

REGALIER

ISSUE 13

*Shining in
Summer*

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Hidden
Patterns of
Blinking

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Diets

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with
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Cover
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Daniele
A. Klien,
from Finance
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Life & Journey
of an Author,
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Rowan Hisayo Buchanan

REGALIER

FASHION LIFESTYLE DECOR

BEAUTY HEALTH & WELLNESS

FOOD & BEVERAGE TRAVEL

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De-puff Your Under Eyes

by Muskie

Photo by Daria

BEAUTY

Have you ever noticed how you're under eyes displays one of the first signs of stress and aging? From creases to pigmentation and most importantly puffy eyes. Having the thinnest area of skin on the body, the under eyes are prone to much more sensitivity and irritation than we anticipate. We look at few of the expert recommended tips that will not only help you maintain your under eyes in terms of appearance and aesthetics but will also make them look calm and stress free without the to-and-from trips to the salon.

1. Gels, serum, creams

Be sure to use eye specific products as they are gentler and absorb easily. The under eye specific products target hyperpigmentation and tired swollen eyes and contain anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients such as green tea, cucumber, pea or caffeine, some might even include collagen. If you live in the tropics, using an under-eye gel would be much more effective than a serum or cream. These are well suited for the night routine as the last step. Massage well so that they are well absorbed into the skin.

2. Under eye patches

The under-eye patches are hydrogel patches. As the name suggests, they provide immediate hydration to the under-eye area by locking the moisture which in turn soothes and relieves tiredness under the eyes. These patches are great if you are looking for instant results and to top it off, most of the patches are free from toxic chemicals and alcohol.

3. Ice pack or cooling eye mask

Before the cooling tools came into existence, using an ice pack wrapped in a handkerchief and lightly dabbing it under the eye, instead of using a cooling eye mask, was the sophisticated and an alternative version for the cucumber slices. A cooling eye mask is perfect for a relaxing self-care Sunday with a face mask and a pina colada. It requires no effort at all and leaves your eyes feeling refreshed and smooth along with reducing any inflammation.



4. Cooling tools

Cooling tools gained immense popularity due to the face-yoga gurus. These are a few things they never talk about: cooling tools such as facial cooling globes or the cryotherapy ice roller are known to be effective by soothing and cooling the puffiness under the eyes. However, they are also known to be super delicate and tend to break if not handled with care. Another major drawback of using these tools is that the tools need to be sanitized before and after use to prevent any contamination which could lead to facial acne breakout or infection in the eyes when used for under eyes. If you can handle them with care and maintain the hygiene, it is worth giving it a try.

5. Finger-pad massaging

Finger massaging is a cost effective and traditional way to keep the puffiness at bay. Use an eye cream or eye gel before going to bed and lightly massage your eyes in clockwise and anti-clockwise circular motion. Massage each eye for 3 to 5 minutes to make sure the cream absorbs well into the skin. This not only increases circulation but also promotes the growth of new cells to reduce any pigmentation.



*Unveiling the
Hidden
Patterns of
Blinking:*

The Behavioural
Secrets Behind Eye
Movements

by Tihana Drumev

The eyes give a lot away, whether we are nervous, stressed, lying or tired. While it is easy to change our demeanour to show nothing is wrong, our eyes could be giving everything away subconsciously.

With the help of a body language expert, Vision Direct have developed a new tool which allows users to track their blinks for one minute to reveal what their blinking pattern may be indicating. The tool called the “the blinking test” encourages users to click a button every time they blink for the course of one minute, at the end it will tell you how many times you blinked and what that could mean.

Fast blinking is a sign of stress

Many may try and convince themselves that they’re not stressed and, in fact, handling everything well, but their eyes could be telling a different story.

Studies show that abnormally fast blinking patterns can indicate that you’re under a lot of stress. So much so, you can rack up a whopping 100 blinks per minute when you are stressed out.

Liars don’t blink!

An example of eyes giving the game away is the changes during lying. Liars will typically forget to blink while telling the lie due to the focus on the details, then will rapidly blink once the lie is told.

Traci Brown, Body Language Expert, says: “There is significant evidence that blink rate and blink weight can play a part in indicating deception. Typically, if their blinking changes it will get less rapid during the lie and then increase dramatically right after the lie is told. However, it is important to note that blinking is just a piece of the puzzle. It is vital to pay attention to other factors in their body language and tone to aid in the detection of deception.”

Take Bill Clinton’s infamous six-minute speech regarding his affair with Monica Lewinsky as a prime example. He blinked straight after saying vitally important words such as “sexual”, “relations”, “Lewinsky” and “never”. The way he punctuated his lies with a stress-relieving blink shows that his pre-occupation was getting his



Photo by Ari Roberts

LIFESTYLE

lie out. So, those looking to catch out a master of deception may be able to decipher their blinking pattern to help get to the truth.

The look of love: Fast blinking, the date is into you

Eye movements may seem insignificant, but blinking patterns can reveal a lot. The average adult blinks every 3-4 seconds, or about 15-20 times a minute, changes to this could be giving something away.

There's a spark: Rapid blinking & tapping

The blink rate is a significant indicator of mental arousal and it can show us when we're excited, nervous or even bored.

When a date is fluttering their eyes while making eye contact, it could indicate that they're pretty nervous but excited to be on the date with you. This is especially true if coupled with other classic nervous behaviour like sweating, fidgeting, or tapping.

They're just not that into you: Blinking a lot & no eye contact

If your date is blinking a lot, coupled with minimal eye contact and a closed body posture this could be a sign that there isn't any chemistry being felt by them and your first date may be your last. This is probably not the result you will be hoping for but is easy to pick up on.

They're lying: Eyes wide open followed by rapid blinks

According to some research, about 43% of people lie on the first date, but how can you tell? Well, according to body language experts, unbroken eye contact may not be as romantic as we thought.

When a person lies, they tend to look like they are really focused and there's not much blinking involved as they are concentrating on the details of a lie. Liars are focused on getting the story straight which means that the cognitive part of the brain pays less attention to the eye blink rate - instead liars tend to blink after the lie was told.





Stay Healthy while Working from Home

As many still opt to work from home even after offices re-opening, some studies claim that working from home can have negative effects on the body. Here are some tips of how you can still stay healthy even if you are working from home:

1. Meal planning

Before you get to work, plan and prepare your meals. This helps to not skip meals if there is a work load and thus leading to body stress.

2. Take a break

Every 1-1.5 hours to get up and stroll around the house or stretch your body. This will prevent the mind from getting dull and keep the body active.

3. Digital detox

If your remote job requires you to be on your smartphone or laptop all day, then choose your post-work relaxations that don't involve a screen such a reading a book, playing a sport, painting or crafting.

4. Healthy snacking

Choose boxes of salads or fruits of your choice instead of binging on packets of junk food. Not only will this provide you with the essential nutrients, but also prevent from diseases caused by junk food.

5. Stay hydrated

Always keep an unsweetened beverage such as flavoured tea, water, flavoured water, smoothies or fresh fruits juices by your side while working to keep you hydrated.

6. Get fresh air

If your schedule permit, make it a point to step out of the house for a half an hour walk, yoga or exercise after you are done with your work hours. It will help with the metabolism of the body and encourage lung health.



What are Tailor-Made Diets?

www.homeopathyandnutrition.com



When a health scare arises, people often surf the web to find solutions that will help guide them to an improved health. But not everything written in black, white (or underlined coloured text) is accurate for every individual.

Many diseases often have generalized people-friendly names that can be used during an everyday conversation. So, when a person is diagnosed with a particular disease or with a risk of a particular disease and is recommended a dietary lifestyle change, they often turn towards the web knowledge for advice. Then thanks to web crawlers, this also leads to them being bombarded with tips, tricks and partly-correct information by people on social media and certain tabloids.

The lesser-known fact is that every person has experienced a different lifestyle in terms of family history, dietary consumption, physical activity, social and psychological experiences, economic factors and work-life balance. Consider these as variables in an equation. The variations in the variable of this equation leads to different levels and types of imbalances in the body. A detected disease is usually the imbalance that has crossed the threshold range and if not brought under control, may possess a life risk. Along with the detected disease there are times when the person also has collateral imbalances in the body which go undetected and thus untreated but tend to pose a parallel threat when ignored. Thus, there is a need to not only focus on the detected disease but all the other imbalances to provide a definitive path for treatment.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

When looking at ways to treat oneself through nutritional-lifestyle changes, following the information available on the web is not useful. A generalized diet or unproven tips and tricks from individuals on the web, at times are deceiving and either may not prove the desired results or fail to treat the underlying and collateral issues. Sometimes, they even tend to worsen the underlying issue because it may include elements that create an opposing effect to the other issues in the body.

These are times when one must visit a registered dietician to request for a so-called tailor-made diet. A registered dietician may first advice to go to a general physician for an approval to conduct medical tests for all the possible risks that a person might be exposed to. Based on these particular tests and the above equation, the dietician prepares an assessment to exclusively prepares a diet chart solely for the particular patient. This tailor-made diet chart is calculated by including information from scientific studies and proven researches to prevent the patient from future risk and treat any prominent disease or underlying risk factors which can be helped with a nutritional-lifestyle change.

Knowing the right way to proceed in a health-crisis is where most people find themselves lost and become victims of inappropriate information, which leads them to lose trust in the health-care systems.

We believe that the right diagnosis is possible to treat for a better health.



Mental Health Awareness



Some of us have a harder time than others inside our heads, so it's good to know ways to offer support if you sense someone may be struggling.

How you can offer to help

Listen

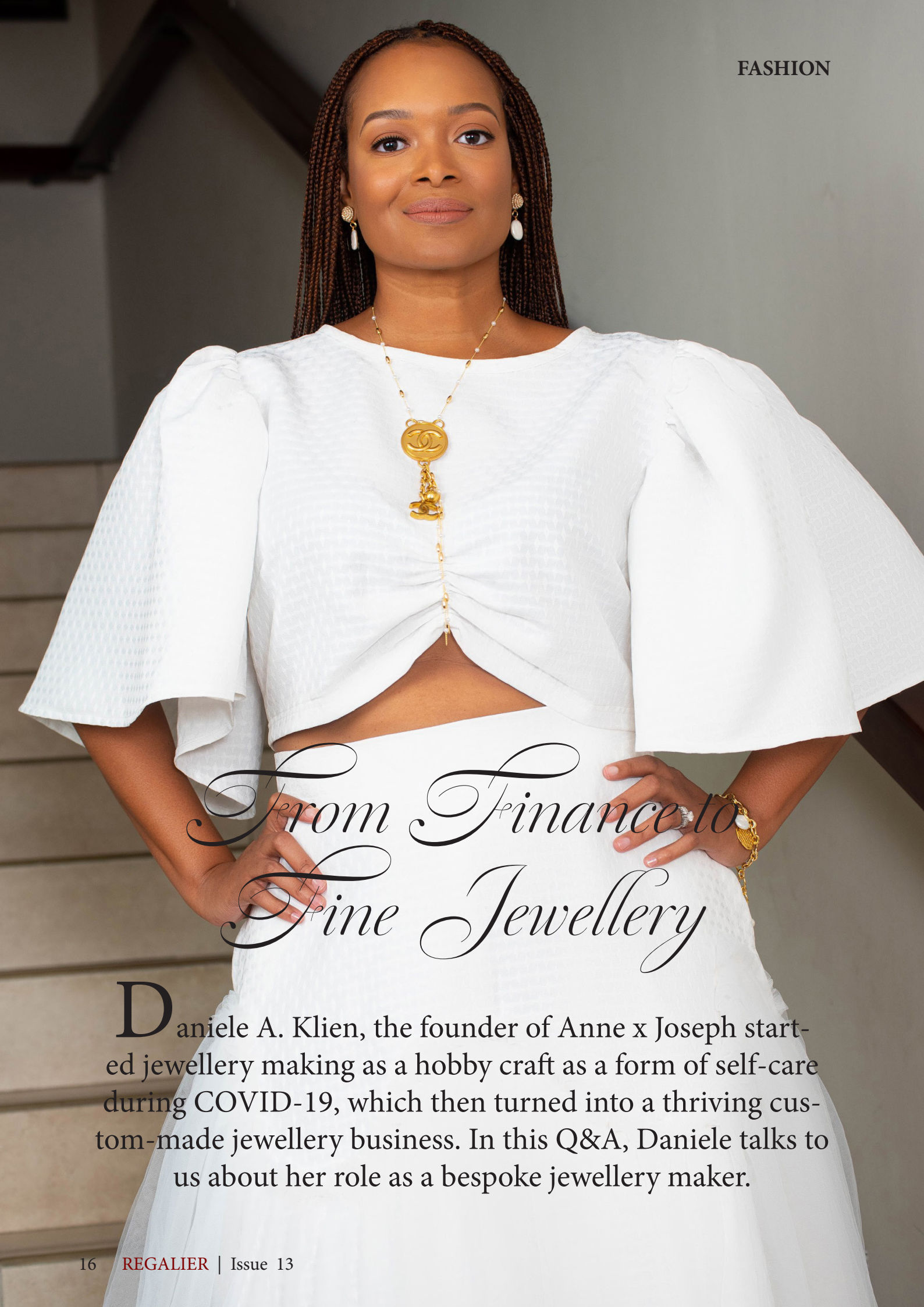
Sometimes all it takes is an ear to vent to or a shoulder to cry on. Letting someone know that you're there if they want to talk is always important.

Empathise

Try and put yourself in someone else's shoes so you can see things from their perspective and react without judgement.

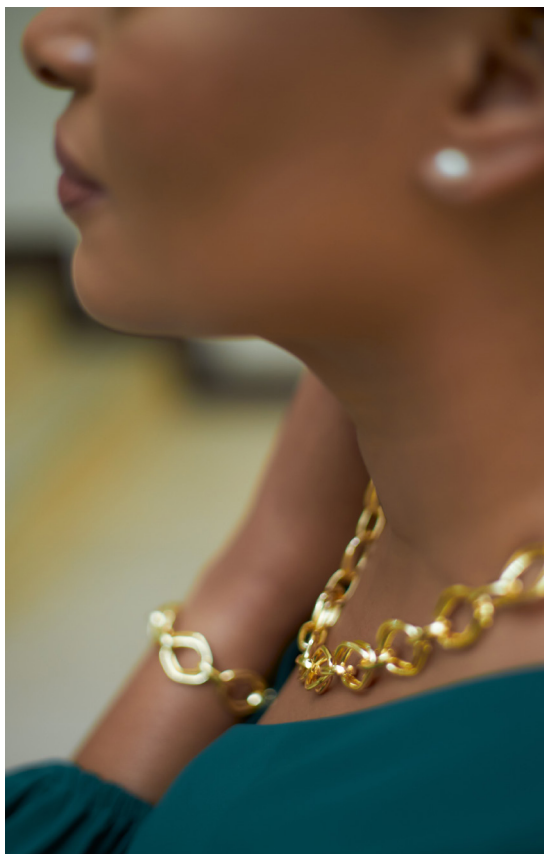
Don't judge

If possible, lend a hand to lighten the weight on their shoulders. If not, just letting them know that they have a friend to rely on will likely be invaluable.



*From Finance to
Fine Jewellery*

Daniele A. Klien, the founder of Anne x Joseph started jewellery making as a hobby craft as a form of self-care during COVID-19, which then turned into a thriving custom-made jewellery business. In this Q&A, Daniele talks to us about her role as a bespoke jewellery maker.



Q: Why the name Anne x Joseph?

My name is Daniele Klein and I am the founder behind Anne x Joseph. The name of the brand was inspired by my children. My daughter's middle name is Anne, my son's middle name is Joseph, hence the name. They are two most important people in the world to me, so it made sense to go with that.

Q: What inspired you to start it?

I started the brand during the COVID -19 pandemic, so this was late 2020. We were all in lockdown and while my background is in finance. My career is in risk management. I've always had a love for the arts, so quite frankly, I started making beaded bracelets as a form of self-care and a way to take my mind off everything else that was going on in the world.

Q: How did you groom yourself in the craft of jewellery making?

Believe it or not, it's 100% self-taught. I have no formal training in jewellery making. But, I think, because I enjoyed it so much and because of how calming and relaxing the process was for me, I started looking at various online techniques, reading books and just through practice, my craft grew from there.

Q: What kind of jewellery do you specialize in?

For the most part, my pieces, I would consider them demifying. I use freshwater pearls, I use gold filled chains, essentially materials that won't necessarily break the bank. However, you will get what you're paying for in my pieces in that with proper care, they should last you a lifetime.

Q: Where do you get your inspiration from?

For the most part, I would say my design inspiration essentially comes from life. In the beginning, you could see a lot of my own personal style, which tends to be on the more conservative side, reflected in my designs. However, as I grew in my craft, I realized that there are ways in which I can include my own personal style within my designs. However, I can step out of my comfort zone and make pieces that are attractive to a wider audience.



Q: What is your designing and making process?

I'm going to start with my process. It's not really streamlined. I think because I've held on to the initial reason why I started the brand, which again, was a form of self-care for me. It's something I enjoy doing. There's no pressure for there to be a formalized process. So, if I come up with a design and you know, I love it and I think my customers or potential customers will love it, I implement it. I get the hardware that I need to make the pieces and I go from there and they're all handmade by yours truly.

Q: As a jewellery maker, what product care advice would you give to people?

I think product care is very important, especially with the pieces that I make. I say this over and over again, that if you invest in a piece of mine, it should last you a lifetime. However, there are certain things that should be done to ensure that. So, actually with each delivery of mine, I include a care card, which gives details on how we should treat our pieces. So, for instance, not getting them into contact with water, with perfumes, etc. I also include boxes for my jewellery pieces as well as polishing cloths. So, I do provide that information with every piece of jewellery that they sell.

Q: What are some of the upcycled designer pieces that you have made?

Gosh the upcycle designer pieces. So, when I first started out, that's a lot of what I focused on. But throughout the years, I've sort of taken the focus away from that and focused more on my designs.

Q: Could you tell us about some of your own personal favourite pieces?

In terms of favourite pieces, I'm actually wearing one right now. So, this piece, I actually purchased a vintage designer bracelet, which it consisted of five of these gold medallions. However, I have a tiny wrist and it wouldn't fit. I actually took one of the medallions off and turned it into this necklace. So, pieces like this that tell a story, those are my favourites.

Q: How do you think Anne x Joseph is different from the other jewellery brands?

Since I began this journey, I've actually come into contact with and become quite close with a number of other female jewellery designers. So certainly, there are pieces that are out there that I think can suit various needs. I think, you know, speaking for my brand specifically, what I would say sets me apart is that there is no pressure to mass produce pieces. The brand -

FASHION

keeps going because, like I said before, I enjoy making these pieces by hand and there is a lot of thought and a lot of care that goes into each piece that I make, that I list for sale, and that I ship out to customers. So for me, I would say that's the one thing that I believe sets me apart.

Q: As a philanthropist, what initiatives have you taken towards worthwhile causes?

Philanthropy - this is something, you know, ever since I was a young girl, it's always been something that I have been very, very passionate about. My father instilled that within me. He came from very humble beginnings. He's always instilled within me and my siblings the importance of giving back. Once I started the brand, I decided that I was going to dedicate two collections a year to two worthy causes. We've been in business going on for years now. So, each year in April, I create a collection where the proceeds from that collection go to an individual organization who could use them towards help with promoting autism acceptance and awareness. Similarly, in October, I release a collection. It's called the Rosa Collection and proceeds from that go towards advancing breast cancer support and care.

Q: What gives the brand its luxe standard?

I personally believe that the definition of luxury and what it means to each of us as individuals has evolved over the years. The pieces that I make, the level of care and thought that goes into the designs, as well as making them, packing them, shipping them, I believe that all of that adds to the luxurious experience. But most of all, the focus is the end user. Once you receive my product, once you put that piece on, whether it's a necklace, a pair of earrings, a bracelet, once you feel luxurious in it, and that is my goal. With every single piece that I make, then I feel that I've done my job and I feel comfortable calling my pieces luxurious.



Q: What kind of clientele do you usually attract?

After almost three years of doing this and getting to know so many of my customers, because a lot of them are repeat customers. I am confident in saying that in general, the clientele that I attract, they're very similar to me. They know what they like, they know what they want, they know what looks good on them, and they're confident in that. They're also comfortable with reaching out to me to say, I've seen this piece on your website. However, is it possible for you to make slightly different versions for me, for instance? And I love that. That's how I get to build rapport with a lot of my customers. So, in short, I would say my clientele, they are women who are beautiful on the inside and out. They are confident and they know what they want.

Q: Finally, where can people find Anne x Joseph jewellery?

For anyone interested in purchasing Anne and Joseph jewellery, we are primarily online www.annexjoseph.com. We're also on Instagram @AnnexJoseph. So again, primarily online, we ship worldwide. However, we do have collections in the Flying Solo store in Soho in New York City, as well as the My Runway Group store in Covent Garden in London. The goal for the remainder of this year is to expand our retail store footprint. So, lookout for us in new cities, hopefully by the end of the year.

BADGLEY MISCHKA 2024 BRIDAL INSPIRATION

Badgley Mischka Bride for Spring 2024 continues to reflect Mark and James' devotion to elegance and glamour featuring Grown Brilliance x Badgley Mischka diamonds.

This season emphasizes "The Grand Gesture"; modern shapes with volume and sweep in fabulous fabrics with statement details – a sequin origami rose, dustings of delicate feathers, a spray of jeweled flowers.

Sheer, diaphanous fabrics highlight the dressmaker constructions and keep the gowns ethereal, or luxurious Mikado and satin provide structure and presence.

Our brides are looking for the dress of a lifetime – dramatic, modern, and elegant with the allure of the past. These gowns will be at home on the rolling lawns of Newport "cottage", the historic halls of Highcliff, or the pink beaches of Bermuda.







FASHION























YELLOW 2024 BY SAHAR FOTOUHI



Designer: Sahar Fotouh, @yellowbysahar
Creative Director: Sahar Fotouhi, @yellowbysahar
Stylist & Producer: Sahar Fotouhi, @yellowbysahar
Photographer: Jentrie Bentley, @jentrie
Location: FD Photo Studio LA, @fdphoto_studio
Hair & Make-up: Anastasia Eisenberg, @makeupbyanastasia
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Jewelry: Miu Miu, @miumiu
Headpieces: Yellow by Sahar @yellowbysahar and Prada @prada
Gloves: Yellow By Sahar, @yellowbysahar
Shoes: Chanel @chanelofficial, Miu Miu @miumiu, and Valentino @maisonvalentino
Models: Vilena - Sydney - Micheal, @bountymodels
Media Relations: ODA Public Relations @odapr



Determined to embrace the vast personalities and independence of women, YELLOW BY SAHAR. transcends beyond the typical wedding gown. Yellow is a fearless color in the white world of bridal. Sahar Fotouhi's, YELLOW, embodies the daringness in brides to defy the norm and choose a gown reflective of their individual character.

Designed to celebrate the “happiest day of a woman’s life”, YELLOW does not stray away from representing brides’ ambitions and dreams. The combination of original artistry and traditional elements with modern concepts, introduces a bold vision into the bridal world.

YELLOW symbolizes more than just a beautiful gown, with each creation full of emotion, innovation, and glamour. The design process is meticulously thought out, no single detail is overlooked from the minimalistic square yellow label to the luxurious velvet yellow hangers.

Created with the most luxurious French and Italian fabrics, the gowns are embellished in French laces, touching on the delicate yet dominant side of a YELLOW bride. Each design presents itself as a piece of art with the most diligent care and craftsmanship.























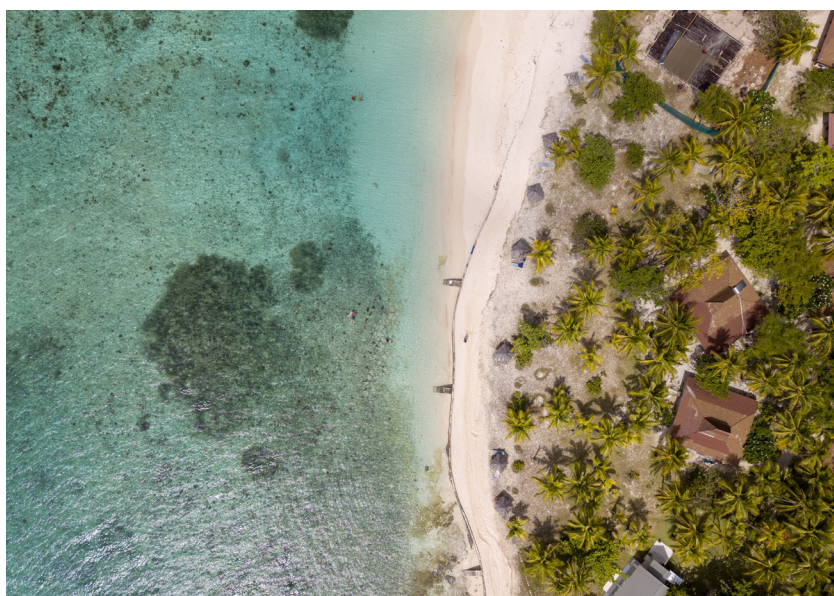


TOP OFFBEAT COUNTRIES TO VISIT THIS SUMMER

Is the post pandemic vacation surge making it impossible for you to find a serene and peaceful place to spend a few days in without being pushed and shoved around? With tourists flocking to all the popular cities post pandemic, we look at our top offbeat family friendly countries for you to visit this summer sans the overflowing touristy crowd.

1. Fiji

Fiji tops our list if you're looking for an exotic getaway to live the best island life. Fiji is an archipelago of 333 islands, each with different luxurious resorts and adventures for you to choose from. You could also choose to live on a luxurious private island such as the Kokomo private island resort and many more. Living on a bigger island would give you a chance to immerse yourself in the famous *bula* spirit, which is much more than just greeting a few cultural heritage activities for you to experience from the locals. The friendliness and the joyful spirit make you feel at home with each resort designed to be family friendly and have amenities both for kids as well as for parents making it one of the most popular destinations for families looking to spend quality time together. Whether you are looking for hiking in the forest, swimming with the manta rays, soaking under the hot springs, tanning on the soft white sand beach or just looking for professional diving classes, Fiji has enough for you to live the ultra-lux island life and to keep you away from the wifi.



2. Tanzania

Not many people are aware that much like its neighboring country Kenya, Tanzania too has a vast variety of safari destinations, some even better than the ones in Kenya. This summer, it's time to move on from the busier Masai Mara to the quieter and serene Serengeti National Park. The Serengeti national park is a UNESCO world heritage site and is known to be one of the best destinations in Africa to spot wildlife. Another one of our favorites is the Tarangire National Park which offers birdwatching opportunities. Both the national parks are known for offering luxury accommodation within the national park such as unique tents, treetop lodges and many more.

TRAVEL



3. Tasmania

Although Tasmania is not a country, it is an island state off Australia. So if you have plans to have skip the cold and visit Australia for winters, adding Tasmania to your itinerary might just be a good idea after all. It is known to have the cleanest air in the world. Much like the northern lights in Norway, Tasmania is known for its southern lights and of course, Tasmanian whiskey. Tasmania has some of the most scenic drives and laidback cities for you to spend a leisure time. Hobart, the capital of Tasmania is a vibrant city framed with Mount Wellington and with clear blue skies and a city with best seafood for you to binge on along with a glass of home brewed wine.

4. Estonia

Bordered by the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland, Estonia is a country that lies in Northern Europe. Tallinn is not only the capital but is also a part of the UNESCO world heritage list. Tallinn's old town is like living in fairytale. From cobbled streets to castle-like architecture throughout the city, Tallin is no less than a Disney dream. Estonia is not only famous for its rich architectural heritage, but also for its nature, wildlife and very active nightlife. If you are a person who loves adventures such as canoeing in the jungle river or walking down a study trail in a national park, south Estonia should definitely be on your list.



5. Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a southernmost European country which lies in the Balkan peninsular region. Bulgaria is widely known for its ancient spiritual monasteries such as the Rila Monastery, beautiful beaches by the Black Sea, stunning nature spots like the Vitosha mountain and the Rila lake. It is no surprise that the capital city, Sofia bears resemblance to the roman architecture since it is a city built on roman ruins. Sofia is a blend of history and modern nightlife and has a lot of restaurants for you to sample traditional Bulgarian food such as taleshko vareno and tutman-ik. For the liveliest nightlife in Bulgaria, it is worth visiting Burgas which has the widest array of beach resorts along the Black Sea.



Wine O'Clock with Miles Edlmann, Founder of One Hour Wine

Wine is a popular après-hour conversational drink but, many still struggle while ordering it. In this interview, we ask Miles about how to assess and choose a bottle of wine along with the most expensive wine in the world.

FOOD & BEVERAGES

Q: Which, according to you, are some of the most expensive wines?

The world's most expensive wines are widely known. There are also many wines which are prized by collectors for their rarity but given their age, are undrinkable.

The most valuable are the ones you can't buy. They are literally priceless. For example, I'm sitting on the only bottle in the world of a solera style aguardente produced at Home - Herdade do Mouchão (mouchao.pt)

You can only get a taste of it if you are family. Some of the brandy in the barrel is 101 years old now. That said, the original 1954 Mouchão is still spectacular. It was so good that that they made more '54 in 1955 and 1956!

Q: How do you assess the sensory qualities of a good wine?

With all 5 senses, our eyes to evaluate the colour of the wine, which can give you clues as to possible age-related oxidation issues, such as browning. Generally speaking, the more intense the colour, the more full-bodied the wine will be. Our ears can help us especially with sparkling wines because a finer mousse makes a higher note than a similar wine with bigger bubbles. Isn't the sound of a popping cork the loveliest in the world? In many ways our nose tells us more about the wine than our palette but taste is of paramount importance when obviously wine

FOOD & BEVERAGES

has been made to be drunk. On the tongue, many people don't realize that the tannins in the wine add a sensory experience which we feel by touch. In addition, it's often not really about the wine itself. It's who you are and what you know, the setting and who you are with. Drink lots of different wines and teach yourself about what countries, regions and grape varieties you like. There are more than 10,000 grape varieties out there to try. They are usually blended, so this might take some time.

Q: Facts that you would check on a bottle of wine to know that it is a good one?

The shape of a wine bottle will instantly tell you the style of wine – an easy way to show off your knowledge to your guests. For example, a long thin tapering bottle is generally for a very light, aromatic white typically Gewürztraminer, Riesling and Vinho Verde. A bottle with shoulders is generally used for a full bodied red and the shoulderless burgundy style bottles tend to represent a lighter to medium bodied wine. We all know what a Champagne bottle looks like with its deep punt in the bottom and the wire cage to hold in the cork which is under considerable pressure. The black glass bottles used for vintage port are fundamental in keeping out light which allows the wine to mature gracefully for many decades without spoiling.

Most labels tell you nothing other than the alcohol content

and volume (almost always 750 ml). However, you can't even always trust the label. American legislation, amazingly, allows such a difference between the actual and the quoted alcohol levels that a bottle of wine listed at 12.5% alcohol could actually be anywhere between 11% and 14%. Oddly enough, this is just because the labels need to be submitted for state approval often before the finished wine has even been blended. For your information, European and UK law allows a 0.8 % shameless fib in either direction. I am quoting from One Hour Wine[®] — Blog

There is often a lot of discussion about terroir on the label also - which is a real thing - but if you're not a viticulturist forget it because you probably won't understand it.

Q: What are some of the essential etiquettes while ordering wine?

You should only ever send back a wine if it is faulty, and not because you don't like it. Otherwise, it was your mistake in ordering it. Wine can have lots of potential flaws unfortunately, but much more rarely these days. These are generally caused by bacteria and fungi but also conditioning of the wine, e.g problems with temperature, vibration, oxidation and light which can also degrade wine. It takes an expert to recognise most of them and this comes with practice.

Q: Trusted labels or price? What makes you feel attracts a customer more?

I think the Australian wine marketing board did a survey some years ago which showed that having an animal on the label increased sales by about 10%. But don't trust medals from wine competitions unless they are reputable. Many of the prestige brands don't bother entering at all, and other shows give out awards just for paying the entrance fee.

Q: How, in your opinion, does one order wine like they have come from generational wealth?

If you order the most expensive bottle then you will show off that you are rich, but you might have no understanding and look a bit of a fool. Especially if you drink Chateau Pétrus with Coca Cola. You actually need to need to appreciate wine, and gain the knowledge. It's not such a tough job.

NJORD BY BERGMAN DESIGN HOUSE UNVEILS THE INTERIOR DESIGN FOR UPCOMING OCEANCO NXT SUPERYACHT, AEOLUS



Njord by Bergman Design House, the superyacht interior architecture and design studio co-founded by Marie Soliman, Albin Berglund and Sarah Colbon, is delighted to unveil the interior design for new superyacht, Aeolus.

The Njord team has collaborated with Oceanco, technical partners ABB & MTU, Lateral Naval Architects, and exterior designer Giles Taylor – renowned for his work designing the iconic Rolls-Royce Ghost and Phantom supercars – on the project, which forms part of the Oceanco NXT initiative. Oceanco NXT is a collaborative commitment to the future that has the potential to become one of the most impactful game-changers in yachting. When Superyacht owners see the Oceanco NXT endorsement on a yacht's design or other innovation, they know they can expect elevated standards of life onboard that are in tune with new perspectives on sustainability and lifestyle.

Unveiled at the Dubai International Boat Show this month, Aeolus heralds a new era for dwellings on water, demonstrating that the future of yachting can be authentically sustainable without compromising on style and beauty, both in terms of technical capability as well as in the materials used onboard.

DECOR



The Design

Taking her name from the Greek god of wind, Aeolus is intended to have a transformational impact on all who board. A floating sanctuary effortlessly sculpted by the wind via the creative vision of exterior architect Giles Taylor, her interior design has depth and is perfectly balanced, seamlessly transitioning between destinations and modes of living. At the heart of her design is a reference to the J Class sailing yachts of the last century,

reflecting the absolute harmony between the ocean and wind power and providing an unrivalled water-borne experience.

“From the very beginning of the design process, we wanted Aeolus to feel like a destination within the journey”, said Njord co-founder Marie Soliman. “It’s so much more than simply a yacht... It’s your very own floating home, your wellness sanctuary, and a place where you can enjoy true quality time with your friends and family.”

Fully sustainable materials, in-



cluding biomaterials, are at the core of the design, which celebrates organic nature, sensuality, and playfulness. Working in harmony with the feminine curves of the yacht’s exterior, Njord have created a sumptuous inner sanctuary that feels soft and cocooning, with an unmistakable bold, masculine energy. Pod-like formations lead seamlessly to the owner’s inner sanctum, where one can enjoy the most arresting views on board.

“The moment we saw Giles Taylor’s exterior design, we fell in love with the very feminine curves, and the very masculine presence of the yacht and we knew we wanted the interiors to reflect that,” added Njord co-founder Albin Berglund. “Through a perfect fusion of warm and inviting palettes, luxurious textures and one-of-a-kind furnishings with non-geometric shapes and spaces, we have looked to blend the boundaries of our clients’ lifestyles ashore and on the water, creating a home that is shaped by the natural elements.”

Every element has been rigorously considered, including the sourcing and traceability of materials, while Njord has worked with some of the world’s most innovative artisans in biomaterials and sustainable development such as Desserto, a premium vegan leather alternative that is made from climate-positive cactus plants and Oliveri Homes, which exclusively works with Global Organic Textile Standard cottons and uses non-toxic processes and dyes to create its materials.

“When designing the concept for Aeolus, we drew from our extensive in-house research capabilities, allowing us to source and develop a range of sustainable alternatives to the traditional materials used onboard a yacht,” commented Njord co-founder Sarah Colbon. “We selected and developed these luxurious and hard-wearing products using biomaterials that offer cruelty-free production, are typically biodegradable and store CO2 during their useful lifetime – thereby lowering the embodied carbon footprint of the interiors. This is the now not the future and we must offer these alternatives to our clients and shipyards as we work alongside our industry colleagues and partners to push the goals for net zero, building and maintaining this incredible superyacht industry”.

A Design Partnership

Njord will collaborate with Giles Taylor on the design for Aeolus, with Giles overseeing the exterior architecture. Giles Taylor is known as the creative who took Rolls-Royce in a new direction with his designs for the Phantom, Cullinan and Ghost. For project Aeolus, he is seeking to shift preconceptions of what constitutes a superyacht, reflecting how the emerging generation of global citizen clients relaxes, connects and works onboard, creating a seamless fusion of life ashore and on the water. The instantly iconic design appears to be sculpted by the wind, not a machine, and set in motion by nature, not engines; it conveys a feeling of natural poise and beauty, particularly with respect to its floating decks.







*Life &
Journey of
an Author*

Written and Interviewed by Sonali Bhatnagar



Post pandemic times have seen an upward curve in the number of authors being published across the globe. These include many who are convinced through social media ads that it is easy to be a bestselling author overnight and create a self-brand, thus leveling up to the likes of the best authors in the industry.

In this feature, we dive deep into what everyday life looks like for a published author and their journey from one book to another by two traditionally published authors:

- Rowan Hisayo Buchanan who is a British-American writer and author of *Starling Days* and *Harmless Like You*, which received a Betty Trask Award and the 2017 Author's Club First Novel Award, and is also the editor of *Go Home!*, an anthology of stories by Asian American writers.
- Tony Matthews is a Welsh/Australian novelist and historian. He is the author of over thirty published books including his light-hearted and humorous autobiography: *Invisible — the Essential Guide for Aliens Stranded on Earth*, published by Big Sky Publishing

In their individual interviews, Rowan and Tony talk to us about what inspires them, how they play around with their craft and the how they promote their work while working on the next book along with an exclusive short story by Tony Matthews.

Q&A with Rowan Hisayo Buchanan

Q: What's your method of creating a book so often?

On one level, it's not that often, this is over the course of my career. My first book came out in, 2016 and it's now, all the way to 2023. So, in that time, I've had three novels published and I've edited two anthologies that have come out. So, it's not an overwhelming amount. It's just steady work and patience. You know, a book comes out one day, but you've probably been working on it for multiple years. So, this year I had an anthology edited and a novel I had come out this spring, one month apart from each other. But it's not that it took me only one month to do one of them. It's that I'd been working on both of them for some time and they happen to come together. I don't think you should be intimidated if you see an author who seems to have a lot happening one particular year because they've probably been building up that that catalogue for a while.

Q: When you are working on a book, what does your everyday life look like?

When I'm doing the first draft of something, I tell myself that I have to write at least 250 words a day. Now that's a tiny amount. That's like half a page and some days I write much more than that. But some days

really the only thing I write is 250 words and the reason to do that is, hey, those add up. Those tiny little books, you get, allow you to get to the finished product. But also, because it keeps me in touch with the work. If you set the work aside for too long, you lose track of it and it can be hard to get back into it. Whereas if you're coming back to it every day for at least a small amount of time or at least a small word count, then all of the rest of the day your subconscious is working on it and when you sleep, you're still thinking about it and so you come with fresh ideas. It's part of your mental landscape in a way that if you write even 10,000 words in one day, then don't look at it for a month, that becomes much more, for me at least, irregular and hard to connect to the work.

Q: Have you written multiple pieces at a time? How do you navigate around them?

Yes. I have a dear author friend who's had multiple books published, who says that she always needs to have the book she's married to and the book she's having an affair with. So that when she's stuck on the book she's married to, she can sneak away the book she's having the affair with. So that she's always working and always creating. I love that idea and I find

it really funny. For me, I can't work on two novels at the same time. They're too big a world to have both in my head at once. But I will often be working on short pieces, whether that's short stories or essays at the same time as working on the longer project. I find, teach and edit. I'm spending time thinking about the language and words when I'm looking at other people's work and that can be a really nice way of both staying with language but also giving my brain a break and so that I come back to my own work refreshed. I do think it's helpful to have more than one thing.

Q: Do you apply any techniques to write faster?

To me, speed is not to me the most important thing. Quality is. Even the most prolific authors, very, very few will publish more than seven books in their life and there are a few like Terry Pratchett who has written a lot. But if you think about the length of a life, that's not that much. For each book, if it goes well, you're going to get reviewed in multiple newspapers, perhaps you don't want to think – 'Oh, I rushed that.'

“
she always
needs to
have the
book she's
married
to and the
book she's
having an
affair with.
”

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You want to think – ‘Oh, I spent the time to give the quality that I wanted to.’ I think that sometimes focusing on speed can be detrimental. Now I know that life is full of practicalities. You might want to make a living or be able to tell people – ‘Hey, I have a published book!’, and I’m very sympathetic to that, but I think it’s worth thinking about other work you can do if you don’t rush yourself in your work. That’s the first thing. But, having said that, I think that rather than thinking about trying to go really fast, think about trying to go steady and not have big gaps and not forget about it for a year and then come back to it. So, if you’re able to schedule time in your life, in your day or in your week, and actually put that on your calendar so that you’re not trying to find time at the end of the day when you’re exhausted or forgetting about it. Saying – ‘This is the time that I write and I’m going to spend that time either writing or researching my work.’ I think inevitably if you do that, you will reach the end of your project. You will create the work that you want. So, I think that’s what I would say. Maybe not focus so much on speed, but do focus on steadiness. Do focus on commitment.

Q: What are the key important aspects that a budding author should always maintain in their story?

I can’t guarantee a particular timeline, but what I would say is, take the time, maybe even take half an hour



to write down the qualities of, whether it’s commercial fiction or literary fiction, that they admire, that they aspire to. It might have to do with an originality of language, or it might have to do with having a really tight and exciting plot and then list maybe five authors they think do a really good job achieving the things they’ve mentioned and then going looking back at that work with a writer’s eye rather than a reader’s eye and then you think – ‘How did you achieve that?’ If it was a tight plot - when did the conflict come in? How long does it take to reach the peak of that conflict? Was there a subplot? By looking at the work of writers who have already achieved what you want to achieve and then thinking - how can I incorporate that into my own work? How can I learn from that? That, I think, is a very useful task to do whatever genre you’re in and it can be a way of helping to think about the genre itself. So, the commercial writer might be looking at the top bestsellers in the previous years, because that’s really part of how they’re thinking about it. The literary

writer might be focused on whatever it is that they find artistically exciting but, focusing the eye on those little, smaller choices those authors they admire are making, that can really speed up learning.

Q: Is there an element of story formation you would lay more emphasis, such as a character or emotion, etc.?

I would love to say, this is the one golden ticket answer but, I think it is important as a writer to know yourself. For me, I’m very character driven. The most important thing for me, is to understand what motivates the people I’m writing about - why they have ended up in the conflict they’re in? How the particular, given who they are, given their background, given their internal lives, what choices are they going to make? That, for me, drives the plot and the plot comes from the character. Another writer who is focused on plot might say start with a dramatic situation and then start thinking about, wait, who has ended up in that dramatic situation? Because plot and

character and style, they are all connected, they're not just separate elements that you grab from different locations. So, once you have one, you can then figure out the others and I think writers will naturally have one they gravitate towards first or be most comfortable with and then it's building from that point and working with the things that are in the conflict that might be less intuitive to you. But from that base, is that the thing that you really understand or that really inspires you.

Q: What advice would you give to a debut author who wants to begin with a series instead of a standalone?

I don't want to say one way or the other but I think that's very genre dependent. In detective fiction and fantasy, for example, it's very common for there to be series. If you have a strong inspiration to make something a series, I would not stop you. I think what I would say having spoken to different friends is, when you go in, you want to know two things: one, the map of the whole series, because readers don't want to buy the first two books and then realise that you can't wrap it up, also, so you can have some sense even if you haven't written the whole thing. Two, having the major plot points of the whole thing so you can explain it but also to have a sense of the first book being satisfying as a standalone. Having the editor be able to read, enjoy and find exciting, because if that's what you're selling,

you don't have to write all 20 books. They can just publish you probably with the first book. So, make that worthy in and of itself and then have that map of: but what would happen after this? What would go on from there? Does that make sense? Yes, yes it does. I have heard so many of them.

Q: Being traditionally published, what strategies and tactics do you use to promote and market your books independently apart from what the publishers are doing?

I'm very grateful to my publishing team and to my publicist. I have social media and I will tweet and share if I have an interview or if I'm doing an event rather than either fully relying on just going blank and having no presence and saying my publisher will do it. I think for someone who is traditionally published, it's quite good to work with your publisher. They might be the one organizing an event and they might have the connection to the bookshop, but you're going to send out on your newsletter and tell your friends and tell people, your followers to come and help generate that audience. For example, if I'm doing an event soon where someone reached out to me by my social media and said, "Hi, we'd love it if you could come to this city and do an event in this bookshop." and that sounded exciting to me. But I've then put my publicist from my publisher in touch with those people to help organize the event. Rather than it being separate, I think you can

work if you are a traditionally published, work with your publisher so that they are your megaphone and vice versa so that you're supporting each other. That way the work goes a bit further.

Q: How do you interact and engage with your reader community?

I had a book launch and I invited the readers in my newsletter to my book launch for my third book, *The Sleep Watcher* and if a reader posts on Twitter or Instagram that they enjoyed my book, I'll thank them and I'll reshare it because I think readers trust other readers more than they trust their publicity team or writer. It's simple. That's something I will always do and I think there's something really lovely when you have someone who has read your previous work come and say they're excited for your next book and you have this relationship with them that is honourable, invisible, but it's also lasted over years and that's a really beautiful thing.

Q: What do you consider as an author's brand definition?

I think naturally if you look at authors, not even contemporary, like if you look at Jane Austen, who probably wasn't sitting around thinking in terms of brand, but she writes about particular topics. She has particular interests in terms of variety, but also marriage and economic status. That makes her distinct from someone

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writing about, for example, war. Very famously, she has the soldiers coming home, but she never writes about the wars themselves and there are all sorts of little, great reasons we can go into that. But someone who loves Jane Austen, not just one book, but her whole work, what they're saying is that they love her particular interests in a particular angle on life and I think for me, and for my readers, hopefully, what they are drawn to are the questions that I find myself asking, that I'm very interested in, for example, in family dynamics. I'm interested in mental health. I write about a lot of mixed-race characters but I like to believe that my books are different to my first two novels are very pure realism. My first is sort of a historical novel and my third novel is contemporary-ish and has some supernatural elements. But yes, those interests remain. I think that there are some people who are naturally excited to think in terms of brand, but if you're a writer who feels that it's intimidating and you feel frightened that it's fake, I would say that you can think about what it is that interests you and excites you in your work, what common themes you can find and then if you are able to share that with your readers, to be able to show that and talk about why those things matter to you, then I think you will find the readers who are drawn to the same things. That's sort of the main thing I would say about brand.

The other thing I would say is, for me, my Twitter, my Instagram, they are always from my work. So, I don't share a lot of my personal life there because it doesn't feel appropriate. Different authors will share different amounts of themselves like their non-working lives on their social media and I think that is a decision and you'll have to make for yourself. I think some authors do it really well and it makes their readers feel connected to them and intimate with them and they want to see their lives. But for me, I need and want that separation between my private self and my work self.

Q: Do you start your new books based on what inspires you or what is expected from you by your readers?

I think that I have to have faith that what that the readers, who come to me, are interested in my particular take in the world. I am drawn mostly by what inspires me, by what I'm interested in, but what my questions are. So, in doing the first draft, I'm not thinking too much about an imagined audience or imagined set of desires, but when I'm editing, I start to think about - is this section boring? Is this character coming through? Will the reader understand why this person is behaving the way they are? Then I'm very much thinking about reader and audience, so I think it begins from a personal place, but then when I'm editing, I start to think about the reader needs.

Q: How does one earn a living as an author?

Different writers will do different things. I have seen authors who truly just make their money from just their work and if I'm honest, I think that's because they have talent and they're hardworking, but there's also some luck there. A lot of writers, who I know, do some have actual other day jobs that are unrelated. It might even inspire them. But I know the writers who either teach or edit or work in publishing who are continuing to work with their craft, that is not unconnected from their writing and people come to them because they've read their work and they appreciate or enjoy their expertise. But it is on top of the income from just writing the words itself. For me, I teach and I edit in part because I find that if I was so stressed about writing a book a year in order to pay my bills, I wouldn't be writing to the quality that I want to. Now I'm not say that, some other writers may be perfectly able to write the quality that they want to, fast, and this is not me saying you can't. I never want to tell someone they can't do something. But for me, I know that I'm a slow writer and that by having these jobs that are connected to my novels but aren't my novels, I'm not able to give myself the time I need. I would say think about the sort of life you want to have and I wish every single one of the readers gets to be the best seller they want to be. But until they do that, do they want to keep working with something

else with their other job or maybe they do want to make writing their full-time career but that might not look like just novels, it might be more than that.

Q: According to some people, most debut authors aim but fail to hit the bestseller mark with their first book. What would be your opinion on this?

That is tricky. I can't say what anyone particularly anticipates. But what I would say is what my early publicist told me, which is the old books sell the new books and the new books sell the old books because you have writers who come in to writers, readers who come in at different points in your journey and they go back to your previous catalogue and they are equally like those readers who love your first book, they're going to want to meet your second. Some books off the gate do brilliantly but it might be a slower journey and do not feel ashamed. I know a writer who was shortlisted for the Booker, which is a pretty big prize and she has a day job at the moment and she's still kept publishing. She's not a failure. Her books have been beautifully reviewed. But that day job allows her to live the life that she wants to live and to have a regularity and security because book money can be uneven. You might get a lot one year and less the next year. Do not feel ashamed if you aren't immediately just making money from your books. I never want to stop someone from pursuing their goal so,



you can come out with about once a year.

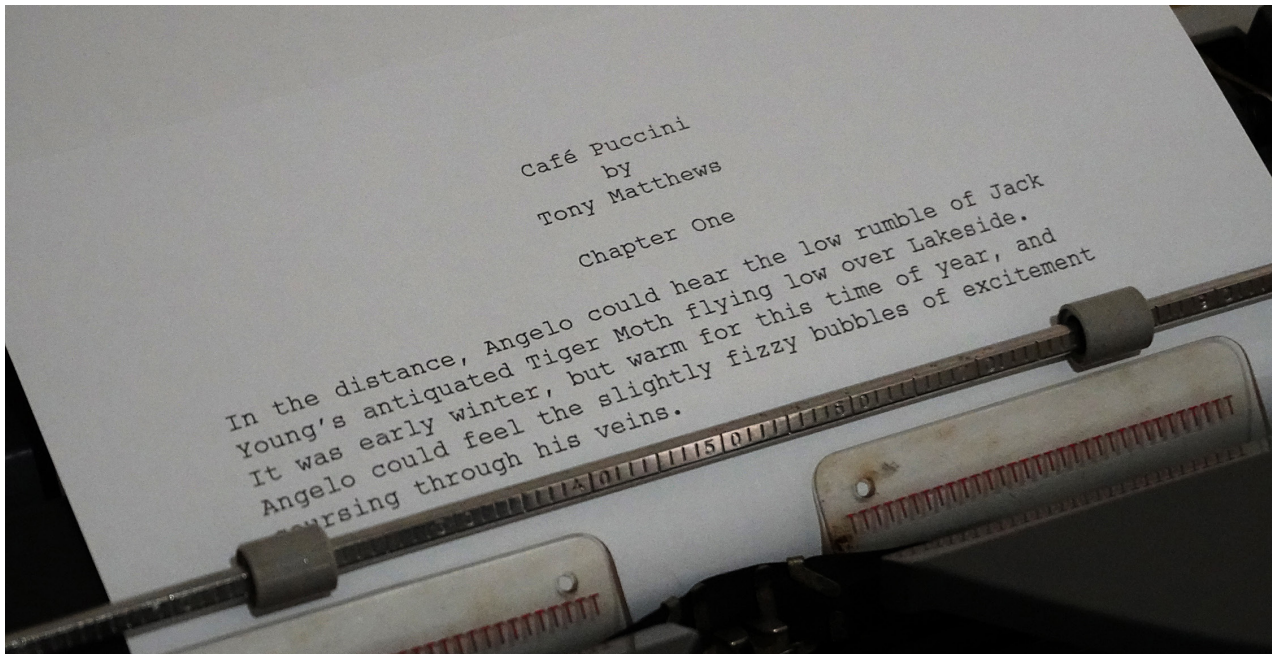
Q: You take one year to come out with another book. In the meantime, what else are you doing in that one year?

No, it takes me much more than that. It takes me like three years. It takes me much more than one year. It takes me probably two years. So much, much more than that. As I said, some writers are able to do a year, but that's not common and is mostly in genre fiction. It is much more pressure and is much more common. But no, no, no, it takes me roughly three years. It'll take me about one year to draft, a rough draft of a book. Then I will spend another year and a half editing that and then I'll send it to my agent and my publisher and they'll give me edits and then it will come out and they'll have done some publicity for that. So, no, it takes a while. So, much, much more than a year for me.

So apart from that, I'm teaching and I'll be researching and I do one on one editing work

as well. Recently I just had another anthology, I judge prizes and I might still be doing events for previous books. So, I'm sort of juggling all of that while writing my first draft.

Q&A with Tony Matthews



Q: Where do you find your inspiration or what inspires you to write a new story?

I am both a novelist and historian, so it's necessary to give two separate answers to this question. As a historian it's my duty to record and analyse historical events accurately, but also to tell the story of those events as effectively and as interestingly as possible. One does not necessarily rely on 'inspiration' as such, but on finding a fascinating story that needs to be told and recorded for posterity. It's also important to consider what one's publisher needs, and what the public is reading at any given time. I take all that into consideration when contemplating what my next non-fiction book will be. I like to focus on really unusual events and on historical characters whose stories need to be told.

Novels, however, are quite different. All my novels have been historical; I have no interest in writing of modern-day events, so my inspiration comes from the past. I normally like to write about real events but for my latest book (*Café Puccini*, set in the 1950s) I completely untethered my imagination and created an entire township and all its characters and gave them lives and colourful, funny experiences that were so diversified I almost couldn't stop writing the book. I was drawn into it, as if being drawn into a hilarious vortex - as I hope my readers will be.

Q: What does your everyday author life look like?

I live and breath writing. Present and future books are always running around in my head. I've been a full-time author since about 1984 so writing

has consumed every aspect of my life since then. Some people may think this is too intense, or that I may be overly committed, but that's not entirely true. I love my work and it's both intense and highly creative, so spending long hours at a desk or sitting alone for lengthy periods thinking about a book, its plot and characters, are all perfectly normal to me. I am sometimes asked what it takes to become a writer, and my response is this. A writer has to be fully committed to the craft, not just the words 'fully committed' which are easy to say, but difficult to put into practice. That's because there are so many obstacles in the path of writers, not least of which are the difficulties of getting published, the sometimes disappointing rate of financial return, the masses (mountains) of rejection slips (or emails) that will come one's way, the

intense disappointments, and possibly even depression when things are not going so well. I've learned through years of rejection never to give up, to keep trying, keep writing. If a book does not find a home with a publisher, then learn from that and move on to the next book. Essentially, writers who are born to write do not write for readers, they write for themselves - the inherent and almost obsessive need to tell a story, no matter who will read it or, indeed, if it will ever be read. If you write for yourself, and immerse yourself into that story, then you will have written the best book you can.

Q: What are your methods of writing?

I write every day that I'm not involved in promoting a book. I'm a light sleeper and early riser. Sometimes I dream about my characters. I begin very early in the morning and work through until I am so tired that I need to stop. I then rest for a few hours and will often return to my desk at night until I go to bed. I'm often up by 4 am. I don't work traditional hours. Sometimes I use the 'wob-bly-knobly' system which, basically, is writing while seated on a wobbly chair, my laptop perched on my knobby knees. I also like to write in a really quiet environment, which is sometimes difficult when one has to deal with noisy neighbours, but I'm a recluse, my neighbours never see me and some of them think I'm a dead writer which suits me perfectly. As far as plotting goes, I tend

to have a basic concept to begin with, and sometimes a very basic idea of what the ending might look like, but that can change dramatically as I write. I rather like to treat my books, at least my novels, as 'real life' so that anything can happen as one moves through it. I'm always open to change as I write and I expect to experience changes of direction throughout the plot. I like to play with a complexity of variables so that even I really don't know how it's going to end specifically. For me that's part of the joy in writing. I expect the unexpected of myself. This also keeps my readers unaware of how the book will end. It keeps me guessing so the readers will be kept guessing too.

Q: What are the most essential elements for writing an autobiography?

Truth, a profoundly accurate memory and, hopefully, a collection of diaries going back to the time one popped out of one's shell! Oh, and a rather interesting life doesn't do any harm either! My most recent book (*Invisible - the Essential Guide for Aliens Stranded on Earth*) is autobiographical but it's not essentially an autobiography. A traditional autobiography comes into a completely separate ethos of writing. *Invisible* tells of my hilarious journey through life, firstly as a marine engineering writer and later as an author, ethical vegan and recluse, but more than that, it's also a social commentary of life as I see it today which is

so vastly different from when I first attended a diabolical over-the-top religious school where brutal teachers and gangs of hooligans ruled the day. For a pure autobiography there are really two essential elements. The first is to tell one's life story as accurately as possible, and the second is what I call the 'growth factor'. Like some of the best screenplays and novels, it has to demonstrate how life's experiences have contributed to one's personal growth, identifying how objective moments have contributed to who we are today and what we have learned along the way. A good autobiography is not just a travelogue of one's life experiences, it's a portrayal of personal development.

Q: Humour is usually tricky to add in writing. How do you craft humour so that it is taken lightly by most of the readers?

There are so many elements to good humour and I can't say that I'm experienced in all of them, but I like to use satirical humour when appropriate. My book *Invisible* is a classic example and is filled with satire, but that's a personal choice. I love the 'stupidity' of satirical humour; it springs into my writing when I need it, and although some people are unable to see the funny side of satire, humorists such as the Monty Python team, Rowan Atkinson and many others have proved that it can be vastly funny and entertaining but also an effective tool for making one's point - particularly on difficult or

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sensitive subjects.

Q: What's your secret of crafting believable characters?

I like to base my fictional characters on real-life people. Not only does that assist with developing the character, but it also helps me to imagine the characters in my mind's eye when I'm writing about them. I have had an interesting life and have met a lot of vastly different people. I've interviewed hundreds of men and women who have had unusual stories and experiences, so it's easy for me to delve into their personalities and utilise at least some of that personality in whatever character I am developing. For example. In my latest novel, *Cafe Puccini* (not yet published) I created a character named Mustapha who is about to celebrate his 100th birthday. That character is based upon an old bullock-driver I interviewed in 1981 who was then 102 years of age, and, tottering slightly on his verandah while bidding me farewell, his raised one of his two gnarled walking-sticks and bellowed: 'I'm 102, not out, and still empty me own piss-pot!' Needless to say, my character, Mustapha is just as colourful.

Q: Do you have a method for writing fast?

Writing histories is always much slower than writing novels. Histories require a huge amount of research and fact-checking, both before and during the writing process. However, fiction for me is

vastly different. I tend to get caught up in the writing to such an extent that I become lost in it. I might work on my laptop all day and then continue scribbling by hand at night. When I wrote *Cafe Puccini* I was almost unable to stop writing. It was a massive joy for me to write that book because I became completely immersed in the characters and the fictitious town where they lived. It was almost as if I were time-travelling and, in fact, I have sometimes been described in the press as a kind of 'Dr Who'. When I become so immersed in writing a book it flows out of me very quickly, it just tumbles out. I like to get that first draft down and then do all the editing and redrafting later.

Q: Have you written more than one piece at a time and how do you balance them?

Yes, I often write two books simultaneously. I wrote *Cafe Puccini* and another book, a history titled *Softly Softly - Capturing Hitler's Spies*, at the same time. I worked on the history during the day and hand-wrote the entire first draft of *Cafe Puccini* at night - a total of more than 140,000 words. Another of my books, *Quiet Courage - Forgotten Heroes of WW2*, was written during the day, while at night I wrote *Invisible*. Going from one book to the other is stimulating. It's good to change pace. Obviously it's also tiring, but I'm a workaholic, so spending twelve or up to fifteen hours a day writing is perfectly normal.





Q: *According to statistics, most debut novels aren't as successful as new authors expect them to be. What would you advise someone who wanted to write a series in the first go instead of a standalone?*

I'd advise caution before writing a series of books without some kind of interest or commitment from one's publisher. Obviously it would be marvelous to be able to focus on further developing the characters one has already created, and spreading the story into two or more books, but the fact is that no publisher is likely to accept a second volume unless the first has sold reasonably well.

Q: *How would you weigh the pros and cons of self-publishing and traditional publishing?*

When I first began writing, self-publishing was considered to be a last resort, almost a desperate measure in getting one's book published. But that was

fifty years ago and times have changed. The introduction of ebooks has altered publishing dramatically, but there are good and not-so-good aspects to that. The principal advantage is that ebook publishing is inexpensive and now has the ability to distribute one's books worldwide. The major disadvantage is that almost everyone wants to be a writer and consequently the ebook market has been flooded with millions of books being released every year, many of which are of dubious quality, so it makes it very difficult for good books to get noticed.

Self-publishing has a place, and it can be quite profitable, but only for the lucky few. My preference will always be to have my books accepted and released by a traditional publisher, with a traditional distributor, because I know that most people would still prefer to read a book which they can hold in their hands, turn down the page to mark their spot,

and put it back onto their bookshelf once they have finished reading it. I believe there is more personal gratification in reading a printed book over an electronic book, especially as we already spend so much of our precious time glued to a screen. The smell of the paper and ink and the weight of the book in one's hands, is a palpable, sensory experience which can heighten the enjoyment of the actual story.

Q: *Marketing and promotions: What strategies and tactics do you apply to sell your books?*

I'm a recluse, so getting out there and marketing my books is not something that I do very much. In the past I've done loads of book launches and book signings and they can be very effective, particularly when releasing a book on a specific subject which has a specific target-readership, but more generally I like to utilise social media, particularly

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Twitter, and also online blogs and other publications to promote my books. It takes a lot of work and is extremely time consuming, but I write feature articles aligned with the general theme of the book and use those articles to promote it. I also make book-trailer videos, similar to film-trailers, and put them on Twitter or Vimeo or even Youtube and anywhere else I can find that hosts such content. As a former documentary film producer and director, I have the skills to be able to produce effective videos and understand how powerful they can be when it comes to creating an emotional response that might drive potential readers to seek out and buy my book.

Q: Having a reader community is considered to be very important for an author. How do you grow, interact, entertain and keep your reader community loyal to you?

I use social media to grow my reader community. Writers are, generally speaking, limited in how much time and effort that can give to one's readership community, and it's necessary to be mindful of readership needs, but it's also necessary to strike a balance between actual writing and how much time one spends on social media. Publishers often want writers to be active on numerous platforms, but developing followers is extremely time-consuming. I find that I am able to concentrate on only one platform, Twitter, which is an effective medium for authors. If I were to be on Reedsy or

Instagram, for example, I would have little time left for what I actually do - writing. Everything has to be balanced and individual authors have to figure out what works for them.

Q: A lot of authors are creating a brand out of themselves. What according to you is an author brand or author branding?

Author branding can be built only over time and with long experience of what one likes to write and how that writing sits with one's readership. It's a growing process and I'm not entirely sure that I've mastered any of it. It is the sum of what one writes and how one promotes that writing. For me, it's still a rather mystifying and ongoing branding-iron.

Q: Being a published author and having a set of readers, do you write what inspires you or do you write what the readers expect from you?

Both, actually. If one wants to live by writing then one's personal work-ethic may need to be compromised. It's possible to write exactly what one wants to write, of course, but all too often that will not be commercially attractive to a publisher. I've written a lot of books that I desperately wanted to write but I was also realist enough to know that they would probably never be published. (Although some eventually were - after about thirty years). A writer must have a solid understanding of what is currently

selling - be it fiction or non-fiction, and work with one's publisher to write and produce books that will be commercially successful. I know that some writers will say they would never write anything other than what they strictly want to write, but, commercially, that's not the road to success. I write books I want to write, but I always ask myself two questions. Will my publisher like the idea? Will my readers want this book?

Short Story

I Was an Invisible Introvert When the C.I.A. Head-hunted Me

by Tony Matthews



I am the classic invisible introvert and recluse. When you open a dictionary and look up the word ‘introvert’, the listing will no doubt state something like: *Introvert — a quiet and reflective person who prefers to keep to himself and shuns the company of others. See also: ‘Tony Matthews’.* I’m that kind of introvert. I’d make it into the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the archetypal ‘quiet personality’. I’ve taken those ubiquitous online tests to see what level of introvert I am, and they always come out at the extreme end of the scale. I’ve even tweeted about the results on social media and the replies have been like: ‘Hey dude, with a reading like that you should be crowned the king of introverts. You could have a [quiet] coronation too!’

So it came as something of a surprise when, one evening many years ago, while on leave from my job as a naval marine engineering writer, the C.I.A. made a hilarious attempt to recruit me for one of their stultifyingly goofy operations in darkest Africa. It was like a comedy skit from *Monty Python*. I had no idea that the C.I.A. liked introverts so much,

but apparently we make great secret operatives and can talk our way out of a vat of boiling batter.

I was in South Africa at the time. It was during the late 1960s and the deeply desperate days of Apartheid were in full swing. I learned that I wasn’t allowed to sit on the same park-bench as a ‘coloured’ person or go on a date with a ‘coloured’ woman. Offences could be punished with a whipping and two years in prison. All this came as a bit of a surprise to me. I’d heard of Apartheid, of course, but had never really understood its true depth of mind-bending ultra right-wing depravity.

One day I was seated in a pub at Fish Hoek, a pretty coastal town on the eastern side of the peninsula, north of Simonstown. It was fairly dark in the pub which suited me. As an introvert, I was trying to be as unobtrusive as possible and fade into the background where few would notice me.

I was a fairly recent arrival in South Africa, and not particularly knowledgeable on the

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terminology, laws or protocols surrounding Apartheid. When I'd first come into the pub I'd ordered an iced beer from the barman, and when it had been brought to my table I'd thanked the coloured waiter, saying: 'Thanks gaffer.' He'd given me a long hard look which had been a mixture of hurt and enmity. I had no idea why the waiter had reacted like that.

Seated at the next table had been an elderly gentleman, a white person, well dressed in a beige suit and sporting a precisely trimmed ginger goatee beard. He gave me one of those looks the knowledgeable reserve for really stupid people. By now the waiter was speaking animatedly in hushed tones to a couple of other waiters on the far side of the room and they were giving me a serious dose of evil-eye. I imagined that they might like to meet me outside when I left and hack me to bits with machetes or something equally as unpleasant. What had I said, I asked myself, that had triggered such a reaction?

The ginger goatee guy took his drink from the table and came towards me. 'All right if I join you for a moment?' he asked, eyebrows raised. He placed his drink on the table and eased himself into the chair opposite, leaning forward. 'Couldn't help noticing that reaction.' He nodded toward the muttering waiter. 'What the hell did you say to him man?' I gave him perplexed look. 'I just thanked him.' 'But what did you say, *exactly*?' he pressed. I thought for a moment and shrugged. 'Thanks gaffer.' Ginger goatee leaned back in his chair. 'Gaffer?'

I nodded. 'Sure. It's kind of a compliment. It's English slang. It means boss, or chief. Someone in charge. Someone to be respected.'

The man threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

'You bloody *uitlanders* don't have a clue do you?'

I certainly didn't have a clue what an *uitlander* was. (Answer: Afrikaans for 'foreigner').

He leaned forward again. 'He thinks you called him a *kafir*. It's bloody derogatory. If he and his mates can catch you somewhere alone when you leave here you'll end up being necklaced.'

I didn't know much about South Africa but I did know what it meant to be necklaced. An old rubber tyre would be pushed down over my scrawny shoulders, locking my arms into place before being drenched with petrol and set alight. I was aghast. I had just tried to be respectful and friendly. That's what introverts do!

I thought about that for all of five seconds. I felt sick. I'd seen how the whites were treating the coloured people of South Africa and didn't want to be associated in any way with that. I pushed back my chair and approached the waiter. He watched me coming with a mixture of surprise and bitterness. His eyes, I remember, were heavily bloodshot with anger. I stumbled to explain what I had meant — that I had actually called him a chief in English slang. It took him a while to figure it out. Who could blame him? Idiomatic English is a mystery to most of the world, even to the English. When he finally understood, however, he was good enough to laugh and began

chattering to his friends in Afrikaans. A white man had called him a chief! It was hilarious. Soon they were all slapping me on the back which was lightly more agreeable than being roasted alive in a rubber doughnut.

Afterward I returned to my table and it was evident that my ‘ginger goatee’ companion had been thinking rather a lot while I’d been away. He called for two more beers and leaned forward conspiratorily.

‘I can see that you have a way with people. A quiet confident way. You handled that well. We need people like you. How would you like to make a lot of money?’ he asked, really emphasising the word, *lot*. ‘Lots and lots and lots of money.’ he pressed. as if I may have failed to understand.

It transpired that he was offering me a job in a covert operation with a specially formed ‘military group’, as he described it. He wanted operatives for patrol boats on Lake Tanganyika in the middle of the Congo. Someone who could get into a scrap and get out without any damage. *Who is this guy?* I thought to myself. He actually stopped short of mentioning gold bars or Swiss bank accounts and loads of beautiful women, but not far short. It was to be an easy job, he said — ‘slightly’ dangerous, obviously, that’s what all the gallons of money were about, but free and easy and I’d be a rich little introvert with enough money to buy a luxury pad overlooking the harbour in Mombasa or somewhere equally as ghastly. A ‘pad’ is what they called a bachelor’s flat in the sixties, by the way.

I did not realise it at the time, but the ginger

goatee man had actually been working as a head-hunter for the Central Intelligence Agency. It was not until 2016, almost fifty years later, while undertaking research for another project, that I discovered the full story about this incident. From 1960 until 1968 the C.I.A. carried out a series of multifaceted actions (known as C.A. operations) in the newly independent Republic of Congo. The entire top-secret operation had come under the control of what was known as the ‘303 Committee’. These operations had been set in place to support the pro-western Congolese leader Joseph Mobutu who had deposed the Soviet-backed Patrice Lumumba in 1960. Lumumba had been executed by firing squad the following year.

The 303 Committee was controlling a series of special operations steeped typically in stealth and subversion. The Congo, which had formerly been a Belgian colony, about a quarter the size of the United States, was a mineral-rich Cold War prize of the first order. As the chief of the C.I.A.’s Africa Division stated in June 1960: ‘If Congo deteriorates and Western influence fades rapidly, the [Communist] Bloc will have a feast and will not have to work very hard for it.’

Upon reflection, it seems that nothing much has changed since that time.

The C.I.A. was then working diligently with Mobutu’s government to quash leftist rebels by carrying out highly secretive maritime operations on Lake Tanganyika. Rebels were in the process of smuggling Chinese arms across the lake and using them during the fighting in the region. The C.I.A. was running a cover

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t operation to stop the arms shipments. Lake Tanganyika, however, was a particularly-dangerous and difficult region for the C.I.A. operatives. It is a massive body of water, over 400 miles in length, but with a width of only about thirty miles. Finding and stopping communist rebels operating in such a huge area was extremely difficult. By the time I was asked to join the operation, the C.I.A. had been functioning in the area for almost three years. The flotilla of patrol boats and other vessels operated by the agency became known as the C.I.A.'s 'pocket navy'. The C.I.A. also carried out a successful amphibious infiltration to deploy Congolese troops against the rebels.

I didn't know any of this at the time, of course, and although the promise of vast amounts of money and battalions of beautiful girlfriends was alluring, I wasn't too happy with the thought of joining a secret C.I.A. war. Had I done so, I'm sure my bones would now be rotting at the bottom of Lake Tanganyika.

As for the waiter, well, we couldn't become friends — that was against the law, but he and some of his associates later asked me to become a spy for the African National Congress which was fighting to bring down Apartheid.

But that's another story.

