



CHAPTER 1

OPPORTUNITY

It was Saturday morning, and Mom was making breakfast. Dad was reading the Town News section of *The Gazette*. Rain was reading the sports pages.

“Have you noticed,” Dad asked, looking up from the paper at Rain, “that for the past few days, the paper is finally being delivered when it’s supposed to be? In the morning?”

No one said anything.

“Would anyone like to know why the paper is getting here on time, after weeks of late or no paper?” Dad asked.

No one answered.

“Am I talking to myself?” Dad asked.

“Apparently,” Mom said.

“Rain?” Dad said.

“What?” Rain asked, trying to read the baseball standings and look at his father at the same time.

“If you’re interested and if you move fast, you might be able to get a job as a paperboy,” Dad said.

Dad now had Rain’s full interest. And Mom’s.

“The reason the paper is being delivered on time is because a guy who works for the paper is delivering it. That kid, D.J. or P.J. or whatever his name was, who was supposed to be our paperboy, quit last week.”

“Don’t tell me you learned all that reading the paper,” Mom said.

“No. The driver told me. He said P.J. was totally unreliable and they were probably gonna have to fire him. But he called in and quit. No notice.”

“So are they looking for a new kid?” Rain asked.

“They’d probably take an adult, but, yeah, they are looking for a new kid. Here’s their ad in the paper.” Dad handed the paper to Rain.

Rain read the ad. Mom read the ad over Rain’s shoulder.

OPPORTUNITY

Immediate opening for an ambitious person to deliver *The Gazette* in the Moravia Woods, Wellington Heights, and Lawrence Avenue neighborhoods.

Applicants must be reliable and trustworthy.

For an interview call Mr. D'Michaels.

1-800-Gazette

“Well you are certainly trustworthy and reliable,” Mom said.

“Do paperboys make a lot of money?” Rain asked.

“Relatively speaking, yes,” Dad replied. “For a kid your age, making twenty-five bucks a week or more is pretty good.”

“Twenty-five bucks a week?” Rain repeated.

“Maybe more, maybe less. It depends on the route, how much you get per paper, and other things. But I think someone could make a lot more.”

“Do you think I could get the job?” Rain asked.

“Well, first you have to want the job. Delivering papers is a tough job, and delivering the morning paper is a bear.”

“How hard can it be?” Rain asked.

“Really hard,” Dad said. “You’ve got to get up early. Fold papers. In this neighborhood, you will have to use your bike. Papers are heavy. Bad weather. But a million kids do it, and the money is good.”

“I want the job,” Rain said.

“Let’s talk for a second. I don’t want you to rush into this. You just turned thirteen, and you weigh, what, 115 pounds?” Dad asked.

And all steel, Rain boasted to himself. But he said nothing.

“A paperboy has to work seven days a week. The U.S. Post Office is the best delivery organization in the world. They deliver millions of envelopes and packages a day, but they work six days. You’ll be on for seven. No break. And you’ll have to spend some afternoon time to collect money from your customers.”

“You won’t have to spend a lot of time collecting from this customer,” Mom smiled.

Dad also smiled. “I mentioned collecting because you have baseball practice and two or so Babe Ruth games a week. That might conflict.”

“I can do it,” Rain said.

“So you still want the job?”

“I want the job.”

“You’re sure?” Dad asked.

“I’m sure.”

“Okay. You have to call that number and get an interview. My guess is that after that D.J. kid, they are going to be careful about whom they hire.”

“What exactly is an interview?” Rain asked.

“The guy from the paper will ask you some questions. He wants to know if you will do a good job. So he’ll ask you questions to see if you are dependable, good in school. Your job during the interview is to convince the guy that you are the best kid for the job. You will have to impress—what’s the guy’s name? Mr. D’Michaels. You will have to sell him on you.”

“Just smile,” Mom encouraged, “and you will get the job.”

“Just smile?” Rain asked.

“Lots of great salespeople have great smiles has been my observation,” Mom said with certainty.

“Okay, this is one ball I intend to knock out of the park,” Rain declared.

And I’m going to do a lot more than smile, he thought.