



# RUNNING IN FLIP-FLOPS FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

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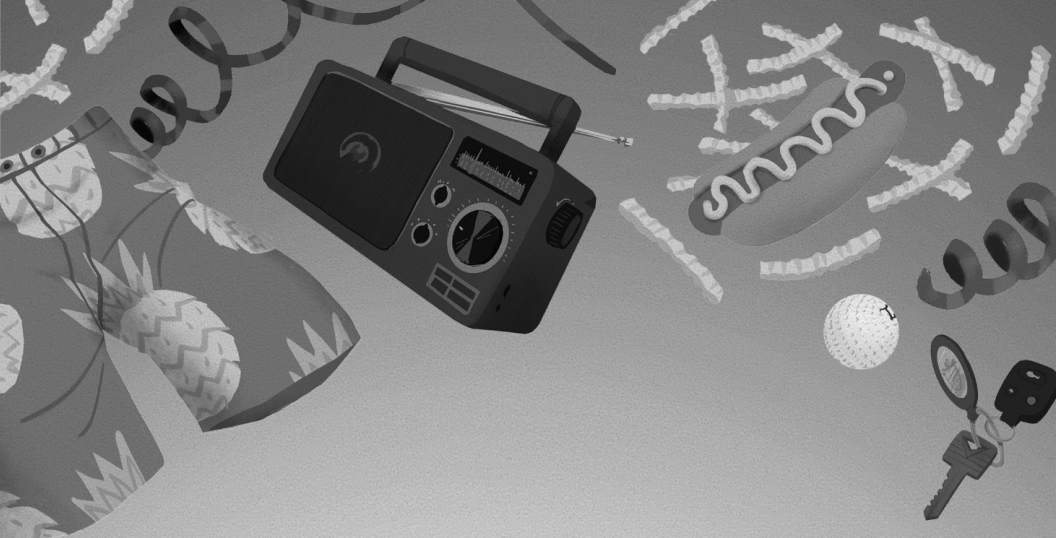
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*An extremely brief but super necessary opening note from your friendly narrator and master storyteller, Eddie Gordon Holloway:*

I know, I know, I owe you a **MAJOR** apology for the way things ended last time.

*Um, yeah, ya do! A cliff-hanger, Eddie, for real? Man, I thought we were friends.*

We are friends! Good friends!

*Hmph. Are we? Because news flash, Eddie, there are two things friends don't leave friends on. On read or on cliff-hangers, okay? That's Basic Friendship 101, dude.*

I hear you. You're absolutely right.

*Of course we are.*

But the truth is, I didn't have much of a choice.

*But hold on, aren't you narrating this story?*

It's complicated. Am I the main narrator here? Yes. But do I have final say on *how* the story's told? Nope. See, there are a lot of factors, um, factoring in . . . and well, all I can say is, if you please give me another chance, I promise I'll prove to you I still got you, same as before, same as always, yeah?

*SIGH. Okay, Eddie, yes—*

YESSS!! SWEET!! This is so exciting, you guys have no idea—

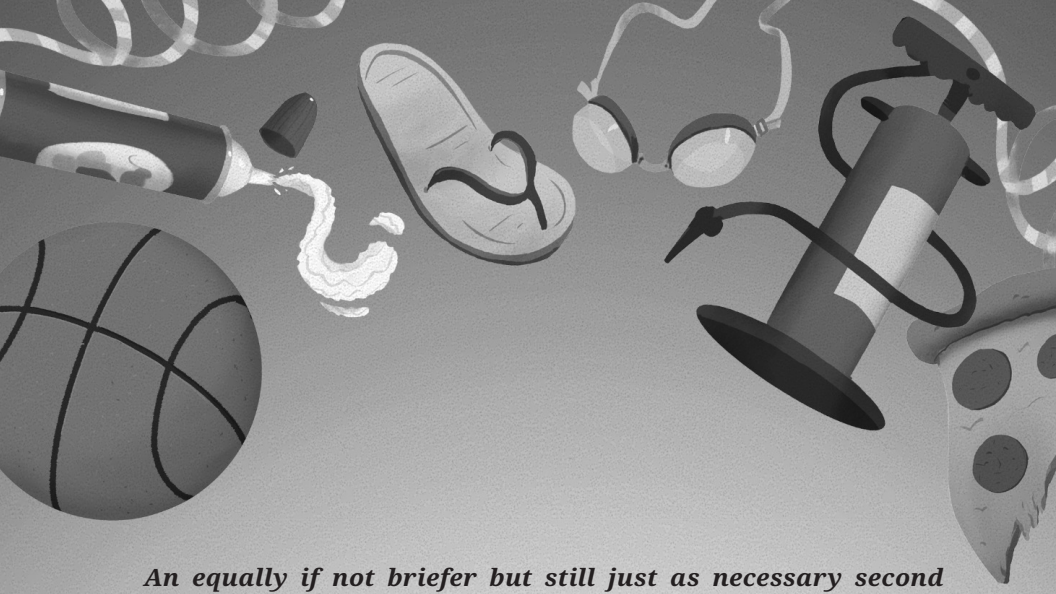
*But, Eddie, we're serious, you've gotta do better.*

Hey, say less. I'm gonna *do better* better than better's ever been done in the history of do-bettering!

*Why do we get the feeling we're gonna regret this?*

Hahaha, guys, staaaahhp. Trust me! I *still* got you!





*An equally if not briefer but still just as necessary second opening note from your friendly narrator and master storyteller, Eddie Gordon Holloway:*

Okay, so now that we're back to being great friends again, can I just say how STOOPID HAPPY and DUMB EXCITED I am to see you?! Like, I really mean it. Big thanks, from the heart, for showing up for me again. I can't explain how much it means to me.

No, seriously, last time we were together things got pretty hairy in a hurry, what with every single person in our town of Carterville, Ohio, including all our family and friends, going to the shore for Beach Bash, aka The Best Party of the Entire Year, only to never return home again.

No, you heard me right.

There's no one left.

Every single person in our hometown has:

Gone missing.

Vanished without a trace.

Disappeared.

Evaporated into thin air.

Been abducted by smelly aliens, teleported to a galaxy far, far away, and forced to spend every waking hour of every day hand-popping alien back pimples—which is 100 percent as gross as it sounds. Especially because no matter how much the people complain, they can't wear gloves. Nope, all that zit bursting is bare-hand action only. Although, in fairness, this is not because the aliens are completely ruthless, uncaring meanies—no, when they came to Earth to take humans, they forgot to grab disposable gloves and, unfortunately, while they do happen to have a large supply of gloves back on their alien home planet, they have seventeen zigzagging alien fingers per hand *and* each of their alien hands is roughly the size of a garbage truck, so the humans couldn't use alien gloves even if they wanted to.

And I know what you're thinking—*Eddie, if the aliens' hands are as big as garbage trucks, how humongous are their back pimples?!*

I don't wanna make you guys nauseous but let's just say, on average, it takes one human sixteen days, nine hours, and forty-seven

seconds to pop ONE alien pimple. And the fluid from each alien pimple is enough to fill 137 normal-sized swimming pools . . . so, how big are they? You be the judge.

You're still thinking about alien zits, aren't you?

Okay, yes, maybe I got a little carried away with that last bit. I mean, odds are they probably *weren't* kidnapped by pimply, stinky aliens. But really, we have zero clue where they are. All we know is it's been two days since we suddenly found ourselves 100 percent alone and entirely on our own without our family or friends.

I'm not sure I ever mentioned this—even if I did, it deserves another nod, because it's *that* important—but I 100 percent appreciate you being there with us, for rocking with us from the beginning to the end (of part one, haha).

For real for real.

Definitely pat yourself on the back with both hands—yep, The Double-Pat—because you're a real one!

I mean, not everyone would go along for the ride with me and the crew the way you did. You didn't ask any questions. Okay, well, when you did ask questions, they were really good ones. Plus, you didn't complain. You just showed up and balled out and I know that took real guts, a big heart, and—as Mom likes to say—*strength*

*of character.* For real, you rock! And well, I just hope you know, as far as Xavier, Sage, Trey, Sonia, and myself are concerned, you aren't just along for the ride. Nope, you are also a valuable member of this team. Basically, you're one of us now. And that means we ride together, no matter what, now and always.

So, hop in, friend—we've got places to go and, hopefully, if we're lucky, *people* to see!