

## Crushing Franklin

"Welcome, MASTER!" Mr Gregory shouted, bowing his head to the ground.

Franklin felt a chill run down his spine. "Mr Gregory?"

"

Everyone present glanced from Elijah to Mr Gregory. Their eyes were wide with disbelief.

Why was Mr Gregory bowing down to a nobody like Elijah? What did this mean?

Mr Gregory stood up and berated the security guards. "Are you mad? How dare you restrain my guest?"

The security guards released Elijah abruptly and stepped back in fear. "W-we didn't know he's your guest, sir."

Elijah dusted himself off, his eyes deadpan. Then he turned to an astonished Franklin and taunted. "Mr Gregory is here now. You can go ahead and report directly to him."

Franklin turned to Mr Gregory. "What's the meaning of this? How could you bow before a trash like him? He's the guy who assaulted me."

Mr Gregory frowned. "I find that hard to believe. What exactly happened, Franklin?"

Franklin was about to speak when Elijah interrupted. "Mr Gregory, is it true you've reserved a contract for Franklin Black without informing the Smith's board?"

Mr Gregory turned white from shock. "H-how did you know about that?"

Elijah's face darkened. "This donkey here wouldn't stop running his mouth. I happened to hear him bragging about it a while ago."

Mr Gregory's eyes went red. He turned to Franklin and screamed at him. "You bloody idiot! Why did you go blabbering your mouth, huh? That information was supposed to be between us."

"I thought so," Elijah said gravely, startling Mr Gregory. "It appears I've made a mistake in choosing your establishment, Mr Gregory. I'll have a word with the board members to terminate our partnership."

Mr Gregory felt his entire world shatter into pieces. He fell on his hands and knees and cried.

"Please, master. Please don't do this to me. I've built my whole life for this day. I wouldn't want to throw it away over a silly mistake. I was a fool. Give me

another chance, I'll do anything."

Elijah hid a smile. "You'd do anything? You mean anything at all?"

Mr Gregory nodded sharply. "Yes. Anything. I'll do whatever it takes to earn your trust back."

Franklin was disgusted by Mr Gregory's act. He couldn't understand what was happening.

Why was his father's best friend, whom he held in high regard, begging an ex-convict for forgiveness?

"Stand up, Mr Gregory," Franklin snapped angrily. "You're making a big fool of yourself."

But Mr Gregory ignored him, and this made Franklin angrier.

"You old fool," Franklin brought out his phone, recording Mr Gregory. "I'll film you and send it to my dad. You'll be a laughing stock in the whole city."

Elijah's smile widened. "Did you hear that, Mr Gregory. He called you an old fool. How do you feel about that?"

Mr Gregory glared at Franklin. "I feel angry, master."

Elijah leaned in and whispered in Mr Gregory's ears. "If you wish to earn back my trust in you and your

establishment, then slap Franklin and transfer your aggression to him for trying sabotage our partnership. Do that and I'll let what happened today slide."

Mr Gregory bowed slightly to Elijah then walked up towards Franklin.

Franklin wrinkled his nose. "Just wait until my father sees this. You're finished, Mr Gregor—"

Franklin couldn't finished because Mr Gregory slapped him hard across the cheeks.

SMACK!!!!

\* \* \* \*

This was the second time anyone has ever slapped Franklin before. First, it was Elijah, the man he's grown to hate so much.

And now, it was his father's best friend. He couldn't believe it.

"How dare you?" Franklin bawled. "My father would destroy you, old man. I'll make you regret laying hands on me."

"Guards," Mr Gregory ordered. "Restrain this idiot."

The two security guards grabbed Franklin and



restrained him from struggling. Fear clutched his heart at that moment.

Mr Gregory slapped him again, and again, and again, and again until Franklin's cheeks were redder than an overripe tomato.

Meanwhile, Elijah sent a text message to the Smith's board, demanding they destroy the Black family.

By the time Mr Gregory was through with him, Franklin's face was unrecognisable.

Despite being in his mid sixties, Mr Gregory's slaps packed a lot of weight. He nearly removed Franklin's tooth.

"Now," Mr Gregory stepped aside. "Apologize to my guest, idiot!"

Franklin glanced up at Elijah, his eyes blurry. "I'll never apologize to this street rat. To hell with you, Mr Gregory and to hell with your stupid guests."

Elijah grinned wickedly. "Ah is that so? Well I don't need your apology. I only want to see you suffer and that's just what's about to happen to you and your family, Franklin."

Franklin laughed arrogantly. "My family is very powerful in Springfield city. Don't get so cocky with

me."

Elijah cocked his head. "You're right. The Black family are very powerful in Springfield city until today."

"What do you mean?" Franklin asked.

Just then, Franklin's phone buzzed in his pocket.

The security guards released him as he hurriedly fished out his phone. It was his father.

Happiness flooded inside Franklin as he answered the call. "Hello, father. You wouldn't believe what I've been through in the hands of your foolish friend...."

He paused for a long moment as his father barked in his ears.

"You bloody idiot. Who did you offend?!" His father demanded.

"N-nobody," Franklin muttered. "I didn't offend anyone. What happened?"

"You imbecile!" Franklin's father roared through the phone. "Do you have any idea what you've done?"

"But I didn't do anything," Franklin's voice was shaking. "I'm actually the victim here."

"Shut up," Franklin's father raised his voice. "I just

received a call from Smith's industries. They said they had been considering making us one of their major business partners, but you've just ruined everything because you disrespected their chairman."

Franklin's heart sank. "Disrespect their chairman? I didn't do anything, father. I swear there must've been a mistake. The chairman is not here."

His father continued to unleash his wrath over the phone. "Your insolence has jeopardized our entire financial standing. The Smiths have sworn to ruin us, and the financial disaster is catastrophic."

Franklin stammered, "But, father, I didn't know. Mr. Gregory never mentioned anything about—"

His father interrupted with fury, "Our stocks are plummeting, investors are pulling out, and we're on the brink of bankruptcy. How could you be so foolish?!"

Listening to his father's outburst bore down a blow on Franklin.

The powerful Black family was now facing an extreme financial crisis and it was sparked by Franklin's disrespectful behavior towards the Smiths chairman.

But how? He wondered. He was the victim here. When

did he disrespect the Smith's chairman?

How was it possible? Who's even the chairman?

His father's voice grew even more violent. "We've lost our major partnerships, our assets are being liquidated, and the reputation we've abuilt for decades is tarnished. You've ruined us and brought shame to the entire Black legacy, Franklin. I swear when I set my eyes on you, I'll kill you."

Tears welled up in Franklin's eyes. He realized he was in a deep mess.

Elijah walked up to Mr Gregory. "I believe we're done here. I'd like to finalize our meeting inside."

"Of course, allow me to show you the way," Mr Gregory said, paving the way for Elijah.

Elijah glanced at Olivia out of the corner of his eyes.

Her face was written with shock.

Her jaws were hanging wide opened and there was a faraway look in her eyes that showed she was spell bounded by what she had just seen.

"I don't believe it," she whispered under her breath. "What's really happening here?"