



## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

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**M**r. Frank had refilled his coffee tumbler and was walking out when he saw the two roommates talking. He was always impressed by how Bobbi and Demetrius could be very different from one another but still demonstrate mutual respect. Though they had only been roommates since the beginning of the school year, they had a special friendship that allowed for some tough conversations, much like Brandon and Learie.

“I couldn’t help but hear some of your fellas’ conversation,” he said. “You know, I have found that for much of my life, the harder I prepared the luckier I seemed to get. I think that success can occur when opportunity meets preparation. Sure, there are times when we prepare and that opportunity that we so desperately want never actually comes to us. But I’d much rather be prepared just in case. I’m not sure I’d want to live with the regret of knowing that something was right there in front of me, but I wasn’t ready.”

Neither of the players could argue with that. It made sense to both of them.

“You fellas ever heard of Wally Pipp?” asked Mr. Frank.

“No,” the two players said in unison.

“You ever heard of Lou Gehrig?”

“There’s a disease with that name, right?” asked Bobbi.

“That’s right. The disease is actually ALS and it attacks the nerve cells and your muscles,” said Mr. Frank. “Lou Gehrig’s life was cut short because of this disease and so it’s commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig’s disease. But Lou Gehrig was also a baseball player way back in the day. In fact, he was the backup to this fella named Wally Pipp. One day Wally Pipp got sick and wasn’t able to play and so Gehrig finally got his chance.”

“Once again, I feel some kind of lesson coming from you Mr. Frank. I’m guessing Lou Gehrig was either really prepared or wasn’t prepared at all. So, which was it?” asked Bobbi.

“Oh, Gehrig was definitely prepared. In fact, he played so well that Wally Pipp never got his starting spot back. Lou Gehrig played so well that he actually played in every game for the New York Yankees for the next 13 years! Despite being sick at various times and suffering 17 fractures in his hands during his career, he never missed a game for 2,130 straight games. He held that record for more than 50 years until Cal Ripken, Jr. came along and broke it.”

Demetrius and Bobbi were amazed at that story. Thirteen straight years and never missing a game was incredible and it all started because one guy got sick and another guy was ready.

“Yessiree. Gehrig was more than ready for his chance. I know that is a story about the olden days, but we see these things play out all the time. We saw this with Nick Foles winning a Super Bowl as the backup quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles. We saw this with that fella at Alabama that came off the bench to quarterback the Crimson Tide to a championship. We saw Ohio State win a national championship in football with their third-string quarterback. You’ve got to be ready to answer the door when opportunity knocks.”

“Mr. Frank, you really like football, don’t you?” asked Demetrius. “It seems you’re always talking about football.”

“Sure do. I played a little halfback myself in college. I like to use football stories and analogies, but you can find lots of stories like these from all different sports. Unfortunately, there are more stories about players who got a chance and they weren’t ready. The sad reality is you don’t usually hear about them. You just look back and wonder why such and such team didn’t fulfill its’ potential. Since you fellas are basketball players, here’s a basketball story that just came to my mind.”

As a deep thinker and a philosophy major, Bobbi loves to hear good stories. Maybe, more importantly, he was excited because he was hoping Mr. Frank would deliver a lesson that would speak to his roommate Demetrius and go along with what Bobbi had been trying to tell him.

“I was vacationing in the OBX, you know, the Outer Banks of North Carolina when I heard this story. It was all over the news,” said Mr. Frank. “North Carolina won the national championship in 2017, but history almost told a different story. The Tarheels needed a game-winning shot from a former walk-on in the Elite Eight game to advance. Amazingly that former walk-on, Luke Maye, was only averaging about five points per game and was only playing about 15 minutes per game. He was something like the eighth-leading scorer on the team. They were playing Kentucky in that game and the Wildcats didn’t focus on him during the last possession. I don’t blame them. Luke Maye was the least likely guy on the court to become a hero. But, wouldn’t you know. That fella knocked down his wide-open jumper and the rest is history.”

“That is amazing,” said Demetrius. “I didn’t know that.”

“A lot of people loved that story because he was a former walk-on, but that wasn’t all there was to the story. The reason I tell you, fellas, that story is because his coach would say later that Luke was always practicing and preparing for a moment like this even though it was unlikely to ever come.”

There it was. That was the lesson Bobbi had been hoping for. It seemed that Demetrius was listening intently to Mr. Frank's story and it had to have touched a nerve.

"Thanks for sharing, Mr. Frank. I probably need to do a better job of preparing myself, especially if my goal is to be a hero and get all the publicity, right?" Demetrius said with a big grin.

"Yeah, thanks Mr. Frank," Bobbi added.

"You're very welcome, fellas. Just remember that everybody wants to be a champion but not everyone is willing to prepare to be a champion. Now, with all of that said, hopefully, your cell phones are charged because it's about time to get back on the road. As the Bandit says, 'we've got a long way to go and a short time to get there'."

"The Bandit?" asked Demetrius as he checked to see how much charge his phone now had.

"You know, Burt Reynolds from *Smokey and the Bandit*. It's a classic. My grandson absolutely loves it, but we have to keep telling him that it's not good to run from the cops even though Burt Reynolds looks cool doing it. We have to remind my grandson it's just a movie. It's just entertainment. Anyway, I know that you don't really care about all of that or an old movie, so we probably need to go get loaded up."

The guys watched Mr. Frank walk out the door.

"That Mr. Frank is really wise," Bobbi pointed out.

"Yeah, but really old," added Demetrius. "I never heard of that movie."

"He might be really old, but I guess we're really young. We don't know it all."

"Wait, what?!?" said a smiling Demetrius.

"We don't know it all, but I get the sneaky suspicion we might start knowing more. The more we prepare, the more we'll know and that just might give us the edge we need."

“I’m going to use the bathroom and get a drink and then I’ll meet you on the bus, but I want to let you know that you’ve inspired me. That is, you and Mr. Frank, but I’m now convinced that I’ve got to be prepared. I need to be ready. When opportunity knocks, I need to be ready to answer the door.”

“Awesome to hear,” responded Bobbi. “Now, hurry up so you get on the bus before Antonio and James!”