

“When you become the image of your own imagination, it’s the most powerful thing you could ever do.” –RuPaul

Fiercely YOU

Be Fabulous and Confident by
Thinking Like a Drag Queen

Jackie Huba

With SHELLY STEWART KRONBERGS

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"*Fiercely You* provides lessons anyone can take away on how to be strong, bold, fierce, and in control of your life, every day. It's a personal power development tool I would have loved to have had twenty years ago, when just starting my career."

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"A wonderful combination of a personal journey, glittering (and fierce) examples, sound research, and delicious process, Jackie Huba's *Fiercely You* provides women with a fun and fresh tool for building, growing, and leveraging confidence."

—**Monique Maley, President, Articulate Persuasion, and creator of Command a Room Women's Leadership Program**

"*Fiercely You* is an essential read for anyone seeking inspiration and guidance on how to stop worrying what other people think and start living boldly and vibrantly."

—**Lyn Christian, MCC, CFCC, founder of SoulSalt**

"*Fiercely You* is packed full of tips and advice to tap into your inner diva and become the fiercest, most confident version of yourself."

—**Sarah Finley, cofounder and CEO, Social Arts & Science Institute**

"Jackie Huba is a fearless role model for women who are holding themselves back from greatness. In this book, she shares the secrets to being the badass you always knew you could be."

—**Amy Swank, Vice President of Operations, Texas Economic Development Council**

"Like Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* wrapped in a feather boa, *Fiercely You* is a masterful and marvelous study of female empowerment in the modern age."

—**Andrea France, retail software executive**

"Fiercely You is an inspiring book that provides a creative and clever approach to being our most confident selves."

—**Maxine Clark, entrepreneur**

"Confident. Remarkable. Strong. Courageous. Who doesn't want that for themselves? I do. I know you do too. In *Fiercely You*, Jackie Huba and Shelly Kronbergs want to outfit you with a new way of seeing yourself in everyday situations. No bustier or thigh boots required!"

—**Jill Silman, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Senior Performance Consultant**

"Fiercely You offers practical insights and creative tips and tools that can help you work through your fears and ignite your confidence."

—**Barbara Miller, international speaker and speaking consultant/trainer**

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Fiercely
YOU

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Fiercely YOU

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Thinking Like a Drag Queen**

Jackie Huba
with Shelly Stewart Kronbergs

Fiercely You

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For ***Rey Lopez, Kelly Kline,***
and ***Jaremi Carey,*** who so ***generously***
shepherded me through my drag journey

—Jackie Huba

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SETTING SAIL FOR THE QUEENDOM

I hate cruises. So how is it that I found myself lying on a Swarovski crystal staircase in the middle of the night aboard the *Carnival Conquest* posing for a promotional photo for a drag performance and surrounded by a small entourage of inebriated drag queens? Ordinarily, I think of cruises as just too many people cooped up on a floating petri dish for a week. No ma'am Pam! But when I found out that there was such a thing as a "drag cruise," complete with forty of the country's top drag queens and twelve hundred drag aficionados from all over the world, I couldn't wait to sign up! My newfound love of drag knew no bounds. I couldn't find anyone crazy enough to go with me, so I had to book a cabin all by myself.

Every night of this five-night, six-day Caribbean cruise was a themed costume party. As an aspiring female drag queen (yes, women can do drag), I had been learning makeup and wig styling from my *drag mother** for a while at this point but still hadn't mastered it when it was time for the cruise. I felt intimidated, wondering about how I was going to do the wigs and makeup for my costume looks when these parties would be full of drag queens who were going to look *sickening*. I didn't want to go out looking like

* Drag culture has its own vocabulary. Drag terms will be italicized on their first usage in the text. You can find their definitions in the Glossary of Drag Terms at the end of the book.

an idiot. One of the last nights of the cruise was the Black Hearts Party, where the theme, of course, was to dress all in black. I was tired of looking so half-assed in my drag; my costumes were fierce, but my makeup and wig styling were awful, to tell the truth.

On the cruise, I met Phi Phi O'Hara, runner-up to the winner on Season 4 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the cult reality competition television show for drag queens hosted by the most famous queen in the world, RuPaul. Competing on the show when she was just twenty-five, Phi Phi was the young, talented spitfire queen, driven to win at all costs. Of course there is always drama on reality competition shows, and in her season of *Drag Race* Phi Phi was usually in the middle of it. In fact, she pulled so many shenanigans on the show that the *Huffington Post* put her on their "8 Nastiest Reality TV Villains" of the year list.¹ Not sure what to expect, I mustered up the courage to ask Phi Phi if she would help me with my makeup for the Black Hearts party. To my surprise, she immediately said yes! I'd remembered that my drag mother had told me I needed a promotional photo she could use in the online flyer for my performance during one of her upcoming shows. I didn't have one. I mentioned this to Phi Phi and she excitedly volunteered to help, saying: "I'll style your wig. I'll do your makeup. I'll direct the photo shoot. I'll Photoshop it. We'll have the photo done by the end of the cruise." I was dumbfounded. I had just met Phi Phi a few days earlier and here she was volunteering to do all of this for me. She seemed nothing like the bitchy character I'd seen on the show.

The night of the party, I brought my dominatrix-inspired outfit to Phi Phi's cabin: a black studded bra and corset, black high-waisted brief, black vinyl lace-up boots,

fishnet hose, and a poker-straight, black shoulder-length wig with bangs. In the cabin she was sharing with her boyfriend Mikhael, it looked like her five giant pieces of luggage had exploded. There were costumes, wigs, high heels, makeup palettes, makeup brushes, eyelash glue, hairspray, and costume jewelry strewn around everywhere, even on the bed. It was hard to find a place to sit down. Phi Phi was in the middle of getting ready herself while at the same time working on another friend's makeup. She stopped to start working on mine. It was an honor to have such a professional *beat my face*. When I showed her the long straight black wig, she thought it would look better as a ponytail. She put my own hair in a tiny ponytail (my real hair is a short bob), and then worked some voodoo magic on the black wig—and voilà! It became a long ponytail that she attached on top of my own tiny one. Then she whipped out a can of black hairspray and began to spray all of my brunette hair black to match the new ponytail. Phi Phi remarked that there wasn't enough bling on my costume, so she lent me four giant sparkly, rhinestone cuffs, two for each wrist. With the look complete, I caught my reflection in the mirror. I didn't look anything like myself, but I looked sickening! For the first time, I felt like an actual queen. Lady Trinity, my drag alter ego, had come alive. The makeup and hair were impeccable, done by a seasoned professional. There were a number of the *Drag Race* queens at the costume party, and I took photos with a lot of them. Thumbing through the photos on my phone during the party, I remember thinking I looked as good as they did. All praise goes to Phi Phi!

Even at 3:30 a.m., after cocktails galore and a ton of dancing, Phi Phi hadn't forgotten about the photo shoot and was ready to go. She corralled a small crew of now sloshed

people from the party and we made our way to the main lobby of the ship, where there were two stunning, curved, open-air staircases: one was made of clear steps filled with shimmering Swarovski crystals, and the other had shiny black stairs trimmed in sparkly white lights. At the top of the Swarovski crystal staircase, Phi Phi directed me, “OK, go down and lie on those stairs.” Um, what? I made my way to the vertical center of the staircase and awkwardly tried to strike an attractive pose, legs outstretched and crossed, my left hand on my hip. The whole crew hung over the railing above, just looking at me. I tried another pose, putting my hand up by my head and pinning what I hoped was a seductive look on my face. But I felt like I just looked stupid. All of a sudden I felt stone-cold sober, so instead of experiencing an alcohol-induced brazenness, I just felt really insecure.

I was intimidated by Phi Phi because she is a master at modeling for photos, as many drag queens are. She knows how to pose. She knows angles. She knows lighting. Phi Phi again tried to direct me, “No, softer face. Softer face!” I didn’t even know what the hell that meant! She tried again, “Just open your lips a little.” Dammit! I felt so inept. I’m sure I looked like a dork. Then Phi Phi directed again, “Grab your ponytail and hold it straight out to the side, real sexy-like.” Real sexy-like? Was she kidding? I felt so vulnerable with everyone above the railing staring down at me. At that moment, a ship maintenance guy who was walking by started catcalling. Oh great! Exactly what I needed.

Phi Phi wasn’t completely happy with the shots from this staircase so she suggested we go to the black staircase nearby and start the whole process all . . . over . . . again. It was all so awkward. I had no experience with modeling like this. I felt so dense and self-conscious because I didn’t know how

to pose. It was really nerve-wracking. Somehow we completed the shoot with no one in our crew guffawing at my awkward poses or faces. At 4:15 a.m., we all headed to our rooms for the night with my early-morning drag queen supermodel photo shoot complete. OK, well, maybe not so super.

I ran into Phi Phi at lunch the next day and she told me she was already done with the photo. Apparently she had stayed up until 5:00 a.m. to pick out the best shot and Photoshop it. Wow! I went back to her room after lunch to get a copy of the image. When she showed it to me, I was dumbfounded. At first, I couldn't find any words. The photo was just stunning. I couldn't believe it was me. In it I'm a



Lady Trinity's first promotional photo

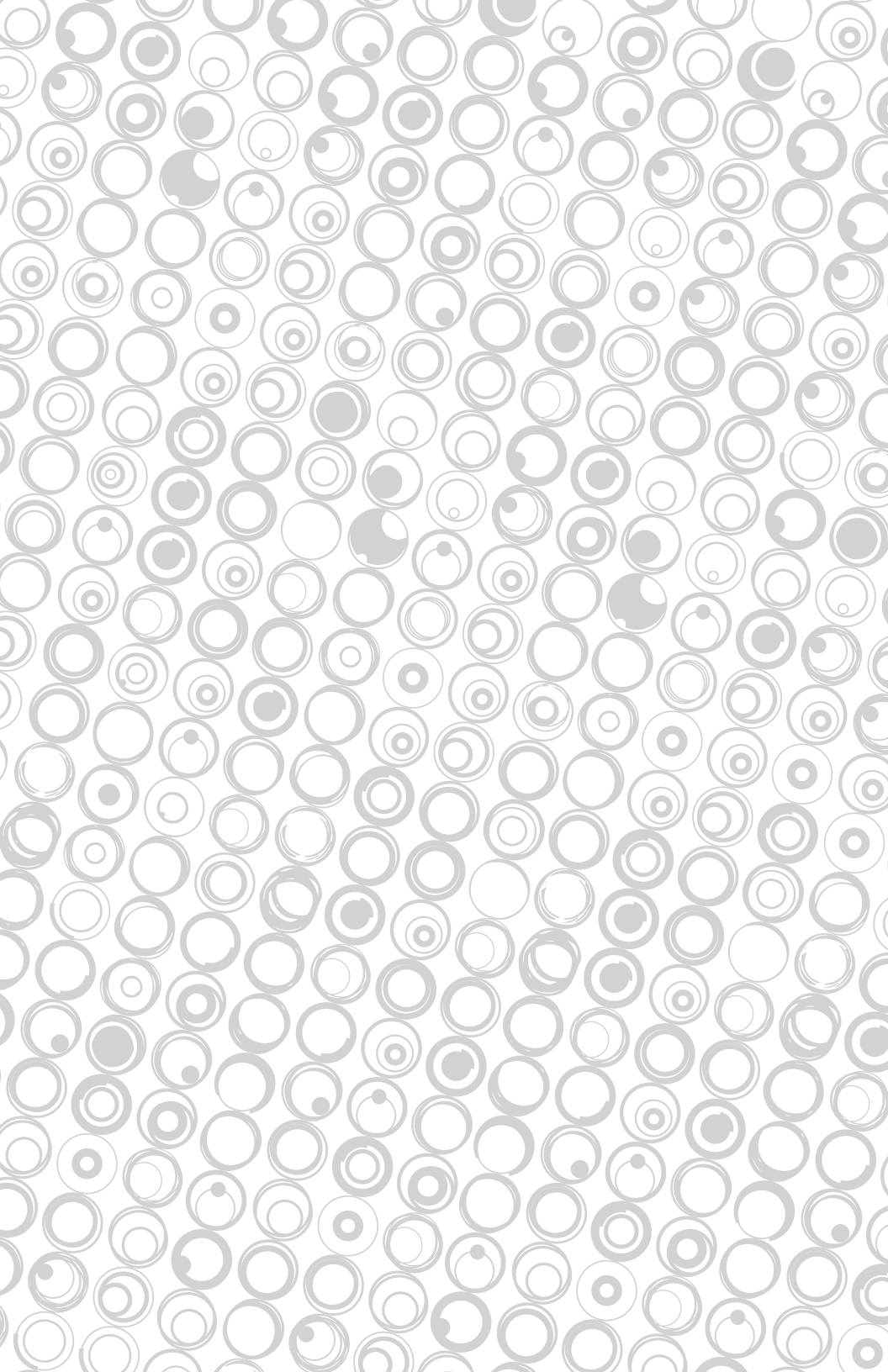
(Photo by Phi Phi O'Hara)

vixen, posing seductively on the black stairs, looking hot as shit. Holy hell, I looked amazing! Especially for a forty-eight-year-old woman. I mean, hot damn!

This became the promotional photo I have used for all of my drag performance gigs. In fact, I blew the image up into a 3' × 4' poster, framed it, and it's hanging on my bathroom wall right now, so I can see it every single day. I use it to remind myself of how awesome I am. I don't say that with arrogance; I say it with pride. That photo reminds me of the first time I was able to see an image of myself as a powerful woman. I know that if you want this feeling, that moment will come for you too, when even if you aren't doing drag, you will realize that you can pull off big changes within that reflect your fiercest self. I guess you could say that cruise was my coming out in drag. It was the first time that Lady Trinity had been fully realized as a character, an alter ego. Phi Phi O'Hara made Lady Trinity come alive, and I will always have her to thank for this. I like to think of her as my "drag aunt," though we have never formalized the role. Honestly, I'm just grateful to be able to call this sweet, generous, sarcastically funny, extremely talented, and hardworking person my friend.

Before this cruise, I had lived a so-called normal life. I was an ex-IBMer, ex-corporate executive, author, and middle-aged woman in her late forties. But my love and reverence for the art of drag and the performers who are transformed by it has changed my life. And choosing this path to become a female drag queen has been one of the most terrifying and rewarding choices I have ever made. I learned how to do drag from some of the best drag queens on the planet. From these queens I also learned how to be the most fabulous and confident version of myself in every-

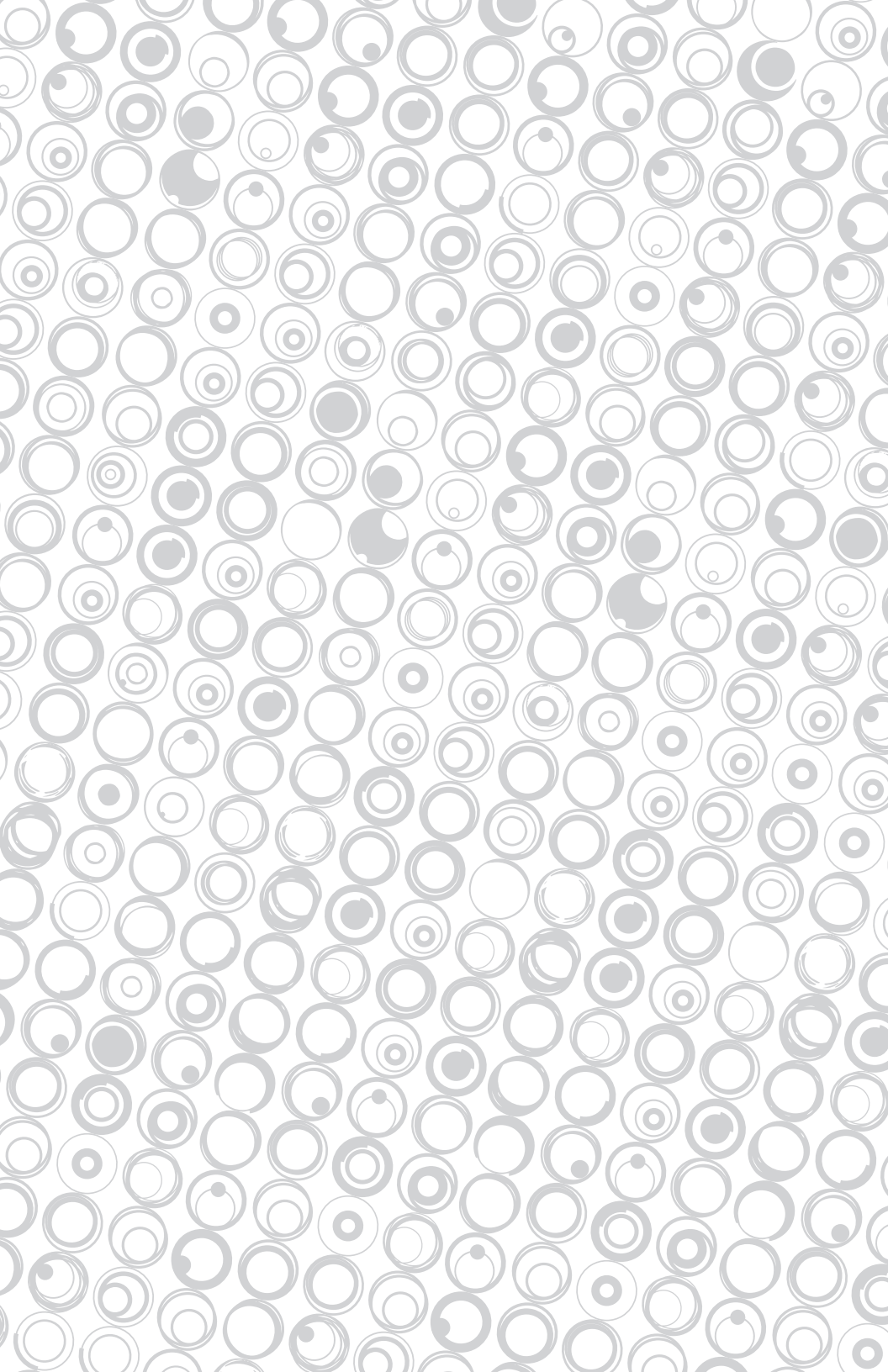
day life. Doing drag has bestowed upon me strategies to manage my self-esteem issues, helped me to take myself less seriously, and enabled me to live my life more boldly. In short, I now own my own power. And I love it! You too can feel this amazing and fierce, and you don't need to do drag to do it. All you need to do is just *think* like a drag queen in your everyday life. OK, well maybe wearing a few more sequins wouldn't hurt either.





PART ONE

WHY FIERCE MATTERS



The Need for Fierce

When was the last time you did something that astounded those around you, that amazed yourself, that was outside of your comfort zone? Has it been a while? Was it in your childhood, or at college? If it was recent, did you need the help of a drink or two to muster up that courage? That's pretty common. But when was the last time you felt intimidated, insecure, afraid to do something because it might be wrong? Or when was the last time you watched someone else do something bold and you thought, "That's amazing! But I could never do that?" Unfortunately, that's pretty common too. Why? Fear. We often hold ourselves back from our true potential because of all kinds of fears—fear of failing, fear of rejection, fear of being laughed at, and even the fear of being our most glorious self.

This lack of confidence shows itself most measurably in our work lives, especially in women as compared to men. In a study by Hewlett-Packard, women working at the company applied for promotions only when they believed they met 100 percent of the qualifications necessary for the job. The men were happy to apply when they thought they could meet 60 percent of the job requirements. The study showed that women felt confident only when they feel perfect.¹ A 2014 U.S. gender parity study at Bain & Company looked at employees' career aspirations and their confidence in getting a top management position. Both men and women were equally confident about their ability to reach a top management position at the start of their careers. However, over time, women's aspiration levels dropped more than 60 percent while men's stayed the same. As they gained

experience, women's confidence also fell by half, while men's stayed about the same.² As both of these studies demonstrate, we women are holding ourselves back from our professional goals and aspirations because of our lack of confidence.

Marianne Williamson, a celebrated spiritual teacher, author, and lecturer, directly addressed this issue when she wrote:

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory . . . that is within us.³

So let's release these inhibitions and fears in order to be the fabulous people we imagine we could be. What would your life be like if you could actually become that dazzling diva you dream of being? It would be shinier than all the sequins on a stage full of drag queens, that's what! It would be more powerful than all those nagging, negative voices that live with you and inside your head.

What would it be like to live your life boldly, vibrantly, barely giving notice to those inner and outer voices that constantly harangue you to step back, quiet down, and not take that risk? Imagine for a moment, though, what would happen if you and all the people you know were set free

from their fears and were able to embrace a life of exuberance. Can you feel that energy simmering? That spark of excitement, of possibility, is actually power, plain and simple. It is the new meaning of an old word that is changing, and that word is FIERCE.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* still defines “fierce” as “having or displaying an intense or ferocious aggressiveness.”⁴ Violence is implied. It has been a bloody word, often used to refer to battle. But the word “fierce” is in the process of morphing into something else, something more refined. The *Urban Dictionary* serves up several definitions of “fierce,” such as “having exceptional quality, being bold, displaying chutzpah, cool, and eye-catching,” and being used to describe someone “who is on fire and possesses too much swag for the common man or woman to handle.”⁵ As we see it, the word “fierce” means bold, empowered, confident, fabulous, remarkable, outspoken, and strong. We want a world that’s full of this kind of fierce. We want our friends to be fierce. We want you to be fierce.

And we’ve found a way to do that. We’ve found the fiercest collection of people on the planet, and we want to share with you what we have learned from them so that you can be your most fabulous and confident self by thinking like they do.

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you . . . THE DRAG QUEENS!

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Learn from the Queens of Fierce

So just how *does* a middle-aged ex-IBMer, ex-computer programmer, former corporate executive, author, and straight woman go from that to performing in drag as the glamorously fierce Lady Trinity? Here's how it all started.

Raised in a blue-collar family, I (Jackie) did everything I could to be the best daughter possible: I got straight As in school, behaved perfectly, earned a degree in computer science, and became a hardworking marketer at IBM. I was always the good girl, doing the right thing, never making waves. I did fine but never felt good enough. After a failed marriage and another failed long relationship, I started to question who I was. I wrote two marketing books with my former significant other and became a successful management consultant and speaker. When that relationship/professional partnership ended I found myself on my own, in my forties, at the lowest point in my life. I was bored with the work I had been doing, felt stifled creatively, and knew I wasn't living up to my potential. I felt insecure and knew something drastic needed to happen. At forty-seven, though, I wasn't sure that I had the confidence to reinvent myself and do something completely different. I was stuck.

During this time, not coincidentally, I found myself freakishly drawn to and inspired by pop superstar Lady Gaga. She even became the subject of my third, and first solo, business book, *Monster Loyalty: How Lady Gaga Turns Followers into Fanatics*. Here was a woman who had created a powerful, disruptive persona—complete with crazy

makeup, big wigs, wild costumes, and tall heels—and had successfully conquered the misogynist, male-dominated recording industry.

I began to think, doesn't everyone, every day, create personas as we act out the various roles we play in society? You have a professional persona you create for work, a more nurturing persona with your kids, a free-spirited persona when you are out with your friends, and I could go on and on. All of these personas together make up our personality. But in adult life we often alter our personas too much in order to fit into society. We worry about what others will think of us. Sometimes it's just easier to conform rather than stand out. This is especially true for women. Psychology tells us that self-doubt derails us from pursuing our passions and accomplishing our greatest goals. Fear and doubt keep us clinging to conformity and stop us from being our best selves.

And, sure enough, there I was one night in my everyday uniform—a wrap dress with comfortable (and, I'd later learn, dowdy) slingbacks, alone, feeling defeated on the couch, surfing through channels when I stumbled on *RuPaul's Drag Race*. I simply could not keep my eyes off of those drag queens I was seeing on the screen. Here were men going balls out (or, more precisely, in) to create these fierce, fabulous, female characters for the stage. I watched them, envious, as they unabashedly transformed themselves into whatever their hearts desired, unafraid to flout the socially acceptable boundaries of beauty by experimenting with costumes, cosmetics, and wigs that defied expectations and even gravity. Here were men revering womanhood and pulling together the most feminine, most fabulous, and most glamorous traits that I (supposedly) just naturally possessed. No limits, no apologies, just strong, bold, dy-

dynamic femininity accessorized with a stiletto-sharp wit and a give-no-fucks attitude. As I watched season after season of the show, I began to realize that drag queens are terrific role models for how to build confidence: they create bold personas, own the way they look, command attention using powerful body positions, aren't afraid to take risks, and can shake off criticism with a flip of their wig. When I found myself in challenging personal and business situations, I started thinking, "What Would a Drag Queen Do?" I wondered how I could live every day with that sense of empowerment.

***"What Would a
Drag Queen Do?"***

Something that RuPaul said really changed my thinking about how I could attain the same confidence as the queens I watched on the show. She said, "You're born naked and the rest is drag."¹

***"You're born naked
and the rest is drag."***

Most of us think of drag as being a performance art for the stage.

But RuPaul's insight is that we create and *perform* personas in our everyday life. Whether you know it or not, you are doing drag right now. You do drag every day. Your drag is not just what you wear, but also how you act, what you say, how you say it, and how you carry yourself. And we can transform ourselves into any persona we want, just as we did when we were kids on Halloween. What I wanted was the power and confidence of the drag performers I saw on TV. Hell, if men could make this

amazing transformation into fierce glamazons through drag, why couldn't I? So while still doing my day job, I decided that I, Jackie Huba, would become—wait for it—a drag queen!

As I mentioned earlier, women can do drag. When most people think of drag performers, they think of men performing as female characters who are, of course, called drag queens. Actually, there are other lesser-known categories of drag: women who perform in drag as male characters are called drag kings, and women who do drag as female characters are known as bio-queens, faux queens, or simply female drag queens. That's what I wanted to do.

I began to immerse myself in the world of drag. I watched hundreds of live drag performances, went on two drag cruises, interviewed the world's top drag queens about how they create their powerful female personas, and got their advice on how to do the same for myself. Many of the queens I interviewed have been on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, because in the drag world these performers represent the best of the best. I interviewed Courtney Act, Derrick Barry, April Carrión, Adore Delano, Laganja Estranja, Miss Fame, Cynthia Lee Fontaine, Jujubee, Trixie Mattel, Chad Michaels, Coco Montrese, Phi Phi O'Hara, Raven, Latrice Royale, Yara Sofia, Shangela Laquifa Wadley, and Katya Zamolodchikova.

I mentored with a local drag mother; developed my own drag persona named Lady Trinity; learned how to do theatrical makeup, wig, and costume styling; mastered the art of lip-syncing; and learned to playfully seduce my audiences (large and small). I've performed in some of the top drag events in the world. And I've met multitudes of others who've also been transformed by their love of drag queens, some of whom are profiled in this book. I want you to be transformed the way they were.

An Invitation to Be Fiercely You

This is your chance, your opportunity to make a change. You are reading this book because you long for something more. You want to be more *you*. You are tired of hiding the shiny, sparkly parts of yourself because of the fear of criticism. You want to experience the feeling of being your most fabulous self. You want to be confident, strong, full of life. This book will show you how to do it—how to be *fiercely you*.

Fiercely You is the culmination of what I (Jackie) have learned from the world of drag. It is a personal growth guide to help you ignore criticism, live life more fearlessly, and become the fierce and fabulous creature you may dream of being every day by learning lessons taught by drag queens. It will offer advice from other people who have been transformed by using drag queens as role models and will trace my personal experience of diving into the Queendom.* My collaborator, Shelly Stewart Kronbergs, will dissect and explain how the lessons we can learn from drag queens are rooted in well-researched concepts in psychology. Everyone, meet Shelly!

Hello, darlings! I'm Shelly, and here are the letters after my name: MDiv, MA, LMFTA. Let me break that down for you: master's degree in divinity from a Lutheran seminary. I was ordained as a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and was the pastor of a wonderful old

* We are using the term "Queendom" to refer to an enlightened worldview in which we see ourselves as confident and fearless as seasoned drag queens.

country church outside of Austin, Texas. Next is the master of arts degree in counseling, with a dual track for both LPC and LMFT. Those letters stand for licensed professional counselor and licensed marriage and family therapist, but I chose to go the LMFT route and am currently licensed as an associate in that field.

All of these letters and degrees may impress you and assure you that I just might know what I'm talking about. Or maybe they'll just bore you—I'm OK with that, too. What the letters don't show you is that I, too, am fully engaged in becoming fiercely me, and I want to share with you why this book works. Because it does. And the reason why it works is that its premises rest on strong psychological foundations. The book is more than merely anecdotal, it is supported by scholarly research on the psychological issues of power, the structure of personality, the construction and performance of our identity, and the ways in which change can be produced in our lives. It is a privilege for me to provide that information for you and to help you become the person you dream of being.

Thanks, Shelly! Now let's get started! In this book you will find the five Keys to Fierce that will unlock your inner fabulousness and help you think like a fierce drag queen in your everyday life. They are:

- 1. Create Your Drag Persona.** Consciously create the person you've always wanted to be.
- 2. Always Look Sickening in Everyday Drag.** Dress for power.
- 3. Strike a Pose and Embody Your Power.** Use power posing and physicality to instill inner confidence.

4. Tell Your Critics to Sashay Away. Quiet both inner and outer critics.

5. You Better Werk! Take small risks to propel yourself to taking even bigger ones.

These keys unlock the wisdom that will set you free: **you get to control who you are in this world.** Too many of you feel controlled by your significant others, your bosses, your friends, your children, your parents. You feel that you need to fulfill their expectations of you. You succumb to the perceptions you *think* they have of you—perceptions that you aren't smart enough, pretty enough, strong enough, capable enough. We want you to consider less what other people think and instead focus on becoming who you were meant to be. Only *you* can let out that inner queen who is confident in herself no matter what other people think. Only you can create the amazing person you see inside your head and feel in your heart.

The next five chapters will break down in detail the five Keys to Fierce. Each chapter has a similar format that looks like this:

- An explanation of each key.
- How Jackie and her drag alter ego, Lady Trinity, experienced this key.
- *Notes from the Stage:* insights and advice from top drag queens on this key.
- *Notes from Everyday Queens:* profiles of real people who are shining examples of how this key has worked for them.
- *Notes from the Couch:* proven psychological research that supports how this key improves confidence

levels. Shelly will break down the research into layman's terms and explain the science behind why these keys really work.

- *Notes for Your Drag Diary*: specific homework assignments to help you personalize each key. The “Drag Diary” is where you record your thoughts, fears, excitement, and progress of working through each key. The “diary” could be any place you want to record your thoughts: a paper notebook, the notepad on your phone, and so on. It's important to write down your progress so that you can reflect back on the new things you have tried and be inspired by your past accomplishments.

By the way, these are not just suggestions. We want you to connect with those people who *do* see your potential and make them a bigger part of your lives, so they can cheer on your accomplishments and remind you of how fabulous you are when you are feeling less than confident. We want to form a community to make this change. That's why we are introducing the **“50 Days to Fierce Challenge!”** Gather your like-minded friends, either as a book club, a meet-up, or in our online community through our website, EnterTheQueendom.com. Post your efforts on social media for the world to see and support. Change can happen. It's all within your control. Because remember, as RuPaul said, you are already in drag. You can create a powerful, confident persona that is fiercely you just by deciding to do it.

An important note as we move forward: we are not suggesting that to gain these benefits of feeling fabulous and more confident you need to actually become a drag queen. The idea here is to take the ways that drag queens create

fierce, bold personas and apply them to our everyday lives to create self-confidence. But in order to apply them, we can't just change our *thinking*; we have to change our *actions*. You will be asked to do things that you may never have done before, things that might make you feel silly, or embarrassed, or uncomfortable. Things that might push your boundaries. Of course, you are still in control of what you do, and nothing you are asked to do will be untoward. There are ways to incorporate a fabulous new you without breaking a dress code at work. Shelly even has a story about wearing stiletto heels under her clergy robe! The big idea here is that when we push ourselves, even just a little, to *do* things outside our comfort zone, we *feel* liberated, as though we can take on something else we feel afraid of. Taking action makes us feel more confident. That said, in the Drag Diary sections of the keys, we will prescribe advanced activities for those who are “drag curious,” that is, who want to have a more adventurous drag experience.

It is also important at the outset to clear up any confusion about the differences between drag queens, transvestites, transgender people, and cross-dressers. Umbrella terms like “transvestite” and “cross-dresser” mean dressing and acting in a style or manner traditionally associated with one's opposite gender. But there are many reasons why someone might be acting or dressing as the opposite gender. “Drag queen” usually connotes cross-dressing for the purposes of entertainment and self-expression. Some people, usually heterosexual men, cross-dress to fulfill transvestic fetishes; that is, their cross-dressing is primarily part of a private sexual activity. “Transgender” is the state of one's gender identity not matching one's assigned sex at birth.

Some drag queens are also transgender women. This can be confusing. Some men who are questioning their gender identity are attracted to drag because it allows them to explore their female side. After these men transition to female, some continue to perform because they love the stage and entertaining a crowd. To put it simply, for transgender drag queens, drag is what they do, but trans is who they are.

Don't know much about drag queens? The history of drag is long, storied, and important to know. Sashay your way to this book's "A Drag Primer: Know Your *Herstory*," and you'll learn about drag queens' historic role in the fight for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) rights, detailed explanations of the various styles of drag, and examples of drag in modern pop culture. Know your drag *herstory*!

And, finally, a word on gender pronoun usage in this book. In the drag world, when we are referring to a male drag queen dressed in drag, we use the pronoun "she." When we are referring to the same male person out of drag, we use the pronoun "he."

Would you like to have a powerful, confident inner drag queen that you can access any time you feel insecure? Can you imagine the power that can reside inside you as a fierce alter ego? Are you ready to create your own drag persona that will empower you to face the challenges in your life? Do you want to see how both drag queens and everyday people of all ages have used their alter egos to change their lives for the better? Then get ready to take the first step into the Queendom! Follow us for a road map of how to craft your own fabulous, fierce persona!