

Author B.K. FOWLER sits at a table with a huge sign reading “Book Signing.” She’s just hit it big with a children’s series. As testimony to her popularity, the table is stacked with novels. A couple are propped up, showing exciting images of boy-hero DANTE Dirkson. FOWLER has spent the day signing the books of eager young fans. There is a small chair on the side of the table opposite her, presumably for said eager young fans.

As the play begins, FOWLER has her notebook out. She’s working on the opening lines of DANTE’s next adventure. However, to her frustration, none of her efforts are satisfactory. After three or four tries, she tears out the page, balls it up, and hurls it across the room.

FOWLER: Stupid thing!

DANTE enters.

DANTE: Excuse me.

Mistaking him for a fan, FOWLER instantly puts on her “public” face.

FOWLER: Hello, I’m B.K. Fowler.

DANTE: I know.

FOWLER: What’s your name?

DANTE: Dante. I’d like to –

FOWLER: What a coincidence!

DANTE: – speak with you, if –

FOWLER: My main character is named Dante.

DANTE: I know.

FOWLER: Dante Dirkson. The next book is coming out in July.

DANTE: Actually, I was hoping –

FOWLER: Oh, of course. (FOWLER grabs a book and pen) What did you say your name was?

DANTE: Dante. But –

FOWLER: That’s right! What a coincidence! Let’s see... (She writes) “Dear Dante” –

DANTE: Dirkson.

FOWLER: – “What a coincidence! Have a magical day!”

DANTE: I’m *the* Dante Dirkson.

FOWLER: “Yours truly (She winks) B.K. Fowler.” (She hands him the signed book) Take it to the cash, and don’t forget to have a wizarding good read! Incidentally, for the duration of my appearance, the hardcover boxed set is on special for just thirty-seven ninety – (DANTE snatches her notebook) Hey!

DANTE: Have I got your attention now?

FOWLER: That’s not for sale!

She grabs for it, but DANTE is too fast.

DANTE: So the next Dante Dirkson book’s coming out in July, is it?

FOWLER: Not if you keep flinging it around like that.

She grabs for the notebook again, but DANTE dodges.

FOWLER: Honestly, if you’d read my interview with *Time*, you’d know that notebook represents over a year of hard work. I’m practically on the last chapter right now. So give it back.

DANTE: Don’t lie to me.

FOWLER: What?

DANTE: You haven’t even started that novel.

FOWLER: Then what are you holding?

DANTE: (opening the notebook to show her) You’ve written one line. That’s all.

FOWLER: It’s a start.

DANTE: It’s today’s date.

FOWLER: I’ve been busy.

DANTE: Liar!

FOWLER: I have! There was Liam’s wedding in November... all these book signings, of course... and my agent wanted me to do an American tour...

DANTE: You’re not busy or preoccupied. You’re stuck.

FOWLER: Where’s your mother, anyway?

DANTE: It’s time to face the facts, Miss Fowler. The gears have stopped turning. The motor has stalled. Your characters have stopped speaking to you –

FOWLER: (calls) Security!

DANTE: – and we refuse to start again until our demands are met!

FOWLER: Wait – “we”?

DANTE: I’m Dante Dirkson. What a coincidence.

FOWLER: You’re one volume short of a trilogy.

DANTE: Ask me anything, go on.

FOWLER: (calls) Security! Rotten second-rate store. (calls again) Security? Anyone?

DANTE: Anything about me, Dante Dirkson. If I can’t answer, I’ll give this [the notebook] back and never bother you again. Promise.

FOWLER: Right then, “Mr. Dirkson”, what’s your middle name?

DANTE: No good. *Deadly Galleon*, page fifty-two, line seven: “ ‘Dante Orpheus Dirkson?’ called the Headmistress.” Ask me something only the real Dante would know.

FOWLER: I see you’re what they call an “extreme” fan.

DANTE: You must have things scribbled down. Character sketches. Ideas you’ve never shared with the press.

FOWLER: What’s your favourite colour?

DANTE: Now you’re talking.

FOWLER: Well?

DANTE: Indigo.

FOWLER: If you could be any animal, what animal would you be?

DANTE: Snow leopard.

FOWLER: How do you take your tea?

DANTE: Trick question. I don’t.

FOWLER: Why did you hate Sesame Street as a small child?

DANTE: Elmo reminded me of the monster that murdered my parents.