



Pressure Makes Diamonds: Becoming the Woman I Pretended to Be

Valerie Graves

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"Written in a highly polished yet informal style, this book will appeal to readers interested in memoirs of accomplished businesswomen and African American success, as well as those who want a glimpse into the fast-paced world of a top-level ad executive."

--*Library Journal*

"Graves established herself as a fierce force in the advertising field and a greatly admired role model for black professionals establishing themselves in American business. In a moving book steeped in perseverance and empowering determination, the author fully embodies the challenges of her culture and those of being a motivated businesswoman . . . Optimistic and galvanizing, Graves' message of hope and hard work is timely and applicable."

--*Kirkus Reviews*

"Barrier-breaking, highly celebrated creative director and advertising executive Graves is about more than glittery and impressive national advertising campaigns and her association with international celebrities and various Fortune 500 companies . . . No one was looking for her, but she showed up, spoke directly to the public, and captured the world's attention. Graves' well-told tale, set against a detailed social and cultural backdrop, of courage and success both personally (including a happy marriage) and professionally is moving and inspiring."

--*Booklist*

"A story about an accomplished woman who is the epitome of grit . . . Whether recalling the guilt she felt as a working, absentee parent, or how she came to adopt new age thinking, the author's storytelling skills and use of humor, imagery, and figurative language is noteworthy. At an early age, Valerie decided she would fake it until she made it. Now a success by most standards, she no longer has to pretend. Anyone who enjoys reading about those who travel difficult paths in life will find Pressure Makes Diamonds to be inspirational."

--*Foreword Reviews*

"A gem of a book . . . Valerie Graves has spun an appealing narrative with a protagonist who reads like an African-American female counterpart of Horatio Alger. Her journey from Mud Lake, Pontiac, an exurb of Detroit, to a corner office on Madison Avenue is exhilarating, marking her rise to the upper echelons of advertising and providing readers with an exposé of her creative life and the world ruled by 'Mad Men.'"

-- *New York Amsterdam News*

This is the unflinching memoir of a female African American advertising executive's unprecedented and unlikely success, which began in the Mad Men era. It follows her journey from the projects of Motown-era Michigan to the skyscrapers of Madison Avenue and beyond. With marches, riots, and demonstrations as the backdrop, and rock 'n' roll as a soundtrack, this book accompanies Graves as she traverses the seismically shifting terrain of 1960s and '70s America on her quest to "be somebody."

In the '80s and '90s, as Graves makes her ascent to the East Coast heights of the white male-dominated

advertising world, she turns familiarity with harsh realities like racism and sexism into robust insights that deeply connect with African American consumers. During the golden era of black advertising, she becomes an undisputed "somebody." Soon, though, she learns that money, success, a good marriage, and connections that reach all the way to the White House cannot entirely insulate her against the social ills that threaten to crush black Americans.

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