

Introducing *Riches*

Brash, glamorous, American series like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* have always held a special place in my heart and I've long been fascinated by shows about family businesses and how the tensions, flowing from boardroom to sitting room, fray and jeopardise relationships. Burt Reynolds once said, "*You can be poor and unhappy or you can be rich and unhappy, I'd rather be rich and unhappy.*" Rich, unhappy people make for great television and in creating RICHES, I set out to tell a story about a successful, black, British family who prove that money can buy all sorts of things but happiness isn't always on the table.

RICHES tells the story of the complicated Richards family. For over twenty years, their hair and cosmetics empire, *Flair & Glory*, has dominated the hair and beauty scene. Our story begins with the unexpected death of patriarch, STEPHEN.



Introducing *Riches* continued...

Stephen's second wife, CLAUDIA, fully expects that their adult children ALESHA, GUS and WANDA will inherit the business but when Stephen's will unexpectedly bequeaths the controlling interest in the business to NINA and SIMON, the children of his first marriage, the scene is set for a messy showdown with both factions of the family vying for control.

In telling a story about a black-owned, hair and cosmetics empire, I wanted to tap into entertaining, contemporary stories about British identity. Black beauty is political, it is also irreverent, creative and very lucrative. The show is unashamedly glamorous and it was a joy to shoot London with an eye on showing its beauty and showcasing the myriad sides of the City. The series explores contemporary questions about power, identity and black ambition. In every episode, we have stories about the business and the fight to save *Flair & Glory* and yet, at its core, the show is about very relatable relationships — sibling rivalry, complicated matriarchs, messy blended families.

The appetite for black British stories has always been there and it has been thrilling to create the Richards family and celebrate their opulence, their ambition, and their immigrant grit. Shooting during Covid presented many challenges and I'm proud of the crew and our talented ensemble of actors, all of whom brought a phenomenal level of commitment and passion to the project. I'm excited to bring this show to the screen and I hope audiences will fall in love with the Richards family.

Abby Ajayi



Character Biographies



Character Biographies

STEPHEN

Stephen Richards is a powerful symbol of the kind of assured, Black male success that is too rarely depicted on screen. He single-handedly built Flair & Glory into a market-leading, Black hair and cosmetics brand and even in death, Stephen looms large. Mercurial, secretive and ruthless, the ripple created by his death and the terms of his will echo through the first season. Stephen's pursuit of business success brought great wealth and power to the Richards family, but at what cost?

Stephen is the divisive, complicated anchor that binds all our characters: loved and revered by some, loathed by others. In life, he was a hard man to know and in death, Nina is struggling to figure out who her father really was. A layer of mystery surrounds Stephen's death: why did he dramatically change his will six months ago? Why did Stephen call Nina on the night he died? Was he in danger? Or is Stephen, even from beyond the grave, simply manipulating his family once again?

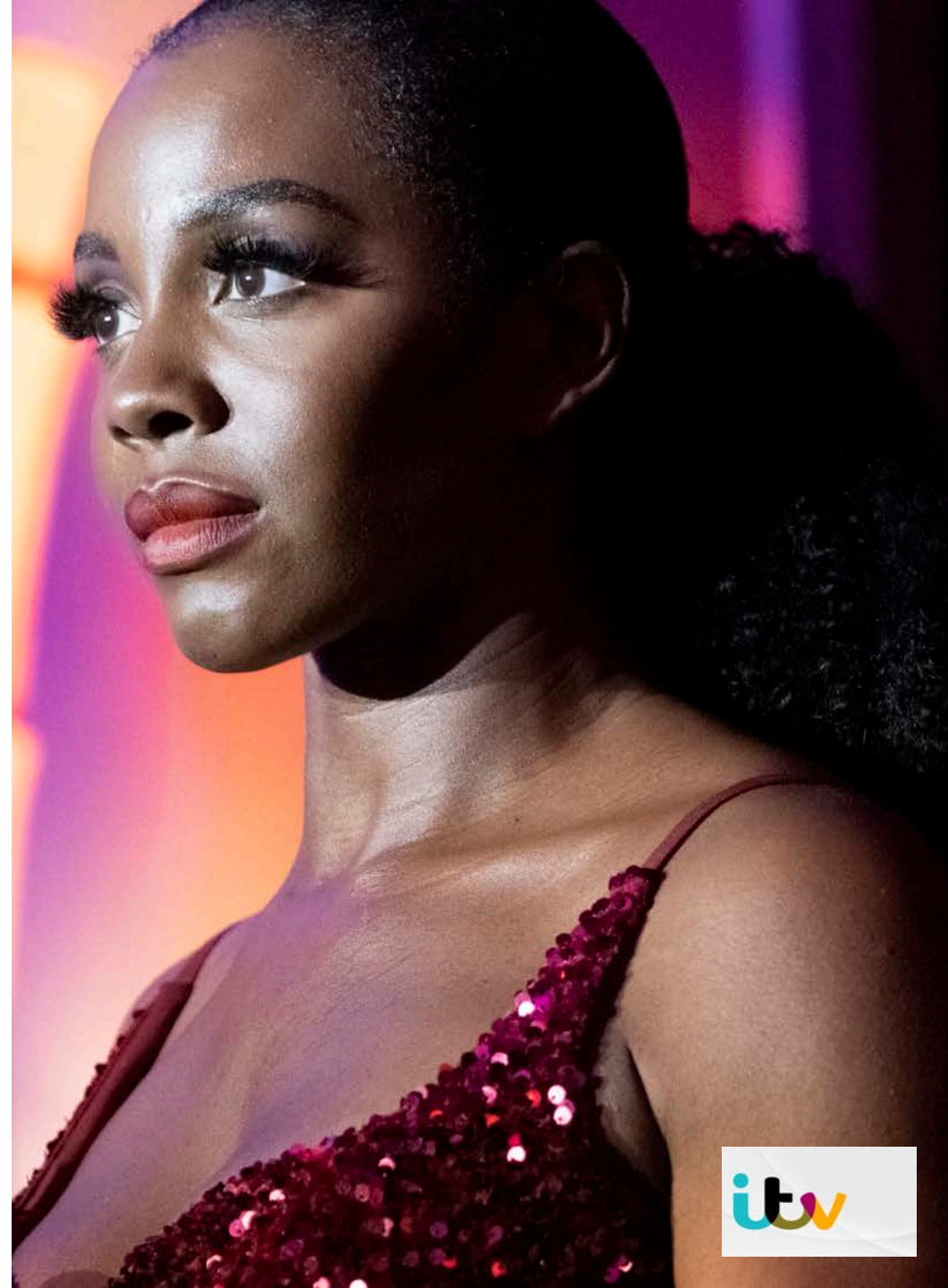


Character Biographies

NINA

Ambitious, intelligent and headstrong, NINA, Stephen's oldest child, has channelled all her abandonment and daddy issues into being a poster child for Black Excellence. She went to college early, got the MBA from an Ivy League school, she's got the VP title at work and yet, she's been feeling restless in her life in New York. When she unexpectedly inherits Stephen's company, Flair & Glory, Nina makes a rash decision to move to London. At first, she's hellbent on finding out why Stephen called her on the night he died but slowly she's dragged into the complicated Richards' family dynamics. Nina's desire to understand her late father, her animosity with her stepmother, Claudia and her determination to find out who is stealing from the business, forms the spine of the first series.

Nina presents as strong and confident and yet, there is a vulnerability too. She is guarded, defensive, and has considerable trust issues, having been estranged from her father since childhood. She doesn't trust Claudia and is determined to put Claudia in her place to make up for the past wrongs done to her mother, Oyin. Nina is suspicious of her half siblings and the cushion of wealth that they take for granted and which she and Simon grew up without. Slowly, Nina is drawn to her half siblings and in forming attachments with the family she never knew. Nina prides herself on being firm but fair, but in the heated cauldron of family resentments, rivalries might well explode.



Character Biographies

CLAUDIA

Brash, flashy and outspoken, Claudia is Stephen's second wife. She's a highly volatile show-off, a woman who acts first and thinks later, Claudia leads with her heart and occasionally with her fists. You can take the girl out of Edmonton, but she stays street for life... Even though he was married to her friend, Claudia caught Stephen's eye and has never looked back. She loves the lifestyle, wealth and luxury that life with Stephen afforded her and she loves her children and would do anything for them. Marriage to Stephen was an emotional minefield and they both had their affairs, though Claudia kept hers discreet. The bombshell of Stephen's will galvanises Claudia; she's not about to let usurpers Nina and Simon take what should rightfully go to her and her children.

Over the course of the series, Claudia proves to be a formidable antagonist for Nina. It would be easy to dismiss Claudia as a Chanel-wearing, trophy wife but her natural cunning and street smarts serve her well. She's a quick learner and is about to fully immerse herself in how to mastermind a corporate takeover and retain control of the company. You come at this queen, you'd better not miss.



Character Biographies

GUS

Gus was supposed to inherit Flair & Glory. As Deputy CEO, Stephen was grooming him for the role but the will upends everyone's expectations. Suddenly, the rug has been pulled out from under Gus and he doesn't know where he fits in the new hierarchy at the company. Sandwiched between Alesha and Wanda, Gus somehow wilts like the middle child that he is. He lacks the dynamism and charisma of his sisters and is a people pleaser, always trying to keep the peace. No one ever says it, but Gus knows he lacks his father's cutthroat, killer instinct in business; he's never managed to get out of his father's shadow and over the course of the series, this imposter syndrome dogs Gus at every turn. Does he have what it takes? Can he ever challenge Nina? And without his family's wealth, can he make it?

Being robbed of the chance to be by his father's bedside in his final moments unleashes a deep rage in Gus. In his life he feels impotent but in setting his mind to taking down the racist police officer who prevented him reaching Stephen's side, Gus finds a focus and ruthlessness that he didn't know he had. But, does he risk going too far?



Character Biographies

ALESHA

Alesha, the first-born child from Stephen's second marriage, has always been underestimated by her family. Alesha's dyslexia was interpreted as stupidity by Stephen, leaving Alesha with damagingly low self-esteem. A latchkey kid, she was a child when her parents' business was starting to take off and she feels neglected in a way that her siblings were not. While Alesha went to the crappy state schools, by the time her younger siblings arrived, the money had come and they went to the affluent, posh schools. Alesha seethes with resentment and there remained a deep animosity between her and Stephen until his death. This ambivalence about her father proves an unexpected bond between her and Nina.

Alesha's burgeoning career as an Instagram beauty influencer is a source of patronising amusement and eye-rolling from her family, who see her "work" as superficial and juvenile, but Nina sees Alesha's talent and taps into her knowledge about the cosmetics industry and uses it to help their struggling company. For the first time, Alesha is being afforded a seat at the table and she starts to realise her value. Over the course of the series, Alesha will undergo a transformation and when she is given a key role in the company, she finally has the kind of power and agency that was previously denied to her. But in disturbing long established family dynamics, Alesha finds herself facing off against her mother and siblings, and it's about to get heated.

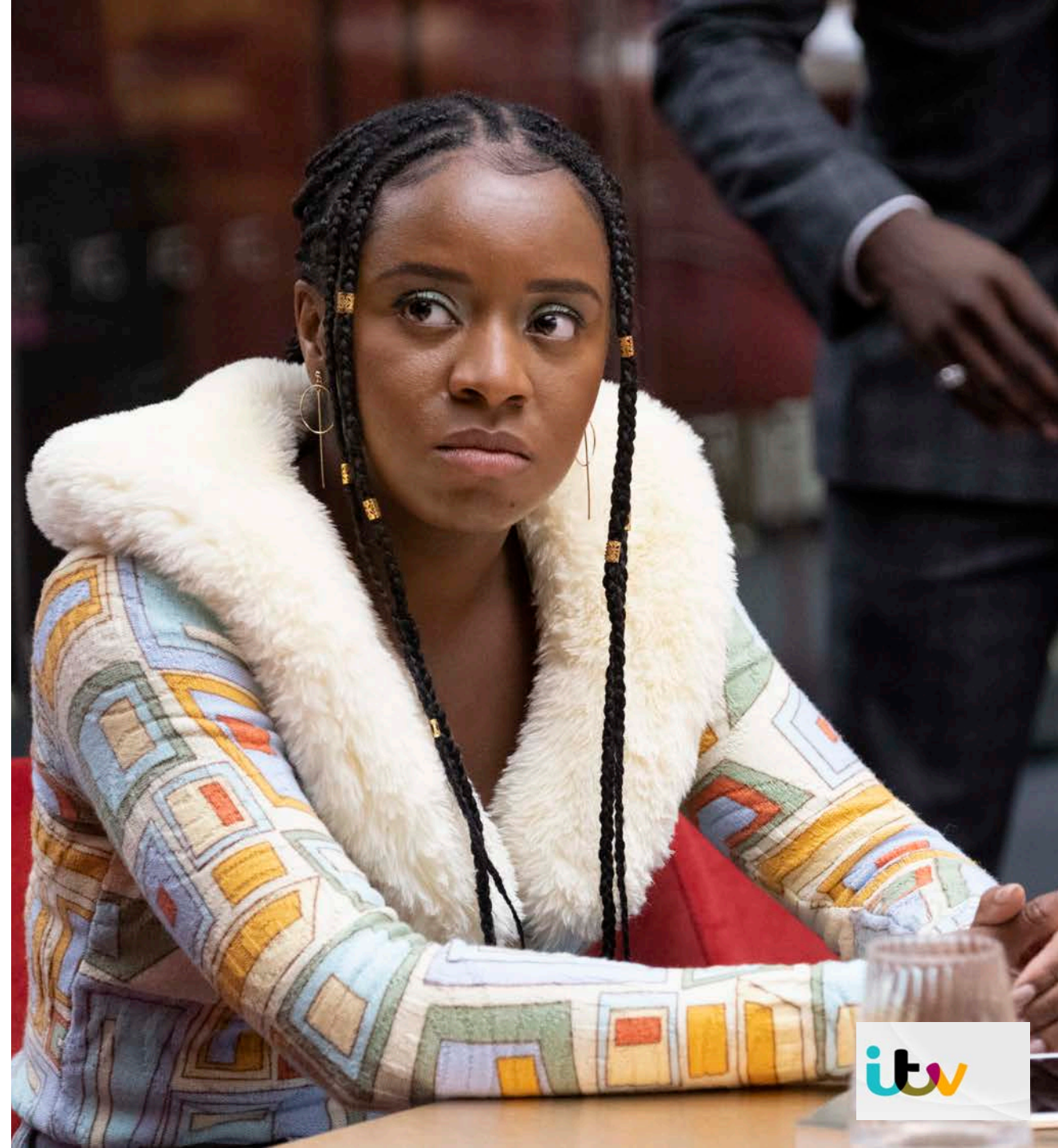


Character Biographies

WANDA

The youngest child, the family lynchpin and the chief organiser. Wanda is something of a poster child for Black Privilege. She went to the most expensive schools, went on the skiing holidays, went to the best university; she's had everything that money can buy. Wanda is a sharp, witty, woke, part-time activist, full-time feminist who is constantly decrying the 1%, all the while driving a Tesla and living with her boyfriend in a house bought by her father. Self-absorbed but also controlling, Wanda ensures that she stays across everyone's business. Wanda can be thoughtless, and she quickly ends up in opposition with Alesha when she accuses her sister of siding with their enemies.

A self-declared daddy's girl, Wanda is rocked by Stephen's death and though she doesn't work in the business she's determined that Nina and Simon be removed as quickly as possible. The arrival of new siblings and her increasingly complicated relationship with her actor boyfriend, Luke, destabilises Wanda's sense of self. Over the course of the first series she'll struggle with her grief, whilst trying to figure out who she is and where she belongs after the loss of her dad.



Character Biographies

SIMON

Simon is a successful, highly sought-after celebrity hair stylist in the United States. Unlike Nina, he's contextualised his daddy issues, had his therapy and is thriving both personally and professionally. He counselled Nina to come to their dad's funeral but when they inherit the business, Simon rapidly starts to feel that they're in over their heads. Stephen's death wasn't supposed to disrupt their lives quite so much. Simon is Nina's closest ally and he proves an asset at Flair & Glory in that he's able to understand the hair and makeup business and also easily charms those around him, gathering up valuable intel for Nina. It would be easy to underestimate Simon but beneath the bubblegum exterior is a smart, strategic thinker with proven business acumen.

As the siblings and Claudia vie for control of Flair & Glory, Simon and Nina quickly start to disagree about their inheritance, with Simon eager to return home to the States. Simon is the least likely candidate to take the seat at the head of the company and he warns Nina about the cost of facing off with Claudia.



Character Biographies

ANDRE

Flair & Glory's CFO and Claudia's secret lover. Andre started as Gideon's assistant and worked his way up in the company, with an eye on the top job. Smart and wily with a playbook gleaned from Machiavelli and *The 48 Laws Of Power*, Andre is a predator hiding in the long grass, constantly scanning for opportunities. He craves power. Andre has perfected a stoic, trustworthy right-hand man front but beneath that facade, he seethes at the spoilt Richards children, none of whom have his talent or skill, in his opinion.

His affair with Claudia was just another means to get him closer to power but over the course of the season he quickly realises that Claudia's volatility could be dangerous for him.

The arrival of Nina and Simon is a hiccup in his plans. Andre finds himself having to play both sides if he's to survive the power struggle at Flair & Glory.



Character Biographies

GIDEON

Lawyer and the executor of Stephen's will, Gideon was previously legal counsel and CFO for Flair & Glory. He worked with Stephen for many years before being ousted from the company by Claudia and Andre. Gideon and Claudia loathe each other, and Gideon wants Nina to run the company. Gideon is unable to explain why Stephen made such a dramatic change to his will. Over the course of the series, Gideon proves to be an invaluable consigliere, advising and guiding Nina as she settles into her position as CEO.



MAUREEN

Stephen's secretary for almost two decades. Maureen, as her title suggests, was Stephen's keeper of secrets. She kept his schedule, made all his phone calls, handled his expenses. If anyone knows why Stephen changed his will or what was going on beneath the surface at Flair & Glory, it'll be Maureen. But after decades of keeping her silence, is Maureen really ready to give up her secrets?



Cast Interviews



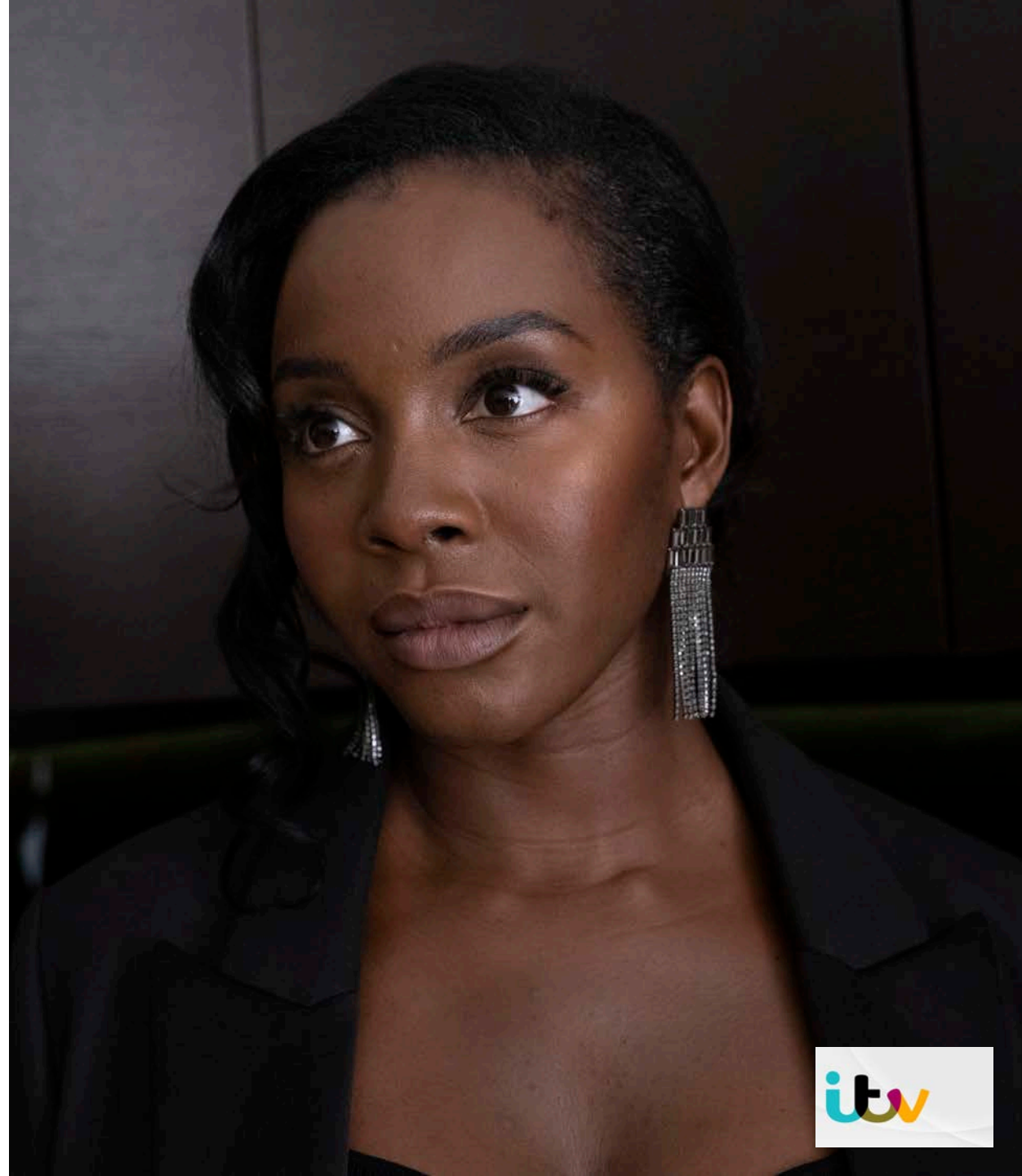
DEBORAH AYORINDE IS NINA RICHARDS

What drew you to Riches?

The similarities between Nina's story and my personal story. When I first met Abby I read the script and then I met her via Zoom and I said, 'Have you been reading my diary?' because literally this is a lot of elements here are my story, my actual story. It's just beautiful to see someone who gets it. I'm also very protective over how Black women are portrayed on screen. In reading the script it just felt like it came from another Black woman and also another Black woman who gets it. A person who gets it. That was the biggest thing that drew me to playing Nina.

What do you like/ dislike about Nina?

What I like the most about Nina is she is a powerful woman, she is strong and smart and all of those things and sexy and she's feminine. I think a lot of times from my vantage point, when powerful women are often portrayed on screen, they're often portrayed as being masculine or mothers. Even those things maybe are representations of powerful women, those are not the only representations of powerful women. So I love the fact that she represents a powerful woman who's still very in touch and in tune with her femininity. Being a woman is great. Being a woman is very powerful. Walking into a room and being able to own that I think is just beautiful. What I dislike about Nina is she's not very vulnerable. She's only truly vulnerable with one person so far and that's her brother Simon. But she's working on being more vulnerable. She's taken out of her comfort zone, so that forces her to explore who she is and navigate things she didn't know about herself.



Tell us about Flair & Glory and the empire that Stephen's built

Flair & Glory is a successful beauty brand that has products in the beauty market, the hair market, the skin care market, the make-up market, they really have done well. The conception is that Stephen started it, but really Stephen's first wife, Nina's mother started it. And Nina was there during the inception of this business. Flair & Glory is in the Black community, hair and beauty is how we express ourselves, it's how we introduce ourselves before we even say our name. I think that Flair & Glory is an example of taking that business back into their own hands of the family and navigating that. It's very cool.

What would you say are the main themes?

A theme that first comes to mind for me is powerful women who really love men, but don't necessarily need them. They're very self-sufficient. The men in this are kind of following their lead. I think the theme of family is definitely prominent in this but it shows that everybody, every family has their stuff, no matter whether you're rich or poor. We're all human. We have family drama, we have people don't get along with, all the messiness. When I first read the script I was like oh my gosh I can relate to a lot of it.

Talk to us about Nina taking over the family business

Picking up where her father left off in the business was almost like her setting the record straight.

Her mother started the business and he took it to another level and included Claudia in this, created this thing where it looks like it's his and Claudia's, but after a while it becomes not about that, it becomes about something deeper for Nina. Almost wondering and figuring out if this is where she actually belongs. I think for Nina that's a huge thing of longing for belonging. I think that this business is that for her. And London is that for her as well, finding her place in life, her calling if you will. So I think that's a really beautiful journey. With ups and downs and craziness and messiness, but it's really beautiful. I hope that many people can relate to that.

What scenes did you enjoy most?

I think that people will firstly enjoy Nina's hookups! You know, I haven't seen them yet but I think they're kind of hot. People will enjoy scenes with the whole family. We just love each other so much that that shows through on screen. I think they're really going to enjoy that. Also, any scenes that kind of put our culture, Nigerian culture, front and centre. Unapologetically. I think people are going to enjoy seeing that a lot. You don't see that often on screen. And you know, hearing the Yoruba on screen I think will be really, really special.

I'm not fluent in Yoruba. Of all of us, the family, all of us except for Sarah are all Nigerian. Manne and Ola are fluent in Yoruba. So they'll try and teach us. Sarah will say it back. Let me tell you, it sounds beautiful coming out of her mouth. I'm learning, but they go back and forth, back and forth. To have that on screen is special.



What do you think viewers will take from it?

This portrayal of Black people out of London is not shown often, if at all, from my vantage point. I really hope that viewers can really appreciate the fact that we as Black people, sometimes we're rich, sometimes we're this, sometimes we're that. Seeing a different portrayal on screen, I really hope that people can appreciate that and can see that and appreciate how special that is. And that it can inspire more projects that tell the truth of that we're not just one thing, we're not just a few things, don't put us in a box. I really hope that people take that and in taking that appreciate the nuances of who we are, Nigerians and Caribbean. Also that this is a very human story that happens to centre around Black people at the end of the day. We honour and try to portray our nuances that make us but with respect and love and truth. But we also honour the truth that at the end of the day we're humans. And this is a story that can stand on its own.

Describe the importance of hair and beauty in the Black community

I can only speak from my experience, Black hair and beauty is so incredibly important in the Black community and that's why it has to be right. No matter how rich or poor you are, I don't know many Black people who don't put effort and time into their hair and into their beauty. It's how we express ourselves without words.

With all that we've been through throughout history, all the things that were unavailable to us, to be able to express our beauty properly, we've still always found a way to make it work, even when there weren't many beauty brands that fit people with skin like mine. We still found a way to make it work. It's an honour to have a story like this on screen to say, we put effort into this, we put love into this, to show this is what this means to us.

Who did you use as inspiration?

My main inspiration for Nina was myself. To be honest, I feel like this is the first role that I've played that I've been able to infuse so much of myself and my story. With Nina, one thing that I appreciate about her is that I get her. I've had some experiences like she's had. And so I was able to pull from a very real place.

How have you seen Black beauty evolve on television?

I think that as far as Black beauty on screen, we've come a long way. Being younger I didn't see many people, any people that looked like me on screen and that was tough. I resolved early on in my mind as a kid I would try and be that for someone else, that representation that I didn't necessarily have. I think we have a long way to go.



HUGH QUARSHIE IS STEPHEN RICHARDS

Tell us about your character

Stephen Richards is the patriarch of the family and also the founder of the family business. He's a self-made man with very humble origins, I think - he started on London transport and worked his way up to the boardrooms of the international business community. He's got drive, he's got ambition, he's got discipline and I suspect that in his past there was a ruthless streak but having made all the money, having achieved all the success, there's a certain amount of remorse which has left him thinking - 'what is really valuable in life?' So he has, a bit late in the day, acquired some humanity and some compassion and is probably thinking 'what could he have done better?' and 'What should he have done differently?'

What do you want audience members to understand about your character?

I think that he's somebody who meant to do good who was conflicted. It's difficult for people of an immigrant background sometimes to fit into the host country and if it appears that the culture is all about profit maximisation - winning at all costs - then that's what you have to do in order to succeed. But, it comes at a cost I think. He's in the autumn of his life, and in a reflective state of mind thinking about what matters most - is it simply the money? The success? The status? Or something else at a more fundamental level. Stephen is really contemplating how much of his own humanity did he compromise and did he lose in attaining all the success?



Does your child have a character that he expects more from?

It's interesting. I know there's been a kind of comparison with Succession and people assume it's about the Murdoch family. I don't think Riches is going to be like Succession, it's a different kind of show but it does pick up on similar themes of the rivalry between the siblings and whether or not it's deliberate it is perhaps one of the effects of not leaving the money to the main family is to force them to grow up, to mature, to realise that they have a shared responsibility. Whether that's his plan or not, I think that's going to be the effect. There's a certain amount of remorse of course in having abandoned the children of his earlier relationship and in giving the majority shareholding to Nina- that's going to set the cat amongst the pigeons isn't it! So it's going to be a test for his children, and also a test for her. Whether that means she was always his favourite, I think that's for her to find out.

Tell us about the politics at play in the Richards family.

I think the children from the main family have enjoyed a life of real privilege and comfort and conspicuous consumption whereas the family in New York have had to work really hard for what they want, so they've acquired a work ethic. I'm guessing Stephen hopes that work ethic will rub off on the spoilt brats of the main family! That's not to say he loves them any less.

Tell us about the Flair & Glory empire and its backstory.

I think just about every Black man and woman that I know understands the importance of hair and make-up to Black women. Stephen obviously recognises very early on - and I've got to say, my experience as an actor, working with make-up artists that aren't familiar with shall I say textured hair, and certain complexions only underlines the importance of the need for people who make products which are suited to Black hair and Black and Brown skin. So for Stephen to have recognised that, is not simply a commercial opportunity but also if you like a sociological one. It's something that was important to the community - Black and Brown people need to know there are products which are geared towards them.

Do you think you share any characteristics with Stephen at all?

That's an interesting question! I like to think that he, like me, has reached a point where he's thinking- 'do I really care about any of that?' 'What matters to me?' And he's reached a point where he wants to pass on something of value to the next generation. And that something of value isn't just a pay check, it's something of understanding. Wisdom and a state of grace. Grace to me is anything or anybody that makes you feel a little less cynical about the world.



Tell us about some of the themes of Riches?

I think it is about ambition, about power, it is about resolve and family. There is that element of having adopted the growing culture of the Anglo-American world which is all about profit maximisation and that ethos has corroded our sense of solidarity, our morality. People admire success and people defer to the wealthy- the billionaires, the oligarchs. People applaud them flying up their fatuous spaceships into orbit. Instead of actually saying 'look, do something good with your money' you know? So I think it is perhaps, I hope that there is implicitly an exposé of that attitude. That it isn't enough in life just to amass wealth and success and if you do there is always going to be a problem about it. Someone is always going to try and undermine you and take it from you. There are things at bottom with more lasting value - solidarity, family, and yes - love.

What will viewers take away from watching Riches?

On one level I hope that they will accept that a series about an immigrant Black family can also appeal to a mainstream audience. That there are stories to be told that can be appreciated by everybody, regardless of ethnicity. On another level, I hope that what people will take away is that the idea of greed - is corrosive if unchecked. We do need guidelines, we need if you like, old fashioned values.



Can you tell us about the importance of hair and beauty in the Black community?

When I was doing *Holby City* my colleague Verona Joseph and I did have an idea for producing a coffee table book about Black women and their hair. As it was so important to get the right product, to get the right style, to get people who understood it. And if they did understand it you wouldn't have to explain, there'd be a shorthand to it.

It is a huge market. The things that you can do with textured hair in terms of braiding, in terms of straightening, in terms of styling. African women have been doing it for decades of course- the kind of hair being braided and piled up into the most intricate designs. Before Bo Derek braided her hair in *Ten*, African women were doing it for centuries before that. You know, before Princess Leia had those donuts on the side of her head. You could have seen that in any number of African countries.

I think it's also changing the aesthetic, Black women don't all have to look like Naomi Campbell. You can choose to have your hair natural; you can choose to have it braided, you can choose to have it straightened. It's the fact that you have a choice and you can choose who you become, you can choose your identity. And I think hair and make-up are critical in that search for a settled identity.

Are there any real people you used as inspiration for your character?

I've got to say first of all that Stephen, the Richards family, are rooted in Nigerian culture. I am of course, a Ghanaian, and there's been a friendly rivalry between Nigerians and Ghanaians, especially over jollof rice. The jollof wars have raged for many years now. There are people within my wider family who have gone into business and done very well and have managed to retain a certain amount of humility in spite of their success and so I was able to draw on that.

How have you seen Black beauty evolve on television in your own experience?

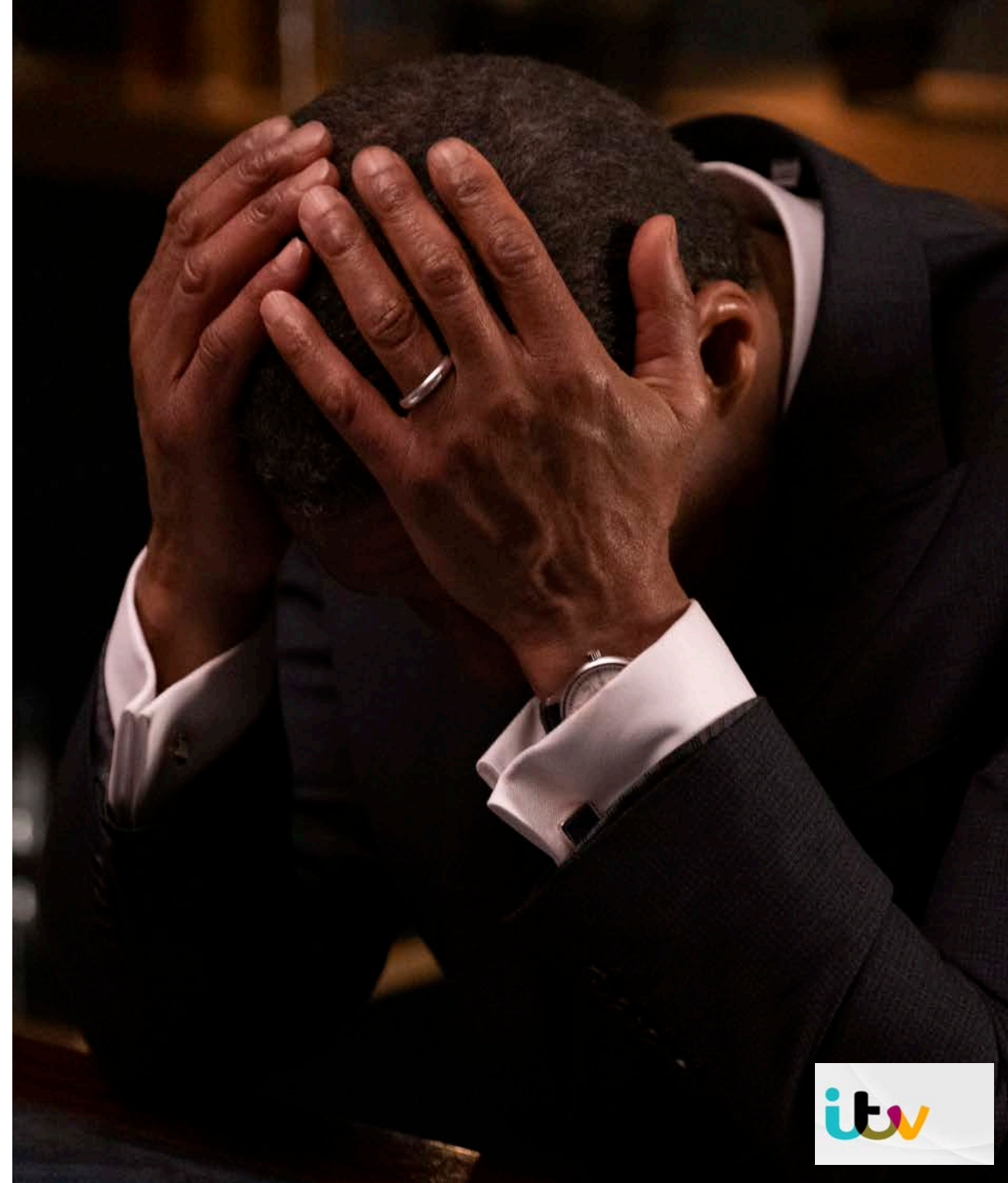
When I was a kid you didn't see that many Black performers on TV. Seeing the Motown performers, I was always acutely conscious of how highly groomed and polished the Supremes were and they had elocution lessons and there was a sense in which they had to learn a kind of protocol, the elegance and the style. Similarly, the male stars of the day, it was as if they had to demonstrate they could carry off the tuxedo and the ball gown look, the elegance of Carey Grant, Sean Connery as James Bond. It's been a liberation I think, that has in part been led by the music industry I would say. You know, Jimi Hendrix with his wild hair, coming after The Four Tops and The Temptations with their well-rehearsed routines and everyone wearing the same suit, the slick rat pack look. I think it came about the same time that there was an assertion of individuality and a kind of determination, to break off the mental shackles. To a more natural look, and a more authentic look.



And today, seeing Beyonce with blonde hair, it's not that she's trying to look white it's that she's saying I can be however I want to be. I can look however I want to look. Looking at the evolution of someone like Nina Simone when she started out and she just accepted that she was never going to look like Diana. She was told her lips were too thick, and her nose were too broad and she wasn't going to get certain work. That fuelled an activism in her music, she wasn't just an entertainer. We see that attitude a little bit today, you've got Me Too and Black Lives Matter, it does permeate the consciousness of people that make art, performance art in particular. I think there comes a determination to reflect who we are on the inside with the outside. I love James Brown and the fact he styled his hair the way he did. It wasn't to make himself look white! It pleases me enormously that there is that boldness and that defiance in hair. Not just Black women's hair but men's too. Seeing all the footballers come on with bleached Mohican haircuts, I'm not sure I could get away with that! But don't think I haven't thought about it.

Tell us why it's important to build a show with a Black showrunner and a Black creative?

Abby, a little bit like Shonda Rhimes brings a new energy and a new perspective to things. Bridgerton was outrageous in its imagination! Abby hasn't gone that far but she is encouraging people, if not forcing people, to see something familiar in a new light. Then to have it crewed in the way that it is, I think it's overdue. There's a vibrancy, an energy about that. It's not a morality, but it's a sense of re-evaluation about what matters and how we are seen, and how we see ourselves. I don't think Abby is doing it just to demonstrate, 'look we can do it just like you people' she's saying 'this is how we do it'.



SARAH NILES IS CLAUDIA RICHARDS

What is Claudia like in the beginning of the series?

Claudia is the matriarch of the family. She has three children. She's really fighting for them. It starts off when their father has passed away and he's left a fortune for the family and she's really digging her nails in and trying to keep everything for the family and what she believes she should have and hold onto her position. She is holding onto the power that she thinks she should have had.

Claudia is a loveable villain really. She is the one you love to hate. She is feisty. She's not afraid to fight for what she wants. She's brash, she's bold. Claudia just wants the best for her family. She has a lot of heart as well.

Do you see any of yourself in Claudia?

Not at all, Claudia and I are polar opposites in a way. I mean what I love about Claudia is she's got a lot of heart in that sense; I think she really cares. I think where we are different is that Claudia goes about it the completely wrong way in a sense.

We do see some vulnerabilities come through in the series with Claudia. Can you talk about that?

I think with Claudia and any character you play, it's not just black and white. There are many roads to how they've got to that position and I think when you are dealing with a woman like this and her family and when lots of things are called into question and what she is going to fight for and what's important to her. There are going to be unexpected twists and turns.



When reading the script, what drew you to Claudia?

When I first read the script and I saw Claudia, I couldn't believe how brash she was. I always assign those kinds of characters I've seen in American shows. I've not seen it in this country and I was kind of shocked by that and excited about it.

Is there anything else you particularly love about Claudia or really can't bear?

There's so much I love about Claudia and there's so much I dislike about her as well. Things I love about Claudia is that I understand that she is kind of fighting for her family. She's like ride or die, if you are on her side. I love her style. I love that when she comes into a room, she commands a room. All eyes are on her. She just doesn't care. She enjoys spending money and being free with it. I just love her wildness. I think she could think sometimes before she speaks and understand that some people aren't her enemies. She's volatile, Claudia is not someone that you would want as an enemy at all.

Tell us a little bit about Claudia's role in the Flair & Glory empire?

She's like the Mother Hen that sits on this treasure nest. She's not had to question her position. I think she is used to enjoying all the thrills and that side of the company so it's been interesting to see a character like Nina come in who has the qualifications to take a company to the right place and see how Claudia is paddling and trying to hold onto it.

Stephen had an idea and behind every great man there is a woman and in his case many women. He's managed to build up this empire with the help of everybody else and now he's passed away, everybody is trying to control it and see where it can go. Some people aren't wanting the best intentions for the company and some people are happy to just let it keep floating and keep riding along. I think Claudia sees the future of the company is going to be passed on to Gus and it's going to just remain within the family. Then when Nina and Simon come in she doesn't understand. Why has Stephen given them some rights to the company? I think it is frightening for Claudia because it will rock her position completely. In the family, her position in life. She has held out for a very long time to receive the company's rewards.

Set the scene where we see Nina and Simon turn up?

When Nina and Simon turn up to the wake, I think Claudia feels she has done everything in her power to stop them coming, to eliminate them out of the picture. I think Nina is a real challenge for Claudia. A good challenge, she has met her match there and it's the journey and the tussle and the play that continues.

Having two strong female players and women in business, you don't often see that on screen, tell us about that?

No, it's great that the two of us look incredible when we play these roles of Claudia and Nina and they have the stamina to fight for what they believe is right; I've never seen that on British TV before. These two headstrong, powerful Black women.



Set the scene of Claudia's relationship with Stephen?

Well Claudia I think prior to this worked with Stephen and his first wife and I think he made eyes, she caught his eye and she saw an opportunity and the rest is history and she just kept moving forward. She's seen the ways of being successful and that's what she has gone for. She's very hungry, I think for success and that's where I think for the two of them their relationship has worked. I think there have been complexities, I'm sure they've both had wandering eyes. I think it has been a tricky relationship but she's held out. She's held out until the end and is waiting for those rewards. It calls into question a lot. There's many times where she says 'All the things I've been through' which we don't necessarily always see in this series. But you could imagine that when she says that you know it's been a lot.

Can you talk about the themes of the show?

I believe the themes of the show involve power, family and strong women. I feel there is greed. There is success. There is envy. There are secrets, there is betrayal. Some of the themes of the show that really come to the forefront for me are the family and the fight to keep a family and hold a family and the position of family and the family's power. Power is a big thing. How you hold your position of power for survival and continue on with the life you have had to survive and to still be present.

There's also trust, who do you trust when you're dealing with money and you're dealing with power and you're dealing with positions. Can you trust your family, can you trust your allies, your friends, can you trust when someone has passed. What they actually meant and what they said is that the truth, can you trust what the past was. What the future holds. There's so much! There's so many themes.

Which scenes have you found most enjoyable to film?

One of them was a scene where we are all around the table and we are about to hear the will. Those things are always high-end drama and so that was really exciting just to hear the reactions of everybody and just having Claudia just let rip. It was fun, it was feisty. It was strong, it was bold.

I actually love a lot of the scenes I have with Nina as well. I love the chance to play with her and I love the conflict they have. It's been fun. We all feel like a family. I know that the audience is going to love Claudia and Andre. I love the fact that there's an older woman, who's got this younger lover and just some of the power play they have between them. I love that they have been able to allow this older woman to have sexual power and to be attractive which again often we don't see when we get into age and the currency of you know what's your power? Within that as an actress, it's a great part to play.



EMMANUEL IMANI IS SIMON RICHARDS

Tell us about Simon

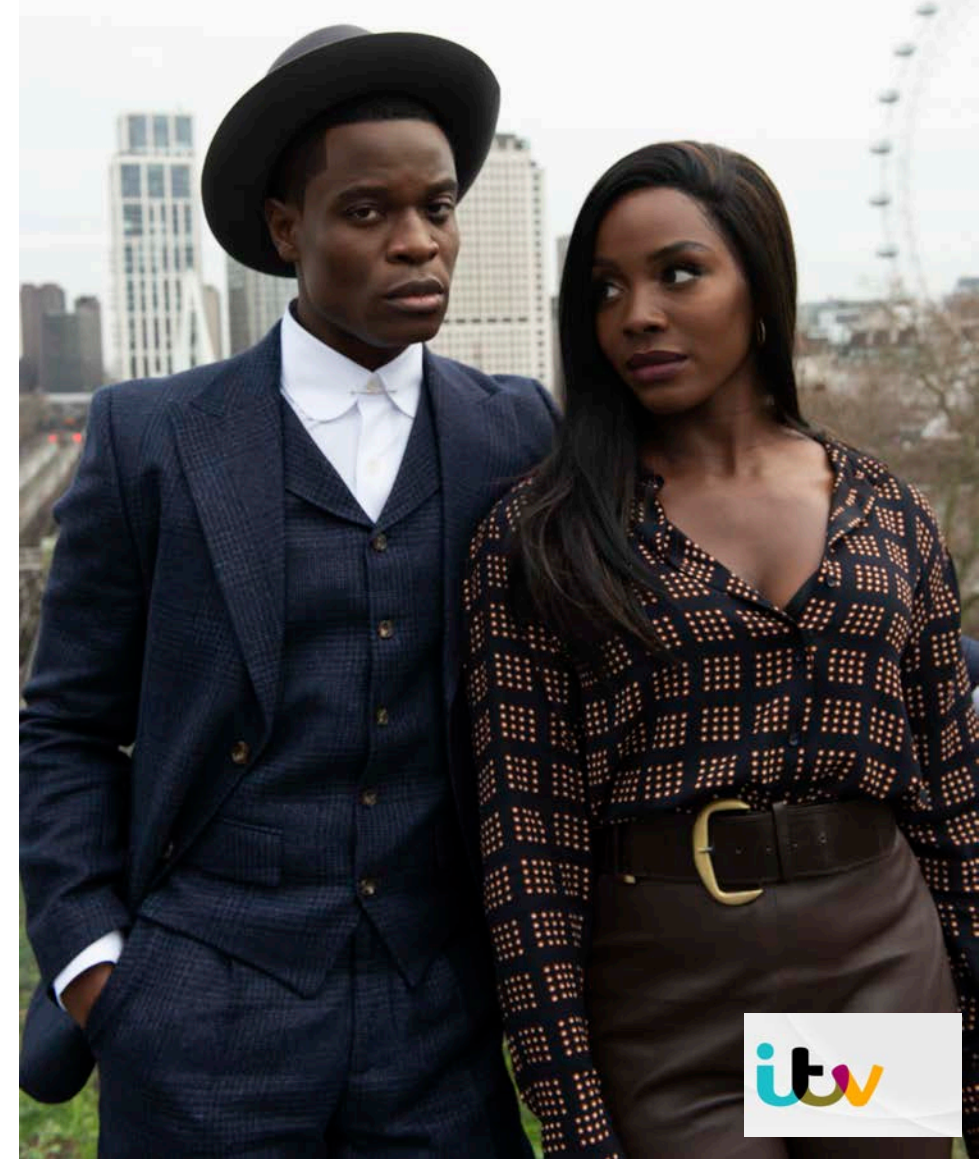
Simon is a queer Nigerian American man, British also, he was born in the UK. I would describe Simon as a superstar stylist. Kind of does it all. Great for the hair and the make-up. The script talks about him doing Michelle Obama's hair, which I'm like, that's pretty cool. For a young kid from London to move over to America and work his way up in that way, that's pretty amazing.

Simon's relationship with sister Nina...

My best friend in real life and on the show! Deborah better back that up. Simon and Nina, they're best friends. They're really very close, supportive of one another. They have this thing, which I would say is similar to your backbone, Simon is behind Nina, Nina is behind Simon in that way and they support and hold each other down. There are no secrets, very transparent, very honest, always loving to each other. It's a lovely relationship to see play out.

What drew you to the script?

I first read the script of Riches and I screamed. I'd never read anything like that coming out of the UK or to be shot in the UK. Seeing people of colour written this way. We're not really written in such complex ways. We're not given the space to breathe on camera and show the inner turmoil of who you are. You're not always perfect, you can be messy, but you can be put together and you can be strong and beautiful and powerful and weak and vulnerable and you can be all of these things that make one human. We're not often given that opportunity. When I read Simon, this successful queer man in this Nigerian household, is embraced by everybody around him, it's very aspirational for me. I'd hope for other queer men in general just to grow up in a community that's a little bit different and be accepted in that way. I think it's lovely. Abby's a genius.



What do you like/ dislike about Simon

I dislike Simon's wardrobe - it's far too good! I would love to exist like this on a daily basis but I can't. I walk around in sweats sometimes. What I love about him is his heart. He's funny, he's really funny I think - I mean I think I'm funny - but he's funnier than me. He's also very genuine and kind and it's important to be kind.

How do you think viewers will react to Simon?

First of all, I pray they believe my accent. I'm like, please don't call me out! The second thing is I think they'll see his truth. Simon doesn't hide. I think now in the world we live in, a lot of people hide who they are for different reasons. It might be culture, it might be religion. Simon is very open, he's transparent all the time. I think that's something people will see in the way he dresses and the things he says and where he goes and how he does what he does. I think people will see his truth, he's constantly being truthful and that's a nice character to play. That's something I'd like to take on in my life. Just be truthful.

Describe Flair & Glory

It's a business our father started with our mother. Nina and Simon have come back to sort of take-over in a way. But Simon isn't so hands on with the business. His sister is far more equipped to handle things in that way, which is lovely to see this beautiful, but delicate, powerful Black woman take on the sea of opposition in that way. I think Simon's very supportive of her. Whatever she needs. Simon does what needs to be done. But Nina headlines in that beautiful way. That's lovely to see. This haircare business saw a hole in the market that needed filling in the UK/ Europe, for non-European hair. I think that's a beautiful story to tell. It was all started by an immigrant man, it's very aspirational.

What do you think viewers will take away from watching Riches?

One of the major things I'll take away is just how dynamic and interesting and how multifaceted people of colour can be. I've been acting for a short while and I've not seen many depictions of people of colour or Black people to be so varied. Usually we play an archetype. This shows the spectrum that lies out there and just how different people can be and you don't expect it. I think the script is so clever in its depiction. I hope people can learn to see people in a different light. And just how dynamic people can be. Nobody's ever one thing. It shows you not to generalise.



Did you take inspiration from anyone for Simon?

I feel like Abby's been watching me. It's so close to my life. I've been fortunate enough to summon my own experiences and that's given me a place of truth to work from. At the same time I've been lucky to have queer friends and family around me who've helped me mould and shape this character who is so connected to his culture. He's so grounded in his Yorubanness, which I love about him. He freely expresses that whenever he can. Not in an overbearing way, it's subtle and delicate. I hope people like that.

How have you seen Black beauty evolve in television?

I don't really recall seeing Black people on TV growing up. I watched a lot of American TV. I grew up watching Black people over there and it's a different ball game over there. They've been given the opportunities for much longer than we have over here. There's far more diverse representation of Black people on television. Over here I think we've got a long way to go. I want to see more Asian people on TV. I want to see more of everybody. More trans people on TV over here. We need to see different people on television.

I would say this show sets itself apart. What we are doing here has never been done before. I think that's going to really shift the conversation and the focus. Black beauty and Black British beauty has never been represented like this before and that will change things I hope and I pray.

It's impacted me in a way that I now see what is possible. I now see that it is possible for me to step onto a job and they have my shade of makeup. At work I believe I'm required to wear some level of coverage and I usually get powder. I usually bring my own lip balm, I cut my own hair, bring my own hair brush, I bring my own hand cream. You get into a habit of taking care of yourself. It's nice to step onto a job now in 2022 - it's been so long but finally you can surrender. You don't have to take up that battle before you get there. You can just learn your lines and show up and say it like any other actor that gets to. So that's nice and I pray that continues. I honestly pray more people gain the skills and the know-how the knowledge to do the make-up and the hair of people of colour, Black people especially.

Why is it important to be on a show with a Black showrunner?

It's that thing isn't it - authenticity. Nobody's going to represent you like you. I believe having a Black showrunner who is writing about Black people, there's a lot of power in that. Abby seems to know her stuff. With the impeccable CV she has, it's wonderful she's been given this opportunity but clearly she's worked for it. She's where she's supposed to be. It's not a fluke, it's not nepotism, she's worked for it, it's hard work. It's incredibly hard for her I'm sure, she's done so much. She was a beautiful director. I love working with her. It's inspiring to see that. I'm going to spiral to say we need more woman on sets, operating cameras and lighting and we need more trans people. We need more of everything. The world is made up of all kinds of people. We need that represented in front of the camera and behind the camera.



OLA OREBIYI IS GUS RICHARDS

Tell us about Gus?

Gus is a young and ambitious man. A man who feels like he really wants to live up to that name. The name that his Dad has built for himself. He is also a little bit of a mummy's boy. He loves his parents and he always feels like he has to try and live up to something, to an image he's built. He's a very caring man too.

How much of yourself can you see in Gus?

I see a lot of myself in Gus which makes it easier to play this role. Of course we have had different upbringings but the values and the family values and being close to his mum and trying to live up to the family name.

So tell us about the themes of the show?

The themes of the show are family, greed of course, wealth. Politics, a little bit of family politics in there as well. I don't even know how to explain it but having two sides of the family come together. So I guess building a bigger family and making the best out of a situation that you have.

Tell us about the Flair & Glory empire and Gus's role within that?

It is really a good story of a man who had a vision and spent as long as it required to bring that vision to life. Gus' role in that empire is he feels like he is the heir. He feels like this is the way in which he really formed that relationship with dad and he feels like this is what I have been groomed to do all my life so I better be ready.



Do you feel that Gus has a sense of entitlement that it should be him?

Maybe not entitlement but kind of like there's no other answer and it is me, you know. It can't be anybody else. I've been here, I've been working here out of the siblings. I'm the only one that's been working here for years. Dad's been training me up for this so it is me. It can't be anyone else.

Talk a little bit about the family dynamics at play and the politics of it all?

Interesting and complicated, it's always complicated having two sides of the same family. The first marriage and the second marriage coming together and fighting for their rights. I guess in that case no one is really wrong because we all feel like this is our dad and we have a part of him and we deserve a part of him. But the way we are all going about it is what makes this very interesting. Because we all have a part to play in dad's empire. So everybody wants to be at the top and nobody wants to share the top spot and that's the family dynamic here. You know a lot of things are going to happen because of that.

Can you relate in any way?

The sort of disagreements and arguments that we may have in the Riches family it's just like arguing with your sister or your brother at home. The Riches family don't really understand to its depth, how much blood, sweat and tears their dad put into this. To some extent, it's a little bit like this is our toy.

Flair & Glory is our toy and I don't want to share my toy with anybody else, you can find that in any family. It's just taking that understanding and putting it on a bigger scale with a multi-million-pound company. It's very relatable. That's one of the reasons why it's also easier to play this role because it's just normal. We just happen to be in a bigger house or a bigger car, or in a bigger company. It's all the same.

Have you formed great relationships with your on-screen family?

Yes actually. We have really definitely formed some good relationships with each other on and off set. Sometimes it's kind of strange to think that we have only known each other for a short amount of time. Some people that you are supposed to not be friends with on screen, you are already friends with them off screen. So it's like okay we have to switch off our friendliness for the next five minutes and shoot. But yeah we have formed some pretty good relationships. It's great.

Are there any funny or amusing on screen moments that you would like to share?

Two weeks ago I was just really tired on set and I feel like being one of the people that's quite energetic on set. It was noticeable when I was tired. So my cast mates, my sisters actually made up a rap on the spot and you know just started singing and we do that a lot. You always find that funny, we play music, we dance. I was born in Nigeria and we speak Yoruba so sometimes I speak a lot of Yoruba with Emmanuel and sometimes the rest of the people on the set don't really fully understand it and we make fun of that and we teach each other different languages and stuff. It's all a joy.



What do you hope viewers will take away from the show?

Entertainment of course. Be entertained. Have fun. We are having fun so hopefully that shows through the screen. But also being raised in Nigeria and South London and always wanting to become an actor and seeing some of the limitations that I had as an actor and as a Black actor, I would love some viewers to watch this and feel like I can actually play a role like this too. I could dress like that too. Just like I watch Black Panther, I watch Spider Man Into The Spider-Verse and be like I want to play that role. I want someone to watch this and be like I want to play that role. It's pretty cool, I really hope that happens.

Tell us why it's important to be on the show with a Black showrunner and creatives. What difference do you feel that makes to the show?

Being on the show with a Black showrunner and creatives, I feel like it's probably less about Abby being Black and more about the culture. This is a Nigerian family. A British Nigerian family.

So having someone that understands the culture and was raised in that culture and has such an understanding of that culture makes a whole world of difference. It's really great that Abby has written this. It's really great that we can really fit into this and into these roles. I am so excited for people to see this. Really excited.



ADEYINKA AKRINADE IS ALESHA RICHARDS

Tell us about your character Alesha

Alesha is the firstborn daughter to Claudia and Stephen Richards. She is a beauty blogger. She's a really interesting character because we find Alesha in a really interesting place at the start of the series. She goes on this really incredible journey. Almost like a new woman. But she's quite guarded in herself and quite separate from the family to begin with. But then events and situations happen in her life that makes her open up a little bit and become a little bit involved. Nina is also a sort of catalyst for that as well. She really encourages her and really sees something in her, which makes her open up and start to understand herself more and know where her place is and her worth, which is really nice to see over the series.

What do you want audience members to know about your character?

I think viewers should be patient with her. She goes on a very interesting journey and she is really influenced a lot by the situations that happen. I think sometimes you can question her choices and motives and I think people should just be really patient with her, because she's also trying to work herself out, work out what's happening and developing. I felt like I've had to be patient with her trying to understand why she makes these choices, what she's doing. I'm hoping that audiences can do the same.



How did you react when you first found out you were cast?

I found out about Riches when I was coming out of a hot yoga class, actually. I finished a class and I had six missed calls – I thought this is either really good news or bad news. My agent said, ‘You’ve been cast as Alesha in Riches!’ I absolutely broke down in tears in my car. I was so happy and so grateful. It’s been absolutely amazing on set. We’ve just bonded so much as a family. It literally feels like we’re brothers and sisters. It’s just been such a lovely experience.

What drew you to Abby’s scripts?

This will sound so simple, but it was such a great story. Every page I was like, ‘This is so interesting, so detailed, so dramatic and bold.’ Also the characters are such an interesting collective of characters that you root for them at different points. I find that so amazing. For me personally when I watch TV, I’m always rooting for one particular person, whereas with Riches I was like I’m rooting for this person at this moment, now I’m rooting for no-one, now I’m rooting for two people... It was such a refreshing read.

Do you share characteristics with your character?

I would say me and Alesha share some characteristics. I’m definitely not a beauty blogger. I’ve only just learned how to do eyeshadow properly. The one thing we share in common is that we’re quite guarded. We’re very protective of our space and our aura and energy. This is why she goes on such an interesting journey over the show.

Tell us about Flair & Glory and Alesha’s role within that

The Flair & Glory empire, a machine of a company, is a really successful beauty company, which has come from Alesha’s dad. The company is the top selling Black company. Stephen would be in the top 10 most influential Black businessmen. Alesha has seen her dad, and her mum, build this from the bottom up. She would overhear conversations between her mum and dad in the kitchen, meetings.. seeing it grow and grow and grow over the years. As she got older she sort of realised that she didn’t want to necessarily have anything handed to her on a plate. So when we find her at the start of the show she’s not part of the empire, she’s built her own mini empire from beauty blogging and her business.

Over the course of the show she is pulled in unexpectedly and she’s given this responsibility unexpectedly. Even though it’s her area and her expertise, she’s pulled into the empire and finds herself trying to figure out her place, know her worth, push herself out of comfort zone, and that’s an interesting journey for me and an interesting journey I’ve been on with her.

How would you describe the dynamics of the family?

It’s chaotic I would say. They are thrown into new information where they’re like, ‘Oh wow, I have a half-brother and a half-sister that I’ve never met and have no idea about.’ And how they react to that? She reacts differently to her brother and sister. She’s more open to them.



Have you formed great relationships with your on-screen family?

We had the best time. I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to take me through this show. From the first time we met we just bonded so well. You watch the show and it's really dramatic and there's lots of drama but in between takes we're taking the mick, we're laughing with each other, dancing. We're just so close and so bonded, it makes this experience feel so special. It's like I'm acting with my family in a family drama, it's just wonderful.

Are there any characters or real people you used as inspiration for the character of Alesha?

While I was researching Alesha I came across a wealth of beauty bloggers, in particular who stood out for me, was Jennie Jenkins. She is an OG. She is brilliant. On her Instagram you have to scroll down and see the absolute colour of looks she creates on herself with her wigs and all her make-up, so I really took a lot of inspiration from her. There are a lot of Black women on Instagram, who aren't necessarily beauty bloggers, who know how to do beauty really well, so I just followed them. I checked out their style, their different types of wig and everything. I spoke to my make-up designer and we had good communication and we came to this middle ground where we used a little bit of eyeshadow from this picture and lipstick from this picture, hair style from this picture and put it together.

How have you seen Black beauty evolve on screen?

My earliest memory of seeing Black women on TV is quite sad to say that I don't really have any, because they weren't on TV as much. I think over the years that has changed slowly. Especially in the last 5-10 years. But I do think we have a very long way to go with how we represent Black women on TV. I know in my really short time of being an actress on set sometimes it's quite frustrating when you're put in a situation where you have to really fight for how you want to look on TV and how you want to be seen or perceived. I've gone to set where I've had to bring my own make-up because it hasn't been provided or I've had to really sit down and say, 'This is my skin tone, it's very difficult to match, can we have a conversation?' Which is fine but it feels I'm constantly having to do that. But I do think that's changing. I do think we have a very long way to go but it's something we do need to talk about and push for.

What difference does it make to have Black creators/showrunners?

It's so amazing to have Abby as the writer and showrunner and as the director. What is so great about why this show has been cast is that five/ six of us are Nigerian, which is deliberate in relation to the story and Abby is also Nigerian. These little nuances that come from the Nigerian culture, we've been able to implement that in some of the scenes. It makes it that extra bit special. We all have this shared understanding of the culture, to be able to bring that to a script and to a scene and have the writer /director really understand that has been absolutely wonderful and great and has made this project really special.



CJ BECKFORD IS ANDRE

Tell us about Andre

Andre is Gideon's assistant, he's also a secret lover to... a few people. And basically, he's the Chief Financial Officer of Flair & Glory and he's an ambitious person, very ambitious. He wants to work his way to the top.

What drew you to Abby's script?

It was the writing. I absolutely loved it. I've never read anything like it before in the UK. When I found out it was being made, that was it, I was ecstatic. Most of those scripts that I've read are mostly American. I was like, 'I have to be a part of it.'

Where were you when you found out you'd play Andre?

I was in Leeds on another project. I got the call, I was over the moon. Reading the character of Andre, he's nothing like me. He's a lovable playboy. I wanted to challenge myself, do something different, come out of my comfort zone. It was a good feeling.

Tell us about the Flair & Glory empire and Andre's role in it..

The Flair & Glory empire from Andre's perspective is something that was built by Stephen 20 years ago. He was a migrant that came to this country with nothing and built a multimillion company. Now he's wealthy, his family is wealthy.



It's doing amazingly in its field, it's something that everyone is recognising. And everyone wants to be a part of, from what he's built. Andre slips into that. I think obviously, because he's so ambitious, he wants so much. This was a great opportunity for him to get into a great company. From that, he's seen and takes so many opportunities that will help him get to the top and, ultimately, I think his goal is to be the number one in this company.

Obviously everyone else, apart from me, is family. So I guess they feel they have an expectation or maybe a duty to be number one at the company. But for Andre, I think he really sees the potential in the company and wants to take it in a completely different direction to everyone else.

How does he see the family dynamics?

Him being an outsider, he sees it differently to everyone else. I think he sees them as very dysfunctional and spoiled - and that's something he's not. Andre has had a very, rough upbringing, so he knows the struggles of life, running the company. To see these kids wanting to run a company that he doesn't feel they have the ambition or drive to do. He sees it as an opportunity to take over.

What draws Andre to Claudia?

Andre, he likes games. That's his way. He may be an emotional manipulator in a way. He uses his charm, his attraction to get what he wants. That is anyone, whoever. CEO, CFO, anyone. And he does it really, really well. He just chooses his targets tactically.

Tell us about the themes of the show – what stands out?

It's a Black, British wealthy family. I haven't seen that on TV. Especially British TV. I think for me just seeing the affluent, how they live is completely different. People like them do exist, but to see it on screen is for me something really, really special. I think it addresses it in a really classy way. Obviously we have classes, but that, it does it really well.

What do you hope viewers will take away from watching Riches?

Drama – lots of drama! Lots of entertainment. I think everyone has their stories that people can relate to. And ultimately, I just hope that people kind of enjoy it. Just enjoy something different on TV. Hopefully they can embrace this difference and tell as many people about it as possible.

Who inspired you when playing the character of Andre?

There's a lot of people I take inspiration from for this role. For me, general people, I researched CFOs, watched videos of CFOs and going out into the public and just people watching and just watching their presence when they walk into a room and how they command a room. That's him, when he walks into rooms people know he's there. When he talks people listen. From that, I had to gauge people in the outside world to see how they operate and bring that in.



NNEKA OKOYE IS WANDA

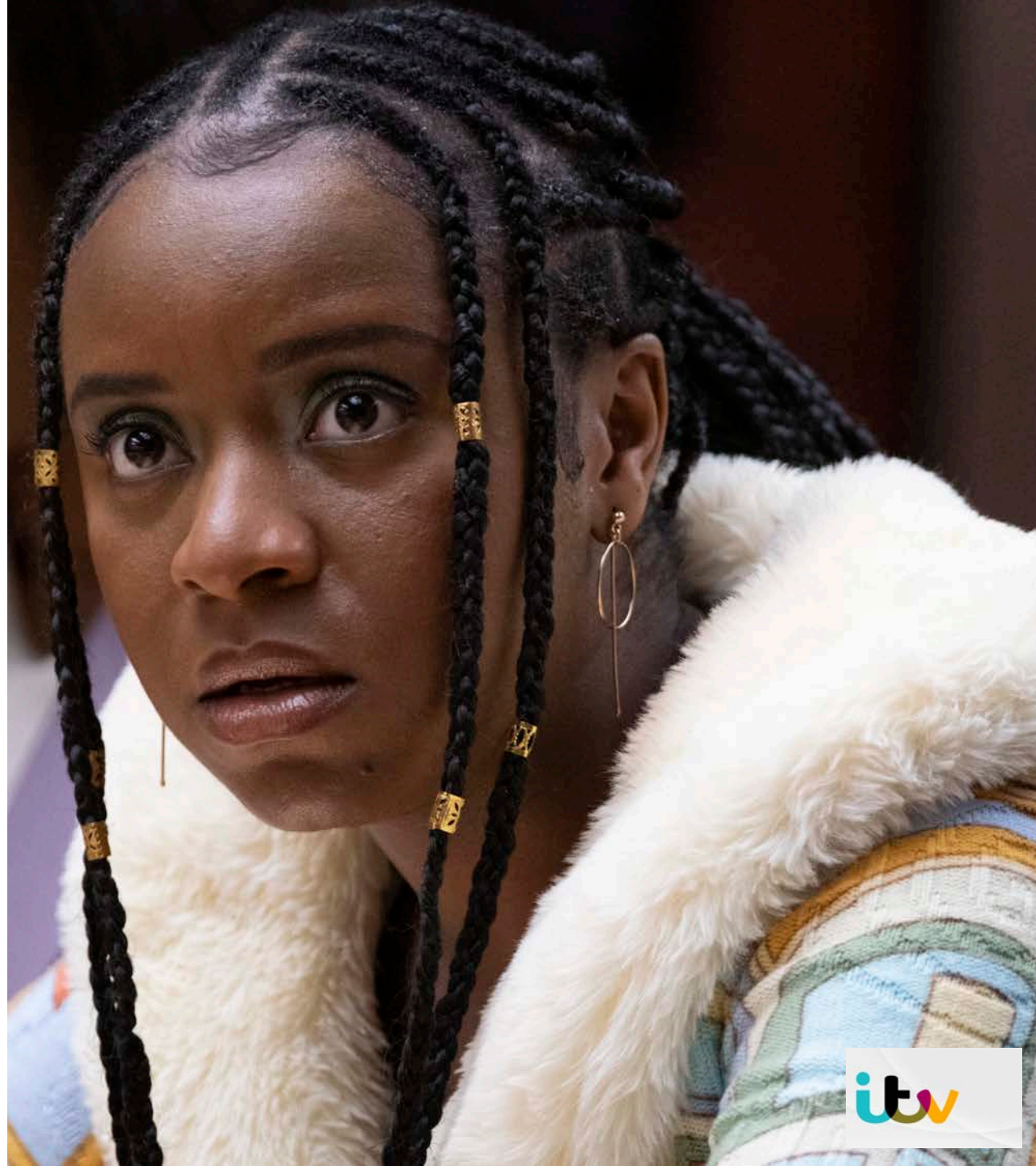
Who is Wanda?

Wanda is the baby in the family but as you'll see in the series she's not afraid of taking up space. She's a daddy's girl through and through. She is someone who comes across as quite self-assured and confident and she enjoys her privilege and enjoys her status, but she is also figuring herself out and finding who she is in the world. I think there is a vulnerability in that, that people sometimes miss.

We first meet Wanda at the hospital. She gets a call and she's told her dad has collapsed in the office. So she rushes over there, she's full of anxiety and panic. It's extra distressing for her as she's the only one there. She's been calling Gus, she's been calling Alesha and her mum and no-one's answered. I'm not really sure what she was expecting when she got to the hospital, but when she saw him wired to all of those machines and looking frail and kind of helpless it really did hit her because she's used to seeing her dad as someone who's quite strong and capable and robust. And even though he was ill and he was weak, I think she still expected to see a degree of strength.

What drew you to Abby's scripts?

They're just really addictive - addictive storytelling, aspirational. Even the characters themselves, you might seem like you know them on the surface, but they're very layered and they're complex, like human beings. It was just another way of exploring the human condition but creatively through the stories we get to tell and how we choose to live our lives through them.



What is Wanda's role within Flair & Glory?

Wanda very much wants to immerse herself in the art world, she wants to get into that space and she's still figuring out how she's going to do that. She isn't as invested in Flair & Glory in that she doesn't want to work there but she does have that autonomy to come and go as she pleases. She wants it to do well as her life is dependent on its success. But she can very much be separate from that and drop in and out when she wants to.

How would you sum up the family dynamics and the politics at play?

I think there are a lot of politics in the Richards family. I think because her dad is someone who really grafted and really worked to get to where he is today. I think he wanted the same for his children, so he really encouraged them to work hard, so that they could excel. But I think in doing that he encouraged a lot of competition, but not necessarily healthy competition, more just sort of pitting one another against each other. I think that that was something that was very present in their lives growing up, Wanda, Alesha and Gus. I think Wanda brought into it a lot more as she sees her dad as this hero and she wants to be validated by him. But also, because she is quite competitive anyway. Whereas I think Alesha and Gus, as time has gone on, they've kind of sussed him out and they don't buy into it as much.

I think Gus and Alesha also have a shared bond as well, because they were around before Stephen had the money. Whereas Wanda was born into money. I think they have this bond that Wanda is

envious of, she'd never come out and say it, I think it just propels her to do more and take up more space, which again doesn't really do wonders for their relationship. But I think amidst all of that there is this real value for family. So no matter what that's one thing, amidst all the squabbling, backstabbing, they still know that family is the most important thing... it's one thing their dad really drummed into them. That does really carry them.

Have you formed bonds with your on-screen family?

We just get along so well. They actually do feel like my family. I just love them. I love them so much. It's been a great way of just meeting people and having special people in your life, so I'm really grateful for that.

Tell us about the themes of the show

There's a lot of secrets - I can't really go into what they are! There's a lot of lies. There's a lot of power struggles in terms of people vying for the business and figuring out who should be in control of the business and who should be in control of certain events. There's also a lot of dysfunction. We love each other as a family but we're a pretty dysfunctional family. You'll see that for many reasons.

Success is an important message. Success is really at the heart of the show - amidst the dysfunction, the secrets and the lies it's because people are trying to rise to the top. I think success is what drives a lot of the themes.



How have you seen Black beauty evolve in television?

Black beauty in television, it's an interesting one. I watched a show recently called *Shrill* and the girl who played Fran, she had braids one time and then she had weaves one time. I remember thinking, 'Oh she's changed her hair quite a bit' and I remember just really appreciating it because I do remember watching shows that would span over weeks, months and maybe a character would have the same hairstyle throughout. And not everybody, but we do change our hair. I imagine we'd change our hair a number of times within a couple of months. So when I watched *Shrill* and I saw it within Fran, I just remember thinking, ok not only is this a show representing to a degree a Black woman, but they're doing it accurately.

What difference does having a Black showrunner make to the series?

I think Abby is great, Abby has got such a clear vision, she knows exactly what she wants. She's literally created these characters, this world that we're inhabiting. It's been a real joy to have her around. She also directed episode 4. It was a treat really to have the writer there and pick their brain, because they've created this space for us. There are certain details and nuances in the script that really just allow an authentic voice to shine through. So I think her scripts are really special and her input is really, really valued. I'm really grateful that we've had her.



HERMIONE NORRIS IS MAUREEN

What can you tell us about Maureen?

Maureen is quite the enigmatic, incredibly discreet. She is the all-seeing eye. She is the height of discretion. She is the ever-present person of Flair & Glory. She knows everything that has gone on in the company since its beginning. She just knows everything that is going on everywhere.

Where do we find Maureen at the start of the show?

We are introduced to Maureen at Stephen's will reading where she discovers that he has left her one million pounds in his will.

Do you see yourself in Maureen?

I don't see any of myself in Maureen. She is very, very quiet. Very, very discrete. Yes, I'm too loud, probably. (Laughs)

What drew you to Abby's scripts?

I loved Abby's scripts. Well firstly I've never seen a rich Nigerian family represented on British television which I thought was amazing and really important and I wanted to be a part of that. She is also very, very clever. Her scripts are concise, funny, twists and turns. Brilliant characterisation. And just the thing that appealed to me was that family dysfunction, all those relationships. It's got everything in it. Plus, there were six complete scripts that tore forward and I couldn't stop reading.



Tell us about Maureen's loyalty to Stephen and his business at large?

Maureen has been a very loyal servant to Flair & Glory and to predominantly Stephen, she has looked after him. She has been his confidant, his secretary. Very loyal trusted servant of his.

How does Maureen directly interact with the other characters in Riches?

I think what really appealed to me about Maureen is that it's a love story really. I liked that it was about love and the love and loyalty between Stephen and Maureen, Claudia, everybody and how important they are to him through money, relationship, whatever, their value. Their currency is all related to Stephen. Claudia has a very tricky relationship with Maureen because Maureen knows everything and she knows that Claudia is probably money-led and does not really have people's best interests at heart and loyalty I think is important to Maureen.

I always think in any drama it is the psychological element that really is what's interesting as an actor and within a family, you've got everything haven't you. There's always dysfunction and heartbreak and love and it's a real recipe for great drama and I think it's that really at the heart of it. They just happen to be billionaires and they happen to have a massive company but it's sort of the way those characters interplay and who they are.

They are all brilliant. Abby has written brilliant characters; they are great characterisations and it's been lovely watching costume and make up and what those young actors have brought to their characters. It's been a real pleasure to watch and to play a part where I am observing has been a real privilege.

What themes and story elements have been of particular interest to you?

Everyone has their own currency as an individual and in this particular family money is a huge part of that and how that bends people out of shape. How it defines them. How they value themselves, is how much they are worth, how much they are going to get. They have probably had to lean on that rather than on themselves on an internal journey and I think that's what it does. It forces characters to confront themselves and who they are. Identity and relationships in a complex family.

What do you hope the audience will take away from watching Riches?

I think it is fresh. I think Riches is fresh, refreshing, it's energetic. It's full of love. Entertaining great drama. Twists and turns. Intrigue. I really hope that it is met with the love that has been put into it.



BRENDAN COYLE IS GIDEON

Tell us about Gideon?

Well Gideon is the family lawyer, he's the executor of Stephen's will. He is a high flying financial wiz. It is implied that he was Stephen's right hand man. He was a very loyal general for their financial building up of this empire. He appears ostensibly to be loyal, to be supporting Stephen and Simon and the inheritance of the company. He is seemingly carrying out Stephen's wishes but there's something murky going on.

Tell us a little bit about the Flair & Glory empire and Gideon's role within that?

Well the Flair & Glory empire was established in a very modest way. It's become this phenomenal success. They tapped into a multi-million selling industry. Some of the guys involved are a little bit more statistical in their business sense but they show great skill and acumen in building this up from scratch and there's pretty much been nothing like it before, so it's an extraordinary thing.

It's a pretty interesting world. You would think it's a niche world- the world of Black cosmetics and hair products- but it's a multi-million pound selling business and Stephen and his family have built up this empire through great business acumen and a mass fortune, against all the odds. I think Abby's take would be it is quite unusual to see Black entrepreneurs you know being so successful against the odds.

It touches on the difference between British Nigerians and Afro-Caribbeans and British Ghanaians and it's just a fascinating one.



Tell us about the relationship that Gideon has established with the Riches family?

Gideon's relationship with the family varies with the different members. His relationship with Nina and Simon is one of great loyalty it would seem. He wants to exact Stephen's wishes. His relationship with Claudia is very, very strained continuously throughout the series. Sarah Niles is amazing.

So he seems to be trying to act in the best interest of every single character apart from Claudia. With Alesha and Wanda, he is loyal and wants the best for them. Gus is a bit more of a tricky proposition and Andre is a really tricky proposition because he is an interloper, he's been brought into the firm because of Claudia.

Describe Gideon's driving force? What keeps him going if anything?

What drives Gideon is the city broker, the thrill of the chase, it's the attainment of wealth. Considerable wealth and ambition. Ambition that he feels has been thwarted by Stephen and the Riches empire. Abby mentioned something interesting. She said he wouldn't have been allowed to buy shares. I don't know why we don't actually mention that in the script but there's something about that, that he has felt should have been a lot more money as a result of his contribution to this great empire.

What drew you to Abby's script?

I was drawn to Abby's script because I just thought they were fresh, exciting and they offered something new. It was a take on a whole aspect of culture and society that we haven't really seen. The characters were vivid, alive and engaging and it's just one of those unputdownable scripts that you read and go: 'yes please!'

So what do you like about the character Gideon?

It's an interesting question because we are taught not to judge characters, we are told to understand them. I like everything about Gideon because I am plain. Wherever we behave badly, we find justifications for that and he has his justifications. You know it's about trying to understand someone and why they behave the way they do.

So what scenes have you found most enjoyable to film?

The scenes I have found most enjoyable to film are my scenes with Deborah Ayorinde and Sarah Niles. They are my main points of contact in the series. With Simon there is a real kind of respect and mutually engaging scenes and then with Sarah who plays Claudia, there's this antipathy, aggression. So they are all very different and enjoyable. It's a shame I didn't get to film with Hugh [Quarshie] because he is just great and because the characters have been set up as having this great history. We didn't get to express that and I just met him briefly in the make-up truck a few weeks before we started and what a great guy! A class act.



What themes and story elements have been a particular interest for you?

The themes that interest me about Riches are ambition, family fractions in fighting, drive, wealth but also culture. Looking at the culture of a British Nigerian family having made all of this money. And the theme of just stylish, witty, sharp writing and performing. It's an extraordinary cast. I mean there was Downton Abbey and now Riches, they're two of the best teams I have played for.

What is Abby like on set and what sets her apart from other directors you have worked with before?

She is very composed. She's directed one episode so what Abby is like on set is that she is very engaging. She knows her stuff. She cut her teeth over here and she did a lot of stuff in the writer's rooms that she did in America. You get great notes and it's just a kind of authoritative, calm energy on set. She knows what works. Darcy and Seb, the two other directors are the same. You know they have done their homework and they have great form and talent.

Would Gideon be welcomed at Downton Abbey?

I think Gideon might fit in at Downton Abbey but not in a favourable way. He wouldn't be the family banker.. Haha. I don't know, the cast of Downton Abbey are very welcoming. The characters. I think he would do well, but I wouldn't welcome him.



Episode Summaries



EPISODE SUMMARIES

Episode 1 ‘See Trouble Coming’

Following sudden and devastating circumstances in the Richards family, Nina and Simon, the estranged children of Stephen Richards are brought back to the UK. A surprising turn of events regarding the future of the family's hair and cosmetics empire Flair and Glory, brings the reunited family into collision.

Episode 2 – ‘Wrong and Strong’

Tensions continue to brew in the aftermath of Stephen's will. Claudia furiously works to regain Flair & Glory for her family. Meanwhile, as Nina acquaints herself with the business, a social media complaint against the company spirals, and she makes a shocking discovery that reveals Flair & Glory's true state of affairs.

Episode 3 – ‘Black On Both Sides’

As the Richards gear up for the biggest event of the year for Flair & Glory, news of the embezzlement comes as a blow to Claudia and Nina's half-siblings. Gus receives some awaited information, and Nina's suspicions turn to a once-trusted employee. To Claudia's pleasure, Andre uncovers a fact of the business that will have big ramifications for Nina in her fight to retain Flair & Glory.

Episode 4 – ‘The Master's Tools’

Andre makes good on his promise and finds an investor for Claudia. Meanwhile, Nina and Claudia vie for shareholders' votes in their bids for control of the business. A damning article leaves Nina exposed and more discoveries emerge during the vote. An uncomfortable truth surfaces for Wanda, while Nina continues her search for the missing money.

Episode 5 – ‘What Needs To Be Done’

Nina's trip in Zurich sheds light on Oyin and a past she'd buried. In London, Alesha and Gus have doubts about the new investors. A startling piece of evidence changes the fate of the business for Claudia and Nina, and Wanda confronts Luke. Desperate for answers, Alesha turns to someone she trusts for help. Claudia takes a break away while Nina is on to the perpetrator of the missing money.

Episode 6 – ‘Forgive, Maybe. Forget, Never.’

A light at the end of the tunnel emerges as Alesha, Gus and Wanda finally get Stephen's safe open, though Alesha is baffled by what she finds. On the back of Alesha's discovery, Claudia rushes back home. Together with Simon, Nina confronts Oyin about her revelation in Zurich. With the thief revealed, Nina goes after the culprit. Simon and Nina review Stephen's will, while Maureen finds solace away from Flair & Glory.



PRODUCTION CREDITS.... EPISODE 1

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS.....ABBY AJAYI, NADINE MARSH-EDWARDS, AMANDA JENKS, ALISON OWEN, ALISON CARPENTER
WRITER.....ABBY AJAYI
DIRECTOR.....SEBASTIAN THIEL
PRODUCER.....YVONNE FRANCAS
DIRECTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY.....OLI RUSSELL
LINE PRODUCER.....NICOLA GREGORY
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR.....CAROLINE ELLISTON
CASTING DIRECTOR.....AISHA BYWATERS, CDG
COSTUME DESIGNER.....CAMILLE ADOMAKOH
MAKE UP & HAIR DESIGNER.....CYNTHIA DE LA ROSAEDITORS
PRODUCTION DESIGNER.....MATTHEW BUTTON
PROPS MASTER.....ALAN AKEHURST
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....DOMINIC DAVEY
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR.....MAYSA MONÇÃO
ASSISTANT PRODUCTION MANAGER.....TAERO ROBERTSON



About Greenacre Films



Greenacre Films is a female led independent production company co-founded by award-winning producers Nadine Marsh-Edwards and Amanda Jenks.

“Working with great talent is the key to our success, we are an inclusive space that allows innovative ideas to be realised; whether you are an award-winning writer or an exciting newcomer you feel able to be bold in your vision and creatively ambitious. Our television and film slate aims to connect with both the UK and global audiences and all, at their heart, are stories that explore the human condition in surprising and entertaining ways.”

Greenacre films recent television credits include Unsaid Stories for ITV, the feature film BEEN SO LONG (BFI/Film 4) starring Michaela Coel and Arinze Kene which after showcasing at Cannes, a global deal was negotiated with Netflix. It then premiered at The London Film Festival before launching on the platform. They were also executive producers on AKALA’S ODYSSEY (BBC 4) and THE RUINS OF EMPIRE (BBC 2).