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Monsoon Demo
read@alasangazine.com

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The Team

Editor In Chief
Pokuaa Adu

Creative Director
Bright Owusu-Konadu

CONTRIBUTORS

Magazine Designer
Kevin Blackmore

Writers
Mame D. Adjei
Aphua Larbi
JB
Adwoa Ayiwah Fofie
Ami Shikah
Tiffany Soulbird

Feature
RiaBoss

Acknowledgements & Special Thanks

RiaBoss
Ni'Mat Raheem-Parry

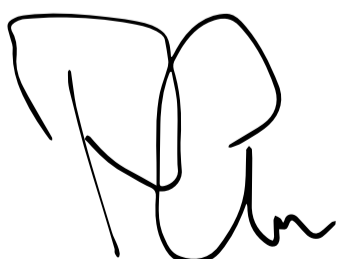
Dear esteemed readers,

Seasons are important to us, whether to signal new beginnings or give us something to look forward to after difficult periods. Change gives us rest, as well as inspiration. The December period in Accra (and all over the world) is no different. For some, it's a celebration. Eleven months of hustling, surviving, [adulting], creating, sky-rocketing inflation AND still rebounding from the effects of COVID-19 culminates into 4 weeks of friends, family and Bloom Bar. It's the holidays, and no matter its personal significance, it's a moment to be grateful for what one has.

For others, it's an opportunity to wave goodbye to the old and usher in the new. Closing the curtain on a past year opens us up to the exciting opportunities that the new year has to offer. Reinvention, growth and inspiration tie easily into the concept of a reset on January 1st. And yet, for others, it's just another month that comes around every year. Maybe a little boring, but there is comfort in the cycles of life. That, no matter what, there are things you can always count on, like the passage of time and alasa season.

The first edition of anything is always special. Our hopes and dreams are captured in those initial wobbly steps onto a new path. If you're reading this, it means you're officially a part of our history. Enjoy our inaugural issue as we chronicle the different moods of December and the opportunities to experience it in real time.

This edition captures special holiday memories that we cherish and new traditions that we hope to introduce. Family bonding, nights out and delicious food remain a staple. For inhabitants of Accra, we are real-time witnesses of the transformation that the holidays have brought to the city in terms of art and entertainment. It is no surprise that our most talented are at the fore-front of exciting experiences that draw larger crowds every year. Every facet of life is impacted by the season, from the Makola Queen showing more business acumen than any B-school graduate, to the experimental DJ who's been honing his craft all year. Whether attending the Masquerade Festival in the oil city or checking in at all 8 days of Polo Beach Club, holidays are all about reliving fond memories and creating new ones. Thank you for starting this journey with us and welcome to the first edition of the Alásà magazine.



Pokuaa
Editor-in-Chief



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Bloom Bar and the Ghost of Venus Past

If we were to pick a venue that captured the spirit of December in Accra, this place comes to mind. The signature tree, lights and open court are well known in the city, and a blueprint for outdoor lounge spaces since 2016. Bloom Bar is the brainchild of Kofi Adjei-Mafo and Keith Edem Aweke, Ghanaian entrepreneurs and nightlife innovators. It was a no-brainer to feature this staple of December events, especially as it celebrates 5 years on the year-round social calendar. Five years since its inception, there have been several new establishments creating their own special vibe, but Bloom continues to be special. At last count, Kidi, Magnom and R2Bees have immortalized Bloom bar in Accra culture and in the fabric of the city's history.

Not quite a club, not quite a spot, Bloom bar rides the sweet spot between pre-game and night out, that Venus Lounge vacated in the year of its inception. Anyone that frequented the lounge, understood the importance of a location where the after work crowd and the club crowd merged before they went their separate ways. Bloom filled that gap with ease.

Bloom is for dancing. The music is good from opening to close and, throwing away the typical formula of saving the best for last, patrons start to melt into the jams as soon as they walk in. It doesn't matter whether it's at 6pm or 12am. The roster of talented DJs rotate all the party hits, (yes, including All I Do Is Win), for as long as there are feet on the dance floor. It's very common to see half the crowd in their office Friday wear and the other in club fits getting down and dirty without a care in the world. The energy stays up all night, and "I'll leave at 10pm." turns into "One more song." with ease.

The cocktail menu is the stuff of legends. Most locations have signature drinks that they are known for. However, not since Venus' Long Island Iced Tea has a bar taken this job so seriously. When the bar first appeared in the corner of its courtyard, it broke barriers with the fish bowl™; an almost science-fiction manifestation of hangovers to come. Two shandy bottles were flipped mouthfirst into a potion of several spirits. An ode to pre-pandemic pre-gaming, this was a communal drink, and the act of sharing a fish bowl with friends jump-started the highly social culture of Bloom nights. Since then, the fishbowls have been joined by the fast track, which lives up to its name in that it puts you on a speedy one-way to party like it's 1995, the wild Lemonade and Bellinis, all favorites made by a heavy-handed bartender.

You don't have to wait until December to partake in the Bloom experience. They host several events throughout the year which culminate into the

holiday parties and club nights. From sports and You don't have to wait until December to partake in the Bloom experience. They host several events throughout the year which culminate into the holiday parties and club nights. From sports and album watch parties to Independence Day parties and, most recently, All you can drink happy Thursdays, there's no limit to the possibilities the space provides.

Bloom bar has always been a living breathing organism. With each year, the bar has grown spatially and conceptually, keeping up with growing interest from Ghanaians and the diaspora. The feel of the space remains the same, in that talented DJs conduct the mood set by voluminous drinks. However, with each year, the founders have found new additions that cater to the changing needs of the night scene.

It is clear that Bloom bar has been influential in the night scene, encouraging other business owners to push the boundaries on what constitutes a bar/lounge. Whether or not there is a causal relationship is inconsequential, because it begs acknowledgement that Ghanaians (and their guests) want more out of their night time experience and new establishments are ready to respond to those needs.



We all have a childhood Christmas memory. It doesn't matter how old you are, where you're from, or where you live. There's something about Christmas that triggers all the childhood, nostalgic feels. About a few weeks ago, I saw a tweet that read:



Sweet Mommee
@Okornore

What are some of your best Christmas in Ghana memories from your childhood/teens?

and it sent me down the rabbit hole of memories.

For as long as I've lived in Ghana, we, aunts, cousins, uncles et al., would all pull up to my Aunt Gina's house after church on Christmas Day. I couldn't wait! I would pick out my outfit the night before because, obviously, the dress you wore to church would not give you enough room to dance for the older family members to throw money on your head.

We would get there and, as anthropologically accurate as possible, the adults would sit on one side and the cousins, depending on the age group, would congregate at various parts of the house. The cousins that were old enough to drink would always sit outside to talk and laugh. I couldn't wait to grow up so that I, too, would be allowed to drink Baileys with my jollof and chicken, instead of the malt us 10-year-olds were stuck with.

Our mothers would call us to come pick up our plates laden with all the chicken, all the jollof, all the Ghana salad, all the kelewele. Of all the "Ghanaian" special occasion foods, everything you could think of was on the dining table. We would eat and eat till we could no longer eat, but we still had to make room for dessert, typically cake and ice cream.

As we've gotten older, some of us cousins have become parents. Some of us are the aunties the babies ask for food. But, it's still a beautiful feeling to celebrate together. We might be taking shots now instead of drinking Bailey's, and the dessert options have definitely expanded past cake and ice cream, but we're still making memories.

So, Afehyia Pa, readers. Afe sɛsɛi, na y'agye y'ani ankasa!

Old Meets New – Santa’s Biggest Helpers

The end of year holiday season in Ghana has become a thing to witness, participate in or dread, if you are a stressed-out local.

The ability of Ghana to draw a sizeable number of Christmas holiday revelers is still a wonder to everyone; a source of frustration to city-dwellers and envy of our other West African neighbors. The holiday season is a monster of a thing that awakens every December and works itself into a frenzy for about four to six weeks and leaves the country to catch its breath for the rest of the year, as it plots in a quixotic attempt to slay a Christmas monster that keeps getting bigger every year. It draws a mishmash of holiday participants both home and abroad; celebrities and commoners; tourists and returnee Ghanaians.

Ghana has achieved near mythical status/powers as a destination for Christmas partying, reconnecting and discovering ancestral roots, finding peace of mind all in a 6-week period of unacceptable levels of traffic jams from morning till way past midnight.

The traffic jams really signal the advent of the holiday season. It creeps up on commuters slowly initially and then becomes the conversation starter at the water cooler, social media chatter, fodder for dinner conversation at home and the best excuse for tardiness and absenteeism in a country that runs partly on Ghana Man Time (GMT). All the traffic starts in Accra Central, that mysterious place that a lot of us hardly ever visit in a year, but suddenly draws us in with the promise of attractive discounts, the latest fashion and supplies to create the most memorable Christmas one can afford. Some of the biggest markets in the capital are situated within a few kilometers of each other in Accra Central, to avoid confusion for non-Ghanaians.

It is the real epicenter of trade and economic activity in the city and serves other markets like Kejetia in the Ashanti Region. Ghana runs on the backs of market women who rule this commercial hub. There’s Makola Market where the understatedly rich women who run Ghana’s households source everyday items; Kantamanto Market where second-hand clothing baronesses feed the thrift market and sustain Accra drip; Agbogbloshie Market where traders of all kinds deal in fresh produce and

food stuff; and Kejetia Market which is touted as the biggest market in West Africa. The real movers of Ghana’s economy are its market women.

While ground traffic builds up thanks to the seasonal market activities, internet traffic experiences a frenzy of its own. Online market stores lead the charge in the fight for eyeballs and attention on social media. Every social networking site you use as your preferred means of escape is suddenly awash with ads with discounts, promotions and sales of fashion, lifestyle and household items targeted at the rest of us who cannot bamba with the big boys. A new kind of market women is emerging and thriving online. The same ingenuity that has created some of the best supply chain systems in the country has spilled over into the internet sphere with similarly spectacular results.

Instagram accounts that are used as online shops are mostly run by women within the Millennial age bracket, selling used clothes acquired from Kantamanto and cosmetics bought from Makola, as well as providing services like personal grocery shopping for busy people or folks who can’t speak the language of the Accra and Kejetia market women.

The online storefronts are the networks for distributing Makola and Kantamanto goods; the owners are the diplomats who are at once university educated, street smart and internet savvy. These women are sitting at the nexus of bulk-breaking, last mile delivery and zero warehousing cost and are saving a lot of people from being swallowed whole by the open-air markets. The holiday season and its traffic is brought to you in any part of the country by Santa’s biggest helpers both online and at your closest open-air market.

"Things to watch"

In the New Year, there are several resolutions we make to be better. What those resolutions are look like different things to different people. In this new year, I am sharing shows and movies that I particularly enjoyed watching. A lot of the movies are feel good movies because the real world is tiring as it is.

Pachinko

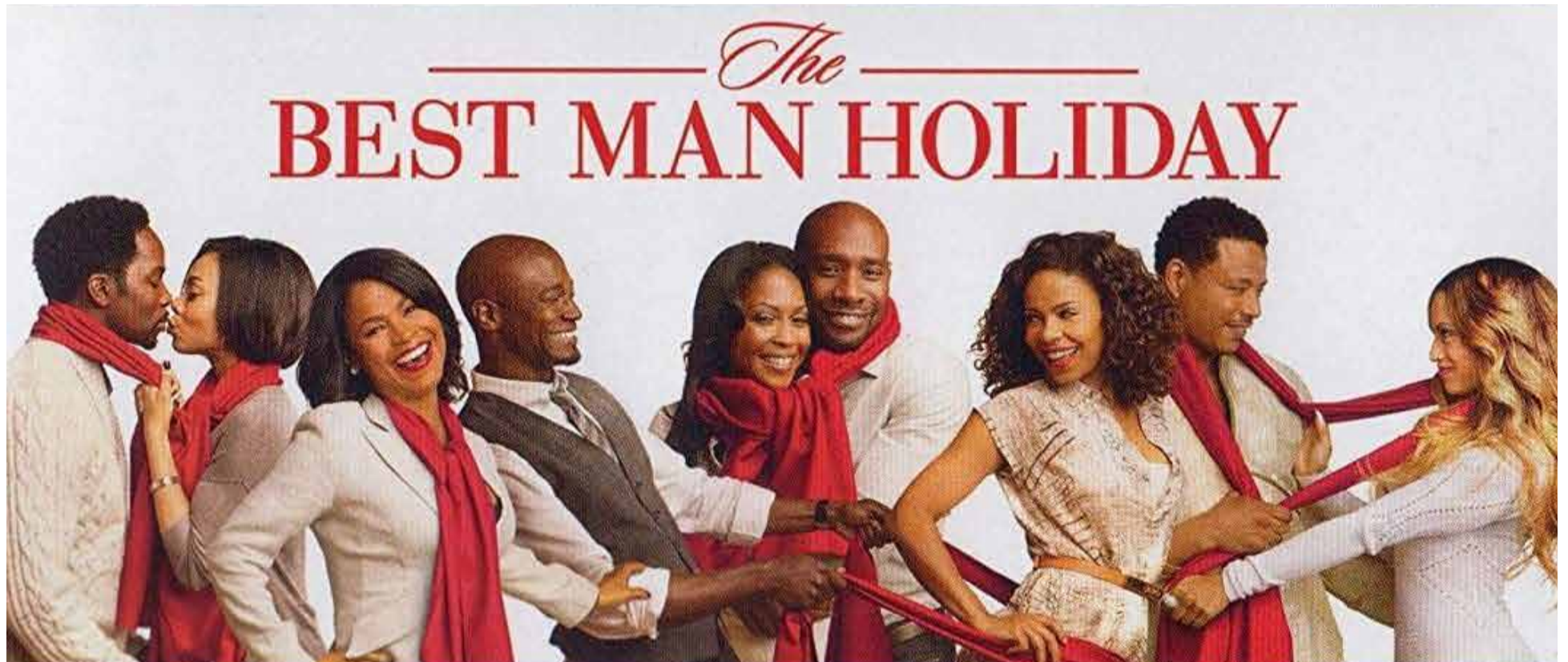
I started watching this show by chance and from the first moment the show draws me in. Pachinko is based on a best-selling books and some of my favourite things to watch were created from books. This show is a Korean show in 3 different languages which can be a lot to follow but I particularly enjoyed that feature of it.

Pachinko follows a Korean immigrant family across four generations as they leave their homeland in their search for a place to survive and thrive. The story is heartbreaking in a lot of ways but also gives us little pockets of joy with the characters. Also, the show has one of the best opening montages I've ever seen; I never skip it.



The Best Man Holiday

Black love, check. Secrets being outed, check. More drama than necessary, check. Christmas spirit, check, check, and check. When the 1st Best Man movie came out, I had to sneak to watch it because my older siblings effectively banned me from it. Thank God for this sequel. This movie sees old friends reuniting for the first time after 15 years for Christmas. I love that we see all the couples, older and celebrating how far they've come. However, it wouldn't be the same if there wasn't some drama, and did they deliver on the drama??? This movie is really great to watch with your significant other but make sure you don't have secrets of your own.



Black Mirror - White Christmas

I know what you're thinking. Why would I include Black Mirror? This particular episode takes place on Christmas Day, and that makes it a Christmas show to watch damn it. Black Mirror is a dystopian show and this episode is no different. Two men wake up in a remote cabin and begin to recount their life stories, each sharing their own disturbing, gruesome tale. As they both finally open up about why they're in the cabin, which is presumably a place of punishment, a surprise plot twist makes us question everything we watched.

This particular entry is very anti-holiday cheer but I think it makes for great Christmas viewing for folks who don't really feel like Christmas. Also, who doesn't like Jon Hamm?



Sylvie's Love

I'll admit this isn't a 'normal' Christmas movie but I first watched this movie in Christmas 2020 and it felt like home. 2020 was a weird, crazy, not-so-terrible but terrible year and somehow, watching this movie around Christmas made me happy that something great came out of the year. This movie is a rom-com through and through. I especially love all the great music it introduced me to and ones I rediscovered. Also, I watched this before Bridgerton, so I got a double dose of Rege-Jean Page.

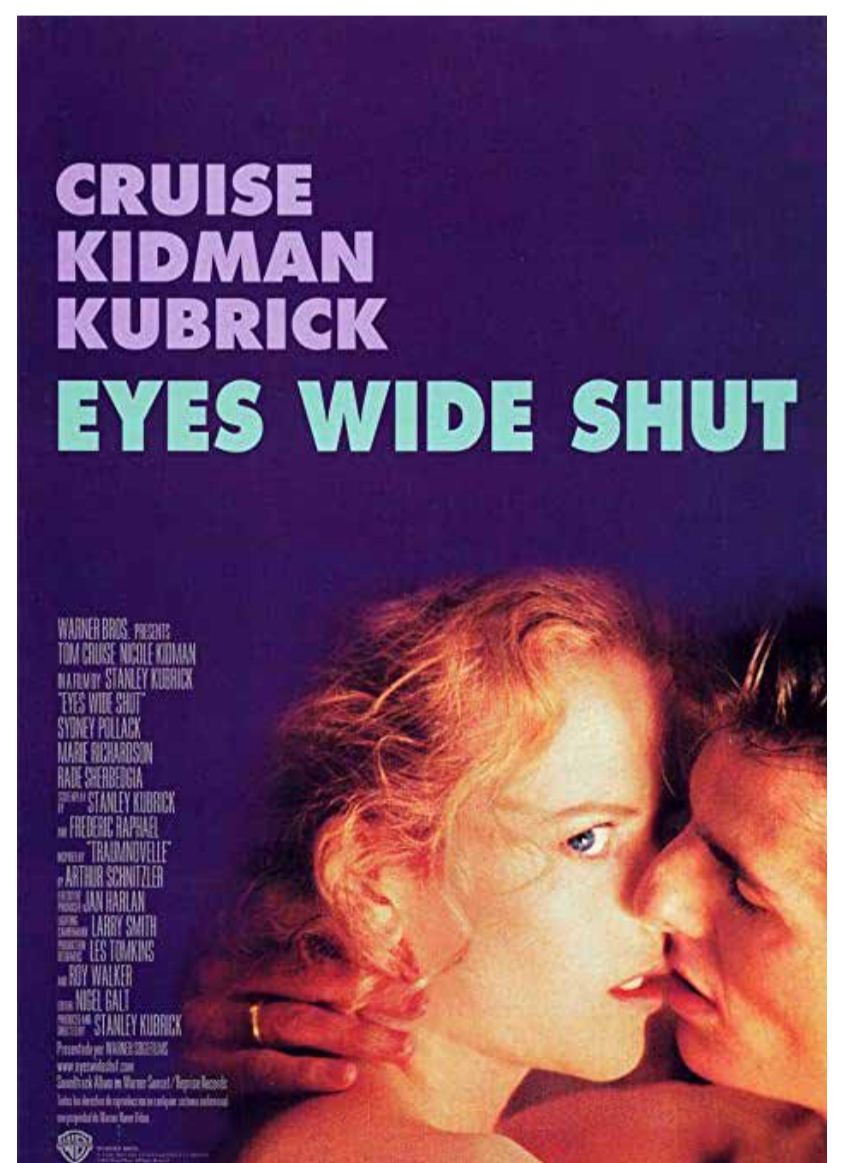
Sylvie's Love follows Sylvie who has a summer romance with a saxophonist who takes a summer job at her father's record store in Harlem. When they reconnect years later, they discover that their feelings for each other have not faded with the years.



Eyes Wide Shut

I. Love. This. Movie. It takes place around Christmas so it's a Christmas movie. I have stated this already and, besides, I don't make the rules. This movie is Stanley Kubrick's last offering to the world and, boy, does it deliver. A lot of people give this movie a lot of flack because of the choice to cast Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman but, to be fair, they were dating at the time.

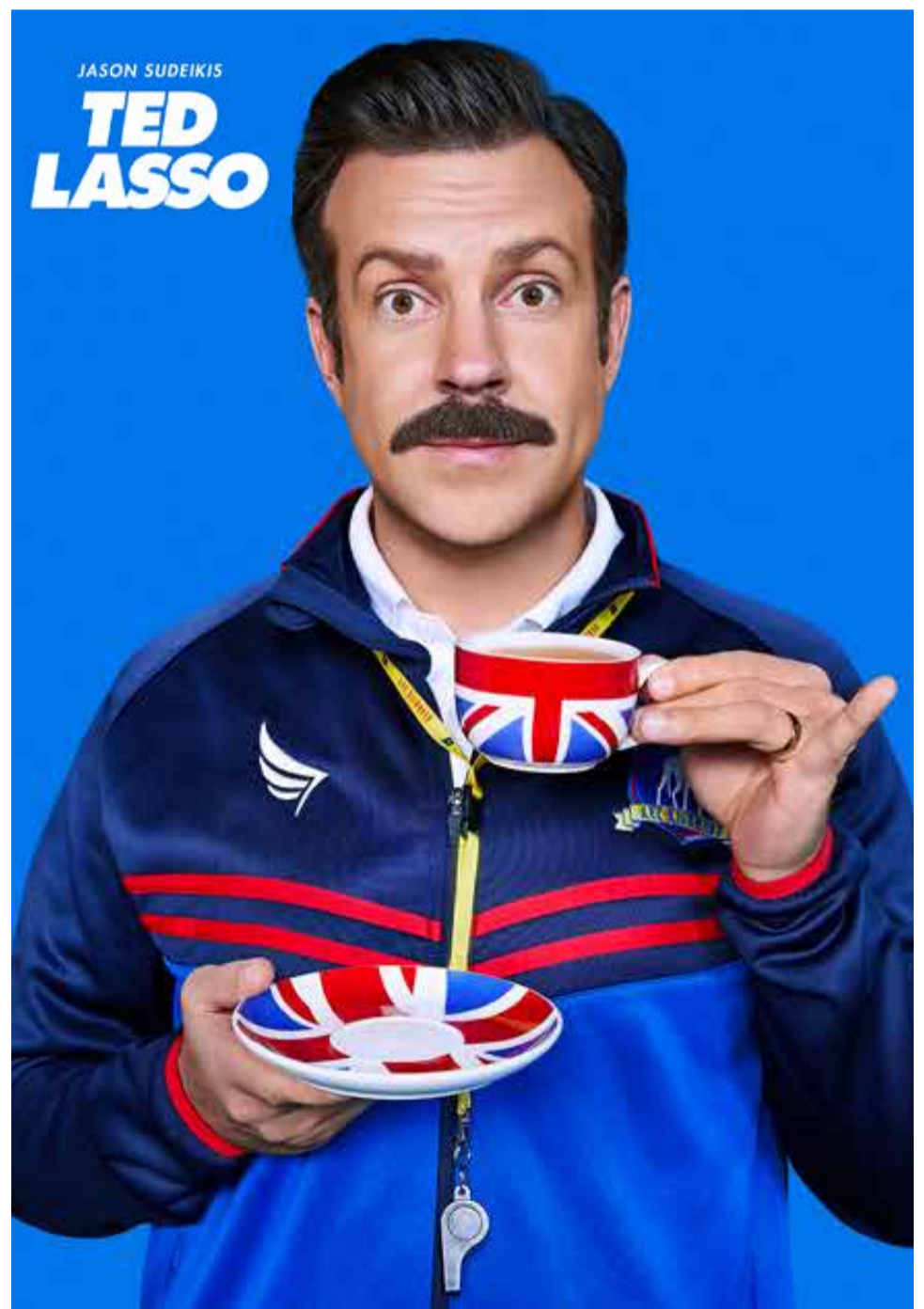
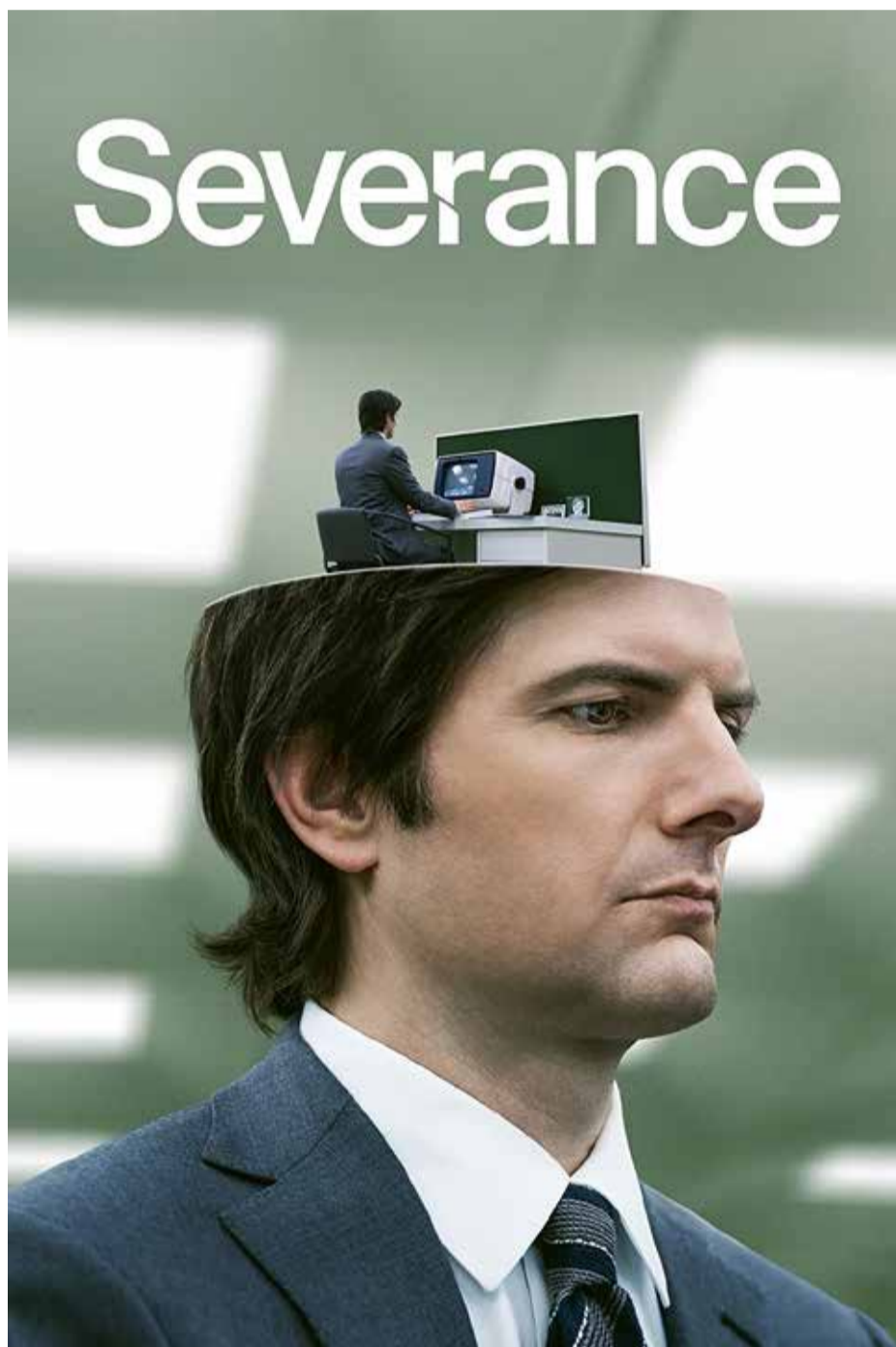
Eyes Wide Shut explores individual desires and marital tensions all wrapped up in the bright lights of Christmas. This movie isn't appropriate to watch with the family because there are a lot of adult scenes and even an orgy scene but it's a fantastic watch. Also, it's a great movie for conspiracy theorists everywhere. After all, Stanley Kubrick died after he finished the movie. What at all could that possibly mean?



Severance

What would you do for work-life balance is seemingly answered in this Apple TV+ sci-fi thriller. The show follows characters who sever their work selves from their everyday selves in order to work for a company, Lumon Industries, that eerily feels like an early Apple company. When we meet Mark S, we find out that he's lost his wife and that was one of the apparent reasons why he got severed.

By his interactions with his colleagues, we feel that something is not quite right as the company. Through certain twist and revelations, we are enthralled with the characters till it delivers a truly jaw-dropping season 1 finale. A lot of people balk at the idea of a slow burn thriller but this show peels the layers carefully that when it ends you can't help but look forward to the next episode. Also, John Torturro and Christopher Walken deliver some of my favourite performances in this show. There's a lot to keep you busy and out of trouble this year



Ted Lasso - 'Carol of the Bells' (Season 2 Episode 4)

I am a huge Ted Lasso fan and this Christmas episode holds such a special place in my heart. I've seen it twice already and, best believe, I'm adding it to my Christmas watchlist. It has everything that makes Ted Lasso great and then adds Christmas cheer. My favourite part was watching the Richmond players impose on Higgins and how he took it in stride. That's my idea of Christmas; friends and family coming over to your house and just being grateful.

This episode also fed into the greater narrative of what Ted Lasso is about; the "found family". I love when shows and movies show us that family is so much more than the people we're related to by blood.

HOW TO BE A ROCKSTAR

Cat Mama 101
with **RIA BOSS**



When we think of rockstars, we think of Jimi Hendrix, Prince, Mick Jagger, Fela Kuti, Daddy Lumba and James Brown. Large as life, influential, self-aware and confident, the rockstar parts crowds with their gifts, verve and ability to stay one step ahead. We love them because they live lives that are courageous and as far away from the box as possible. Soul sensation Ria Boss happily shared with us her recipe for becoming a rockstar, as defined by herself and her art.

Step 1: Be yourself (no matter how many versions of that there are) "with every Ria era, each of them comes from a place where I've personally also grown in certain ways"

Do you consider yourself a rock star?

Wow, what a really good question. Do I consider myself a rock star? I think if you had asked me this question, maybe two years ago, I might have actually said, "No, I don't really consider myself a rock star." I think in the last two years, with my performance, and getting more, I guess, familiar with [my stagecraft], I think Cat Mama is indeed a rock star. Who her persona is; that version of me, is definitely a rock star. With the album that I just finished working on, that's going to come out next year, I really tapped into a certain, I like to feel, crazy Jimi Hendrix personality that comes out and wants to smash things. So, yes, I am absolutely a rock star. Get ready for the live shows. They're about to be extra.

If I was to answer it myself, I would say definitely you are. It shows in the persona and how you engage your audience. How does this align with your personal style? How do you arrange your music, but also your personal fashion?

One thing I should say about my artist personality is that I've got different sides of myself, like alters... like multiple personality disorder, okay? There's Ria, Ria Boss, obviously. Then there's Cat Mama. Then there's Hajia kitty, and then there's Maria. And so, when I think about the style with regards to my music, Cat Mama is this soulful, sensual goddess who really is super confident and sure of herself.

That's what I think comes across not only stagewise, but also in the music, especially the way we arranged the live music. It's very reminiscent of old school blues, soul and funk. For me, the band and instrumentation is what really turns the persona up a notch because that really informs my mood on stage and might even inform what I decide to wear. There's of course, Cat Mama who likes to wear these oversized, matching fits. Then there's Hajia, who likes to be very naked. So then, depending on the mood of the experience I want to give, it's sort of which alter takes the light.

Is Hajia going to come wearing a real slinky number and dancing on people, or is Ria going to come, you know, dressed in her Tribe of God fit with her Air Forces, because you never know. I can give you a whole bunch of different sides. These personas that I've given myself, help bring out a confidence where I think Maria tends to be quite shy and actually very introverted. These personas give me an ability to be more dramatic.

I love that. So do you find that you like to keep the audience guessing as to who they're going to get at any given time?

Honestly, yes. Because, to be honest, depending on the gig. I actually don't know until that day or maybe the day before who's actually gonna take the stage. Is it going to be Ria? Depends on the mood.

How much does reinventing yourself you know, play a part in your music & your sound as an artist.

I wouldn't say reinventing yourself plays a part in your music. In that, I think that with every Ria era, each of them comes from a place where I've personally also grown in certain ways, whether or not it's in the technicality of music. When I put out the album, I think some people will notice that my vocal range has completely shifted. I'm able to sing certain notes that I wasn't able to sing before or maybe I'm a bit more confident in my writing. That's important for me, because it's an indicator of my growth, and how far I'm personally going. With each reinvention, a new personality rears its head. So, even though each of these personas kind of helped me, in a way they are all me at the end of the day.

Step 2: Make love to the crowd

"I might not be giving you the serious dance jams, but I'm giving you the jams that'll help you get through Sunday morning."



One thing I have never forgotten is this video, featuring you at a little lingerie slumber party and it is burned in my memory forever. Even then, you were kind of pushing boundaries, but I listened to that content and it's a very different sound from what you do now. Now, there's a lot of love in your content, you know? There's definitely a lot of self awareness. It's very important, especially if people are growing with you as well. In your conversations with your fans, do you find that they feel like they're growing with you, as you are also growing through the sound?

This is such a good question. I tend to get in my feelings a lot, like maybe once a month. I have a crisis where I see [my old] music and I want to take it down. So, there was one time that I actually removed certain songs off my discography from my SoundCloud. A month or two later, I got a message from a fan: "Hey, so I've been going on your page. There's this one song that was getting me through my depression and it seems you've taken it down. Is there any way you can send it to me?". That particular song was one of the songs I had been sort of over because I just felt it didn't show my vocal quality. But it was a song that resonated with someone somewhere, and it was helping them. I realized that, even as I'm working through life, people are also using my art to help them get through.

I owe it to myself to not be so hard on myself when it comes to my art because there's always something for someone. I think that's what I want my music to be; a reflection of familiar pains that we're all feeling.

Some of our favorite artists are the ones that are basically taking us through life and showing that you're not alone.

I think a lot of artists that I really aspire to, like Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu or Jill Scott, you realize that they're actually talking to you about their everyday qualms and issues, but in a very obviously poetic way. It's just to remind us all that, hey chale, we're all actually going through the same stuff, you know. I mean, I'm really here for party music because it helps me to take a break. I've had people ask me, why I wouldn't venture into Afro beats, considering the region that we're in. The same way people want to feel something, I'm offering the other side of the coin. I might not be giving you the serious dance jams, but I'm giving you the jams that'll help you get through Sunday morning. After the jams, I'll be here to wipe your back kakra.

Step 3: Build your team

"Anywhere can be a really good venue if you have a good sound guy.

I think investing in amazing sound here can make any venue pretty much top quality."

Undoubtedly, the live music scene in Accra is you and everybody else. There are definitely different voices coming up, and I think that your presence is very encouraging of that. What do you enjoy the most about your live performances?

Hands down, I am absolutely at home when I'm performing with a full and live band. There's something about being on stage with a bunch of amazing instrumentalists that's just the most exciting thing ever, because you never really know what you're gonna get. The energy of the evening is not even going to be the same as the rehearsal. You just catch a serious vibe with these players.

I'm somebody that prefers to perform live, because there's a certain quality that you can't really get when it's a pre-recorded track, especially with the type of music that I make. Sometimes you can riff with the band, have the solos or get your background vocalists to do something crazy. There's so much about that live experience that makes it that much more exciting for me.

I'm performing two gigs with my band that play for my album and the fact of the matter is that the Musical Lunatics are the best band in my craft for me, Ria. Anytime I get an opportunity to perform with them, I don't even have to think because we've rehearsed so many times that now it's just about how are we going to give it to them this time? Like, what are we going to do? What magic am I going to pull out?

Also, the venue matters because it sometimes has a specific type of crowd. I like the Alley Bar/-Jamestown Coffee crowd. They always come through for a good time, ready to jam with you. I really like The Woods' crowd as well.

I really like doing big crowds because there's something about them vibing with you that gives you so much vim. You feel completely unstoppable. I'm going to be performing new songs and I'm going to definitely try to smash something on stage.

That was actually my next question. What is your dream venue to perform in? How do you visualize your ultimate venue in Accra and worldwide?

I would say, because of the quality of sound, a dream venue in Accra is Alliance Française. They have impeccable sound and will work with you to make sure that the sound is phenomenal.

Anywhere can be a really good venue if you have a good sound guy. Investing in amazing sound here can make any venue pretty much top quality. If I want to think worldwide, I have a lot of festivals that I really want to play. To be able to fill up a space like the O2, in my lifetime would be epic. I've watched those Wizkid videos on repeat, praying alongside the videos. Just praying with it, you know, with my candles because that is such a beautiful experience. That would be the top. Madison Square Garden in New York is a close second to that kind of feeling.

Those videos give me chills.

It's crazy. The best part about those videos is when you actually look at Wizkid. You can tell, as an artist, that there's this smile on his face that's just like "I cannot believe this." I pray for that, for all amazing musicians.

Saying that making it in music and reaching a point where you can experience that is difficult, is an understatement. Doubly so in Ghana, because we're still trying to figure out what artists need, besides their talents, in order to reach the audiences that they deserve. What is the fuel in the engine? Everything is a headache, so what is it that keeps you pushing through?

This question is hard because, I won't lie, I do have moments where it can be quite difficult. Maybe I'm speaking more because of the region, the genre of music that I've decided to undertake and the fact that there aren't really a lot of creative funds that can help with startup capital to do things of a grand nature when it comes to your creativity. A lot of the time, you'll see that we're doing a lot of things out of pocket, especially when you're working independently

especially when you're working independently and don't have a label. What that means is that a lot of the money that you're using to sort of fuel that engine is coming from you, your gigs or a side job. You don't have the luxury of completely focusing on your passion.

When it comes to that, we all have to check our privilege. I have to admit that my mom sometimes helps me financially when it comes to certain things in music. Not everybody has that luxury. Then, there's a lot of disparity because some people have connections, somebody is speaking their name in a room or their family has given them some small block.

Either way, I think what keeps me going is my love for music. I don't think there's anything else that I could possibly do. I have a lot of skills but this, for me, comes to me so naturally that I feel like I'd be doing myself a huge disservice if I didn't see it through.

"That's kind of what keeps me going. The love of music. The love for being able to pass down some of this information that I'm also learning."



Step 4: Ride for others

Also, in doing this work, I've been able to partner with initiatives such as Black Girls Glow, which is a collaboration between women creatives. Through that I've also been able to teach songwriting courses, stage etiquette, and things like that. It allows me to mentor young women who want to be in the same position that I am. Though I still don't feel like I've made it, the reality is that, for somebody who's coming up behind me, I'm giving them the skills they might need to get to where I am. That's kind of what keeps me going. The love of music. The love for being able to pass down some of this information that I'm also learning.

Step 5: Follow your passion

Also, it just makes me feel good. And I realized that the less time I spend on my purpose, or on my music, the more time I spend melancholic and in my head. I'm a Sag girl and a Libra rising too, so I don't know. So many people around me and in my community see something in what I'm doing. That kind of helps, that people that I respect also think what I'm doing is pretty amazing and keep cheering me on.

Step 6: Community is key

Something that is actually surprising: When I reached out to certain people for features for the album, I was nervous because I don't feel like I'm a huge household name.

But the ways in which these people responded to me, made me realize I've been downplaying myself this whole time. People that I respect are more than happy, if not even excited, for me to reach out to them and are ready and willing to work. One of them in particular sent me the longest voice note, saying: "I'm so happy that you're still doing this, because you're one of the greats in this ecosystem.", and I was blown away because, to me, he's a pretty big deal. Little things like that remind me there's a reason I'm doing it.

The imposter syndrome can be very real. Are there any artists to watch?

Oh, my goodness, there's a number of them. I'm gonna shamelessly plug Black Girls Glow (BGG) because all of the women that come through the residency are always so amazing. The last album that we released with BGG, *Fighting for Air*, features four amazing women; Elodie Vannesa, Essilfie, who is an amazing singer, and Nana Yaa.

Baaba J is another young singer, who I think is such a refreshing new artist because she's just carefree and you hear it in her music. It's a young Ghanaian girl who's just talking about her every day. She's a tomboy. She talks about it in her music, and about people giving her grief. She gives me Khalid vibes; carefree, talking about my reality. I love her because I feel like I need that type of youthful, fun sound coming out of Ghana. The Super Jazz Club is also absolutely amazing. I'm always trying to talk about them and Tamiwaa who I freaking love, another amazing singer. In fact, I bow down to Titi Owusu. Her vocal quality is... I don't have the words. Her voice is just the most powerful thing I've ever heard. She's "big voice gang", for sure. She was just featured on Bryan The Mensah's album on a song called *Until I See You*, one of my favorites, sounding like what?! So, definitely, Titi Owusu is somebody that I really enjoy.

Step 7: Celebrate Life and Love

"She used to be my playmate. She would literally watch Dexter's Lab with me."

To wrap up, what is your favorite holiday memory?

Oh, wow.. So my grandmother pretty much raised me with my mom. Christmas was always this super fun time where all the cousins came from all over the world to grandma's house. They set up the tree downstairs by the dining table and chock it with mad gifts, including gifts for the dog, mind you.

My favorite memories were all of us on the morning of Christmas day. Nobody has showered and everybody just goes directly downstairs, including all the staff in the house. We sit and have a huge breakfast together as a family, unwrap all the gifts, and just kind of sit there till it's lunchtime, basking in each other's stench. That's my favorite memory because I was always an only child and grandma always made it such that I never felt alone. She used to be my playmate. She would literally watch Dexter's Lab with me. Apart from when I got a bit older and we used to go clubbing and wipe the floor in the morning, that's my favorite memory.



Artists to Look out for

Ignis Brothers-11:48;

Ignis brothers is a Nigerian indie band making alternative/r&b music with haunting melodies and lyrics. My favourite being 11:48 from their debut EP The Cost of Lives (TCOL).

Cupidon ft Shaqdi - Sway;

Cupidon is a German producer/dj duo and singer Shaqdi collaborated to give us this chill summer r&b/soul bop with Afro House influences. Sway was so great, I hyperfixated on it for months.

SuperJazzclub - Cameras;

A Ghanaian alternative band that makes a lot of experimental music like this single Cameras that caught my attention in the first 10 seconds with its use of the percussion instrument Axatse.



shorturl.at/qDGU7



Artists to pay more attention to

Amaarae ft Moliy - Sad Girls Luv Money; All the bad Bs' favourite went viral this year on tiktok and gave us the equally amazing remix with Kali Uchis. Our Ghanaian babes Amaarae and Moliy really made me proud with this one.

Bree Runway ft Baby Tate - Damn Daniel; The IT Girls Bree and Baby Tate gave us this fun hit in 2020 to carry us through season one of the pandemic and didn't disappoint. They've gone on to give us more outstanding work since then.

Ichon ft Yseult - Mélange; Yseult is a Cameroonian-French singer with incredible range who has had a hold on me since 2020. This party bop by fellow Cameroonian-French artist Ichon featuring Yseult had us bouncing into the summer.

Ayra Starr - Bloody Samaritan; Ayra showed us she wasn't here to play with her album 19 and Dangerous and this hit single. This jam is an energy booster and a great addition to your money and blessings manifestation playlist.

Artists we've missed

Odunsi The Engine ft Tams - Decided; We are not strangers to Odunsi or Tams, but the little known R&B/Soul collaboration "Decided" that dropped in 2020. Odunsi has since dropped two songs in 2021 but we are still waiting on the album.

Toro Y Moi ft The Mattson - Ordinary Guy; The second love of my life, gave us this beautiful single in June 2020 and dipped. Hopefully he gives us something like this next year or in 2023.

Stromae - Santé; Stromae, just when I thought we were never going to get music from him till 2030 or something, he dropped this iconic French electronic song on us in October. Waiting with bated breath for his new album "Multitude" dropping

1.2kg hard/stewing* chicken, cleaned and cut

Spices & Herbs

- 1 teaspoon dried oregano or 7 fresh leafs
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme (1 sprig fresh thyme)
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 5 cloves
- 1 calabash nutmeg
- 2 grains of selim
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary/1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 7 small sage leafs or 1 teaspoon dried sage

For the marinade

- All the spices & herbs
- 1 large onion
- Red chili peppers (I used red for color so you can use any chili type available)
- 1 thumb sized ginger (1 tablespoon)
- 1 garlic bulb

I like to mix up my herbs, I mostly use a mix of fresh and dried herbs in my recipes. You could do the same in this recipe, it doesn't necessarily need to be fresh sage or rosemary. It just turns out that those were the only fresh herbs I had on deck. You could use fresh thyme or oregano, there should be at least one fresh herb in there.

For the soup

- 2 medium very ripe fresh tomatoes
- 1 garden egg, divide into 2
- 1 small carrot, divided into 3 (substitute with garden egg if unavailable)
- 2 star anise
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 extra garden egg, sliced (will be added to the soup almost at the end, optional)

Directions

Blend all the ingredients for the marinade into a very smooth paste (use as little water as possible to blend). Place chicken in a pot and pour marinade over chicken cuts and add salt. Rinse the blender with 1/2 a cup of water and pour over chicken. Allow it to sit for 20 mins.

To make the soup, place pot over medium heat, allow it to come up to a simmer then continue simmering for 5 minutes then add 5 cups of water such that the chicken submerges completely. Add the veggies (carrot, tomato and garden egg) and star anise. When soup begins to boil scoop the foam that floats on the surface (get as much out of it as you can).

Remove veggies when they're completely soft, after about 40 mins and blend with one cup of water into a smooth paste. Pass through a fine sieve and add back to soup. Add the tomato paste and turn heat to low. Cover and allow soup to continue simmering. Scoop any foam off the surface of the soup. Taste and adjust salt. Keep eyes on the soup, if it's getting a bit too thick add a bit of water. Taste and adjust salt every time you add water.

Allow soup to cook gently until meat is tender then add the sliced garden eggs if using any. Keep simmering until garden eggs get soft. Add a pinch of sugar if soup is a bit too sour (I didn't need it in mine because my tomatoes were quite ripe and sweet). Add more water if soup is too thick or let it cook longer if too light. Taste, adjust salt then turn off heat.

***Serve soup warm with my cumin rice, turmeric rice or my tea bread.**



The Detty December
Sex Bucket List
By Ami Shikah



1. Flirt with someone new and sext with words only.
2. Play the exhibitionist and invite a friend to watch you have sex with a partner or more.
3. What's the most number of orgasms you can have in a day?

All you need to do is devote a day (holiday/weekend) to giving yourself the most orgasms you can get in a day. Call it a self-pleasure marathon. Make use of erotica, porn, pleasure products, your fingers, pillows, shower head, fleshlight, or whatever can keep you in a highly aroused state to see how far your body can take you.

4. Reenact a sex scene from Game of Thrones.
5. Use a dating app and have a one-time fling with a new person.
6. Push the envelope a little and explore sex with more than one person (threesomes, foursomes, etc.).
7. Swing with another couple (exchange partners in the same space and give each other pleasure).
8. Buy a new vibrator and explore pleasing each other with it.
9. Explore a very seductive, Sexy Santa role play session of Christmas Day. Get costumes for it!
10. Have sex in a car and a new hotel you've never been to.

Dos & Donts Of Holiday Hookups

Where are you spending your Christmas holidays? At home? In Ghana? In a different city? In a partner's vagina or arms?

Holidays are the most exciting times of the year. The adrenaline rush and euphoria from seeing Christmas trees and lights everywhere, foreigners, and beautiful people who are so happy and looking forward to having a good time are out of this world.

This holiday season is a great time to let loose and immerse yourself deeply in sexual pleasure. Let your body and overall wellbeing benefit from the happy hormones released when you get pleasure and/or orgasms. Endorphins relieve stress and pain for relaxation. Oxytocin improves the connection and bond you have with other people, family, friends, partners, etc. Prolactin gives you a sense of satisfaction from a sexual experience. Dopamine makes you feel great and

How much sex are you trying to have this season? Engage yourself (self-pleasure), talk to new people, explore your sexual fantasies, try new things, use dating apps, and have sex for the sake of having it (pleasure, transactional, fun, tend to your sexual needs, etc.)?

Let the holiday bliss fuel your passion for pleasure this season, but keep these do's and don'ts of holiday hookups in mind to stay sane, healthy, and happy:

DON'T: Ignore the rules of consent before and during any sexual encounter (activity related to sex including sexting/phone sex/sending of nudes, sex amid other people, usage of condoms, etc.)

DO: Ensure that sex is consensual, mutually pleasurable, and happens under no form of harm, violence, or discrimination.

DON'T: Have unprotected sex with people you meet this season without having the STI conversation to know when last they got tested, what infections they might have that you should know about (HIV, Herpes, etc.), and bringing up the need to use all forms of barrier protection (condoms, dental dams, finger cots, etc.) to minimize chances of STI transmission.

DO: Stay sexually responsible, know your STI status, get tested, start treatment for any infection, let your last/most recent sexual partners know directly or indirectly through an anonymous person to get tested because they might have been exposed to an infection, and do what's necessary to minimize chances of STI transmission to more people. You owe the world and humanity that!

DON'T: Fake orgasms or withhold sexual needs, feelings, desires, or fantasies.

DO: Communicate with your partner(s). Discuss expectations and needs before every sexual encounter, to ensure that no one leaves with negative feelings. Discuss kinks, what you both don't like, what you get the most pleasure from, how you want to be pleased, and how you want to be cared for after sex.

DON'T: Use saliva, baby oil, flavored lubricant, or water-based lubricants that contain glycerine as vaginal lubricants to prevent skin irritation

and infections.

DO: Use personal lubricants that are water-based (glycerin-free and paraben-free) or silicone-based for self-pleasure and partnered sex. Avoid using oil-based lubricants during latex-condom usage and silicone-based lubricant when using silicone-based sex toys.

DON'T: Rush foreplay during solo sex (masturbation) or unpartnered sex.

DO: Do lots of foreplay to enhance your sexual experiences. Foreplay consists of anything and everything that gives sexual pleasure excluding the insertion of penis/strap-on/dildo in the vagina/anus. Kissing, touching, caressing, hugging, toe sucking, cunnilingus, fellatio, anilingus, fingering, use of vibrators on the clitoris /penis, nipple play, dirty, talk, etc. all count as foreplay.

DON'T: Catch feelings during a casual sexual encounter

DO: If you attach emotions/feelings to sex, you shouldn't be having casual sex. Before you have sex with anybody, talk about what you are all looking for. Is it fun? Is it a relationship? Is it love? If you are on the same page, go ahead and have all the fun you can have. If you are not, find someone else who is on the same page as you; or decide what's more important to you and go with it.

DON'T: Get pregnant or impregnate anyone if you aren't ready for pregnancy

DO: Get on a reliable contraceptive and follow the rules to use them to effectively prevent pregnancy during unprotected sex, or 'condom breaking' moments

DON'T: Ignore the clitoris and other erogenous zones during sex

DO: The clitoris is there for one reason: sexual pleasure. Find the clitoris, and stimulate the nerve endings in every other erogenous zone of the body (head to toe) to intensify pleasure/orgasms. The best way to know your partner's sensitive spots is to explore their body and communicate to learn what feels good to them and what doesn't.

DON'T: Have sex with anyone without discussing boundaries and safe words

boundaries and safe words

DO: Discuss boundaries, and set a safe word that is mentioned to halt a sexual session in times of discomfort, pain, or any other thing that might warrant the need to stop a session, including crossed boundaries.

Have the sexiest Holidays!



It's no secret that the world has been going through an unprecedented rough patch since 2020. The pandemic has uprooted many lives, birthed economic instability, revealed corruption in our systems, and also threatened the health of the populace. We don't even have to talk about climate issues, social uprisings and also a whole war in the middle of it all. To say the least, the 2020s have been off to a rough start as the world has confronted its traumas head on.

But, it hasn't all been in vain. These times have led to massive changes in how we view the world, and helped us to shape ideas of the world we want for the future. You might have also had personal realizations about your priorities, and what does and does not work for you any longer. These realizations have been tough. Yet if we use the experience well, it will help us move forward into a future where we solve many of the problems that have been in the spotlight for the past two years. This is what 2023 is all about.

So you'll be pleased to know that the astrology of 2023 looks a lot smoother than that of 2020, 2021 and 2022. It's also a lot more supportive of upward growth. If you or the people around you have been struggling, then let's look at the ways in which 2023 could go a lot better.

New Moon in Aquarius: Forward Motion and Revolutionary Moves First off, let's look at the first new moon of 2023, which happened on 21st January. This new moon happened in the first degree of Aquarius, the sign of progress and revolution. It also occurred at about the times the planets Mars, Mercury and Uranus went direct after being in retrograde motion. Retrogrades can be compared to the winter season, when it's time to slow down, go inside and reflect since movement outside is restricted.

For the first time since last April, all of the planets in the zodiac are going direct (out of retrograde motion), which means what was blocked and slowed down before may feel more free-flowing now. You might have experienced some unexpected disruptions around the 22nd due to Uranus slowing down and going direct, as this planet is notorious for unexpected happenings. But again, the forward motion of the planets will yield energy to resolve problems and get things moving again.

Since Uranus rules the sign of Aquarius in the modern astrology system, this new moon in Aquarius is a special time for us to make intentions for the progress and new ways of doing things that we want to see in our lives. Uranus/Aquarius energy asks us to stand out and be unique in the way only you can. Aquarius is also the sign of the people, meaning that we will see more mass movements for social justice. In February Saturn, Venus, Mercury, and the sun will all be in Aquarius at the same time, making this energy even more potent.

Saturn in Pisces: The end of a Stand-Off and the Start of New Ways Speaking of Aquarius, planet Saturn has been Aquarius for two years, making a challenging square to Uranus in Taurus. Saturn will be moving on to the sign of Pisces in March, thus ending this hard square that began in 2020. It will be interesting to see how Saturn in Pisces plays out, since Saturn is the planet of boundaries and tradition, while watery Pisces is the sign of no boundaries. We may see more structures put in place to treat and talk about mental health and addictions, as Pisces rules mental health and drug addiction. We might see more laws put in place to regulate art and creativity since Pisces rules artistic inspiration. In any case, we are moving on from the Saturn-Uranus square, which has given more leverage and voice to the masses by showing us the truth about our institutions and how they must operate going forward.

Pluto in Aquarius: A New Revolution For Humanity Perhaps the biggest transit of 2023 is Pluto moving into the sign of Aquarius. Pluto, a slow-moving planet that has a lasting impact, has been in bone-hard Capricorn since 2008, when a financial recession hit the U.S and rippled across the world. Pluto is the planet of karma and retribution, and has been revealing our world's structural failings in unprecedented ways since then.

The past couple years have felt like a climax because of Pluto moving through the last degrees of Capricorn, since a slow-moving planet in the last degrees of a sign always feels intense. The last time Pluto moved into Aquarius was January 1788. This period saw lots of changes in the west, including the storming of the Bastille in France, the ratification of the U.S Bill of Rights, and the climax of the industrial revolution. Pluto's influence is long lasting, so we can expect to see world-shifting innovations in the years and decades to come. Pluto will move into Aquarius in March, and after two retrogrades back into Capricorn, it will be there until 2044.

Jupiter in Taurus: The Enjoyment of Life On 16th May the expansive, celebratory planet Jupiter will transit into Taurus, the sign of earthly pleasures and loving relationships. Taurus is ruled by planet Venus, the goddess of love and sensuality. Jupiter is known as "the great benefic," meaning that it blesses whatever area of the zodiac it moves into. Jupiter in Taurus will inspire us to expand in the areas of enjoyment, beauty, pleasure, and relationships.

This is a great time to put energy into this area of your life. Indulge in the arts. Make old and new culinary treats to delight your senses. Surround yourself with natural beauty. It's also a good time to put energy into romantic love, whether in a relationship or not. Flowers, romantic comedies, love songs, lovely scents, and general self pampering can enhance the energy of romance in your life and potentially attract it. Jupiter will be in Taurus until May 2024.

The Lunar node shift into Aries: A Shift of Destiny There are two points related to the moon called the lunar nodes; one is the north node and the other the south node. Since January 2022 the lunar nodes have been in the sign of Taurus and its opposite sign Scorpio.

On 12th July, the north node will shift into Aries, which means the south node will shift into its opposite sign Libra. The north node is the point of destiny, showing us what humanity is moving into. The south node represents what we're moving away from. This north node shift into Aries means that it's time to believe in ourselves and have confidence. The south node in Libra asks us to leave behind people pleasing and sacrificing your destiny for the sake of others, which is a negative attribute of Libra.

This period is the perfect time to activate your sense of self confidence to take the positive shifts that are possible now. While the north node in Taurus brought shifts in our relationships, the north node in Aries will shift the focus to the self. Remember your positive attributes. Write them down, or ask someone close to you what they most like about you. If you don't have friends who will give you positive feedback like that, it might be time to leave those behind, since Libra is also the sign of relationships. Seek to form relationships with those who will build you up and not tear you down.

Conclusion: Remember, the movement of the planets only indicates changes that are happening within and around you. Overall, 2023 is offering us a chance for forward motion into the future now that we've had time to absorb the lessons we've learned over the past few years. Don't let chaotic circumstances deceive you; after all, the old must fall away before the new can take root. If you're rather feeling beat up and battered, you will feel better the more you a) lean into the good that you have going in your life, and b) put an emphasis on taking care of your mind and body. In 2023 we can take our newfound knowledge and experience, and use it to make unprecedented big changes for the better, with universal energies supporting us along the way. Make the best of the year!

Would you like help in interpreting your personal astrology chart to get more details about what this year has in store for you? I am an astrology and tarot guide who will help you to make the best of 2023. Contact me at tiffanysoulbird@gmail.com with inquiries.





Travelogue By Bright Owusu - Konadu

When you can't respond to the wanderlust abroad, you seek the one within. The nostalgia comes rushing back like a wave and you know you must respond to the call of the rushing countryside and wind in your face.

I have, often, saved the travel to my village for Easter a big thing back home. Everyone comes back to kepame and the nights are filled with borbobor drum sounds, hugs and reconnection after a year of not seeing each other. My love for my village has been lost under a heavy blanket / emotional weight of the duty of attending funerals and kosakoko, and, the social event that is the annual Easter pilgrimage / Memories of my wonder at the sight of clouds at eye level and verdant foliage over rolling hills as far as the eyes could see have all been put away in a box that's within reach, not entirely forgotten, but hardly ever used.

It is not lost on me that it is in the year Easter was cancelled during early attempts at arresting a surging COVID-19 virus that I rediscovered my love for my village, decoupled from the duty of events and familial responsibilities. I recall quipping that there was no better time than in sudden economic stagnation brought on by the pandemic for one to inject some cash into their hometown economies by visiting and patronizing local enterprises. For most of us in Ghana, there's always an empty house or room to lodge in whenever we return to the village. Furthermore, there's always an aunt in the village ready to cook for and fawn over you and your friends, with a steady supply of home cooked meals, if you visited from any part of the country.

Watching the clouds leisurely break apart to allow the sun to come through during early morning walks was always one of the highlights of my stay. On my most recent visit I only managed to wake up at 5am to enjoy the exodus of the morning clouds on the next day after I arrived, when still had my my capitalism-attuned city body clock was functioning, I was soon so lulled by the serenity of village air and cold that I slept with the assurance that the clouds would be there whenever I wanted to see them; just as majestic. I love the assurance.

The weather is great when you are more than 290 meters above sea level. The air is cleaner; the sights are vivid and unobstructed; and the sounds are unpolluted. Drinking directly from a stream is a reflex action that takes you by surprise only after you've quenched your thirst. It is an indulgence you have to take because something primal told you to simply drink from the stream with your cupped hands with no care for safety. Our senses know that you're safe.



The longer I stay away from my village the more I need it, but the harder it is to hear the call to go back. The future of travel is uncertain as we navigate what looks like a full-blown apocalypse, but one thing I know is that travel within Ghana is like always returning home, whether or not it's mine, and I can count on a hearty welcome each time.













**Write us us your thorny life,
relationship & ethical conundrums**
questions@alasangazine.com

Dear Alásà,

I am contemplating moving out of my parents house to live by myself, now that I am fully employed and can actually afford to do so. I have a new job that pays well, but is also on the other side of town. I am always tired at the end of the week because of my long commute and would like to find somewhere closer. I am torn because my parents do not like the idea and have fought against it. Things are pretty tense at home now.

Is it worth it to move from home just to get better rest, discover myself and have a better social life? Or to live with my family, keep the peace and save money for more important future expenditures?

I don't know what to do and I could really use your perspective on this.

**Yours,
In Limbo, F, 26**

B: Everyone comes to this point at least once in their lives don't they?

P: There is no future expenditure more important than your own welfare. If moving out guarantees you less stressful commutes, why shouldn't you invest in it?

B: Getting straight to the heart of the matter there, P!

P: It's dear to my heart. All over the world, people cross several oceans to make their commute a little less painful, why not you?

B: But we also see a lot of loneliness among younger unmarried people than ever recorded. It is a very important decision with a lot of implications for one's mental health whichever decision one makes.

P: That is true. I think it exposes how much we need to commit as much to all types of relationships to ensure that you still have community, whether you live alone or with your parents. For some, their home situation might be perilous to their mental health and moving will be a solution to that.

B: You have introduced the all important idea of community into this exploration of solution and I think it really should be the focus of Miss In Limbo;

that she focuses on community, creating, being part of and nurturing one that meets her emotional needs. That would make the move worth it. that she focuses on community, creating, being part of and nurturing one that meets her emotional needs. That would make the move worth it.

P: She mentioned that she wants to have a better social life. It is clear that she wants the time to create those connections as well. I'm sure she loves her parents, hence her hesitation, but they can't form the basis of her entire social scene.

B: Looking at the move from home through the lens of money saved or even freedom alone will result in a lop-sided solution that doesn't extract the most benefit from moving out of your parents house.

P: I agree. When will you ever have enough money in this Accra? We can all agree that living alone is no walk in the park; bills, added responsibilities and the weekly run-in with your local artisan will turn you grey in no time. However, we will all get to this point sooner or later. Why not sooner?

B: I would say move. The chance to live an adult life on your own terms is worth the cost you pay as long as your mental health, safety and relationships benefit from the move. You can always return to your parents house if you don't have a good experience away from home.

P: I second that. I know the conversation is even more hectic as a young African woman in an African home, but it is worth having. As long as it is reasonably within your means, go for it! P.S. Your parents will heal. :)

B&P: We wish you all the best, In Limbo



Write us your thorny life, relationship and ethical conundrums. questions@alasangazine.com

Finally Home
By Pokuaa Adu



It had been 3 hours and Kanea was starting to lose her patience. "I checked 3 bags in and none of them were on the carousel. Where is my luggage?!" The airline official who had been furiously scratching her large gold cornrows with a red acrylic contorted her face into a frown and eyed her.

"Madam," she started, pulling her shoulders up to her ears. "I have told you that, due to the delay at transit, your bags were not transferred. They are in Morocco, and will arrive in 3 days with the next available flight."

"So what am I supposed to do?" Kanea all but shouted. With a noncommittal shrug, the official handed her a card and asked her to take it up with the printed contact. Kanea broke out in a cold sweat. Her cousin, Sitso's, wedding was in three days and, in her bags, were all three bridesmaids dresses and the engagement rings. She still didn't understand why they hadn't elected to purchase these items in Ghana. She tried to tell her family as much weeks ago and had been met with so much disgust at the thought, that she'd immediately backed down. One simply does not argue with the bride's family about wedding plans, unless you planned to live a short life on earth.

Kanea had lived with the Afefas for the majority of her life, before moving to Canada. They had taken her in after her parents had passed 22 years ago and, while she loved and was grateful to them, she often needed respite from the "Sitso Show", as everything seemed to revolve around their only child and daughter. She grabbed her hand luggage and shuffled towards the exit of Kotoka International Airport. The sooner she could get out of there, the sooner she could figure out the looming disaster. No one was more grateful than she that she was staying in a hotel, and not at the family house. How would she explain the very obvious lack of luggage, a revelation that would mean she would be walking on eggshells for the next 72 hours. Upon exiting, she scanned the crowd. Sitso had sent a friend to pick her up, but had forgotten to send a name, phone number or instructions for where to meet. Nearly 10 minutes passed before a tiny woman with a buzz cut and what looked like 20 piercings burst excitedly through the crowd. "Kanea! Over here! I'm so sorry I'm late. Parking was brutal, I couldn't- Where are your bags?" Before Kanea could reply, she had already moved on. "I am sure they are stuck in Morocco. Typical. When are you expected to get them back? Don't worry we'll figure it out once you're settled. I'm Mashuda. Most people call me Shu."

She finally paused long enough to give Kanea a hug and grab her bags. Next thing she knew, the firecracker was taking off towards the parking lot. Kanea was 6 feet tall with long legs and could barely keep up with her. An hour later, she was checked into the hotel, with Shu's help. At her insistence, they were already by the pool sipping cocktails and eating kebabs. "So you're saying the other bridesmaids and I are going to be naked at this wedding then?" Shu asked playfully, "I don't quite mind, actually." "Oh no?? Anyone else feel the same way? I'm still too scared to tell Sitso, before she sends armed thugs to my room tonight." "It's not your fault, she is just going to have to relax till they get here." "Relax?? Are you sure you're friends with her?" Shu laughed out loud. "Your main concern should be finding clothes for the next 3 days, not my dear bestie's tantrums. What would you like to get up to while you're here? Contrary to popular opinion, the holiday does not revolve around #Sitsuation2021."

"I don't know. I'm tired of the usual club scene. I want to do something different, for a change. Otherwise, I'm content with chill days by-" "I am sure they are stuck in Morocco. Typical. When are you expected to get them back? Don't worry we'll figure it out once you're settled. I'm Mashuda. Most people call me Shu." She finally paused long enough to give Kanea a hug and grab her bags. Next thing she knew, the firecracker was taking off towards the parking lot. Kanea was 6 feet tall with long legs and could barely keep up with her.

An hour later, she was checked into the hotel, with Shu's help. At her insistence, they were already by the pool sipping cocktails and eating kebabs. "So you're saying the other bridesmaids and I are going to be naked at this wedding then?" Shu asked playfully, "I don't quite mind, actually." "Oh no?? Anyone else feel the same way? I'm still too scared to tell Sitso, before she sends armed thugs to my room tonight." "It's not your fault, she is just going to have to relax till they get here." "Relax?? Are you sure you're friends with her?"

"Say no more!" Shu interrupted, "I know the exact thing." And she did. By the evening, Kanea had been bundled into a black van with a bag full of new clothes from the mall. She wasn't alone. Shu had pulled up with 6 friends in the van and began the 1 hour trip to Kokrobite.

They arrived at what appeared to be a beachfront property bounded by a bamboo fence and several coconut trees. She couldn't see much, but she could already feel the energy pulsing from it. Music, kebab smoke illuminated by colorful lights floated to the top and welcomed them in. "Ohhhh..." Kane breathed in amazement, to Shu's obvious delight, when they walked inside "I knew this would be your vibe."

There were tents set up all over. Lots of lamps, lanterns and candles lit up the space. A woman with dreadlocks to her knees met them with a tray full of coconuts and led them to a large tent in the corner of the clearing. "Shu, my darling! It's so good to see you. I see the piercings are multiplying." "Hahaha! Thank you for noticing Ama! I see the locs are flourishing as always. This is my new bestie Kanea, and she's looking for a little adventure. "I see..." Ama stared directly into her eyes and smiled, "I don't think she will have any problem finding that here" A weird chill washed over Kanea at that statement and it was all she could do to not shiver visibly. What did she mean by that? She tried to put it out of her mind as she and the rest of the party settled down and got ready for the rest of the night's activities. By dinner, she was in a tiny bikini that Shu had packed for her and tipsy on overflowing cocktails. Everyone was in varying stages of inebriation, talking and laughing loudly and rocking to the music. Before she knew it, she was leading a dance party in the middle of the space. She was grateful for the energy, especially following her tense conversation with Sitso earlier. You knew better than to book such a late flight!? Sometimes you're so irresponsible, I can't understand it! If you knew you couldn't handle it, you should have said so. I swear, you just want to ruin this for me!

She shook the memory and focused on Shu, who was pointing out the beauty of the full moon. It really was gorgeous and somewhat invigorating. She loved how it seemed so close and big, she could actually touch it. According to Ama, full moon retreats at the beach were a tradition she had started 25 years ago as an opportunity to recharge and connect with her friends away from the pressures of the city. For the spiritual, it was a spell-casting sort of night, and it was encouraged to lay intentions out for the coming month amidst positive energy.

Kanea didn't particularly consider herself spiritual, but in that moment it felt right to pull out the contact card handed to her at the airport and whisper a little wish. Shu, understanding the importance of the little ritual, wrapped her hands around her waist and smiled up at her. "You know, I've never gotten Sitso to come to any of these with me. She doesn't particularly like the rustic scene. But, last month, I manifested a new friend and now you're here with me. So, if I were you, I'd throw in some intentions for yourself that mean more than some fancy dresses." Kanea smiled and twirled Shu back onto the dancefloor. Morning rolled around and Kanea woke up disoriented. The last thing she recalled was skinny dipping with Shu in the moonlight and crawling exhausted into her tent. She couldn't remember the last time she had had this much fun. Her escape to Canada had primarily been an attempt to put as much distance as she politely could between herself and her adoptive family, but she missed Ghana so much. Returning was so attractive, but without a foundation of her own, it meant returning to the Afefa family home. That was not an option. She wished there was another way to keep her there.* The scenes were very different from that of last night. Sleepy partygoers shuffled towards the breakfast spread of juicy fruits, freshly baked bread, chibom style eggs and coffee, while others joined in morning yoga led, unsurprisingly to her, by Shu's tiny frame.

She shook her head at her new friend's endless energy and, after grabbing some food, settled next to Ama in a hammock. "Thank you for this experience." she spilled out before she could stop herself, "You can't imagine how much better it's made me feel." "I think I can.", Ama replied softly. It wasn't so much what she said, but how she said it that made Kanea look up in surprise. Like she knew Kanea more than someone whom she had met only 24 hours prior.

Ama was looking intently at her again. "You look just like her, you know?" "I- What? I don't-" "Don't

She looked down at the envelope, standard letter-sized and slightly worn at the corners, with her name on it, and somehow knew that the contents had the potential to be life-changing. Instead of opening it, she thrust it into her pocket and made a beeline for Shu and the tent. It was time to head back home.

Ama was nowhere to be found as they packed up the van. That is, until they were practically pulling out of the parking lot. However, Kanea was so lost in her own thoughts that she completely missed the knowing look that passed between Ama and Shu through the van window.

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Ama was nowhere to be found as they packed up the van. That is, until they were practically pulling out of the parking lot. However, Kanea was so lost in her own thoughts that she completely missed the knowing look that passed between Ama and Shu through the van window. When she returned to her hotel room, she nearly tripped over the stack of suitcases by the door, as she let herself in. "What in the world" she exclaimed and squealed when she realized that she had nearly injured herself on her own luggage. She rushed to open them and collapsed with relief when she saw the yellow taffeta of the bridesmaids' dresses spill out.

Wow, powerful moon...She distractedly reached into her pocket to touch the envelope and with a shake of her head continued unpacking. On the morning of the wedding, Kanea was running late. Shu was sitting in the corner of the room, fully dressed and sipping champagne. The view made her smile. Shu, being Shu, was adorned in multiple layers of jewelry, from the gold hoops and statement pieces at her ears to the beads at her ankles. Her buzz cut had been dyed a striking gray, with lines etched to nape. She looked regal, even cushioned in endless yards of fabric.

"8 am champagne?" "Hey, you ordered this as a bribe for making us late." "I said you should order breakfast." "This is breakfast. Besides, you look like you need a glass yourself. You look gorgeous, and stressed!"

Kanea sighed. She knew she was right, but she couldn't stop fidgeting with the straps on the long red dress that hugged her frame, or her locs which had been tightly wound to the top of her head. She wished she hadn't gotten so high a slit or left the tendrils around her face. She wanted everything to be perfect, that is, perfect enough to fly under the radar of the Afefas' critical eyes.

"It's not too much? I'm not the bride. I should have gone with a less sensational colour."

"Um... no! You look perfect and if you keep at this, we will never make it before the honeymoon!"

It was a beautiful wedding. Sitso looked spectacular in bejeweled kente, not at all at risk of being upstaged by Kanea. Everything had been done in the garden. Lush vegetation that had been tended for decades formed a good part of the decor, with sheer panels cascading from a large bromeliad tree in the middle and forming a makeshift tent. Everyone cried when the vows were exchanged and the merriment went on late into the night. It wasn't until everyone had left that Kanea, Sitso and Shu sank into the couch in the living room, feet aching from dancing and make-up practically melting off. Her updo was a thing of the past and Shu had lost several of her rings.

"Kanea! Come here a second." called Sitso's mother. Bracing herself for conflict, she groaned inwardly and limped to her aunt's bedroom. "Auntie?" "Yes. Come." She looked up from a stack of envelopes and cash on her lap "I have some things for you. There's a box of items that we think you might want." "What's in it?" "Young lady, it is simply for you to open it to find out." she sniffed and went back to her accounting. Kanea rolled her eyes and left the room with the box. It was only till she was showered and in her pajamas that she finally went through the box. She sifted through letters, diaries and pictures. Most were of her parents and an infant Kanea, but one caught her eye, for two reasons. The first was that her parents were standing with a woman with shoulder length locs and a mischievous intense look, who held a young baby in her arms. The second was that they were standing on the beach in front of a small wooden cabin. Several things about that scene had changed in recent days, but it was unmistakable where they were.

The envelope! She rushed to grab it from the desk and tore it open. Out fell a handwritten letter and a few neatly folded official documents.

Dearest Kanea,

You are the light of our lives. We have seen so much of the world and none of it has been as wondrous as your smile every morning. We are so blessed to have you.

We are young, but we simply cannot imagine a world where we would leave you with nothing to cushion you. We don't know what the future would hold, 10 years from now... 20... What we do know is that if we can make it such that, no matter where you go in life, you can always return home to love and family, we have done all we need to as parents.

Ama is our dear friend. No, our family. We have taken care of each other our whole lives. One day, when you're grown up, you will meet her and she will give this letter and other important documents to you, in the event that we can't do this ourselves. She loves you, just as we have, and will always be there for you.

The beachhouse is yours to take over and do as you wish. We respect whatever your choice will be but, if you have met her, something tells us that you will want to keep the traditions sacred to the house and build onto it.

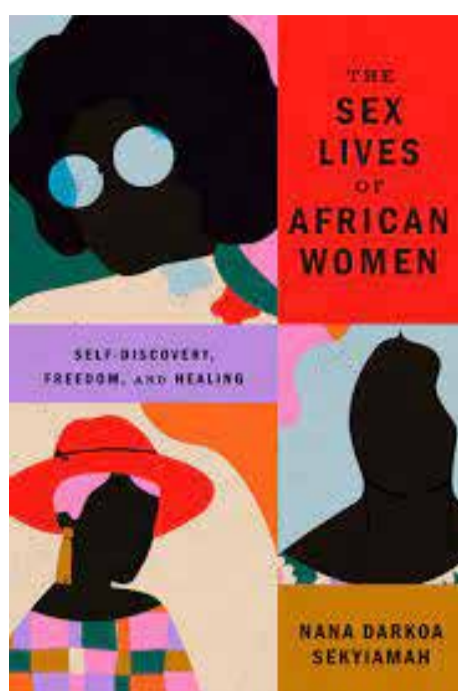
We love you dearly and hope you find happiness here.

Sincerely,

Your family

She was in a trance as she dialed the number on the back of the envelope

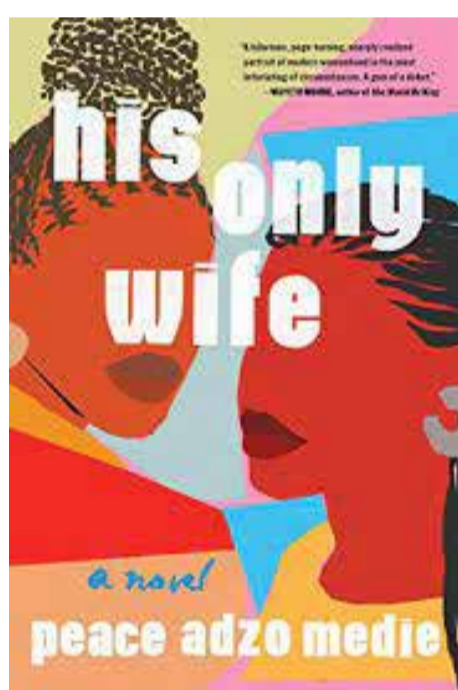
"Hello? Ama?" she whispered after the dial tone. "When can I come home?"



The Sex Lives of African Women by Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah

A culmination of conversations initiated by her blog, “Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women,” this book details sexual experiences of over 30 African women across the globe including her own. Between Yami, a pansexual Canadian of Malawian heritage, Esther, a cis-gendered hetero woman studying in America, and Tsitsi, an HIV-positive Zimbabwean mother raising a healthy, HIV-free baby, we are exposed to confessional pages, of womens’ journeys to discovering and controlling their own diverse bodies and sexuality.

(hyperlink: <https://linktr.ee/tsloaw>)



His Only Wife by Peace Adzo Medie

Afi Tekple, is a young seamstress living in a small town in Ghana with her widowed mother and her polygamous uncle Pious. She accepts a life-changing opportunity—a proposal of marriage from the wealthy family of Elikem Ganyo, a man she doesn’t know. She soon realizes that Elikem is not quite the catch he seemed after sending a stand-in to his own wedding. Only weeks after Afi is married and installed in a plush apartment in the capital city of Accra does she meet her new husband, who is in love with another woman. Afi is meant to win him back on his family’s behalf, but it is Accra that eventually wins Afi’s heart and gives her a life of independence.

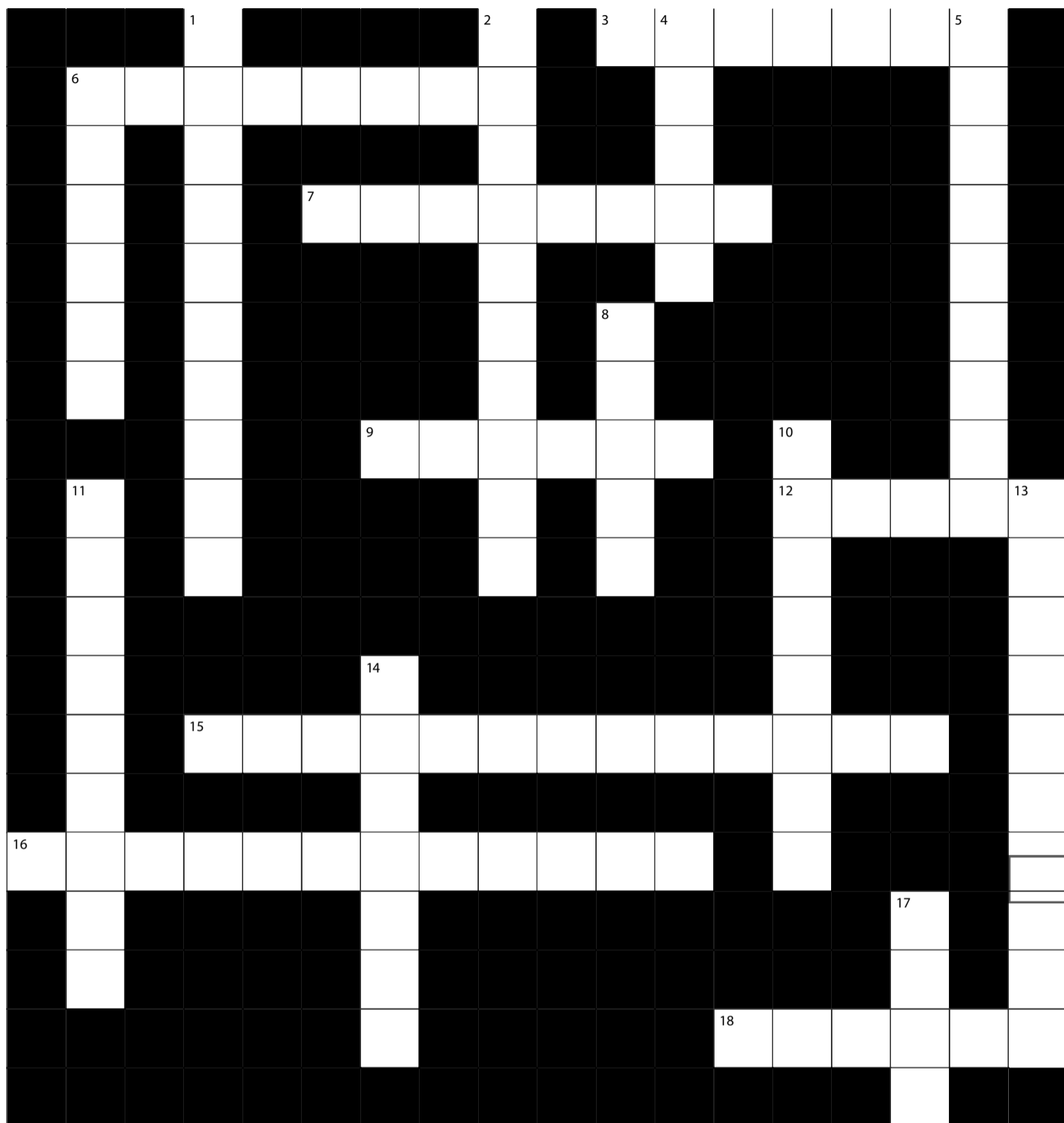
(hyperlink: peacemedie.com)



Coloring Book: Akan Symbolism by Annertey & Bright

Childhood nostalgia and akan heritage is captured in this adult-targeted colouring book. Well known adinka imagery is reconstructed into pages of almost psychedelic outlines begging to be filled with colour. The appeal of this book is the opportunity for creative expression and cost-friendly therapeutic activity, with detachable pages to share with friends and family.

(hyperlink: <https://paystack.com/buy/po-coloring-book>)



Across

- 3. Fictional police inspector
- 6. Soft grain meal (2 words)
- 7. Ghanaian name for holiday explosives
- 9. Traditional celebratory rice dish
- 12. African star apple
- 15. Church event with joyful singing (2 words)
- 16. Costumed street performers
- 18. Airport to the Gateway of Africa

Down

- 1. Accra's first Instagram-worthy restaurant
- 2. A place in London and an old biscuit
- 4. Boredom or listlessness
- 5. Upgrades on a tree
- 6. Large, aggressive, delicious bird
- 8. As a flower does; bar
- 10. Performs song about Christmas Eve
- 11. A bakeshop classic
- 13. Holiday greeting with complicated response (2 words)
- 14. Apio-based cocktail
- 17. Cold, wet and white

On the follies of child-like naivete

Proverbs and aphorisms are an important part of oral communication in Ghana. In fact, there is a proverb that speaks to the importance of proverbs in our oral culture – **Ɔba nyansafoɔ yɛ bu no bɛ, yenka no asem** (you speak to the wise child in proverbs and not plain language). One's ability to decipher and use proverbs puts them in the elevated position of a wise person, much like a linguist in a king's court or an elder in society.

Ghanaian proverbs have a certain indirectness to them that requires a bit of thinking to fully understand and use in the right context. These two proverbs highlight that point quite well.

Ewe Proverb

Dzakpata be devi menya eku o – The snake says: the child doesn't know death. A child might think of a snake as a wiggly animal that they can simply grab and play with without understanding that that action could be the cause of their death. This proverb is used as a caution to anyone who might be venturing into a situation thinking it is just what it seems to be on the face of it.

Fun fact: This proverb was featured in Omanhene Pozo's Apuskeleke song, and deliberately misinterpreted for comic effect.

Akan Proverb

Akwadaa na wo deɛ wo hu kɔto ani aa, wo se abaa – You are a child to think the eye of a crab is a twig/stick.

The eye of a crab is quite an interesting thing, it is colorful and juts out like a probe and quite tempting to touch for anyone who doesn't know what the crab is capable of doing to defend itself. This proverb speaks to the wisdom of knowing. Knowing that the eye of a crab is not a stick means that you won't try to touch it and risk being pinched by a crab's pincers/claws. These proverbs extol the virtue of knowledge in a roundabout manner: by calling out the folly of naivete that is peculiar among children but not adults.



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