

# THE OTHER

IT'S YOUR MOST MAJESTIC BODY PART—  
THAT YOU'VE NEVER REALLY SEEN.  
SO WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU GET IT IN  
TOP FORM. IN OTHER WORDS,  
WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK. **BY SARAH BALL**

Let us briefly consider the back.

The underappreciated acreage from the graceful peak of the neck to the provocative curve at the end of the spine. That serpentine swish so famously seductive, it was known as one of painter William Hogarth's "lines of beauty" simply for its power to inspire. And inspire it has.

At their best, our backs are a plane so genuinely stately, broad, and capable as to be almost ageless. This is where you got a hug from your dad after a rough day. It's where you received a congrats-on-that-promotion clap. It's where a tentative hand on the small of your back maybe changed your life. It's where a delicate swath of silk can frame your shoulder blades, making you stand taller. And it's where, moments before you walk down the aisle, two tiny graceful straps might crisscross in a way that makes you feel beautiful, formidable, proud.

It is our back that carries the weight of the world, our spine that is the source of our strength, our nerve, our gumption. When things turn, go bad, hit a slump, we pick ourselves up. We move on. We power through. There's a word for this thing that keeps us driving forward.

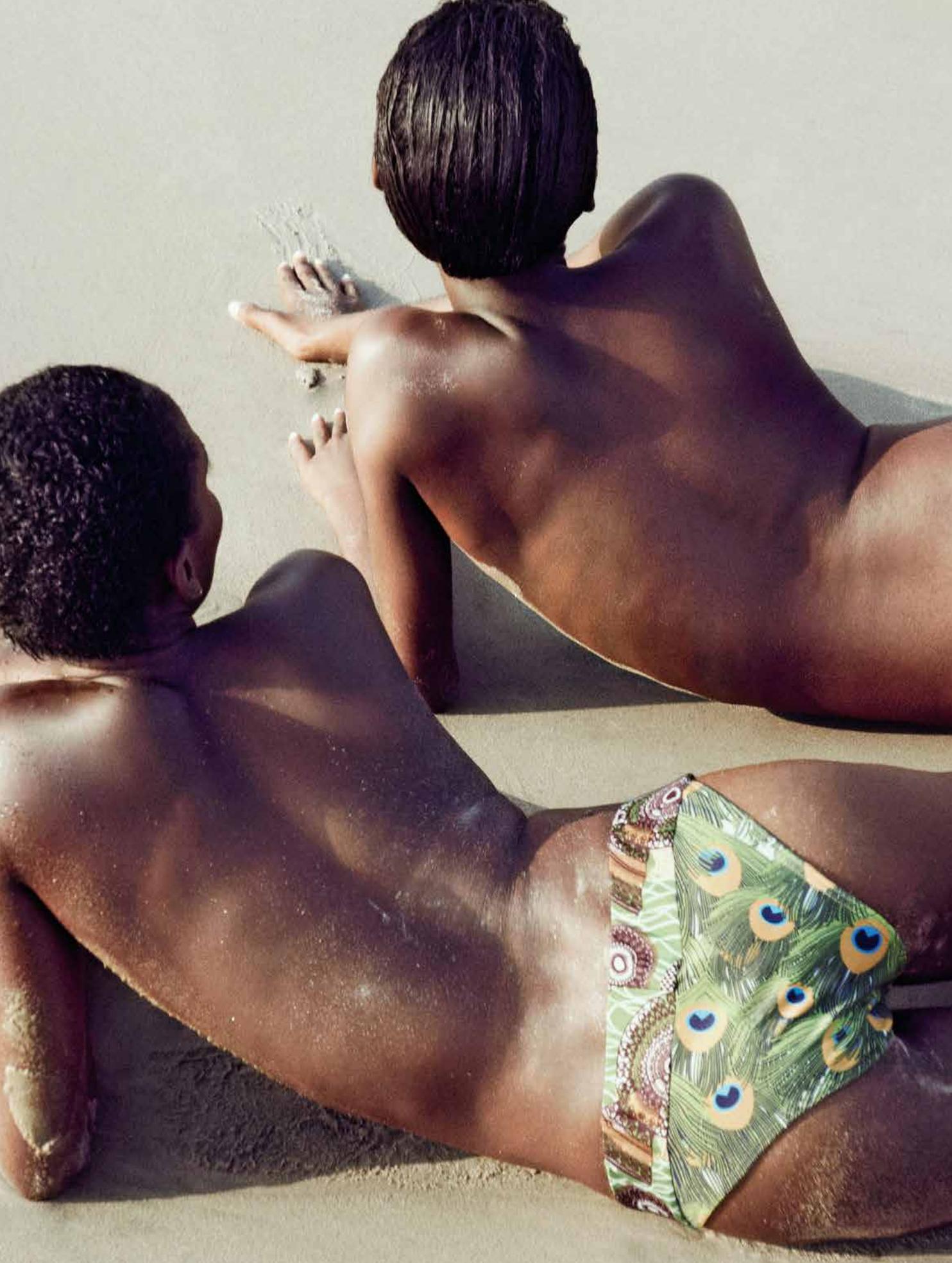
It's called backbone.

# IS THE BACK

## LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT

You want to know how to get a better back? Ask the woman who trained Natalie Portman for *Black Swan*. "We get fatalistic and think we have a certain body type or 'bad' posture, but we can change most everything," says Mary Helen Bowers, the founder of Ballet Beautiful. "Sitting up and with the chest open, pull your stomach in, engaging the muscles by thinking about touching the belly button to the spine." Do this for a moment or two when you're at your desk or having a coffee. The cumulative effort is what's going to change your posture permanently. Andrew Sama, an orthopedic spine surgeon at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, says another track to a ballerina back is to pinch and hold your shoulder blades together for a few seconds every day, or, if you're alone and no one can see you, lift your arms overhead and make snow angels against a wall. —ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY KRISTEN DOLD





# BRONZE YOUR WHOLE BACK\*

\*EVEN THE NO-MAN'S-LAND BETWEEN YOUR SHOULDERS

You're self-tanning the night before a vacation, and the dead center of your back is one pale void of out-of-reach skin. Self-tanning expert Nichola Joss is about to go all Heloise on this situation.

**Raid the kitchen.** "Get a long-handled wooden spoon, put a tanning mitt on the spoon end, then tie it with a rubber band," Joss says. (Don't cook much? Try a long-handled loofah.) For the back, Joss likes fast-absorbing mousses that spread on evenly. She recommends St. Tropez's Classic Bronzing Mousse and Tan Applicator Mitt, which feels like a giant foundation sponge. An ultrafine aerosol formula helps with touching up mistakes (try Banana Boat Summer Color Self-Tanning Mist).

**Double down.** Use two pumps of mousse on the mitt at a time, and make sure the product is rubbed into the mitt itself so there is no visible excess. "Otherwise, you get spills that can look splotchy or streaky," Joss says. First tan where you can reach—neck and shoulders, waist and lower back—with your gloved hand. Next attach the glove to your handle and apply two more squirts. Sweep the tool "up and down, from side to side, making sure you cover the whole middle," Joss says. Finish "with large circular motions around the hip and lower back area" to blend.

**Fix mistakes.** The minefield, Joss says, is your spine just above your shoulder blades, which even if covered can be poorly blended. She uses a mist formula here to fix harsh lines. "Gently bend forward, bowing your head, and raise your arm [with the canister] up over your back," she says. "Spray from side to side from above your head, and the mist falls gently and evenly onto the back." Keep at least six inches of distance between the can and your skin.

## IT'S B-A-A-A-CNE

Your best bet for getting rid of pimples on the back is to go to a pro. Spa and dermatologist's-office devices that emit blue LED light can kill acne-causing bacteria, reduce inflammation associated with acne, and treat large areas. "They're fantastic for bacne that you can't reach or spot-treat at home," says Doris Day, a clinical associate professor of dermatology at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York City. "You can get the whole back in 20 minutes." A series of four to six treatments is best; each one will run about \$350. At home (for a lot less than \$350 times four to six) use a face or body wash with 2 percent salicylic acid on your back. Let it sit for a few minutes so it has time to work before you rinse it off.

BEYONCÉ'S TANNING TIPS: DON'T BE A HOUSE

## GETTING A BACK FACIAL (IT'S A THING)

Cocktails on Beyoncé's yacht in a backless gown? First things first. Kát Rudu, a Los Angeles facialist who treats Kate Beckinsale and Jenna Dewan Tatum, has developed a regimen of "facials" for her celebrity clients' backs.

### She gets rid of bikini lines.

If her clients come in with tan lines (tsk, tsk!), she gives them "an enzyme peel, which makes the back look superb," she says. "It really does get rid of uneven skin tone."

### Download some podcasts.

'Cause you're gonna be here for a while. Rudu's Glowing Jet Set Back Treatment goes something like this: two separate cleanses, one round of microdermabrasion, a sugarcane lactic acid mask, an oxygen infusion, some LED light therapy, and a moisturizing mask. At home, scrub down using an EcoTools Cleansing Mitt and her Coco Honey Papaya Enzymes Cleanser, clarify with a GlamGlow SuperMud mask, and finish with a vitamin C serum. If you don't have a house elf to do it all for you, enlist a husband or friend. You can't go it alone.

**Even DIY ain't cheap.** Laying three facial sheet masks end to end, which Rudu did on a celebrity's back for this year's Golden Globes, uses over \$500 worth of SK-II. That said, Rudu only likes the whole shebang for a superspecial occasion; she has backless-dress brides book two or three treatments.

### Get that 24K magic.

After cleansing, exfoliating, toning, and moisturizing, Rudu starts...gilding. Using a foundation sponge on a totally dry back, she presses a liquid gold highlighter over the entire area, "very gently, with a light hand." (She uses Per-Fékt 10 Liquid Gold Illuminating Perfector.)