

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
**SARAH JAKES ROBERTS**

**POWER**

*Ignite Your  
Confidence  
& Become  
A Force*

**MOVES**

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SARAH JAKES ROBERTS



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*PowerMoves*

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*This book is dedicated to any person who wonders if they are enough. May you discover the power in being yourself and release the gift of you every place you go.*

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Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves,  
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
Actually, who are you *not* to be?  
You are a child of God.  
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We were born to make manifest the  
glory of God that is within us.  
It's not just in some of us;  
it's in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously give other people  
permission to do the same.  
As we're liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

# INTRODUCTION

I'm not sure we spend enough time talking about how quickly our power can be stripped away. Often, we don't even feel it when it happens. Like a pickpocket on a bustling street, one encounter with rejection, betrayal, systemic oppression, pain, or fear can leave our souls with a vacancy that power was meant to fill. Out of desperation we cling to external markers of power. Status—whether it be relational, financial, professional—or notoriety masquerade as fillers for the place where our soul is now empty.

The only thing worse than being powerless is falling for the illusion that power can be amassed by what you have instead of who you are willing to become. One of the earliest definitions of power dates to the thirteenth century. It is defined as the “ability to act or affect something strongly.”<sup>1</sup> The circumstances that have affected your ability are not puny opponents. They have real power.

If you have ever found yourself withdrawing and isolating because you're confused, doubtful, or nervous, it's not because you are weak. It's evidence that your power is under attack. For most of us it was taken before we even realized how precious it was. When we experience distress, it doesn't just wound us; it robs us. It drains us of power before we can even patch the hole.

You might be able to acknowledge that you have been changed by that theft. You may agree that you have been drained. But did you know that you don't have to accept this inwardly frustrated state you're in? The reclamation of your power is an act of defiance. Your days of faking it until you make it are over.

You're finally ready to acknowledge that you have been grasping for confidence, strength, and joy to no avail. No, I'm going to serve you into facing off with the ideologies, memories, oppression, and fears that have turned you into a shell of who you know you can be and declare to them and for yourself that power moves.

That trauma does not get to keep your power hostage. Shame does not get to hold your tongue. Rejection cannot stifle your creativity. Fear cannot dictate your destiny. People-pleasing cannot hijack your authenticity. It may have had the power to rob you of your yesterday, but it doesn't get to have another second of your destiny.

There is not a message I am more passionate about right now than the fluidity of power. I want us to do more than acknowledge the power of what has limited us. I want us to recognize that power can be restored. My life has been marked by the evidence of this truth. My relationship with God has awakened me to more than just a life of penance and remorse. I have discovered that dry bones can live again, joy does come in the morning, and abundant life exists after heartbreak.

I am going to share with you what I've learned about reclaiming and redefining power. It is going to be liberating in ways you didn't even realize you needed, and the best part of it all is that it won't require you to pretend. A truly powerful existence cannot be built on a lie. So the only request I have is honesty. There will be moments when these words require reflection.

The truth that surfaces may not be something you're ready for anyone else to hear. That's okay. Where you start may not be where you land, but until you learn to make space for your truth, you cannot tap into the fullness of God's goodness concerning your life, nor can you reasonably expect anyone else to do the same. I'm honored to be your guide on this journey of reclamation. I've already prayed that God would grant me wisdom, insight, and clarity to lead you back to power. You won't believe how much more there is to you than this.

## CHAPTER 1

# CLAMPED DOWN

**I** want to start by saying, if you're one of those people who know better and *instantly* do better, I'm probably going to be that person in your friend circle whom you roll your eyes at constantly. It's okay. Everyone has one, two, or maybe three of those types of friends. You need us in your life. We keep you humble. If you're not one of those people and you have the ability to know something but need to let it marinate before you activate it in your life, then welcome home! I am your people.

Over time many things in my life have moved from the marination stage into the activation stage. For example, I didn't just become someone who enjoyed working out four to five times a week. I got to a stage in my life where the articles I read about health and fitness made it clear that the key to overall wellness would require that cardio and strength training become a part of my lifestyle. Did I close the article, grab running shoes, and never look back? I did no such thing. I had to let it marinate for a little while before activating it into my habits.

Sometimes, when I shop online, I load up my cart with things I like but not necessarily things I will buy. After I'm finished perusing the site, I go look at the cart, my total, and bank account and then determine what, if anything, will actually be coming to my doorstep. Do you think that those items are just sitting in my cart doing nothing? Of course not—they're marinating.

My "marinating before activating" theory is how I sized up therapy before actually reaching out to a professional. It's the same way I ruminate on tough conversations before actually bringing them up. I don't even make

a hair decision before letting it marinate first. There are many things that have been activated in my life as a result of marination before activation.

Anyone who knows their way around the kitchen knows that marinating is not required, but for the right recipes it can make a huge difference. When meat or veggies are marinating, they are placed in a combination of oil, seasoning, spices, and sauces to add flavor or to tenderize the meat. When time is short and preparation is a luxury, I don't have the time to play *Top Chef* in the kitchen. But when I do have the bandwidth and I want the results of my time in the kitchen to be memorable, I take the time to create a marinade.

When it comes to life decisions, I need time to sit with ideas before allowing them to transform my identity. I take the time to ponder them in my heart and to examine what ways I will have to grow in order for the idea to become a tangible truth that can activate a healthier version of myself. There have been many instances in the past when I have set out to cook a new dish that required marination and overestimated my availability and energy. Sometimes the meat stayed sealed in a bag for longer than I anticipated, but the extra time worked in my favor and the meat was infused with even richer flavor.

Then there are occasions when ordering in or cooking something fast and easy makes more sense than the culinary experience I have in mind. I leave the meat to marinate but it inevitably goes bad, and I choose comfort and ease over what could have been an adventure for my taste buds. The same thing happens when concepts that can transform my identity, expression, and relationships are marinating. The results are either an adventure that yields beautiful change or a commitment to choosing ease over braving the unknown. I have a few things that are stuck in the marination phase for me right now, and only time will tell if I'll find the courage and energy to move them into activation.

One of the things marinating right now has to do with a décor decision for our bedroom. I've read a few different blogs that all say we should be utilizing our bedroom exclusively as a place for rest or adult time. Have you heard that? Essentially, you should avoid using your bedroom for taking meetings, responding to emails, watching television, or, umm . . . writing books.

Evidently when your bedroom is reserved for sleeping or sexy time, it trains your mind and body to disassociate from the stresses of life and work.

The concept makes perfect sense in theory. As long as my children live in the house with me, however, my chances for privacy outside my bedroom are slimmer than I was in 2013. Therefore, that novel idea will stay in the marination stage for the foreseeable future. I can tell you right now there's no way I'd be able to finish this book or an episode of *Bridgerton* if I adhered to that rule.

My commitment to having a television in my husband, Touré's, and my bedroom taught me a valuable lesson about how so many lose touch with power without even realizing it. A couple of years ago we moved into a rental home. My priority is usually getting it set up in the first day or so so that we're settled enough to rest and shower with minimal stress. Still, it doesn't quite feel like home until the television is set up. Fortunately, at the new house the owners said it was easier for them to leave the television in our bedroom than dismount it and patch the wall where it was hanging.

A few months into living in the home, we hopped in bed after a long day. We were ready to unwind with an episode of our favorite show. I grabbed the remote and pointed it to the television. Nothing happened. I exchanged the batteries in the remote with fresh batteries from a different controller. I extended my arm and pressed Power again. The black screen didn't budge.

My husband took it as a sign that we should rest and started snoozing. I was not so easily converted. I waved my arms around like a conductor at the philharmonic while I attempted to find the right angle to bring the television to life.

Eventually I got out of the bed and unplugged the TV, and then plugged it back in. Pressed the button on the actual device. Nothing. As a last resort I grabbed my husband's clippers out of his suitcase and tested the outlet. Maybe the breaker needed to be switched or a circuit was blown. The clippers began to hum as soon as I clicked them on. Since I didn't buy the TV I had no idea whether it was still under warranty or had a history of malfunctioning.

Through a process of elimination, I could confidently say that the problem wasn't the remote and it wasn't the outlet. The problem was happening inside the television. We travel and work so much that our TV time had become more of a treat than a routine, and it was impossible to gauge when it had stopped working. All I know is that somewhere along the

way the TV went from being the main attraction in the room to nothing more than a dark screen taking up space on the wall.

## A FORCE IN THE MAKING

What was so interesting about the TV no longer working was that it's not that it lacked power. The power was flowing, but there was something internally keeping the TV from converting the power into function.

If you've ever been in a room or environment and felt incapable of demonstrating confidence, then you may be more like the busted TV than you realize. If we could peek inside your thoughts in those moments, we'd see that you're not without ideas to contribute or a perspective to share, but you can't figure out how to get what's in you out of you.

This could happen when being introduced to a new social circle, contributing in a work environment, or even engaging in intimate relationships. When you are unable to connect the dots between who you sense you could become and who you presently are, it doesn't just cause internal frustration—it renders you powerless.

You don't defend yourself when misunderstood. You don't trust that your perspective can add value. You downplay your ideas and convince yourself that maintaining the status quo is better than introducing something new. You allow the things you believe you can make better to stay the same, and as a result you're not the only one rendered powerless, and your environment is less potent too.

Fortunately there's a secret advantage to being like that television that should give you a sense of relief. It would have been a major headache if there were faulty wires in the wall of the home that needed to be replaced or some other electrical issue hindering the flow of power. But the television had access to power. The issue was with the device, which meant our focus could be directed to converting the power it had access to, to power it to come back to life.

You're probably thinking, *That's great for the TV, but what does that have to do with me?* You either have access to power but not conversion or no access at all. Here's a spoiler alert you won't mind knowing: there's no such thing as no access to power. Your breath is evidence that power is still accessible to you. If you have breath, you have access. But until we go



within and figure out what's not functioning properly, we can't take advantage of the access to power that we possess.

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Your breath is evidence that power is still accessible to you. If you have breath, you have access.

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Did you play with a water hose on a hot day as a kid? It's a fun way to stay cool and keep kids busy that my parents turned to quite frequently. I'm not sure if your water hose was as fancy as ours, but when we were outside playing, we had two ways to turn the hose on and off. One was by turning the knob on the base of the hose where it connected to the house. Immediately the water would begin to flow. The other way was much more sophisticated and involved grabbing the water hose, folding it together, and stopping the flow. Unsurprisingly, the latter method doesn't work without initiating the first one.

This is a perfect example of what happens to us when the power we have access to ceases to flow into our life. When the power is flowing, it's not much different from water gushing through a water hose at full speed. It moves without restriction. It takes on many different forms without being committed to any particular way of being. When your power is flowing, you have the ability to act or affect something strongly.

In this flow our capacity for what's possible increases and transforms our perspective about ourselves and the lives we've been chosen to live. No wonder we feel blocked when we can't convert that kind of power. Can I offer you a gift that can help to unblock some of what you're experiencing? Right now, in this very moment, power is on and flowing in your direction.

Can you let that sink in? Say this aloud: "Power is flowing in my direction." No matter how much disarray you're experiencing or how dull the routine is that you're trapped in, power is still flowing in your direction. Undoubtedly, there may be something clamping down on the flow, but doesn't it feel good to know that power is closer than it appears? If you're struggling to accept that as truth, it's okay. Just let it marinate for now.

There is something about the way you are presently wired that is keeping the power you have access to from converting into the confident, resilient, and bold person you desire to become. I'm going to help you

untangle the wires that make you feel like you're short-circuiting when you should be moving with intentionality, authority, and confidence.

I know you're probably ready to roll up your sleeves and dismantle the obstacle standing in the way of you being powerful. What if it's not *something* that is in the way, but *someone*? Until we discover what beliefs, or lack thereof, are clamping your flow, you will have temporary bursts of power but nothing sustainable. The vicious cycle of feeling like you're moving in the right direction and then suddenly slung a thousand feet back will continue until you stop trying altogether or do the work of this book.

I know we're just warming up here, but I want to drop a truth bomb that will open you up to fully receive all that this message offers. Your power is not going to come from an opportunity, position, or person. Power is an inside job, and you can waste time trying to pursue power from people and things, or you can allow it to accumulate and then erupt from the inside.

Your situation may seem dire and a shift in your environment may absolutely be necessary, but nothing changes until you change. You are in your way. That may seem like a strong statement, but I will unpack it with you. Your loyalty to the way you assume things should be is keeping you from showing up powerfully in the way things are. This in no way absolves the outside forces or systems that may be contributing to your clamped flow, but it should empower you to identify the way you may be giving them a license to stunt your determination and desire.

You are not irreparably broken, incapable, or inadequate. It's not even necessarily the lack of examples in your world. The ultimate limitation you're experiencing is the result of constant internal and external pressure to conform, stay silent, perform, or achieve. If that pressure is not released, it eventually ends up having more power to stop you than you have to break free from it. If you're like me the application of that pressure did not happen overnight or as a result of one particular thing, but it was a slow tightening over time.

By the way, I want to take a moment and simply say, I'm sorry. I know that I may not have applied the pressure you're experiencing. I know I likely didn't play a role in your silent suffering, but still, I'm sorry that you've lost your way. I know what it's like to feel powerless in a world that seems like it's outpacing you. A world where it feels like your truth is better left unspoken. It's scary. It's lonely. The only thing more frightening than

being powerless is the fear of how being powerful may disrupt your environment.

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The only thing more frightening than being powerless is the fear of how being powerful may disrupt your environment.

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Don't worry. I'm not going to take you from zero to one hundred. I think you'll find that this approach to reclaiming your power is considerate and not adversarial to the variables you have to navigate. Being powerful does not have to come at the expense of trampling on opportunities and connections that you value. I wholeheartedly believe that you can walk in power, love, humility, and kindness all at the same time. Jesus is a beautiful example of this truth. It's essential that you become discontent with the way things are and hungry for what could be so that we can work together to get you to the most powerful you.

With each turn of a page, you will feel yourself reclaiming strength, confidence, creativity, and vision. You're going to break through what has limited you—armed with the power to never be limited again. You are not meant to be a broken fixture in your world that resembles something familiar and useful but is just taking up space. You're a force in the making.

## COURAGEOUSLY AUTHENTIC

Let's lay some groundwork first, shall we? There is no breakthrough without breakdown. This moment carries breakthrough for you. I've prayed that God would give me divine wisdom and insight on how to awaken you to what disrupted your ability to be a channel for power. That's where the breakdown comes into play. It's time for you to fully step into the powerful being He had in mind when He decided the world needed your imprint.

In laying out the road map to lead you to the powerful version of yourself, I realize that it could feel overwhelming to do an overhaul of your life. We're going to take this step-by-step. We'll analyze where you experienced a breakdown between your most powerful self and the fixture on the wall of your life that you have become.

It would have been nice for me to receive a warning from the television before it died. I would have even taken a flickering picture to let me know that trouble was on the way. At least the electric company sends a notice before it shuts off your power. But there is no notice when you are existing in a situation that will ultimately disconnect you from the power you're supposed to convert into abundant life. It happens so subtly that most of us don't even realize it's happened at all.

There is a wide range of culprits that zap our power. They can be overtly flagrant like heartbreak, abuse, betrayal, and abandonment or inconspicuously draining like the demands of success, productivity, or support for your community. It's much easier to attribute the loss of our power to the big moments that have left us wounded, but the subtle paper cuts that rob us along the way can be just as damaging.

The loss of power shows up in different ways for everyone. Here are a few signs that can indicate you're experiencing a loss of power:

- You find yourself habitually conforming to ideas that contrast sharply with what you really want or believe.
- You feel enraged when asked to fulfill obligations that you set the precedent to complete.
- You feel resentful at other people's ability to freely express themselves.
- You find yourself overreacting to trivial issues.
- You feel a constant longing and discontentment.
- You choose appeasing others over advocating for yourself.
- You feel trapped inside your life, regardless of how many things should be a source of joy.
- You feel annoyed when people speak, especially incorrectly, on your behalf or about you in your presence.

For many of us feeling powerless is something that happens over time. No one is born powerless. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. From the moment you were an embryo in your mother's womb, you began disrupting things. Smells began to make her ill. Her clothing had to give way to make room for your growth. She tossed and turned for comfort because you unapologetically took up space.