













## RAYMOND WEIL

GENEVE









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## EDITOR'S LETTER

Just do think presence was something you were either born with or not—an elusive quality reserved for those who just *had it*. The kind of people who could walk into a room and immediately belong to it, effortlessly drawing attention without asking for it.

But the truth is, presence isn't about being the loudest or the most polished. It's not about perfectly measured words or a striking wardrobe (though those don't hurt). It's about how you show up. Not just in rooms, but in conversations, in the way you carry yourself, in the way you make others feel.

This issue is a masterclass in presence, told through individuals who embody it in different ways. Carmen Edelson shows us that presence extends beyond borders, shaping the way we move through the world as travelers. Lady Blue captivates on social media, not with noise but with elegance and restraint. Richie Frieman proves that etiquette is less about rules and more about awareness—of yourself, of others, of the moment.

We also step into the world of Alison Cheperdak, whose confidence proves that etiquette is less about formalities and more about an instinctive grace that shapes how we navigate life. Her story is a testament to the fact that presence isn't about being the center of attention, but about the depth of your influence.

Presence isn't a trait; it's a choice. And in a world of distractions, choosing to be intentional—to listen deeply, to engage fully, to carry oneself with confidence—is the most timeless skill of all.

As you turn these pages, I hope you're reminded that the way you show up—in your work, your relationships, and the smallest moments—matters. In a time when distractions are endless, the simple act of showing up with intention, grace, and kindness is more powerful than you think.

Warmly,







# The Watch Collectors Are Talking About

A masterpiece of Swiss craftsmanship, designed for those who appreciate time in its finest form.

by AMANDA MILLER















MILLESIME AUTOMATIC MOON PHASE MIDNIGHT BLUE DIAL WATCH, 39.5MM MIDNIGHT BLUE SECTOR DIAL, MOON PHASE, STAINLESS STEEL, ROSE GOLD PVD, NAVY BLUE LEATHER STRAP, INDEXES There comes a moment when you realize you've outgrown certain things. Flashy status symbols, oversized logos, watches designed more for recognition than refinement. When that moment arrives, the search for something greater begins—something understated yet masterful, something that speaks in craftsmanship rather than marketing slogans.

The RAYMOND WEIL Millésime Collection is for those who have arrived at that point. Inspired by the golden era of Swiss watchmaking, this collection is a study in elegance—timeless, precise, and effortlessly sophisticated. It isn't about chasing trends; it's about owning a piece of heritage that will remain relevant for decades to come.

A watch does more than tell time—it tells the world something about you. The choices you make, the values you hold, the way you carry yourself. Some watches are designed to impress others. This one is designed to reflect the quiet confidence of those who don't need to be impressed.

There's a reason serious collectors never part with certain timepieces. It's not just about rarity or mechanics—it's about the moments a watch carries with it. The deals closed, the journeys taken, the milestones reached. Over time, a great watch becomes more than something you wear; it becomes part of who you are.

The Millésime Collection was crafted with this philosophy in mind. It isn't a watch you buy on impulse. It's a watch you choose knowing that years from now, it will still hold meaning. Because some things aren't just possessions—they are stories waiting to be told.

Most watches today are made for the masses—designed to be trendy for a moment, before being replaced by the next big thing. The Millésime takes the opposite approach. It's the details that define its character. The 39.5mm stainless steel case is perfectly balanced—substantial, but never excessive. The dial, available in deep blue, silver, and champagne, is a study in sophistication. The railway minute track and slim faceted indices evoke the refinement of mid-century timepieces, watches made when craftsmanship mattered more than marketing.

Yet, what sets this collection apart







isn't just how it looks—but how it feels. The way the light catches the polished steel. The familiarity of a well-fitted leather strap molding to your wrist over time. The unmistakable smoothness of the Swiss RW4200 automatic movement, a mechanical heartbeat ticking with precision beneath the sapphire crystal. These aren't just features. They are the soul of the watch.

A fine timepiece isn't something you buy on a whim—it's something you choose with intention. The Millésime is for those who appreciate restraint over excess, heritage over hype. For those who understand that the right watch doesn't follow trends; it sets its own rhythm.

Collectors will see in it a bridge between past and present—a tribute to an era when watches weren't just worn, they were passed down. For those acquiring their first serious timepiece, it offers something rare in today's world: permanence.

Because when you invest in something of real value, it never goes out of style.

# DRESS FOR THE LIFE YOU WANT

by **DONNA DEROSA** 



ou've probably heard the expression that you should dress for the job you want. Well, I say dress for the life you want.

When curating your elegant wardrobe, start by doing some soul searching to find the woman you want to be. How does she dress? How does she accessorize her clothes? How does she feel in her clothes? What does she wear when she is home alone and no one is there to see her? What does she wear to work, on a date, or at brunch with the girls? You should be able to visualize the answers to these questions. And how do you get there? You become that elegant woman by showing up as that woman now.

There is not only one way to dress elegantly. Your style choices are your own. Dress to suit the lifestyle you want. Whatever style you adopt, the most important thing is that you dress to please yourself. Only you know what feels comfortable on your body and what styles and colors illustrate who you are as a woman.

Buy clothes that you love so you'll take care of them and feel good when wearing them. Keep your clothing clean and wellpressed.

Choose quality pieces that will last a lifetime. I love to invest in high-quality jackets and blazers. You can elevate any outfit from casual to business to formal by just slipping on the right jacket.

Quality doesn't have to mean expensive and designer. There are plenty of good quality clothes on the market, but you have to know where to look. You're not going to find them at Target. You may get lucky at a department store like Macy's or Nordstrom. Seek out boutiques in your area. Or try vintage shops for beautiful, unique pieces that have already survived the test of time.

Have your clothes tailored to fit you. The sleeves should hit at just the right place on your arm. The waist should not be too tight or baggy. Clothes that are fitted to your shape will look more elegant and expensive. Don't hide behind baggy tops and bulky coats. Dare to be seen.



Don't wait until you lose weight to start investing in your wardrobe. Wear good quality clothing now. If you lose weight, you can always take the clothes to the tailor and have them altered for the new you. Or you can sell them and invest in new pieces. If they are good quality, you should be able to resell them if needed.

Wear clothes that show off your best assets. I've always had a tiny waist, and I like to show that off with fitted jackets or dresses with belts. Maybe you like your legs, arms, or neck. Choose pieces that highlight your favorite parts.

Accessories can change the mood of an outfit. Think of a basic black dress and how differently you would feel wearing a rope of pearls, as opposed to a colorful scarf, or a bold baroque cross necklace. These

accessories evoke very different feelings for different occasions.

Look for inspiration everywhere. I take inspiration from old Hollywood movies, fashion magazines, history books, paintings, my mother, and other women I admire.

Have fun with it. This is your life. Celebrate it in style. Tie a colorful scarf to your handbag. Wear bold sunglasses. Try a pair of chandelier earrings or a playful brooch. Express yourself through design.

Curate your elegant wardrobe to suit the woman you want to be, and start living like her right now.

"Curate your elegant wardrobe to suit the woman you want to be, and start living like her right now."





From the White House to the beauty industry, HOPE HARVARD is redefining influence—one shade at a time.

by **MARIA FERNANDA** 



# "Metaphorically speaking, we walk into every room with our hands outstretched. We can approach this in two ways: to serve or to be served."

her life to unfold the way it did, but perhaps that was the point. Some paths are walked by sight; others, by faith. Hers was the latter.

With no political connections or insider advantage, she applied for a White House internship—one of the most competitive placements—with nothing but conviction. The odds weren't in her favor. Weeks later, the response came: waitlisted.

Then, just fifteen days before the program began, her phone rang. A Washington, D.C., area code. The White House Communications Office had a spot for her.

For two and a half years, she worked at the center of political power, where words were measured, narratives shaped, and history made. But beyond the podiums and press briefings, what truly shaped her was something else entirely.

It was the stillness—the moments spent outside the noise—where she found herself drawn not to policy, but to Scripture. The women of the Bible captivated her. Their stories weren't just ancient history; they were portraits of strength, resilience, and identity. Then, as seasons often do, hers changed. The career she had worked toward disappeared, leaving behind an unfamiliar but expectant silence. In that space, she prayed—not for another position, but for clarity.

The answer came swiftly. *A makeup line*.

Not one built on trends or reinvention, but something more meaningful. A brand inspired by the very women who had inspired her. "God had combined my passions—femininity and encouraging others—into a clear vision, and I couldn't be more thankful," she reflects.

For decades, the beauty industry has defined its own standards—ones that often feel just out of reach. Airbrushed images and ever-changing trends have shaped perception, making beauty feel like something to attain rather than something innate.

Hope saw an opportunity to reframe the conversation. Beauty, she believed, was never meant to be about perfection. It was about refinement, confidence, and embracing what was already there.

Hope Beauty was created with that philosophy in mind. Each product tells a



story—not just of color and texture, but of meaning. Mary, a clear gloss, symbolizes purity. Rahab, a bold red, draws from the scarlet cord she let down from Jericho's walls—a mark of faith and redemption. Beyond aesthetics, Hope believes confidence is about blessing others.

"Metaphorically speaking, we walk into every room with our hands outstretched. We can approach this in two ways: to serve or to be served," she explains.

From affirmations etched into every Radiant Stick to shades designed to enhance rather than alter, the brand exists to remind women of what they already possess.

Hope's influence extends beyond her brand—it's reflected in the way she lives. Just as her brand is built on faith, her life is a testament to her commitment to Jesus.

Mornings begin in stillness, much like they did during her time in the White House—before the movement, before the noise. A moka pot gently bubbles on the stove, filling the air with the rich aroma of espresso. Wrapped in a pink robe—her

emotional support robe, as she calls it—she eases into the morning with Scripture and quiet reflection.

It was in these moments of stillness that Hope Beauty was born. And it is in these moments that the future continues to unfold. "Don't accept temporary defeat as final, but keep pressing forward in prayer," she encourages.

Hope Beauty is part of a larger movement—one that redefines not just how women see themselves, but how they understand beauty itself. And this is only the beginning.

She is writing a book, one she plans to complete in 2025. The details of the journey ahead are still unfolding, but one thing is certain: she will move forward as she always has—not chasing opportunities, but walking in purpose. And with the unwavering confidence of someone who knows exactly why she's here.



## ON THE SPOT

### ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND?

Hope Beauty Lip Reflect shade Mary (a clear lip oil), my Bible, and a candle always!

### BEAUTY PRODUCT ALWAYS IN YOUR BAG?

An eyelash curler and Hope Beauty Lip Reflect shade Rebekah

## BOLD EYES OR BOLD LIPS?

Bold lips, always! I love how confident I feel with red lips!

## DREAM TRAVEL DESTINATION?

Lake Como, Italy

## FAVORITE QUOTE?

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

- Hebrews 11:1

## REFINERI: FORGED IN FIRE, DEFINED BY FAITH

Marissa Cano transforms faith into timeless design.

by ANNA BLAKE photography MARINE BARIAN PHOTO

must endure fire. The process is both brutal and delicate. The metal is placed into a crucible, where temperatures soar past 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, liquefying the solid form into molten gold. As the fire rages, impurities rise to the surface—blackened dross separating from what is pure. The refiner carefully skims away what does not belong, knowing that every moment in the flame is necessary. Only through fire does the gold reveal its truest form—gleaming, radiant, and refined.

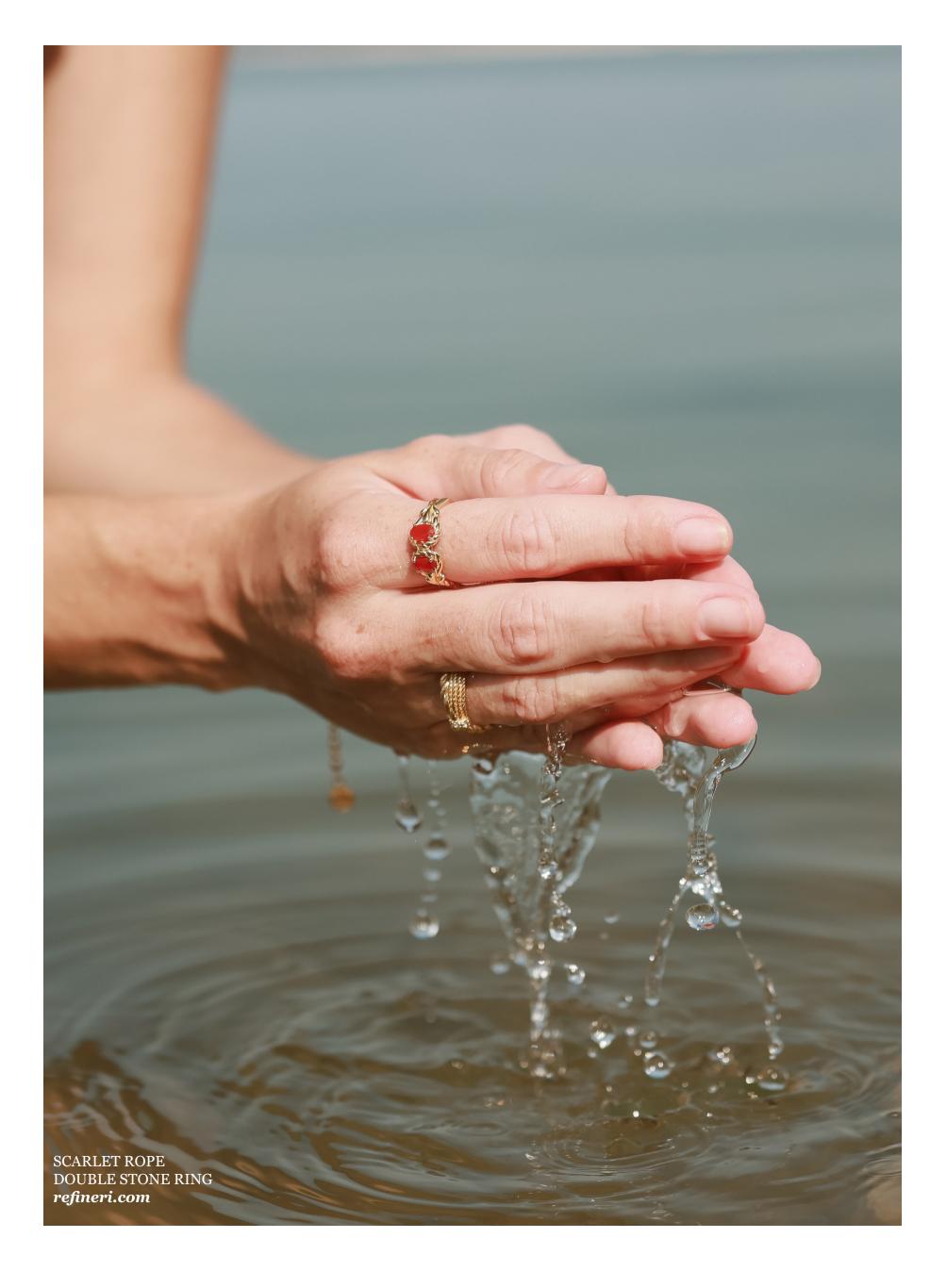
This process, as ancient as civilization itself, is what first inspired Marissa Cano to name her brand Refineri—not only for the jewelry she designs but for the deeper spiritual truth it represents.

"The name Refineri was inspired by the process of gold being refined," she explains.

She was drawn to 1 Peter 1:7, which speaks of faith being tested by fire so that it may result in praise, glory, and honor when Christ is revealed. That imagery became the foundation of her work. "That's what I want every piece of jewelry to represent—a reminder that you are being refined, that God is at work in you, and that He is making something beautiful out of your life."

For Marissa, designing isn't just a step in the business—it's an extension of that belief. It didn't start with a single piece. It began with a curiosity—an eagerness to uncover what Scripture said about gold, one that felt both ancient and deeply personal. While searching, she found the first mention of gold in Genesis 2:11: "The gold of that land is good." The words held weight. Here, in the earliest days of creation, gold was not just a material—it was declared good, intentional, part of God's perfect design.







That verse became the foundation for Beresheet, her first collection, named after the Hebrew word for "in the beginning." Rather than designing a single piece, she envisioned an entire collection that reflected the purity and purpose woven into creation itself. Onyx and pearl, mentioned alongside gold in Genesis, became its defining elements—one dark, one luminous, both rich in meaning. To Marissa, Beresheet wasn't just jewelry; it was the first step in a greater calling, a brand that would carry faith and intention into every design.

That first collection, like a firstborn, holds a special place in her heart. But Refineri didn't stop there. The Tikvah Collection followed, inspired by Rahab and the scarlet cord—a bold symbol of hope and redemption. Now, this spring, she is launching something long envisioned: Refineri's first cross necklace. A timeless expression of faith, crafted with the same

care and purpose that have shaped every collection before it.

"I've been learning to balance feeling put-together with embracing comfort"

Mornings at

Refineri begin in stillness. Before the rush of emails and design work, Marissa carves out time for prayer—a quiet foundation before stepping into the rhythm of business and motherhood. As the house stirs, breakfast becomes a cherished ritual with her family. Then, as her son naps, she shifts gears.

"The nap-time hustle is real! I've learned to work in focused pockets of time,

being intentional with every moment," she shares. Some days are spent sketching new designs, others in marketing, content creation, or carefully packaging each order. No two days look the same, but the structure remains: purposeful and full of intention.

Some moments bring productivity, others simply the act of showing up—for her husband, her baby, and the brand she's building with both hands and heart. The balance isn't perfect, but it's hers, and she wouldn't trade it for anything.

Her personal style mirrors the essence of the jewelry she designs—timeless, classic, and intentional. "I'm naturally drawn to neutrals, clean lines, and choosing quality over trends," she says. There's a deliberate simplicity in the way she curates her wardrobe, a balance between elegance and ease that feels both sophisticated and effortless.

Since becoming a mom and navigating

the shifts of postpartum life, her approach to fashion has taken on new meaning.

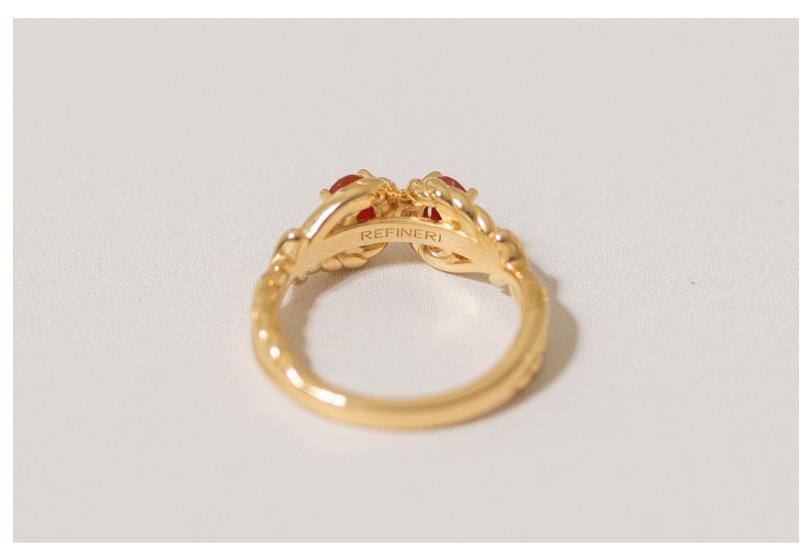
"I've been learning to balance feeling puttogether with embracing comfort," she says, reflecting on the demands of motherhood. She finds herself reaching for versatile pieces—clothing that supports her daily rhythm while still allowing her to feel confident.

Yet, there's one constant in her wardrobe: "No matter what—whether I'm

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out and about or just at home—I always finish off my outfit with a great pair of earrings!" It's that final touch, a subtle but powerful

accessory, that makes her feel polished—even ordinary days.

### "No matter what—whether I'm the most always finish off my outfit with a great pair of earrings!"

Much like

her jewelry, Marissa's approach to style is about more than appearances. It's about embracing what is timeless and resisting the pressure to constantly reinvent herself for the sake of keeping up. True style, like true faith, isn't dictated by passing trends it's built on something deeper.

The world doesn't just sell fashion—it sells identity. It whispers that beauty is a currency, that confidence is measured in designer labels, that worth is something to be worn rather than something inherent. From social media feeds to advertising campaigns, the message is clear: if you want to be loved, desired, or admired, you have to look the part.

But what happens when the trends shift? When the standard of beauty moves again, just out of reach? Women are left chasing an ever-changing ideal, spending their time, money, and self-worth trying to mold themselves into something new something "better." It's an exhausting, never-ending pursuit.

Refineri stands in defiance of this

cycle. "In a world that constantly tells us to find our worth in what we wear or how we look, Refineri reminds women that

> their true beauty and identity are found in Christ." The jewelry isn't just about aesthetics—it's

about truth. A verse wrapped around the wrist, a cross resting against the heart reminders that identity isn't dictated by trends but by the unchanging love of God.

Each Refineri piece is created with intention, where every detail-from the weight of a pendant to the way gold catches the light—is thoughtfully designed. More than an accessory, it becomes a daily reminder of faith, carrying both artistry and meaning. Just as gold is purified with precision, each design is shaped with the same care, ensuring it embodies both elegance and the depth of the story it holds.

This isn't just jewelry; it's armor against a culture that profits from insecurity. It's a statement that beauty isn't something to be earned, chased, or proven. It already exists, placed within each woman by the Creator Himself.

And that truth is worth more than gold.







## HOW TO MONOCHROME

Three Tricks for a Visually Interesting Outfit

by JAMIE-LEE BURNS

ONOCHROMATIC or tonal looks might just be my favorite. It's the styling tool that I utilize most and every outfit saturated with color or muted and calm – feels right within my wheelhouse. The trick though, is how to make a monochromatic outfit feel interesting. Stop it from falling flat. Through all my years experimenting with monochrome dressing, I've found that there are three

key styling pillars that add in that visual element of dimension; shape, texture, and color. You may even find that your outfit includes all three, but usually, the ones that feel good will have at least one of these core themes.



#### **TEXTURE**

The second theme is texture. A tactile quality to the clothing. Something that distinguishes between the partitions of our outfit. That draws the eye in, in search of a missed detail.

Think soft, fuzzy, shiny, glossy, smooth, puckered, silky. A good mix helps to define the outfit, while also adding layers of nuance. You can see it present in this outfit here. The cashmere knit has a plush quality, whereas the skirt is in an ornate Jacquard with so much depth alone. My bag is a pebbled leather, with a slight shine, and the shoes are a mix of fuzzy wool flannel, and soft suede.









#### **COLOR**

Final theme; color. And there's a handful of ways that this can play out in an outfit. Namely, the balance between warm and cool. For harmony, you'll want to pick one or the other (though neutrals that straddle that middle ground tend to work too). It could be how you incorporate prints – drawing in on commonalities of the colors present in the print for your outfit.

Maybe it's how you play with brights; opting for varying degrees of color intensity within your outfit (think shades of blue, or red). Or maybe it's how you add in color against a neutral base through accessories (think bags, shoes, earrings and even makeup).

You can see how I've chosen to use color here in this final look; all pieces sit on the neutral to cool end of the spectrum, from clothing items to accessories.











## "Elegance, when lived with intention, never fades."

ome men follow trends. Others define an era. Cary Grant did neither—he set the standard.

He wasn't just an actor; he was an education in effortless sophistication. Hollywood has seen many leading men, but few possessed Grant's particular brand of magnetism. He had a rare duality—refined yet approachable, polished but never stiff. His charm was understated, his style impeccable, his presence undeniable. He never sought attention; he simply made it impossible to look elsewhere.

Sixty years on, Cary Grant remains the benchmark. His influence endures not because of what he wore, but because of what he understood: elegance isn't an outfit—it's a state of being.

On screen, his presence was built on restraint, balance, and precision. Whether in the razor-sharp tailoring of *North by Northwest*, the devil-may-care refinement of *To Catch a Thief*, or the quicksilver wit of *His Girl Friday*, he carried himself with an ease that made every scene feel like a masterclass in poise.

His suits—always immaculate, never excessive—were less worn than inhabited. Navy, grey, crisp white shirts, polished black shoes. No flashy patterns, no unnecessary embellishments. A wardrobe so meticulously unremarkable it became unforgettable.

And yet, his style was only the introduction. Grant knew how to occupy a space without demanding it. He

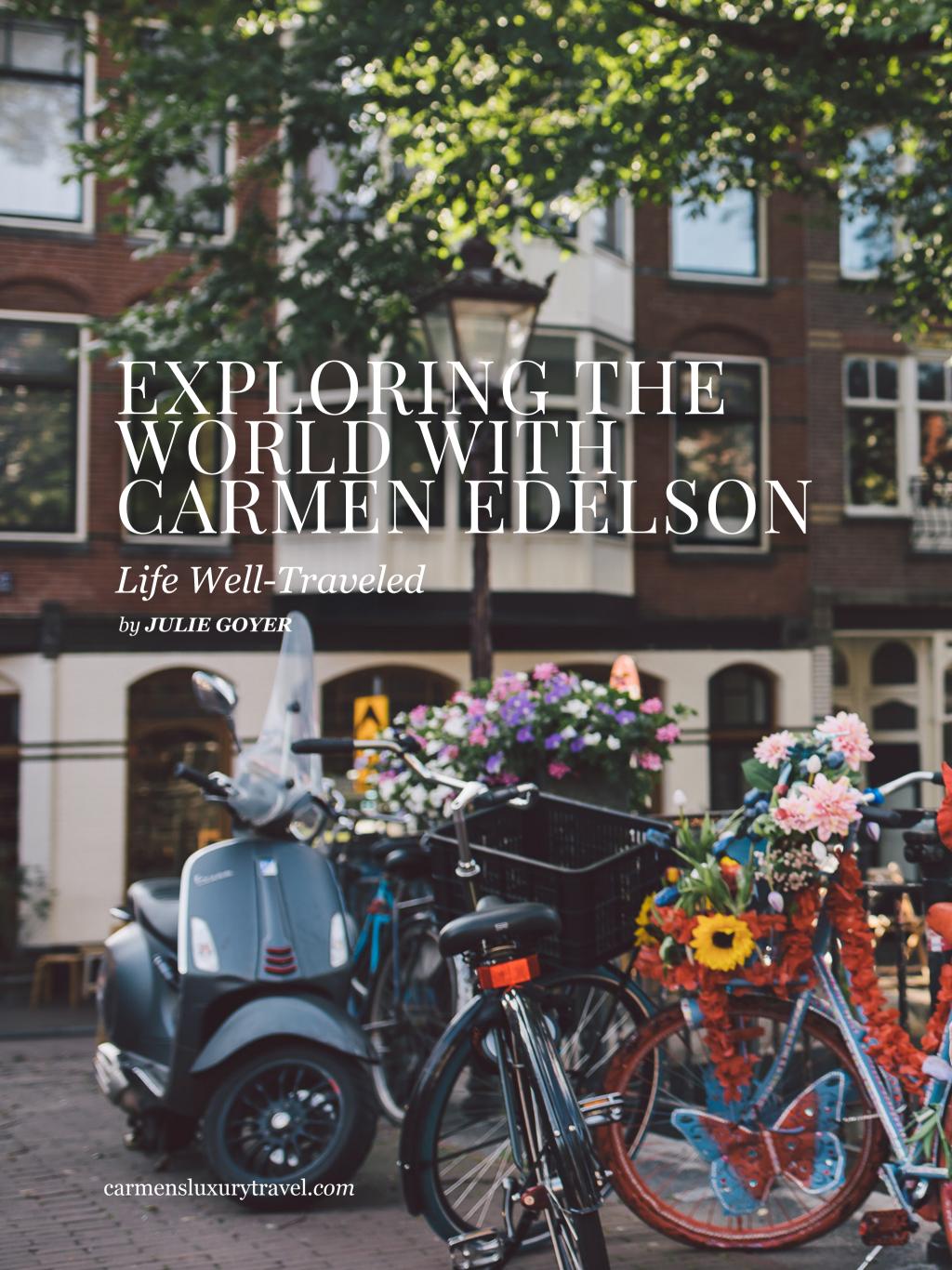
moved deliberately, never fidgeted, never scrambled to fill silence. Even at his most frenetic in *Bringing Up Baby* or *The Philadelphia Story*, there was a rhythm to his presence—a smoothness that made the chaos look composed.

The secret? Control. Grant never needed to raise his voice or posture for dominance—he simply was. His charm wasn't a performance; it was a skill. He understood people, not as a means to an end, but as something worth understanding. His charisma wasn't about self-promotion—it was about awareness: when to listen, when to speak, and how to do both with intent. His speech was deliberate, every word measured, never wasted. The transatlantic accent—part Bristol, part invention—wasn't an affectation, but a refinement. Nothing about Cary Grant was accidental.

Because, of course, Cary Grant wasn't born. He was built. Archibald Leach, the working-class boy from Bristol, assembled himself with surgical precision—the voice, the posture, the wardrobe. And yet, the key to effortlessness is never letting anyone see the work.

That's what made him different. That's why it still works.

The world moves on, fashions fade, but Cary Grant remains. Not just in film, but in the way a man straightens his cuff, holds a gaze, or walks into a room with quiet certainty. Elegance, when lived with intention, never fades. It merely waits for those who recognize its weight.





# "Embrace slow travel and prioritize meaningful experiences."

here is an old saying that travel leaves you speechless before turning you into a storyteller. For Carmen Edelson, the love of exploration was not something inherited but something discovered. The daughter of Cuban immigrants, she was raised in New Jersey, where the idea of venturing beyond familiar streets felt distant. It wasn't until her early thirties that the world truly opened up to her—first, with a last-minute trip to Spain. What began as a simple family visit became something far greater, igniting a passion that would shape the course of her life.

From that moment on, travel was no longer an occasional indulgence but a pursuit. She began planning, saving, and, most importantly, immersing herself in every destination. Over a decade ago, she started sharing her experiences online, a quiet passion project that evolved into Carmen's Luxury Travel—a space where storytelling meets the art of traveling well.

Some places leave an imprint long after the return flight has landed. Bali is one of them. The island's lush landscapes and storied temples are often spoken of in the same breath as its luxury retreats, but for Carmen, it was the warmth of the people that defined the experience. She recalls evenings in Ubud, where the scent of frangipani hung in the air and hospitality was as effortless as the scenery was breathtaking. The suite at the Viceroy Bali, with its private pool, was a study in indulgence, but it was the island's subtler moments—the sound of the jungle at dawn, the way time seemed to stretch in the golden afternoon light—that left the deepest impression.

Luxury, in her view, is as much about presence as it is





about privilege. The finest hotels and firstclass cabins are a comfort, but the essence of travel lies in the experiences that unfold beyond them. A city is best explored on foot, its culture best understood through its cuisine. The most exquisite meals are not always plated under the soft glow of Michelin stars but are often found in small, locally revered establishments where the menu is handwritten and the recommendations come not from a guidebook, but from the people who know it best.

Her eye for detail extends to the finer points of hospitality, those often-overlooked gestures that elevate a stay from pleasant to unforgettable. A well-appointed hotel is one

thing; an intuitive one is another. She speaks of the luxury of a well-curated pillow menu-an indulgence not in excess, but in

consideration. It is, after all, these small comforts that mark the difference between a place that is merely visited and one that is truly experienced.

explore them deeply."

Not every destination is effortless. Some test the traveler, demanding a level of awareness that is unfamiliar yet undeniably enriching. The Middle East was one such experience. In cities where tradition and modernity exist in delicate balance, she found herself more conscious of her presence, aware of the unspoken codes that shape daily life. It was a place that required observation before immersion,

patience before understanding. There is a particular kind of refinement in navigating an unfamiliar culture with grace, in learning when to move with the rhythm of a place rather than against it. Travel, at its best, does not just offer new landscapes—it sharpens perception.

With the world at her fingertips, there are still places that call to her. Japan is one of them-a country where ancient traditions and modern innovation exist in seamless harmony. It is the kind of place that rewards the traveler who lingers.

And lingering, she believes, is the key. The greatest luxury is time—not in abundance, but in how it is spent.

> "Embrace meaningful

slow "Instead of cramming multiple destinations into travel and prioritize a short trip, focus on fewer experiences," she places and take the time to says. "Instead of cramming multiple destinations into a

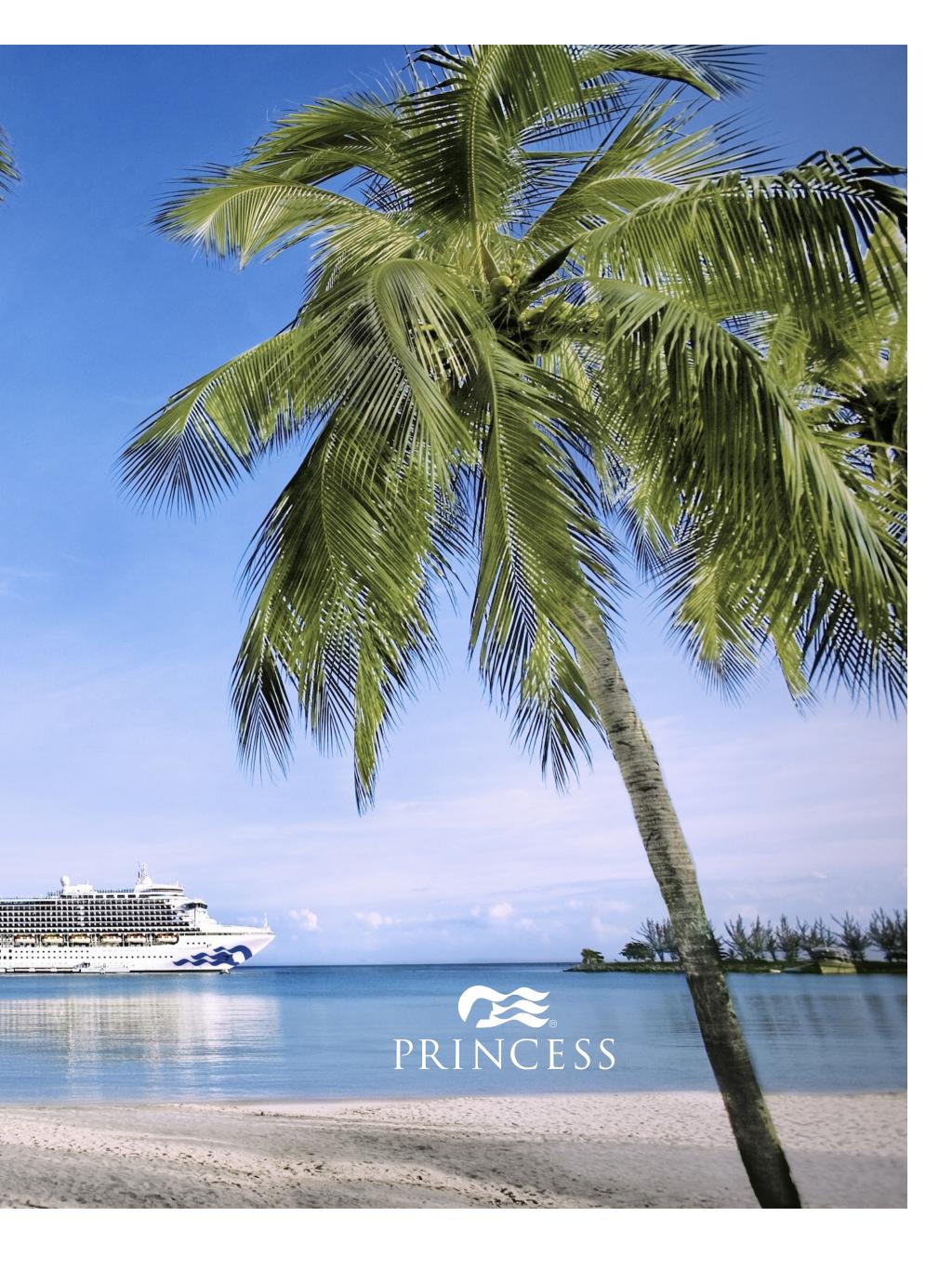
> short trip, focus on fewer places and take the time to explore them deeply." A single, well-chosen location will always reveal more than a hurried itinerary ever could.

> Luxury, after all, is not a race. It is found in the stillness of a Venetian morning, in an unhurried meal shared with new friends, in the understanding that the best moments are not planned, but discovered. For Carmen, the greatest indulgence is not simply in seeing the world—it is in savoring it.

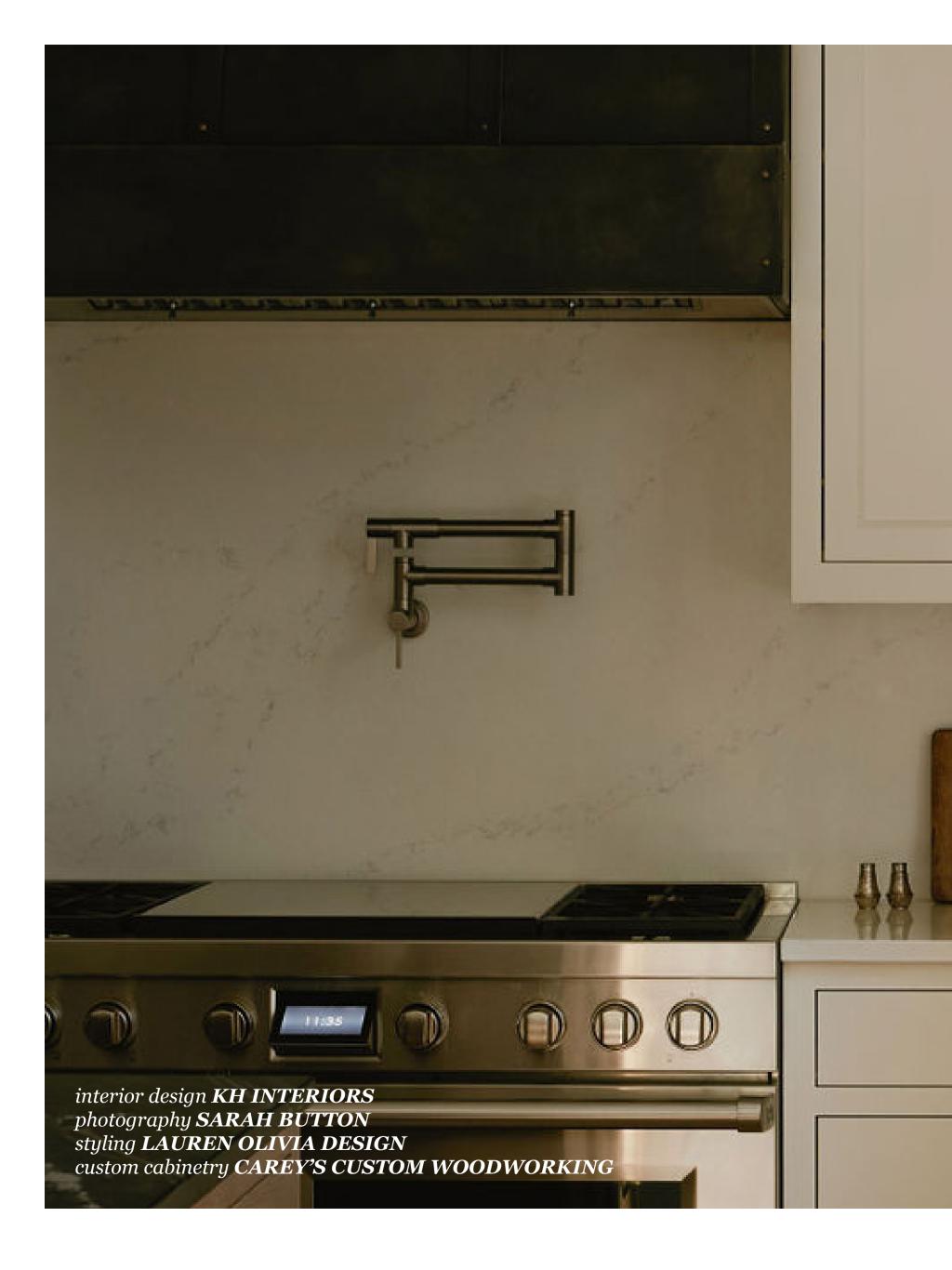
















## "Forget trends and fill your home with things that make you happy."

Some careers are chosen with intent; others unfold in ways no one expects. For Kristin Hildebrand, founder of KH Interiors, design wasn't the path she envisioned from the start. Her world, for over a decade, revolved around courts and competition—playing professional volleyball, representing Team USA, and living across continents. It was a life of movement, precision, and discipline. Yet, amid the adrenaline of the game, something quieter stirred.

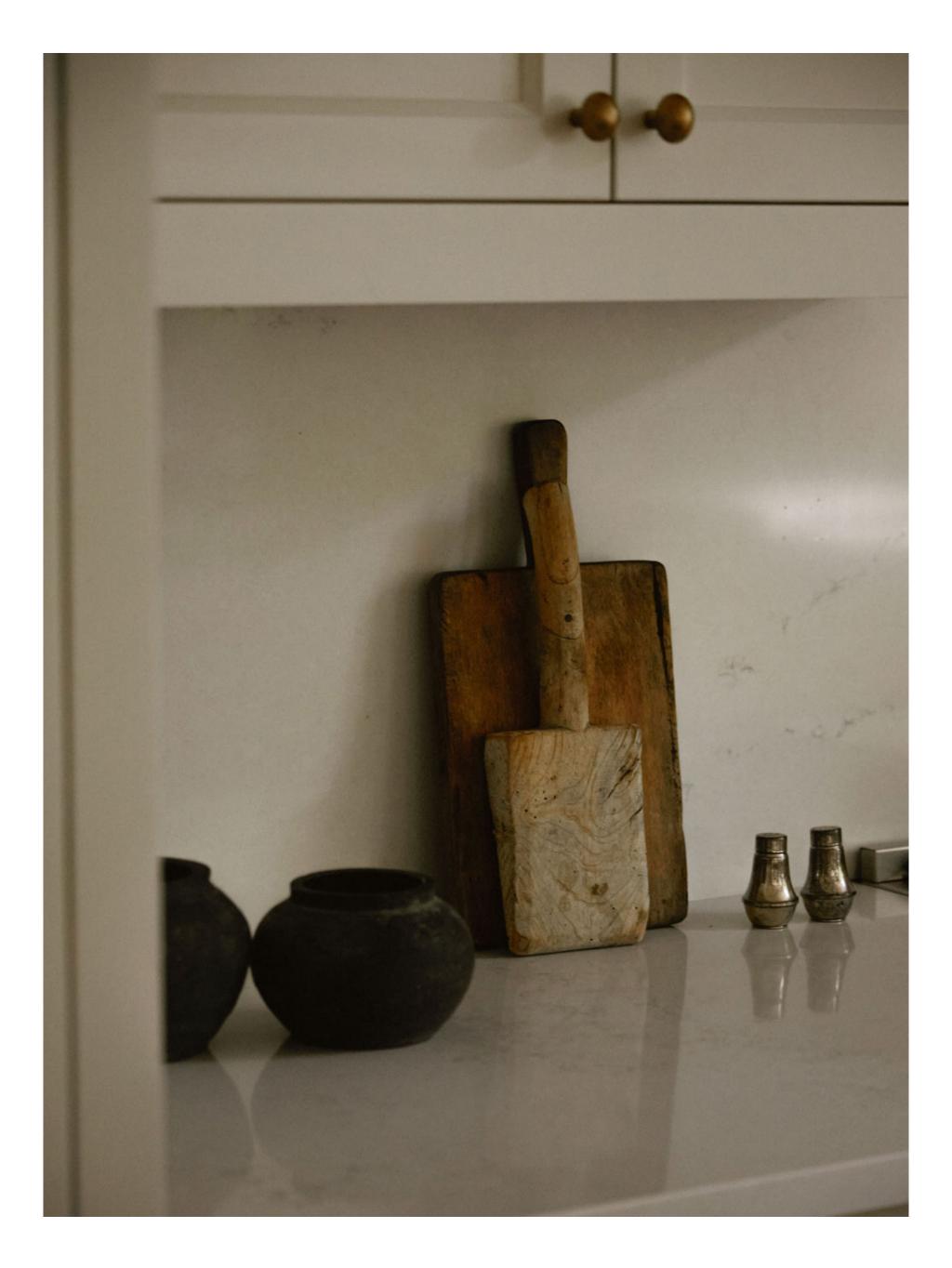
Each new country brought more than a change in scenery; it offered a new rhythm, a new way of living. While her teammates focused on the next match, she found herself drawn to the details many overlooked—the gentle curve of an archway, the softened patina of timeworn walls, the effortless grandeur of spaces that whispered of history and craftsmanship. The fascination grew, unspoken and patient, until a single project turned curiosity into calling.

"When me and my husband decided to renovate our first home, I loved it," she recalls. "And concurrently, my USA teammates started to hire me to do their homes, which I really enjoyed. When I retired from my professional volleyball career to start a family, I finally decided to dive into interior design full-time."

And so, in 2019, KH Interiors was born—not from a high-rise office, but at her kitchen table, sketching designs and convincing clients to take a chance on her. The shift from professional athlete to interior designer was, in many ways, just another test of endurance—one where patience and persistence mattered as much as talent. Today, her firm operates out of a dedicated studio in Orange County, designing bespoke homes across the country, each infused with the depth and character that set her work apart.

Design, to Kristin, is more than aesthetics. A home should have presence, history—something that lingers long after a guest leaves. "All of my time living abroad and the European architecture I was able to absorb inspires me daily." That appreciation for timelessness is reflected in her designs, where vintage elements play a key role in adding depth and personality. "I love it, collect it, and use it in all of our projects. It gives a space soul and a sense of nostalgia."

Her projects, whether a sun-drenched Southern California home or an elegant renovation in Lake Oswego, carry that same thread: an effortless blend of past and present, where nothing feels forced,









yet everything feels intentional.

She doesn't look to trends for inspiration. Pinterest is a useful tool, but her best ideas come in quieter moments—away from screens, on long walks where her mind is free to wander. "When I'm outside on walks is when my mind is the clearest and I get some of my best ideas." Some elements fall into place instantly; others take time, revealing themselves gradually, like a story unfolding. But no matter how strong the vision, patience is required.

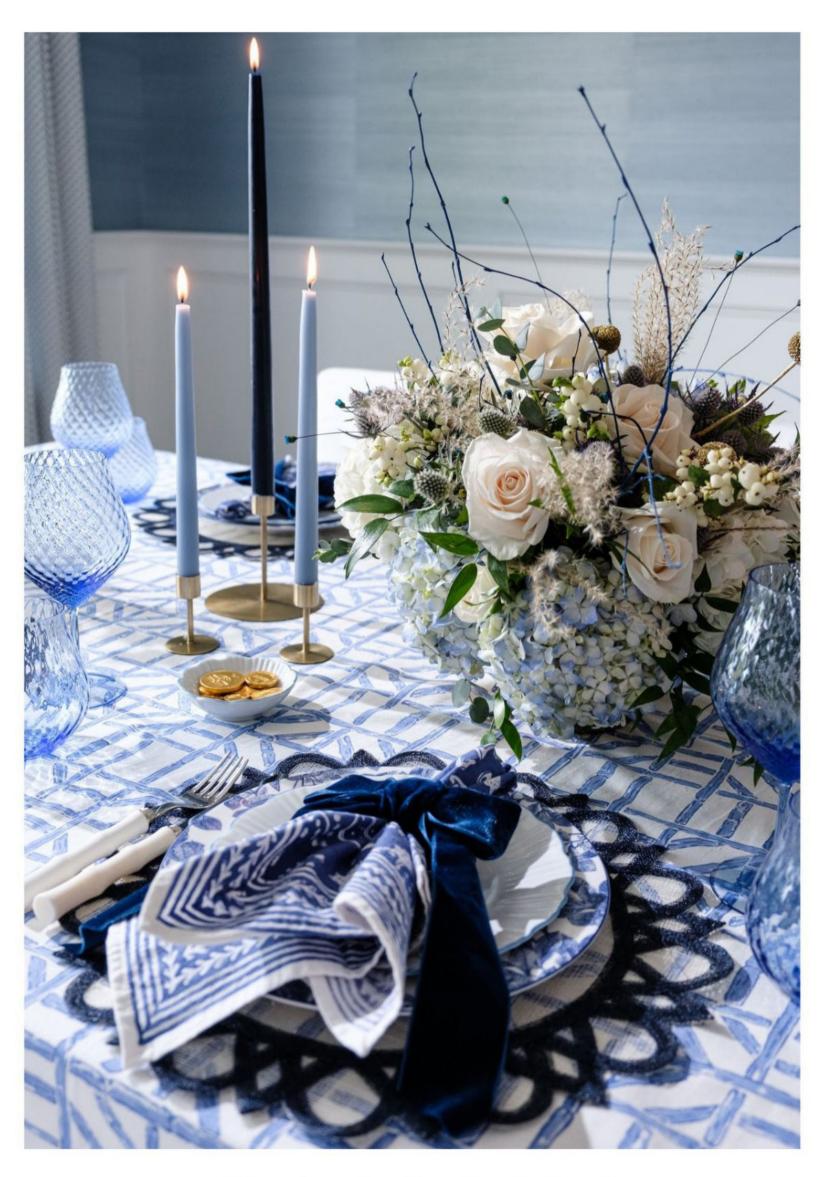
Yet the waiting is only part of the challenge. Bringing a vision to life isn't just about creative direction—it's about coordination. The process of turning an idea into a finished space depends on countless moving parts, from material deliveries to skilled craftsmanship, all

working in harmony. Delays happen. Adjustments are inevitable. But Kristin understands that great design, like great architecture, isn't rushed. And when the final details fall into place, when a house transforms into a home, the wait is always worth it.

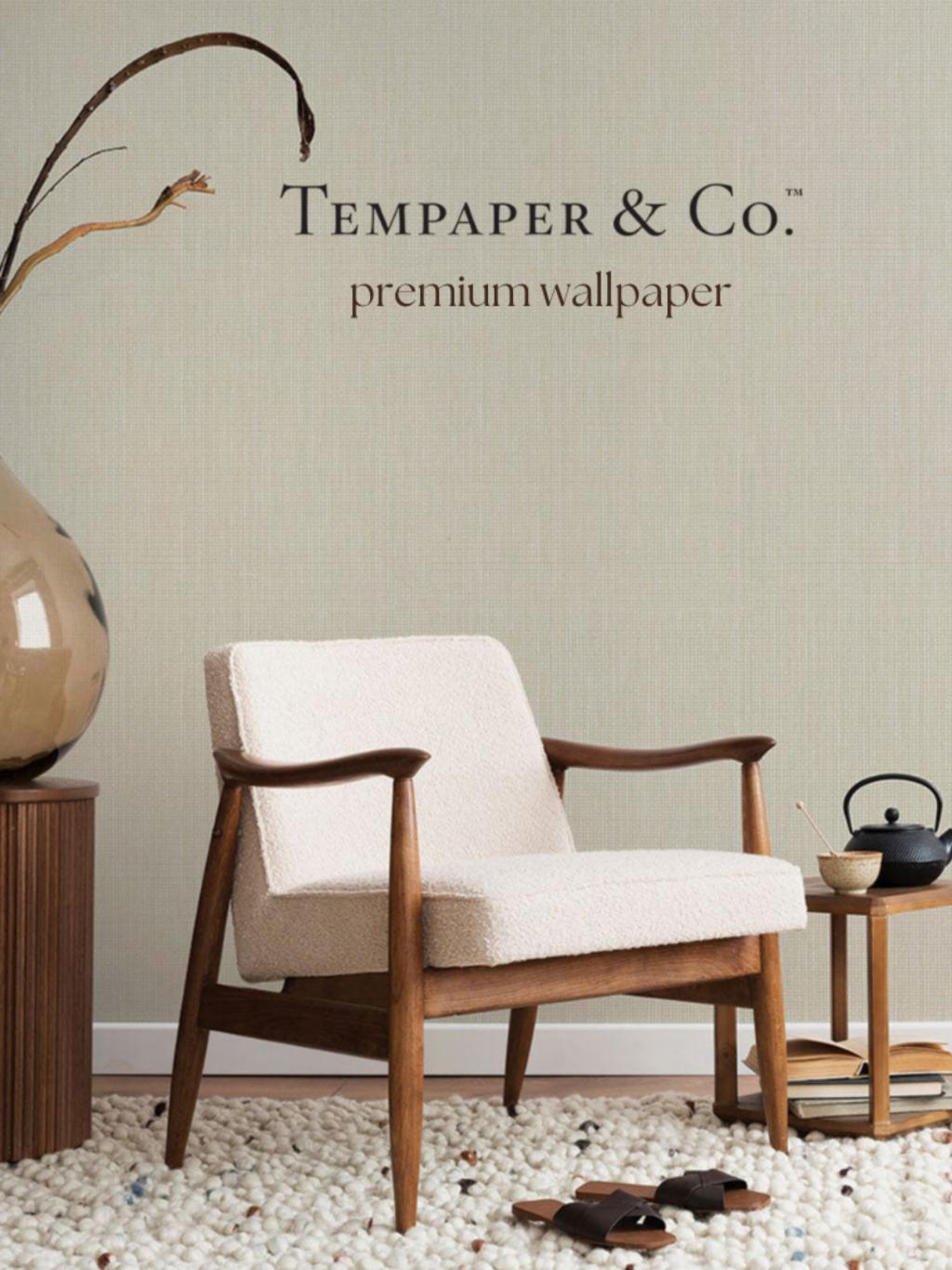
It isn't trends that make a home feel right. It isn't what's fleeting or what feels relevant one season and uninspired the next. The only real rule is to surround yourself with what makes you happy. "Forget trends and fill your home with things that make you happy."

For Kristin Hildebrand, design is about creating something timeless. And the best homes? They don't just look beautiful. They feel like they've always existed.





C A I L I N I



# THE ETIQUETE ETICE Alison M. Cheperdak, J.D., on Confidence, Presence, and Lasting Impact

by SAMANTHA ROMANO

strong presence speaks before words ever do, and Alison Cheperdak has spent a lifetime refining it. She's walked the corridors of law, stood under the bright lights of television, and now, she's shaping the future of modern etiquette.

Etiquette, at its core, is the art of discernment—knowing what to do and when. It's the ability to read a room, catch the weight of an unspoken pause, and make an entrance that feels effortless rather than orchestrated.

The world is moving at increasing speed, growing more informal by the day, but Alison makes a compelling case for why poise and polish matter now more than ever.

Navigating high-pressure environments—whether live on television, in the courtroom, or in professional negotiations—taught Alison that composure is everything. "Whether it was learning how to think on my feet while reporting live on television, crafting persuasive arguments as an attorney, or strategically navigating

professional opportunities, I've learned that kindness and confidence are the ultimate assets," she reflects.

Living in Washington, D.C., a city where relationships and reputation are paramount, she saw firsthand how etiquette plays a role in building trust. In high-stakes environments, knowing how to handle success and setbacks with grace can make all the difference. Disagreements are inevitable, but as she points out, the ability to disagree without being disagreeable is essential for maintaining strong connections.

With success often resting on first impressions, Alison empowers others to master the subtle yet significant art of social intelligence. Her approach extends beyond convention—it's about reading the room, adapting with finesse, and making an impact, often without saying a single word.

She believes first impressions are shaped by the smallest details—things most people overlook but that never go unnoticed.







communicates volumes

before we even say a word"

While many focus solely on attire, Alison emphasizes that everything visible about a person contributes to their overall image. A polished outfit loses its effect if paired with a disorganized handbag, a wornout notebook, or a phone lock screen that feels unprofessional. Thoughtful details reinforce credibility, while careless ones

can unintentionally undermine it.

It's no surprise that etiquette and style go hand in hand. "The way we

dress and carry ourselves communicates volumes before we even say a word," Alison notes. Dressing thoughtfully demonstrates respect for the occasion and those around us, while posture and intentional movement signal confidence. But style isn't just about polish; it's a form of self-expression that demands situational awareness.

"For instance, a pair of leopardprint heels might be the perfect touch of flair for a chic dinner party, but those same heels might feel out of place at a boardroom meeting depending on your industry," she explains. The key, she says, is balance—understanding when to make a statement and when to exercise restraint.

> Style is a language, and like all good communicators, the best-dressed individuals know how to tailor their

message to the occasion.

Etiquette is often dismissed as antiquated, a relic of period dramas and royal engagements. Alison challenges that notion head-on, explaining that etiquette isn't about elaborate place settings or rigid social rules—it's about respect and kindness in everyday interactions. Whether

ck screen that industry," she explains. The key, she ghtful details is balance—understanding when to exercise reactions a statement and when to exercise reactions and carry ourselves

The way we dress and like all communicates.

navigating a business lunch or grabbing a casual coffee, social awareness and consideration for others are the underlying principles.

Another common misconception is that etiquette is exclusionary, a set of rules designed to judge rather than guide. Alison disagrees, emphasizing that good etiquette is never about making others feel small. In fact, she argues that the worst breach of etiquette is calling out someone else's misstep simply to make them feel bad.

Rather than striving for perfection, she believes good manners should

# "I love seeing the ripple effects of good etiquette."

create ease, connection, and a sense of belonging.

We've all had those moments—tripping in public, mispronouncing a name, knocking over a drink at a dinner party. The true test of social grace, she says, isn't about avoiding these moments but about handling them with poise. "The key is to laugh it off and not take yourself too seriously. The truth is, everyone has their awkward moments, and the way you handle them says far more about you than the mishap itself."

If you forget someone's name mid-introduction, she suggests taking a lighthearted approach. "Instead of spiraling, just laugh lightly and say, 'I'm so sorry—remind me of your name? I want to make sure I get it right.' A little humility and warmth not only diffuse the situation but also make you more approachable." True elegance, after all, isn't about being

flawless—it's about handling imperfections with ease.

For Alison, etiquette isn't about memorizing rules—it's a refined skill set, a way to move through life with confidence and assurance. It's about presence. It's about making others feel valued. And, most of all, it's about knowing when to lean in, when to step back, and how to command attention with quiet authority.

"The most rewarding aspect of my work is seeing tangible transformations

> in people's lives," she shares. "Whether it's helping someone with social anxiety feel

more confident in conversations, showing someone how to deepen relationships, or teaching executive presence for career success, I love seeing the ripple effects of good etiquette."

Through Elevate Etiquette, she helps clients master the nuances of human interaction, both online and in person. From social confidence to professional presence, her work focuses on striking the perfect balance of authenticity, composure, and self-assurance. She understands that etiquette can feel intimidating, but she approaches it as an empowering tool rather than a set of rigid expectations. "My clients and community on social media trust me to guide them in areas that can feel vulnerable, and I take that responsibility very seriously."

Her passion for lifelong learning extends beyond etiquette. "Your education





is something no one can ever take away from you. And keep reading," she says.

"If you want to be more intelligent, more compassionate, more worldly, a better writer, or a more effective communicator, there is nothing quite like reading to expand your mind and empathy, see the world through others' eyes while sharpening your perspective."

That dedication to knowledge and refinement will soon take the form of her own book, set for preorder in early 2026. Blending practical etiquette with modern social dilemmas, it offers guidance on everything from first dates and salary negotiations to navigating tense holiday

conversations with grace. "It's about polish in professional and social settings, instilling confidence without any mean-girl energy," she says. With insights on dining etiquette, setting boundaries, and presenting oneself with poise, the book promises to be as practical as it is timeless.

While trends come and go, Alison Cheperdak exudes an elegance that stands the test of time. It's not about perfection or performance—it's about quiet confidence, awareness, and the way we make others feel. Etiquette isn't a set of rules but a way of life—one that elevates every moment and proves that true grace leaves the strongest impression.



## MERIT



# Minimalist Beauty Simplify what it takes to get ready.







LAMER





by CALLIE MARTINEZ

Thile the digital age obsesses over visibility, Lady Blue captivates effortlessly. Her presence isn't built on fleeting trends but on a mastery of refinement, cultivated over time. She doesn't chase the spotlight—it finds her, drawn to an elegance that lingers beyond the screen.

Though she shares much, one detail remains deliberately withheld: her real name. The mystery only deepens her allure, but it is not secrecy that defines her—it is transformation. Every person knows the silent battle of self-doubt, the tension between who we are and who we hope to become. For Lady Blue, the shift wasn't sudden or effortless. It was a choice, made with intention, refined through discipline, and embodied with grace.

Overcoming insecurity became a daily commitment, beginning with a simple rule: no negative self-talk. Whenever doubt crept in, she interrupted the pattern, breaking the cycle before it could take hold. "Overcoming my insecurities became a daily commitment," she says. "I would literally say 'STOP' out loud," refusing to let self-doubt take root.

Determined to embody the grace she admired in others, she became a student of elegance, observing the mannerisms and speech of refined women. Genuine elegance, she realized, was a rarity. What began as an exercise in refinement soon became second nature, resulting in a confidence that others couldwn't help but notice. With time, that confidence became visible not just in her presence, but in the way she carried herself, spoke, and dressed.

For Lady Blue, elegance is more than appearance—it is a way of being, a quiet pursuit of grace in thought, action, and presence.

That same philosophy extends to her wardrobe, where every piece is chosen with care. Prioritizing craftsmanship over trends, she gravitates toward small, ethical brands rather than fleeting fashion. Quality materials and precise tailoring take precedence, shaping a closet as timeless as

# "You truly shine when you fall in love with yourself and with life"

her approach to life.

She finds joy in the seemingly small moments, treating everyday life with the same care as grand occasions. "In the mornings, I drink my coffee from a fine porcelain cup. It is not waiting for guests or special occasions. I put on a beautiful dress and wear my pearl necklaces even when I'm at home alone, with no one else to see it but me," she shares. A pearl necklace, a well-cut dress, a beautifully set table—these rituals are not reserved for an audience but embraced for their own sake.

Of course, living in the public eye invites scrutiny. Yet criticism has never deterred her. Long before establishing her social media presence, she made a quiet vow: negativity would not dictate her path. Rather than shrinking in response to judgment, she embraces individuality, recognizing that differences are what make life interesting. "We are all different, and it's those differences that make life interesting," she says, a sentiment that underscores her unwavering self-assurance.

Through her Elite Ladies Program, she helps women cultivate confidence and refinement in their own lives. The messages of gratitude she receives from those whose lives have been transformed by her teachings are, to her, the most meaningful measure of success.

The internet, for all its noise, has gifted us something extraordinary—the ability to observe, to learn, and to be shaped by minds and influences once beyond our reach. In an age where proximity no longer dictates access, we can refine our tastes, expand our knowledge, and engage with those who challenge and inspire us. The world has never been more connected, and for those who seek wisdom, the possibilities are endless.

At the heart of it all lies a simple truth: elegance is not worn, but lived. "You truly shine when you fall in love with yourself and with life," she says. The most luminous presence isn't curated—it emanates from self-assurance, from a life shaped with intention rather than the need for approval.

Lady Blue moves through the digital world with the same poise she brings to life—unrushed, unshaken, and entirely herself. In an era that clamors for attention, she proves that true elegance whispers—but is always heard.





# CODE OF CONDUCT

Expert Answers on Modern Manners

**Richie Frieman** is an author, illustrator, and etiquette expert, widely recognized as a "Modern-Day Renaissance Man." His dynamic career spans writing, illustration, podcasting, design, and entrepreneurship.

He has written extensively on professional and social decorum, including his bestselling book *REPLY ALL...And Other Ways to Tank Your Career*, a sharp and witty take on workplace etiquette.

Today, he's here to answer your etiquette questions—offering practical, no-nonsense advice for handling life's most awkward moments with confidence and style.





"I was on a date, and the conversation was fine, but I knew I wasn't feeling it. Is there a polite way to cut the date short without pretending I have an 'early morning'?"

As I get older, I realize more and more that time is important: time with family, time for work, making sure you're there for friends, and, of course, the most time possible for love. Understanding that point, the easiest way to prepare for a possible quick exit is to bring up your tomorrow, tonight. For example, the first thing someone will likely ask you on a first date is, "How was your day today?" or "How's work?" These rather standard questions allow

you an easy door opener to talk about your "busy workday tomorrow" as a get-out-of-an-awkward-jail-free card.

Without a doubt, you will know quickly where this date stands with your value of time, so you can either use this excuse early or right after the bill comes and tuck it away if things are going well.

"I ran into someone I know but blanked on their name. I panicked and avoided saying it altogether. Is there a better way to handle that in the moment?"

For the record, I'll openly admit that forgetting people's names is a weakness I constantly try to fix. With that, misplacing someone's name should not brand you as a rude person for life. It happens to all of us. Still, to avoid that embarrassment, there are two ways to secretly avoid asking for their name again.

The first situation is when you're already with someone else and then run into someone new whose name you forget. If you have time, while the forgotten-named person is far enough away, mumble quietly to your friend, "Please introduce yourself first!" That way, your friend puts their hand out to initiate the introductions, and now you have all names on the table.

In the same situation, if you don't have ample time for a quick sidebar hint to your friend, I always like to point to the person I'm with and introduce them first as if presenting them to the forgotten-named person. For example, "It's so nice to see you again," then gesture to your friend, "This is Bob." Bob extends his hand, and now the forgotten-named person says their name. Just make sure you remember it again.

Another way, when you're flying solo and honestly can't remember, is to ask them how to spell their name. Trust me, it works. For example, they approach you, your mind goes blank, and you say, "How do you spell your name again?" They may think it's odd, but then you add, "It's so funny because a friend of mine spells her name with an A on the end." Laugh it off, play it cool, and forget it ever happened. Again, you're simply doing this to buy yourself some grace and avoid being uncomfortable.

"A coworker keeps standing way too close when they talk to me. I subtly step back, but they keep inching forward. How do I fix this without making it a big deal?"

Oh, nothing like dealing with the old "close talker," as made famous by an episode of *Seinfeld* decades ago. It's ironic, but you would have thought that episode and its legendary status would have made the close talker realize, "Is that me?" However, the close talker still walks amongst us.

One way to properly fix this is to adjust your body language to fend off the close talker. Think of it like a sport; in basketball, for example, if you're trying to avoid your defender, you never go face-to-face—you pivot your body so the ball is farther away and only one shoulder is in their direction. With the close talker, one way to do that is to stay on the move. Be prepared to keep your guard up and don't lose focus on their eagerness to invade your space.

Also, if you have papers or a coffee cup, use that to build your force field from the close talker by extending the paper forward or holding the coffee cup out to gain more space. If you hold your papers to your chest, hold them outward in a resting position, as if you're almost handing them to someone. It gives you distance.

Lastly, be prepared for the close talker when you see them coming your way; be ready to build your safety zone ahead of time to provide yourself with even more distance from their uncomfortable presence.

"When dining with a group, I try to pace myself with others, but sometimes everyone eats so quickly that I feel awkward still finishing my meal. Should I speed up to match them or stay at my own pace?"

Unless you're in boot camp, you should not be chasing your meal down like someone is about to take it away at any time. A meal should be enjoyed, cherished, and a relaxing part of your day. However, yes, there will come times when you dine with someone racing to a finish line that you did not know existed. When you find yourself in this situation, don't feel obligated to shove food down your throat rapidly because others are doing so. Instead, I find it better to put the situation out there for everyone to see. Try something like, "Gosh, look at how much more I have to eat... I've always been a slower eater, it happens all the time. I'll grab a to-go box if we're ready to leave." Here, you are being self-aware, adding some self-deprecating humor, and even providing a solution to everyone being done.

This will set the stage so that the next time you dine together, others will know you take a little longer (which is NOT a bad habit), and you will be more than happy to take your meal to go since everyone is done. Yes, it's always best to enjoy a meal the way it was meant to be enjoyed; however, when dining with others, sometimes you're the odd person out. And don't get me started on people who don't understand how to split the bill properly! The worst of the worst.

"One time, I was at a wedding, and someone kept whispering comments about the bride's dress. I didn't want to participate but didn't want to look weirdly uptight. What's the classy way to shut down gossip without making a scene?"

There is nothing like an obnoxious wedding guest to ruin the wedding for other guests, all of which had the wedding paid for by the individual(s) the rude wedding guest is mocking. Classy, right? For the life of me, I will never understand the need to rip apart the host/hostess

outfit, as if every situation is a red-carpet reveal. Plus, it's someone's wedding — who cares if you don't like the dress! It's not your dress to wear. The person you are celebrating took time and money into their special day and having someone judge their taste is not benefiting anyone at all.

Yet, if you are someone who truly needs to share your style advice for the sake of mockery, at least have the wherewithal to do it in private, like your car. What, do you think everyone will chime in around you because they also agree, and you get the credit for calling it first? Again, classless.

When you witness this happening, the best thing to do is to ignore it and walk away. Nothing good will come from you engaging with the style divas. However, if you're stuck sitting next to the rude "fashionista," busy yourself with someone else around you in conversation with them. If you're unable to escape that horrid conversation for another, simply pretend you're not listening. Focus on something that's taking your attention, and if they ask your opinion, don't give it.

In this situation, ultimately, the last thing you want is to be a part of anything being said, even from the sidelines. Also, telling the rude commenter they are being rude will likely only cause more drama around the situation. If someone has no problem holding back their childish opinions, they will likely look for another target to aim their improper behavior towards. Sometimes, it's just easier to play dumb than actually play with the dumb.

Have an etiquette dilemma or a question about timeless living? Send your inquiries to editor@thegildedpalm.com, and you maybe featured in an upcoming edition of *The Gilded Palm*. Discretion always assured.



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**SCAN TO DISCOVER** 



# INHER OWN WORDS Author Interview with Lori Keating

ORI KEATING tells stories that stay with you. There's a permanence to her work, a sense that her words do not simply pass through but linger, like the scent of aged paper in a well-loved library. Nostalgia and emotion are her hallmarks, drawing readers into worlds that feel both intimate and timeless. With



books like Butterfly
Ink, The Memory
Quilt, and her latest,
Angels in the Sand,
she distills the beauty
of fleeting moments
into something that
lasts.

Writing from her home in Southwest Florida, Keating works with an effortless instinct, drawn to the poetry found in life's smallest details. Resilience. curiosity, and an unwavering reverence for the written word shape her craft. In our conversation. she reflects on the forces that fuel her creativity, the lessons she has gathered along the way, and why storytelling, at its core, remains an act of connection.

# Can you tell us about the moment that inspired you to become an author?

My journey toward becoming an author began in fourth grade when I participated in a Young Authors Contest at school. At the time, I had little expectation of winning—my best friend was confident in her victory, and I shared in that belief. So, when my name was called as the winner, I was both surprised and thrilled. As the grand prize, I attended the Young Author Conference, where I experienced a profound moment that left a lasting impact on me: a heartfelt reading of Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*.

That experience sparked a passion for writing, though, like many young dreams, it was

# "One of the most significant lessons has been the importance of resilience."

initially put aside. It wasn't until adulthood that I truly began to take writing seriously.

# How does your creative space inspire you, and are there routines that help you maintain focus?

A conducive creative space has been essential to my writing process. My setup is likely unconventional—I prefer writing on the couch, with my laptop on my lap and a cozy blanket draped over me. To help maintain focus, I follow a few routines to set the right tone for my day. I start with a refreshing juice made in my juicer, followed by a green smoothie, and end with a shot of espresso. Rather than imposing a specific

word count on myself, I focus on allowing the words to flow naturally, stopping when I feel the work is complete for the moment. Additionally, I take a short break for a twenty-minute workout, which helps clear my mind and refresh my energy.

## Has your journey as a writer taught you any unexpected lessons?

Absolutely. My journey has been filled with valuable lessons that have not only shaped my writing but also my outlook on life. One of the most significant lessons has been the importance of resilience. Writing is full of both highs and lows—moments

of inspiration and periods of self-doubt. Over time, I've learned that

perseverance is key, and that every setback, whether it be rejection or self-criticism, is an opportunity for growth. Another surprising lesson has been the power of vulnerability. Writing requires me to expose parts of myself through my characters and stories. This vulnerability has deepened my connection with readers, allowing them to see reflections of their own experiences in my work.

# Which aspect of storytelling do you find the most challenging, and how do you overcome it?

One of the most challenging aspects of storytelling for me is determining which ideas to pursue and which to set aside. With so many concepts constantly evolving in my mind, it can be difficult to assess which ones are truly worth the time and effort. To navigate this, I record all my ideas in my notes app, allowing me to revisit them later. If an idea persists in capturing my attention, it's usually a strong indicator that it has potential. I also evaluate how each idea aligns with my current interests and creative goals. If an idea challenges me to grow as a writer or explore new territory, I'm more inclined to develop it further. Ultimately, I rely on my intuition sometimes an idea simply feels right, and that instinct is an invaluable guide in choosing the stories that resonate with me and, hopefully, my readers.

# What items do you always keep on your desk?

I always have water and my phone nearby for quick reference while writing. I also keep *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel* by Jessica Brody on hand, especially the "beat sheet," which helps me stay focused on essential storytelling structure and ensures I'm hitting all the key elements of a compelling narrative.

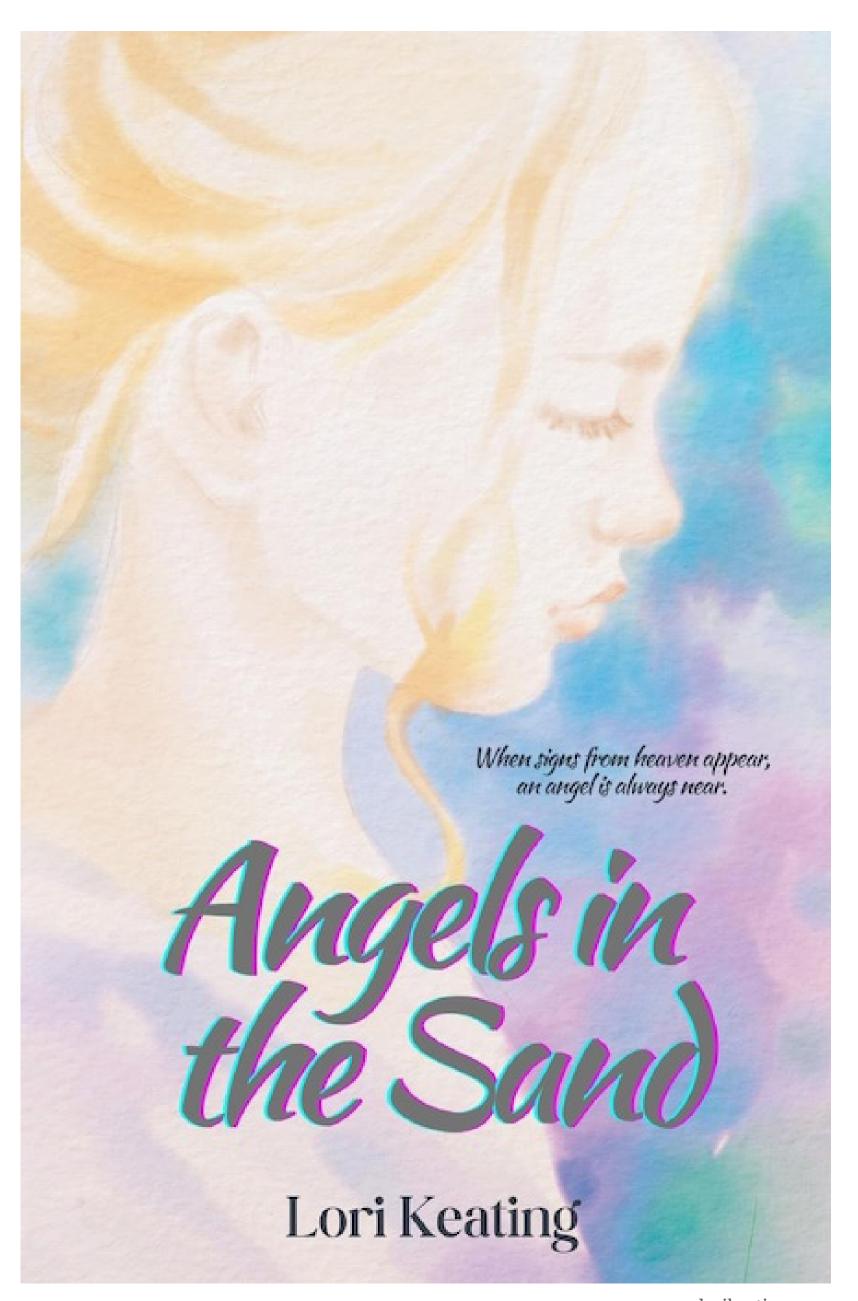
# Is there an author or literary figure whose work has profoundly influenced you?

There have been several authors whose works have had a lasting impact on me

and shaped my literary sensibilities. C.S. Lewis, with his enchanting tales of Narnia, instilled in me a deep sense of wonder and adventure. Judy Blume's authentic portrayal of young characters helped me feel understood during my teenage years. Kate DiCamillo's moving stories have shown me the beauty in life's smallest moments, while Nicholas Sparks' emotionally rich love stories remind me of the enduring power of romance. Lastly, Francine Rivers' profound novels have inspired me to reflect on themes of faith, redemption, and the complexities of human nature. Each of these authors has played a significant role in shaping my love for literature and continues to influence my writing today.

# What do you hope readers take away from your work?

Connecting with readers on an emotional level is one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a writer. Whether it's evoking laughter or moving someone to tears, knowing that my words can bring joy or provoke thought is incredibly gratifying. Storytelling has the remarkable ability to foster empathy and understanding, and when readers respond to my work in such a genuine way, it reassures me of the power of words. My greatest hope is that my writing can continue to inspire, uplift, and create meaningful connections with others.









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**PRINCESS** | princess.com Brand offering elegant essentials that empower individuality with a blend of timeless design and functionality.

**RAYMOND WEIL** | raymond-weil.

Swiss watchmaker renowned for precision engineering and timeless design that endures across generations.

#### ROBERT BARAKETT |

robertbarakett.com Fashion-forward brand delivering distinctive style through pieces that merge classic aesthetics with modern sophistication.

**SALUA** | salualingerie.com Lingerie brand celebrating feminine allure with sensuous, luxurious designs that inspire confidence.

**SCAROSSO** | scarosso.com Italian brand synonymous with exceptional leather footwear and accessories that embody modern sophistication.

## SERÀ FINE SILK |

serafinesilk.com Purveyor of premium silk products that combine luxurious comfort with exquisite, timeless detail.

**TOD'S** | tods.com Iconic Italian brand renowned for sophisticated leather goods and signature driving shoes that fuse tradition with modern elegance.

#### WHITE + WARREN |

whiteandwarren.com Known for its sophisticated designs, timeless knitwear, and signature cashmere pieces. SUBSCRIBE TO THE

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