

Anna Jensen, poet and author



**And these are but the outer fringe of his works;
how faint the whisper we hear of him!
Who then can understand the thunder of his power?**

(Job 26:14, NIV)

Jensen is a British ex-pat who, after marrying a South African, moved to Durban a little over twenty years ago. For the first year, they lived in a small flat above the company workshop of a small community of local workers. Being less than an hour's drive from the local safari park, they enjoyed weekends exploring and getting to know the area and its inhabitants.

Several road trips, two children and a ten+ year stint in church leadership later, Jensen felt called to write. After a memorable trip to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe where she learned that waterfalls

are deafening, awe-inspiring, drenching, and silencing all at once, and while reading the beginning of Revelation where John describes the voice of the risen Jesus like "the sound of rushing waters," Jensen realised that her incredible experience at the Falls enabled her to more fully comprehend what John meant.

From there came the command to "write what you see in a book" and the start of a journey that culminated in her first book, *The Outskirts of His Glory*. This devotional/poetry book shares Jensen's views on how God speaks, which is often in the most surprising ways through creation. Since then, Jensen has spoken at several local church events and has a weekly slot on a local Christian radio station where she encourages believers to listen to the whispers of His ways.

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PHOENIX

ANNA JENSEN

I hear tell of a sun-bird burning
called, at last, on her final flight home
From fire she arose and to fire she succumbs
feathers of flame her plumage.

Stillness of death, with only smoke rising
Twisting as wreaths on her grave.

Yet out of the embers a legend ignites
And rises on wings burnished orange and ochre
Soaring above the pyre as it smoulders
A phoenix reborn from the ashes.

Elsewhere . . .

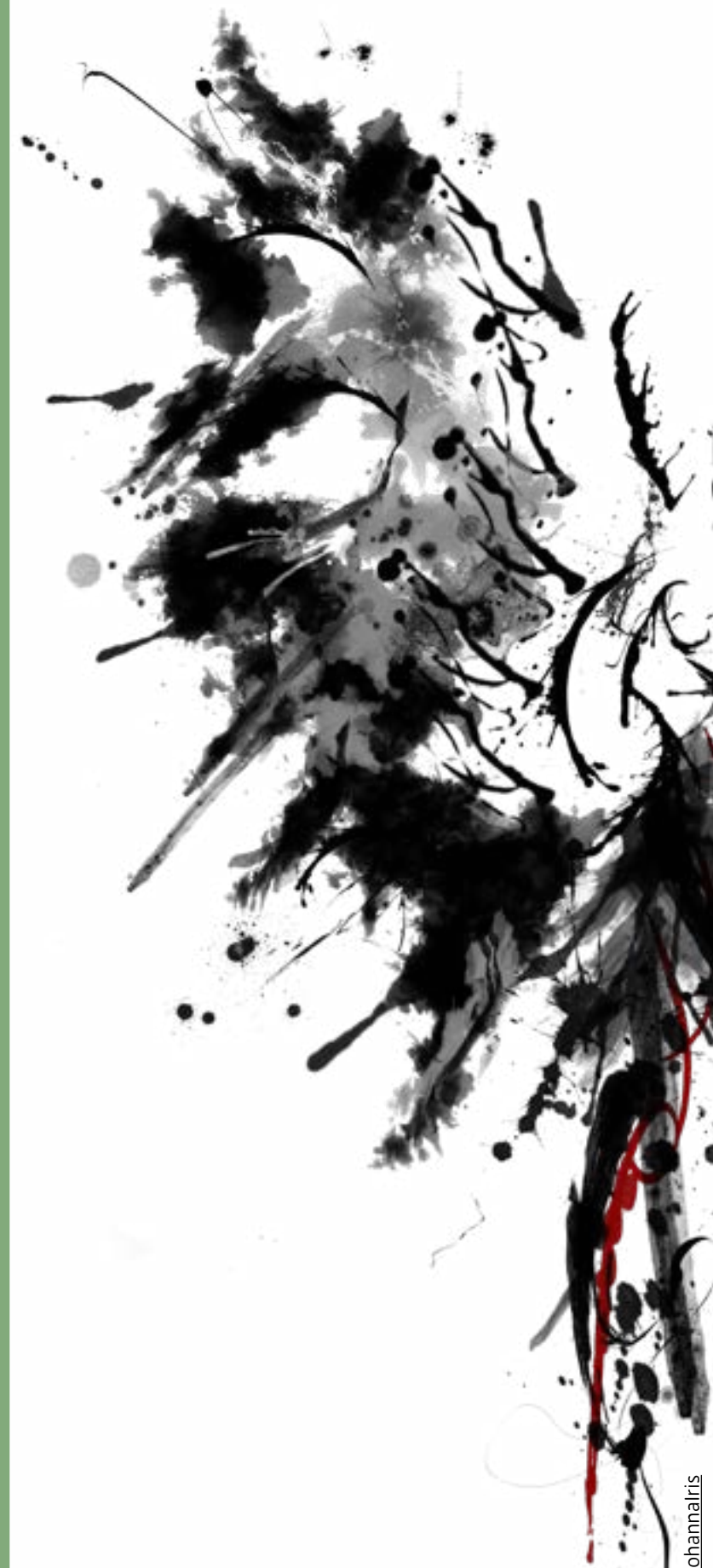
Smoke billows round in a soot-acrid insult
Choking my breathing and cloaking my seeing
A blaze catching grasses and branches and leaves
and tossing them free, into the fire of a furnace
where fireworks are moulded and forged.
The roar and the writhe of a manic inferno
inexorable stomp of a monster.

Tomorrow . . .

The pall of destruction
The end of life now lost but for memory
The carcass of dreams lying tortured
Pain hovering loud in the chaos.

But then . . .

Space has been cleared and vision created
Fertility forsaking the barren
The tender and new—
irrepressible, unstoppable—
Tenacious assertion the delight of sweet promise.
The phoenix of hope
reborn from the ashes.



FIRES

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Photo by freestocks-photos

In the region of South Africa where I live, we have very little winter rainfall. The days are warm and sunny, and the evenings pleasantly cool after the humidity of summer. In many ways, it's a delightful time of year.

But there is a downside. The landscape slowly turns from a vibrant, lush green to a tinder-dry brown. As winter progresses, the risk of fires breaking out becomes a real concern.

Although I've never witnessed devastation on a scale encountered in California, Portugal, or Australia, the little I have experienced is unsettling enough: the night sky lit by an orange glow as maniacal dancers leap from bush to bush, the air filled with the deep roar of an engulfing, ravaging monster. Morning brings the "catch in the throat" smell of burning grassland, where the mist of smoke can be seen rising.

We once spoke to a wildlife conservationist about the winter fires and their ugly, unpleasant aftermath. He smiled knowingly and went on to explain that the fires, far from being a destructive force, were, in fact, yearly acts of regeneration. The old, woody stems of the previous year's growth were removed, creating space for the new shoots that would take their place. Animals flourished and thrived on the abundant nutrition suddenly available, in turn fertilizing and bringing life to the seemingly ravaged ground.

This truth got me thinking, as does so much about how God works in and through creation. The wildfires I have seen are often started by lightning striking the dried-up grasses. In Job 38, God assures Job that He and He alone can call on lightning bolts and order them where to land. No sweeping wildfire is, therefore, by accident, no scene of devastation a permanent finality. After death comes life; after mourning, joy; after ashes, beauty.

We, ourselves, can feel like we've been struck by "lightning," flames burning the core of our beings through disappointment, pain, and despair. Mired in a misty haze of confusion, we lose sight of what is true. Everything seems contaminated by the stench of destruction.

And yet—Jesus. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out," says Isaiah 42:3 (NIV). Rather, He transforms with resurrection power, speaking life and new growth to the blackened ruins of our souls. Our darkened valleys are never beyond His reach, our ashes never too many, the beauty of fresh greening even now appearing.

Editor's note: This article was included before the onset of the devastating fires in Australia, and it was kept because its message is pertinent to Christian living. Please know that we are sensitive to the plight of the Australians and intend no disrespect.