

Prequel One  
Frankie Scarmazino @ 4 Years of Age

Prologue

Frankie Scarmazino was born on February 28, 1969. With 4 brothers and 1 sister, Frankie was the final child to Carla and Sal Scarmazino, both famous parents.

Sal was coming off his second Super Bowl win when Frankie was born, and Carla had just had the 5<sup>th</sup> book of her Ramona Grey Romance Series go viral the day before Frankie's birth when she was in labor.

The little guy was too young to grasp the significance of the level of notoriety he was born into, nor the fact that he would follow in both parents' footsteps with his success in the NFL as its greatest kicker ever.

It took him many years to understand that he would be intellectually superior to most of the individuals he would meet in his entire life.

His IQ would eventually be revealed to be above 170. Being extraordinarily gifted across the board was a blessing, but it also had a dark side; there were infinite opportunities.

And having so many possibilities made choices difficult, a fact that the newborn babe would soon discover ...

## Chapter One

The Scarmazino's owned a 4-story Townhouse on Commerce Street in the Cobble Hills section of Brooklyn, New York. Built in 1930, the spacious home easily accommodated the illustrious Scarmazino family of 7.

Sal and Carla had fortuitously placed themselves and their talented progeny in an area that would stimulate their fecund curiosity and offer endless opportunities for exploration.

The townhouse was not only near the famous Brooklyn Restaurant Row but also close to a great elementary school well known for its dedicated teachers.

Success Academy Charter School in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, enrolled 418 students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

This was the elementary school where Mary Alice, born 6/3/1967 and her twin Stevie, born 6/3/1967, Bobby, born 4/20/1965, and Richie, born 5/5/1963, were all enrolled.

But Cobble Hills Park was the real prize. Just a few blocks away, it offered the space and invitation for young athletes to develop their skills, particularly in games of touch football, which would lead to more rugged games, including tackle.

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And for little Frankie, Mrs. Stiver's Preschool on Smith Street and Congress was the perfect cradle of opportunity to guide him through his early years until he could join his siblings at the Charter school.

The Preschool, named simply The Stivers School for Children, had as its leader a small, rotund, constantly smiling, warm, embracing, and loving middle-aged pedagogue who instilled the urge in others to love her back, as well as learn.

Especially the babes, and even more especially, 4-year-old Franklyn Scarmazino.

“Momma, Mitheths Thtiverths let uth kill cockarotheth today.”

Frankie, who had a lateral lisp, was sitting next to his mother in the child’s bucket seat of her Classic 1973 Volkswagon VW Super Beetle with a CUSTOM INTERIOR. Carla Scarmazino, writer and stay-at-home-mom, had just picked up her youngest of 5 children from the Stivers Preschool at 5:00.

Carla had decided, even though Frankie was extremely shy and had never been away from his home environment before, that, after a few days, he would be acclimated to the full-day schedule.

And he had. This was his 5<sup>th</sup> day at the school, and his parents were thrilled at how well their youngest son was adjusting.

The first day he’d cried when Carla had left him at the front door, but Mrs. Stivers was an expert in the “first-day-blues” syndrome and had instantly distracted the new student with a finger puppet of Mister Rogers.

“Did you say you killed cockroaches? All day?”

“Yeth, and momma,” Frankie said, looking at his mother in awe, “I wuth Child of the Day.”

“Well, Frankie,” Carla said with a big smile, “That’s wonderful. Just wonderful!”

“I got to help Mths Thiverth make tunafifth for lunch ...”

Frankie exhaled in his mother’s direction. The smell of garlic was almost overpowering.

Carla laughed. “Was the tuna fish good, Frankie?”

“Yeth,” Frankie said, shaking his head vigorously, then, “and momma, Jennifer wanths to marry me.”

Jennifer had been the topic of discussion ever since Frankie’s first day at school. One year older, she’d instantly latched on to the tall, little boy who was the cutest thing she’d ever seen.

Carla sensed that Jennifer was a little dominant and hoped that Mrs. Stivers and her 2 helpers were aware that her son was, at this point in his young life, easily manipulated.

“What did you say to her?”

“I told her I wath going to marry you.”

Carla chuckled. “But Frankie, you know I’m married to your daddy.”

Frankie looked at Carla, his face contorted in pain. “Momma! I told you before, I wanted to marry ...”

The boy broke down in tears. Carla pulled over to the curb and parked, then put her arms around her jilted suitor.

“Honey, it’s all right. Your momma loves you very, very much, and so does your daddy. We all love each other, and we’ll never leave you. Okay?”

She wiped Frankie’s tears away and cupped his face in her hands.

“Why don’t we stop and get an ice cream cone.”

Frankie instantly overcame his upset. “I want chocolate!”

“Chocolate it is.”

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## Chapter Two

It was Saturday, the next day.

It being late spring, a few months after football season, Sal was free and along with Carla had planned a picnic for the whole family at Cobble Hills Park a few blocks away from the townhouse.

The space was a grassy, beautiful area 10 blocks wide surrounded by and with picnic tables, a playground, and a sandlot between Clinton Street, Verandah, and Congress in the heart of Cobble Hill where touch football games could be played.

The park was framed by two lovely townhouses lining a charming street, and the grass in the middle was full of sunbathers and people lounging about.

The Park was a gem.

Cobble Hill Park, or Verandah Park, as it was called by the locals, was a quiet little haven, quite simply the quaintest, cutest, most sophisticated park in New York City.

Starting at 1 p.m., the neighborhood accordion player with his bluegrass band had begun playing its first set.

After Carla and Sal had deposited their food and utensils on one of the previously reserved picnic tables and Carla had begun the setup, Sal took his progeny to the sandlot, along with several footballs, and organized his 'team' into two sides:

Sal and Frankie (4) were on one side, Bobby (6), Stevie (8), Mary Alice (8), and Richie (10), were on the other.

"Okay," Sal said, "What's the first thing we do before we play a game?"

Richie blurted out, "Flip a coin for who goes first!"

"Right," Sal said as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter. "Richie, you're the captain for your team, Frankie's the captain for our team. Okay, you ready Frankie?"

“Yeth!” Frankie shouted as he put his hands on his knees and squatted.

“You ready Richie?” Sal said.

“Ready!” Richie shouted.

Sal flipped the coin and let it fall on the ground between the 2 captains. “Call it Richie!”

“Tales!” Richie called out.

“Okay!” Sal said. “Tails it is. Your team gets to receive the ball.”

Richie, Mary Alice, Stevie, and Bobbie went to one end of the field, and Sal and Frankie went to the opposite end. Sal threw the ball to Richie’s team; Bobby caught it.

Frankie, having played the game before, knew he had to touch the one with the ball, but Sal reminded him.

“Okay, Frankie, we gotta touch Bobby!” Sal yelled as he ran beside the youngest player who was fast on his feet for a 4-year-old.

Frankie tagged Bobby.

“Very good, Frankie, that was a good tag!”

Sal put his arms in the air in a victory salute. Frankie did the same.

“Okay, Frankie,” Sal continued, “now, I’ll center the ball to you, and you try to get past the other team. Get to that tree without getting tagged, and get a touchdown!”

Richie’s team lined up. Sal bent down in a center position facing them, and Frankie became the quarterback as Sal handed him the ball through his legs.

Frankie took the ball and ran around the right end, but Stevie intercepted him, grabbed the ball out of Frankie’s hands, knocked him down, sprinted over, and made a touchdown.

“Foul!” Sal yelled, “You can’t push another player down. Only touch ‘em! Come on back, Stevie; the T.D. doesn’t count!”

Stevie was not happy. “I didn’t push him down. I just grabbed the ball. He fell all by himself!”

“You can’t grab the ball, Stevie,” Sal said, “You can only touch!”

“Okay,” Stevie said as he ran back and gave the ball to Frankie, who grabbed the ball and took off without warning for the opponent’s goal line.

No one was ready for Frankie’s sudden dash to the opponent’s goal line.

“That’s not fair!” Mary Alice yelled, “I wasn’t ready for him to run!”

“Neither was I!” yelled Bobbie.

“Learn a lesson, gang!” Sal suggested to the players, “You have to be on your guard; be ready for anything! Okay, that’s 7 points for myself and Frankie.”

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The Scarmazinos continued playing touch football for half an hour, then had a great lunch of hamburgers, hotdogs, potato salad, Fritos, miniature chocolate donuts, and root beer.

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## Chapter Three

It was Monday and Frankie was back in nursery school. Jennifer, as usual, met her favorite guy as soon as her parents dropped her off at 8 a.m. for the day.

She selected 2 coloring books, took Frankie by the hand, led him away to a table that was somewhat isolated, and proceeded to show him what she wanted him to color.

The shy little boy didn't resist Jennifer's suggestions. He liked to color anyway.

His little girl buddy preferred trees, flowers, and birds.

Frankie preferred cars, airplanes, and rocket ships.

What Jennifer picked out for him was a page of flowers with hummingbirds circling around them. When he finished that page, he was about to go to the page that had cars on it, but Jennifer snatched the book away and gave Frankie a page of trees and grass.

Frankie colored every image, giving each one unique colors, and adding different qualities for variety just to have fun.

There were some worksheets given to the children at the beginning of nursery school that day to do after lunch. Mrs. Stivers liked to keep a casual atmosphere for the children as opposed to a rigorous structure, so she assigned a number of plans for the children to accomplish later in the day whenever they wanted.

After Frankie finished the coloring book of trees and flowers, he forged ahead and tackled the waiting assignments to keep from getting bored. He wrote out the alphabet from A to Z; worked a numbers puzzle in which he had to choose the right number of stars, boxes, monkeys, and caterpillars; labeled upper case words as opposed to lower case words; listened to a recording of simple grammar rules about nouns

and verbs, and then read a book about trucks, one about rockets, and one about the B-52 WWII Bomber.

Then, it was time for lunch. When Mrs. Emmy asked Frankie what he'd been doing, she was amazed when he showed her his productivity.

As Frankie was having lunch beside Jennifer, Mrs. Emmy shared what she'd just learned about the 4-year-old with Mrs. Stivers.

"Sounds like we may have a little genius in this year's class, Emmy. Keep a close eye on him for me. He may need special assignments to keep from getting bored."

"I will certainly do that, Mrs. Stivers," Mrs. Emmy said with a smile, "Frankie's a delight."

Mrs. Stivers had 3 helpers. Besides Mrs. Emmy, there was Mrs. Peters and Sally Wendel, a young girl studying to gain a degree in childcare.

After lunch came nap time. Jennifer lay down beside Frankie and tried to hold his hand. The 4-year-old didn't like that and withdrew his hand. Jennifer put her hand on his arm anyway.

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After the nap, if it was a nice day, the children were taken to the park a few doors away.

On this particular day, the activities were first a game of catch with all the children standing in a circle and throwing a tennis ball around the group. Jennifer insisted on standing next to Frankie.

Next, each child had a turn on the scooter. There was a small area where the little ones were allowed to ride on one of the 3 scooters. There was also a training bicycle with 3 wheels that was traded off between parties.

There were short races that Frankie always won, probably because he was coming from a family of a professional athlete where there was always a focus on health and physical fitness.

Jennifer always wanted to race in Frankie's set and usually cried when he beat her. This made the little guy sad, and sometimes he let her win. But he was unhappy that he had to do that.

He didn't know why, but he thought it was wrong for her to expect him, an active boy who played touch football with a dad who made his living being on a football team, to give in to Jennifer all the time.

In other words, Frankie was beginning to tire of her constant badgering every hour of his nursery school experience.

This feeling developing in the youngest of the Scarmazinos was about to come to a climax by the end of the week.

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## Chapter Four

Carla began to notice a slight change in Frankie's enthusiasm for nursery school.

After the end of 2 weeks, Frankie was beginning to get tummy aches every morning.

After 3 days in a row with the 4-year-old's complaints growing, Carla realized something needed attention.

At breakfast that Friday morning, Carla took her youngest son aside from the clamor coming from the other 4 kids at the table.

"Frankie, I know something's bothering you," Carla said. "You used to love nursery school. Now, you act like you don't want to go at all, and you have a tummy ache every morning. What's bothering you, baby?"

Frankie looked his mother square in the eyes. "Itth Jennifer."

"Jennifer? What's Jennifer doing that's bothering you?"

"Thee won't leave me alone, Momma. Thee makth me color birdth and flowerth, and I want to color trukth and airplaneth."

"Well. I don't like the sound of that. I think I'd better have a talk with Mrs. Stivers."

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And she did. That morning, Carla parked in the street in front of the nursery on Smith Street and went inside with her young son.

Mrs. Stivers was already in her office and welcomed Carla and her son inside.

"Mrs. Stivers, Frankie's having a problem with one of your students. Could we talk a minute?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Scarmazino. Have a seat."

Carla sat in a chair across from Mrs. Stivers' desk while Frankie stood beside her.

“Frankie doesn’t feel he can be free to do what he wants to do in your school.”

Mrs. Stivers registered surprise. “Really? What’s wrong Frankie? I want you to be happy and do whatever you want to do. What’s keeping you upset?”

“It’s Jennifer. They won’t let me do what I want to do.”

“Well, I’m sorry that none of us realized that, Frankie. We thought you two were happy together.”

Carla interrupted. “Frankie’s very shy, Mrs. Stivers. I’m sure you know that. It’s hard for him to assert himself. Jennifer’s a very manipulative child; if you can talk to her parents, maybe they’ll be able to fix this.”

Mrs. Stivers nodded. “Of course, Mrs. Scarmazino. I’m sorry this happened. We need to be more observant of the children’s relationships. Jennifer’s mother just called. Jennifer has a cold and won’t be in today. I’ll speak with her mother this afternoon and work this out.”

“Thanks, Mrs. Stivers. I’d like to stay here for a while and be sure everything’s okay. I’ll sit at one of the tables and be as inconspicuous as possible. I’m sure you understand.”

Mrs. Stivers smiled. “Of course I do, Mrs. Scarmazino. You’re perfectly welcome to stay all day if you wish. We’d love to have you.”

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Carla stayed at the nursery all morning observing Frankie and the activities of the children. All seemed to be going smoothly. After lunch, she kissed her son and left a happy Frankie playing a game of catch with the other children.

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## Chapter Five

Frankie was happy his mother spent some time at the nursery. He felt good about her support, even though it was just a few hours.

When she picked him up later that day and asked how the rest of the day went, Frankie had a lot to tell her.

“Momma, Momma,” he said, eyes wide, “I won the egg race with a thpoone. I put a Humpty Dumpty egg together again. I jumped over the candle thick 3 timeth. I rethited Hickory, Dickory, Dock, and I wuth the only child who could thay the whole alphabet.”

“Well, Frankie, you’re doing great in Nursery School. When will Jennifer be back?”

“Nexthth week.”

“Well, I’m sure Mrs. Stivers worked it out with her mother, so you don’t have to worry about her anymore.”

“Okay,” the exuberant 4-year-old said.

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The rest of the week went by quickly with Frankie enjoying the school activities with his friend, Buddy, a new boy who’d just started nursery school and loved to do the same activities Frankie did.

His dad was a Marine and Buddy had a lot of stories to tell Frankie about what his father had done, where he’d been deployed, and how many medals he had.

He’d invited Frankie over for dinner to meet his brothers and sisters, something Carla and Sal agreed their son should do. So that Friday, after nursery school was over, Frankie went home with Buddy and his mother and had dinner and watched the movie “Bambi” together.

At 9:00 that night, when Sal picked him up, Frankie was glowing with excitement and told Sal all about his new friend,

his Marine dad who was home on leave, and the movie he'd just seen.

“Dad, my favorite animal wuth the thunk.”

“The skunk? Why did you like him best, Frankie?”

“He wuth funny, and I liked hith colorth.”

“Well, I like skunks too, pal. I had a pet skunk when I was a little boy like you.”

Frankie stared at his dad, his eyes wide. “You did?”

“Yes,” Sal nodded, “His name was Horace. I taught him to do tricks. He could roll over.”

His 4-year-old was looking at him with wonder. “Dad? Could I have a pet thkunk?”

Sal thought a minute. “Well, let me talk to your momma about that, Frankie. She'd be the one helping take care of him.”

The Scarmazinos had a conference when they arrived home. The next week, Frankie had a new companion: Horace, his pet skunk!

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## Chapter Six

Well. Horace was the talk of the nursery school. Frankie was allowed to bring his pet to school the next week. The boys and girls were thrilled with the new pet that the youngest Scarmazino could bring to visit once a week.

The only one who wasn't happy about the incident was Jennifer. Each time Frankie's pet skunk came to school, Jennifer wouldn't play with him or even acknowledge his presence.

Frankie felt bad about Jennifer's rejection. He tried to make it up to her by inviting her to play with himself and Buddy, but the only thing that made her happy was when Frankie would stay away from Buddy and only be with her.

Frankie gave in. He stopped seeing Buddy and only played with the 5-year-old girl.

Several days after he'd made the change and stopped playing with Buddy, he sat down with Jennifer after their nap to do some coloring.

Frankie picked out a book on airplanes and had begun coloring a P-38 when Jennifer snatched the book away and insisted he color some pansies.

The little Scarmazino got very upset. It was one of the first times he'd let himself express this kind of anger. He grabbed the airplane coloring book back and resumed coloring the P-38, but Jennifer snatched the book away again and put it behind her back where Frankie couldn't get it.

"Give it to me!" Frankie demanded.

Jennifer shook her head. "No. You have to do what I want you to do!"

"Give it to me!" Frankie demanded again and tried to grab it.

Jennifer took a step back, and when Frankie tried to reach the book again, she slapped his face.

Frankie responded by hitting her in the stomach as hard as he could. Jennifer began crying causing Sally and Mrs. Peters to hurry over.

“What’s the matter, Jennifer?” Sally said, taking the little girl in her arms.

“Frankie hit me!” Jennifer blurted out.

Mrs. Emmy looked at Frankie. “Did you hit Jennifer?” Mrs. Emmy asked.

“Yeth.” Frankie admitted without explaining why.

“We’ll have to go have a talk with Mrs. Stivers. We don’t let our boys and girls hurt each other.”

Frankie started to cry.

By the time they arrived at Mrs. Stivers’ office, Frankie was in no condition to explain what had happened.

“I want to go home,” Frankie said between sobs.

Mrs. Stivers took the boy in her arms and tried to comfort him. “It’s all right, Frankie. We all make mistakes. I’ll call your mother and tell her what happened.”

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Within the hour, Carla Scarmazino and Jennifer’s mother, Peggy Pendleton, were in a meeting with Mrs. Stivers and her staff.

Mrs. Pendleton was furious. “This is unacceptable ... I won’t have my child assaulted by another child! Especially a boy, of all people ...” She looked at the women staff. “Where were you when this happened? You should have seen Frankie threatening my little girl and prevented this incident!”

Carla lost control. “You and your precious baby need a lesson in manners, Peggy! Jennifer has been hounding Frankie from the first day of school. She won’t leave him alone! She won’t let him color what he wants to color; she won’t let him play with his friend Buddy; she bosses him around like a servant! She’s the most demanding, manipulative little brat I’ve ever seen! Frankie told me what happened. What caused this incident was my little boy was coloring a P-38, Jennifer

snatched the book away and insisted he color a flower. When he tried to get the coloring book back, Jennifer wouldn't let him have it. She slapped his face; he responded by hitting her back! He was totally justified in what he did!"

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Mrs. Stivers tried to calm the waters; she was partially successful. Jennifer's mother pulled her child out of the nursery. Frankie was happy. Carla was happy. And, actually, Mrs. Stivers and her helpers were happy.

Jennifer had been a difficult child and her mother was behind in her payments.

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That night, after Frankie had gotten in his bunk bed, his mother had reminded him that hitting a little girl was something he shouldn't have done, but that under the circumstances, she understood why he'd done so.

And his father wanted to be sure that the little tyke knew boys tend to be physically stronger than girls, and if a girl ever hit him again, he should just turn his back and walk away.

Frankie listened intently to all that they told him, nodded, said, "Okay." Then curled up with Horace, his pet skunk, and went to sleep.

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The End