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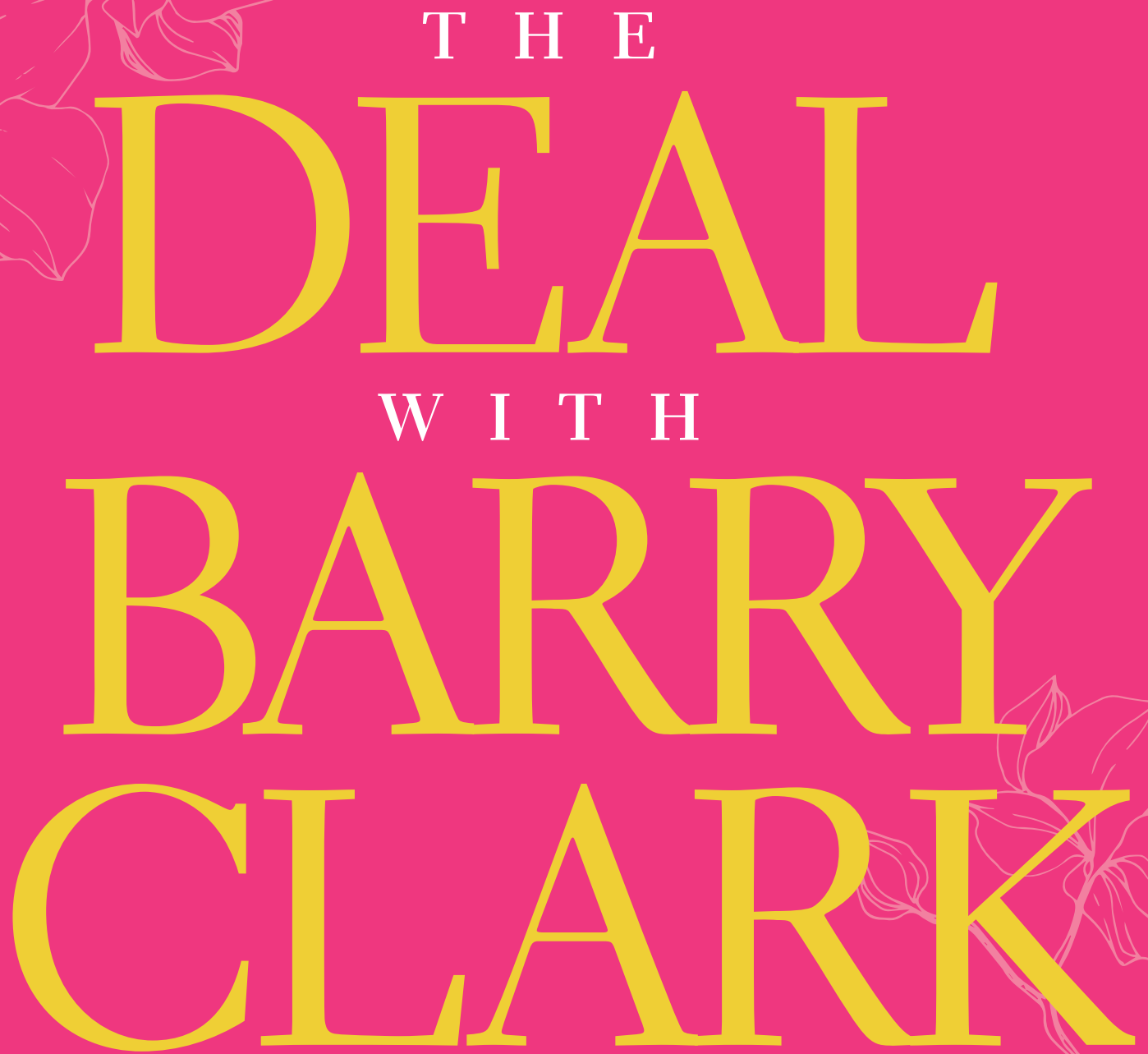
MEET THE GANJIERS

The certified masters of weed

KISSED BY A FLOWER

California pioneer **Flowerkist** made
CBD an essential ingredient in
high-end skincare





T H E
DEAL
W I T H
BARRY
CLARK

The Flowerkist co-founder shares what it takes to launch a business
in the booming CBD skincare market. TEXT STEPHANIE WILSON



Barry Clark's in the business of making money off of money, but that's not how he describes himself.

"I'm a deal guy," he says, and his bio describes him as a "capital markets professional"—aka the money guy, the man who raises big funds so brands can do business. He knows more than most that businesses need money to make money. So he's made a career out of helping companies raise some—and he's good at it. Like, really good. For awhile there in the 1980s, he was a top-producing financial consultant for Merrill Lynch, then he became the VP of investments for Prudential Securities. In the decades since, he's taken six companies public, run a microcap investor relations firm, and handled corporate development for a company that literally mines for gold. He's the man with a plan for raising capital, and Barry Clark is all business.

Lately, Barry's been raising money for a business of his own. It's a change of pace for him, being on the operations side of the startup thing. From this fresh perspective, he's got a new appreciation for just how hard it is to do what he does. Raising money

hasn't been simple. "It's easy for everybody else to spend the money, but it's really hard for me to raise it," he says. Especially since it's a cannabis-related business, and operating in the space is a whole lot harder than in more traditional industries. Working with cannabis comes with a whole lot of inherent risk.

Barry hopes it'll turn out to be a risk worth taking.

KISSED BY THE FLOWER

Barry's company's origin story begins back in 2014 when he and his (now-ex) wife Stephanie moved back to California from Montana. They were relatively new parents of triplets—two girls and a boy, age 6 at the time. "We'd been hearing about this legalization of marijuana coming for a couple of years," he tells me over Zoom in early March from his California home. "I'm a guy who's in recovery, I haven't had a drink or illegal drug in 23 years now. And so I thought, oh my God, they're gonna legalize marijuana, I've got three little kids, this is the worst thing I've ever heard of."

He needed to understand the market, and he was shocked by what he found out. Turns out, the War on Drugs propaganda he'd been hearing all his life was wrong. "I learned, wow, there are these cannabinoids that have medicinal properties that are helping people, curing cancer, stopping seizures," he says, an incredulous edge to his tone. "It got my attention."

Laying in bed with Stephanie one night, flipping through a magazine, Barry felt a familiar pang of an addiction demanding to be met. "Let me put it this way: I had

to do a deal," he says. "I had to do a deal; I had to think of something, had to think of something we could do."

Seeing the emerging market in medical cannabis, they decided to focus on topical hemp-based products, choosing to explore the idea of adding CBD to skincare products or face creams—something no one was really doing at the time. Sure, there were a handful of lotions and pain creams that incorporated the powerful cannabinoid, but none of them were destined for high-end med spas or the shelves of Neiman Marcus. A luxury CBD skincare product line didn't yet exist, and they set out to change that.

The idea inspired Barry to put everything on the line. "I went out and borrowed \$1.2 million in unsecured notes to get this thing started," he says. "I didn't have any money to put into it, I didn't even have so much as a business plan. I had an idea, I stood on a podium, and I told a story. And I got guys to loan me 300 grand. That was enough to get the first samples [of a CBD pain cream Flowerkist developed] in. Then I went back to those guys and let them try the pain cream. And I got another million dollars within 20 minutes."

With the initial funding in place and a product with a ton of potential on the way, the Clarks realized it was time to build a brand. While laying in bed one night, inspiration struck Barry once again. "We were trying to think of a name for the company, and I'm flipping through a cannabis magazine and see this beautiful purple glistening female marijuana plant with all

the resin, and it's just gorgeous, so I think 'kissed by the flower'—which became Flowerkist.”

Stephanie focused on the development of beauty products and makeup, letting her creative side shine. As the company's co-founder, she wanted Flowerkist to reflect her interests and personality, her refined sensibilities.

“Stephanie is a 51-year-old mother of triplets and she's stunningly gorgeous,” Barry says. “She's a grandmother, an entrepreneur, a visionary, taking care of three little kids as a single mother—and she could be a Victoria's Secret model. She's a drop-dead gorgeous bombshell woman.”

Fittingly, Stephanie envisioned a brand that was elegant, feminine, and fun. She developed a CBD-infused lipgloss and encased it in a luxe container topped with a folding mirror. It would have looked at home at the cosmetics counter at a high-end department store. Her insistence on elegant, functional packaging and branding elevated Flowerkist above other CBD products entering the market in 2017. That may not sound like it was that long ago, but things in cannabis operate in dog years, so 2017 was forever ago. Back then, most Americans hadn't even heard of CBD yet. So when Flowerkist introduced one of the world's first CBD-infused lipsticks at a marijuana conference in 2017, the market was theirs for the taking. “A distributor approached us to buy 10,000 units a month,” Barry says. “Stephanie was making these CBD lipsticks at the kitchen table, so we could only produce about a hundred of them a month, so that was out the window. But at

that point, we knew we had something,” he says.

“And we also knew that we weren't smart enough to market it.”

WINDOWS TO THE WORLD

Barry went on a search for a marketing guy, and he wound up connecting with *the* marketing guy, Rowland Hanson. You may not know the name, but you know his work: if it weren't for him, Bill Gates might have prevailed

with naming Microsoft's graphical user computer system “Interface Manager” instead of what Hanson suggested: “Windows.” (The marketing genius is also behind the 1990s infomercial for Bowflex, once ubiquitous on late-night television and said to be the highest-revenue-generating infomercial of all time. He knows how to make a brand or a product connect with target audiences.)

Barry says Hanson took one



look at the licensing agreement Flowerkist had with the company that had developed Flowerkist's pain cream. "And Rowland being Rowland, he blew it full of holes. So we wound up going to London and meeting with a group called the Dabur Research Foundation [DRF], a \$5 billion pharmaceutical company in India that is the number one ayurvedic medicine company in the world."

Over the last several years, DRF has been evaluating how to optimize the benefits of CBD-infused skincare products, and they've concluded that CBD alone won't deliver optimal results. But combine some CBD with specific plant stem cells and select ayurvedic essential oils, and you just may see some incredible results.

According to Derm Store dermatologist Dr. Ava Shamban, plant stem cells can help stimulate better cell turnover, and their strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects help to protect against sun damage and prevent wrinkles, leading to more youthful skin cells at the surface of the skin. There is evidence that plant stem cells can promote the production of new collagen, which can make skin appear more youthful. Dermatologist Dr. Sonoa Au adds that using products that contain plant stem cells can help keep your skin looking young by fighting off wrinkles, protecting against sun damage, and reducing inflammation.

While developing its new skincare line, Flowerkist leveraged DRF's expertise in plant-based ingredients to explore the healthful benefits of selected plant stem cells. They screened over 35,000 plant species for their medical

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use, settling on blends that incorporate the all-natural power of ginseng, grapeseed, bilberry, licorice, curcumin, and sea buckthorn. They opted for broad-spectrum CBD, which contains a wider array of naturally occurring cannabinoids, plant terpenes, flavinoids, vitamins, minerals, and plant proteins of the original hemp source than CBD isolate does. Using a patent-pending





“applied emulsion technology,” which aids in rapid absorption, the formulations deliver the natural nutrients deep into the skin, amplifying their effectiveness.

The resulting three-part product line (The Silver Collection, \$249) is formulated with some seriously effective all-natural ingredients, including broad-spectrum CBD, plant stem cells, and ayurvedic oils and water. “We developed a serum, a face cream, and a night cream,” Barry says, “and the results are incredible.”

Barry says that in 60-day clinical trials—backed up by actual scientific data—the products in Flowerkist’s Silver Collection were “proven to have the ability to

reduce the appearance of a woman’s age on her facial skin by up to eight years by decreasing the fine lines and wrinkles and a reduction in pore cell size, and elimination of up to 96 percent of the bacteria on the face.”

The Silver Collection is available now on Flowerkist’s website, and the proven regimen is destined for medspa offices and dermatologist offices in short order. Keep an eye out for the flower-of-life-inspired logo—it’s going to start popping up in more and more places as more mainstream beauty editors get their hands on the product line and become evangelists themselves.

Flowerkist’s already started

grabbing attention in beauty circles: *Aesthetic Everything’s* 2019 Aesthetic and Cosmetic Medicine Awards honored Flowerkist as the “top breakout company,” and the 2021 CEW Beauty Creators Awards recognized Flowerkist as a finalist in the CBD beauty category. The brand’s on the brink of blowing up.

So Barry’s handing over the reigns to a new CEO to run the business side of things. “I am a guy who can raise money, but I’m not an operator,” he says. “We just got to the point where this is way too sophisticated. We’ve got these products that are real, so I resigned as CEO—the thing got bigger than I ever dreamed.”