A CABANGA BOOKSHELF BOOK



# HELD

*A love letter to the woman in every shape*

THINKMORE MUDAZVIRO

# Held

*A love letter to the woman in every shape*

THINKMORE MUDAZVIRO

*Held. A love letter to the woman in every shape.*
*Written by Thinkmore Mudazviro. Published by Cabanga Bookshelf, 2026.*
*© 2026 Thinkmore Mudazviro. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher.*
*This book is written to inspire. It is not medical advice.*

01

UNDERNEATH

# Before anyone sees you

This is for you. Yes, you, reading this with your shoulders a little tight and a list of things you would change about yourself already open in your head.

> *Tonight the list can wait outside the door.*

Put the list down for a few pages. It has been with you long enough. It has followed you into fitting rooms, into photographs, into wedding invitations you almost declined. Tonight it can wait outside the door.

Every morning there is a moment nobody sees. You stand in front of a mirror before the world gets its turn. You choose what goes on first. It is small and private and it is yours, and it decides how the rest of the day feels in your skin.

That moment deserves kindness. Not a verdict. Not a sigh. Kindness.

Let me sit with you in that moment for a while.

It is early. The house is still quiet, or it is already loud with children and kettles and someone asking where their other shoe is. Either way, there is a small pocket of time that belongs only to you. The bathroom door is closed. The light is soft. The water is running warm.

Before you reach for anything, notice your own hands. They have done so much. They have braided hair and signed contracts, wiped tears that were not theirs, stirred pots for people who never said thank you. Rub a little lotion into them slowly, the way your grandmother might have done for you when you were small. Take your time over each finger. Nobody is timing you here.

Now look up.

The woman in the mirror is not a problem to be solved before breakfast. She is someone you have known your whole life. She was there at the first day of school with her socks pulled up too high. She was there the night you cried over someone who did not deserve a single one of those tears. She was there on the morning you got the job, the morning you buried someone you loved, the morning you decided to start again. She has never once left you.

So greet her the way you would greet an old friend who has been through everything beside you. Softly. Warmly. Maybe with a small smile that nobody else will ever see.

Then let your fingertips move across your own collarbone, your shoulders, the soft curve of your arms. Not to inspect them. To thank them. Say it silently if saying it out loud feels too strange at first: thank you for carrying me.

When you choose what goes on first, let it be something that feels like a kind hand at your waist. Something that holds without squeezing, that smooths without scolding. Fabric that says, I have you, go and live your day.

You will be surprised how differently you walk out of that room when the first thing you did was be gentle with yourself.

Every woman deserves one tender minute before the world begins asking things of her. This is yours. Keep it. Protect it. Make it a habit that nobody can take away.

And if tomorrow the list of complaints creeps back in, as it sometimes will, simply begin again. Warm water. Soft light. Your own two hands. The quiet promise that today, at least, you will treat this body like someone you love.

Some mornings you will not have a minute. The taxi is hooting, the baby is crying, the meeting was moved to eight. On those mornings, take ten seconds instead. One hand flat on your chest. One deep breath. One quiet sentence: I am here, and I am enough for today.

Ten seconds is enough to change the whole tone of a day.

And on the slow mornings, the Saturday ones, give yourself the full ritual. Open the window and let the light in. Sit on the edge of the bed in your robe with a cup of something warm. Listen to the birds or the traffic or the neighbour's radio. Let your body wake up without hurrying it.

Then choose your clothes the way you would choose flowers for someone you adore. Not in a panic. Not in apology. With pleasure.

You will find, over time, that the mirror becomes a softer place. The list of complaints grows shorter, then quieter, then one day you realise you have not heard it for a week. In its place is something new. A small, private pride. A warmth when you catch your own eye.

That warmth was always meant to be yours. We are simply clearing the way for it to come home.

02

CURVE SCIENCE

# You were built on purpose

Look at the curve of your waist, the weight of your hips, the soft place where your arm meets your shoulder. None of it is a mistake that needs correcting. It is architecture. It carries you up stairs, holds children, dances at weddings, stands for hours at work and still finds the strength to laugh at the end of the day.

When clothes fight your shape, the clothes have failed. When something is made to follow your curves instead of flattening them, you feel the difference at once. Your body was never the problem. The design was.

Stand side-on to the mirror for a moment. Let your shoulders fall. Breathe all the way down into your belly and let it be soft.

Now look at the line of you. The rise of your chest, the dip of your waist, the way your hips open like a sentence finishing on a beautiful word. There is a rhythm to it, like a song your body has been humming since before you knew its name.

Women before you had this same shape. Your mother, perhaps. Her mother. The aunties who danced at every wedding until the sun came up and never once apologised for how much room their joy took up. When you look at your hips, you are looking at an inheritance. They were passed to you by women who worked the land, carried water, rocked babies to sleep on their backs, and still stood tall enough to be noticed when they walked into church on Sunday.

Nothing about that is an accident.

Run your palms slowly along your sides, from the ribs down to the hips, and feel how the curve is not a flaw in the design. It is the design. Your body is shaped to hold, to carry, to balance and to move with a grace that no straight line has ever known.

The world will sometimes show you a narrower picture of beauty and ask you to squeeze yourself into it. Clothes will be cut for a body that is not yours and you will be made to feel that you are the one who does not fit. Remember, in those moments, that a garment is a guest. It comes to you. It must learn your shape, not the other way round.

When you find something made to follow your curves, you will feel it at once. The fabric will settle into your waist as if it has been waiting for you. It will lift where you like to be lifted and soften where you like to be soft. You will stop pulling at it. You will stop thinking about it. You will simply feel held.

That feeling is not a luxury. It is what you should have had all along.

So tonight, before you sleep, put a hand on your hip and leave it there for a moment, warm and still. Feel how solid you are, how present, how real. Whisper it to yourself if you need to hear it: I was made like this on purpose. And the purpose was beautiful.

Next time you are getting dressed, try something. Before you put anything on, stand in your underwear and move. Sway your hips from side to side. Roll your shoulders. Lift your arms above your head and stretch until you feel it all the way to your fingertips.

Feel how beautifully everything works together. The waist turning, the hips following, the spine lengthening like a plant reaching for the sun.

This is the body clothes are meant to serve. Not a mannequin. Not a drawing on a pattern. A moving, breathing, living shape with its own music.

When you choose shapewear, choose it for this body in motion. Pieces that move when you move. Seams that follow your curves instead of cutting across them. Support that feels like being held by someone who knows exactly where you like to be held.

And when you catch your silhouette in a shop window as you walk past, do not look away. Slow down. Enjoy it. That outline, that sway, that confident curve against the glass: that is you, built on purpose, walking through the world exactly as you were meant to.

03

THE FITTING ROOM

# The number is not the woman

Somewhere along the way you were taught to fear a number. A size on a label. A figure on a tape. A digit on a scale in the bathroom.

> *A size is information. It says nothing about your worth.*

Here is the truth. A size is information, the way your shoe size is information. It tells a garment how to fit you. It says nothing about your worth, your beauty, or whether you deserve to be looked at with love.

Measure yourself the way a tailor would, calmly and without commentary. Then buy the size that fits the body you have today. Not the one you had at twenty. Not the one you are promising yourself for next year. Today's body is the one walking into the room tonight, and she deserves to be comfortable.

Let us talk about the fitting room, because so many of us leave a little piece of our confidence behind in there.

The light is harsh. The curtain never quite closes. You pull on something in the size you have always bought and it will not go up past your hips, and suddenly you are fourteen again, hot-faced and wishing you could disappear.

Breathe. Put it down. That garment was cut for a number, and numbers change between brands, between seasons, between the day before your period and the day after it. It is not a judgement. It is just a measurement that did not match.

Take the tape measure home instead, where the light is kind and nobody is waiting outside the curtain. Stand in your own room in the evening. Wrap the tape around your bust, your waist, your hips, gently, the way you would measure a friend for a dress you were making her as a gift. Write the numbers down without a single comment. No sighs. No promises about next month. Just information.

Then let those numbers do their only job, which is to find you something that fits.

When it arrives and you try it on, notice the difference between clothing that fights you and clothing that welcomes you. The right size glides on. It sits where it was designed to

sit. It lets you breathe all the way down. It lets you sit, bend, laugh, lift a child, reach for the top shelf. It stays put without biting.

That is what fit feels like. Not tightness. Not punishment. Welcome.

If you have spent years buying one size too small as a kind of dare to yourself, let this be the season you stop. Your body is not a debt you owe the future. It is the home you live in today, and it deserves furniture that fits the rooms.

And when you catch sight of yourself in the finished outfit, standing a little taller because nothing is pinching and nothing is slipping, give that woman in the mirror a nod. She deserved this ease all along. You simply finally gave it to her.

Let me tell you about the moment a garment truly fits.

There is a small exhale. You did not even know you were holding your breath, but when the fabric settles and nothing pinches, your whole body lets go a little. Your shoulders drop. Your jaw unclenches. You stand in front of the mirror and, for the first time in a long time, you are not calculating anything.

You are simply looking at yourself. And what you see is a woman who fits her clothes, not a woman trying to fit into them.

That exhale is worth everything. It is worth measuring properly. It is worth ignoring the old number. It is worth trusting the tape instead of the voice that says you should be smaller.

So chase that exhale. Look for it every time you buy something to wear. Let the right size be your quiet act of love, repeated until it becomes the only way you know how to dress.

04

WHAT TO WEAR UNDER IT

# Dress for your own yes

There is a dress in your wardrobe you have not worn. Maybe the tags are still on it. Maybe you bought it on a brave day and then the brave day ended.

Take it out.

What goes underneath matters, not because you need hiding, but because a smooth line lets a dress do what it was made to do. When nothing pulls and nothing shifts, you stop checking your reflection in every shop window. You start looking at the people you love instead.

Wear it for your own yes. If someone else says yes too, enjoy it. But the first yes belongs to you.

Go to the wardrobe. Find the dress with the tags still on.

Hold it up against you for a moment and remember the day you bought it. You were brave that day. You saw yourself wearing it somewhere wonderful, a dinner, a wedding, a night

when the music was good and the company was better. Then somewhere between the shop and home, the bravery slipped away, and the dress went to the back of the rail to wait.

It has been waiting patiently. Let us not keep it waiting any longer.

Lay it on the bed. Run a bath or a hot shower. Take longer than you need. Oil your skin until it glows, slowly, the way you would care for something precious, because you are something precious. Put on the music you love. Do your hair the way that makes you feel like yourself.

Then begin with what goes underneath. Choose the layer that smooths the line and lets the dress fall the way it was always meant to fall. Step into it. Feel it settle around your waist like a steady, reassuring hand. Then let the dress slide down over it, cool and soft against your arms.

Now turn to the mirror. Slowly. Take in all of it before you let your eyes go looking for faults. The colour against your skin. The line of your shoulders. The curve of your waist, the fall of the hem. You look like a woman who is about to be somewhere good.

This is your yes. Not the yes of a partner, not the yes of a friend, not the yes of a stranger on a feed. Yours.

If someone you love looks at you later with that light in their eyes, let yourself enjoy it completely. There is nothing wrong with being admired. But know that the admiration only found what you had already decided: that you were worth dressing up for.

Wear the dress. Wear it to the dinner, to the wedding, to the Sunday lunch that did not strictly need it. Let it be seen. And when you hang it back up at the end of the night, hang it at the front of the rail, where brave dresses belong.

There is a particular pleasure in dressing slowly for an evening.

The lamp is low. Your favourite song is playing. The smooth layer goes on first and sets a gentle line around your waist and hips. You sit at the dressing table and take your time with your face, not to hide anything, but to celebrate it. A little colour on the cheeks. A little shine on the lips. A dab of perfume at the wrist and the base of the throat.

Then the dress. Then the shoes. Then one last look.

This is not vanity. This is ceremony. Women have been doing it for thousands of years, preparing themselves with care before stepping into a room full of music and light. It is a way of telling the world, and yourself, that this evening matters. That you matter.

So the next time an invitation arrives, do not reach for the safe black thing you always hide in. Reach for the one that makes your heart beat a little faster. Say yes to it. Then walk into that room like you already knew you would be the loveliest thing in it.

05

EVERY WOMAN

# Every age is a good age

At sixteen, the mirror can feel like a courtroom and every photograph like evidence. At forty, the pressure changes its voice but not its message. At seventy, you may finally notice how much time you spent apologising for a body that carried you through everything.

Wherever you are on that road, hear this. The pictures on your phone are lit, angled, filtered and chosen from a hundred others. You are comparing your ordinary Tuesday with someone else's best second of the year.

Your body is not a trend. It does not go out of season. It has been with you through every exam, every heartbreak, every celebration and every quiet recovery. It deserves loyalty more than it deserves criticism.

Begin with one small act of loyalty today. Stop saying cruel things about yourself out loud. Other women are listening, and the youngest ones are learning from you.

If you are sixteen and reading this, come closer. I want to tell you something I wish someone had told every girl at your age.

Your body is still becoming. It will change many times, and every version of it will deserve kindness. The pictures that make you feel small were never meant to measure you. Put the phone face down tonight, take a long bath, and let yourself be exactly the age you are. You have so much time. Spend it living, not shrinking.

If you are thirty and tired, sit down for a minute. You are carrying careers and families and expectations, and somewhere under all of it is a woman who used to dance in her bedroom with the music too loud. She is still there. Put the song on. Close the door. Dance badly, joyfully, in your socks. Notice how your hips remember every step.

If you are fifty and the mirror has started to show you softer lines, touch them gently. Those lines came from laughing at family dinners, squinting into bright sun at graduations, frowning with worry over children who all grew up fine. They are a map of a life fully lived. Nobody earns them by accident.

And if you are seventy, you already know what the rest of us are still learning. That the body is a faithful companion. That elegance has nothing to do with size. That a good dress, a warm shawl and a straight back can still turn every head in the room. Teach the younger women. They are watching you more closely than you think.

Every age has its own kind of beauty, and none of them is a consolation prize.

Wherever you are on the road, let today be the day you stop postponing yourself. Wear the colour you were saving. Use the good perfume on an ordinary Wednesday. Buy the piece that fits the body you are living in now, and wear it with your head up.

There will always be someone younger, someone slimmer, someone with a filter kinder than the truth. Let them be. You are not in a competition. You are in a life, and it is yours, and it is happening right now.

Take a slow breath. Put your hand over your heart. Feel it beating steadily, the way it has every single day since you were born. That heart has never once asked you to be smaller. Neither should anyone else.

Here is a small practice for women of every age. Once a week, write down three things your body did for you. Not how it looked. What it did.

It walked you to the clinic and back. It hugged your sister for a long time at the airport. It carried the shopping up three flights of stairs. It danced in the kitchen while the rice cooked. It healed a cut on your finger without you even asking.

Read the list back to yourself on Sunday evening. You will find that gratitude is a far better mirror than any glass.

And every so often, dress up for no reason at all. Not for an event, not for a date, not for a photograph. Just for the Tuesday. Put on the earrings. Wear the good shoes to the post office. Let the woman at the till wonder where you are going.

You are going somewhere important. You are going through your one precious life, fully dressed for it, at exactly the age you are.

06

SHAPE MYTHS

# The lies they sold you

They told you confident women do not care how they look. They told you caring means you do not love yourself. They told you that the only good body is a smaller one, that pain is proof of effort, that one day, after enough punishment, you would finally be allowed to feel beautiful.

> *There is no waiting room for beauty. You are already inside.*

Every one of those is a lie.

You can love your body and still choose how you present it. You can feel firm support and never feel pain. You can be beautiful today, at this size, at this age, with these stretch marks and these scars. There is no waiting room for beauty. You are already inside.

Some of those lies were told to us so early that they sound like our own voice now.

You are too much. Cover that up. Nobody wants to see that. You would be so pretty if you just lost a little. We heard them from magazines and adverts, sometimes from people who loved us and did not know better, sometimes from ourselves in the quiet of a changing room.

Tonight, let us put them down, one at a time, the way you would take off heavy jewellery at the end of a long evening.

The lie that you are too much: put it down. You are exactly enough. Your laugh, your curves, your opinions, your appetite for good food and good company. None of it needs trimming.

The lie that beauty lives somewhere in the future, after the diet, after the programme, after the next birthday: put it down. Beauty is not a destination. It is here, in this room, in this body, this evening.

The lie that a garment that shapes you is a confession of failure: put it down too. Women have always dressed with intention. Our grandmothers wore girdles to church and looked like queens. A beautiful foundation is not an apology. It is a choice, made by a woman who knows exactly how she wants to look.

The lie that caring how you look means you do not love yourself: this one especially. Put it all the way down. Choosing a lipstick is not self-hatred. Choosing a dress that fits your

waist is not self-hatred. You can adore yourself and still want to look breathtaking. Those two things have always lived together.

Feel how much lighter you are without them.

Now pick up something truer in their place. I am allowed to take up space. I am allowed to enjoy my reflection. I am allowed to feel beautiful before anyone else agrees. Hold those words close, the way you would hold a warm cup of tea on a cold morning. They are yours now. Nobody gets to take them back.

There is one more lie I want to take from you, and it is the quietest one.

It is the one that says you must earn kindness from yourself. That you may only speak gently to your body after it has changed, after it has been improved, after it has finally deserved it.

Let that one go too.

Kindness is not a reward. It is the ground everything else grows in. The woman who is spoken to gently becomes braver. The woman who is dressed with care stands taller. The woman who is forgiven for her softness finds her strength.

Start speaking to yourself the way you speak to the people you love most. Tell yourself you look lovely today. Tell yourself you did well. Tell yourself you are proud of how far you have come. Say it even before you believe it. The believing always comes after the saying.

And one day soon, you will catch yourself smiling at your own reflection for no reason at all. That smile is the truth, finally winning.

07

HEAT AND COMFORT

# Comfort is not a compromise

You were told that looking good must hurt. That shoes should pinch and waistbands should bite and a beautiful evening must end with relief when everything comes off.

No.

In our heat, on our long days, through our long weddings and longer family gatherings, comfort is not something you trade away for looks. Comfort is what makes you glow. A woman at ease moves differently. She laughs from the belly. She dances. She stays until the last song because nothing on her body is asking her to go home.

Choose what lets you breathe, sit, eat and dance, and let everything else follow.

Think of the most comfortable you have ever felt in your own skin.

Maybe it was a hot afternoon under a tree with your feet bare in the grass. Maybe it was the morning after a wedding, still in a silk robe, drinking tea on the step while the house slept.

Maybe it was dancing at a family party so long that your shoes came off and you did not care who saw.

Remember how your body felt then. Loose. Easy. Unbothered. Completely yours.

That feeling is what you deserve from your clothes, every single day.

In our summers, when the heat sits heavy on the shoulders by ten in the morning, comfort is not a small thing. It is the difference between enjoying the day and simply surviving it. So choose fabrics that breathe. Choose pieces that let air move against your skin. Choose support that holds you gently in the places you want holding and leaves you free everywhere else.

Notice how a comfortable woman carries herself. She does not keep tugging at a hem or adjusting a strap. She does not count the minutes until she can get home and take everything off. She is present. She listens properly. She laughs fully, head back, eyes closed. She stays for one more song.

That ease is magnetic. People are drawn to it without knowing why.

At the end of a long day, when you finally do undress, take a moment for yourself. Rub a little cream into the places where the day pressed on you. Stretch your arms above your head.

Roll your shoulders slowly. Let your body know you noticed how hard it worked.

And tomorrow, dress it again with the same care. Supported. Smooth. Comfortable enough to forget about. Beautiful because it is at peace.

Let me describe the perfect evening dress, and see whether you recognise it.

It lets you breathe all the way down into your belly. It lets you sit at a long table without a thought for your waistband. It lets you reach across for the salt, hug your cousin hello, bend to pick up a dropped napkin. It stays where it is when you dance. It is still kind to you at midnight.

Underneath it, the foundation does its work so quietly that you forget it is there. It smooths without pressing. It holds without squeezing. It breathes when the room gets warm.

That is not a dream. That is simply what well-made clothing feels like. You are allowed to insist on it.

Never again accept the idea that you must suffer to shine. You shine brightest when you are at ease. You are most beautiful when your body feels safe. Dress for that feeling, every time, and watch how differently the world responds to a woman who is completely comfortable being herself.

Comfort is not settling. It is choosing yourself.

08

AFTER BABY

# After the baby

If you have carried a child, your body did something extraordinary. It stretched to make room for a life. It fed, held, rocked and stayed awake long past what anyone should ask of a person.

> *Your body never left. It changed.*

And then the world asked when you would get your body back.

Your body never left. It changed, the way a river changes its banks after a great flood. There is no deadline. There is no six-week finish line. There is only you, learning this new shape at your own pace, and the tenderness you deserve while you do.

Mother, woman, partner, friend. You are allowed to be all of them at once.

If you are reading this with a baby asleep on your chest, I am so glad you found a quiet moment.

Look down at that tiny face. Everything you see there, the soft cheeks, the fists curled like new leaves, the small rise and fall of each breath, your body made. It made it from nothing. It carried it for months. It opened in a way that most people will never understand, and then it went straight back to work, feeding and rocking and holding, with hardly a night's rest.

You are allowed to be tender with that body.

When you step out of the shower and see the new softness at your belly, the silver lines on your hips, the fullness in your breasts, try not to look away. Look at them the way you look at your baby. With wonder. With patience. They are the marks of the greatest work you have ever done.

Some days you will not feel beautiful. You will feel tired to the bone, milk-stained and unwashed and a little bit lost. On those days, beauty can wait. Rest. Eat something warm. Let someone else hold the baby for an hour while you sleep. Your worth has not gone anywhere while you recover.

And on the days when you do want to feel like yourself again, start small. Wash your hair and let it dry in the sun. Put on earrings, just because. Choose something soft and supportive that holds your middle gently, like a reassuring hug, so that you can stand a little taller when you walk to the shop.

Let your partner see you, and let yourself be seen. If they tell you that you look beautiful, try to believe them, even if only a little at first. They have watched what your body did. They know.

There is no finish line. There is no old body waiting to be found again. There is only this new woman, stronger than she knows, learning her shape one gentle day at a time. Be as kind to her as you are to that little one in your arms.

Here is a promise that no one made to you in the hospital, so I will make it now.

You will feel like yourself again. Not the old self exactly, but a fuller one. A woman who knows what her body can do. A woman who has learned a patience she never knew she had. A woman who can soothe a crying child at three in the morning and still find a way to laugh by breakfast.

That woman is beautiful. She deserves soft fabrics and gentle support and clothes that fit the body she has now, not the one she had before.

When you are ready, and only when you are ready, choose one piece that makes you feel held. Something broad and gentle that supports your middle while you move through your day. Put it on, stand at the mirror with your baby in your arms, and look at the two of you together.

That picture is the most beautiful thing you will ever see. Keep it in your heart for the days when you forget.

09

THE REAR VIEW

# Turn around

Most of us check the front of the outfit and give the back one nervous glance before we leave. Turn around properly this time.

Look at the curve of your back, the line of your hips, the shape you walk away with. It is part of you, and it is beautiful. Celebrate it. Do not crush what deserves to be admired, least of all by you.

Think of the women you admire most. Your grandmother in her Sunday dress. Your aunt who owned every room she entered. Your best friend on her wedding day. Not one of them was admired for being small. They were admired for arriving fully, as themselves. Arrive like that.

Most mirrors show us only the front, so most of us rarely meet ourselves from behind.

Tonight, try something different. Stand with your back to the long mirror and hold a small one in your hand, or ask someone you trust to take a photograph. Look at yourself the way the room sees you when you walk away.

See the long line of your back. The place where your spine curves softly in at the waist. The fullness of your hips and the shape that follows beneath them. The backs of your knees, your calves, the heels you chose with such care.

It is a lovely view. It always has been.

So many women spend their lives trying to shrink what is behind them, to flatten it, to hide it under long jackets and loose shirts. But that shape is part of your signature. It is how people recognise you across a crowded market, how your children knew it was you coming up the road, how the dance floor remembers you.

Dress it with pride. Choose pieces that lift and round rather than squash and flatten. Let the fabric follow your curve instead of arguing with it. Then walk out of that room without a single nervous glance over your shoulder, because you already know how good it looks.

Think of the confidence of women who move like water, unhurried, hips swaying to a rhythm only they can hear. They are not smaller than you. They have simply stopped apologising for the space they fill.

You can walk like that too. Tomorrow, try it. Slow down a little. Let your hips move. Hold your head up. Feel the air on the back of your neck and know that you are worth watching, coming

and going.

There is a special kind of confidence in a woman who knows she looks good leaving a room.

She does not rush out of doors. She does not hide behind her handbag or tug her jacket down as she goes. She simply walks, head up, hips easy, trusting that the view she leaves behind is every bit as lovely as the one she arrived with.

You can be that woman. It begins with how you dress the parts of you that you cannot see.

Choose pieces that honour your shape from every angle. Check the back view, once, lovingly, before you leave the house. Then let it go. Stop checking. Trust your choices.

And the next time someone watches you walk away, and they will, let them. Keep walking. Smile to yourself. You know exactly what they are seeing, and you know it is beautiful.

10

THE LAST WORD

# Held

This book is called Held because that is what every woman deserves to feel. Supported where she needs support. Free where she wants freedom. Never squeezed into someone else's idea of who she should be.

So tomorrow, in that private moment before anyone sees you, try something new. Stand in front of the mirror and say it out loud, even if your voice shakes a little.

I am enough. I am beautiful in this body. I am dressing for my own yes.

Then choose something that holds you the way you should always have been held. Gently. Firmly. Beautifully.

Come here, one last time, and let me hold you with words.

You have read about the private moment before anyone sees you. About the architecture of your curves, the lies you are allowed to put down, the comfort you deserve, the tenderness after a baby, the beauty of the view as you walk away. Now I want you to feel all of it at once.

Close your eyes for a moment. Wrap your arms around yourself, one hand on each shoulder, and just stay there. Feel the warmth of your own skin. Feel your breath slowing. Feel how solid and alive and entirely precious you are.

This is what being held feels like. Remember it.

You were never meant to spend your life squeezed into shapes that were not yours, holding your breath in photographs, pulling at hems, apologising for your body before anyone else had the chance to. You were meant to be supported and free. Beautiful and at ease. Seen and unafraid.

So from today, let every choice you make about your body be a loving one. The size that fits. The fabric that breathes. The colour that makes your skin glow. The foundation that holds you the way a good friend's hand holds yours when you need courage.

And on the mornings when you forget, and you will sometimes, come back to this book. Open it anywhere. Let it remind you.

You are not too much. You are not too little. You are not late. You are not unfinished. You are a woman, in a body that has loved you faithfully every single day of your life.

It is time you loved it back.

Go gently. Go boldly. Go beautifully.

You are held.

Before you close this book, I want to leave you with one small ritual.

Tonight, before you sleep, sit on the edge of your bed. Put both hands on your belly, warm and steady, and breathe into them. Say thank you to your body for everything it carried today. The worries. The work. The people. The joy.

Then lie down and let the bed hold you. Let the blanket hold you. Let sleep hold you.

Tomorrow morning, begin again with that same gentleness. Choose something that holds you well. Walk out into the world with your shoulders back and your heart open.

You deserve to be held like this every single day. By the people who love you. By the clothes you wear. And most of all, by yourself.

You were always worth it.

# Shape*wear*

*The outfit begins before the outfit.*

**shapewear.cabanga.co.bw**