

SAPPHIC

APRIL
2025
VOL 1 ISSUE 4

10

OF ROXIE'S
FAVORITE
THINGS

&

ROXANNA'S
NEW
MUSIC

REDEMPTION
TOUR!

DR. RIGHT
ON
TIME!

THE
Best
REMEDY

8

MONTHS
SOBER &
SAPPY

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April 2025



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Bad Habits Album Cover: Sheergenuis (Lamar)

Images 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10 for Roxanna's 10 Favorite Things: MidJourney

Images 1, 2, 4, 21, 22, 23 for Family Matters: MidJourney

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Onyx Lee: Marketing

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The section that is dedicated to book recommendations of nine sapphic authors was a curation of stories written about addiction and overcoming those challenges as a part of our spotlight on **Alcohol Awareness Month**.

Sapphic is designed to provide readers with an engaging and insightful look into the fictional world of the *My Day One* series and beloved characters. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Enjoy the journey into these vibrant stories, and thank you for joining us in celebrating the creative magic of fiction.

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APRIL 2025
SAPPHIC MAGAZINE
VOLUME 01, ISSUE 04

8 Months Sober & Sappy

AUNTIE CHAT

Dealing with a Sensitive Heart

This month, we celebrate Alcohol Awareness Month and the ways we continue to uplift our community through stories written from the heart—with you in mind.

In a world overflowing with labels, it's hard to know if this love affair with self-definition is authentic or just the latest trend. But whether it's rooted in truth or fiction, I'm grateful to have the freedom to claim my sensitivity without shame. I've had a sensitive heart since the day I was born. How do I know this? Well, even as an infant—seeking nothing more than warmth and protection from my new mommy—I carried that tenderness. And I've been lucky enough to have a mother and family members who've shared stories from my childhood. Stories that, along with my own memories, help me understand now what it means to be an empath.

Back in the day, though, sensitivity wasn't something to celebrate. It felt more like a burden. I was constantly being told—or subtly shown—that I was “too sensitive” and needed to “grow thicker skin.” These days, the word empath rolls off tongues so easily, it's hard to tell who truly feels deeply, and who's just seeking attention or affection.

But let's be clear: being an empath isn't a trendy accessory or status boost. It's not something you put on for likes or glow-ups. It's a full-on, deeply-felt experience. You feel—joy, pain, love, grief—not just for yourself, but for everyone around you. You sense energy. You notice shifts in a room. You carry burdens that don't even belong to you. And yes, it can be beautiful. But it can also be overwhelming, exhausting, and hard on your body and soul. Sometimes, all you want to do is run away, just to escape the overload.

Still, a sensitive heart is rare in a world so consumed with self. And where many people ignore or deny their emotions—often choosing harm or hate instead—empaths stand out. We create art, safe spaces, healing practices, and resources that help preserve humanity. But this gift comes with a cost. Living by instinct, guided by heart, means we also endure deep pain. We attract those who feed off our light, who want our healing without giving anything back. Narcissists. Energy vampires. Broken systems.

And so many of us cope the only ways we know how—with food, alcohol, sex, silence, or hiding. We slip into depression. Isolation. Co-dependency. We self-medicate. But does that mean we should run from who we are? Should we deny this gift?

Even in my senior years, I'm still learning. Still growing. And what I know for sure now is this: our sensitivity must be protected. It's sacred. It's a gift that deserves boundaries and self-love. We were made this way for a reason. But to serve the world, we must first serve ourselves. I know that might sound backwards, especially for the healers and helpers among us. But just like the oxygen mask on a plane—you can't help anyone if you're gasping for air. If we want to make a real, lasting impact, we have to be strong in mind, body, and spirit. Sometimes the best thing we can do is simply model a healthy life so others can see what's possible for themselves.

Editorial Director AUNT GEORGIA LEE

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Credit: Aunt Georgia Lee's Photos (Haigwood Studios)

Credit: Aunt Georgia Lee's Makeup (TipTip)



Encourage Yourself 8 MONTHS SOBER & SAPPY!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



How does it feel to have made it through the storm? “Okay! So, we just gonna jump right into the thick of things without giving me a little warm-up or rehearsal?” *Laughs.* You know, before a singer hits them high notes or takes to the stage, we practice before we start preaching through song to our audience. *Laughs again.* But I’m ready to go deep with y’all. I wouldn’t say I’ve made it, but like the song says, *It’s a new day, it’s a new life, and I’m feelin’ good!* Honestly, I haven’t felt this good in a very long time—if ever. As corny as it may sound, it feels good being me. My real self. The one I’ve gotten to know more of over the past eight months of sobriety.”

And what have you learned during that time frame? “Love. Forgiveness. Grief. Happiness. Maybe not in that order, but those are the emotions I’ve had to sit with since that unforgettable—and not in a good way—day that started me on this path to sobriety and rehab.

I was so used to faking it ‘til I made it with the help of alcohol, meaningless relationships, and being a workaholic. I was writing music, recording music, building my record label, touring, partying, and *fucking...ahem...* having “relationships” with many women. *Blushes.* But when my world came crashing down on New Year’s Day, I couldn’t imagine anything that could cure what ailed me. I literally wanted to end it all.”

Are you talking about suicidal thoughts? “Yes. I wanted to die. I wanted to unalive myself. As many times as I’d been at my lowest, I had never consciously thought of harming myself like that. But when Timothy Freeman hit me with the most devastating truth—a story I never expected to hear, especially not at that moment in my life—that my...*pauses, clears throat...*my mother had passed away the night before while I was out partying and fucking around with a stranger—I couldn’t think straight, let alone see straight.

I couldn’t believe what he was saying. And y’all, I was out of my head. I just wanted to get to Mama, you know? Fix things. Fix our relationship. Bring her back home with me. So yeah, I was reckless. I got behind the wheel of a car with my sidekick in hand—a bottle of wine—and did one of the most dangerous, thoughtless things I’ve ever done. I regret it to this day. That’s why I’m an advocate for mental health. Why I haven’t stopped—and won’t stop—attending AA meetings. I still remember how it felt to slam my foot on that gas pedal, wanting to be with Mama, wanting to pay for my sins...only to change my mind in a split second. But it wasn’t me—it was God who saved me. Not cowardice. God.”

Do you really believe that was a cowardly act? It sounds pretty brave to me. The hardest thing is to keep on living, don’t you think? *Laughs.* “You damn right about that. It was hard to keep living after that. Still is sometimes. But I’m so thankful to God, to my family, and a love that has come into my life that I never expected to happen during the shittiest time in my life. *Blushes.* She has truly been the best remedy this girl could have ever prayed for.”

Ah, I see. It’s written all over your face and in the sound of your voice. I take it you’re referring to Naomi Right? *Blushes.* “Yes, you’d be Right. *Laughs.* You see what I did there? I used to tease her with corny jokes like that. But having Naomi’s love has made me sappy—in the best way.

Growing up in a drama-filled household with my mama, the sperm donor, and then other situations, other men, and her addictions, wasn’t easy...I had to grow a thick skin fast. But no matter how tough I acted, or how sharp my tongue was when I had to check somebody, deep down, I was still that scared, sensitive, little girl who just wanted her mother’s love.

I always tried to protect her. But no matter how strong I became—physically, emotionally, or financially—it never felt like enough. So, I became the life of the party when I had a glass in my hand, but I was shrewd and short-tempered in business and with anybody trying to come for me. I didn’t take it easy on Naomi—and she didn’t always take it easy on me. And for that? I’m so, so thankful, for her, for her love.”

That love sounds incredible and so special what you have with Dr. Naomi Right. But I gotta ask—did either of you worry about starting a relationship while you were still under her care as the wrong thing to do instead of the right thing? “Hmm. Clever. I see you. *Smiles.* Was it wrong? Technically, maybe. But if loving Naomi is wrong, I never wanna be right. And that’s my truth. But to answer your question on a serious level, we both knew it wasn’t appropriate at the time. But I couldn’t deny what I was feeling. And I never once felt like it was about being vulnerable or that she was taking advantage of me.

If anything, I was the one doing the chasing. Naomi tried her best to stay professional and keep it all business. She was even willing to walk away from me to avoid any damage toward my arrangement with the courts to remain in therapy instead of jail time for my crimes. But I wouldn’t let her go. Couldn’t. So yes, we broke a few rules, but the only thing I regret is not meeting her sooner. Then again, maybe I wouldn’t have been ready. God knew what He was doing.”

That’s a great perception. Speaking of the past and doing things differently. What would you tell your younger self now, if you could go back in time, knowing what you know now? *Laughs.* “Oh wow. I’d tell her how proud I am of her.

I’d tell her that even though she’s felt weak and helpless during this journey, she’s the strongest person I’ve ever known—and I love her for never giving up on us. I’d remind her to slow down, enjoy the simple things, don’t grow up so fast. Build deep, intentional relationships with people worthy of being in her inner circle.

And most of all, I’d say: *You were loved by Miriam Roxanna Rouse*—in the only way she knew how. But Roxie, you were never responsible for curing your mother’s pain or bad habits, or carrying her burdens. And you sure as hell don’t have to inherit them bad habits.”

That’s deep. Generational curses are real and heavy. *Sighs.* “They really are. One of the greatest gifts Mama gave me before she passed were her letters. Those letters made me realize how much she suffered as a child—and how her mother and grandmother had suffered too. Even in Mama’s

weakest, most addicted moments, she still protected me from some of what she had endured. That’s something her mother and grandmother weren’t afforded.

So now, as I think about building a future with Naomi, and possibly raising little *Nays and Roxies*, I promise to do the same—and even more. I want to protect our kids from repeating those same painful cycles, no matter their gender.”

It’s wonderful to hear you connect with the origin of the dis-ease in your life and how you’re making a conscious decision not to repeat those ills. Let’s talk about the new album and the Redemption Tour. We’ll be getting even more up close and personal about your feelings for Naomi Right in the article you wrote about the good doctor—but tell us how this project came together. *Blushes.* “Sure, of course. What would you like to know?”

“
I GET UP EVERY
MORNING, LOOK IN THE
MIRROR, AND SAY,
PRETTY BITCH! —
JENIFER LEWIS STYLE!”

”

So, if I had to guess, I have a feeling I know what inspired the new album, *Bad Habits*. But I’d like to hear it in your words, please. “Sure. The album *Bad Habits* was inspired by three women: me, Miriam, and Naomi. Before rehab, I started working out my mother-daughter shit. Sorry for my language, it’s still a bad habit, I haven’t resolved. *Laughs.* I started with *Bad Habits*, the title cut as the first song. It’s all about breaking that co-dependency and learning to build good habits.

You Made Me All Right was also inspired by my mother and some of my past relationships. They weren’t all good, but they taught me lessons that helped shape the woman I am today. *The Best Remedy, Bring Us Back*, and *Kiss and Tell* are pure Naomi. *Blushes.* *Bring Us Back* especially tells the story of a time when we needed to pause, breathe, and do some personal healing before we could really come together. I realized I was creating a new co-dependent dynamic with her, and I had to learn to stand on my own. To be the grown-ass woman I claimed to be—before there could be a *you and I*, I had to find the real me. “

Dang, that’s prophetic. I love this for you. What about the track *A Sinner In Me*? “Oh yeah, that’s definitely a banger from what I’ve been told by my loyal supporters.” *Blushes.*

“I could never live my life without giving praise to God. People love to say God doesn’t love the LGBTQIA+ community—but I don’t believe that. Never have. Maybe I’ve been fortunate

to grow up during a time where as Nay would say, *I’m free to be me*, but I’ve never been ashamed of my feelings toward women or my sexuality. I know God loves me just as I am, as He loves all his children.

A Sinner In Me is my testimony. It’s for the folks who preach about my *so-called sins* while ignoring their own. And as my bro Isaiah professes, they try to use *God as a Nemesis*.

And like MJ said: *Take a look at the man—or woman—in the mirror before you start speaking on a bitch!*” *Laughs.*

Well, alright then. Enough said on that subject. Tell us about the Redemption Tour. I saw the premiere at the Rialto, and it was phenomenal. “Thank you! That means the world. That night was one of the best concerts I’ve ever had—because it wasn’t just about me. It was about celebrating my new extended family.

Now, truthfully, we didn’t start off on the right foot. That was mostly me. I wasn’t used to sharing the spotlight, and I was being a bit of a brat toward Cheryl Rose Campbell. Poor sweet, Dymon Stud got caught in the middle.

But Cheryl and I both know what it’s like to be motherless daughters. And we both have strong women beside us now, keeping us on the right paths, and who aren’t afraid to give us the business when we get a little diva-ish!” *Laughs.*

“When I let go of the fear and removed my walls, I received the biggest gift of all—a newfound family. And now I can’t wait to take that love on the road and share it across the country.

Well, I can wait just a little bit...since Nay’s finally come home to me. We’re trying to soak up every moment before I hit the road for six months. She promised to visit as much as she can—and Naomi Right never breaks a promise.” *Blushes.*

Your journey’s been filled with challenges, revelations, and redemption—but it’s far from over. What final words do you want to leave us with? “It’s gonna sound sappy—but it’s true. If you can’t love yourself, how the hell anybody else gonna love you? Shout out to RuPaul. And like the Mother of Black Hollywood, Jenifer Lewis, says: I get up every morning, look in the mirror, and say, “Pretty Bitch!” *Laughs.*

“That’s what I do, and it seems funny or simple, but it’s so powerful. There will always be people trying to bring you down. Trying to get in your head. Trying to make you feel small. But do you know why they do that? Why they form cliques, try to bully you, troll around you, ridicule you or try to sit in judgement of you instead of minding their own damn business? Because on the inside they feel small, defeated, angry, hurt, and afraid. Misery always loves company. They want you to feel just as lonely and defeated as they feel. And you living your life unapologetically, walking in your truth, puts up a mirror to their faces and shows them what they’re afraid to do. And the thing they fear the most is—change. So, you just need to stand in your own light, shine bright like that damn diamond, and say *Nah! Nope, Not Today or any other Damn Day! Imma be all right!*”

Amen to that. Thank you for your transparency, Roxanna. We all need to be encouraged, and your experience and music are truly inspiring. “Thank you for letting me be real—because that’s the only way I know how to be. I appreciate you for appreciating my experience, and my voice.”

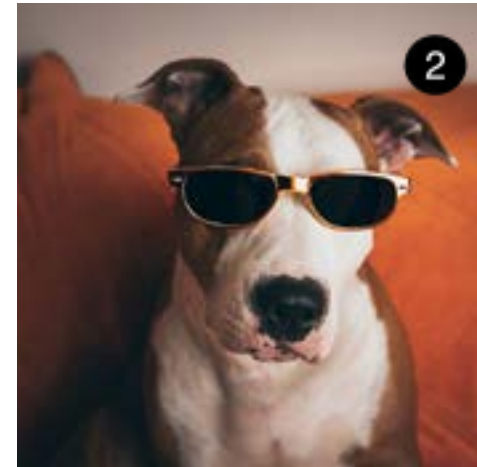
With her new album *Bad Habits* and the *Good News Redemption Tour* on the way, Roxanna Alexis Rouse continues to stand tall in her truth, reminding us all that healing is possible, love is real, and faith in ourselves is the first step toward redemption.



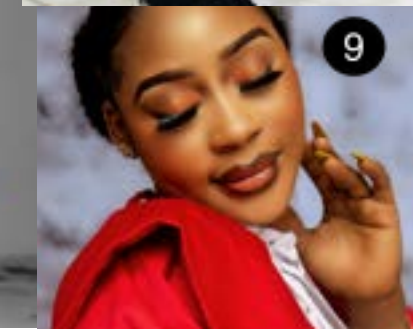
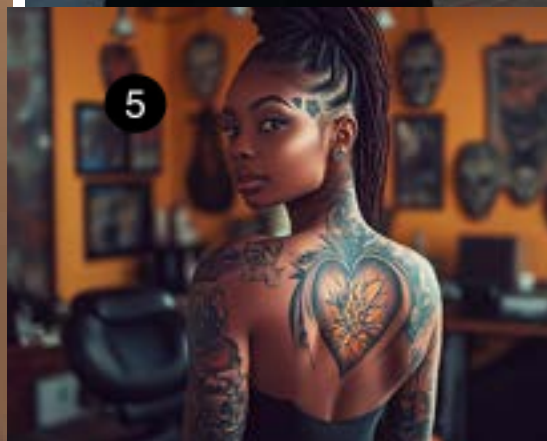
10 of ROXIE'S FAVORITE THINGS

Guilty Pleasures in 2025 ROXANNA

Roxanna shares her 10 favorite self-love secrets to help us express the love we feel—inside and out—during this spotlight on Alcholol Awareness Month, offering nourishment that will provide some of the best remedies.



1. Captain Olivia Benson (SVU)
2. Boss her puppy
3. Meditation
4. Popcorn
5. The Tattoo Boo Shop
6. Silk Pajamas
7. 90's Boy Bands
8. Sexy Lingerie
9. Toya, her hairstylist
10. The Starlight Nightclub



“LOVE WILL BRING US
BACK AGAIN.
LOVE YOU MORE
THAN JUST A
FRIEND.”

“Roxanna And Naomi”

Roxana is a 25-year-old R&B/soul sensation with the lyrics and vocals of a much seasoned musical spirit. She is a mixture of old school and new school with her storytelling and rhythm that are deep and spiritual but will also make you move and groove as you fall in love with this young Queen, a boss babe with an old soul and a BOTA you don't want to ignore!

Now, in this fourth edition of *Sapphic*, Roxanna tells us all about the bad habits that led her to redemption and true love.

“You are the best remedy. Take all my stress away. It's a fresh start just you and me.” - The Best Remedy - Roxanna

R&N

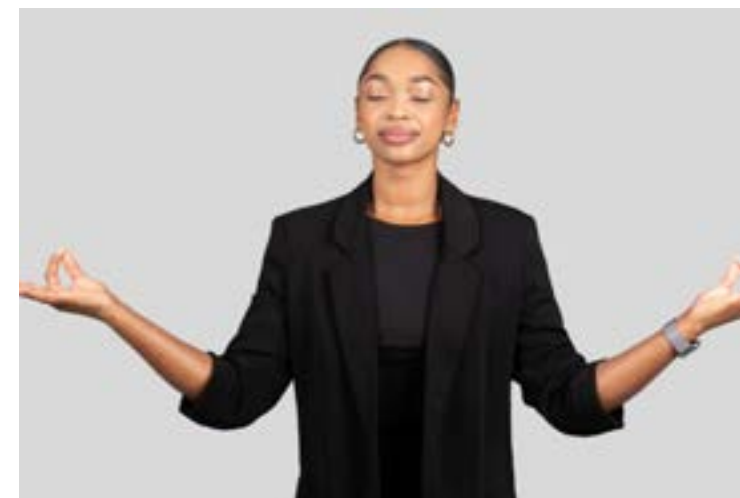
DR. RIGHT ON *Time!*

Real love doesn't come when we expect it or when we think we're ready—it comes right on time. Dr. Naomi Right is living proof of that. She's the realest of the real, the truth wrapped in grace, and the best remedy I could have ever imagined. She was—and still is—the cure for what ailed me.

The first time I met Naomi, she was already trying to guide me—straight to the intake desk at Serenity Hills. *Laughs.* Even then, with her calm encouragement, she was speaking the truth. But at the time, I wasn't trying to hear it. I was hurting, grieving, and already feeling the early grip of withdrawal, even though it had only been 24 hours since my last drink.

Still, from that very first day, she was there. She saw me when I was at my lowest—sweaty, filthy, hair wild, still in my three-day-old funeral clothes, eyes blood-shot, body trembling, stomach churning. I was a hot damn mess. *Sighs.* And while plenty of folks in my life—personal and professional—would've kept their distance, Naomi didn't flinch. As Niagara, one of my group members and now good friend, once said: *Girl, you were the Queen of Rock Bottom.* And yep, I was. But Naomi? She stood tall. In her role as doctor, yes, but more than that—she stood in truth. In compassion. In presence.

That night, no pill could dull the pain. No prayer could soothe my soul. But Naomi was there, offering her body to shield me, her arms to hold me, her calm to protect me from the chaos raging inside. She stayed. She spoke to me. Then she simply sat with me until I fell asleep.



And the next morning? I knew. If I was going to survive this—this prison sentence that rehab initially felt like—Dr. Naomi Right had to be the one to guide me through it.

Now, let's be real—Naomi wasn't thrilled when me and Dr. Arlene made that decision for her. *Laughs.* I could see her disapproving scowl from a mile away when I interrupted her session (with my then sworn enemies, who've now become my chosen family). And her words? Whew—sharp like a lemon peel, not sweet like they are now when she sings to me. Yes, sings. She swears she's tone-deaf, but whether it's poetry or plain prose, her voice is my favorite love song—I could listen to it all damn day.

It took her some time to come around to the fact that I was stuck on her like glue. But I wasn't letting her go. There were so many nights when the thought of her—her voice, her eyes, that body (Lord, she's got a banging body at 40)—was all that got me through. I still find it hard to keep my hands off her. *Sighs.*

But more than her beauty, it's her patience. Her perseverance. The way she shows up for people, the way she listens without judgment, and how she's never ashamed to share her own challenges—that's the kind of woman I strive to be. Every single day, wrapped in her arms, by her side, I want to grow stronger, wiser, and softer. For her. With her. Because of her.



Now, Naomi still wants us to take things slow. But me? I'm already dreaming up wedding dresses for us—ones I'll have my girl and favorite designer Yazmine Wolfe create. I've even started picking out names for the kids we might one day have. *Laughs.* I just know they'll be the perfect mashup of us both, little Nays and Roxies running around the home we'll build together.

At night, when we're in bed, I tell her all my daydreams, and she doesn't pull away—she paints right along with me. Pictures of a future full of love, laughter, health, and healing. A future where our kids never doubt their worth. Where their story starts with love. And of course, more fur babies—because Boss can't be our only child forever! *Laughs.* We've even been looking for mates for our Boss Babe, which to me, is just one more step closer to the life we're building.

Sighs deeply. But no matter how our story plays out, I already know: we are, and will always be, each other's best remedies. From this day forward, and forever more.

Want more of the story behind Roxanna and her good doctor, Naomi Right?

Flip the page to dive deeper into the Queen of R&B's powerful journey toward redemption, love, and found family. From co-dependency and addiction to heartbreak and healing, witness how an unexpected tragedy led her to the one woman she never saw coming...but who came right on time.

Discover it all on page 8.



“I WAS ON
THAT
BULLSHIT.”

NONE OF THIS IS *Bullshit!*

June 10, 1998, I decided my father had abandoned me for the last time. My father didn't attend my high school graduation and as far as I was concerned, he could fuck off forever!

That morning, I sat up front in the first two rows of graduates, a sea of purple caps with gold tassels. When my name was called, I walked across the stage and strained my eyes beyond the seats to find my family. I saw my Jama first, her wheelchair a great marker for finding everyone else. My mother, my sisters, my aunt, my cousins, and my uncle—my father's brother. No sign of my father.

I went through the rest of the day feeling excited and proud but distracted, my father's absence a sharp, jagged hangnail that snagged every moment of celebration. Fuck him. Forever.

I ignored my father for three hundred and eighty-seven days.

My Mama Was on That Bullshit

The summer of 1999, my mother asked me to drive my father to his court date. I didn't want to do it and didn't know why she was even getting involved, but whatever.

Navigating the afternoon of my father's court date involved a special brand of mental gymnastics. I would look at and listen to and respond to everything and anything but him. I pulled up to the house my father lived in—a dingy white, wooden four-square house with a large porch that sat back from the street in a neighborhood some called *The Zone*, a shorthand for *The Twilight Zone*. I couldn't help but watch him walk toward the car.

He looked terrible. Thin in the arms and shoulders and face, his stomach distended like he was six months pregnant, his eyes yellow and sunken. As he

struggled down the cement steps of the rooming house, I struggled to find sympathy. My father, looking a fucking mess, was probably just more drunk than I'd ever seen him, coming down off some week-long bender where he hadn't eaten or drank any water. It had been a year since my graduation no-show, and in that run-down place he chose to live, it was no wonder he looked like shit.

Once we got to the courthouse, my mother asked me to come in with them. I didn't want to, and I didn't know why she bothered. My mother is the strongest woman I've ever known. The way she carried our family through all my father's bullshit inspires me to push through when times are tough and has taught me to make sense of things when faced with chaos and uncertainty. That morning, I was confused. My mother had been so invested in finding her own happiness—seeing someone else, buying a new house—yet, here she was, once again, playing supportive wife.

During the hearing, my mother commented on how disoriented my father seemed, her face creased with concern. I shrugged. As my mother listened to my father, I listened to the judge. Apparently, my father had failed to appear for some other court date after a drunk driving arrest a couple months prior. He'd hit a light post and a parked car that had children in it. Because he was a repeat DWI/DUI offender, he was looking at jail time.

I knew it. Same bullshit.

I slid out of the gallery and walked into the hall. Standing firmly in my self-righteousness, I reasoned cutting him off had saved me, I was better for it, even. I wanted my mother to do the same. Be done. Cut the bullshit. I wanted her to be the strong woman I knew her to be. I wanted her to remember who the fuck she was.

My mother, worried and flustered, pushed open the court room door and found me in the hall.

“They're calling an ambulance for your father. We need to meet him at the hospital.”

Doctors Be on That Bullshit

The doctor stood at the foot of my father's hospital bed. I stood in the corner. My mother sat bedside him. The doctor explained my father's appearance—the bloated belly, the jaundice—and his demeanor—fatigue, disorientation—pointed to ascites, a common companion to liver disease, or cirrhosis, which affects alcoholics.

“Are you a heavy drinker, Mr. Wilson?” the doctor asked.

My father's eyes rolled from the doctor to my mother, then to me.

My mother answered for my father. “He's an alcoholic.”

“Recovered? Trying to quit?” the doctor pressed.

My father closed his eyes. “Trying to quit,” he said.

“I see,” the doctor said. He shook his head and whistled through his thin lips. “You're going to have to try harder if you want to stick around.”

Try. Harder.

I had heard it all before. The Al-Anon and Alateen meetings my mother took me and my sister to as kids explained alcoholism the same way. I remember reading and rereading *What's “Drunk,” Mama?* I remember wishing it had more pictures. I remember wishing the pictures it did have weren't sadly sketched drawings with squiggly lines and no colors. I remember wishing it didn't use the word “sick” to mean arguing all the time, sleeping a lot, and breaking promises when I knew sick meant sneezing and coughing and sore throats.

Standing in the corner, I was that little girl again, rereading that same paragraph: “I guess Daddy is sick. He's always drinking. Something is wrong with Mama, too! Mama is always crying or mad. It's hard to understand. It mixes me up.” There were no pictures on that page. Only words. Sick, drinking, wrong, mad, cry, bad, wrong, angry.

Is being angry being sick, too?

Am I sick, too?

I looked around the room. My father's eyes watered with apology. My mother's jaw was tight with disappointment. The doctor glanced around at the three of us. He was the professional. He was supposed to have some answers. He offered none. Instead, he set

a bomb of bullshit blame in the center of the room.

“If your father had been left alone for a few more days, he wouldn't have made it,” he said holding his clipboard to his chest. Then he left without telling us how to get well.

Therapy Is That Bullshit

Every time I see my therapist, I expect to come out of our session fixed. I talk about my father. I talk about my mother. I talk about myself. She asks questions I have difficulty answering because they push me to think about experiences, my family, and myself in ways that go beyond broken or fixed, weak or strong, good or bad. I answer, “I don't know” a lot. When I do share something, it feels like whining, like brooding, like bullshit.

I tell her this. That it's all bullshit.

But she makes me share it anyway, and for the first time in my life, I'm talking about it instead of drinking about it. I'm finding a softness, a stretch and bend, a vulnerability in the narratives and beliefs I thought were as solid and necessary as bones. But there is flesh here. And muscle. And skin. And hearts that need and scream and harm but also give and whisper and comfort. I'm learning my father is more than one thing, my mother is more than one thing, I am more than one thing, we are all more than one thing.

We are flawed and perfect. We are the light after the blackout. We are all doing the best we can, and now have the chance to be better.

This article is an excerpt from the Archives: Voices on Addiction: *None of This Is Bullshit*, originally published on November 17, 2020 in *The Rumpus*.

Sheree L. Greer

A Milwaukee, Wisconsin native, is a text-based artist and educator living in Tampa, Florida. In 2014, she founded *The Kitchen Table Literary Arts Center* to showcase and support the work of Black women and women of color writers. She is the author of two novels, *Let the Lover Be* and *A Return to Arms*.

REFLECTIONS ON
FINDING MYSELF THROUGH
THE VOICES OF
QUEER BLACK
WOMEN IN
R&B, COUNTRY, AND
BEYOND

WHERE WERE WE IN THE *Music?*

I have always loved music, for as long as I can remember. My first records were Lionel Richie's *Dancing on the Ceiling* and Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. I played them on repeat on my mother's console stereo—the kind that doubled as living room furniture. But it wasn't just those two. I loved everything. R&B, pop, soul, country (my grandmother kept her radio locked on the country station), even classical. And every Sunday night, I tuned into *Hearts of Space* with Stephen Hill—a dreamy, ambient show that made the world feel like something bigger than my neighborhood.

Music has always been that for me—comfort, joy, escape, prayer. But even though I was surrounded by sound, something always felt...a little out of reach. I didn't have the words for it back then, but now I know: I couldn't see myself in the music.

In college, that started to change. I discovered Meshell Ndegeocello and I began to see myself in her music. Michelle's music didn't sound like anyone else's—it sounded like the truth. Around the same time, RuPaul burst onto the scene with full glam and boldness, and somewhere in the background, George Michael was still holding my heart. (I'd loved him since elementary school. And yes, it makes sense now.)

What I didn't realize at the time was that I wasn't just a music fan. I was a queer Black girl looking for a mirror. I didn't want to just like the music—I wanted to live in it. But too often, I had to bend it to fit me. Switch pronouns in my head. Translate emotions into ones I could claim. There's nothing wrong with loving what you hear—but there's something



Kehlani

Kehlani is what vulnerability sounds like when it's wrapped in a beat you can ride around town to. She's fluid, fearless, and her growth shows up in every project.

Start With:

"Honey"

"Melt"

"Can I (feat. Tory Lanez)"

Victoria Monet

Victoria's got golden-age vocals, glittering production, and lyrics that celebrate love, desire, and womanhood—on her terms.

Start With:

"On My Mama"

"Moment"

"We Might Even Be Falling in Love (Interlude)"

Meshell Ndegeocello

The original truth-teller. Meshell's music is layered, emotional, and often decades ahead of its time. She writes what others won't even touch.

Start With:

"Fool of Me"

"Outside Your Door"

"Waterfall"

Tanner Adell

She's country with edge, glam, and soul. Tanner is redefining what it means to be a Black woman in country—while still having fun doing it.

Start With:

"Drunk in Love (Apple Music Session)"

"Buckle Bunny"

"I Hate Texas"

powerful about hearing yourself without needing to translate.

That's why this current wave of queer Black women and women of color in music hits me so hard—it feels like coming home.

In R&B and soul, Syd gives us quiet swagger and soft confessions. Kehlani lets us into her evolution in real time—unpolished, emotional, real. Victoria Monét brings glitter and groove, singing about love, motherhood, and queerness with joy. And Meshell? She's still giving us music that dares to sit in the mess, the beauty, the unknown.

But this evolution isn't just happening in R&B. It's showing up in country—a genre that rarely reflected someone like me.

Artists like Tanner Adell are kicking the doors open with rhinestones and range. Joy Clark's warm guitar licks and soulful vocals feel like healing. Amythyst Kiah gives us Appalachia with edge and honesty. And Luisa Lopez's work is smoky, poetic, and unforgettable—especially when she sings a line that makes you sit back and say, "Wait. She means me."

Representation in music isn't about checking boxes. It's about hearing a song and feeling whole. It's knowing your story belongs right there, woven into the lyrics, echoing in the chords. I didn't always have that. But now I do.

And for the next little Black girl dreaming about the stars or her first love or the life she hasn't lived yet—I'm glad she'll have it too.

Artist Spotlights: The Soundtrack to Finally Feeling Seen

Syd

Cool, understated, and effortlessly intimate—Syd makes music that feels like a slow exhale. Whether she's singing about desire or heartbreak, her voice feels like it's sitting right beside you.

Start With:

"Body"

"All About Me"

"Over (feat. 6LACK)"

FAMILY MATTERS

“Some things never change. Some people always stay the same.” — Roxanna

Being raised by Miriam Roxanna Rouse wasn’t an easy journey for Roxanna Alexis Rouse—but what didn’t kill her became living proof of just how strong she truly is. Through her music, her roots, and the chosen family she’s found along the way, Roxanna has built a foundation of healing that radiates through every note she sings and every space she enters.

She moves through life redeemed, sober, and shining like a damn diamond. This issue, *Family Matters* turns the spotlight on the people—blood, bonded, and beyond—who have stood by Roxanna, walked with her, and in some cases, helped save her life. Their photos will grace these pages, but so will their stories, beginning with the women who shaped the Rouse legacy.

Miriam Roxanna Rouse

Miriam came from a long line of scorned women, and though each generation struggled, they survived—mostly by the grace of God and the grit in their bones.

Raised in the church, Miriam clung to her faith even when the very institution that taught her about holiness also ushered pain into her life. She wasn’t perfect—never claimed to be—but she did what she could to offer Roxanna the protection and freedom she herself never had.

She wasn’t going to win any *Mother of the Year* awards, but she poured every ounce of herself into helping Roxanna become something bigger than both their pasts. Not just a songwriter. Not just a background singer. With her momager by her side, Roxanna would rise to become a *BOTA*—*Baddest of them All*.

Maybelle Miriam Rouse

Heartbreak was inherited in the Rouse line like eye color or a birthmark—and Maybelle wore it heavy. Her childhood was chaotic, echoing the same pain Roxanna would later experience in her own home. But the monster in her life wasn’t Walter—it was Leroy, a man cut from the same cruel cloth. It wasn’t until Maybelle fell into the arms of a forbidden love—a man of the cloth—that she finally found the strength to flee.

That love gave her the courage she didn’t know she had, to leave behind the unholy mess that had shaped her youth and move to a new city: Atlanta. There, she gave birth to Miriam Roxanna Rouse. But the sins of our mothers don’t care about zip codes. They travel with us. And so did Maybelle’s addiction, passed down like an heirloom Miriam never asked for.

Ophelia Maybelle Rouse

Ophelia’s gospel was made up of three pillars: the Bible, her Savior, and Leroy. Unfortunately, her devotion to both the Word and the man proved tragic. Her blind loyalty cost more than just her own bruised body—it cost Maybelle her childhood. Even as the truth blared like headlights on a dark road, Ophelia looked away. Instead of standing up for her daughter, she cast her out—sending Maybelle from Savannah to Atlanta, continuing the curse rather than confronting it.

But now, in Roxanna’s generation, the cycle is breaking. The curse ends here. The circle will be broken—by choice, by healing, and by the love of a family built with intention.



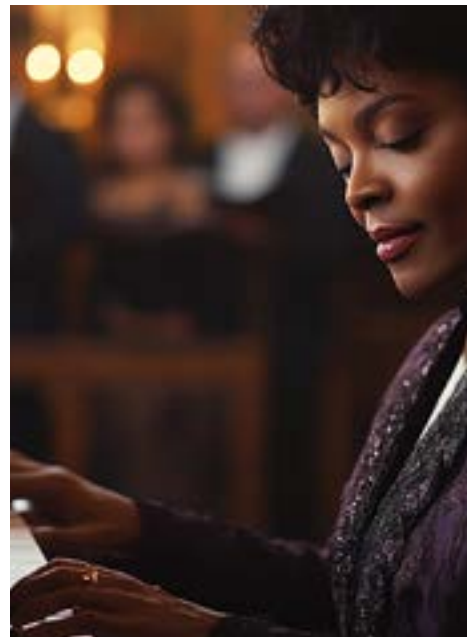
1. MIRIAM ROXANNA ROUSE

The mother with the voice of an angel, carrying the weight of inherited pain and addiction, branded by the unspoken Scarlet Letter of her mother’s sins and the generational curses she never asked for.



2. MAYBELLE MIRIAM ROUSE

Miriam’s mother, a woman who endured years of abuse at the hands of a monster but found fleeting freedom in the arms of a forbidden love.



3. OPHELIA MAYBELLE ROUSE

Maybelle’s mother and the ground zero of the Rouse family’s pain—where betrayal, abuse, and addiction first took root through the hands of her own father.



4. WALTER PRIMUS

Roxanna’s sperm donor and her mother’s abuser—a former Super Bowl champion turned captain of a crooked ship, the monster who haunted her sanctuary and whose chaos she transformed into the fire that fueled her own victory.



6. REVEREND TABITHA SCOTT

Miriam’s childhood friend and spiritual sister-in-arms to The Hammer; Rev. Tab wields the power of the Holy Spirit while he carries the Mighty Sword—together, they are Roxanna’s faithful protectors in both prayer and power.



5. DARCELLE “THE HAMMER” BONDRAGE

Miriam’s childhood friend and Roxanna’s guardian archangel, The Hammer keeps the streets in order and protects those he loves with an iron fist, a body of steel, and a heart that beats hardest for his Roxie Boo.



6. AYDA KOHN

The Queenmaker who gives Roxanna the love she couldn’t give her own child, Ayda is both agent and unsolicited mama bear—fiercely protective, deeply loyal, and always ready to defend her “daughter” at all costs.



7. LATOYA (TOYA) MITCHELL

Roxanna's go-to glam-squad diva, Toya keeps her hair laid, her face beat, and that Black Girl Magic glowing—more than a makeup artist, she's a ride-or-die friend and an essential part of Roxanna's found family.



8. YAZMINE WOLFE

The fashion couture diva and Roxanna's go-to designer for a flawless fit, Yazmine Wolfe is also one of her closest good-girlfriends—ever since Roxie discovered her on Made for Fashion Week, Yaz's style and sisterhood have been a perfect 10s across the board from day one.



11. DR. NAOMI RIGHT

The physician who took an oath to do no harm and ended up healing Roxanna's broken heart, Naomi is the best remedy of all—making things all right, holding her down, and promising a future as her forever wife.



12. NORENE MILLER

The second person Roxanna meets at Serenity Hills, Norene is a no-nonsense, by-the-book powerhouse who jumpstarts the routine and rigor Roxanna needs on her road to redemption.



9. ERIC & CORY

The double-trouble twin bros Roxanna can't imagine life without—though not blood, their loyalty, love, and nonstop comedy feel more real than any biological bond, and even with their family feuds, they always keep it real...and Roxie's all Gucci with that.



10. THEO

The last of the three amigos to join Roxanna's brotherhood of found family, Theo is her sensitive soul and spiritual sibling—an SVU binge-buddy and part of the ultimate fangirl/fanboy duo who swoon over Captain Olivia Benson, their fictional queen of law and order and source of late-night comfort.



13. ZAYN

With boyish charm and a heart of gold, Zayn is Roxanna's queer star power and ride-or-die fan club member of The Roxies—the third person to greet her at Serenity Hills and a fearless protector of both Roxie and Dr. Right.



14. DR. ARLEENE EDWARDS

The Patient Whisperer and fourth person Roxanna meets at Serenity Hills, Arlene rose like a phoenix from family tragedy and now devotes her life to helping others overcome addiction and loss—including her favorite doctor, Naomi Right.



15. NIAGARA FALLS

A young fighter battling the weight of childhood abuse, disability, anger, and suicidal thoughts—she may not have been a fan of Roxanna at first, but shared pain turns them into kindred spirits on the road to healing.



16. CARMEN VANDERBRAUN

What happens when your biggest nemesis walks into group therapy? You get mayhem, mischief, and madness—until Carmen Vanderbraun and Roxanna trade blows for breakthroughs, learning to bury the hatchet and build an unexpected bond.



19. CHERYL ROSE CAMPBELL

Roxanna's new sparring partner in a classic young diva vs. older diva showdown—Who's On First?—but with the love of the women who've captured their hearts, they learn to let peace in, be still, and become part of a new found family.



20. AYODELE AGWUEGBO

The eldest Agwuegbo sister and a powerful pianist whose music can move an audience to its feet or sway in the pews—Ayodele speaks life into many of the unforgettable songs on The Good News soundtrack.



17. JONAH LEONARD PARKINSON III

Jonah's got daddy issues, and Roxanna knows all too well about monsters parading around like perfect candidates for Father's Day—so with her help, he learns to walk away from his co-dependent past and into a life where he stands tall and proud in his own truth.



18. FRANCINE KATHARINE LONG

"Til death do us part" was the vow Francine took—but she never imagined the surprise twist: that the gift of her marriage, and her husband's secret lover, would become the unwanted gift that just keeps on giving. With Roxanna's support, she finds the strength to reclaim her power and finally pursue her own dreams.



21. MOTHER DOROTHY BANKS

Leader of the secret sisterhood known as the Gospel Girls, Dot may feud publicly with her rival Cleo over the title of Grand Gospel Diva, but their unbreakable bond runs deep—carrying the heritage of gospel music and Roxanna's lineage with the grace and wisdom of an elder.



22. MOTHER CLEOPATRA CLARKSTON

Cleo may fuss and fight with Dot on the church steps, but her heart secretly belongs to her sister Dorothy Banks in more ways than one—as a former member of the legendary Clarkston Sisters, she's been singing for the Lord all her life and now offers Roxanna her wisdom, strength, and seasoned spirit as an elder.



23. REVEREND CARLOTTA WILLIAMS

Reverend Carlotta delivers the word with kindness, love, and grace—serving as the calm within the Gospel Girls' fiery circle, and offering Roxanna healing and hope during her mother's funeral.



24. DYMON STUD

Dymona Ann Alexander, aka Dymon Stud, is the third member of the Redemption Tour triecta—bringing her prophetic rhymes, powerful beats, and undeniable presence to the stage alongside Roxanna in this unforgettable musical extravaganza.



27. WHITNEY JAMES

The Contemporary Jazz Diva who once needed her own redemption, Whitney now walks in her truth, singing praises to the Almighty—and lending her smooth, soulful sound as a special guest on the Redemption Tour and The Good News album.



28. JEROME SCOTT

Reverend Tabitha's eldest adopted son and the vocal powerhouse behind many songs on the Redemption Tour, Jerome stands strong as his mother's right hand, his siblings' protector, and the future stepson of Cheryl Rose Campbell.



25. ISAIAH SCOTT

Isaiah, formerly known as Lit G2G, is giving up his notorious bad boy ways for the love of the Lord and a brand-new life. He brings his music and voice to the Good News Redemption Tour with the power of a changed man walking boldly in faith.



26. TIFFANY SCOTT

The youngest of Reverend Tabitha's three adopted children from Nigeria, Tiffany carries the sweetest voice and a powerful testimony of resilience—joining her brothers, Isaiah and Jerome, to bring a fresh Gen Z vibe to old-school gospel.

Sexy
Smart
THE BEST
REMEDY

“LOVE SMART, LIVE SEXY, AND EMBRACE
THE BEST REMEDY.”



You’ve got questions about love, healing, and rediscovering your worth—and Roxanna’s got answers straight from the heart. Whether you’re navigating relationships post-rehab, grieving a deep loss, or just learning to love yourself again, Roxanna is here to remind you: real healing starts within, and *you are the best remedy you’ll ever find.*

So sit back, relax, and let Roxanna guide you to your best remedy—one heartfelt answer at a time.

Q1: Dear Roxanna,

How do I build a healthy relationship when I come from nothing but co-dependence and toxicity? I finally met someone new, but I don’t want to bring my old baggage with me.

A: Dear Tired of Toxic,

First of all, I’m proud of you for recognizing the pattern and wanting better. That’s your first breakthrough. When I fell for Naomi, I didn’t know how to be in a healthy relationship either. I was used to chaos, control, and calling it love. *But healthy love?* It starts with honesty—with yourself and your partner.

Set boundaries. Talk openly. Don’t be afraid to go slow. Real love isn’t a sprint—it’s a steady rhythm. You’ve got to learn your own song before you try to harmonize with somebody else. And always remember: the baggage you unpack is more important than the bags you carry in.

Q2: Dear Roxanna,

I’m heading home after completing rehab and I’m nervous. Some of my old friends and family don’t know everything I’ve been through. I’m scared I’ll be judged or rejected.

A: Dear Signed, Anxious, and Returning,

Whew! I remember that feeling all too well. When I left Serenity Hills, I had shame dragging behind me like a shadow. But I had to realize—I’m not that same woman. And neither are you.

You’ve done the work. Now it’s time to protect your peace. You don’t owe everyone your full story, but the ones who truly care? They deserve your truth. Let them see the real you—the growing, glowing, healing you. Some folks will fall away. Let them. The ones who stay? That’s your new tribe.

Q3: Dear Roxanna,

I lost my mother, and the grief is unbearable. How long does it take to feel okay again?

A: Dear Still Hurting,

Baby...I’m sending you the biggest hug. I’ve been there. I’m still there some days. Grief doesn’t have a finish line—it’s a river you learn to float through, not a mountain you climb over.

You don’t *get over* your mama—you carry her with you in everything you do. In your laugh. In your strength. In your love. And one day, I promise, it won’t feel like drowning. It’ll feel like remembering. Like honoring.

Until then? Breathe. Cry. Talk to her out loud if you need to. She’s still with you. You’ll get through this—but take your time.

Q4: Dear Roxanna,

I feel so guilty. I wasn’t there when someone I loved passed away. I don’t know how to forgive myself.

A: Dear Drowning in Guilt,

I hear you. I see you. And I feel this one in my soul. I wasn’t there for my mama either. I was out, caught up in mess I should’ve never been in, and when I got the call...I just broke.

But guilt doesn’t mean you didn’t love them. It means you’re human.

You forgive yourself by remembering the love. By saying the words you didn’t get to say—in a journal, in a prayer, in a letter. You carry their memory by living better, not by punishing yourself.

You are still worthy of peace. Let go of the shame so you can hold onto the love.

“
LOVE SMART,
LIVE SEXY, AND
EMBRACE THE BEST
REMEDY

”

Q5: Dear Roxanna,

I want to love someone, but I don’t even like myself most days. Where do I begin with self-love?

A: Dear In Need of Self-Love,

Oh baby...self-love is a daily practice, not a destination. Some days you’ll feel like a queen. Other days? Like you barely got your crown on straight. But the goal is to show up for yourself no matter what.

For me, I had to start with affirmations. My favorite? I look in the mirror and say, “Pretty Bitch!” (Shoutout to the Mother of Black Hollywood, Ms. Jenifer Lewis.) It makes me laugh, but it also makes me stand tall.

I even helped a friend of mine, Jonah, come up with his own mantra. He used to be afraid of standing up to his dad. I said, “Use your own name like a Declaration of Independence—Jo, Nah!” And baby, that boy found his voice.

So what’s your phrase? What words would future you whisper in your ear right now? Say them. Write them. Repeat them. Until they feel like truth.

Q6: Dear Roxanna,

I’ve done both group and individual therapy. I’m trying to figure out which one actually helps more. You’ve done both—what’s your take?

A: Dear Unsure and Healing,

Honestly? They both have their place. Group therapy gave me community—mirrors of people who had walked through similar storms. There’s magic in shared testimony.

But individual therapy? That was sacred. That’s where I unraveled without shame. Where I told my rawest truths without flinching.

You don’t have to pick just one. Mix it up. Do what feels right in this season. Healing isn’t one-size-fits-all. You deserve support that fits you.

Q7: Dear Roxanna,

I want to fall in love again, but after everything I’ve been through, I don’t trust myself. How do I open my heart when I still feel fragile?

A: Dear Guarded but Hopeful,

I feel this. When I first started falling for Naomi, I questioned everything—especially myself. I was scared I’d sabotage it, scared I’d lean too hard, love too fast, break too easily.

But here’s what I’ve learned: loving again doesn’t mean being perfect. It means being present.

Take it slow. Stay honest. Check in with your gut. *And most importantly?* Keep showing up for you. The more you trust yourself to choose peace over patterns, the more you’ll believe that you’re worthy of good love.

And let me say it plain—you are worthy. You always were.

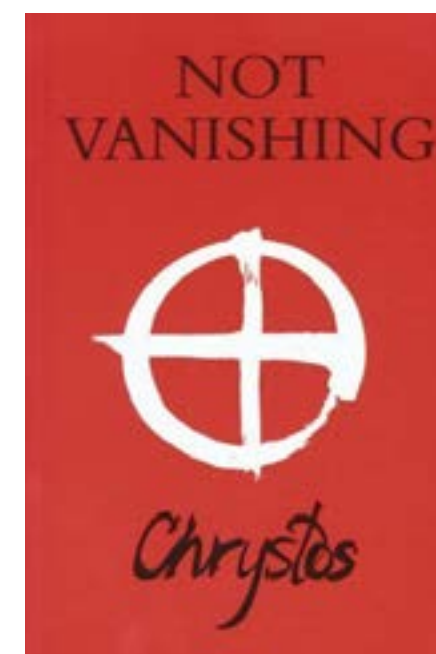
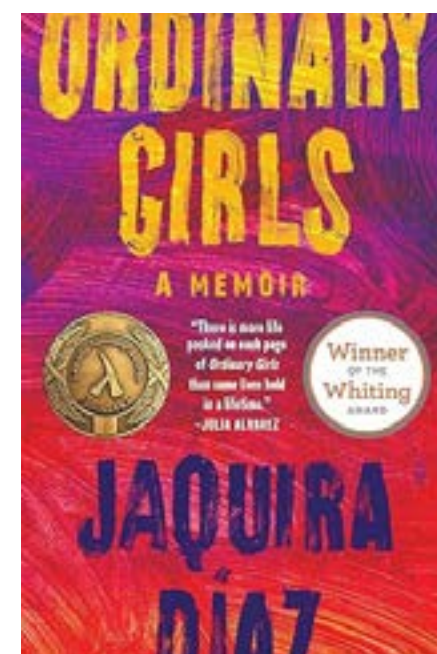
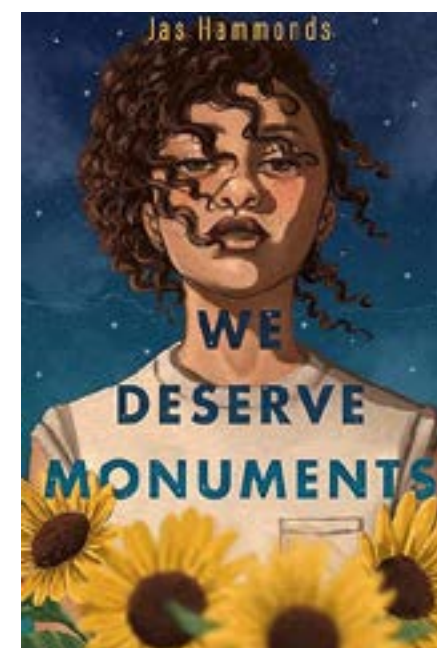
Got a question for Roxanna? Want a little *Sexy Smart* advice for your soul, your love life, or your healing journey?


Email us at info@onyxlee.pub or tag us on socials with [@onyxleepublishing](https://www.instagram.com/onyxleepublishing) and your question could be featured in our next issue of *Sapphic Magazine*.





9
SAPPHIC
BOOK RECS





ONYX LEE MUSIK PRESENTS

Bad HABITS

PRODUCED BY SHONUFF

ROXANNA

ROXANNA'S BAD HABITS!

Roxanna is a southern Georgia peach with the vocals and songwriting skills of a much older artist than her young age of 25 reflects. Although youthful, Roxanna has lived a full life far more profound than most. She has been through many storms and survived them all stronger than ever. You will hear her story of triumph in this sophomore EP, *Bad Habits*. Prepare yourself to experience the joy and pain of Roxanna, the woman, the artist, and the BOTA (baddest of them all)!

Sapphic readers, enjoy this groundbreaking album and bonus content. Scan the QR code to the right to experience the music that's already taking the community by storm. Roxanna's music is raw, soulful, and unforgettable. She knows how to hook you!" - LezFan

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SCAN ME 