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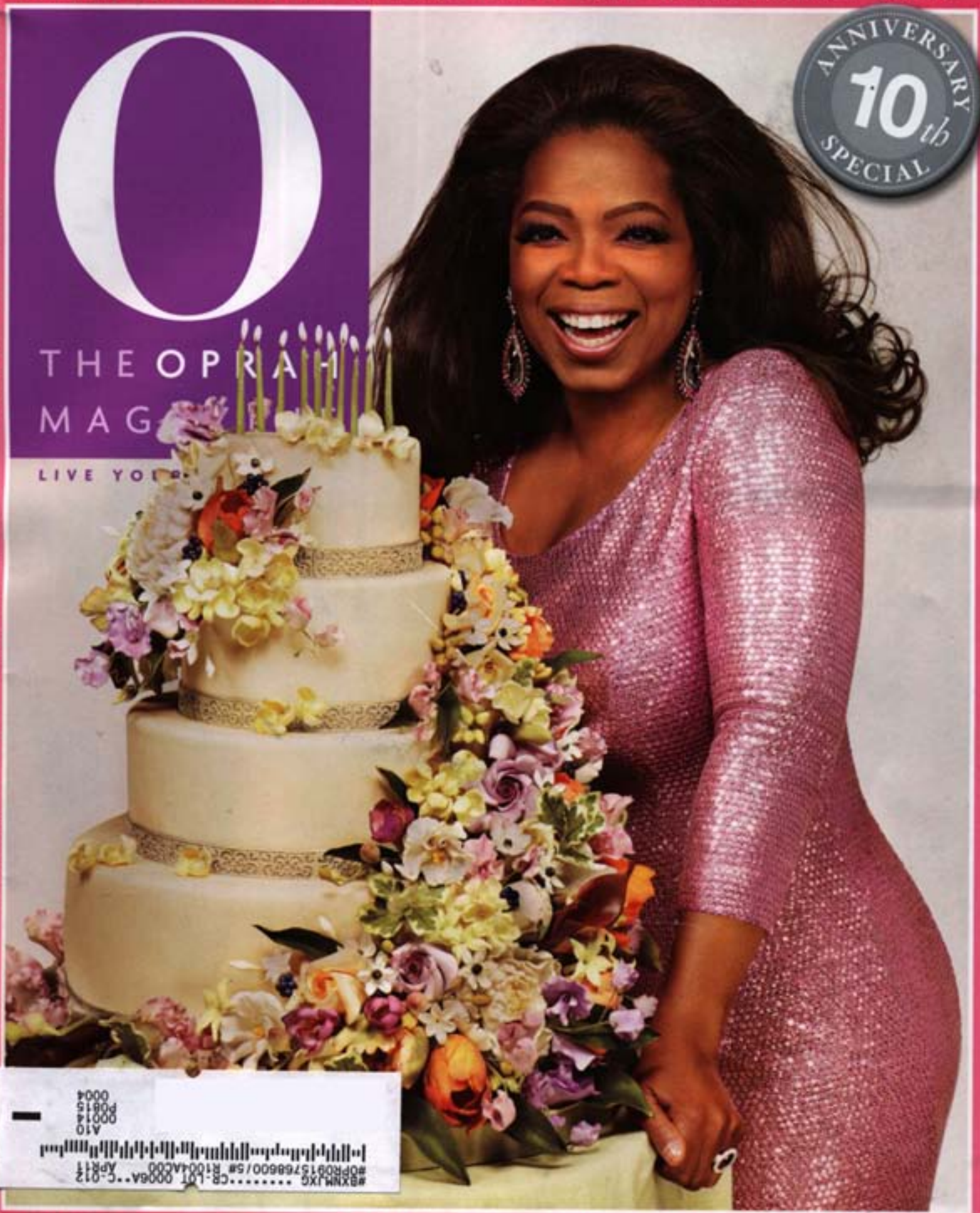

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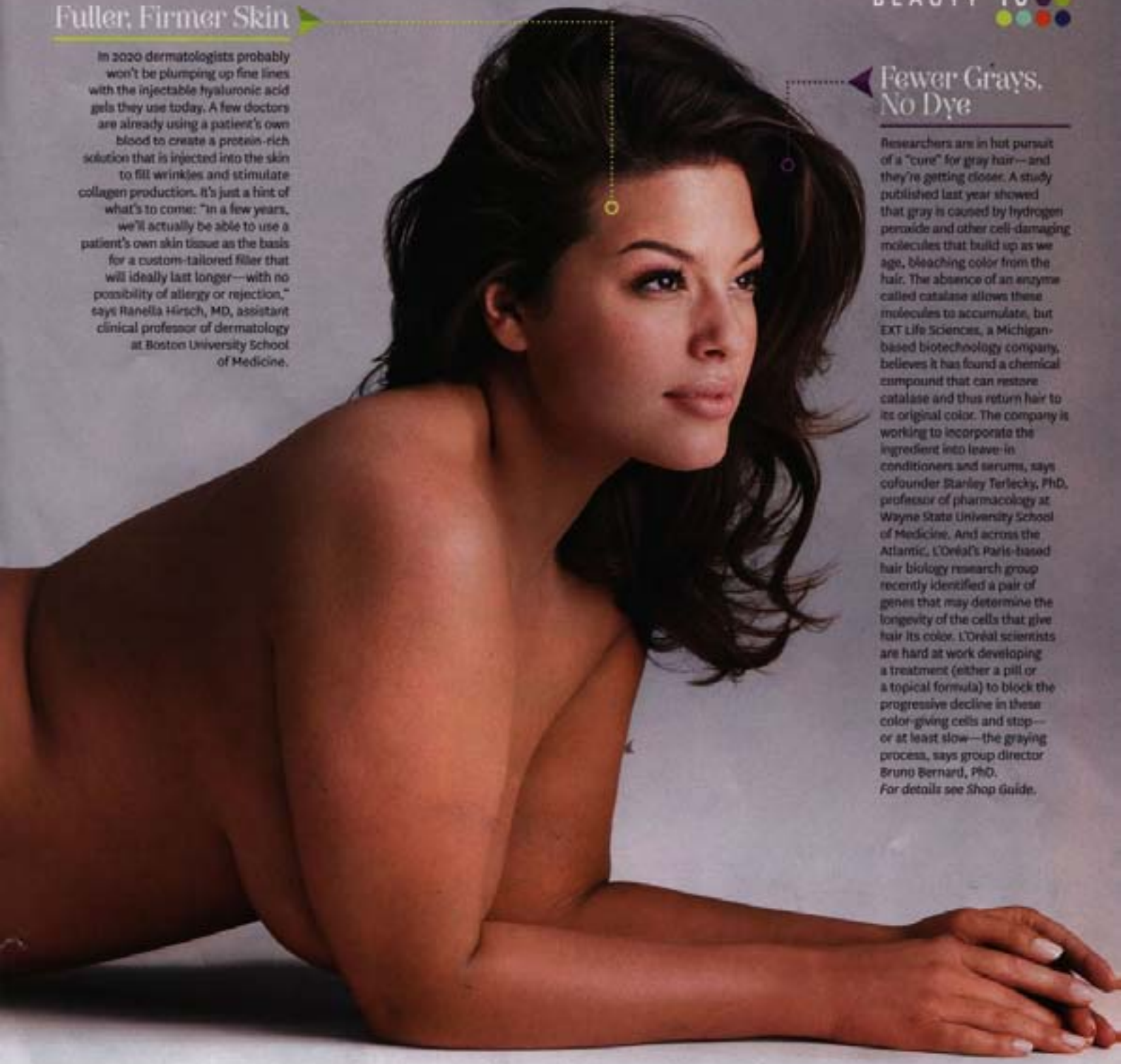
Fuller, Firmer Skin

In 2020 dermatologists probably won't be plumping up fine lines with the injectable hyaluronic acid gels they use today. A few doctors are already using a patient's own blood to create a protein-rich solution that is injected into the skin to fill wrinkles and stimulate collagen production. It's just a hint of what's to come: "In a few years, we'll actually be able to use a patient's own skin tissue as the basis for a custom-tailored filler that will ideally last longer—with no possibility of allergy or rejection," says Ranella Hirsch, MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Boston University School of Medicine.



Fewer Grays, No Dye

Researchers are in hot pursuit of a "cure" for gray hair—and they're getting closer. A study published last year showed that gray is caused by hydrogen peroxide and other cell-damaging molecules that build up as we age, bleaching color from the hair. The absence of an enzyme called catalase allows these molecules to accumulate, but EXT Life Sciences, a Michigan-based biotechnology company, believes it has found a chemical compound that can restore catalase and thus return hair to its original color. The company is working to incorporate the ingredient into leave-in conditioners and serums, says cofounder Stanley Terlecky, PhD, professor of pharmacology at Wayne State University School of Medicine. And across the Atlantic, L'Oréal's Paris-based hair biology research group recently identified a pair of genes that may determine the longevity of the cells that give hair its color. L'Oréal scientists are hard at work developing a treatment (either a pill or a topical formula) to block the progressive decline in these color-giving cells and stop—or at least slow—the graying process, says group director Bruno Bernard, PhD.

For details see Shop Guide.

THE BEAUTY OF STEM CELLS

A stem cell is an exquisitely blank slate—it has the potential to become a nerve, a muscle, a retina. Or...breast tissue, a hair follicle, elastin. Now that researchers are beginning to tap into these cells' programmable potential—to treat cancer, paralysis, cardiac disease (see page 152 for more on the cells' promise in rebuilding damaged hearts)—the science will inevitably make its way into the cosmetics industry. (Remember, Botox was first developed to treat muscle spasms of the eye, and the hyaluronic acid in facial fillers was used for lubricating joints.) Stem cells could potentially create new collagen, grow new hair, and restore skin color in people with pigmentation disorders, says David Goldberg, MD, director of laser research at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Stunning prospects, aren't they?