for Angela and her news crew. Over the next hour or so, a few of Eddie and Kathy's friends come over, just to hang out waiting to see who won the election.

The pizza arrives right on time. Two boxes of pizza and a slew of drinks are dropped off for Braden and his security crew at the gate. The remainder of the pizza is then delivered to the house, where everyone is anxiously awaiting the news of who won the election.

With the television on in the background, Angela has her headset on, waiting anxiously to get the word of who won from the studio. Angela was informed that the results were promised by 6:30 p.m. As the clock ticks down to that time, tensions rise as everyone waits to hear the news.

By six o'clock, the party at Eddie's house is in full swing. Angela is standing by, waiting to hear the results of the election before they are broadcast. Eddie granted the television station where Angela works exclusive rights to a post-election interview. Braden and his security crew are at Eddie's front gate, enforcing those rights.

Downtown, at Frank Hamilton's office where there is massive television coverage, another crew is standing by in case Mr. Hamilton wins. Hamilton, who invited all the news outlets, is convinced that Eddie does not stand a chance of winning.

Over the casual pizza dinner, Kathy confidently mentions to everyone, "Eddie is going to win! I just know it!" Paula asks, "how can you be so sure?" Kathy explains, "no one is going to vote for someone who is already associated with the town, since Mayor Jamieson is pretty much a crook. So, Eddie is going to win." Everyone hopes that Kathy, who calls the events on the track accurately, is just as accurate calling this election.

With 6:30 p.m. rapidly approaching, Eddie asks Angela, "have you heard anything yet?" Angela, sitting on the sofa, listening carefully over the wire to the studio, replies, "they say the election officials are almost finished counting. We should know any minute now." Angela stands up, walking to where the television camera is set up, suggesting that the announcement is imminent. Angela, can be heard saying, "yes. Okay. Got it," over the wire to the studio. It's anyone's guess what is being said on the studio side.

Angela, understanding that the announcement is about to be made, waves Eddie over to the camera. The cameraman focuses in on Angela, as she announces, "we're on in five, four, three, two, one. Good evening, everyone. This is Angela Meadows here with Edward Bogenskaya, as we await the official announcement of the election results from the election

board. Edward, please share your thoughts with our audience on today's election." Eddie replies, "this has been an interesting couple of weeks, Angela. We've put the facts out there in no uncertain terms. It's up to the people to decide whether they want a change, or keep going down the corrupt path this town has been on for several years."

With the viewers televisions on split screen, Angela suddenly gets the results of the election from the studio, and announces, "hold on for a second," as she listens to the announcement from the studio. Angela then announces, "I just got word that the election board has announced a winner! The official count is Edward Bogenskaya, 1,143 votes, and Frank Hamilton, 92 votes. Congratulations, Edward, on a landslide victory!"

The split television screen focuses on Eddie, dropping the feed from Mr. Hamilton's office. As Eddie's friends in the room cheer, Angela asks, "tell us your thoughts, Edward. What's running through your mind right now?" Knowing what he was going to say well ahead of time, Eddie announces, "my thoughts right now, Angela, is to first clean up the mess left by my predecessor. That, as everyone knows by now, is the number one reason I got into this race."

Angela asks Eddie, "can you share with our viewers some of your plans?" Eddie replies, "first and foremost is to unravel the mess left by the former mayor. I plan to bring in an independent accounting firm to review the town's books. Once that is taken care of, we're going to return whatever money we can to the local businesses who have been swindled by my predecessor. Then, we'll do whatever is necessary to get the exorbitant tax situation under control." Angela further interviews Eddie, who hints at a few of his plans for the future of the town.

Next in line to be interviewed by Angela is one of the town's residents, Dr. Gerhard Zunde. Dr. Zunde walks up, shakes Eddie's hand, telling him, "congratulations, Edward! As usual, you've won the race." Catching Dr. Zunde's innuendo, Eddie laughs and replies, "thank you, Dr. Zunde."

Eddie steps aside, and Angela introduces Dr. Zunde, announcing, "I have with me now Dr. Gerhard Zunde, who lives just around the corner from Edward. Dr. Zunde is the athletic director at Northside High School and the field events coach at the State University, not far from here." Dr. Zunde tells Angela, "good evening, Angela. It's great to see you once again."

Angela asks, "Dr. Zunde, please tell us your thoughts on the election." Dr. Zunde replies, "first of all, getting rid of the corruption was the first goal. I'm very confident we will see that goal met shortly. The crime problem in the area, which was linked to the former mayor, appears to have been solved by Officer Richard Hayes. I'm glad to see the county

police department came forward with a strong endorsement of Eddie. I understand that the first item on Mayor Bogenskaya's agenda is to do something about the ridiculous taxes the residents of this town pay." Dr. Zunde, among others, knows the taxes are way out of line with other towns in the area.

On the subject of taxes, Angela asks Dr. Zunde, "high taxes. That's a subject I think we all can relate to. What can you tell us about that?" Dr. Zunde, who was already briefed and prepared to answer Angela's question, replies, "Angela, the taxes in this area are so high, they are causing property values to drop. I'm not aware of too many areas where the monthly tax bill is far greater than the average mortgage payment. When the taxes get this high, Angela, prospective buyers move to a neighboring town. Mayor Bogenskaya is in the process of preparing a proposal to cut the property taxes in half. For one, I am definitely looking forward to that." Angela tells the listeners, "that's something I think all of us would welcome." Dr. Zunde and Angela talk some more, addressing other concerns of the town that have been unaddressed for years.

The evening winds down around 9:00 p.m. Braden, and his security team, comes inside, telling Eddie, "congratulations! I heard you came in first place! You got the gold medal!" Eddie replies, "yeah, bro! Like Mr. Frazier always says, 'only one person wins the race!' The first thing I'm going to do tomorrow is to tell Mr. Hamilton, 'congratulations! You won the silver medal!' Braden laughs, and tells Eddie, "that's gonna be funny. I wish I could be there to see that."

Mark tells Eddie, "hey, you were right!" Not having a clear context of what Mark is referring to, Eddie asks, "about what?" Mark replies, "my neighbor. We started throwing our trash in his trash cans, and now he brings his trash cans in when he gets home from work." Eddie tells Mark, "see that, bro? There's more than one way to solve those kinds of problems." Paula mentions, "it was those two steaks that went bad that probably got him moving." Kathy laughs, and asks, "you put two bad steaks in his trash can?" Paula replies, "I sure did. And, they cooked out there and stank for a whole day." Eddie smiles and replies, "problem solved."

Once everyone is gone, Kathy asks Eddie, "so, what's next? What does a mayor do?" Eddie replies, "the first thing I'm going to do is attend the meeting I set up with Mr. Davies, Mr. Rice, and Ralph Myles tomorrow. I'll get them to look over the town's books, and get moving on lowering the taxes." Eddie was so confident that he would win the election, that he already planned tomorrow's meeting well in advance. Kathy replies, "I'd love to be there for that meeting." Eddie replies, "then, come. It's not like anyone is going to kick you out." Kathy replies, "I think I will."

Eddie tells Kathy, “oh, and I have to fire Giuseppe Vio Otto, that is, if he’s still on the town payroll.” Kathy replies, “yeah. Vio Otto. Get rid of him. Put that on the top of the list.” Eddie and Kathy clean the house up a bit, and get ready for their early day tomorrow.

A few weeks later, Eddie is at work at the service station when Officer Richard Hayes drives in. Officer Hayes yells out to Eddie, “what’s up, mayor?” Walking out from behind Provost Leighton’s mother’s van, Eddie yells back, “what’s up?” Officer Hayes smiles, and exclaims, “I got the promotion! On the first of next month, I’ll officially be Captain Hayes!” Eddie and Bobby B. both give Richard a high-five and offer their congratulations, easily telling that Richard is very happy.

Eddie asks Richard, “I guess this means that you’ll not be on the road anymore?” Richard replies, “not much. But, I’ll still stop by and say ‘hi’ to you guys. Officer Wilson will be taking my day shift. And, we have a few new recruits.” Eddie replies, “yeah. You have to stop by so I can give you the stock tips.” Richard replies, “thank you again for those. Sandy has really taken an interest in the stock market. She takes the rental income from our old home and, after paying the expenses, invests it.”

Remembering something he has been meaning to ask Eddie, Richard mentions to Eddie, “I talked to Sandy. She’s really interested in a Volkswagen Bus, but with the Porsche engine. How do I get the ball rolling?” Eddie tells Richard, “if you guys pick up a Bus, I can take care of finding the engine and doing the modifications.” Richard explains, “Sandy already test drove a Volkswagen Bus. She likes it, and the kids like it. All of a sudden, she’s not so happy with the four-door sedan.” Eddie replies, “I can see that. There’s a lot more room in the Bus.” Richard asks, “so, what do I need to do next?” Eddie replies, “buy a Bus. Bring it here, and I’ll take care of the rest.” Richard tells Eddie, “thank you. I’ll get moving on that real soon.”

Reverting back to the original topic, Bobby B. comments, “Erika said something about her father getting promoted to police chief.” Richard explains, “the news just came out this week. Captain Gabriel was Chief Hanson’s first choice to take his place as chief. For the position of captain, the other guy strong in the running was Mueller. The deciding factor, I think, was this Jamieson character’s case. I have you guys to thank for that.” Eddie tells Richard, “all we do is tell you what we see.” Richard replies, “and, if you guys didn’t do that, that Maurice Crum character would still be dealing drugs over at the high school.”

Richard then informs Eddie, “by the way, you and Mark really did a number on Mayor Jamieson and this Glooma character. They’re not doing too well. They’ve both suffered severe concussions. Glooma is learning how to walk again. And, this Jamieson character now claims to not

remember anything about the incident.” Eddie replies, “and, I’m sure he’s forgotten all about his involvement in the gambling ring, too.” Richard laughs, saying, “that wouldn’t surprise me.” Eddie replies, “I’m not really sure what those two idiots expected when they attack someone with a knife.” Richard comments, “they’re lucky that’s all that happened to them. As we always say, deadly force is best addressed with deadly force.”

Looking around the shop, Richard curiously asks, “what in the world is that?” Eddie replies, “it’s Provost Leighton’s mother’s van. It’s an Austin K30 configured as a service van.” Richard comments, “I haven’t seen anything like that on the road since I was a kid.” Eddie replies, “it’s more than 40 years old. I’m restoring it to factory specs. Well, maybe a little better than factory specs.” Richard asks, “better than factory specs?” Eddie replies, “yeah. When this was new, the top speed was somewhere around 55 or 60 miles per hour. I had the engine bored out, and I’m going to turbocharge it. When I’m done, it might just do zero to sixty in fifteen or twenty seconds and get up to eighty miles per hour.” Richard comments, “it looks as if it just came out of the showroom.” Eddie replies, “other than the mechanicals and a few minor items, it’s in near perfect condition.”

Richard looks over the van, then tells Eddie and Bobby B., “I guess I’d better get back on the road. I just wanted to give you guys the good news, and thank you for all your help.” Eddie replies, “congratulations, again.” Eddie and Bobby B. get back to work. Richard gets back on the road, counting down the days until he is police captain.

Early morning, beginning at 7:00 a.m., Eddie generally fulfils his duties as mayor, which takes minimal time out of his schedule. Eddie then heads to the service station, arriving by 10:00 a.m. Eddie’s first order of business as mayor was to have the law firm of Davies and Rice, L.L.P., and his accountant, Ralph Myles, audit the town’s books and finances. Today, in a conference room at the town’s administration building, Eddie receives the final report.

Present today during the meeting are Eddie, Mr. Davies, Mr. Rice, and Mr. Myles. Also present is the town’s comptroller, Mr. Hamilton, the head of the planning department, Mr. Bernstein, and the tax assessor, Mr. Jennings. Deborah, the administrative assistant to the mayor, will be taking the minutes. Eddie opens the meeting, announcing, “it looks like we’re all here, and ready to begin. So, let’s get down to business.” Eddie, neither a politician nor a typical businessman, asks Mr. Davies, “so, what did we find out?”

Mr. Hamilton, a bit peeved at Eddie’s way of opening such an important meeting, shakes his head. Interrupting Eddie, Mr. Hamilton asks, “I realize you haven’t held the position of mayor very long, sir. But,

aren't we going to follow Robert's Rules of Order?" Eddie replies, "no. We're going to follow Eddie's rules of order. And, those rules are that I ask the questions, and I expect answers." Eddie and Mr. Hamilton have already had a few run ins. Eddie is not in the mood to hear Mr. Hamilton's shit today. Mr. Hamilton suspects that he is in for a bumpy ride during the course of this meeting.

Just to annoy Mr. Hamilton, asking exactly like he asked before, Eddie asks Mr. Davies again, "so, what did we find out?" Mr. Davies takes the floor, stating, "to be honest, every time we discover the answer to a question, three more questions are raised. But, let me start from the top, with item number one on the list." Eddie replies, "okay. What do you got?" Mr. Davies explains, "the township contracts with the county to provide services such as garbage collection, water, sewer, road maintenance, and all other services typically provided by a municipality. The charges for those services to the town's residents have been typically marked up 100 percent or more over what the county would charge for the same service. In some cases, such as water service, businesses pay as much as 500 percent more." Eddie replies, "wow! That's surprising. I'd love to hear the explanation of that."

Quickly providing an explanation, Mr. Hamilton interjects, "the increase in fees over what the county would charge is generally necessary to cover the billing of the town's residents for the services. And, we make sure that the services have been properly rendered." Eddie replies, "I'm a little lost here. The county bills for the same services. Their billing is included in the cost of the service. So, please explain." Mr. Hamilton, a forty-five-year-old finance expert, does not like answering to a twenty-two-year-old auto mechanic. Spouting out mumbo jumbo, Mr. Hamilton replies, "the county has a far greater number of personnel than we do to handle most of these issues. So, many of our expenses are tied up in salaries." Knowing that he is receiving bullshit for an answer, Eddie replies, "okay. Got it." Eddie has come to find out that Mr. Hamilton hates the phrase, "got it." So, Eddie uses the phrase a lot.

Not one to bother with details, Eddie asks, "okay. So, what's next on the list?" Mr. Davies reports, "Mr. Myles can get into the details of this, but there appears to be a lot of undocumented, poorly documented, and unnecessary travel expenses by township employees." Eddie asks, "like what?" Mr. Davies replies, "I would like to defer that question to Mr. Myles, if I may." Mr. Hamilton is beginning to look a little worried in addition to clearly being aggravated and annoyed.

Ralph reports to Eddie, "over the last three years, there have been 22 trips by various township employees to what appears to be resort areas. The expenses reported for these trips were not accompanied by any receipts or documentation. In most of these cases, plane tickets were

also issued in the name of family members of township employees, of which there is no accompanying explanation. And, what I find most odd is there is no documentation for seminars, continuing education, or business meetings for these trips.”

Eddie asks, “Mr. Hamilton, do you have an explanation for this?” Getting irate, Mr. Hamilton replies, “some documentation is likely to be found in other files. But, as far as my knowledge goes, I’m not aware of any unapproved travel.” Already knowing what is going on behind the scenes, Eddie replies, “okay. Got it. We’ll look for those files at a later date.” Mr. Hamilton is glad to hear that the explanation for unexplained travel will be deferred. That will give Mr. Hamilton enough time to forge the required documentation. From Mr. Hamilton’s perspective, he firmly believes the bullshit he is putting out on the table is accepted by all.

Wanting some specific information of undocumented and unnecessary travel, Eddie asks Ralph, “can you give us an example?” Ralph replies, “this past May, one employee took a trip to Miami, Florida, with his wife and three children. No documentation exists, other than receipts for plane tickets, hotels, and one large check reimbursing undocumented travel expenses.” Eddie asks Ralph, “who was that employee?” Ralph replies, “Frank Hamilton.” Eddie looks at Mr. Hamilton, and bluntly asks, “is there any explanation for this, Mr. Hamilton?” Now hot under the collar, Mr. Hamilton replies, “there must be. I’ll look into it and get back with you.” Giving Mr. Hamilton a false sense of security, Eddie replies, “okay. Got it. That sounds good.”

Eddie asks, “okay. What’s next on the list?” Mr. Davies replies, “you’re not going to like this one.” Eddie replies, “try me,” as he puts his feet up on the table. Mr. Davies explains, “tens of thousands of dollars over the prior year were transferred from the township’s operating account to a company called Environmental Impact, Incorporated.” Already knowing the answer to the question, Eddie asks, “what is Environmental Impact, Incorporated? What do they do?” Mr. Davies replies, “you don’t really want to know. But, I’ll tell you. Environmental Impact, Incorporated is a corporation formed by Bradford Jamieson. It is a shell corporation with no assets, which, as far as I can tell, conducts no business. Its primary address is listed as being the former mayor’s personal residence. And, the former mayor is listed by the Secretary of State as the CEO of Environmental Impact, Incorporated. Eddie replies, “okay. Got it.”

Eddie asks Mr. Hamilton, “do you know what this company, Environmental Impact, Incorporated, does?” Mr. Hamilton replies, “no, I don’t. Just by the name, it sounds like it’s a company that Mayor Jamieson used to do some sort of environmental studies.” Eddie asks Ralph, “who signed the checks used to transfer the money in question?” Ralph replies, “that would be Mr. Hamilton.” Eddie asks Mr. Hamilton,

“and, you have no idea what Environmental Impact, Incorporated does?” Turning a hot shade of red, Mr. Hamilton replies, “no, I don’t.”

Eddie quietly reviews a few documents, and announces, “Mr. Hamilton, you’re fired. Please leave the building immediately. There is a police officer outside this conference room who will escort you to the door. He will request your keys to the building. I suggest you comply with his request.” In total shock, Mr. Hamilton exclaims, “why? What’s this all about? If this is retribution for the election, I’m going to have your head!” Eddie calmly and quite confidently replies, “according to the Secretary of State, you are listed as the secretary of Environmental Impact, Incorporated. That would make you an accomplice to the embezzlement charges being brought against Bradford Jamieson. Correct me if I’m wrong, sir, but those are grounds for firing you.” Mr. Hamilton is silent for a moment, knowing he is guilty of far more than he thinks Eddie knows.

Backing down from his demanding tone, Mr. Hamilton demands, “can I, at least, clean out my office?” Eddie replies, “that won’t be necessary. There is a police officer doing that right now for you. They are collecting what they call evidence.” Mr. Hamilton slams his chair to the floor, exclaiming, “this is a setup!” Eddie replies, “I agree. You set yourself up for this. All we did is catch you.”

Hearing the commotion from outside the meeting room, Officer Braden, who was hired on a contract basis by Eddie on behalf of the town, walks into the room, asking, “is everything all right in here? I heard a lot of screaming.” Eddie replies, “yes. Everything’s under control. Please escort Mr. Hamilton to the front exit. Please obtain his keys to the front door, his alarm key, and the key to his office. If he fails to comply, take him to the county jail.” Braden replies in a military tone, “yes, sir!” Mr. Rice advises Mr. Hamilton, “it would be wise of you to govern yourself according to Mayor Bogenskaya’s request.” Hearing the word jail, Mr. Hamilton is shaking like a leaf in the wind. But, jail is where Mr. Hamilton will eventually end up.

Neither Eddie nor Braden has any grounds to have Mr. Hamilton transported to the county jail since he is not yet being charged with a crime. Eddie, Braden, Mr. Davies, and Mr. Rice all know that. But, Mr. Hamilton does not. So, Mr. Hamilton, in all of his ignorance, complies with Eddie’s request. Mr. Hamilton removes the keys from his key ring, and voluntarily places them on the table. Eddie reminds Mr. Hamilton that, if he is caught in the building, it will be considered trespassing, and he will be arrested. Braden escorts Mr. Hamilton out of the building, and everyone takes a short break.

After the break, Eddie announces, “now that we’ve gotten rid of that problem, we can move on to more important issues.” Eddie asks Mr. Davies, “do you have the papers drawn up?” Mr. Davies replies, “yes,” and hands a copy to everyone in the room. Eddie asks Mr. Davies, “will you please do the honors of explaining this to everyone present? You can probably do a much better job than I can.” Mr. Davies replies, “sure. No problem at all.”

Mr. Davies begins, “Edward’s plan is to dissolve the township, and turn the services formerly provided by the town over to the county. Mr. Myles has performed some preliminary estimates, which indicate that dissolving the township will result in, on average, a 45 percent decrease in property taxes for residences. For businesses, the reduction will be more along the lines of 55 percent. Dissolving the township will result in the complete closure of the town’s administrative offices, thus procuring the aforementioned savings.”

Interrupting Mr. Davies, Mr. Bernstein asks, “wait a second. Does that mean that we’re all getting laid off?” Mr. Davies answers, “no. If the proposal is accepted, you, Mr. Jennings, and Deborah will be transferred to the county to equivalent positions at their offices. I might add that, transferring to the county will involve a substantial increase in salary. And, there will no longer be the position of mayor of our town.” Mr. Bernstein, Mr. Jennings, and Deborah are all very surprised at what they are hearing. But, they all understand the dilemma.

After some group discussion, Mr. Davies continues, “the township, however, cannot simply be dissolved by the stroke of a pen. It must be put up to a vote, and the residents will have to approve the dissolution.” Holding up a power of attorney document, Mr. Davies explains, “this document allows me to go to the board of elections, and arrange a special election to vote on the dissolution. The resolution has two parts. The two items that will be put to ballot are first and foremost, the dissolution of the town. Secondly, as an independent item on the ballot will be the disposal of the town’s administration building.” Mr. Davies hands the document to Eddie, who signs the document along with a few other documents pertaining to the dissolution.

Mr. Davies then announces, “unless there are any questions, I believe we have covered everything on today’s agenda.” A few questions are raised by Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Jennings. Their questions are satisfactorily answered by Mr. Davies and Mr. Rice, the attorneys who are now representing the town, and Mr. Myles, who has now been hired as the town’s interim accountant. The meeting is adjourned, and Eddie takes the rest of the day off.

About a month after Provost Leighton dropped off her mother's van, the work on the van has been completed and is ready to be picked up. Driving into the service station with her mother, Provost Leighton wonders whether her mother's van will perform as well as expected. After all, the van is more than 40 years old, and the older vehicles do not typically perform as well as the newer ones.

Provost Leighton walks into the office with her mother, patiently waiting for Eddie to greet them. Eddie walks into the office, where Provost Leighton introduces her mother, Julia, to Eddie. Provost Leighton tells Eddie, "the plan is to take a trip to the beach in mom's van. Mom has really been looking forward to it." Eddie replies, "well, now the van will make it there and back. When I first saw it, I kind of wondered how you even made it here." Provost Leighton agrees, telling Eddie, "I know. I was seriously hoping I didn't have to call a tow truck." Eddie tells Provost Leighton and her mother, "well, let's go take a look at it."

Walking up to the Austin van, which has the hood opened, Julia exclaims, "wow! The engine looks brand new!" Happy to see that her mother is satisfied with the way the engine looks, for her mother's benefit, Provost Leighton asks Eddie, "tell me about the work you did." Eddie explains, "the engine was completely rebuilt. The cylinders were bored out, and now have oversized pistons and valves. I turbocharged the engine, so it now has more horsepower. I put in a bigger radiator. The brakes have been rebuilt. And, that click in the front end was a cracked bushing, so I replaced all the bushings. I put an anti-sway bar in. I think you'll find it handles better now. The clutch was shot, so I replaced it. And, the tires were all dry rotted, so they were replaced." Julia comments, "the engine, it looks so clean." Eddie tells her, "when I had the engine out, I pressure washed the engine compartment. It was kind of messy in there."

Eddie closes the hood, and tells Julia and Provost Leighton, "why don't you take it for a drive, and see what you think." Not wanting to wait another second, Julia replies, "I think I will. Come on, Athena. Get in! We're going for a drive!" Julia and Athena get into the van. Julia starts the engine, which sounds much smoother than when Provost Leighton drove it in a while ago. In her Austin van that looks as if it just came out of the showroom, Julia drives away with a big smile on her face.

Ten minutes later, Julia returns to the service station, all excited that her van is roadworthy once again. Getting out of her van, Julia exclaims, "it's better than new! And, it actually moves when I press on the gas pedal!" Eddie smiles, knowing that the extra effort he put into restoring the vehicle was definitely worth it. Julia continues exclaiming how good her van runs, as Athena opens the rear doors. Taking another look at

what was once her home, Athena is secretly very happy that the van has been restored.

Eddie and Provost Leighton settle up the bill, which Eddie forewarned will be expensive since a lot of work needed to be done and parts are hard to come by. But, the bottom line came in a little less than Eddie's original estimate.

Athena walks back to the van with Eddie. Julia, still marveling at how the van looks brand new, can't wait to take it to the beach. Athena's mother tells her, "we're going to the beach this weekend!" Athena replies, "I'm up for it!" Eddie comments, "that's where we were headed too. It's supposed to be a beautiful weekend." As Julia gets in her van to drive away, Eddie takes a photograph of her behind the wheel. Eddie then gets back to work.

Walking into the service area, Eddie asks Bobby B., "how's it going?" Bobby B. explains, "I dropped the engine. The buyer is going to be here sometime after lunch to pick it up. It's ready for you to modify the frame. And, Mark called and said he'll be by sometime around lunch." Eddie replies, "I guess he wants to check on the progress." Bobby B. asks, "I wonder why Paula wants a Bus." Eddie replies, "the baby, bro. There ain't no way she's getting that baby in and out of the back seat of her Jeep." Bobby B. observes, "Mark is going to have to put an addition on his three-car garage soon." Eddie tells Mark, "I can see that coming." Eddie and Bobby B. get back to work on Mark and Paula's Volkswagen Bus, reinforcing the frame to accommodate the more powerful engine.

Summer would not be the same without the annual reunion at the county pool. This Summer, since she has graduated from the University, Tessa has not been training as much. Neither has Eddie, who has been focusing more on work, getting the baby's room ready, and, now that he is the mayor of his town, the town's business. It's anybody's guess who will win the annual rematch in the pool.

The group arrives a few at a time. Angela Meadows, who now works at a television station, joins the group again this year. And Genise, from the track team, arrives with her boyfriend. Karen, the University's number one female sprinter, arrives with Amanda, Michelle, and Leslie, all of whom stay around during the Summer break and train together. Not surprisingly, eight matching Dune Buggies are again found in the parking lot.

Todd McCutchen, being held in the county jail, is not likely to cause trouble at the reunion this year. Neither is Andrew Goldstein, who has jumped bail and hasn't been seen in months. Terry Haynes and Donna Harmon, now serving a prison sentence for assaulting Erika last Summer,

are out of the picture. And Chuckie, who has been in and out of the sanatorium, has been readmitted once again.

Having a quiet morning, the group hangs out at the tables, where various conversations ensue. At one table, Kathy, in her eighth month of pregnancy, is the center of attention. Today, Erika is the first to ask, "is it a boy or a girl? Do you guys know?" Kathy replies, "it's a surprise. We don't know." Kathy suspects it's a boy since, many years ago, they attended a track meet in the future at the high school where Eddie, Jr. was on the track team. But, that's not to say that Eddie, Jr. will be the first child in the Bogenskaya family.

At another table, Eddie tells the story that a water filter salesman came by the service station a week ago, selling table top water filters. Eddie tells the story, "the salesman said his water filter will remove 99.99 percent of toxins from the water. So, I questioned him, and asked, 'so, your water filter filters out 99.99 percent of the toxins?' The salesman replied, 'yes. 99.99 percent. The water that comes out of this filter is 100 percent safe to drink.' So, I told the salesman that I'll put the water from the toilet bowl through the filter and, if he drank the water, I would buy one filter. And, I told him that I'll put the water that comes out of a radiator through the filter and, if he drinks it, I'll buy three water filters. The guy told me I was crazy. So, I told him, 'hey. If you can't stand behind your product, then don't put it in front of me.' The guy left, without a sale." Braden laughs, commenting, "ain't no one gonna drink water from a toilet bowl no matter what kind of filter it goes through." Johnson mentions, "that guy should get a real job."

Eddie then mentions, "the politician running for county commissioner wasn't any better. This guy was a real clown. He came by the station and told me that he was running for office, and his main goal was to lower my taxes. He wanted a donation. So, I told him that, if he gets elected, to come back before the next election, and I'll write him a check for the amount he lowered my taxes." Johnson comments, "you'll never see him again. Taxes never go down!" Eddie, who is in the process of dissolving the township where he resides, replies, "not without a hatchet and a machete." Bobby B. asks, "didn't that guy know that you're the mayor of our town?" Eddie replies, "no. If the guy had half a brain, he would have known that." Mark comments, "yeah, seriously. That election was all over the news."

Eddie tells Mark and Bobby B., "if our town votes to dissolve the township, according to Ralph, our taxes will be cut in half. That's how you lower taxes. You get rid of 27 town employees who sit on their ass and do nothing all day long." Mark asks, "how come we don't invite Ralph to our parties?" Eddie replies, "I don't know. Maybe we should. It will get

him out of his office.” Johnson comments, “seriously. Accountants work way too much.”

Tessa walks over to Eddie, and asks, “so, when do you want to lose our race?” Eddie replies, “it sounds to me like you want lunch!” Tessa tells Eddie, “I’ve been training. I’m beating you this year, buddy!” Eddie laughs, and replies, “I bet you haven’t been in the pool since you graduated!” Braden reminds Eddie, “she was in the pool at your house during the graduation party. I didn’t see her swimming no laps, though.” Eddie stands up, telling everyone, “okay, everyone. Let’s get this over with. Tessa wants lunch.”

Kathy walks over to Sherri, who is now the senior lifeguard, telling her that Eddie and Tessa are ready for their annual race. This year, Karen decides to join the race. Eddie, Tessa, and Karen get warmed up, ready to fight it out for the title of this year’s winner. Sherri blows her whistle, announcing that the pool will be closed for ten minutes. The pool slowly clears out as the tribe moves to the pool’s edge since everyone wants a good view of the race.

Once the pool is cleared out, Sherri tells everyone to get ready. Eddie takes lane three, Tessa takes lane four, and Karen lane five. Walking along the edge of the pool, Sherri tells everyone to step back three feet from the pool’s edge. Sherri asks the swimmers if they are ready, who all indicate they are. Sherri walks to the side of the pool, ready to start the race. A crowd develops, with many spectators wondering what the big event is.

Sherri announces, “take your mark.” With everyone in position, Sherri blows her whistle. Eddie, Tessa, and Karen dive in, all showing their strength off the blocks. Halfway through the first lap, Eddie is in the lead, but this is to be expected. Eddie’s leg strength always affords him the lead right off the block. Eddie arrives at the wall first, suggesting to Tessa that she needs to start swimming. Kathy asks Hoffer, “has Tessa been training a lot?” Hoffer replies, “not much. We’ve been more focused on other things.”

During the second lap of the four-lap race, Kathy asks Hoffer, “did you find a job yet?” Hoffer replies, “yeah. I did. I got a job at the television station where Angela works. I was going to announce it a little later.” At the end of the second lap, surprising everyone, the race appears to be a three-way tie. As Eddie completes his second flip turn, Kathy mentions, “it looks like Eddie gained a slight lead after the turn.”

During the third lap, Karen takes the lead. Kathy comments to those standing around, “well, that was totally unexpected.” Eddie, fully aware that he is not in the lead, steps up his pace a bit. Hoffer asks Kathy, “has

Eddie been training?” Kathy explains, “not as much in the pool. Eddie has been mostly focusing on weight training. But, in the last two weeks, he’s been swimming a little more, especially since he knew this race was coming up.” Hoffer replies, “Karen has obviously been training.” After the third flip turn, Karen is unexpectedly in the lead.

Early in the last lap, Eddie gains a little ground over Karen. Tessa, losing this match at the moment, gains slowly on Eddie. The spectators cheer, as the end of the race draws near. No one, however, seems to know who is cheering for whom. The swimmers rapidly approach the wall and, at the finish, with the upset of the year, Karen touches first. Eddie touches the wall second, beating Tessa by barely a yard.

Barbara announces to the crowd, “the winner this year is Karen! What a surprise! But, between Eddie and Tessa, Eddie won by barely a yard!” Eddie gives Tessa a high-five, moves into Tessa’s lane, where he and Tessa give Karen a high-five. Eddie tells Tessa, “you can have your pizza now.” As the three swimmers get out of the pool, Tessa confesses, “I should have trained more. I haven’t been in the pool much recently.” Tessa, breaking the national record in the 100 and 200-meter freestyle last Spring, has been taking a bit of a hiatus from swimming. Eddie replies, “me either.” Eddie turns to Karen and says, “but, apparently someone has.” Karen replies, “I’m found out. Yeah. I’ve been training a lot. A real lot.” Eddie, Tessa, and Karen walk over, joining the others who are also ready for lunch.

Over lunch, various conversations take place. Telling those sitting at his table, Bobby B. announces, “me and Erika have set our wedding date.” Mark asks, “when is that?” Bobby B. replies, “December 21.” Mark asks, “what made you guys pick that date?” Bobby B. replies, “December 21 is the Winter solstice. Erika wanted to get married on an equinox or solstice. But, the Autumn equinox won’t give us enough time, and the Spring equinox is way too far away.” Mark observes, “I guess you guys aren’t having a beach wedding.” Bobby B. replies, “I think we’re going to go the more traditional route.”

Karen and Amber, still working at their Summer job at the day camp, seem to be happy with their arrangement. Next year, however, they will both graduate from the University, and Mrs. Jensen, who runs the day camp, will have to find a replacement. Kathy asks Karen and Amanda, “how’s Mrs. Jensen doing? Is she still a space cadet?” Karen replies, “oh, yeah. But, I think her daughter is a bigger space cadet than she is.” Kathy laughs, and replies, “I can only imagine.” Amber tells Karen, “tell her about the story when her daughter called from college.” Kathy replies, “I got to hear this one.”

Karen explains, “okay, so I only heard one half of this conversation, so you’ll have to fill in the blanks. But, it was kind of obvious what was happening. Mrs. Jensen’s daughter, Penny, was in her first semester of college over the Summer. So, I was sitting in her office, and her daughter calls. Mrs. Jensen said she had to take the call. It was obvious her daughter was having some sort of panic attack or something. Penny bought something using a credit card. So, the next month, the credit card company sent Penny a bill, and Penny can’t understand why she has to pay for whatever it is she bought twice. Penny was telling her mom that she paid for it using the credit card and didn’t understand why she is being billed by the credit card company a second time for what she already paid for.” Kathy, among many others, laughs hysterically. Kathy exclaims, “you can’t be serious!” Karen replies, “I hate to say it, but I am.”

Karen goes on to explain, “I seriously had to leave the room. I told Mrs. Jensen, ‘I’ll be right back.’ So, I stood out in the hallway because I couldn’t keep from laughing. Their conversation went on for like ten minutes.”

Paula asks, “why did she start college in the Summer?” Karen replies, “the only thing we can figure out is that she had to take some remedial classes or is in some sort of head start program.” Kathy laughs, and blurts out, “hopefully, they were accounting classes!” Karen sighs, and comments, “so, it’s something every week with Penny.” Kathy concludes, “it sounds like Penny will be running the day camp when Mrs. Jensen retires.”

As lunch comes to an end, Paula stands up, and exclaims, “now that we’re all together, I have an announcement to make!” Kathy and Erika suspect they know what Paula’s announcement is about. From another table, Barbara yells back, “out with it, girl.” Finding out for sure just a few days ago, Paula announces, “we’re having a baby! I’m pregnant!” The group claps and cheers, causing others at the county pool to wonder what’s going on at the tables near the deep end of the pool. Paula is inundated with questions from the women, while the guys move on to talk about other things.

After lunch, Eddie and Bobby B. are discussing getting into the Volkswagen Bus modification business. Not only upgrading the engine, they discuss other possible upgrades to the Bus. Overhearing the conversation, Amber decided that she, too, wants a Bus, asking Eddie, “what’s the chance I can get you guys to make one for me?” Eddie replies, “we can do that.” Mitchell asks Amber, “why do you want a Volkswagen Bus?” Amber replies, “well, let’s see. We’re getting married soon, and we might have babies. It would be kind of hard getting babies in and out of the back seat of your Opel. And, I’m graduating next year, and I’m going to need a way to get around.” Mitchell, who is fast on the track but slow

to move on life's other issues, is quickly silenced. Eddie tells Amber, "pick out what you want, and we'll take care of the rest."

The remainder of the afternoon is relatively quiet. Most people in the group are either sitting at the tables or in the pool cooling off. Kathy comes over and sits at the table with Braden. Braden tells Kathy, "it's kind of quiet this year. There ain't no Chuckie or McCrutchen to mess up our party. But, I've been keeping my eyes open." Braden, since he is a police officer, is always keeping his eyes open for trouble. This year, in contrast to the past few years, he finds none. Kathy replies, "maybe we'll all finally get to have a normal life." Braden laughs, and tells Kathy, "as a campus police officer, there ain't no such thing as a normal life."

Kathy asks, "by the way, how is that old Crum doing?" Braden replies, "shit. You don't want to hear about that. They really ought to transfer his ass to some other prison. He keeps getting his ass kicked in there. And, he's always complaining that he's sick. That's because sick bay is the only place he doesn't get his ass kicked. So, he's complaining that he's sick all the time." Kathy replies, "yeah. He's sick in the head. Maybe they should transfer him to the sanitarium, where he can be with the Chuckie." Braden laughs, and tells Kathy, "my father can't wait until Mr. Crum is out of there. They'd be glad to get rid of his ass. From what I hear, Mr. Crum is the biggest pain in the ass in the whole prison." Kathy replies, "that doesn't surprise me."

As everyone gets ready to leave, Amber asks Kathy, "what's the chance I can come and check out your Bus sometime soon?" Kathy replies, "that shouldn't be a problem. Just call me, and you can come by sometime." Mitchell, wanting to see what he is getting into, tells Kathy, "we'll do that. I want to see this too." Mitchell is keenly aware, now that Amber is one year away from graduating, that wedding plans are the next thing on Amber's list.

The party quickly breaks up, only so everyone can get to the next party, which is at the pizzeria. On the way out to the parking lot, Mark tells Braden, "we got off easy today." Braden, not quite as confident, replies, "the day ain't over yet. I'm still keeping my eyes open." Everyone gets into their vehicles, glad to see that they are all in the same condition as a few hours ago. Everyone heads to the pizzeria, where they will plan their next get-together.

Eddie gets the news late one Tuesday evening of the results of the special vote to dissolve the township. The residents of the town voted by an overwhelmingly large margin to dissolve the township, and turn the essential services over to the county. The county will now cover all services, such as garbage collection, water, sewer, road maintenance, and all other services typically provided by a municipality. Now that the

township has been dissolved, property taxes will be lowered by an average of 50 percent. And, as soon as the changeover takes place, the town will no longer have any employees, including Eddie's job as mayor.

Early the next day, Mark drives into the station to fill his gas tanks. Mark, Eddie, and Bobby B. sit in the office for a few minutes, talking about what they're going to do with the money that they will be saving on their property taxes. The guys quickly come to a consensus to invest it in the stock market. Eddie then suggests another beach trip, this time wanting to invite the whole group. Now that Bobby B's Volkswagen Bus is finished, Erika wants to take it to the beach.

Mark inquires, "how's my bus coming along?" Eddie explains, "the engine is in, and it runs. We're working on the front end now." Mark asks, "can I see it?" Eddie replies, "yeah, bro. Let's go back and take a look." Mark looks over his Bus with Eddie, as Bobby B. heads outside to attend to a customer who just drove in.

As Eddie and Mark look over Mark's Volkswagen Bus, in front of the station, Bobby B. is on the receiving end of a verbal outburst from someone he does not even recognize. Not being able to get a word in, Bobby B. stands and listens, trying to make sense out of the woman's complaint. Hearing the argument, Eddie walks outside with Mark. Mark asks, "who is she?" Eddie replies, "I don't know. I've never seen her before." Mark comments, "she definitely has a screw loose." Eddie jokingly replies, "let me go back and get my air ratchet. We'll tighten it."

Eddie walks up, and asks Bobby B., "is there a problem?" Bobby B., now catching on to Eddie's sense of humor, replies, "apparently so. But, I haven't been able to figure out what her problem is." The woman yells at Bobby B., "so, you haven't even been listening to me?" Bobby B. replies, "I'm trying," and is again interrupted by the woman who starts screaming.

Eddie tells the woman, "whoa! Hold on here! First, who are you?" The woman replies, exclaiming, "I am Nancy O'Brien! And, you are the guys that are responsible for my husband and son going to jail! They're having a terrible time in there!" Immediately knowing this meeting is a total waste of time, Eddie asks Mrs. O'Brien, "so, what do you want me to do about it?" Mrs. O'Brien screams, "I'm losing my house, and I can't afford to eat! I have a family to feed! And, is that all you have to say? 'So, what do you want me to do about it?'" Eddie tells Mrs. O'Brien, "there's nothing I can do about it, so why don't you just move on. Go home!" Eddie then motions to Bobby B. to go inside and call the police. As Bobby B. walks inside, Mark asks Eddie, "how can you lose a house? They're kind of big, and they don't move."

Mrs. O'Brien continues to fly off the handle, yelling and screaming. Mark asks Eddie, "is she for real?" Mrs. O'Brien, catching wind of Mark's comment, yells out, "yes! I'm for real! And, you guys are not getting away with this!" Eddie tells Mrs. O'Brien, "why don't you just shut up and listen for a minute." Rather than shutting up, Mrs. O'Brien continues to yell and scream at Eddie and Mark. Eddie and Mark listen, occasionally looking at each other in amazement as Mrs. O'Brien continues to carry on.

Officer Wilson drives up, sitting in his car for several minutes listening to the one-sided argument. Hearing enough, Officer Wilson gets out of his car and walks up to Eddie. Eddie asks Officer Wilson, "can you please get rid of her? She's out of control." Mrs. O'Brien yells at Eddie, "oh no, you won't! You're not getting rid of me! I'm not done." Officer Wilson exclaims, "Nancy O'Brien! Please control yourself!" Mrs. O'Brien exclaims, "I'm losing my house, and I can't feed my family! What do you want me to do? And, these guys are responsible!" Raising his voice, Officer Wilson replies, "control yourself! Or, I'll be arresting you for disorderly conduct!"

Hearing the word "arrest", Mrs. O'Brien finally calms down, and Officer Wilson asks Eddie, "what started all of this?" Eddie replies, "she just drove into the station and started yelling at Bobby B." Mrs. O'Brien starts yelling again, prompting Officer Wilson to sternly warn her, "I'll get to you. Now, unless you want me to arrest you for disorderly conduct, I suggest you remain silent." Giving everyone's ears a rest, Mrs. O'Brien is silenced for the moment. Officer Wilson asks Eddie, "and, then what happened?" Eddie replies, "I came out to see what the problem is, then she started yelling at me." Officer Wilson asks Eddie, "that's it?" Eddie replies, "yeah. I don't even know why she's here."

Giving Mrs. O'Brien the ultimatum, Officer Wilson tells her, "Nancy O'Brien, you have a choice. You can either drive away now, or I'm arresting you for disorderly conduct. The choice is yours." Mrs. O'Brien exclaims, "fine! I'll leave. But, none of you have heard the end of this!" Eddie sarcastically comments to Mrs. O'Brien, "yeah, whatever." Mrs. O'Brien drives off, committing at least three traffic violations before she is out of sight.

Now that Mrs. O'Brien is gone, Officer Wilson tells Eddie, "I advise you to get a restraining order against her. Let me tell you what is going on with her. Nancy O'Brien came into the precinct a few days ago, yelling, screaming, and flying off the handle, just like she did here. I wasn't there to see it, but I hear she made a big commotion. Apparently, to her, the law doesn't matter. She's angry that she doesn't have the money to bail her husband and son out of jail, so she's blaming the department, the judge, and apparently now you guys." Eddie informs Officer Wilson, "wow! It sounds like she's after everyone." Officer Wilson replies, "flying off the handle like that, she'll make a really good witness for us in court."

Eddie asks, “so, how’s Richard doing?” Officer Wilson replies, “he’s doing good. I think he likes his new position. But, unfortunately, he got caught in the middle of it when Nancy O’Brien came into the precinct. But, if he didn’t run into it then, he would have run into it now.” Eddie tells Officer Wilson, “I have some really big news for Richard. So, tell him to stop by sometime this week.” Officer Wilson replies, “will do. I’ll radio the precinct when I get back on the road and let him know.” Officer Wilson gets back on patrol, very glad to see Mrs. O’Brien left on her own accord.

Mark tells Eddie, “I don’t think you’ve seen the last of that crazy lady.” Eddie replies, “you’re probably right about that.” Mark tells Eddie, “I’m glad I could stay around for the entertainment.” Eddie mentions, “at least, now I know that Mr. O’Brien and Jimmy aren’t coming by any time soon. So, that’s some good news.” Mark replies, “that guy deserves to be in jail. That really sucks, failing athletes just to make a little money on the side.” Eddie comments, “I wonder if he thinks it was all worth it now that he’s in jail.” Mark replies, “yeah, seriously! Well, I’d better get over to the job site and get to work.” Mark drives away, and Eddie gets back to work on Mark’s Volkswagen Bus.

Later that afternoon right before Eddie is about to close, Captain Richard Hayes drives into the service station, apparently wondering what news Eddie has to offer. Walking back to the service area, Captain Hayes yells out, “what’s up?” Eddie replies, “what’s up?” Richard replies, “Officer Wilson radioed the precinct, and I got the message that you have some important news. I’ve been inside all day long. So, I thought I’d take some time and get out of the office.” Eddie asks, “are you missing the streets already?” Richard replies, “I really like my new position as captain, but being inside most of the day is going to take some getting used to. So, when I heard you have some news, I jumped on it and drove right over.”

Richard then asks, “so, what’s up?” Eddie replies, “the vote to dissolve the township was yesterday. The residents of the town voted to dissolve the township. So, the county will now be covering all the services.” Richard replies, “I missed the news last night. We were out in the pool. But, that’s really good to hear. There’s no telling how far the corruption went in that organization.” Eddie points out, “Frank Hamilton was in on it. You guys should keep an eye on him.” Richard replies, “he’ll be looking for a new job. We’ll see where he lands.”

Eddie then informs Richard, “there were two items that were voted on yesterday. The first was the dissolution of the town. The second item on the ballot was the disposal of the town’s administration building. The second item passed as well.” Richard asks, “what’s this second item all about?” Eddie replies, “the second item allows me, as mayor, to transfer the town’s administration building to any organization in the county

government that I see fit. So, I'm giving the building and the grounds to you guys. That is, if you guys want it."

Richard is silenced for a moment, then replies, "wow! Are you serious? The department is really going to appreciate that! I don't know how to thank you. Wow! This is big news!" Never seeing Richard so excited, Eddie replies, "it's not really me making the decision. The residents of the town voted on it. I think they'd rather see you guys get the building rather than the county water department." Richard smiles, and tells Eddie, "Chief Gabriel is really going to like this one."

Richard tells Eddie, "thank you again. And, you're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you." Eddie asks, "oh, yeah? What's that?" Richard explains, "the first thing Chief Gabriel charged me with is to find a location for a new precinct in the Northern part of the county. Up there, in the town that you guys reside in, is no man's land. It's on the fringes of every precinct. That would be the perfect location, but land in that area is very expensive. That administration building would be in the perfect location." Eddie asks Richard, "do you want to go take a look at it?" Richard smiles, and replies, "sure. I'd love to. And, I have the time." Eddie closes the service station for the day, and will meet Richard at the town's administration building.

Arriving at the town's administration building, Captain Hayes and Eddie take a look at the grounds first. After a short conversation, Captain Hayes asks Eddie, "how much land is this, anyway?" Eddie replies, "the building sits on eight acres. Two of the eight acres is a green buffer hiding the building from the residential area." Officer Hayes replies, "that's really a lot of land."

Walking around, Captain Hayes sees more than adequate parking in the front of the building. In the rear of the building, another larger parking lot would be perfect for employees, police cars, and SWAT team vehicles. Eddie points out, "there's also a nice picnic area. If you want to get outside, it's a perfect place to eat lunch." Captain Hayes replies, "I see that. And, there's a fence around the whole compound." Captain Hayes clearly notices the security features.

Taking a look at the building itself, Captain Hayes mentions to Eddie, "wow! This building is far bigger than our main precinct." As they walk inside, Eddie replies, "it's three and a half stories. In total, it's about 50,000 square feet." Captain Hayes asks, "what in the world did these characters need 50,000 square feet for?" Eddie replies, "I have no idea, especially since the town will now be operating at half the cost, with zero square feet." Eddie and Captain Hayes walk throughout the building, taking a look at the common areas, offices, and storage areas. During the tour, Eddie walks anywhere he wants to but, after all, Eddie is the mayor.

After looking at the first three floors, Eddie and Captain Hayes get into the elevator, ready to look at the fourth floor. The top floor, which is one-half the square footage as the other three floors, houses the mayor's office. A few other high-level officials occupy the floor, such as the comptroller, Mr. Hamilton, who has been fired by Eddie. The elevator opens, exposing a grandiose lobby giving the impression that someone who is very important occupies this area of the building. Opening the door to his office, Eddie tells Captain Hayes, "here's my office. Maybe, someday it will be yours. And, the office next door is identical to this one." Captain Hayes walks inside, seeing a five-hundred square-foot office with beautiful views. A private bathroom, complete with a shower, attests to the high property tax rates in the area.

Pointing to the East through a wall of windows, Eddie tells Captain Hayes, "if you look out in that direction, you can see the University." Captain Hayes replies, "I see that. There's the stadium. And, I can almost make out the time on the clock tower. If I had binoculars, I could see what is going on out on the track." Eddie points out, "to the right of the clock tower, where all those big houses are, is frat row." Captain Hayes replies, "that's where all the dope smoking and underage drinking goes on." Eddie asks, "really?" Captain Hayes replies, "yeah. We know all about it."

Eddie tells Captain Hayes, "come take a look at this," as they walk outside onto the roof, where there is a beautifully furnished patio. Eddie informs Captain Hayes, "by the way, all the furniture in the building is part of the deal." Eddie then points to the South, telling Captain Hayes, "you can even see the high school from here. And, to the right of the high school is Dr. Akinmola's church." Captain Hayes tells Eddie, "this place is, well, I don't even know what to say." Eddie and Captain Hayes walk around the top floor, which is clearly an executive office suite.

Captain Hayes asks Eddie, "and, the townspeople are okay with giving this away?" Eddie replies, "yeah. At the end of the day, they'd rather have the money back in their checkbook. And, with the number of break ins in the area, I'm sure they'd be glad to have a police station in the town."

Recalling a few of the break ins, Captain Hayes laughs, and comments, "I guess Frank Glooma and that Vio Otto character are out of a job." Eddie laughs, and replies, "I fired both of them." Captain Hayes asks, "what? Those characters were still on the payroll?" Eddie replies, "yeah. And, they were collecting a full paycheck while they were in the hospital and in jail." Captain Hayes shakes his head, commenting, "when does it ever end with these people?" Eddie replies, "apparently never. Well, until now."

Eddie and Captain Hayes head outside, where they sit and talk for a while. Eddie informs Captain Hayes, "Ralph Myles and his father are

working with the county to transfer all the residents' accounts to the county. They tell me it shouldn't take more than a month. After that, all I have to do is sign the paper, and the building is yours." Captain Hayes again tells Eddie, "I can't tell you how much the department appreciates this."

Captain Hayes tells Eddie, "you know what? I'm going to take the rest of the afternoon off, and join my kids in the pool. When Chief Gabriel comes in tomorrow, I'm going to tell him I found a place for the new precinct. He expected this project to take at least a year. And, he was going to have to put a bond proposal through to pay for the place. That, in itself, would have taken a year." Eddie tells Captain Hayes, "maybe he'll give you the rest of the week off."

Eddie then suggests, "if you want to show it to Chief Gabriel, just let me know." Captain Hayes replies, "trust me. After he hears about it, he's going to want to see it tomorrow." Eddie tells Captain Hayes, "I can show it to you guys at three o'clock." Captain Hayes replies, "the chief will be counting down the minutes all day. Go ahead and put it down on the calendar. We'll be there." Eddie and Captain Hayes both head to their homes, calling it a day.

Two weeks later, the day of the beach trip comes up on the calendar. Most everyone in the group who has a Dune Buggy drives it to the beach, including Eddie and Kathy. On the way to the beach, those who are driving a Dune Buggy use the two-way radio to talk among themselves, only because they can. By the time Eddie and Kathy get near the beach, there is a caravan of four Dune Buggies on the road.

Arriving at the beach, Eddie tells Kathy, "it looks like we're not the first ones here today." Even though it's early in the morning, the beach is filling up quickly. Instead of getting the closest parking place to the water, Eddie, and the rest of the caravan, parks near the concession building. Kathy radios the other Dune Buggy drivers who are still on the road to let them know where the group has settled. Eddie and Kathy gather their stuff together, and head to the water with the others in their group.

Walking through the parking lot, Eddie comments, "look who else is here!" Mark asks, "who's here?" Eddie replies, "Provost Leighton's mother." Kathy suggests, "maybe Provost Leighton is here too." Tessa asks, "how do you know?" Pointing to the Austin van he rebuilt, Eddie replies, "that's Provost Leighton's mother's van. I worked on it earlier in the Summer." Braden comments, "that's one mean looking van. That van looks like it means business. What is that?" Eddie replies, "it's an Austin K30. It's built like a tank." As they walk out onto the sand, everyone looks for Provost Leighton, but do not immediately see her.

As they are laying out their towels, Braden sets up an umbrella for Wendy. Braden asks, “what do you guys usually do at the beach?” Quick to reply, Kathy tells Braden, “we all make fun of Paula.” Paula, also quick to reply, tells Braden, “don’t listen to her. She’s eight months pregnant, and her hormones are off the chart.” Kathy tells Braden, “don’t listen to Paula. She’s only been out here for ten minutes, and she’s already getting heat stroke.” Paula replies, “am not.” Kathy tells Paula, “yeah, you are. Mental confusion is a sign of heat stroke.” Paula replies, “it’s not heat stroke. Your hormones are off the chart, girl. You’re not making any sense. And, at lunch, you’re going to eat a whole pizza yourself.” Kathy laughs, and tells Braden, “see? That’s what we used to do at the beach. Make fun of each other.” Braden just laughs, as he finishes setting up his and Wendy’s stuff. And, Paula realizes that Kathy got her going once again.

Braden announces, “I’m gonna go and check out the water.” Eddie, Mark, and Hoffer join Braden, as they get into the water and ride the waves. Kathy and Paula lay in the sun alongside Wendy. Tessa, seeing Bobby B. and Erika looking for the group, yells out to them. Bobby B., in turn, yells out to Johnson and Barbara, who are also looking for the group. Everyone settles in the same place, looking out for others in the group who have yet to arrive.

From the water, pointing to an area of the beach in front of the sand dunes, Eddie tells the guys, “there’s Provost Leighton. She’s walking in the sand with her mother toward the sand dunes.” Braden replies, “we should go say ‘hello’ to her.” Mark suggests, “watch and see where their stuff is. The girls may want to say ‘hi’ too.” The guys ride a few waves, finding that Provost Leighton’s stuff is close to the water, not too far from where they landed.

Eddie and the guys return to where they settled, finding out that nearly the whole group has arrived. Eddie tells Kathy, “Provost Leighton is here with her mother,” which is overheard by a few others. Kathy asks, “where is she?” Eddie points to the location, replying, “in front of the sand dunes, a little farther down than where we are.” Kathy quickly stands up, telling Eddie, “I’m going to go and say ‘hi’ to her.” Paula, who is very relaxed and doesn’t want to move, tells Kathy, “tell Provost Leighton to stop by here and say ‘hi’.”

Walking up to Provost Leighton, Kathy announces, “we weren’t expecting to see you here today.” Provost Leighton replies, “wow! Kathy! This is a big surprise. I’d like you to meet my husband, Mike.” Provost Leighton introduces her husband and Kathy, and reintroduces her mother to Kathy. Provost Leighton wastes no time asking, “who else is here?” Kathy replies, “wow! Almost the whole group. About two dozen of us.”

Provost Leighton tells her husband and her mother, "I'll be right back. I'm going to say 'hi' to the track team."

Kathy and Provost Leighton walk toward the group. On the way, Kathy looks toward the water, seeing an area in the sand that has been dug away. The tide has filled the dug out area with water, forming what appears to be a makeshift bathtub. Kathy recalls the time when Eddie was looking at Provost Leighton's van and she and Provost Leighton took a walk. On that walk, Provost Leighton shared the story that she shared with Mr. Frazier about how her mom gave her a bath at the beach.

Walking up with Kathy, Provost Leighton is warmly greeted by the group. Wondering if the track team frequents the beach as much as the pizzeria, Provost Leighton asks, "do you guys come here often?" Answering for the group, Mark replies, "we used to come here a lot more often, but not so much in the last few years. But, now that we've graduated, we've been hitting the beach more." Provost Leighton confesses, "I've missed this place. We've been coming to the beach more, too, this year."

In catching up since graduation, the question comes up, asked by Kathy, "so, what did you think of Mr. Frazier's commencement address?" Provost Leighton sits in the sand, and explains to the group, "to be honest, I kind of dreaded walking in to work on Monday morning. I was confident that some administrators would voice their approval. But, I also expected a few others to express their extreme disapproval. But, honestly, I didn't care what anyone else thought. I had four hours to find a speaker, and I could not think of anyone more motivating to listen to than Mr. Frazier. But, to answer your question, since I've been at the University, that was, by far, the best commencement address I've ever heard."

Mark asks, "what are the other commencement addresses like?" Provost Leighton replies, "to be honest, they're quite boring. Most commencement addresses are all the same recycled material, addressing topics like, 'you can make a difference in the world,' 'find your passion,' and 'world peace.'" Kathy laughs, asking Provost Leighton, "are you making fun of the valedictorian?" Provost Leighton laughs, and replies, "the valedictorian's address this year was a watered down version of the commencement address given two years ago."

Amber, who has not yet graduated, asks, "Provost Leighton, are you still going to coach track next year?" Provost Leighton replies, "well, hmm. How do I say this?" Barbara, in full character, replies, "just spit it out, girl!" Placing her hand over her mouth, Barbara quickly realizes whom she was speaking to. Provost Leighton laughs, and explains, "well, first of all, next year, I will no longer be Provost Leighton. I resigned a

week ago.” The group verbally expresses deep disappointment and sadness.

Provost Leighton then continues, “but, wait! I have taken a position in the Exercise Science Department, where I will be a professor. I will be teaching a class in track and field along with Mr. Frazier. So, to answer the question, yes. I will be coaching track next year and, hopefully, for many years to come.” The group cheers, really glad to hear that Provost Leighton will be now more involved with track.

Surprised to hear the news that Provost Leighton resigned from her administrative position, Kathy asks, “how did all this come about?” Provost Leighton explains, “during the graduation ceremony, when Mr. Frazier introduced me as ‘Coach Leighton’, and told the audience that I was largely responsible for the team’s undefeated season this year, I realized for the first time in my life that I would rather be identified as a track coach rather than the provost of the University. Then, toward the end of his address, Mr. Frazier made mention that there is nothing worse than running someone else’s race. Well, that was me. I was running someone else’s race. Track and field is where my heart is. So, I took Mr. Frazier’s advice, and decided to start running my own race.” The two dozen track athletes applaud for Provost Leighton, who is now even more convinced that she made the right decision to resign.

Now curious, Amber, asks, “so, Provost Leighton, what’s this about a track class you are going to teach?” Provost Leighton smiles, and replies, “we’re not at the University right now. So, out here, at the beach, please feel free to call me Athena. But, to answer your question, Amber, there will be several new physical education classes brought to the curriculum next year. The first class is a class on track offered at the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior level. The other class is a class on the field events, offered at the same four levels. All the classes will meet together. But, listen to this. The class will be also offered as an advanced placement class to high school students, who will receive college credit for taking the class. My and Mr. Frazier’s goal is to get future track team members to train with the team before they enter the University. Then, when they enter the University, their skill levels will be top notch. Mr. Frazier and I will be teaching the class together. Next year, if all goes well, we will look into expanding the program.”

Eddie comments, “I would have definitely signed up for that class.” Mark reminds Eddie, “yo, bro! You weren’t even interested in going to college back then!” The group laughs, as Eddie replies, “oh, yeah. That’s right.” Braden mentions, “yeah, but we all would have taken that class just for fun.” Johnson points out, “Mr. Crum would have found a way to keep us out of it.” Braden replies, “ain’t that the truth.”

Athena then tells Barbara and Johnson, “you’ll be hearing more about this in a few weeks when school starts up again. I’ve already spoken with Dr. Zunde, and all the details have been worked out. The class will be offered midday, coinciding with the seniors’ lunch, physical education, and study hall at the high school. That will leave the students ample time to leave the high school campus, take the class, eat lunch, and return for the remainder of their classes.”

Barbara asks, “are you saying the class will be offered this Fall?” Athena replies, “yes, to those who want to take it. Dr. Zunde and Dr. Brooks have had the schedules reorganized for anyone who was on the track or cross country team. When the students get back in a few weeks, they will be presented with the option of taking the class in lieu of a formal gym class at the high school.” Athena then mentions, “this is a pilot program and is, at the current time, being only offered to Northside High students. Next year, it will likely be offered to other high schools in the area. And, as I mentioned earlier, we will likely be expanding the program.”

Once the conversation of track and field comes to an end, Paula tells Athena, “why don’t you guys come over here and join us?” Seeing the track team now as her friends, Athena is quick to reply, “I think we’ll do that.” Athena heads back to her place in the sand, and returns with her husband and mother.

Lunchtime arrives, and Eddie asks, “how many pizzas are we getting?” Counting the number of people, Paula replies, “fifteen, not including Kathy. She’ll need two pizzas. She’s eating for two.” Kathy laughs, and tells Paula, “hey, now! You’re eating for two now, too!” Athena asks, “what’s this? Paula, are you pregnant?” Paula replies, “yeah. I’m eating for two. But, the other one is about the size of a golf ball right now.” Athena exclaims, “congratulations, Paula!” A few of the guys then go up to the concession stand to place the order. Kathy and Paula talk to the women about their due dates.

The guys return with the pizza and drinks. Everyone digs in, including Athena and her family. Over lunch, Athena asks Eddie, “how much do I owe you for the pizza?” Eddie replies, “nothing. It’s my treat.” Athena tells Eddie, “please, let me pay you.” Braden blurts out, “Eddie always buys. He’s gotta spend all that money he makes in the stock market somewhere. There ain’t no use in you arguing with him.”

Everyone enjoys the pizza, and Kathy is quick to point out to Paula, “see there? I only ate three slices, just like I usually eat.” Paula replies, “uh huh. And, when everyone gets in the water, you’ll finish off the rest of the pizza.” Kathy replies, “I will not!” Paula replies, “yeah, you will, girl. And, you know it!” Kathy laughs, and tells Paula, “we’ll just see about

that.” Tempting Paula, Kathy takes another slice of pizza, and places it on Paula’s plate. Paula pretends to ignore Kathy’s kind gesture, but eventually gives in and eats the slice.

Eddie tells Athena, “they always get like this at the beach. If Kathy wasn’t eight months pregnant, they’d be chasing each other by now.” Overhearing Eddie, Paula tells Athena, “no, we wouldn’t.” Kathy responds, “yeah, we would. And, I would win.” Paula replies, “you’ll never win! You’re carrying an extra ten pounds!” Kathy replies, “so what? I’m still faster than you are.” Paula points out, “I’d be all the way to the water, girl, before you could even stand up!” The verbal ping pong match goes on for a while, with Kathy and Paula providing the after lunch entertainment.

After a while, most in the group heads to the water. Athena, her husband, and mother join the group headed to the waves. Athena, putting two and two together, has figured out that Braden must be correct in his assessment that Eddie makes a lot of money in the stock market. On the way to the water, Athena asks Eddie, “I hope I’m not prying or intruding, but is the stock market how you and Kathy made the money to buy your house?” Eddie replies, “yeah. I’ve been studying the stock market since I was a junior in high school.” Eddie figures he might as well also tell Athena, “it’s also how Bobby B., Mark, Braden, and a few other of the guys make money too. And, that’s how Angelo made enough money to move back to Greece and buy a service station there.”

Athena realizes that Eddie and Kathy must be well off. Athena makes the same observation of Mark, Bobby B., and a few others in the group. Now curious, Athena asks Eddie, “may I ask how do you determine what and when to buy or sell?” Eddie explains, “the key is the projected earnings and the earnings reports. If the projected earnings looks to be far better than average, we buy and wait for the report. When the report comes out, the stock goes up, and we sell. On average, nothing is held for longer than three or four months.” Eddie, of course, cannot tell Athena how he really picks stocks. He also cannot tell Athena about buying gold, traveling into the future or past to sell it, and making a profit.

Knowing Athena would likely also want to get in on the deal, Eddie tells her, “if you want my list of what to buy and sell, and when to do it, I’d be glad to give it to you.” Looking forward to a 50 percent pay cut in the near future by stepping down from her position of provost, Athena replies, “I’d really like to take a look at it, if it’s not too much trouble.” Eddie replies, “it’s no problem at all. Everyone who gets the list stops by the service station to pick it up. It’s only one page long. Stop by early next week, and I’ll give it to you.” Athena tells Eddie, “thank you very, very much. I really appreciate that.”

Mid afternoon, a few members of the group begin to leave, having enough of the beach for today. The plan afterwards, for those who want to, is to meet at the pizzeria for dinner around seven o'clock. Kathy, as Paula predicted, did reach for another slice of pizza, but discreetly ate it when Paula was in the water. And, seeing the dedication of the track athletes, Athena takes note that Amber, Karen, and a few other team members went on a training run in the sand. As the day at the beach comes to a close, everyone is convinced that they must do this more often.