



AIRBRUSHED

NATION THE LURE & LOATHING
OF WOMEN'S
MAGAZINES

Jennifer
Nelson

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AIRBRUSHED NATION
The Lure & Loathing of Women's Magazines

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For Ashley—and all the beautiful women
reading a magazine everywhere

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Introduction

Often, aspiring magazine writers cut their professional teeth writing for smaller newspapers and magazines before transitioning to the big leagues of national magazines. Not me. I knew what I wanted. I'd grown up with my girly nose buried in the glossy pages of everything from *Tiger Beat* and *Young Miss* to *Cosmo*, *Shape*, and *Self*. I was enthralled and occasionally appalled, but still I was totally smitten.

At the time, it didn't occur to me that these women's magazines, which had imparted a lifetime's worth of seemingly friendly advice to me on everything from dating and sex to fashion and health, approached its readers as if they needed fixing, nor did I think my self-esteem and self-worth had been diminished simply by reading their shiny pages. In fact, like millions of other women readers, I craved their content and made no connection that any of my insecurities could be traced back to women's magazines.

So when it came time to launch my career, I went straight to the source of the love—the perfumed pages of the chick slicks. One of the very first pitch letters I sent went to *Woman's Day*, one of the nation's oldest and most widely read women's magazines. I had what I believed was a solid story idea about smoking cessation,