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A Big Five Safari Christmas



Anna
JENSEN

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A note about language: I am a most English of authors, despite having lived in South Africa for many years; I therefore use British English phraseology and spelling rather than American, so please forgive me if anything isn't clear or isn't spelt as you might expect.

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Dedication

To all those who need the Lion of Judah's roar

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Allyson Koekhoven, for you editing expertise.

Thank you to my early readers. I always appreciate your feedback and encouragement.

Thanks, as always, to Craig, Caragh and Leal for checking in with me to see what stories are brewing, and whether they're reaching the page.

Thank you to my wonderful Chuckle Sisters, Dianne J Wilson and Ashley Winter, for all the laughs along the way.

Thank you to Caroline Johnston for spurring me on to write another St Saviours. Can't wait for Sunglasses and St Saviours...



The last strains of ‘*Oh, When the Saints*’ echoed around the sitting room.

Marj lowered her newspaper. “That’s the doorbell, dear.”

An unnecessary statement, in Richard’s view. What else would disturb their morning’s peace with such impertinence as Will’s most recent Father’s Day gift? Installed without his knowledge while sent on an urgent errand by co-conspirator Marj, he’d spluttered tea and almost fallen off his chair the first time a visitor called at the vicarage. Whatever had possessed his usually calm and sober wife to allow Will such free rein with their household gadgets, he had yet to determine. Although perhaps calm and sober were less than accurate epithets...

“Mm?” He would pretend he hadn’t heard.

“The door — ”

Oh, when the saints,

Oh, when the saints go marching in...

No use pretending.

“Are you going to answer it, then?” Marj plucked her reading glasses from her nose, fixed him with a glare, which made him squirm. “It’ll be the new curate, won’t it? You don’t want to keep him waiting.”

“No, no, I suppose I don’t.” Richard smoothed the front of his pale blue shirt, ruffled a hand through thinner, greyer hair. “I hope this is a good idea, Marj. You know, the trip, and everything...”

“Darling, it’s too late to have second thoughts.” Marj reached across and patted his knee. “We can’t back out now, especially as the poor man travelled so far to join us. Come on, best foot forward and all that. I’ll put the kettle on. I’ve made shortbread.”

Richard gave his wife's hand a squeeze. "Thank you. You're wonderful. What would I do without you?" He eased up from the sofa. "Do Americans drink tea...?"

"I have no idea. But this American will have to learn, if he's to have any hope of making it at St Saviours." Richard tugged on her hand, pulling her towards him. He inhaled flowers and peaches as he drew her close. Her smile crinkled her eyes as she shoved him away. "Go. Before that bell starts up again."

"That bell? You make it sound as if it has nothing to do with you."

"With me, darling? No, no, it was all Will, I assure you." She blew a kiss across her fingertips. Her chuckle followed her retreat into the kitchen.

Shaking his head, Richard squared his shoulders and took the couple of steps into the hallway. Framed in the dimpled glass of the door, a blurred shape loomed close. Richard sucked in a breath, glanced around. Coats hung in patient confusion on the hooks along one wall; waterproofs for rainy days, a tweed greatcoat for when the wind blew in from the Arctic, Marj's bright pink Paddington Bear-style duffel coat. A mackintosh, unclaimed property of a previous visitor. On the low shelf below the somnolent coats, a motley collection of boots and shoes waited in hopes of being The Chosen for a day's outing; hiking boots caked with dried mud, a pair of rose-patterned wellington boots, running shoes reflecting the fitness ambitions — and realities — of their owner. A damp, musty smell lingered.

A groan bubbled in his throat. Why did he agree to meet the man for the first time here at home? He should have requested a meeting in his study at the church. Not perfect, by any stretch of anyone's imagination, but preferable to this displayed jumble sale of his and Marj's private life.

The shape shifted, the outline of a face sharpening into focus. A palm pressed against the glass.

"Anyone home?" The palm bunched into a fist, knuckles rapping in a staccato rhythm of attention seeking. "Reverend Richard, are you there?"

Richard hurried forward, shoving anxiety about his outdoor wardrobe display aside, swallowing the gurgle of unexpected surprise at the twang of accent. How would the congregation take to that?

"Coming." Must stop the saints from marching a third time...

Richard fiddled with the Yale lock, fingers clumsy with a sudden rush of nerves. Ridiculous. He's here to help, not judge and criticise. Hopefully.

The snib clicked, the door swinging open with the gentlest of tugs; the benefits of arriving towards the end of summer rather than in the wet and dreary winter months — no swollen wood to deal with. Sunshine danced into the hallway, carrying the song of birds and the unaccustomed heat of a muggy, humid morning. Maybe a storm on its way.

Arranging his features in what he hoped was a grin of welcome instead of the more probable grimace of awkward shyness, Richard extended a hand to the smiling stranger on his doorstep. Although, the 6' 2" giant who reached to encase his fist in a bear-like grip of exuberant greeting wasn't entirely unknown to him. Recognition stirred as Richard squinted against the glare to observe twinkling eyes framed in a dark-skinned face — a sharp pang of missing as Joelle's African-night features sprang to mind — a neat, trimmed beard and the buzz-cut hairstyle, familiar from the photos emailed back and forth, the interactions via video calling platforms and the internet.

"You must be Lloyd. I didn't expect you to be so tall, somehow. But then, I've only seen you sitting down." Richard's cheeks warmed at the inane reShaun.

"And you're Reverend Richard. Hi! And I get that a lot. About being tall." Lloyd's good humour growled and rumbled like the bear of his handshake. "I'm delighted to meet you in person, at last."

"Please, call me Richard — everyone else does. It feels as though today has been a long time in the making."

"It does, Richard. But God's timing is always perfect, and His ways, although mysterious, are always wonderful." The smile broadened. Richard envied the white perfection of the grin. He ran a tongue over his uneven, tea-stained lower teeth, snagged the sharpness of his upper incisors.

He kept his smile thin, his lips hiding his shame.

"Richard, dear. Bring our guest in off the doorstep." How did she know he needed rescuing?

"Yes, yes, of course. Lloyd, please come in. Marj — my wife — has made tea." He pressed himself against the cushioned wall of coats as

Lloyd's bulk filled the entrance. "Is tea alright? Or would you prefer coffee...?"

"No, tea is great, thanks, Richard. I've been practising my English etiquette ever since receiving the confirmation of my position here. I've even read a book on it. *Watching the English*. Do you know it?"

An inward groan at further evidence of the giant's perfection. This is my congregation, my people. He can't endear himself more to them than I have. Can he? Richard frowned at the uncharitable stab of jealousy.

"No, can't say I do. The door on your left, Lloyd." Richard extricated himself from the coat's embrace, dusted specks of fluff and a few blades of dried grass from the brown corduroy of his trousers. He nudged the door closed with his elbow, catching sight of himself in the hall mirror as he did so. Pale, pasty features returned his gaze, the jawline slack and the cheeks pinched. Old, that's how you look, Reverend. Old and past it. Time to pass the baton to the likes of Lloyd here. With his black denim jacket and jeans, his black leather boots with the pointy toes. Only the Stetson was missing.

A muscle twitched as Richard's reflection clenched its jaw. A cloud blotted out the sun, darkening the hallway, accentuating the twilight creeping over his soul. He lowered his head from the reminder of his mortality.

"Lloyd? Welcome to St Saviours. Well, the vicarage of St Saviours, at least." The girlish giggle a glimmer of sunshine in Richard's darkening mood.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, ma'am." Richard pictured the non-existent hat removed, a deep bow of service offered.

"Goodness, no need to call me that. I'm not the Queen. Marjorie — or just plain Marj — is more my style. Please, make yourself comfortable. Richard, are you joining us? Or have you got lost between here and the door?"

Can't stay lurking out here. Have to face the future somehow. Might as well be now, as anytime. "No, no, I'm right behind Lloyd." Trailing in his shadow already. "Just checking the door is closed properly. There's a bit of wind picking up..."

He thumped at the door, jiggled the latch. Emphasising his point. Returning to the sitting room on legs which alternated between stuck in treacle and wobbling like jelly, he paused in the doorway. Marj fussed

over Lloyd, plumping a cushion to cover the worn flowers of the couch's upholstery, leading him to the armchair where the springs hadn't yet collapsed in a tiredness of long service. Dear Marj. A tray of steaming mugs, a bright yellow milk jug and a polished silver sugar bowl — their one treasure Marj insisted on using — occupied the modern, out-of-place Ikea coffee table.

How he hated that table. He gave it a sly kick as he passed it on his way to the couch. Not enough to spill the tea, but sufficient to draw a frown on Marj's forehead. He widened his eyes in innocent apology.

What was the matter with him? How could a visitor from 'across the pond', as Colin the organist insisted on referring to the United States of America, unnerve and unsettle him to the point of childish rudeness?

He couldn't confront that right now. Perhaps after they'd had their tea and Lloyd had hurried off on whatever his Saturday errands in a new parish in a new country might entail, he'd take a stroll to the park down the road. Dig a little deeper into his reactions and their reasons in the peaceful surrounds of the lake. It worked for Ellen; perhaps today it would work for him.

Consigning all thoughts of self-examination to the hidden depths of 'later', Richard composed his best 'greet the visitor' face.

"Lloyd, I see you and Marj have already met. Can I offer you milk, sugar, in your tea?"

"I'll take it as you give it, Richard. I'm sure I'll have to get used to several different versions of your national drink."

"Right you are then. One cup of Builders coming up!" Richard splashed a few drops of milk into the closest mug, turning the clear liquid a sludgy brown colour.

"Richard, don't be mean. Poor Lloyd doesn't want to drink the equivalent of paint stripper on his first visit to our home. Here, I'll do it." Marj added a generous tilt of the milk jug. "There, that's better. Enough milk to taste, but not so much you end up with something that reminds you of yesterday's dishwasher."

Lloyd's guffaw startled Felicia the cat from her curled-up nap on the windowsill. The animal arched her back and stalked from the circle of chairs and their disturbance. Richard watched her retreat with a twinge of envy.

“Thank you, ma’am — I mean, Marjorie. That looks about as I’ve tried to make it.”

“Did you say you wanted sugar?”

“No, thank you. I’m determined to try going without.”

“Then have a piece of shortbread in its place.” Marj held out a plate of sugar-dusted treats.

“Now that I won’t refuse.”

The guest’s tea ritual complete, Richard chose the strongest of the two remaining teas, adding the tiniest dash of milk he could pour. He slurped a mouthful, determined to hide the wrinkle of disgust at the hit of bitter tannins. Marj’s lips twitched with silent laughter. How well she knew him.

He was being ridiculous. Exactly what point was he trying to prove? He took a second slurp before seating himself on the sofa. Not nearly as bad as the first.

“How was your flight, Lloyd?” Marj perched on the other end of the sofa. “When did you arrive in London?”

“Yesterday morning. The flight was fine. Long and quite noisy — a group of college students over on a cultural tour, I believe. Visiting Shakespeare’s country, that sort of thing. But their chat helped pass the hours, I suppose.”

“And the jet lag?” Richard found himself drawn into the conversation despite himself. This hulk of a man fascinated him. The warm ease of his presence as he sat with mug of tea clasped between long fingers? Or the chocolate-rich timbre of his voice? Perhaps the beam of a smile directed his way after every sentence.

Oh, St Saviours was going to love him.

“I confess I’m a little dazed as to what day it is and what meal I should be eating next.” More laughter. “Although I’ve travelled outside of the States before, so I know the sensation passes within a day or two.”

“And where have your travels taken you? More shortbread?” Marj held up the plate.

“I won’t say no. These are delicious. I take it you made them yourself?” Lloyd held a slice between thumb and forefinger. A smudge of pink satisfaction coloured Marj’s cheeks. “I’ve been to Africa a good few times. My church at home sponsors a yearly outreach programme, which some of our more adventurous students go on. They help out in a children’s

village with practical projects, run education classes for the kids and their teachers. I was the primary liaison for several years, so I travelled across with the teams to see them settled. They always found the initial days somewhat overwhelming. Some of them have never left the city, much less the country — all that open space and wildlife is intimidating.”

“That’s similar to the work our Ellen is involved in. Isn’t it, Richard?” Marj turned to Richard, the plate of shortbread hovering between them.

Richard plucked at a piece before the plate moved out of reach. “Yes. I can’t remember if I told you, Lloyd. Our daughter is in South Africa. She’s joined a local ministry there.”

“The reason for your visit at Christmas, right? Have you been before?”

Richard bit into the shortbread. Buttery crumbs cascaded down his shirt front. He flicked them away, hoping Lloyd didn’t notice the mess.

“No, we’ve not travelled to Africa at all.” Marj responded, allowing Richard to finish his mouthful with what remained of his dignity. “We’re very excited about it, aren’t we, Richard? Especially after other plans fell through.”

Richard flinched at the edge of disappointment in Marj’s reply. Their sabbatical postponed, the flights to Mexico cancelled and refunded; the video call with Rosa explaining they wouldn’t be visiting after all. The fight with the airline to refund the gifted First-Class tickets. Circumstances beyond their control.

Marj wore black for weeks. Only the glass beads sparkled in colourful defiance of their wearer’s despair.

His flamingo-Marj didn’t return to her full colourful glory until the trip to South Africa was certain.

A rush of gratitude as the realisation seeped into his conscience that the man filling the best armchair, slurping Yorkshire tea with gameful determination, and munching Scottish teatime tidbits when he probably longed for a dinner of steak and chips, was the saviour of this second attempt at a sabbatical.

“I trust this will more than make up for the pain of missing out on whatever else you had planned.” Richard swallowed the sudden lump in his throat at Lloyd’s gentle sincerity. “You should treat yourself to a safari. Find the Big Five!”

“The Big Five?” Marj leant forward, her eyes sparkling. “That sounds intriguing.”

“Five animals considered the hardest and most dangerous to hunt, back in the day.” Lloyd raised a hand, lifting a finger as he rattled off a short list. “The buffalo, the leopard, the elephant, the rhinoceros. And, of course, the lion.”

He waggled his thumb in emphasis.

“I remember Ellen telling us that.” Richard nodded, his tea sloshing from the mug at the movement. “Have you seen them all?”

“A leopard, only once. And lions two or three times. But the others, yes, on several occasions. It’s quite something, I can tell you. You’ll have a wonderful visit.”

“I believe we will.” Richard felt for Marj’s hand. “Don’t you, dear?”

I hope you enjoyed this sample of the first chapter of *A Big Five Safari Christmas*

To continue reading, follow the link, or scan the QR code, to purchase. Available in both paperback and ebook. Always free in Kindle Unlimited.



Buy *A Harvest of Thanksgiving* here

St Saviours Seasonal Stories



The seasons of the church calendar are important to Richard, vicar of St Saviours, a thriving church community in the heart of London. Christmas, Easter, Advent and Lent — all have a special place in the Reverend's heart and actions. Scan the QR code to open the St Saviours Seasonal Stories series purchase page.

Book 1:

A Candle for Christmas
Four candles. Four stories. One Christmas Day.



The vicar of St Saviour's is preparing for Christmas. Four Sundays, four services, four advent candles to light.

Richard loves Christmas. And he loves the ritual of the advent candles. Only this year is different. Memories and regrets threaten to spoil his favourite season.

Joelle is tired. Tired of the streets; tired of the weather. Tired of being unseen. Could the preparations for Christmas at

St Saviour's herald a new beginning?

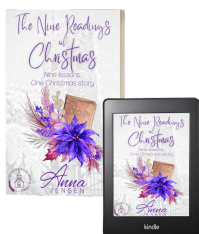
Tamara knows this Christmas is going to be different. She's been planning for weeks. But will it be in the way she expects or is there a surprise in store?

Ellen realises her new-found freedom isn't as wonderful as she expected it to be. Can she retrace her steps and find restoration? Or is it too late?

Christmas Day. Richard ignites the final candle...

Book 2:

The Nine Readings of Christmas *Nine lessons. One Christmas story*



Christmas is fast approaching.

The congregation of St Saviours is caught up with Christmas preparations and parties — not least amongst them their vicar, Richard.

The service of Nine Lessons and Carols has been months in the planning. Everything is in place for the evening to be the highlight of this year's church calendar.

Until Richard receives a telephone call; his soloist has a sore throat. Can The Service still go ahead? Will Richard seek to find his own solution? Or will God have His way?

Marjorie is baking up a storm; containers full of every Christmas treat occupying all available space. When a Christmas card from afar arrives with unwelcome news — and a gift — Marj is forced to reassess the life she has chosen. Is she where she should be or has her focus on family and church been misdirected?

Ellen, studying and involving herself in the local community, is experiencing dreams of Africa. What do they mean? And does an email she receives have anything to do with them?

Tamara has made her peace with the single life she now leads. But is there more? Are a young girl, a homeless woman, and a Christmas party the key to her happiness?

Joelle has a new home, with a comfortable bed and two cooked meals a day. She also has a family — the family of St Saviours. Can she help Ellen decipher her dreams and discover her heart? Or show Tamara that they are more alike than she may think? Christmas at St Saviours. Nine lessons; one story.

Book 3:

One Passing Easter

Seven special days. And the lives they changed

Shrove Tuesday.



The annual St Saviours Pancake Relay is in full flip. Runners and spectators alike are wild with excitement.

Until an accident occurs and an ambulance is called.

Reverend Richard has a full schedule of services and events planned between now and Easter Sunday. Will he be able to con-

tinue as arranged, or will circumstances dictate otherwise?

Tamara, persuaded to go on a blind date by a friend and colleague, is desperate for change. Abandoning the shallowness of yet another meaningless relationship, she seeks something deeper this Lent. Can she find the love she longs for? Or will past experiences and hurts keep her in their grip?

Joelle harbours a secret. Does she have the courage to share it with Marjorie? Or is time running out?

Elsewhere, Ellen has found her calling. Or so she hopes. But when disaster strikes her community, bringing with it an unexpected confrontation, can beauty rise from the ashes?

After this one passing Easter, the lives of the St Saviours community may never be the same.

Book 4:

A Big Five Safari Christmas



“You should treat yourself to a safari. Find the Big Five; five animals considered the hardest and most dangerous to hunt, back in the day — the buffalo, the leopard, the elephant, the rhinoceros. And, of course, the lion.”

The Buffalo

Lloyd arrives from ‘across the pond’, ready to steer St Saviours through the Christmas season while Reverend Richard finally takes his sabbatical — in South Africa. But will this American bison stampede like its African cousin through all Richard’s precious traditions?

The Leopard

Tamara steels herself for another Christmas — alone. When emergency surgery leaves her weak and vulnerable, will she admit her hidden truth to friend Carol? Is she the leopard whose spots never change, or will she discover the transforming power of love in action?

The Elephant

Lula wants only to mind her own business as a top surgeon in a busy London hospital. But when a patient arrives with a ruptured appendix, the doctor finds her world colliding with one she’d rather ignore. Is there healing in uncovering the past? Or can she, like the elephant, never forget?

The Rhinoceros

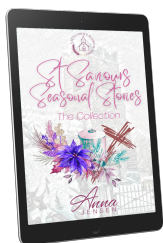
Marj has reached the end of her tether. One more disappointed hope, one more emergency, and she’s certain she risks near extinction — like the African rhino she can’t wait to see. Is a simple pottery class the rescue she needs?

The Lion

Ellen is keeping a secret. One she daren't tell her parents — but knows she'll have to, before their visit to South Africa at Christmas. Is she brave enough to risk their disapproval? Will the Lion of Judah roar over this — and every other challenge faced by the St Saviours faithful?

Buy the Box Set

Scan the series QR code and buy the box set of the first three St Saviours Seasonal Stories



About Anna

I'm a British expat who has lived in South Africa for a little over twenty years. My husband and I live with our two teenage children on the east coast, a few miles north of the city of Durban. We overlook the Indian Ocean where we have the privilege of watching dolphins and whales at play.

My first book *The Outskirts of His Glory* was published in May 2019. The book is a Christian devotional and poetry collection, exploring the many surprising ways that God can speak to us through His creation. I have drawn on my travels in and around South Africa, as well as further afield, to hopefully inspire each of us to slow down and perhaps listen more carefully to the 'whispers of His ways' (Job 26:14) that are all around us.

Since publishing *Outskirts*, I have had the privilege of speaking at a number of local churches and even have a weekly slot on a Christian radio station. I have also continued writing by contributing to a variety of blogs and online writing communities as well as developing my own website and blog.

Want to know more? Check out my website at www.annajensen.co.uk

Make it easier to hear about all things Anna and sign up for my free more-or-less monthly newsletter. You'll receive a gift of the ebook, *Seeking Light*, a Cornish tale inspired by my years living in Cornwall when you do. You'll also be sent an invitation to join my Subscriber Family Birthday Club. Sign up today at www.annajensen.co.uk/news



Cornwall, September 1742

Tin mining is in Jem Pearce's blood. For as long as he can remember, the subterranean caverns of the Cornish mines have been his world — just like his father before him. Intimate knowledge of the maze of tunnels and passageways lights the way in the underground darkness, as sure as any lantern.

So why, when mine owner Mr Roberts announces plans for a proposed expansion project, is Jem so uneasy?

Compounding his anxiety is his son Edward's eagerness to experience the thrill of the blasting preparations.

Can Jem persuade the mine officials to change their plans, and so avert disaster?

Meanwhile, Mr John Wesley has returned to this remote part of the country with his vibrant Gospel crusades. Thousands gather to hear his simple, hope-filled teaching, including Susanna Pearce, Jem's wife. Can she help her husband discover the true light that shines in the deepest darkness — the light that is Jesus?

Anna
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when you do. You'll also be sent an invitation to join my Subscriber Family Birthday Club. Sign up today at www.annajensen.co.uk/news



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A Prairie Roses wagon trail story with a South African twist



Maria Steyn's life is characterised by goodbyes. From the dim recollection of long-dead parents to the farewells from an established life in the Cape Colony of South Africa, she has learnt to live with loss and sadness.

Joining the voortrekkers in their search for freedom and a land of their own, Maria embarks on a journey inland. But disagreements soon arise, breaking relationships and, once again, Maria's heart suffers loss.

When the dust settles after this final wagon trek, will Maria find the stability she longs for? Could her reunion with Field-Cornet Christiaan Venter, hero of the Battle of Blood River, signal a new beginning? Or, is she destined for a life of upheaval and tragedy?

Buy now from Amazon or scan the QR code



The Ripples Through Time

series



Ripples Through Time is a series of novels telling stories of the past and showing how they inspire our present. Stories of how God takes the ordinary and transforms it into something extraordinary. The smallest of stones, tossed into smooth water, will create waves; concentric circles spreading outward to reach beyond the immediate or seen. So too, the seemingly insignificant actions of today can leave ripples that are felt into eternity.

There is the village of Eyam and her inhabitants' love and sacrifice which saved a generation, the Bletchley Park codebreakers' dedication to fight a war far from public praise, the adventure and ingenuity of diamond hunters settling in the impermanence of the Namibian desert, and the discovery of a 2000-year-old fishing vessel believed to date to the time of Jesus and his disciples. Campaigns and conflicts, castles and cottages – tales to uncover and histories to unfold.

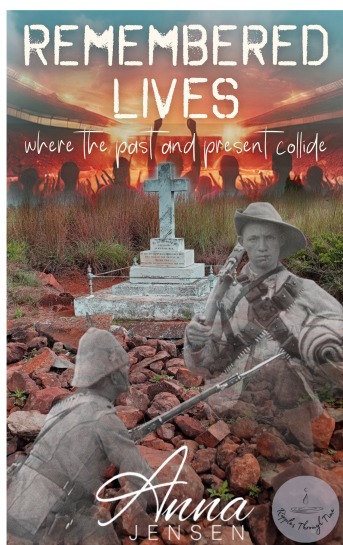
These are the pebbles and the ripples they leave.

The *Ripples Through Time* series is dedicated to my personal mentor, author Marion Ueckermann, who sadly passed away on 25 June 2021. She included a devotion entitled *Reflections in Pebbles* in the multi-author boxed set, *In All Things* (a set which I also contributed to). I would like to leave you with this quote from Marion:

‘God has chosen you to be His pebble in the sea of humanity. What ripples of hope could emit from the splashes of your life? What giants could tumble from the impact of one small stone, one random act of kindness?’

May you, like Marion, become a pebble in the hand of God, leaving ripples in the world as you pass.

Remembered Lives



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Anfield Stadium, Liverpool, England.

Home ground of the Liverpool Football Club. And place of remembrance for the victims of one of the worst football disasters in British history.

South Africa, 1899-1900.

A bitter war rages between Britain and the Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Free State. Boer commandos lay siege to towns in British-controlled Natal. The British Army must fight to relieve them.

But first they must reach them, marching into hostile terrain against an enemy with unrivalled Shaunsmanship skills, and travelling on horseback.

Both sides target Spionkop, a hill rising from the Natal plains - destined to be christened 'an acre of massacre' by watching reporter, Winston Churchill; and to find its name gracing one of the most famous football stands in the world; Anfield's The Kop.

South Africa 2015.

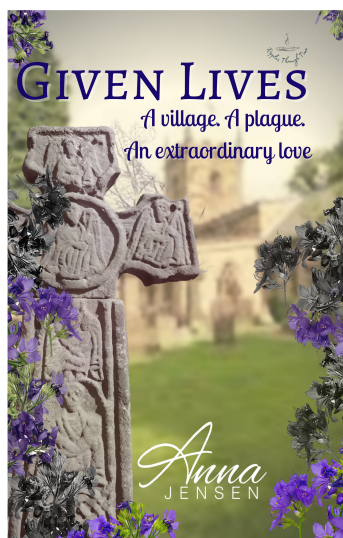
Liverpool football fans Jimmy, Sarah, and Des travel to South Africa to commemorate the Hillsborough Disaster, where they discover more than they expect - about the distant past, and about themselves.



Buy now from Amazon or scan the QR code



Given Lives



SEPTEMBER 1665.

Plague ravages the English capital, London.

Thousands are left dead.

In the Derbyshire village of Eyam, 160 miles north of the London tragedies, Kitty Allenby is settling into country life. Encouraged by her Aunt Anne and Uncle Robert, she is excited for the year ahead.

That is until a stranger arrives from London, bringing a parcel of cloth for the local tailor – cloth infested with plague-carrying fleas.

Within weeks, Eyam is under siege.

By spring 1666, drastic action is needed to contain the spread of disease. What can be done?

The Reverend William Mompesson thinks he knows. For his plan to succeed, Mompesson will need the co-operation of the whole community, including his predecessor and rival, Thomas Stanley.

Will the two men be able to put aside the deep mistrust of one another for the sake of the people they are called to serve? How will the doomed villagers respond?

And what of Kitty? Can she learn to love a community not her own, perhaps paying the ultimate price alongside strangers she barely knows?

Based on true events, *Given Lives* is a story of bravery and sacrifice, of love that laid itself down for the sake of others. It is a whisper through

time to each of us confronted by a modern plague, the global Covid 19 pandemic. Will we attune our ears and listen?

'My great aunt (nine times over) and ancestor, Margaret Blackwell, is part of this wonderful novel and, as a family survivor of this dreadful plague, I felt privileged to be asked to read Anna's novel.'

The story unfolds as Kitty comes to Eyam to celebrate the annual Wakes Week and becomes isolated with the villagers as they try to contain the disease. It captures the real depth of sacrificial love, care and compassion and their heroism during the plague outbreak in 1665–66. The trust and hope the families had in God to bring them through this tragic time is a real testament to their fortitude, as Kitty constantly, with her family, looks forward to a brighter and happier future.

'It's a great read. and my thanks to Anna for her factual insight and passion for our history.' — Joan Plant, Descendant of a Plague Survivor



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Secret Lives



Can you keep a secret?

February 1942

Alice Stallard, encouraged by her two friends, submits her entry to the Daily Telegraph prize crossword – a crossword she solves in record time. She thinks nothing more about it until called into the study of her Cambridge University professor where she's invited to an interview at the mysterious Bletchley Park near Bedford.

Once at Bletchley Park, Alice is confronted with the Official Secrets Act and months of training for a job no one will talk about. After being moved from one training centre to another, her final posting is to Station 53a of the Special Operations Executive – Winston Churchill's 'Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare'.

But what of when the War is over? Will Alice keep her promise of silence?

February 1998

A-levels loom on the horizon for 18-year old Rosie Mason. She had expected her favourite subject to be History but instead is finding it dull and lifeless. Perhaps the drama and romance she was hoping for can be found elsewhere – in her grandmother’s memories. But Gran is reluctant to share any war stories, changing the subject at every one of Rosie’s questions.

Determined to conquer Gran’s reticence, Rosie decides to spend her long post-exam holiday with her grandparents. After days of trying, Gran agrees to show Rosie a few photos -- and the first edition copy of C S Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*.

Only when Rosie stumbles on a handwritten note tucked between the pages of *Screwtape* does the silence of decades threaten to unravel.

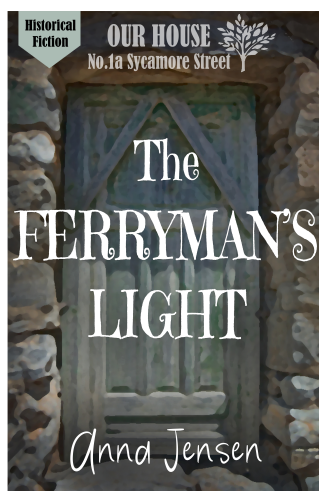


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Our House on Sycamore Street

Our House on Sycamore Street is a multi-author, multi-genre series set in quaint and quirky Eden Cove, an English seaside town with plenty of spirit. With stories of redemption and salvation behind every door, you're sure to find a new tale of romance, intrigue, humour or heart. All you have to do is knock!



The Ferryman's Light

He has plans for the future. What happens when circumstances dictate those plans must change?

If you love an historical origins drama, you'll be sure to enjoy The Ferryman's Light

October, 1853:

Walter Ferryman's life is simple and predictable, running the Eden Cove ferry while his father works as gamekeeper to Castle on the Hill owners, the Wingfields.

That is until sweetheart Susan Wingfield reveals a dreadful secret - which puts all Walter's future hopes and plans into jeopardy. Will Walter find the courage to own his mistakes? How will he make good on his promise to Susan while remaining in Eden Cove?

Buy now from Amazon. FREE in Kindle Unlimited!

OUR HOUSE on Sycamore Street



BOOK 1: THE FERRYMAN'S LIGHT *by Anna Jensen*

He has plans for the future. What happens when circumstances dictate those plans must change?

BOOK 2: THE ITALIAN MUSICIAN'S SANCTUARY

by Danielle Grandinetti

Hunted by one man, can she open her heart to another?

BOOK 3: THE OUTSIDER'S WELCOME

by Vida Li Sik

If you love women's fiction, you will enjoy The Outsider's Welcome, a tale of resilience, community, and a search for belonging.

BOOK 4: THE DAUGHTER'S TRUTH *by Claire Lagerwall*

Emmy Whitehouse is about to discover that everything she knows is not at all what she thinks.

BOOK 5: THE LIGHT KEEPER'S WIFE

by Jennifer Mistmorgan

They've come to escape their wartime secrets. But are some shadows too dark to shake off?

BOOK 6: THE KEY COLLECTOR'S PROMISE

by Donna Jo Stone

She came to warn her estranged mother of danger. But will the cost of unraveling family secrets be too much to bear?

BOOK 7: THE MAESTRO'S MISSING MELODY

by Amy Walsh

She is thrilled to apprentice with her fiddler hero—until his grumpiness knocks him off his pedestal.

BOOK 8: THE NIECE'S AUSSIE PATIENT

by Meredith Resce

Newly graduated in hospitality management, Stephanie Delafonte is looking forward to managing her aunt's guest house for three weeks while Lina takes a well-earned break.

BOOK 9: THE RUNAWAYS REDEMPTION

by Allyson Koekhoven

A tragic event at work leaves South African paramedic Johlene Anderson reeling.

BOOK 10: THE BOOKBINDER'S DAUGHTER

by Lynn Dean

A war refugee is invited to live with an aging recluse but learns too late she's being used.

BOOK 11: THE WIDOWS REQUEST *by Ashley Winter*

Join Fiona as she unravels old family secrets, faces danger head on and uncovers the truth about her parents' deception...

BOOK 12: THE LOST DAUGHTER'S IRISHMAN

by Carolyn Miller

She wants to find a way to live again; he wants to close a deal and move on. Until sparks fly and these opposites attract in this contemporary romance filled with heart and humour.

BOOK 13: THE MOTHER'S SONG

by Caroline Johnston

Miranda McVitty, wife, mother and campsite owner. Miranda loves to sing as she goes about her work and this summer she's learning to sing her prayers as well as her to do list.

BOOK 14: THE WEDDING PLANNER'S PREDICAMENT

by Dianne J. Wilson

Cleo is done organizing weddings. James has a wedding to plan, and Cleo is his only hope.

Poems and Devotionals

The '14 Days of Devotions' Series



A Seat in a Garden

14 days of reflections and poems from seven gardens of Africa

What better place to enjoy the presence of God than from a seat in a secluded garden? Take a moment to wander with Anna Jensen through seven of her favourite African gardens in this book of 14 daily devotions.

Discover with her the delights of quiet contemplation, finding glimpses of the Creator in every leaf and flower. Pause and rest for reflection on a ‘bench’ – a space created through poetry and prayer.

Also available as an audiobook, narrated by myself as the author.



Rugged Roads

14 stories and poems from seven journeys in Africa

Take a journey off the beaten track and enjoy the drama on seven journeys of adventure and discovery through South Africa and beyond.

Take the warned-against route from Harare to

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, or discover the twists and turns of a mountain pass into Lesotho. Stumble through the sand of a Namibian desert or feel the adrenalin rush of being charged by a rhino or threatened by an elephant. In this collection of 14 daily devotions, reflect on the whispers of God heard when driving off-road. Through stories and Scripture readings, poetry and prayer, find the joy of choosing ‘rugged roads’.



Poems and Prayers

14 reflections from a year of change

The year 2020 started like any other – full of promise and hope. Within a few months, it was clear this was to be no ordinary year. By March, the World Health Organisation had declared a global pandemic of the hitherto-unknown coronavirus Covid-19. For Anna Jensen, it was a time of bewilderment, but also an opportunity; an opportunity to press in afresh and hear all that God wants to whisper.

In this collection of 14 daily devotions, Anna reflects on those early months of the pandemic, articulating her thoughts through poems and prayerful reflections.



A Gratitude Challenge

14 days of choosing thanks

In November 2020, Anna Jensen embarked on her first 'gratitude challenge', a series of social media posts giving thanks on a daily basis.

Anna found herself being grateful for the serious and the silly, and everything in between (on one of the days, she was thankful for shoe shops, after her son climbed into the car from school with a 'flapping sole', which needed an urgent remedy).

This book of 14 days of devotions is the pick of Anna's month of gratitude, shared with you in the hope that you will see the delight in the daily and the mundane. There really is so much to be thankful for.

Other Books by Anna

The Outskirts of His Glory

Join Anna Jensen and her family as they travel to seek out and experience the odd and unexpected of God's creation.

Captivated by the Creator (paperback only)

Be inspired afresh by the voice of the Creator through the beauty of His creation. Be guided by Anna Jensen as she describes her own journey of discovery through articles and poems. This beautiful journal contains pictures for you to colour and space for your own thoughts and prayers.

Twenty Years an Expat

Read about Anna's experiences when she left her native land and learned to embrace the different and the new as she settled in South Africa. At times funny, at others poignant, the one constant is God's love and purpose for Anna in all she experiences.

Find all my books on Amazon

