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## On She Goes: Boo-Loving & Romance While Traveling

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Ash: It's 90 degrees in some parts of the city today. JoJo asked me if it always gets this hot in October. It does. While the rest of the country is buying scarves and pulling on boots, I'm baring my legs for the first time in months. I saw a graphic last year about how the country was screwed and roasting and terrible, while San Francisco summer was full blast, a bone-chilling 55 degrees. I understand how San Francisco became a city for deviants, for rebels, for nerds and outcasts. While America is united in the plod of seasons, San Francisco meteorology is an exercise in whims and microclimates. We're not on the same schedule as everyone else. Time passes in a non-narrative mishmash of second winters and fourth summers, calendar dates be damned. Packing up was hard; driving away was hard. I keep thinking of all the things I forgot: my checkbook, doggy-poop bags. But I also forgot to go to all these *places*. These pockets that keep me sane in San Francisco. For lunch, I'd made a simple pasta with frozen peas and lemons I preserved last spring. This being my choice of how to spend my time here, my last meal is indicative. I'd hope to find some simplicity in San Francisco, but after living here for five years, I've struggled to find and keep it.

[PLANE SOUNDS]

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Aminatou: That was author and designer Ash Huang. A few years ago, she went on a cross-country road trip with the second love of her life, her dog, Nuri. She wrote about her experience on the road, and we fell in love with her words. You'll hear the rest of her story sprinkled throughout the episode, because today, it's all about romance and love. I'm Aminatou Sow, and this is *On She Goes*.

[MUSIC PLAYS]

Aminatou: Love inspires travel, from honeymoons and post-breakup getaways to friend vacays and self-love trips to the spa. Ash Huang, Brittany Luse, and more are giving you a taste of how love and travel intertwine. As you know, my friends Ashley and Rosie are the most in love, both with each other and with travel, so of course their honeymoon story is epic.

Ashley: I think we're both, you know, romantics in our own way. And I think she read somewhere that Will and Kate had honeymooned in—

Aminatou: Wait, Will and Kate who?

Ashley: Middleton. I'm on first names with them.

Aminatou: I just really wanna be very clear that you're talking about British Will and Kate.

Ashley: British Will and Kate, yeah.

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- Aminatou: Heirs to the throne of England. Okay.
- Ashley: This was, like, the *Downton Abbey* era, and we had read that they had honeymooned in Seychelles, and Rosie was like, “Well this is where we’re gonna honeymoon because you my queen and, like, if Will is taking Kate to Seychelles then I’m taking you to Seychelles.” So, I was like, you not gonna get me to disagree with that. So, she plans this trip to Seychelles—I mean, it takes us forever to get there. It was like here to Dubai, Dubai to—
- Rosie: Seychelles. That’s it. On Emirates. And y’all know Emirates is a good-quality airline.
- Ashley: We had to like take a boat to the island. I’m like, oh girl, you rented the island out.
- Rosie: Oh, it was classy.
- Ashley: I’m feeling extra classy. And so, we get to this hotel and this guy is taking everyone else to their room. He’s dropping them off, like, we’re in a golf cart. So he drives down this really long driveway to get us to ours. And so, at that point I’m like, either we’re staying in like, you know, the rough part, you know what I mean? Or this is going to be really nice.
- Rosie: The bungalows behind.

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Ashley: Or this is gonna be really nice. So, we pull up to this, like, villa, and I walk in and I kid you not, the bathroom was like—people can't see this room—but it was like humongous. The entire tub was, like, as big as, like, my room at home.

Rosie: It was our first stop on our monthlong honeymoon. So, to me you have to make it right. Right? I mean, you're traveling 23 hours, so if we were to get all the way there and then pulled up to that Hyatt next to the airport, that would've been a little problematic.

Ashley: Right. But I walked in, they had the, like, bug nets on the bed, I mean it was just beautiful. The down comforters, like all in.

Aminatou: When you are on, like, a super high-end luxury trip like that, are you really aware of the other people of color that are around you?

Ashley: So, Seychelles is interesting in that there's a big French influence there, and so a lot of the folks there that are, you know, African or Black, they remind you of folks that you might see in the French Quarter in Louisiana. So, you're seeing these people around you who work there that are definitely, like, people of color, but they also have a lot of folks from other areas that come there for work. I remember this guy asked us, or he asked me when I went to the bar, he was like, "Oh, are you guys rappers or entertainers or like—"

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?" I mean, and I went with it. What other moment would I have to give someone my autograph, and I totally like—

Aminatou: You gave somebody your autograph?

Ashley: So, there is someone in Seychelles who thinks that Ashley dot Mosley is, like, somebody. And that poor soul is probably YouTubing his life away trying to find my single or something. But I just could not resist.

Aminatou: I've been impersonating Missy Elliott in Mexican resorts for years.

Ashley: See? So you get it.

Aminatou: So this makes me so happy.

Ashley: So you totally get it. But I do remember, like, looking around and thinking, Oh wow, we are like the only ones here, and we're, like, married. There was just so much going on. We're women traveling by ourselves, we're married, we're black.

Aminatou: There's so many layers to this, right? It's like you're lesbian bougie babe.

Rosie: You're labeling us. You're putting me in a box.

Aminatou: Listen, the best labels. I'm putting you in the most empowering, prettiest box that society can give you. Yeah, it's like sometimes I really wonder about the assumptions that people have to unpack

when they see us, because you know, sometimes at the nice hotels, people will ask me for a towel and I'm like, "I don't work here." You know, just like all sorts of crazy, like, what are black women doing at nice places? So, it's really interesting to hear about it like from a, like, oh, I'm not the only person this happens to.

Rosie: Yeah, I find myself doing the black person nod to everybody who works there, right, but there's never anyone who's really staying at some of these places. Sometimes we'll run into people, but I mean it just really depends on where we are. Seychelles, just, no. There was no one actually staying in one of the villas that was a person of color. Which, you know it's unfortunate. There are places that you run into them more, you know. But Seychelles is just so freaking far, and then it's so expensive. And then honestly, shockingly, the food is really expensive. But it was, to me, it was our honeymoon. We purposefully decided not to have a big wedding so we could spend all the money on ourselves and have a nice honeymoon and so, you know, why not.

Aminatou: That's awesome. Man, now I really wanna go. I don't think anyone can top Ashley and Rosie's honeymoon except probably Kate Middleton and Prince William. Maybe.

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Aminatou: You know what I love, though? The “three Hs.” Here’s Melissa Valle with some hair tips.

Melissa: So sometimes you’ll encounter a particular kind of harassment that you may not experience in the States or you may just not be accustomed to. For example, I was in Cartagena, Colombia, dancing in a nightclub with friends when a guy came up to me and he started pulling money out of his pocket when I refused to dance with him. And I was kinda confused by this; I was like, “All right, well, this guy must be drunk.” But then I went outside and another guy who I remember thinking was cute offered to kinda walk me around the corner, and I said, “Fine.” And then at some point, he’s like, “I have to go to the cash machine.” And I’m like, “Why do you have to go to the ca—?” And he kept saying this. So I’m like, “Why do you need to go to the cash machine?” And he’s like, “Well, you know, how much do you cost?” So as a black woman, sometimes there’s this assumption that you’re a sex worker in a number of countries. This has happened to me in Italy; this happened to me in Argentina. You have to learn how to take those things in stride and not let them ruin your trip. As a matter of self-care, maybe take some me-time if you find that this thing really upsets you.

**Comment [LU1]:** Melissa Valle segment below is not about hair tips.

Aminatou: Good looking out, Melissa. Okay, back to Ash. Here's part two of her story.

Ash: Nuri and I spend most of our time alone, as intended. From California to Arizona, the mountains and desert remain similar in topography, but the sun-baked landscape saturates. The sunsets are candy-pink and blue. The Google Maps navigator interrupts my music in a chipper robotic voice. "Head west on Water Street toward Pearl Street." I listen politely and reply, "Thanks, Googlina." We stop at a rest area in central Arizona near a prison. It's preceded by an enormous sign that warns cars not to pick up hitchhikers. The rest stop is well maintained, and there are tons of families there. The bathroom is as clean and modern as a suburban McDonald's. I can't help but wonder if the families there are visiting incarcerated loved ones. The families are calm, polite, and very white. I suppose I'll have to get used to being the only Asian in the room again for the next thousand miles. I'll also have to get used to the push and pull of what self-sufficiency on the road really means. When I am in cities, I internet everything. I internet places to eat, the best sites to see. I'll go days without speaking to anyone but Nuri. Here, I find myself stopping at Circle Ks and buying physical hiking passes from real



human men. I check into hotel rooms and tell Nuri to high-five concierges in exchange for dog treats. Somewhere near Texas I realize I'm now a guest in God's country. The high concentration of churches rivals the density of restaurants. I post a picture of a 190-foot-tall cross, and a friend comments, confusing it for another giant cross I'll see later, near Indiana. I pass a truck plastered in Jesus information. JESUS SAVES, written big in all caps across the stainless-steel tanks. Jesus loves you, every waving mud flap informs. Jesus truck gives two little honks as I pass. Okay, I think. A few miles go by; I check my mirrors again. Jesus truck approaches. My heart jumps. I am, for a minute, sure that he has seen my California plates, a little Asian girl driving alone, far from home. Liberal scum, or at the very least a potential convert. I book it. This is the reason my parents tell me to stick to the coasts, where I'm not so funny looking. I do not want to prove them right. I do not want to be on *60 Minutes*, kidnapped by a Jesus truck. I really should not have listened to *Gone Girl* on audio book. I freak out for 10 more miles before I finally lose Jesus truck. The irrational adrenaline still pulses through me. Of course this truck was not chasing me. It's already forgotten I exist. But I've become so afraid of sticking out, of

being memorable. Different is dangerous, and yet it has been my everything. I have grown too used to wanting to belong. Of determining who my people are and sticking with them. And suddenly I understand why San Francisco has started to frighten me. San Francisco demulsifies its population with its niches and tribes. Everyone looks at you and does the mental calculus. Hippie? Homeless? Techie? Hipster? This never used to matter to me. I never wanted homogeny. I wanted Republicans and hippies and Jews and blacks and Asians. I wanted to be in a melting pot because I wanted to be able to melt away at will. I hated that my face could determine whether or not I was recognized or easily described. I wanted the power of invisibility with none of the radioactive consequences.

Aminatou: Next up, I talk with one of the most wonderful women in the podcasting biz, Brittany Luse. She's the host of *For Colored Nerds* and formerly of Gimlet's *Sampler*. She's here to fill us in on traveling with your boo.

Brittany: So, I had to work a lot when I first started at Gimlet—surprise. So by the time *Sampler* came out at the end of January, I was like, “Look, I am tired.” I had gotten the flu all these times, and I was like, “Look,

this is not popping. This is not cute. This is not me.” Also, my boyfriend works overnights, so we don’t really get to see each other during the week. So I was like, “We need to go somewhere, we need to get out, go be in nature, we need to stop smelling these Brooklyn smells, and we need to go be somewhere.” So we decide to go to New Paltz, which is, like, upstate New York. I call everything above the Bronx “upstate,” which I’m sure is very country.

Aminatou: It kind of is, though. It’s upstate!

Brittany: Yeah, it’s upstate! I’m down state.

Aminatou: How is it, like, traveling with your boyfriend?

Brittany: It was great. Yeah, we had so much fun. And we had so much fun that we decided to go to Puerto Rico together.

Aminatou: Oh my God, tell me about Puerto Rico.

Brittany: Oh my God. It’s the most fantastic place I’ve ever been in my entire life. I have like an amazing, I mean, so my boyfriend’s from San Juan. He just moved here four years ago. All his people are there, his parents are there, his friends are there. Like, you don’t understand. There was a day we just got up in the morning, picked his parents up, drove up through the mountains, through like the mist and trees and all this gorgeousness that kind of resembles rain

forestry. And then we got to this street. Not a street, it was kind of like a road, like a two-lane highway just continuing up the mountains in this town called Guavate, and, literally, people call it Pork Highway. I don't know if you eat pork: Do you eat pork?

Aminatou: I eat pork.

Brittany: Thank you, Jesus. It's good. It's a food group.

Aminatou: I feel conflicted about it, but yes.

Brittany: I feel nothing. I feel like all systems go, I feel very green light, green light if I eat pork. So we go up there and it's like . . . I can't describe it. It was, like, an open-air restaurant, and there's like all these people in there, there's like a puppet show going on with, like, a pig puppet, which I was just like . . . what? This place is lit. So I'm sitting there with like—we got two pounds of pork. His mom wasn't eating any that day. Me, my boyfriend, and his dad, we finished that shit in like 14 minutes. Two pounds of, like, slow-roasted pig on a spit.

Aminatou: I'm so happy for you, just hearing this.

Brittany: It was one of the best experiences of my entire life. It was so fantastic.

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Aminatou: And you also have that great experience of you know, like, you know locals. It's kind of a homecoming and it's other people showing you where they're from, and so you get the best of everything.

Brittany: Yeah. No, it was like we did touristy stuff where we definitely went to Old Town and we went to the rain forest one day and, like, went hiking in the rain forest down to a river where he used to hang out when he was younger. And like, went swimming. In a river. In the rain forest. Which was, I mean, I'm from a place called Farmington Hills, Michigan. You see a river in the rain forest, that's certain death. I saw that; he was like, "This is safe." I was like, "You and I don't think safe is the same thing. This isn't real. Safety is a social construct."

Aminatou: Be safe, everyone.

Brittany: Exactly.

Aminatou: So, I mean, what are like maybe two or three things that you think are must-dos in Puerto Rico.

Brittany: Oh, I say definitely go to Old Town. Go to El Morro and everything there. It's really beautiful. There's a lot of history. Also, you know, hashtag Colonialism. You get to get the full flavor of that. I would also say go to El Yunque, which is the rain forest. It is incredible. I

mean, I can't describe how incredible it is. Even like after, you know, we went hiking and we went swimming in the river—which I did begrudgingly and then I slowly started to enjoy—we hiked back up and got in the car and then drove all the way up to the top.

Aminatou: Wow.

Brittany: And we, like, did a whole overlook, and it was in the rain. And in the rain, it was still one of the most gorgeous places I've ever seen. So at one point we stopped off and got like a—what do they call them there? *Pincho*. Which is like a shish kebab. They give you, like, a piece of white bread like you would get at a BBQ in Texas and some BBQ sauce, and we just stood there at 10 o'clock in the morning and just looked. It had just rained, there was mist covering all of the mountains, and I was just, like, damn.

Aminatou: Like, life can be like this.

Brittany: I'm eating some grilled meat and some white bread at 10 o'clock in the morning, and everybody else I know is going to damn work. I feel like I won.

Aminatou: The Puerto Rico tourism board should holler at you.

Brittany: They should holler at me, like, I'm on point.

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Aminatou: You can find Brittany on many places on the internet, namely on Twitter, where she is [@BLMuse](#). You can also find her [@ForColoredNerds](#) and [@SamplerShow](#).

**Comment [LU2]:** Aminatou mispronounces the Twitter handle in the audio file. Aminatou says “@BLMuse,” but in reality Brittany’s Twitter handle is @BMLuse.

Nneya: Pack your bags. It’s me, Nneya, and I’m about to take you around the world. This week I’m talking about Bordeaux, France. So, my cousin just had friends from Paris in town, and they were pretty shocked to learn that I had just come back for Bordeaux. Definitely a growing city. I guess it’s not on the typical American tourist circuit. That’s part of what makes it so awesome. It’s young and beautiful; it’s full of life and full of wine. Here are some things you should check out while there. Wine touring in Saint-Émilion. There are few places more romantic than the nearby medieval town of Saint-Émilion. An easy half-day trip from the city of Bordeaux, this town has charming, winding streets, beautiful plazas, and great shopping. Best of all, it’s surrounded by wonderful vineyards within walking or biking distance. Enjoy your tasting at La Cave Dourthe and stock up on wines as great gifts for friends and family back home. Tell one of the shopkeepers, Cedric, that I sent you, and he’ll be sure to send you off with the good stuff. Go vintage shopping. You’ll find them if you’re willing to explore a little. Go down that side street around that

corner and wait until it opens up into that beautiful hidden plaza, and you'll spot a great vintage shop. There really is nothing like saying that you got that one-of-a-kind piece in Bordeaux. Take in skateboarding while having a bottle of wine and watching the sunset on the Garonne. Really, that's one of the best dates I've ever had. Watching the sunset over the Garonne River, seeing the beautiful lights of the city turn on and being reflected in the water's surface while having a merlot blend from Bordeaux and hearing skaters take their last ramps of the day right behind me. The skate park at Bordeaux is probably one of the most beautiful ones in the world because of those views.

Aminatou: That was Nneya Richards bringing you around the world, and now, I'm bringing you part three of Ash Huang's cross-country road trip.

Ash: I swing down 376 and everything feels right. The steering column is steady, and I am singing at the top of my lungs. I exit the tunnel and see that nighttime Pittsburgh skyline. I audibly gasp, and it wakes Nuri up. He rustles in the back seat. I'm remembering the exits to take; I wanna turn off Googlina. College kids line the gray streets, and I remember that it is Saturday night. I was one of those kids at 18, swaddled in the warm comfort of new friends. Our generation



seems so stunted as adults. College is basically a glorified adult kindergarten, an addition to childhood. At that age, our grandparents were shipping off to World Wars. We are just trying to find ourselves and hang on to our parents' corporate insurance plans. I think of these narratives and then I think of all the narratives, hundreds of stories, I could tell myself. Some of the ones about me are from the mouths, bodies, and raised eyebrows of other people's books. They are stories I did not write. How our mother said I'd be pretty if I would just lose the weight. How he turned up the volume on his music when I sang in the shower. How they repeated my ignored words and were heralded as mavericks. How he said I didn't deserve the money. How she said I'd do anything with legs. How she was selectively honest when frightened, how he'd cheated on the school trip I couldn't go on. How the coffee jitters made me interview like a nervous moron. But I can write stories too. It's the only real power I have. I can chose which tales stay and which ones die as I do, slowly, like shedding cells. When my head hits the cool pillow, when I stare into the city light patterns on the ceiling or the quiet dark of the country, I'm the sieve. I'm the narrator. I have the power. How the interstate opens up like a tulip to accept us. How I'm

learning to be wild again. How Nuri transforms from a coward to a guardian who notices intruders in the hallway. How I dyed my hair purple so they'd know to step back. How she and I share a bond because nobody believes what happened to us. How his eyes wrinkle up at the corners when he looks at me. How my muscles stopped hurting after every session of yoga. How we eat the pizza, even though dairy makes us gassy. How she says I am a column, says I have a backbone. How I am a guest in God's country and the deep lefts alike. How my home is inside of me always, a little haven.

Aminatou: That was author and designer Ash Huang.

Aminatou: I love listening to each and every one of you, but it's time to go. Thanks so much for listening to *On She Goes*, the podcast. You can fall in love with even more travel stories, tips, and inspiration at [onshegoes.com](http://onshegoes.com). I'm your host, Aminatou Sow. *On She Goes* is produced by me and Bari Finkel for Pineapple Street Media in partnership with Serita Wesley, Lizzy Harris, and Natalie Huizenga for Wieden+Kennedy Publishing. Special thanks to Jenna Weiss-Berman, Max Linsky, Emily Becker, Lindsey Mavis, Sarah Fink, Marmoset, and APM. Bye!

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