



Lost Without Him

WHO COULD POSSIBLY FILL THE SHOES
OF THE LATE, GREAT DR. BRANDT?
VANESSA LAWRENCE MEETS THE CONTENDERS.

IN APRIL, AS FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND PATIENTS OF THE illustrious dermatologist Fredric Brandt mourned his headline-making death, by suicide, a wave of fear and concern was sweeping across New York's Upper East Side—and far beyond. “At the memorial, the unspoken question was, What is everyone going to do now?” recalls the publicist Elizabeth Harrison of the problem that continues to vex the scores of high-profile women (and men) who relied on Brandt to maintain their preternatural youthfulness.

“There were dozens of women e-mailing and tweeting one another frantically,” says the jewelry designer Carol Brodie, adding that, having expressed her grief on Facebook, she was inundated with queries there too. “I was getting personal messages from people I’d never met—not just in the U.S. but all over. Like, ‘Oh my God, I loved Fred, too, but who are you going to go to?’”

“I spoke with two celebrities the day I heard, and we were all so upset,” says the star colorist Sharon Dorram, whose client list overlapped heavily with Brandt’s. “But, of course, at the end of an hour-long conversation, it always came down to, ‘Who is next?’ People don’t want to change. It’s a scary moment.”

With offices in Miami and Manhattan, Brandt, who wore *Comme des Garçons* to work and had a habit of bursting into show tunes mid-procedure, forged a new model of cosmetic dermatology, combining his hypermethodical technique with no-holds-barred innovation. Wielding his beloved fillers and Botox—with which he treated the likes of Madonna, Kelly Ripa, Ellen Barkin, and Stephanie Seymour—he revolutionized the way ladies of means approach aging. “Most doctors know how to inject,” says Brandt’s former top nurse, Julie Concepcion, who worked by his side for more than a decade. “But rarely do doctors know how to *create*.”

Elizabeth Hayt, a writer and longtime patient, agrees. “His use of fillers was not only rejuvenating,” she says, “it also had the potential to make you prettier. That’s the art part.”

Brandt’s meticulousness resulted in interminable wait times—“I knew I had to block out my whole morning,” Harrison says—but it also fostered unconditional trust. Patients rarely questioned Brandt’s judgment, to the point that many of them couldn’t begin to tell you what he actually did to them. “I never once said, ‘Wait, are you sure?’” Brodie remembers. “Now, I’m starting all over.” Seeing a new derm, she says, is like dating a new man. “They seem amazing, but can you trust them? Are they going to have your back all the time? Fred had your back all the time.”

Brandt’s patients have followed different paths in their search for a replacement. Harrison chose Ellen Marmur from a list of suggested names in an e-mail chain circulating among her friends and has been happy so far. (“She looks great herself, and I like her vibe.”) Dorram, who, given her beauty-guru status, feels an added responsibility to her clients, has been recommending Paul Jarrod Frank, David Colbert, and Robert Anolik (one of Brandt’s associates), based on advice from the plastic surgeon David Rosenberg. Concepcion was so flooded with inquiries that she took it upon herself to interview five doctors. She settled on Frank (“He has a very good eye”) but has also suggested Elizabeth Hale. It is rumored that Madonna has also migrated to Frank. Celebrity hairstylist Garren, meanwhile, is giving Anolik the medical equivalent of three dates to see how things work out before committing. “My records were there, and he saw all the subtle things that Fred did,” he says, adding that he would also have visited Joely Kaufman, Brandt’s Miami associate, had he been in Florida.

In a testament to Brandt’s talent, Hayt is now seeing two different doctors, in an attempt to replicate what Brandt achieved solo: Yan Trokel, a plastic surgeon whose YLift technique seems most akin to Brandt’s practice of using cannulas to inject filler beneath the muscle; and the dermatologist Joel Kassimir, who adds smoothing “finishing touches” with Botox and fillers.

Of course, like blind dates, encounters with syringes don’t always pan out. Garren says he’s witnessed some misguided work on the faces of former Brandt patients who seemingly panicked and went with the first doctor they could find. “They’re filling the bottom of the face too much, so you get a heavy jaw and a heaviness around your mouth area,” Garren says. “And those lines from the nose to the mouth? Fred never believed in filling them in.”

Also unattractive, Garren says, is the feeding frenzy that has ensued among doctors eager to scoop up Brandt’s devotees. The hairstylist says he’s been propositioned, via his clients, by other derms hoping to earn his influential stamp of approval. Some plastic surgeons, meanwhile, have added cosmetic-dermatology services to their menus, in the hopes of luring Brandt’s patients. One derm was even spotted handing out business cards at Brandt’s memorial service. “Every doctor wants a piece of Fred’s clientele,” Brodie says.

It remains to be seen whether any of them can possibly fill his designer shoes. “It will take a long time before there is someone who has that brain and artistic flair and vision,” Garren says, noting that one of his clients was so sure she’d never find someone comparable that she confided, “Maybe Fred’s telling me it’s time to let go and grow old gracefully.” Garren’s reply: “I don’t think that’s exactly it.”

Perhaps not, but for Hayt, at least, there is a sense of resignation. “I’m going to look older than I would if Fred were still around. There’s a limit to beauty now,” she says with a sigh. “That didn’t seem to be the case when Fred was in the game.” ♦