

Mira Khurana

10/23/22

Iron Stream

“First and last number?” The receptionist asked, glancing up from her computer.

“28-13170,” The girl responded.

“Who are you currently following?”

“Beverly Rhodes,” The girl replied, “I’ve been a follower for the past 12 years.”

The receptionist nodded, her nails clicking loudly on the keyboard.

“Now, have you submitted a follower resume to The Franklin Foundation?”

The girl had finished and emailed her resume to The Franklin Foundation weeks ago. The Franklin Foundation, named after the celebrity Franklin Star, was a group that seemed to be the only thing the girl could think about these days.

16 years ago, Franklin Star challenged his followers for one of them to prove themselves as his greatest fan. The prize? A promise of fame. Franklin Star gained 32 million followers the day the challenge was announced. Both old and new followers were going crazy to try and get his attention. People followed him everywhere, copying his every move, some even changing their legal name to Franklin Star. After celebrities around the world saw how popular Franklin had become, they decided to follow in his footsteps. Soon, everybody had a celebrity that they were trying to prove themselves to. And thus began The Franklin Foundation: a group of celebrities that were followed by people all over the world. Once Franklin Star got older, and fans started to

move on, he took over the foundation and put together The Franklin House, where these celebrities could live together, separate from the rest of the world.

Since then, people that weren't celebrities were followers, people no longer had their own identities. As a follower, you were identified by your number and the celebrity that you committed your identity to. The only way to change that was to become a celebrity yourself. To do that, you had to prove yourself to The Franklin Foundation, showing that you were the strongest follower of your celebrity.

The girl had been working towards this for the last 12 years, planning her name for as long as she could remember. Now, finally, she was on the path to becoming a part of the foundation.

“Excuse me?” The receptionist looked bored.

“Oh, sorry,” She smiled sheepishly, “Yes, I submitted both a resume and an application.”

The receptionist went back to typing. The girl stood in silence, unsure if she should be attempting small talk, or if she should just let the woman be. Her phone pinged twice, and she pulled it out of her pocket. Two new updates about Beverly, paparazzi photos from her morning run, and information about the release of her second skincare line.

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“First and last name?”

“Jane Dow” The girl, now Jane, replied.

The man at the front desk smiled, “Right this way, Jane.”

He stood up from his chair and stepped out from behind the desk. He gestured for Jane to follow. She trailed behind him as he led her through a series of staircases and hallways. After a few minutes, he stopped in front of a large door, which led to what looked like an office.

He turned the door knob, and waved her into the room, "Good luck."

Jane smiled nervously, pushing the door open further. She turned back one last time to thank the man, but he was already gone.

"Jane," a man's voice called from the office.

Finally, Jane stepped into the room. She was met with a face she knew all too well.

*Franklin Star:*

"Oh my god..." she muttered, still only a step inside the room. She was frozen in place.

"What was that?" Franklin asked.

"Oh, um," Jane stuttered, "I was, just, uh, saying it's— so great to meet you!" She tried her best to plaster a (hopefully friendly) smile on her face, and began to walk closer to Franklin's desk (thankfully, her legs had finally decided to cooperate).

"Well, I could say the same, Jane," He replied, firmly shaking her hand. She hoped her palms didn't seem as sweaty as they were.

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*Jane Dow: The Newest Member of The Franklin Foundation*

*Author: 78-09563*

*Posted: 09/28/2039*

*The Franklin House has gained yet another resident! With her striking red hair, big eyes, and sweet personality, Jane Dow already has almost a million followers committing to her. From what we've seen, she's going to be a great influence in our community.*

*Though Jane has yet to make many public appearances, the things she's said about her revision from follower to celebrity seem positive. When asked about her goals with her newfound platform she says, "It's such an honor to be a part of this community – The Franklin Foundation, I mean. I just hope that everything runs smoothly, you know? But, um, with my platform? Well, I hope that I have a good impact, I guess." Though Jane seems to not be completely comfortable in front of the camera, we can already tell she has a good heart. We're all looking forward to seeing what's next for Jane Dow!*

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Jane was finally starting to get used to waking up in The Franklin House. She had been a part of the foundation for almost three weeks, and now had over two million followers.

During those three weeks, she had met with Franklin two more times. Both interactions consisted of Franklin telling Jane she needed to work on spending more time in the public eye, and Jane assuring him, "I will soon! Just still getting used to all of this celebrity stuff!" with a big smile. She wasn't sure how long that would continue to be a reasonable excuse.

Though Jane had been waiting for this opportunity for over half of her life, she was slowly realizing that she hadn't thought much about what it would be like when she was actually a member of The Franklin Foundation.

So far, Jane had only one experience being a celebrity in public. The first day she moved into the house, her car pulled up into what seemed like thousands of people. Jane could barely see the gates that separated the Franklin House from the rest of the world. The front garden was covered with people: fans, journalists, and paparazzi. It took 5 security guards and at least 10 minutes of ushering people away from the gates for the car to finally make it through.

Jane was thankful she had the tinted windows of the car to separate her from the commotion outside. Even with that, she could still hear her name being shouted over and over and over again.

Jane was pulled from her thoughts when a letter slid out from under her door. She hurried to the door, grabbed the letter, and unwrapped it, looking at it skeptically.

*Jane,*

*I know you've been hesitant to be around the media, so I've scheduled a meet and greet with a few of your biggest fans. This will be a small, personal event — won't be too overwhelming.*

*Tomorrow, 10am, Room 326.*

*-FS*

Jane sighed, tossing the letter onto the kitchen table. At least this was better than paparazzi.

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So far, Jane had met with two fans. One of them cried when they first saw her, and the other knew an amount of information about her that was just a little bit terrifying. She tried to think back to what she knew about Beverly Rhodes when she was a follower, but could barely remember anything. Had she been this crazy?

Finally, her third and last follower came out. Jane froze. Looking straight back at her was the carbon copy of herself. She had the same high cheekbones, a nose that was slightly tilted to the left, big eyes, and thin lips. The only thing that differentiated the woman from Jane was her hair. It was a slightly duller red than Jane's, and her straightened locks were starting to curl at the ends.

Jane plastered on a smile, her stomach churning.

"I can't believe this is happening," The woman said, smiling wide. Her teeth were straighter than Jane's.

"I just finished my last operation," She continued, gesturing proudly to her face, completely oblivious to Jane's shock. Jane stared at her blankly.

Though Jane was usually happy to be like others, never wanting to be the black sheep, this was something different. Jane had now lost her sense of self, something that was barely there in the first place. She used to be a random number, and now she was a name that she stopped

feeling connected to weeks ago. The only constant thing was that she could look in the mirror and see herself, her true self. Now, that was gone. Jane had nothing to herself.

“... I was actually taller than you, you know? So I went to this special surgeon, who can take up to 8 inches off your height— he’s the only one in the country that does it. Crazy, right?”

The woman looked at Jane expectantly.

Jane ran out of the room.

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“Franklin,” Jane said, stepping into his office, “can I talk with you?”

“Of course,” Franklin smiled, “I’m all ears.”

“I need to get out of here,” Jane blurted. That wasn’t how she had planned the conversation going.

“What do you mean by that, Jane?”

Jane hated that he always seemed so calm.

“I mean, like, I need to leave the house. I need to leave the foundation.”

If Franklin was surprised, he did a good job of hiding it.

Franklin sighed, “There’s nothing I can do for you, Jane. You leaving the foundation is up to your followers.”

Jane obviously looked confused, because Franklin continued to explain.

“I can’t take you out of the foundation. You need to be abandoned. You would have to do something that would make you lose your fans.”

This was Jane's way out. She had to do something bad. Really bad.

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*Beverley Rhodes dead at 32*

*Author: 10-10787*

*Posted: 11/17/2039*

*Last night, superstar Beverley Rhodes was found dead in her room in The Franklin House.*

*Investigations are underway, but reports claim that this was not only a murder, but a crime of passion.*