FALL 2026 ISSUE 3 VOL. 06

HER COLLECTION



"I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT FAILING. IT WAS GOING TO WORK."

Etheline Joseph

HER Story

HER PILLARS

INSPIRATION

Empowering professional women with stories, insights, and resources that spark ambition and motivation. Her Collected is a space where success is not just envisioned but actively pursued.

ELEVATION

Providing the tools and strategies needed to elevate careers, businesses, and personal growth. Through premium programs and coaching, we help women step into their highest potential.

EDUCATION

Delivering transformative learning experiences that equip women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate their journey with clarity and purpose.

COMMUNITY

Building a supportive, like-minded network where women uplift, collaborate, and celebrate each other's achievements. A space to thrive, connect, and grow together.

FALL 2026

ISSUE 3 VOLUME 06

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FROM THE EDITOR'S PEN

A new season invites us to consider what we are carrying forward, what we are ready to change and what we are courageous enough to create.

This fall marks a new chapter for HER COLLECTION Magazine and for me as I step into the role of Editorial Director. I accept this responsibility with gratitude to our founder, Coach Janine Bowen, and with deep respect for the foundation she has built: a publication created to educate, celebrate and elevate women.

As HER COLLECTION enters this new season, we are building upon the magazine's established foundation while exploring new ways to tell women's stories. Readers will experience an evolving visual language, newly shaped departments, original photography, thoughtful interviews and stories grounded in lived experience. This next chapter creates more room for discovery, creative expression and meaningful connections among our contributors, the women we feature, our readers, the communities already connected to HER COLLECTION and those we have yet to reach.

We are also delighted to welcome new contributors from across North America and the Caribbean. They join our returning contributors in bringing fresh professional, cultural and scholarly perspectives to our pages. Together, their voices broaden the conversations we can have and deepen the stories we are able to tell.

This season also marks the official in-person launch of **HER**COLLECTED at The Showing. It is a significant moment for the community Janine first envisioned: an opportunity for women to move beyond digital connection, gather in the same room, exchange ideas, celebrate creativity and build genuine relationships.

Every part of this new chapter returns us to the three Cs of HER COLLECTION:

COLLECT the stories, experiences and knowledge that deserve to be preserved.

CONNECT women across cultures, generations, professions and communities.

CREATE original work, new opportunities and a future shaped by women's voices.

No story embodies those principles more powerfully than Etheline Joseph's.

It was a profound pleasure to interview someone so close to me, my godmother. Yet, even with that personal connection, I discovered more than I expected. Etheline's life and career reveal a woman who made bold decisions, took extraordinary risks and built an impressive professional legacy in rooms where her talent could not be ignored.
Turn the pages and read about Etheline Joseph's personal journey, professional triumphs and undeniable boss moves. Her story deserves to be known in its own right, not simply through the celebrated names whose paths crossed hers.

We collect stories. We connect the women. Together, we create what comes next.

Welcome to the new season of
HER COLLECTION.

Lisa-Ann

Lisa-Ann Bannis
Editorial Director



From Dominica to London to Toronto, from beauty and music to film, Etheline Joseph built a career by learning, adapting and refusing to be underestimated. Yet what she considers most important happened beyond the credits.

I sat down with Etheline Joseph over Zoom on a Saturday morning. But interviewing Etheline is a little complicated for me.

She is Aunty Eth.

She is my godmother. Her children are my cousins, and she and my mother are more like sisters than friends. We aren't related by blood, but you would never know it. She has always treated me like a daughter, and throughout my life she has occupied that space somewhere between **aunt, godmother, mentor and mother figure.**

Growing up, I thought she was cool.

Aunty Eth wore tight leather skirts, trendy boots and leather jodhpurs. She worked as part of the MAC team before most people I knew even knew what MAC was. Because of her, I had cool haircuts no one else my age seemed to have. I had my makeup professionally done for prom at the Carlton Street store. I went to events I didn't fully appreciate at the time. I participated in the very first Fashion Cares, and I helped at the shampoo bowls and earned tips.

All because of Aunty Eth.

What didn't occur to me until much later was that she was kind of a big deal. I began to understand it when other people started talking about her. Names I knew. Careers I recognized. Stories from Toronto's beauty, fashion, music and entertainment worlds. Moments I had been close enough to witness without realizing I was witnessing anything particularly remarkable.

To me, it was simply Aunty Eth's life.

We share a love for many of the same things, but perhaps none more faithfully than a really good shortbread cookie.

She knows the supplier. I enjoy the butter.

So there was something wonderfully strange and nerve-racking about sitting across from her, this time with questions prepared, the video recording as I asked her to tell me about a life I thought I already knew.

I didn't.

And maybe that is what made this conversation so special.

For this issue of HER COLLECTION, I get to introduce you to the woman I have had the privilege of simply calling Aunty Eth.

This is **Etheline Joseph**.

And **HER Story** continues...

“I don’t like professional titles. My name is Etheline Joseph, and I'm a hairdresser.”

Why don't you like titles?

“It doesn't really say anything. The title is just a name. It doesn't mean that you have particular skills. It may somehow reflect your experience, but I don't think it's necessary.”

You were born in Dominica and left for London when you were eight. What did that move change for you?

“First of all, I didn't know I was a minority until I arrived in London because everybody around me generally looked and sounded like me. When I got there, the first thing a child my age told me was that I was a “golliwog.” I didn't know what that was. I asked my dad, and he wouldn't answer me, so when I got to school, I asked my teacher. I think I started paying closer attention after that. There was a huge race fight going on. This was London in the sixties and seventies. I remember seeing signs saying, “No Blacks, no Irish need apply.” There were seven of us living in one room. My siblings and I slept on the floor. My two younger brothers slept in cribs. We shared a kitchen and bathroom with another family. So yes, ***I became observant and adaptable.*** *But ambition wasn't a word I would have used at the time.* ***It was just survival.****”*

School didn't necessarily recognize what you were capable of either.

“No. I think a lot of Black children were robbed. I was put into the lowest stream, into a domestic class. We focused on sewing, cooking, taking care of a home, domestic jobs. I remember wanting to do French and being told I couldn't because I didn't have the necessary grammar. Maybe that was true. But why couldn't you help me get the grammar? My parents were new immigrants. They didn't understand how to make those things happen. If the teacher said I couldn't do it, they accepted it.That was a good thing in one way, because ***when I had children, I fought tooth and nail for them to get everything.****”*

Is education the door you wish someone had opened for you?

“Yes. I would have liked somebody like me to have been there to say, this is how you can attain it. I didn't have the education I needed to do some of the jobs I would have wanted to do. Maybe I didn't know how to get it. Maybe I didn't voice my needs enough. But I was curious. ***I liked art. I saw beauty in everything. I didn't realize until years later that I was an artist.”***

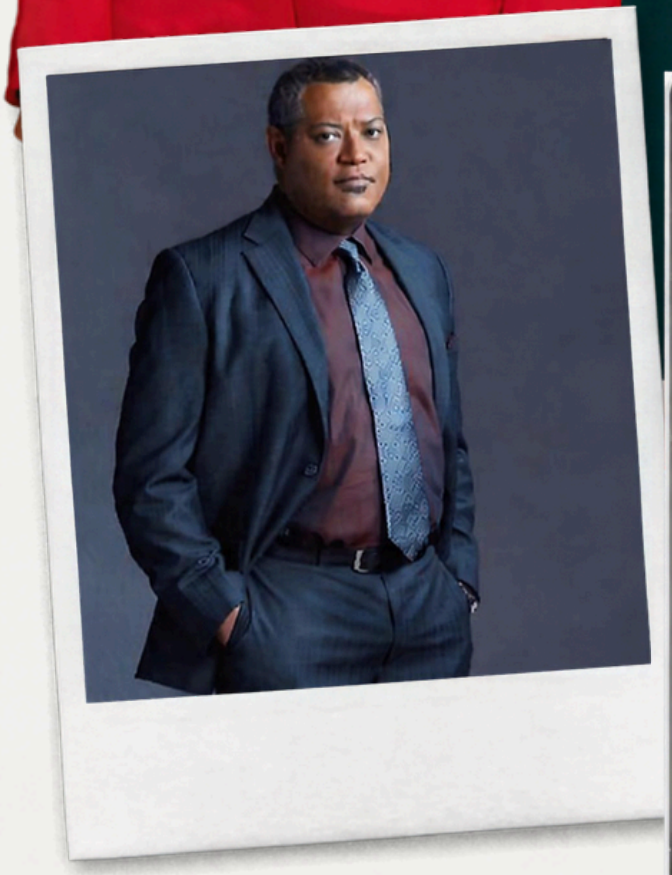
Hair wasn't the original plan?

“No. I wanted to be in fashion. I wanted to be an air hostess. I wanted to be an archaeologist. I couldn't do any of those things. One day I was at a friend's house reading a magazine called Lady, and at the back there were advertisements. ***There were two jobs I wanted. One was to be an au pair in Kashmir. My father said no. The other was to be an apprentice at Vidal Sassoon. My friends said, “You're not going to get that.”***
Vidal Sassoon was on Bond Street. It was a white salon. This was the end of the sixties, beginning of the seventies. ***I said, “I'm going to get that job.” So I*** got dressed up, went down there and ***got the job.”***










Tina









"THAT'S MY LIFE. I'M ALWAYS TRYING TO IMPROVE SOMEHOW."

Photographs from the personal archive of Etheline Joseph, used with permission

You were 19, while many hairdressers had started training at 16. Did that bother you?

"People my own age were already hairdressers, and they were telling me what to do. I didn't think that was very good. So, I did the training in two and a half years instead of three. Every night on my way home, I'd get off the bus and go do somebody's hair. I got more lessons. I learned more. If I was going to be a hairdresser, I had to go to the top hairdressers, and that was Vidal Sassoon.
Why not?"

"Why not?" seems to appear quite a few times in your life. Years later, you were teaching in London when someone asked whether you'd come to Canada.

"I said yes. I didn't really think about it. Canada sounded exciting.
Then months later, I got a phone call in the middle of the night. This man says, "The papers are ready. Are you ready?" And I'm saying, "Ready for what? Who is this?" It was Blair James. He reminded me of the conversation. I came to Canada initially for six weeks. Six weeks kept being extended. I didn't know Blair was friends with Frank Toskan and Frank Angelo, who owned MAC. I was working above the MAC store before it opened. When they moved to Carlton Street, I was part of that move. I've always been very lucky to be in the right place at the right time."

And talented.

"Working hard helps."

You've worked behind images and people the rest of us recognize. Was there ever a job where you didn't completely know what you were doing but decided you were going to figure it out?

"*Tina Turner.*
I got there, and she asked me, "Do you know anything about wigs?" I said, "Yeah, sure. But whatever I don't know, you've got a few minutes to teach me. "Why did I say that? Today, I would have had the wigs beforehand and prepared them. I didn't have that. I had my regular equipment and these wigs, and Tina wanted to look "raunchy." I didn't know what raunchy meant.
But I didn't think about failing. It was going to work. Whatever I did, it was going to work.
They did several photo shoots. I didn't know if my work would be chosen.
Then weeks later my brother came running up to me asking, "Did you see it?"
There was a huge advert of Tina Turner on Bond Street. They had used my work.
But one of my favourite parts of that story actually happened after the shoot.
We walked to King's Cross Station to get a taxi. This is Tina Turner. There should have been a car waiting for her! People crowded around her, and she stood there signing autographs.
I asked her, "How can you do that? Aren't you tired?"
And she said, ***"Without them, there's no me."***
I never forgot that.

Your work eventually moved further into film, including period work. You are very particular about historical accuracy, especially when it comes to Black hair. Why does getting that right matter so much?

"Because you're telling a story. People understand that when you're doing a period show, the clothes have to look a certain way. The shoes have to be right. But they don't always understand that I can't take a wig from today and make it the 1800s. You can't do that.
We talk about the fact that we didn't have products for our skin or products for our hair. That's why Madam C.J. Walker was out there making products.
So how did I get your hair to look like this if I didn't have those products? When we do our research, we have to portray people the way they really were, not the way that makes them palatable for today's audience. You're telling a story."

What did building this career while raising Elliot and Zara demand from you?

"I wasn't always at home doing some of the things mothers do. There was always someone to pick them up from school, sometimes take them to school.
I remember working with somebody who upset me so much that I would come home miserable. I came home and told Elliot and Zara, "Don't speak to me."
I went into my room for an hour or so and calmed down. And I realized I must never do that again. ***If I have to come home upset so much that I can't speak to my children, then it's not working at work."***

Did motherhood complicate your ambition or sharpen it?

"*Sharpened. I had Elliot, and I wanted a house. I didn't want him growing up in an apartment. I needed to earn more money. That's when I decided to go into film."*

You also had family around you who helped make that career possible. What has community meant in your life?
"***We can't survive without community. We can't.***
There was always someone. When Zara was born, without my aunt I would not have been able to go back to work. She came from Dominica and stayed for months to help me. There was family. There were people around me. That's how I was able to do what I needed to do."

Knowing you personally, I've watched you push the people around you to do more. Your children, ME, people in your industry. You support businesses. You share what you know. You make introductions. Why have you felt responsible for leaving the path open behind you?

" I think we should be. There was a company, or maybe it was a saying, called "Each one, teach one."
I think it's our responsibility to help the generations that come after us because there was somebody there doing it for me. I've just taken it that step further. And I would like you all to do the same thing. My mum used to say that with every generation, there should be a level of improvement. That's what I'd like to do."

Is there a part of your work that you consider unfinished?

"I'm always going back to everything and improving.
I'll do something and think it's great. Then a few days go by, and I think, you know, I could have done that better. That's my life. I'm always trying to improve somehow."

After many years, what keeps you interested creatively?

"There's so much out there to learn.
When I started as a hairdresser, I was a hair cutter, and that was enough.
Now I need to know the history of hair. I need to know what products were used to achieve a look. I have to research. And for me, research is the best part of any job.
I'm always learning."

Which is interesting considering how much you've already done.

" Every day we learn something.."

After Dominica, London, Vidal Sassoon, Toronto, MAC, music, film, motherhood and everything in between, what do you want people to understand about Etheline Joseph beyond the resume?

"These aren't things I really think about. I just go along my world willy-nilly.
My focus now is setting my children up. Finding ways to improve their lives. Making sure they're okay.
When the day comes, and I go to heaven, I need to know they're able to take care of themselves."

Then let me ask it differently. When your children and the people you've helped along the way speak about you, what would you want them to say?

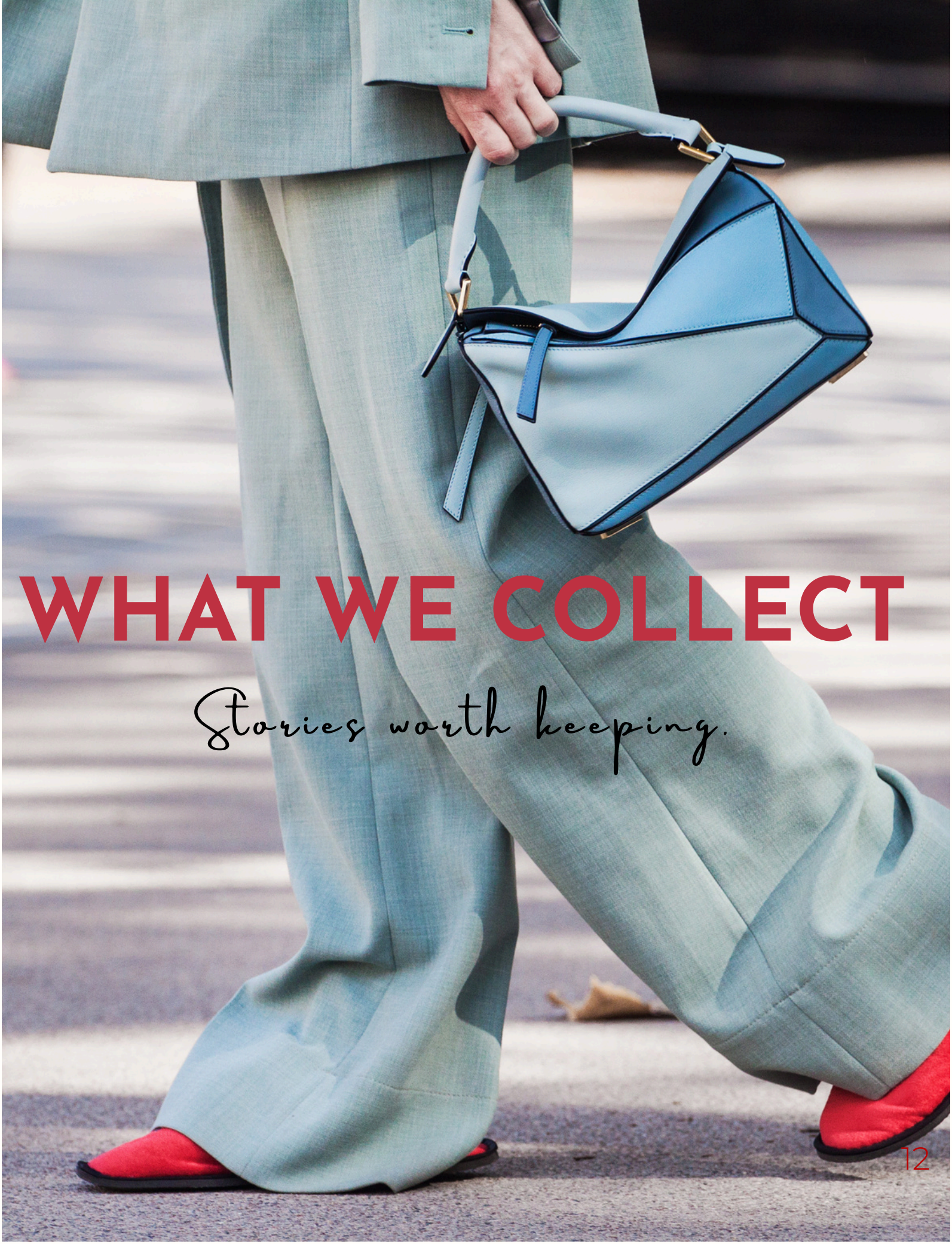
"I would just want to be known as hardworking.
That I was fair and professional, always.
And that I strived to do the best that I could do for myself and with any project that I worked on."

Perhaps that is the most Etheline answer possible.
No grand title.No lengthy inventory of credits.
No attempt to make herself sound more important than she believes herself to be.

Just Etheline Joseph. Hairdresser.

And, to me, Aunty Eth.

Lisa-Ann Bannis



WHAT WE COLLECT

Stories worth keeping.

OKAY, FRIEND. LET'S TALK ABOUT MATURE SKIN FOR A SECOND.

MISS MEGAN ROBINSON

FULL COVERAGE THAT STILL LOOKS LIKE YOU, NOT A MASK.

Let's talk about mature skin, but not in the way the beauty industry talks about it (you know… the fear-based "anti-aging" stuff that makes you feel like you're late to your own face).

I mean real-life mature skin:

Skin that's a little drier than it used to be.
Skin that can look textured the minute you go too matte.
Skin that can look shiny the minute you go too dewy.
Skin that's still beautiful… but needs a different approach than it did at 25.

And if you've ever looked in the mirror after doing your makeup and thought:
"Why does this look heavier than I wanted?"
"Why does it look patchy by lunchtime?"
"Why do I feel like I can see every line now?"

I need you to know: it's not that **you suddenly don't know how to do makeup. Your skin has changed, and your technique has to change with it.** Because mature skin doesn't need more product. It needs more intention.
And that's why the goal isn't matte. The goal isn't super dewy.

The goal is that sweet spot: *Satiny skin*.

Skin that looks smooth, healthy, and real, especially if you're dealing with dehydration and your makeup loves to get patchy the second you move your face.

1) Start with the finish you actually want: *satiny.*
A satin finish is the difference between:
"My makeup looks flawless." and *"My makeup looks like makeup."*
If your skin is dehydrated (and a lot of mature skin is), going matte can make everything look dry and textured. And going too dewy can make you look shiny in places you didn't ask for.
So here's the assignment: aim for satiny.

2) Hydration prep = makeup that moves with your skin.
Hydrated skin helps foundation sit better, blend better, and *move with your skin,* so you don't get that cracked, patchy, mask moment.

But I need you to hear me:
Makeup prep is temporary.

It can make you look amazing for the day, but if your skin barrier is struggling, you'll keep feeling tight, dry, and irritated underneath it all.

So yes—prep for today.
And also, *support your barrier for the long game.*



3) If your face feels tight after washing… that's a sign.
If you're washing your face and it feels tight, *especially* if you're using a physical scrub every day, your skin might be reacting, not thriving.
Over-exfoliating can mess with your barrier and make dehydration worse.

Instead, think:

- Barrier support (ceramides)
- Repair support (peptides)
- Comfort (your skin should feel normal after cleansing, not tight)

4) Full coverage doesn't have to be heavy-build it.
The trick is not "more product."
The trick is strategy.

- Start with a base that gives you coverage, but still looks thin
- Then decide what needs more (not everything needs more)
- Layer where you need it instead of packing it everywhere

And yes, shade matching matters.

Your center-of-face tone can be different from your perimeter/neck tone, so don't be scared to mix shades to make it seamless.

5) Freckles: let them help you.
If you have freckles and you try to erase them completely, your base can start looking flat. Freckles add dimension and real-life colour. So instead of fighting them, consider letting some show through because it makes the whole face look more natural.

6) Brows: don't go too dark.
If your brows are already full, you don't need to overdraw them.
For everyday? Brow gel is enough.
If you're doing a fuller eye and want more structure, you can add a little definition at the start/under-brow area, *but keep it soft.*



7) Eyes: build depth with browns first (then a tiny hit of black)
Sultry doesn't mean "start dark."
Start with browns to build shape and depth.
Then if you want that extra intensity? Add a tiny hit of black.
Because mascara adds darkness too—and if you start too dark, mascara will push it over the edge.

8) Hooded/partially hooded eyes: placement is everything
If you've got a little crease to work with, you can absolutely do liner/shadow that still shows when your eyes are open.
The key is placing and blending your depth where it's visible in your open-eye shape.

9) Lashes + glasses: choose comfort over drama
If you wear glasses, lash style matters.
If your lashes are rubbing your lenses, you're going to hate your life by hour two.
Pick a lash that gives you lift and softness without fighting your frames

10) Powder: blur on camera without harshness
If you want that smooth, blurred look, especially on camera, go for a satin-smoothing mineral powder.
And if you're doing high-visibility moments (photos, video, events), a more "luxury" style powder can give extra blur + brightness in the areas you want to pop.

11) My client comfort rule: start with less
I would rather start with slightly less makeup, let you feel it, and then adjust. **Because nobody wants to feel like they got talked into a face they don't recognize.** We build together.

Bonus: stop letting "over 40" marketing tell you what to buy.
I hate age-based marketing.

Your skin doesn't need a product because of your age.

Your skin needs a product because of your skin type.

Dehydrated is dehydrated.
Oily is oily.
Sensitive is sensitive.

Choose based on what your skin is doing, not what a label says you should be using.



Megan Robinson
Founder of The Makeup Revival
MISSMEGAN MAKEUP REVIVAL
IG / TikTok: **@missmeganrobinson**

Not sure how to adjust your makeup?
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WALKING THROUGH MOLASSES

LOVELEEN SINGH I FOUNDER, PILATES WITH LOVE

I never really understood how much lack of sleep could affect you until recently.

I can fall asleep. That isn't my problem. I'm usually exhausted by 11 and fall asleep pretty quickly. Then somewhere between 1 and 3 in the morning, I'm awake. Sometimes I'm hot, sometimes I'm cold, and sometimes there is absolutely no reason for it. And of course, my brain decides this is the perfect time to start thinking about everything.

Then morning comes, and somehow I'm supposed to get up and function like a normal person. Lately, my days feel like I'm walking through molasses. I'm foggy, I'm tired, and my body feels heavy. Everything seems to take more effort than it should.

For someone who is normally so active, this has been really hard for me. Pilates, Reformer, Lagree, yoga, Barre...movement has been such a huge part of my life. I teach Pilates, for goodness sake. And lately I can't even imagine getting myself dressed and going to a class. There have definitely been days where I've thought, Loveleen, what is going on with you? Just get up and go. But I'm starting to realize that I'm not lazy. I'm tired. Really tired. And there's a difference.

I'm going through perimenopause and I'm now in my second month of HRT.

I'm using estrogen every day and progesterone for part of the month. I'm still trying to figure out what my new normal is. I'm hoping the sleep gets better. I'm hoping the fog lifts. I'm hoping I start feeling more like myself again.

But there's another part of this that I don't think we talk about enough. The stress of not feeling like myself is adding to the stress of not sleeping. Then not sleeping makes me feel even less like myself. I wake up at 2 a.m., and instead of simply being awake, my mind immediately starts calculating. How many hours have I slept? How many hours until I have to get up? How am I going to function tomorrow? Why can't I just sleep?

Then the next day I'm exhausted, so I don't work out. Then I feel guilty because I didn't work out. Then I start worrying that I'm losing everything I've worked so hard for. Nighttime comes around, and now I'm worried about whether I'm going to sleep. Then I don't sleep because I'm worried about not sleeping. Around and around we go.

So how do you break that cycle?

I'm still figuring that out, but I'm starting with something really simple. I'm trying to stop fighting myself. When I wake up at 2 a.m., instead of immediately thinking, "Oh no, here we go again," I'm trying to remind myself that it's okay. I'm awake right now. I don't have to solve tomorrow at 2 a.m.
I can just rest.

I've also started experimenting with very gentle movement when this happens. These aren't exercises that I believe magically make you fall asleep, and I'm definitely not turning 2 a.m. into a Pilates class. They're simply movements that I personally find calming and that give me something gentle to focus on instead of watching the clock.

I usually start with breathing. One hand on my stomach, breathing slowly through my nose and allowing the exhale to be long and easy. I'm simply paying attention to my breath and letting everything slow down.
Then I might bring one knee gently toward my chest and then switch sides. Sometimes I'll bring both knees in and gently rock from side to side. It gives my lower back and hips a nice, easy stretch without feeling like I'm actually exercising.

Another one I like is a gentle figure-four stretch. I place one ankle over the opposite leg and just let the hip relax. I'm not pulling harder or trying to become more flexible at two in the morning.

I'll sometimes do a very gentle supine twist as well, letting my knees fall comfortably toward one side, taking a few breaths and then changing sides.

Another movement I've been using is a small Pilates pelvic tilt or pelvic clock. Lying on my back with my knees bent, I very slowly allow my pelvis to rock, gently noticing the movement through my lower back. Nothing big. Nothing forced. I coordinate the movement with my breathing and focus on how it feels rather than how many repetitions I'm doing.

If I feel like getting on my mat, I may finish in a comfortable Child's Pose with my head supported and my shoulders relaxed.

Nobody needs me doing The Hundred at 2 a.m. The point isn't really the exercises themselves. For me, it's about slowing everything down. My breathing, my movements and hopefully my thoughts.

Some nights I might do several movements. Some nights I might only breathe. And sometimes nothing works perfectly. I'm learning to be okay with that too.

I'm also realizing that telling myself, "I HAVE to fall back asleep," creates another kind of pressure. Maybe the goal can simply be getting comfortable, resting and allowing my body to settle. Sleep may come, and hopefully it does, but I don't need to spend the night fighting myself until it happens.

I'm trying to take that same approach with exercise during the day. Instead of waiting until I suddenly wake up one morning feeling like my old self again, I've decided to start where I am. I've started doing gentle yoga, and I recently got myself back to a Reformer class. Before I walked into that class, I actually told myself, " No judgment today. Don't worry about what you used to be able to do.

If you need a break, take one.
If you need to modify something, modify it.
Just show up. And I did.

Honestly, that felt like an accomplishment. I'm starting to understand that movement doesn't always have to be about burning calories, becoming stronger or pushing yourself harder. Sometimes movement can simply be about feeling better. Maybe that's part of how I start breaking this cycle too.

Not by forcing myself back into my old routine, but by taking some of that pressure away.

Right now that might mean gentle yoga. It might mean a walk, ten minutes on my mat, a gentle stretch at 2 a.m. or a few slow breaths when my brain won't shut off. Whatever I have in me that day is enough.

I'm still tired. I'm still waking up. I'm still figuring out HRT, and I definitely don't have perimenopause figured out. But I'm realizing how much energy I've been spending worrying about getting back to myself.

So I'm trying to give her some grace. I'm letting her rest when she needs to rest and move when she can move. And instead of waking up every day asking myself, "When am I going to be myself again?" I'm trying to ask myself something different.

"What does my body need from me today?"

Maybe that's where I start.

Loveleen



Pilates with Love
Pilates Instructor & Youth Athletic Fitness Coach
Connect with Loveleen
Instagram: **@pilates.with.love**
Website: **pilateswithlove.ca**

(UN)PLEASANT WOMEN IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

SASHA WELLS

From childhood, women are taught to be docile. To be pliable. To be agreeable. To be pleasant. To be all the adjectives that are not jarring to men. Literature has always been a way for women to counteract that incessant voice telling them to diminish themselves. Authors like Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley (a lot of Marys as you can see) have used the written word to push back on the belief of what women should and can do. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, writers like Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, Paule, Alice Walker, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and many others have illustrated the dimensions of women of colour on page. They shaped the literature landscape with their creations. In Caribbean literature, the exploration of womanhood has burgeoned to allow readers to experience issues they may never had to consider. The women on the page are diverse in circumstance and place. Take a dive and explore these books and their (un)pleasant women.

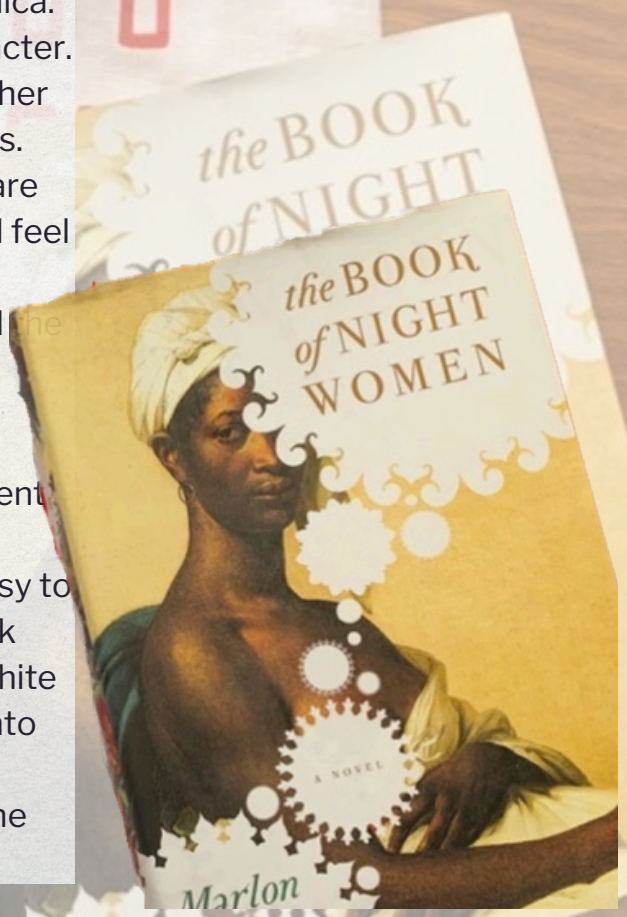


A native of The Bahamas, Sasha C. Wells is a long-time content creator in book spaces across the internet. BahaReads on Instagram and TikTok are spaces for Sasha to share Bahamian and Caribbean history, Caribbean books, and other literature interests. Sasha is Assistant Professor of History at the University of The Bahamas and a PhD Candidate in History at Florida International University.
@bahareads

Lilith in *The Book of Night Women*
Marlon James

The Book of Night Women is a powerful historical fiction novel about plantation life in eighteenth-century Jamaica. It covers the story of Lilith. Lilith is not a likeable character. She is colourful; as a reader, you can feel the depth of her rage to the brief feelings of happiness she experiences. None of the characters in *The Book of Night Women* are likeable, but they are real and raw. As a reader, you will feel Lilith being squeezed on all sides by enslaved people working in the field, the white people in the house, and the maroons who live free. It feels as if there is no escape from the bondage that she was born in.

Readers will feel the psychological strain of enslavement through the characters. Lusting after whiteness is something readers see in Lilith again and again. It's easy to fault Lilith for this, but it also causes the reader to think about what drives enslaved people to the security a white person could provide. The historical detail that went into *The Book of Night* Women is fantastic. The pain and brutality of the stark reality of enslavement is worth the read.



BoPopo, Mana Lala, Doris, and Rosie in The Lost Love Songs of Boysie Singh
by
Ingrid Persaud

The Lost Love Songs of Boysie Singh is the tale of four women. Popo is a known prostitute who is trying to find a better life. Boysie Singh is one of her clients who invites her into his home. He sucks her into his business until it does not suit him. Mana Lana is Boysie's baby mother. She is deeply devoted to Boysie and their son. She sticks around hoping he will eventually choose her. Doris, a small town-girl, is wooed by Boysie relentlessly. She gets marriage from Boysie, but does he deserve her? Rosie is a storeowner who Boysie bullies into paying him taxes. She does not want anything to do with Boysie but gets caught in the crossfire.

Caribbean man wicked bad! Persaud does a fantastic job of balancing each character's voice and point of view. She had me rooting for Boysie or at least hoping that he would change his wicked ways. Readers will enjoy each women's perspective for the story. The issues that they face are vastly different but are all connected back to Boysie. **What I enjoyed most was that Boysie had no point of view, but he was well fleshed out by each (un)pleasant women's view.**

Le Bianca in The God of Good Looks
by
Breanne McIvor

The God of Good Looks centers around Bianca. Bianca has recently graduated from a university in London and returned to her home country of Trinidad to pursue her dream of becoming a writer. Things seem to be falling into place. She has a remote job, an apartment, a car, and, although she's a little lonely, she makes the best of her situation. Her mother has passed away, and her father has remarried and is rarely around, leaving Bianca largely on her own.

Everything is going well—until Bianca meets and falls in love with a government minister. When their affair ends up splashed across the countrye's front pages, Bianca's life completely unravels. She becomes a social pariah, is blacklisted and fired from her job, and finds herself barely making ends meet. Her only source of income comes from occasional photoshoot jobs.

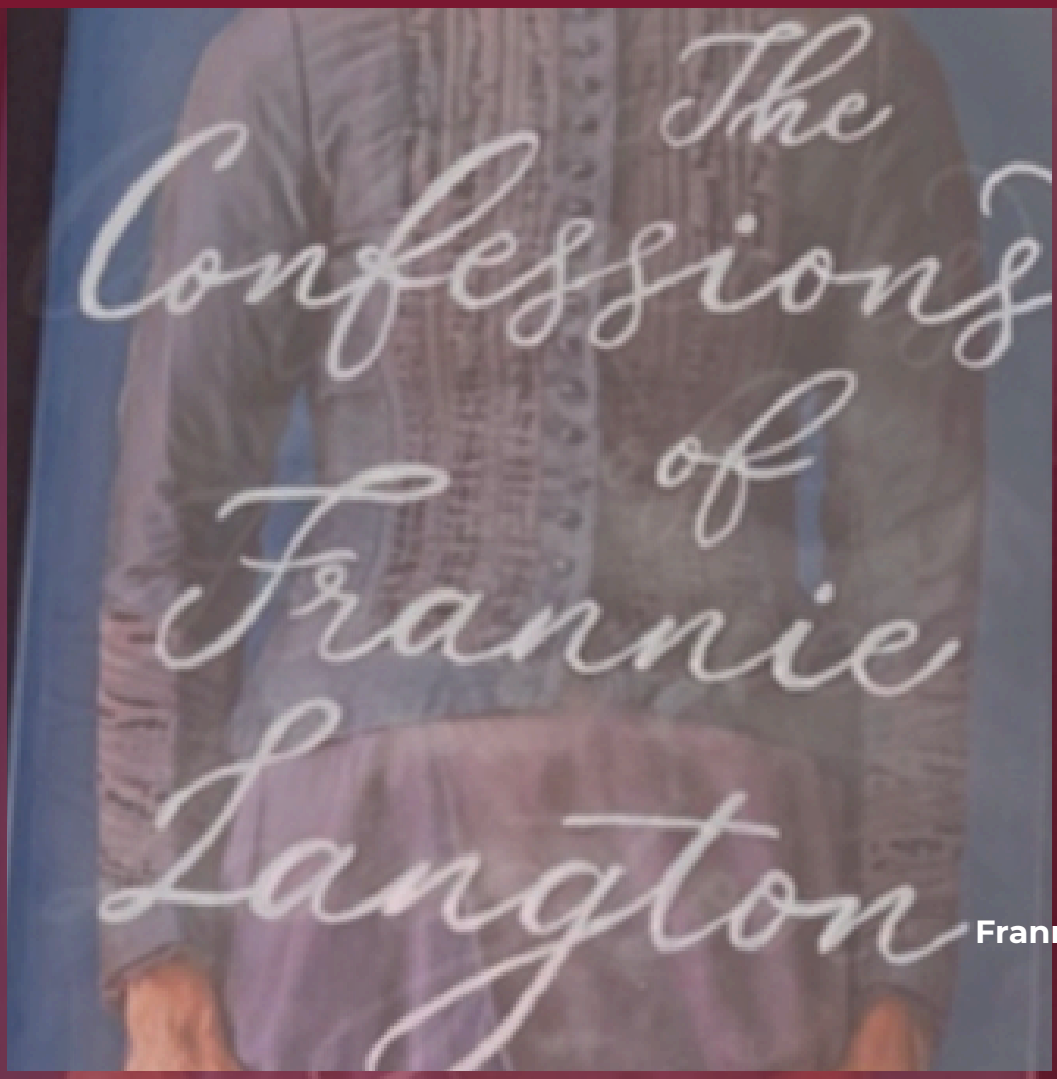
Biance is a character that slowly comes into her own and discovers her truth. She is a very realistic character that readers can root for. There is a lot of messiness around love, ambition, friendship, family, and figuring out who Biance is when everything she thought she had is suddenly taken away.

BoPatsy in Patsy
by
Nicole Dennis-Benn

Patsy explores what it looks like when an immigrant woman puts herself first – and not her family. Patsy travels from Jamaica to New York as an undocumented immigrant. The novel explores Patsy's relationship with her overtly religious mother and her daughter, Tru.

Patsy's life is hard. Patsy as a character is intricate and vivid. She was unlike any character I had read before. Her feelings towards motherhood and what she wants out of life was real and believable. Patsy is a slow building book, that readers must take time to soak in. The themes in Patsy – of identity and sexuality – were well explored and made me see the world around me differently.





Frannie in The Confessions of Frannie Langton by Sara Collins

The Confessions of Frannie Langton is about the case of formerly enslaved woman murdering her employer and his wife in Georgian London. Frannie and her story keep the reader thinking. Collins is a master storyteller. She unfolds the story, putting all the pieces together in the end in a great chain link. The Confessions of Frannie Langton are not the usual enslaved narratives. It was a rollercoaster ride. The gothic feel will remind readers of Jane Eyre with a mix of Sherlock Holmes.

Frannie is not a likeable character. None of the characters are 'likeable' characters. They are real people; complex people. Likeability is not the purpose of the story. The story is to illustrate the powerfully brutality many people had to live during enslavement. The confessions of Frannie give readers an insight into the psychological ongoings of different incidents people could have had to experience. The frustration will readers glued to the very bitter end.

Across the five novels, these (un)pleasant women created by brilliant Caribbean authors will push readers past comfortable narratives to explore themselves and the world around them.

CARIBBEAN LUXURY ISN'T IMPORTED. IT'S INHERITED

FANTA WILLIAMS



When I think of Caribbean luxury, I think of my Trinidadian grandmother, her hair always pinned into a sleek updo, red lipstick carefully applied and then dabbed lightly onto her cheeks as rouge. I remember church on Sundays, when women arrived in bespoke dresses in beautiful shades- yellows and pinks at Easter, reds and greens at Christmas, purples during the Lenten season. They wore matching hats, shoes and, sometimes, gloves. My grandmother, a Roman Catholic, covered her hair in church with a black lace mantilla.
There was an elegance to it all, but also intention.
Nothing was accidental.

And then there was my Aunty Patsy.

If my grandmother represented the elegance of tradition, Aunty Patsy was, in my young eyes, the Caribbean "It Girl."

She left Point Fortin at eighteen to make a life in Port of Spain. In her twenties she travelled from Trinidad to Europe and beyond. She was always fashionable: short pixie cuts, long nails, high heels and that island style that somehow looked as though no effort had gone into it at all.

She played mas every Carnival. She drove sports cars.
But what I remember most is that she always came home.

I can still picture her making the journey from Port of Spain back to our family home in Point Fortin, her dog riding in a basket in the car, Aunty Patsy at the wheel wearing driving gloves.

She had left Point Fortin. She had travelled the world. But neither seemed to require her to become less of where she came from.

You could be worldly without becoming someone else.
You could go out into the world, absorb it, enjoy it, participate fully in it, and still come home.





Perhaps that idea resonates so deeply with me because, in my own way, I eventually made a similar journey.

I was born in Canada but raised in the Caribbean, and Trinidad will always be home. Today, I have the extraordinary privilege of living in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I came to this beautiful collection of islands and simply never left.

There is something about living here that has changed the way I see the Caribbean. Not as somewhere to return to occasionally. And certainly not simply as the paradise sold back to us through travel magazines.
It is home.

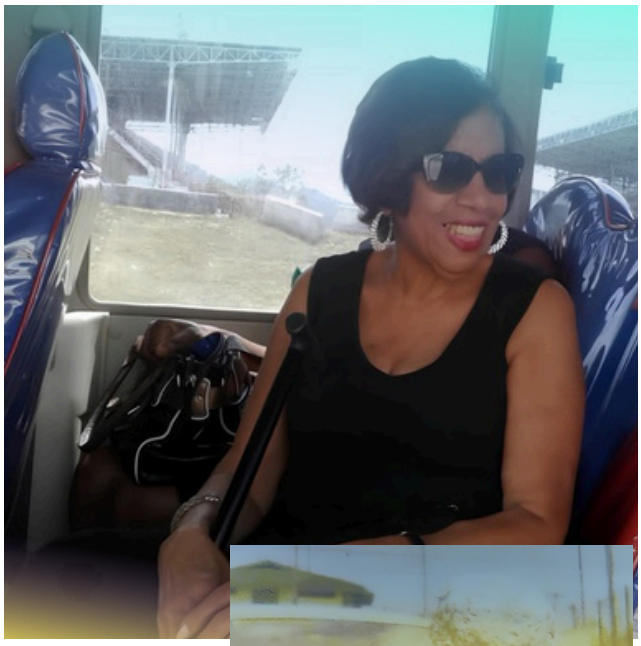
I get to experience its beauty in the ordinary: the sea on an unremarkable Tuesday, the mountains after rain, food passed between people, the familiarity of community.
We are a region shaped by movement, between islands, between country and city, between the Caribbean and the wider world. Our identities have never fitted neatly inside borders.

And perhaps returning gives you the privilege of seeing familiar things again. Things that once seemed ordinary begin to reveal themselves as extraordinary.

Long before I understood the language of luxury, the women around me were teaching me its vocabulary.

Luxury was how you presented yourself. How you prepared your home. How you welcomed people. The good glasses and china carefully stored and brought out for company. The Sunday meal that took hours to prepare. A dress made specifically for the person who would wear it.

Aunty Patsy, for all her glamour, was also a teacher. And every year until I was eleven, this woman who travelled the world, played mas and drove sports cars sewed my birthday dress herself.







The glamour and the craftsmanship were never opposites. Neither were modernity and tradition.
These women would probably never have described any of this as "luxury."

It was simply how things were done.
And perhaps that is where our conversation about Caribbean luxury should begin.

Today, luxury in the Caribbean is often presented through the lens of tourism: five-star resorts, private villas, infinity pools, spas, yachts and expensive experiences designed primarily for international travellers.

There is nothing inherently wrong with that. But it is not the beginning of the story.

Long before international brands began selling the Caribbean as a luxury destination, Caribbean people had their own ideas about beauty, quality, hospitality, craftsmanship and presentation. And importantly, much of that knowledge was carried by women.
Women like my grandmother and Aunty Patsy understood that elegance was not necessarily about how much something cost.

It was about standards.
You took care of beautiful things.
You presented yourself properly.
You made people feel welcome.
You knew the difference between something merely expensive and something well made.

And you understood that beautiful things did not always have to come from somewhere else.
Sometimes you made them yourself.

Of course, we should not romanticise this history. Caribbean ideas of refinement were influenced by colonialism, class, religion and European standards of respectability.

Sometimes elegance was pleasure.
Sometimes it was aspiration.
Sometimes it was armour.

But Caribbean women did something more complicated than simply imitate European ideas of refinement. They absorbed influences, adapted them and made them their own.

African, Indian, European, Indigenous, Chinese and Middle Eastern traditions encountered one another across these islands. What emerged was distinctly Caribbean.

The danger comes when we begin to believe that sophistication exists somewhere else and must be imported back to us.

That matters particularly now because the global definition of luxury itself is changing. Increasingly, luxury is being defined not simply by price or excess, but by provenance, craftsmanship, authenticity, scarcity, cultural knowledge and genuine connection to place.

On those terms, the Caribbean has an extraordinary story to tell.

The question is whether we recognize it.
Across the region today, Caribbean women are taking things our grandmothers and aunties understood instinctively (hospitality, beauty, food, craft, ritual, storytelling and pride of place) and translating them into contemporary businesses and experiences.



They are creating hotels that feel rooted in their islands rather than transplanted onto them. Fashion that draws from Caribbean history without becoming costume. Food that treats our ingredients and culinary traditions with seriousness. Beauty and wellness businesses grounded in knowledge that existed here long before "wellness" became a global industry. That, to me, is where the future of Caribbean luxury becomes interesting.

Because perhaps the challenge is not to choose between being Caribbean and being cosmopolitan.

Aunty Patsy certainly didn't.
And, in my own way, neither did I.
Perhaps Caribbean luxury can do what so many Caribbean people have always done: leave home, encounter the world and return without surrendering itself.

That requires a particular kind of confidence. It means understanding that international standards and Caribbean identity are not opposing ideas. We can elevate our ingredients, rituals and craftsmanship without waiting for someone elsewhere to tell us they are valuable.

The ambition should not be isolation.
Nor should it be imitation.
It should be authorship.

What if the knowledge, rituals, ingredients, craftsmanship and aesthetics that have lived quietly in Caribbean homes for generations were treated as cultural and economic assets rather than quaint traditions?

And what if Caribbean women, the women who have so often been custodians of these traditions, were among those defining, owning and profiting from their contemporary expression?

Those are the questions I want to explore in HER Island Luxe.

I will be speaking with Caribbean women working across hospitality, design, gastronomy, fashion, beauty, wellness, craftsmanship and other creative industries. I want to know what they are building, what they inherited, what they are transforming, what they are deliberately leaving behind, and who gets to define Caribbean luxury now.

But I suspect I already know something about where the answer begins.
It begins with women.

With my grandmother's red lipstick and black lace mantilla.

With Aunty Patsy leaving Point Fortin at eighteen, travelling the world and still making that journey back from Port of Spain.

And somewhere among all that glamour, there was a birthday dress she had taken the time to sew for me herself.

Neither woman ever sat me down to explain luxury.

They lived it.

Years later, after my own journey away and back, I think I finally understand what they were showing me.

Sophistication did not require us to leave ourselves behind.

Caribbean luxury isn't imported. It's inherited.



Fanta Williams is a Caribbean executive, writer, mother of two and unapologetic advocate for all things Caribbean. Born in Canada and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, she now calls St. Vincent and the Grenadines home.

Her career spans leadership, telecommunications, government relations and digital transformation, giving her a front-row view of a region that is ambitious, complex and constantly evolving.

Through HER Caribbean Luxe, Fanta explores the intersection of inheritance, identity and contemporary Caribbean life. She seeks out the women redefining hospitality, design, gastronomy, fashion, beauty, wellness and craftsmanship across the region.

Her perspective is shaped as much by where she has travelled as by where she has returned. She believes the Caribbean can be cosmopolitan without becoming imitative, contemporary without abandoning tradition, and globally ambitious while remaining unmistakably itself.

For Fanta, celebrating the Caribbean is about recognising the cultural and economic value in what the region already possesses, ensuring Caribbean people participate meaningfully in what is created from it, and preserving enough for the generations that come next.

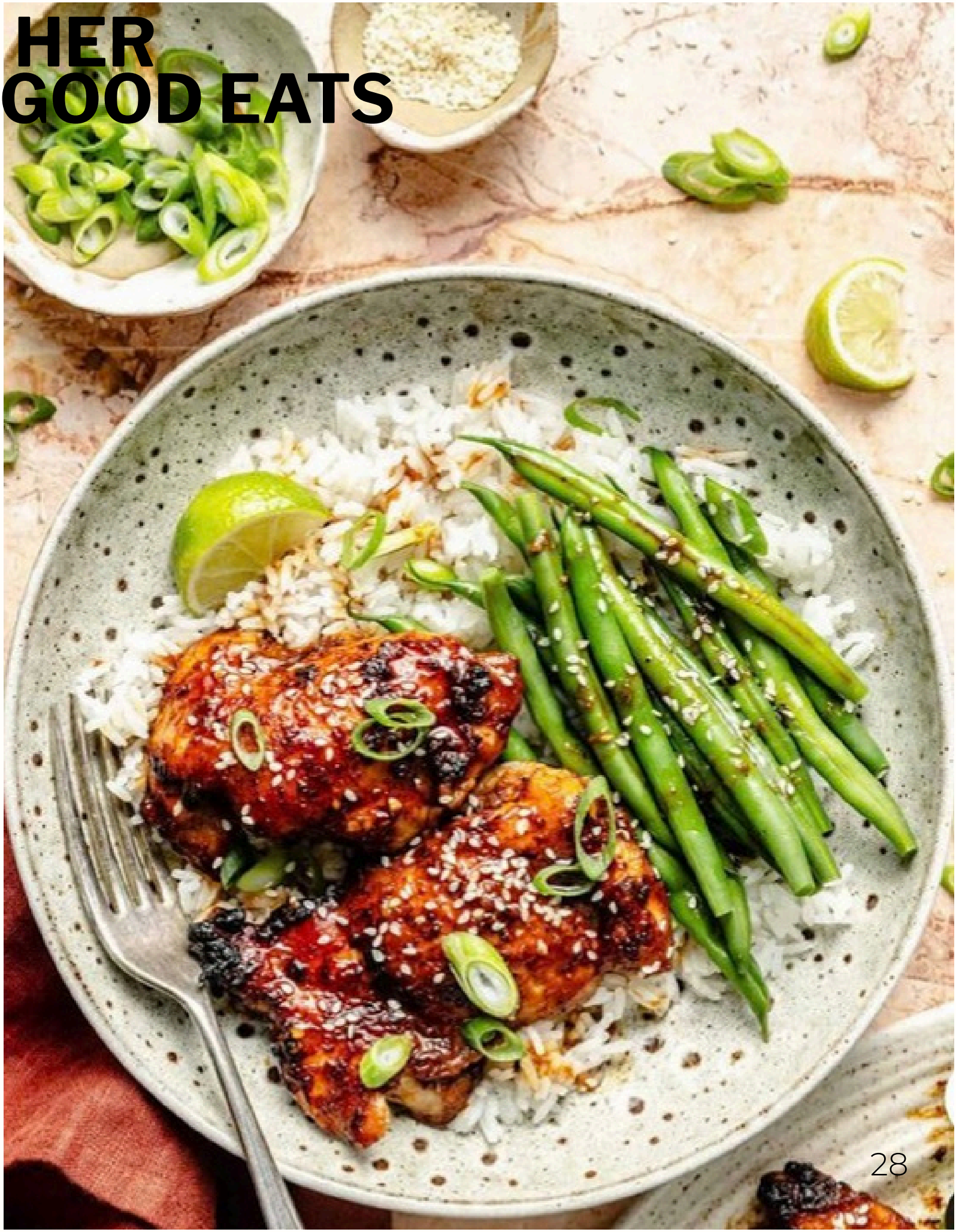
Some of the Caribbean's most extraordinary stories, ideas and possibilities have been here all along. We simply need to recognise their value, protect what makes them ours and tell our stories ourselves.





BAR PRIMA - 1136 Queen St. West

HER GOOD EATS



AT HER TABLE

with
Chef Elizabeth “Liz” Bowers

MISO HONEY CHICKEN RECIPE

Sweet, savoury and just a little spicy, this Miso Honey Chicken is packed with bold umami flavour. White miso, honey, ginger, garlic and chilli garlic sauce come together in a simple marinade that caramelizes beautifully under the broiler, giving the chicken a deliciously charred, sticky finish.
Serve it with fragrant jasmine rice and garlic green beans for an easy, flavourful meal that's equally suited to a weeknight dinner or casual entertaining.

Serves 4-5

Ingredients

- 8-10 Chicken Thighs boneless skinless

Marinade

- 3 tbsp white miso
- 3 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 3 tbsp tamari sauce or ight soy sauce
- 1 tbsp rice wine vinegar (or) Mirin
- 3 tsp finely grated fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic (grated or crushed)
- 3 tsp chilli garlic sauce
- 1 tbsp neutral oil
- ½ tbsp water

Topping

- 3 cilantro stems, leaves removed and roughly chopped

Method

1. Prepare the marinade.
In a bowl, whisk together the miso, honey or maple syrup, tamari or soy sauce, rice wine vinegar or mirin, ginger, garlic, chilli garlic sauce, neutral oil and water until well combined.

2. Marinate the chicken.
Place the chicken thighs in a bowl and add half of the marinade, tossing until the chicken is evenly coated. Reserve the remaining marinade separately for finishing. Cover the chicken and refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.

3. Prepare the oven.
When ready to cook, preheat the oven to broil and position the oven rack approximately 6 inches below the broiler.

4. Prepare the chicken.
Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil, for easy cleaning after. Do not use parchment paper under the broiler. Remove the chicken from the marinade, allowing any excess to drip off, and arrange the thighs in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Discard the marinade that was in contact with the raw chicken.

5. Broil.
Broil the chicken for 8 minutes. Carefully flip each thigh and continue broiling for an additional 5 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and beautifully caramelized.

6. Finish and serve.
Drizzle or brush the chicken with the reserved miso honey marinade and finish with the roughly chopped cilantro leaves.
Serve with jasmine rice and garlic green beans.
This is DeLishe, Enjoy!

MEET CHEF LIZ

Elizabeth “Chef Liz” Bowers is the chef and creative force behind DeLishe Toronto, a personal chef and culinary experience company built around fresh ingredients, global flavours and memorable food.
After years in the corporate world, Liz traded the boardroom for the kitchen to pursue the career she loved. She trained at Liaison Culinary Institute and continued her culinary education at George Brown College, developing expertise in pastry and cake decorating.

In 2015, she competed for a place on MasterChef Canada, Season 3. Selected from thousands of hopeful contestants, she entered the MasterChef kitchen and became one of the Top 17 home cooks in the country. The experience strengthened her determination to build a life around food.

Born in Canada to parents from Dominica, Liz spent her early childhood on the island. Its ingredients, flavours and food traditions shaped her appreciation for the way a meal can bring family and community together. Those early experiences continue to influence her cooking, alongside the techniques and global flavours she has discovered throughout her career.

Liz has cooked in private kitchens, for celebrity clients and on film sets across North America. Her work now includes catering, recipe development, baking, cake decorating, food styling and culinary instruction.

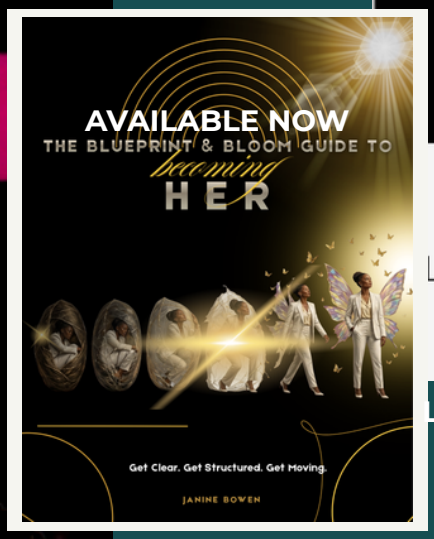
Through DeLishe Toronto, she creates personal dining and cooking experiences throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Whether she is hosting a private dinner or leading a hands-on class, her goal is to make entertaining feel effortless and the food unforgettable.



She also offers online classes and cooking and baking experiences for young chefs. For Chef Liz, the greatest reward is seeing people connect around something she has created. Great food. Beautiful experiences. Memories made around the table.
For personal chef services, private dining, events or cooking experiences:
Email: **delisheinfo@gmail.com**
Instagram: **@delishetoronto**

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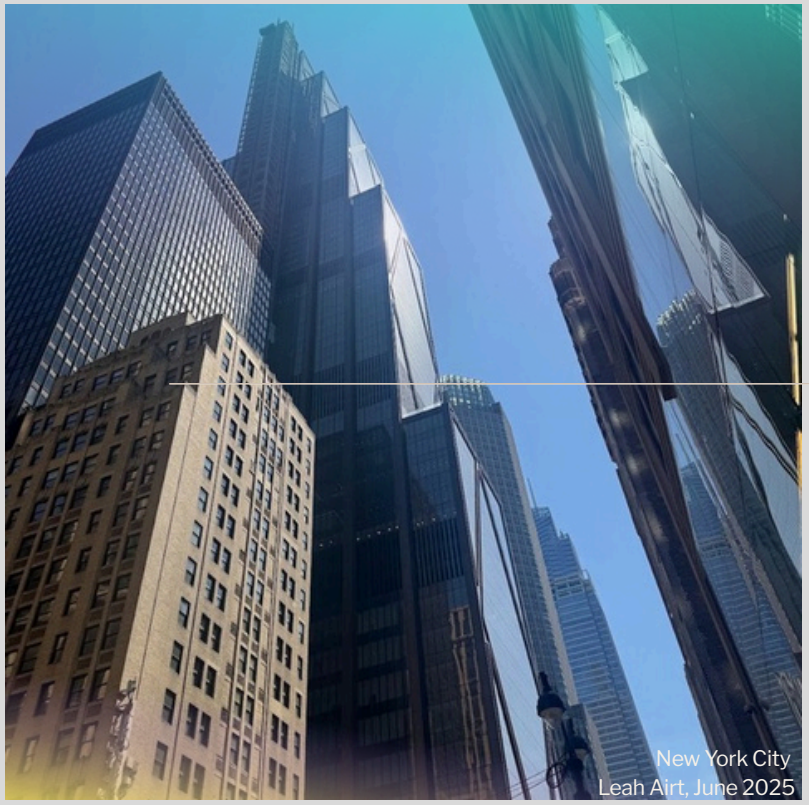
Maureen Greenstein



makeupartist


CREATE
Space for what comes next.

THERE'S SOMETHING BENEATH.
SOMETHING *BEFORE, BEFORE, BEFORE.*



New York City
Leah Airt, June 2025

Corporate Cocktail to Automate a Powerful Woman

Equal parts extended meetings and meeting expectations
1 part people-pleasing
1 part always on
1 part immediate response
½ part mandatory in-office

Ensure she's touched out with frayed edges.
Surround with hot pavement and simmer on back-to-back calls.

Top with guilt (of all varieties)
Fiscal years and corporate jargon to taste.

This summer, as a corporate executive navigating relentless fiscal-year demands, I was asked to close Q2, complete our financial 6+6 analysis, and keep us on track to meet our 2026 goals.

It's easy to watch the numbers. It's so tragically hard to tend to the present moment in Corporate America.



Sunrise over my garden with Wildfire Smoke glow in Snohomish, WA
Leah Airt, August 2026

Touching the data means you never have to deal with the messy humans the data reflects. It all had me wanting things to come together quickly, which required me to be the automation.

I usually scoff at overly complex layers or things that require patience - I'm afraid any residual patience faded with the rising heat of summer 2026.

And as my patience waned for my corporate life, a life with a clear ladder of progression I'd hungrily climbed, a few moments in my garden this August brought back memories of the first two women at the helm I ever witnessed.

Their legacy of leadership gripped me like a ghostly fog rising from red Georgia clay.

Something *before, before, before.*

I actually do not remember all that much of them, but the way they both led is something I've realized needs to be called forward and preserved.
I remember cold countertops in both their homes. The crisp echo that held in the Appalachian mountain air. Footsteps on gravel. Herbs hanging, spiralling, and suspended in a dance I did not understand.

Leadership for one grandmother came without books or curated courses; she was the eldest daughter who dropped out of school in 8th grade to ensure her younger sisters were supported. Leadership was demanded and woven into her every step. It was her own legacy born from the mouth of the Klamath to the Mulberry Rivers.

Leading the seamstresses on the factory floor. She'd barely look up from her own work to discuss scheduling, needs, or concerns. And she'd command the room back to attention if it got too chatty or the buzz of any machine fell out of rhythm.

Briers held discipline. Birdsong held mischief. Sorghum held abundance.



Mouth of the Klamath River meeting the Pacific Ocean
Leah Airt, July 2022

There's something beneath.
Something *before, before, before.*

For my other grandmother, leadership was quietly cultivated alongside a hearty meal topped off with something sweet. Mending in her classroom was served with a side of listening ear, home-cooked food, and a story woven from Rabbittown. Only a small cafe in a strip mall still carries the name of the long-forgotten town alongside a statue of a rabbit. Growing up, we would walk down to where her fence used to stand, and I'd squint with the blazing Georgia sun as I tried to imagine thousands of rabbits hopping along the landscape. Brambles held discipline. Rabbits held mischief. Rosemary held protection.



Rabbittown statue in Gainesville. Georgia USA
Leah Airt, May 2012

There's something beneath.

Something *before, before, before.*

This summer, I began to remember their hands quite clearly.

Calibrated season over season - a full palm pulsed to ⅛ cup, firmer still was a tablespoon; and clenched like they threaded their sewing machines was a teaspoon. They were both weathered, scarred, charred from cigarettes, and held the most tender touch to ingredients that mattered.

One would have me identify uses and contraindications of wild herbs. Always quick to caution on over-picking the spoils of geranium, she taught me boundaries of gratitude and land presence.

The other taught me that ingredients were raw and prepared within the limits of the season. Financial obligations and illiteracy didn't allow for operating outside of what was grown, traded, or purchased through Piggly Wiggly.

They both embodied how to be the True North for those trusted in their care. We absolutely knew how to lead before.

There's something beneath.
Something before, before, before.

With the fading light of the final throws of 2026, at the end of two decades wielding the high-pressure intensity of a mechanical hummingbird - I drift. I sink. I melt. I remember them.
Their wisdom offers a remedy - an elixir for a woman who has become automated and longs to **drench herself** in seasonal rhythm that's balking at algorithms and asking us to ***unravel*** our automation.

Unravelling Elixir (Fading Light Edition)

Equal parts elongated shadows and shadow puppets
1 part wind chill
1 part calendula balm
1 part pouring rain
½ part evergreen shimmer

Ensure she's well-boundaried with cellular hydration. Surround with cold moss and steep on the forest floor.

Top with leaves (of all varieties)
Stone fruits and silent mornings to taste

From cold commutes and fiscal years that no longer serve. Maybe we can drink this deep elixir and summon together what's there before to lead and stay human.

There's something beneath.
Something *before, before, before.*



Headshot by Jenna Nord Photography

Leah Airt
@hearthmamaopsboss
www.hearthmamaopsboss.com
Nourish Deep. Glow up. Lead and stay human.

Originally from the Appalachian foothills in Georgia, Leah is a U.S. Army Veteran and data librarian with more than 20 years of building + leading in the military and Fortune 500 companies. She cooks and shares her journey from her busy home in the Pacific Northwest - ink smeared by tears and splattered with bacon grease.

Photos Available for Potential Use

The Next Part of the Story

From Persistence to Power

Spring was the brave beginning.

Summer was the persistence era: the decision to keep building when the applause is delayed, the opinions get louder, and the results are still loading.

Fall is where we take it a step further.

Because persistence isn't just about staying.

It's about leading.

And for small-business owners, leadership isn't a title - it's a thousand tiny decisions you make when nobody's clapping.

It's you answering the same DM again.
It's you posting even when the last post didn't hit.
It's you re-sending the invoice.
It's you following up on the email you were scared to send.
It's you choosing standards over scrambling.

So this fall, we're talking about the part of business nobody glamourises:
the ask.

Because your vision deserves more than hope and good vibes — it deserves structure, standards, and a woman who is willing to ask for what she wants.

THE RULE I'M REWRITING THIS FALL

A lot of women were taught to lead softly by staying agreeable.
To hint instead of asking.
To wait instead of following up
.To keep their desires "reasonable" so nobody feels uncomfortable.

But here's the truth: you can't build a high-quality experience, a real business, or a meaningful brand without becoming the kind of woman who can make the ask.

So the rule I'm rewriting is simple:

I don't hint. I ask.

What Leadership Looks Like

Behind the Scenes

Right now, I'm planning **THE SHOWING** - an experience built on connection and a promise of quality when it comes to vendors, sponsorship, and the overall experience.

And that promise has required a different version of me.

Not a louder version.
A clearer one.
The version who:

- Applies for the grant
- Asks for sponsorship
- Reaches out to city officials
- Follows up with her network
- Cold-calls and reaches out

And here's what surprised me most: I haven't felt a huge spike of rejection sensitivity.

Because I went into this expecting noes.

So when I get a yes?

It's a quiet win. A moment of celebration. Proof that asking works.

CTA

If you're ready to be in a room built on connection and quality - and you want to experience what it looks like when women show up for themselves out loud - **join us at THE SHOWING.**

Get your ticket. Bring a friend. Come ready to connect.

Because repetition is leadership.

And asking is a skill.

THE FALL FRAMEWORK

The Ask + The Standard

If summer taught you to keep building, fall is here to teach you how to build with standards - the kind that protect your time, your energy, and your brand.

1. **Define the standard:** What does "high quality" actually mean in your business (delivery, communication, experience, results)?
2. **Make the ask specific:** What do you want, by when, and what's the next step?
3. **Follow up like a leader:** Not because you're desperate - because you're serious.
4. **Trackyour outreach:** So emotion doesn't run the process.

This week:

YOUR FALL ASSIGNMENT

KEEP IT SIMPLE

1. Write the thing you want in one sentence.
2. Make one clear ask (email, DM, call).
3. Schedule one follow-up.
4. Celebrate the yes - and don't collapse at the no.

DIGITAL MISE EN PLACE

THE TECH ISN'T COMPLICATED. THE CLUTTER IS.
BY TARANEH SALEH, TRN GROUP

Imagine you've been asked to handle the baking for someone else's party. Not your kitchen, not your rules, just an extra set of hands in a kitchen you don't know your way around yet.

You go looking for salt and find four containers of it: two open, one nearly full, one clearly bought because nobody could find the other three. You reach for saffron and find five jars, three of them years old, one still wrapped in the packaging from a trip nobody quite remembers taking. Every spice has at least two homes. Nothing has one. Your friend laughs when you hold them all up. She says she buys a new jar every time because she can never find the one she already has.

She says it like a joke. It isn't. It's a whole household pattern spoken out loud without either of you noticing. Then the oven is already running, someone else's dish is in there for another forty minutes, and your batter is sitting on the counter with nowhere to go.
There's an air fryer two shelves over that could do the job in half the time. Nobody thinks to reach for it, because nobody ever told you it bakes too. You wait on the oven, and all of it is completely avoidable.



That kitchen is what I open every time a client hands me their business and asks me to build them an AI assistant. It's not a metaphor I'm reaching for. It's the actual thing. Five versions of the same invoice template. A client roster split across four different tools that don't talk to each other. A folder called "Important" that hasn't been opened since 2023. They know exactly what they want the AI to do for them. They just can't hand it anything clean enough to do it with.

I've built these systems for a coaching brand run by one woman doing the work of five, and for a food business trying to modernize a decades-old operation. Different industries, same wall every time. It's rarely a shortage of tools; most of my clients have too many.

It's a file named "final," another named "final_v2," a third named "final_ACTUAL," and an AI asked to pull the latest pricing that confidently reads the wrong one, because nothing ever told it which file was true. The AI didn't fail. It answered the question the mess actually asked.

It's the same avoidance with tools, not just files. People have a dishwasher and hand-wash everything anyway, because unloading it feels like one more step than reaching for a sponge. I watch the digital version of that constantly.

A team with a native tool built for real-time collaboration runs the same conversation through an email thread instead, forwarding a document back and forth. Or a calendar with a scheduling link sitting right there, ignored in favour of four emails hunting for a time that works. Or a call that could transcribe itself, retyped from memory an hour later.



Nobody chose the harder path on purpose. They took the one that required nothing new and paid for it in hours, and in exactly the kind of scattered record an AI can't make sense of later.

Here's the part most people get backwards, including clients who hire me expecting me to start with their files. They think the filing has to come first, so they wait for a burst of energy to sort everything before they'll let themselves build anything. I always start with the actual vision: what do you want this system to hand you at the end of a normal Tuesday? The filing logic reveals itself from that answer. You can't organize a kitchen for a cuisine you haven't decided you're cooking. Clarity comes first. Organizing follows it.

All three of those things- the spice jars, the air fryer nobody thought to use, the dishwasher nobody unloads- come from the same place. Most of us were taught, without ever being formally taught, how to run a kitchen. Where the salt goes. Why the oil lives near the stove and the flour doesn't. Which tool can stand in for another when the oven's full. Someone showed us once- a mother, a grandmother, a roommate correcting you- and it stuck without anyone calling it a lesson.

Nobody has ever done that for a hard drive, or for the tools sitting inside it unused or unknown. We were handed laptops and told to figure it out, and most of us did, badly. That's not carelessness. It's an unlearned skill wearing the costume of one. The tech isn't complicated. The clutter is.

This is where I think we get to fix it faster than the last time. Nobody wrote down the kitchen rules either; they got passed hand to hand, between people who trusted each other enough to correct one another without it stinging. We can do that here too, by actually telling each other what we've figured out. That's the whole premise of this column: one woman's system, handed to the next.

"I didn't build her an assistant that got smarter. I built her a kitchen where she could finally find the salt."

Digital Mise en Place: one small habit a month, the digital version of clearing your counter before you cook. This month's habit is an inventory, nothing more. Open your digital pantry, every folder, every drive, every app you touch weekly, and just look. Write down what's actually in there. Then do the same for your tools: what each one is actually for, whether two of them are doing the same job, and what you're paying for that you forgot you're still paying for. You're not fixing anything yet. You're finally finding out what's in the cabinet before you decide what needs to change.

I didn't build my friend a better spice rack that day. I just helped her find the salt. That's smaller than it sounds, and it's also the whole job. Every AI system I've ever built starts exactly there, not with the model, with the mess underneath it. Clear that first, and the tech stops being the hard part.

Next issue: the dishes we're afraid to unload.

HER inTech & AI

Tara Saleh is the founder of TRN Group, a multidisciplinary organization that weaves together technology, business strategy, and spiritual development. Through Nava Ritual Studio (NRS), TRN Group's Gnosis and Mysticism division, Tara teaches how philosophy, science, and spirituality merge into one through an eight-layered course, a never-ending path of discovery.

With a background in full-stack software engineering, property valuation, and licensed paralegal work, plus certification as a professional makeup artist and yoga instructor, she brings both practical grit and graceful insight to her work. That range isn't a collection of side interests; it's one instinct applied to different rooms: legal structure, code architecture, and spiritual practice all ask the same question: what's the underlying order, and where has it broken down? That's the lens she brings to HER Tech, translating the same diagnostic work she does for clients into a monthly look at the habits that keep an entrepreneur's tools, files, and systems actually working for them.

Tara's passion lies in crafting systems that work for entrepreneurs, built from a holistic view that treats business, technology, and spiritual practice as one connected system rather than separate concerns.



Tara Saleh, Founder of TRN Group,

The Woman Who Became the Asker

BY COACH JANINE BOWEN

Women are changing their lives - family, work, faith and entrepreneurship in real time. Sometimes it looks like a woman who used to wait for the right moment, the right invitation, the right sign. Then one day, she decides the mission matters more than her comfort.

That is what this season has looked like for me while planning **THE SHOWING**. The event is being built on connection and a promise of quality for its vendors, sponsors and guests. The women who show up deserve to feel that promise.

It has required me to rewrite a rule I did not even realise I was living by: *Ifyou want something,don'tasktooloudly. Don't ask too directly. Don't ask too much.*

I am still me. But I have been bold anyway. I have applied for grants, asked for sponsorship, reached out to city officials, followed up with my network and made cold calls. Planning an event forces you to put your name next to a vision and invite people into it.

I expected no's, so they do not feel like a verdict on me. They feel like part of the process. And when I get a yes, it is a quiet win. Proof that asking works.



THE SHIFT

"I don't hint. I ask."

Boldness isn't a personality trait. It's a decision.

"Ready isn't a feeling. It's a decision."

The Ask Framework

If you are building a business, an event, a new offer or a new season of your career, here is the framework m you can use.

01 **Define your standard**
What kind of partners do you want? What experience are you promising? When you know your standard, your ask becomes clearer and your no's become easier.

02 **Make the ask specific**
Say what you want,why it matters, what you are offering in return and what the next step is. Specificity is confidence

03 **Expect no without making it personal**
No can mean timing, budget or competing priorities .It is not always a reflection of your worth.

04 **Follow up**
Follow-up is not begging. It says, "I meant what I said. This matters. I am building it either way."

05 **Track your outreach**
Replace "Nobody is responding" with the numbers: who you contacted, who replied and when to follow up. Do net let emotion run the process.

HER ASSIGNMENT

Become the Asker

01 Write down what you have been hoping for but not asking for.

02 Define what "quality" looks like in one sentence.

03 Make one specific ask today: email, DM, phone or in person.

04 Schedule two follow-ups: at 48 hours and seven days.

05 Track responses without spiraling.

06 Celebrate the yes, and do not collapse at the no.

07 Repeat.

Because asking is a skill. And skills get stronger with reps.



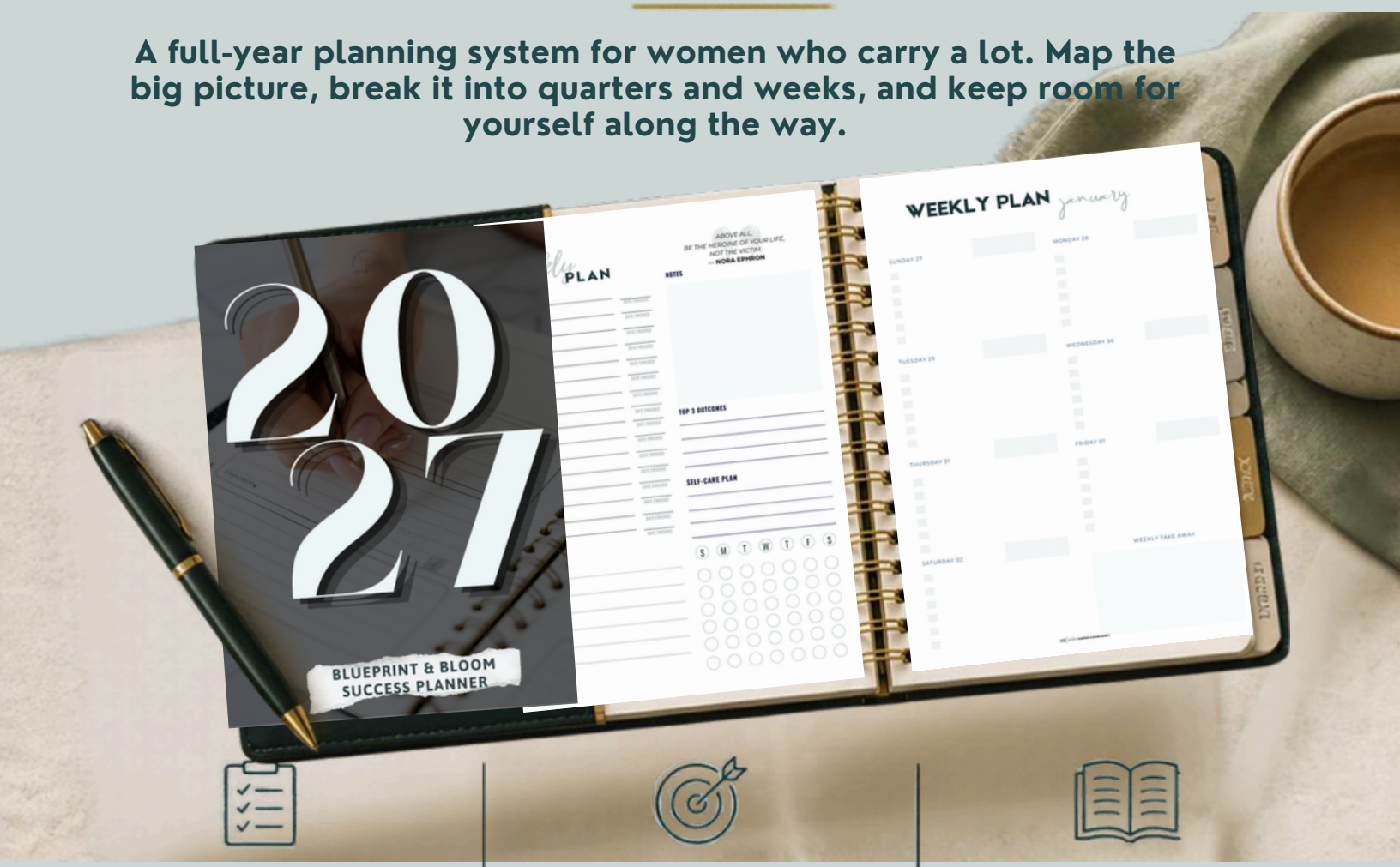
Janine Bowen is the founder of **HER**COLLECTED **INC.,** a Toronto-based women's leadership, goal-setting, and personal development company. She brings with her 25 + years of experience in business building and human relations.

At **HER**COLLECTED, we help women turn goals into actions that are aligned and sustainable - supported by a community that keeps them encouraged, accountable, and consistent. Through our ecosystem of coaching programs, planning tools, community membership, and live experiences, we support women in building clarity, consistency, and self-leadership, so they can lead with confidence in life and business.

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TAROTSCOPES

with

Krista Kayser
The Vibe Curator

Intuitive | Tarot Reader | Reiki I + II Practitioner

Krista has always been able to pick up on the feelings, thoughts, emotions, and needs of others. Throughout her upbringing, this ability felt isolating and always left Krista feeling different than those around her. This gift gradually developed throughout the entirety of her hairdressing career. She honed in on it during her spiritual awakening in the mountains. Krista really took time and space to do some deep healing within, leading her to discover Reiki and the impact it can have.

After experiencing a lot of loss, grief, and trauma throughout her teens and early adult life, she was finally able to turn this pain into her purpose. Since that time, Krista has dedicated her time and energy to holding space for those who are looking to empower, connect, grow and become more aware of themselves. Krista's clients find her intuitive sessions emotional but uplifting, insightful, transformative and powerful.

She holds space for people all over the world, including Australia, Panama, Mexico, the UK, all over the US, and Canada.



Instagram @the.vibe.curator
TikTok @thevibecurator1111
Email thevibecurator@outlook.com
Website thevibecurator.ca

TAROTSCOPES

'Tis the season for abundance, gratitude, community, letting shit go and embracing inner and outer transformation.

Seasonally, we are literally harvesting our crops, the results of the hard work we have been planning and pouring ourselves into for the first half of the year. It's time to enjoy the fruits of our labour, literally and figuratively. This bounty we have accumulated and earned tastes so much sweeter when we have loved ones to share it with. We give and prepare our offerings with love, pride and gratitude, and it fills our hearts to be able to give so generously and freely.

This is a time to reconnect with ourselves and our loved ones. To spend time enjoying the beautiful life we have created and share together. To count each and every one of our blessings because seasons change, and so does life.

This is a transitional and rare time when we see the beauty and value in decay. We see the important place that death and letting go hold in our lives during the fall. We understand that we wouldn't regenerate or survive without them.

Hold strong like your favourite maple when you feel the leaves of transformation start to fall away. Steady yourself in the knowledge that your existence and thriving make up the majority of your life, and these moments of decay and release are temporary.
You were made for this!

Krista Kayser
The Vibe Curator

ARIES

QUEEN OF PENTACLES

Your proverbial cup runneth over! Your grounded energy and resources provide a bounty, not only for yourself but for those around you, because you always know how to use and stretch your resources.

You give as "Mother Earth incarnate," and people are feeling your warmth, comfort and nurturing love. Please don't forget to extend and apply that healing mother's love to yourself.

Invest in yourself! Pour your pentacles and resources back into you, and keep the abundance, prosperity and generosity flowing.

If you aren't feeling connected and grounded, return yourself to the earth. Spend time in nature, communing with the land, trees, water and sun to reinvigorate your energy.

As the airlines remind us, you have to put your mask on and help yourself before you can help others.
Where can you meaningfully invest in yourself this season?

TAURUS

FIVE OF PENTACLES REVERSED

You have been going through it! You've been pouring yourself and your resources into things that have left you feeling depleted and broke(n).

The worst is over, and you are going to replenish and rebuild those resources. You will soon regain, or may already have regained, your independence, and it is going to be sustainable.
This is the time to rebuild your material security. It could come in the form of a new source of income, such as a new job or an additional way to earn.

Now is the time to revisit your relationship with money, time, energy and a scarcity mindset. You have to address the root of the issue before any healing can happen.

Spend the season honouring and building your worthiness and self-esteem. Know just how fucking badass and fabulous you are, no matter what your bank account says.

GEMINI

ACE OF WANDS

Potential and power await you, and you're being invited to step right into both!

What are you calling forward? What feels a little too big and scary, in a good way, to feel tangible?

THAT is where you're being asked to move.

Your dreams are never too big. That's why they're meant for you. You can truly do anything you want, anything you set your mind to, so why not use your mind to help you reach your dreams?

Your word is your wand! Use your words to affirm and manifest what you want. Pursue your dreams. Consciously create and manifest the days, weeks, months and life you desire.

In this season of your life, what have you got to lose? What do you have to gain?

This is just the beginning of this illuminating journey. Have the best time, and open yourself to a magical existence tailor-made for you!

CANCER

TWO OF CUPS

Whether it's a business partnership, a romantic relationship or the relationship you have with yourself, this is a card of love, synchronicity and emotional connection.

This is a supportive, complementary and loving relationship that can feel like a match made in heaven. Like yin and yang, opposites attract and complement each other, picking up where the other leaves off and providing strength that supports the other's weakness.

Allow yourself to enjoy and receive the loving energy that is coming your way!

Lean in and allow yourself to learn who this person truly is, but also who you are when you're given the space to be softer and feel like someone has your back.

This can also be a big, gorgeous mirror for the relationship we have with ourselves.

How can you practise receiving love?
Where can you be more tender with yourself?

LEO

THE MOON

We have all heard the adage, "There are two wolves inside of us." Your shadow wolf is asking to be fed.

Not with fear, worry or anxiety, but with strength, compassion and understanding.

There are dark parts of ourselves that we would never want to come to light, but that alone gives them power. We project them onto our loved ones, friends, coworkers and neighbours.

Avoiding the fears, stories and patterns in our lives is what gives them power. Allowing yourself to sit with them and work through the triggers removes that power and the accompanying weight of the burden.

Where have you been projecting your fears and worries onto others?
How can you make peace with these fears?
Are you allowing yourself to acknowledge them?
If not, what do you have to lose by acknowledging them?
What do you stand to gain?

TAROTSCOPES

VIRGO

FOUR OF CUPS

Everything feels okay, and that's kind of the problem, isn't it?

Thoughts such as "What if this is all there is?" "Is this enough for me?" and "Can I envision myself doing this every single day for the rest of my life?" are calling you to ask where you are lacking emotional fulfilment.
Just because something is okay and there's nothing wrong doesn't mean it's for you.

Feelings of stagnancy can creep in when you are ignoring your deepest desires and truest wishes. This season is a time to meditate, journey and parse through your dreams and desires. Look at where you could be living life to its fullest.

You can reroute and get back to fulfilment. Give yourself the time, space and imagination to see which opportunities are available to you now and in the future.

Start journalling with this prompt:
"What dreams or desires have I abandoned that still feel true for me?"

LIBRA

THREE OF CUPS

Squad goals! You, your crew and your social life are thriving.

You deserve to celebrate where you are and who surrounds you in your life! The women around you uplift and support you. It's reciprocal and appreciated!

If you haven't been feeling like yourself, it is time to get back into community with your girls, pour into one another and enjoy the gorgeous friendships you've cultivated.

Savour the beautiful, harmonious relationships in your life.
You may also need to rally the troops for a common cause this season. Showing your nervous system and the young women in your life how important it is to show up for one another in times of need will inspire and sustain generations!

Where can you pour into your friends? Where do you need support or to be poured into?

SCORPIO

THE STAR

This season is all about stepping into the spotlight and allowing yourself to shine authentically, exactly as you are, in all your divine glory!

You've done the work and healed so many parts of yourself. It's time to allow yourself to be seen for the gorgeous being you are and make peace with what you consider imperfections.

The things you don't appreciate about yourself are part of what makes you stand out.
Human kintsugi. You are perfectly imperfect!

Others are drawn to your undimmed light. Simply by being yourself, you inspire these people to be themselves.

You and the world are ready for you to step up, shine like the beautiful, perfect freak of a star you are and show everyone what you're made of!

CAPRICORN

Eight of Pentacles

You're putting the time, effort, energy and sweat into creating a life you love and are proud of!

Your hard work and mastery demonstrate your insatiable appetite for knowledge and skills. Your hustle is noticed, and you aren't afraid to put in the dedication required to achieve what you want.

You're making sure the details are taken care of so that the big picture is even more beautiful than you could imagine. You are committed to making the most of your efforts and are diligently making your way towards your dreams and success.

Consider this a positive sign from the universe that your hard work is paying off! The work you're doing quietly and independently is leading you closer to your goal.

Be so proud of yourself, and get back to work with a renewed commitment and vision of what awaits you.

AQUARIUS

QUEEN OF WANDS

Stand tall, proud and strong in your pure beauty and authenticity!

This season epitomizes claiming and owning your personal power and magnetizing opportunities, people and blessings towards you.

Speaking your truth, holding no pretences and refusing to hide from your truest, most divine self are going to serve and elevate you now more than ever!

Chase your creative dreams. Own the creative fire that roars in your belly, and channel that passionate energy into tangible results.

Use your ability to get things done, together with your power of co-creation, to see how magical you and this life can truly be!

Share your passions! Share your thoughts! Share your feelings with candour!

Inspire others while living as inspired and freely as possible.

SAGITTARIUS

TEN OF SWORDS REVERSED

Life is lifing!

You are reconsidering and reevaluating your life because of the shitstorm and decisions that have led you to this point.

This season is all about letting go of things that no longer serve you, including inner narratives about things happening to you. Letting go of being a victim and becoming the hero in your story and your life will set you off on an empowering and transformational journey.

You are being called to stop catastrophizing and living in worst-case scenarios. See the good and the opportunities available to you to enjoy your life.

Go through the stories you tell yourself and others. Is this how you want to be perceived? Are you always a martyr? A victim of circumstance?

If you want better for yourself, you have to do better for yourself! Release the shit weighing you down, and remember that you deserve a joyful existence and life!

PISCES

NINE OF WANDS

Girl, you've got this!

You're so close. Although the finish line feels far away, don't lose perspective on just how far you've come!

It's easy to feel as though obstacles and challenges are personal, but really, they're par for the course and divinely designed detours created to get us where we need to go, in timing we would never choose for ourselves.

Take a breath and remember how much life experience you have to carry you through this moment.

You didn't come this far to come this far!
You've got everything
you need to make it through, and you are so much closer to the finish line than you think.

Trust in your ability to navigate everything life throws your way. Honour the skills and tools you've acquired along the journey, and know that you have the wisdom and perseverance to make it to the other side.

Stay strong, Queen, and keep your chin up. Otherwise, the crown will fall.

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HER COLLECTION

COLLECT.CONNECT.CREATE

Regular Contributors:

Leah Airt @hearthmamaopsboss

Lisa-Ann Bannis IG: @gaboandanicet

Janine Bowen IG: @hercollected.com TikTok: @hercollected22

Elizabeth "Liz" Bowers @delishetoronto

Kyster Kayser @the.vibe.curator TikTok @thevibecurator1111

Megan Robinson IG / TikTok: @missmeganrobinson

Taraneh Tara Saleh

Loveleen Sing @pilates.with.love

Sasha C. Wells @bahareads

Fanta Williams

CONTACT

hcmagazine@hercollected.com

www.hercollected.com

IG: @hercollectionmagazine.com

FOR EXCLUSIVE ONLINE CONTENT VISIT
WWW.HERCOLLECTED. COM

HER COLLECTION MAGAZINE IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY JANINE BOWEN, HER COLLECTED