



# FRANKIE

and  **FRIENDS**

## *BREAKING NEWS*

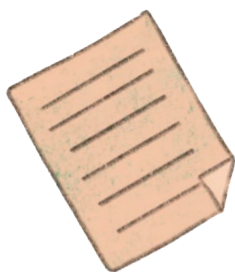






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illustrated by Alea Marley

  
WALKER BOOKS



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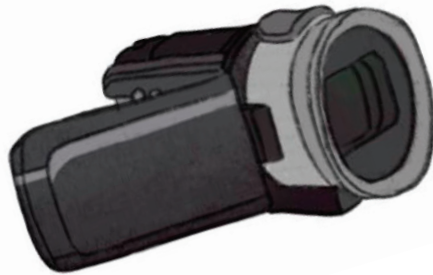
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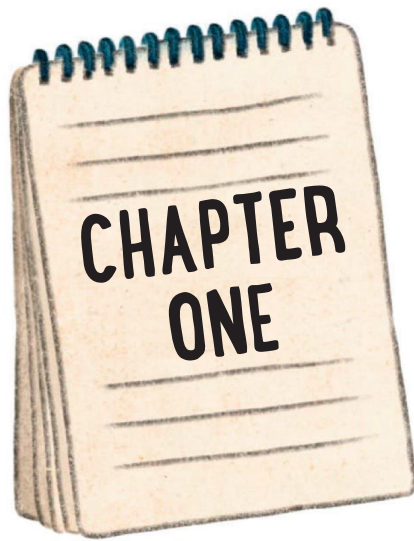




For Alice Dunnigan,  
the first Black woman journalist to earn  
White House press credentials







Frankie sat on the floor in her parents' bedroom and watched as Mama finished packing the small suitcase she used when traveling for work. When Mama put her special press badge for reporters around her neck, Frankie knew she'd be leaving for the airport soon.

“I'm sorry I have to go,” Mama said.  
“You know I hate to miss out on family card games. But whenever there's BREAKING NEWS, it's my job to cover the story.”

“Like the breaking news you had to cover during the presidential election?”

Frankie asked.

“Exactly,” Mama said. “Breaking news is about something that’s happening in the moment. It’s information that people need to know right away.”

Frankie sighed. Mama was the best and toughest journalist in the world, so of course Frankie was proud. She just wished breaking news would take a nap so that Mama could finish a game of Crazy Eights for once.

“We’ll miss you, but we understand.” Papa placed his hand on Mama’s shoulder. “JOURNALISM is important work. We’re not the only people who need you.”

Frankie smiled. Papa always reminded





them that Mama's job helped hundreds  
(and sometimes even thousands) of people  
get the information they needed.

“Because everyone needs to know the news, right?” Frankie’s older sister, Raven, twisted the ends of her dark curls. Frankie watched her closely. Whenever Raven played with her hair, she was usually worried.

Frankie tried to lift her sister’s spirits. “Yes, Mama, we’ll miss you. But we know that the world of journalism needs you. So we’ll stop playing Crazy Eights right now, and we won’t play again until you’re back home.”

“Well, that’s awfully nice of you.” Mama playfully pinched Frankie’s cheek. “I know how much you love that game. I promise I’ll be home in a few days.”

Just as they always did before Mama left to report on something important,

everyone gathered for a group hug. Papa,  
Raven, and Frankie  
all sang out,

*“Mama’s leaving so  
we’re singing the  
blues. ’Cause  
Mama’s got to go  
report breaking  
news!”*

*“Mama’s got  
to go! This much  
is true. And while  
I’m away, I’ll be  
thinking of you!”*

Mama sang  
back and gave  
everyone a kiss.



As Mama finished packing, Papa and

Raven left to do the things that papas and big sisters had to do. Maybe Papa would make a delicious spaghetti dinner to make them feel better. Frankie loved slurping up noodles covered in his special pasta sauce.

Raven was probably going to call and text all her friends. Then they'd record silly videos together.

But Frankie wasn't leaving. She wanted to stay with Mama until the last second.

"Are you sure I can't come with you?" Frankie eyed Mama's suitcase as she sat on the floor. If she folded her arms and legs just right, Frankie was certain she could fit.

Mama zipped up her suitcase and put on her serious journalist glasses. She sat down on the floor across from Frankie and leaned in slowly until their foreheads

touched and their eyes crossed. Frankie started giggling.

“I wish you could join me, Frankie,”  
Mama said. “Do you remember what HARD  
NEWS is?”

One day, Frankie would be an award-winning journalist too, so she always listened closely when Mama talked about



work. Frankie pulled out the special journalist notepad she always kept in her back pocket and flipped to her notes. She couldn't wait to show Mama how serious she was about journalism.

"Yes!" Frankie replied. "Hard news is when something very serious is happening. Something that is so serious, only adults need to know about it."

"You've got it!" Mama smiled. "I'm so proud of you! And this assignment is hard news. So unfortunately, you can't come with me. We'll have to wait for another breaking news story, maybe something that's happening here in town. Something that's the perfect story for kids to know about too."

Sometimes Frankie went with Mama to the local news station, which was a lot of

fun. Once she even got to sit behind the fancy news desk! Frankie had looked right into the television cameras and pretended to go live as she gave a news report, just like Mama.



“I can’t wait until I grow up and I’m a famous journalist too.” Frankie twisted her forehead against Mama’s as they made silly faces. “Then I can come with you whenever you report on breaking news *and* hard news.”

Mama smiled. “Me either! We’ll report on all the news together.”

“Can we report on human-interest stories too?” Frankie loved learning about ordinary people doing amazing things. Her favorite was the boy who found a stranger’s wallet. Instead of taking the money and buying bags of candy, he took it to the police station. That boy got to wear a real police badge for a whole day.

Frankie was really impressed that he did the right thing. He didn’t even ask for



a reward! If Frankie had been there, she would have told him to ask for free ice cream for a year.

“Absolutely!” Mama said. “In fact, we’ll be our own human-interest story: the best mother-daughter journalism team ever.”

“I can’t wait!” Frankie said excitedly. “We can call it *The Mama Franklynn and Frankie News Show!*”

Mama laughed and gave Frankie a big hug. “Until then, be on the lookout for developing stories at home. News is happening all around us all the time. Do you have the special press badge we made together?”



The last time Mama went overseas to cover a hard news story, she helped Frankie make a press badge so she could officially report on stories that happened in their community.

“Of course, Mama.” Frankie tapped the *Citizens’ Press* badge she always wore around her neck. “If there’s any news that happens while you’re away, I’ll make sure to report on it.”

“Perfect! Thank you for covering for me,” Mama said. “Now, this is Franklynn McKnight, signing off to head to the airport to cover breaking news in another city.”

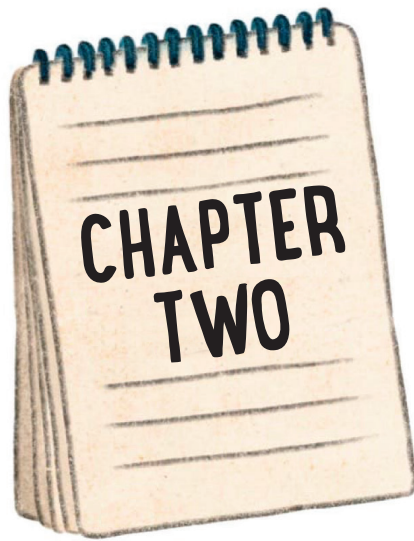
Frankie smiled proudly. “And this is Frankie McKnight, signing off to cover news stories right here at home while Mama . . . uh, Franklynn McKnight is

away.” She pulled out her notepad and wrote *Breaking News at Home*, then underlined each word carefully. Frankie couldn’t wait to find something to report on.





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BEFORE  
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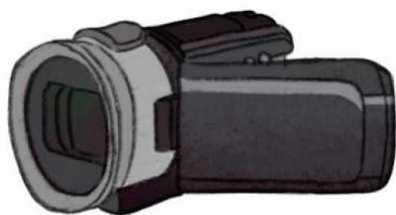
The house always felt a little bit empty after Mama left for work. Papa's office was in the basement, so Frankie could watch him working on his computer through the glass doors whenever she wanted. It was hard knowing that Mama was off working but not being able to see her until she appeared on television.

Frankie walked past Raven's bedroom and heard her big sister laughing with her friends. Raven used to keep her

bedroom door open so Frankie could stop by whenever she wanted. But ever since Raven became a teenager, her door was always closed. Now Frankie had to knock on Raven's door and wait for her to open it. And sometimes when Raven was doing "teenager stuff" she wouldn't even let Frankie inside!

Once Frankie got to her bedroom, she tried to cheer herself up by looking at the amazing journalist things Mama had given her. There was a cool voice recorder, although Mama said that a notepad and pen were a journalist's best friends. There was also the whiteboard that Mama once used to sketch out stories. And there were three things that Frankie loved the most: Mama's old video camera, an old

microphone, and  
a real leather  
messenger bag  
to carry everything in.



“Hey, I have an idea!” Frankie said.

“I have everything I  
need to make my own  
news studio!”



First, Frankie moved  
her desk and chair to the  
middle of her bedroom.

Next, she put Mama’s old  
microphone on her desk. Then, she slid the  
whiteboard  
behind her chair  
and picked up  
her favorite  
green marker.



*“Frankie and Friends”* She giggled as she wrote each word. “The best news show ever!”

Now all she needed was a news crew.

Frankie looked around her bedroom carefully. She picked up Farrah, her first doll and best friend. They’d spent their entire lives together and even looked alike! Farrah always knew exactly what Frankie was thinking.

“Mama says that she wouldn’t be an award-winning journalist if it wasn’t for her amazing team,” Frankie reminded Farrah. “So are you ready to help me pick the perfect news crew?”

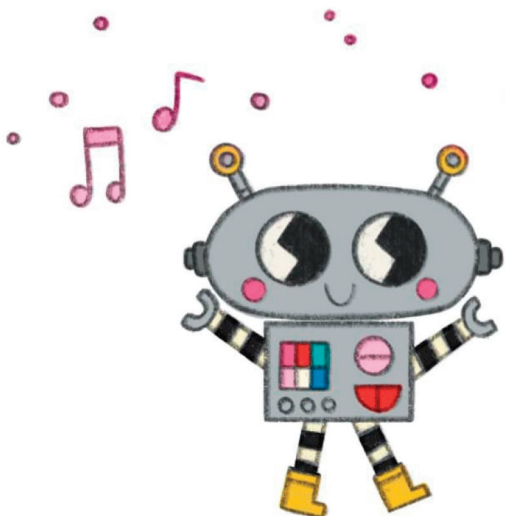
Farrah smiled. “Ready!”

“Who do you think would be best for sound and lighting?” Frankie asked.



# FRANKIE and Friends





“Robert,”  
Farrah said  
wisely. “Definitely  
Robert. He has a lot  
of neat ideas and is  
super helpful. Plus, he’s  
great with technology.”

Robert the robot whizzed over to the news desk, his lights blinking as he played a happy tune. “Whatever you need, I’m your guy!”

“What do you think about King Tut and Queen Cleopatra as copyeditors?” Frankie asked. “You know, to fact-check our stories and make sure everything is good to go?”

“Perfect choices,” Farrah agreed. “They are well-traveled and very opinionated. Just the voices of reason that you need.”

Queen Cleopatra and King Tut adjusted their golden crowns before strolling over to the news desk. When Mama had covered a news assignment in Egypt, she'd brought them back as special gifts for Frankie. The queen and king were very smart, but they rarely agreed on anything.

“Always happy to be of assistance,” Queen Cleopatra said, bowing.

“As you know, I am fully committed to whatever you need.”

“As I am.” King Tut bowed deeper than Queen Cleopatra. “Not



that this is a competition in commitment.

But if it were—”

Queen Cleopatra interrupted. “Let me guess. You think you would be the most committed.” She shook her head in disbelief. As usual, the two royals began to argue.

Frankie laughed. “King Tut and Queen Cleopatra, you are both *equally* committed to whatever I need. And for that, I am grateful.”



Frankie rubbed the top of her favorite teddy bear’s head. “Dan, do you think you can handle operating the camera? You’ll

have to pay attention, though. You know how easily distracted you are.”

Dan smiled proudly. “I won’t let you down, Frankie!”

Frankie’s orange-and-white tabby cat, Nina Simone, twirled around Frankie’s legs and purred. “Of course you’re part of the news crew, silly. I can’t do anything without you!”



With her news crew assembled, Frankie clapped her hands. “All right, everyone. Family card games have been canceled. Mama had to leave to cover some breaking news.”

Nina Simone frowned as she sang out

a large “Meow!” She wanted Frankie to know she’d miss Mama too.

“Nina, we all feel the same way,” Farrah said. “That’s why Frankie has set up this lovely news studio so we can report on our own news story!”

Frankie smiled. “That’s right, Farrah. Welcome to the *Frankie at Five* news studio! This is where award-winning journalist Frankie McKnight—me—will report on breaking news right here at home. And as my trusted news crew, you’re going to help me make it all happen!”

The news crew was very excited. Dan plugged in the video camera so it could start charging while Robert flashed all his lights to make sure he didn’t need any new bulbs. Queen Cleopatra and King Tut had

a mini debate about the best way to check facts. Nina Simone licked her fur, carefully grooming herself to make sure she was camera-ready.

Frankie sat in her chair, kicked her feet up on the news desk, and cleared her throat. “OK, everyone. Gather around! It’s time for our first huddle. We need to brainstorm.

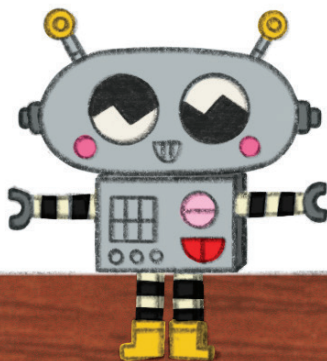


I want your OPINIONS on what my first news story should be about.”

Everyone rushed over. Suddenly, Robert's eyes started flashing. He raised his shiny arms in the air and spun in circles like he always did when he got excited.

“Let's hear it, Robert.” Frankie tapped her pen on her notepad like Mama did when she talked to the news crew at the local station.

“Not to make your first news show about me,” Robert began.





“But imagine a report on the importance of robots. We’re quite intelligent, you know.”

Nina Simone let out another loud meow to voice her concerns. Because no one was more intelligent than cats. Not even humans!

“I believe you are leaving out an important bit of information,” King Tut cautioned. “Robots are known as a form of artificial intelligence. As you know, or maybe you don’t know, *artificial* means that you are a copy of something natural. So the humans who made you are therefore more intelligent than you.”

Robert’s lights flashed brightly. “I am *not* a copy—.”

“All that being said,” King Tut interrupted. “Robots could make for

interesting news. Frankie could report on how everyone will need a robot in the future. Having subjects to rule over is important.”

“Well, I—” Robert tried to defend himself.

“But will *everyone* need a robot in the future?” Queen Cleopatra asked. “We need an important story that interests everyone. Of course, this is not to say that *you* are not important, Robert . . .”

“Mama said news is happening all around us all the time,” Frankie said.

“Maybe—”

“Sorry to interrupt,” Dan apologized, rubbing his furry ears. “Frankie, you said I need to focus. And I am trying, truly. But that sound . . . is someone crying?”



Everyone quieted. They too heard faint, muffled cries. Who was it? Or rather, *what* was it? And where was it coming from?

“I hear crying too!” Frankie whispered. “This is what Mama calls a DEVELOPING STORY. It’s like a mystery. Something is happening, but you don’t have all the facts



yet, so the story is still growing. And it's our job to figure out what's going on!"

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Farrah asked. "Let's solve it!"

"Yes," Dan agreed. "We have to hurry before this developing story is fully grown!"



