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TO ANYONE ELSE WHO'S EVER FELT "LESS THAN" . . .

too short, too tall, too big, too small, too young,
too old, too weak, too bold, too odd, too plain, too shy,
or too vain—you are good enough, lovable,
and worthy of powerful style

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INTRODUCTION

Did you get dressed this morning? Yes, of course you did, because in our society you can't live your life naked. And even if you could, I think most of us would opt for clothing. After showering or brushing your teeth, dressing is probably the first thing you do every day. But have you ever stopped to consider that it's also the most important? This one act affects everything else that follows, yet the duty of putting something on is often left to the last few minutes before you have to run out the door.

Style is the way we speak to the world without words. Our style is a layer of language we wear and the first thing people notice about us. It's how we initially attract others, from potential mates to employers to friends. Family, coworkers, companions, and, most important, acquaintances and strangers are constantly "listening" to how we present ourselves, because our style is such an echo of who we are. I believe

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everyone has a “style speak” that is uniquely their own. Though we might not always realize it, we buy and wear clothes that physically represent and communicate our insights, frustrations, fears, goals, and desires. We then carry these signifiers into a workplace, a party, or on a date. Everyone gets dressed and most often with a

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purpose—whether they are conscious of it or not. We can miss out on some amazing opportunities if we forget or ignore the fact that appearances matter and if we overlook how others interpret them.

I’ve met some truly amazing and accomplished women and men in my life, and the most noticeable trait they share is that they all have their own authentic sense of style. However, they didn’t just stumble upon their statement by following someone else’s opinions about what’s stylish or by following trends. They understand exactly who they are and how to express that, each of them a unique, complete, and brilliant package in which the outside perfectly matches the inside. Much like products whose branding attracts the ideal consumer, we too can attract what we want through what we wear.

Are you covering up what you’re trying to say to the world or perhaps advertising to the wrong audience? *The Power of Style* is about aligning your image—the one you see *and* the one others see—with your goals. Your style speak is a louder “voice” than anything you might scream from a rooftop, and the way you look says something to the world. So if you’ve succumbed to the mentality that your appearance doesn’t matter, you’ve also agreed that your voice doesn’t deserve to be heard. I’m not here to tell you what your message

should be, just that you need to have one. And more specifically, it should be a message you've consciously developed and learned to express with style.

Though news and entertainment media usually interchange the terms “fashion” and “style,” I believe these terms are not synonymous. Fashion alone is an external thing, not a way to identify you. Style, however, is about being whole and balanced. Whether I'm on NBC's *TODAY* show talking about the latest trends or hosting events at JCPenney or Gucci, I believe in leading a woman toward discovering her authentic self—her personality, her essence—on the inside and then reflecting that self on the outside through style. Unlike many fashion pundits out there, my “makeovers” are more about self-discovery and reinvention than overhauls and major transformations. And when I offer fashion or beauty advice, it's mainly about adapting trends to fit a lifestyle that's genuine to the woman wearing them. The most stylish people I know are comfortable in their skin, and their clothes reinforce that. I love a hot shoe or a stunning gown as much as the next girl, but style is about a lot more than stuff.

Style is about a lot more than stuff.

In these pages I don't present overly simplified categories (classic, trendy, diva, glam, and so on), call out your lamest fashion mistakes, or offer an endless or regurgitated list of must-have pieces. Instead, I plan to get to know *you*. Seriously. You may think a book is inherently one-sided, but I have filled these pages with insightful questions and targeted exercises I call “style sessions,” which I promise will make this process unique to you.

I divided *The Power of Style* into two equally important sections: part I's internal makeover and part II's external makeover,

each comprised of five key steps. In part I, you'll learn to truly see yourself accurately (step 1), harness your body language to ensure effective first impressions (step 2), take control of your "style speak" (step 3), then understand your own worth (step 4) so you make a plan to fully commit (step 5). In part II, once you have a clearer understanding of who you are and what you want to say to the world, we'll get into how you can best say it with your style by identifying your best colors (step 6), selecting the most flattering clothes for your individual shape (step 7), editing your closet (step 8), interpreting your wardrobe needs (step 9), and, finally, learning how to shop smart (step 10). Because I couldn't ship myself to your house to physically go through this process with you, a book was the next best thing.

I've probably seen more women naked than most rock stars, both physically and emotionally. And this book is a result of stepping outside myself to capture my own thought process while styling them—the automatic mode I shift into in a dressing room, at a fitting, or in a friend's bedroom. While the "style therapy" I use may be instinctive for me at this point, I believe anyone can apply these methods to improve his or her image. By following the ten steps laid out in these pages, you will ultimately become a master at balancing your internal self-image with your external public image. It's all about drawing style *out* of you, instead of imposing it *onto* you. I believe progress and evolution can happen without assuming that the starting point is a bad one or that I'm the final word on taste. I plan to arm you with information about yourself, offer you a way to share it with the world, and show you how it can help attract your best life. And even if you think fashion is frivolous, overwhelming, scary, or—worst of all—unnecessary, I will prove that its value is often underestimated and empower you to express your most authentic self with every outfit every day.

As a style editor, an overwhelming majority of the questions I am asked revolve around the *why* and *how* of style. In this book, I will illuminate the *why* in part I and then explain the *how* in part II, so you'll first understand why you should care about your image and then learn how to make the right changes to improve it. Many of us are familiar with the mind-body connection, but when it comes to style, the focus is almost always disproportionately on the body. In order for part II to really work, it is essential to understand your emotional reasoning and motivation in part I. When doing makeover segments on television, I have advised producers many times to *not* start at the mall. Inevitably, the transformation will look good on camera, but it won't stick. The same can be said of anyone embarking on a lifestyle change who reaches for his or her wallet first. Buyer's remorse is a real thing, and any woman out there who has ever tried a fad diet (I'm not alone here, right?) knows that looking for a quick fix never works. You have to understand why you want to make changes and feel motivated to commit before positive, long-lasting effects can be seen. You don't start at the store; you start with yourself.

While I've always possessed a love for fashion, beauty, and the DIY approach, this is not where I got my start or even where I thought I would be today. My career began in the classroom, working on my graduate studies in marriage, family, and child counseling. When many of my friends in Los Angeles were forming pop bands, getting their acting careers off the ground, and networking with agency executives into the wee hours of the morning, I invested my time at a rape-crisis facility. For many people, including myself, the evolution from my work as a counselor to style guru on TV seemed like a drastic and perhaps even incongruent career transformation. And though the process wasn't deliberate or even

conscious, I went along with it with little or no resistance because it somehow felt so organic, real, and natural.

My career trajectory was punctuated for me while on the set of an Alicia Keys photo shoot in New York City. A longtime photographer friend happened to be booked for the shoot; I was there to interview Alicia for the Style network. My friend and I hadn't seen each other for a few years, and after our hugs and kisses, he made a reference to knowing me as far back as when I was working at an HIV pharmacy and counseling at a rape center. Several people within earshot had almost audible thought bubbles and bewildered facial expressions that screamed, "Wow, she was helping HIV patients and rape survivors and now she's interviewing pop stars about their clothes?" However, as I stood in front of the camera with Alicia discussing style with her, it all came full circle for me. I asked her my questions, which admittedly are a little different from those of most television personalities: not just "What are you wearing?" but "Why are you wearing it? What does style mean to you? How has your style evolved? How do your talents connect to your self-expression?" Her responses were articulate, and she identified and shared how she uses her music, acting, clothes, and accessories to project a piece of her soul. In that moment I was reminded of how my particular style philosophy is truly about helping women discover this reality for themselves and live happier, more expressive lives. I'm still counseling. And while the subject matter may not be quite as heavy as it once was, it is equally significant. I'm still dealing with self-esteem, communication, attracting love, positive self-image, and contentment.

Over the past fifteen years, I've written advice columns, held style seminars, hosted shopping events across the country, and worked as a spokesperson for various powerful, female-centric

campaigns. These experiences have afforded me the opportunity to connect with hundreds of thousands of women. As the style editor for NBC's *TODAY* show, I've had the unique good fortune to reach millions every week across every platform. While sharing my style philosophy with everyone from tweens to small-town homemakers to urban professionals to retired grandmothers, I've found that nearly every woman I meet identifies with my message as a fellow traveler on their own style journey and as a modern woman living in a modern woman's world. While the women themselves are always changing, my message has remained the same: style and psychology are intrinsically linked, and the better you feel about how you look and the message you are sending the world, the more confident, powerful, and ultimately happy you will be.

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My hope is that you will curl up on an overstuffed sofa with *The Power of Style* and never doubt that I'm right there with you—as a style guide, as a professional girlfriend, and as a cheerleader rooting for each one of you, *as one of you*. And when you finish this book, after having completed your inner and outer makeovers, I want your family, friends, boss, and strangers to immediately, and finally, see *you*—not a Gap ad or a celebrity wannabe or some designer's esoteric inspiration for that season. I want you to be your own muse, and I want to be the one who shows you how.