

Calling in a Favor

Bobby sat in his dimly lit study, surrounded by stacks of dusty books and scattered papers. He had invested a great deal of time and effort into helping Franks with his peculiar problem—a gamble he couldn't afford to waste. Now, he was about to turn that investment into leverage.

He dialed a number, and after a few rings, Franks' deep voice answered.

"Franks, it's Bobby. I need a favor," Bobby said.

Franks replied, his voice neutral—a rare gesture of respect, as few people ever received such a measured response from him. "What kind of favor?" he asked.

"Crowley still has my soul. I need you to get it back for me."

There was a pause on the other end of the line. "I can do that. I can even do it without violence," Franks said, his tone still calm but with a hint of unexpected restraint.

Bobby raised an eyebrow, though Franks couldn't see him. "You think you can negotiate with Crowley?"

"I can handle it," Franks replied. "I'll make sure Crowley understands the value of returning your soul."

Bobby nodded, intrigued by Franks' willingness to try diplomacy. "Alright, do it."

A few days passed before Franks arrived at Crowley's location. The demon king was amused by Franks' audacity but wary of his reputation.

"So, Franks, what do you propose?" Crowley asked, leaning back in his chair.

"I've come for the soul of Bobby Singer," Franks stated flatly. "In exchange, I'll offer you something of value."

Crowley raised an eyebrow. "And what could you possibly have that I would want?"

Franks smiled, a rare sight. "Information. About a certain... artifact. One that could give you an edge in your dealings with other supernatural entities."

Crowley's interest was piqued. "Go on."

Franks continued, "This artifact has the potential to grant significant power. But it requires a specific key to unlock its true potential. I can provide you with that key."

Crowley leaned forward, his eyes gleaming with intrigue. "And in return, you want the soul of Bobby Singer?"

"Yes," Franks replied. "It's a fair trade. You get the key, and Bobby gets his soul back."

Crowley smirked. "I'm not sure I'm interested in your proposal, Franks. You're not exactly in a position to dictate terms."

Franks leaned forward, his eyes locked on Crowley. "Did you not realize I was once a Throne, a guardian of divine justice? However powerful you are, you are but a demon. I have walked among the highest orders of heaven."

Crowley raised an eyebrow. "And what exactly does that mean?"

Franks' voice took on a hint of mystery. "It means I have seen the face of God, and I have been forged in the fires of rebellion. You may have power, Crowley, but I have the weight of history on my side."

Crowley chuckled, but there was a hint of unease in his voice. Franks was absurdly powerful in the mortal world, but if his boast were true—and so far as Crowley knew, he never bluffed—Franks might be that powerful in the supernatural world too. Could Crowley win? Maybe. Could Crowley win and keep his position in Hell? Well, there was the question.

Crowley decided to proceed with caution. "Very well, Franks. I'll play along. But let's make this interesting. If you can answer a riddle, I'll return the soul. But if you fail... well, let's just say you'll be doing me a favor."

Franks nodded. "I accept your wager."

Crowley presented the riddle: "What is the one wish I cannot grant?"

Franks paused for a moment before responding, "I wish for salvation."

Crowley's smile faltered, and for a moment, he looked genuinely surprised. "Very good, Franks. You are indeed clever. Salvation is the one thing I, as a demon, cannot grant. It's a wish that transcends my power."

Franks nodded again and leaned forward slightly as he spoke: "I knew that. And I also know why you asked the question, Crowley." His voice carried an edge now—calm but cutting as he continued: "You weren't testing my intelligence; you were testing my claim about who I am and what I know about divine power itself."

Crowley's eyes narrowed slightly as he studied him more closely—impressed despite himself but unwilling to show it openly yet: "You're more perceptive than I'd given credit for earlier."

Franks smiled faintly—a rare sight indeed: "I've been around long enough to fight wars shaping existence itself; Lucifer trusted me as chief lieutenant when he rebelled against Heaven itself too long ago."

Crowley leaned back, visibly annoyed but grudgingly respectful. He knew that tactical reversals meant adapting faster for the next encounter. "Well played, Franks. You've won this round, but don't think it prevents future attempts to maneuver against you strategically."

Franks turned calmly away, his mission accomplished. "I'm looking forward to it, Crowley. The dynamics between us will remain... interesting."