

THE
CONSEQUENCE
OF ANNA

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

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AND MARK BORNZ

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There's something wrong with Anna . . .





Anna May Shahan

WARNING: This alternative ending to *The Consequence of Anna* is very different than the original and was meant to explore a much darker conclusion. It answers the “what ifs” . . . What if no one had stopped Anna? What if the stockmen were not there that day to help? What if Anna hit James so hard, he never woke up?

We pick the story up within the scene where Anna has confronted her husband James over his egregious betrayal with her cousin Rose . . .



“And now that I’m in love with Rose, it’s time we admit the truth and end this lie,” James said, attempting to reason with Anna. “Divorce is the only way.”

Her mind panicked. “Divorce? What about the station? What about our daughters?”

“You know how to manage this place in your sleep; you don’t need me. And I will visit Scarlet Rose and Mabel Blessing on the weekends.”

Anna stared at him wide-eyed, as if he were on fire. “You can’t leave me!”

He held firm. “Yes, Anna. I’m leaving, and Rose is coming with me.”

“We can fix this! Whatever’s wrong, we can fix it!”

“No! What’s done is done!”

“You can have two wives!” she pleaded. “Please!”

“I don’t want two wives. I only want Rose.”

A thick, dark sensation crept up on her. Seeing nothing but red, she felt as if she were walking through the catacombs. They were leaving without her . . .

Pain. Heartache. Terror.

Deceived and abandoned by the people she loved the most.

Anna lost her senses as the world around her became a blur. A surge of emotion erupted inside her, and as James looked away for a second, she grabbed a mallet and hit him on the back of the head as hard as she possibly could. He fell to the floor. Attempting to stand, stumbling forward, she hit him again and he collapsed.

Anna stared at him, lying there on the ground, unconscious. As if she didn’t even recognize whom she had just hit. Then she hit him once more, and blood sprayed on her face and dress. Dropping the mallet, she grabbed a knife off the tool shelf and ran to the windmill . . .

“Tell me it’s not true!” Anna pleaded as her cousin opened the door.

When Rose couldn’t find James earlier, she had retreated to her windmill to wait for his return.

“The letters in the box at the fisherman’s cabin—tell me it’s not true!” Anna repeated.

Rose saw the blood on her face and dress, and the knife she clutched in her hand. Her heart raced, realizing the secret she and James had been hiding for months was now exposed. Instantly she remembered James telling her they should just leave, and in that moment, she regretted her decision to stay.

“Rose, please tell me it’s all lies,” Anna begged, seemingly unaware she was covered in her husband’s blood.

Rose remained silent. Words eluded her, knowing that Anna had lost her mind. She looked over at the farmhouse, desperately searching for James to rescue her from this nightmare, but he was nowhere in sight. Had Anna killed him? A sudden terror washed over her, so powerful it eclipsed anything she had ever felt before.

“You’re my family, my best cobber,” Anna cried. “I let you sleep with my husband so you could have a baby, and we were supposed to raise our children together. Now you’re both leaving me!”

Rose began to tremble, gripping her cane tightly, preparing to protect herself.

“For God’s sake, I even let you breastfeed my daughters!”

“Anna, please calm down,” Rose implored. She was crying now too.

“You can’t leave me!” Anna screamed. “Not after all I have done for you! You can’t do this to me! I love you! Please, I’m begging you!”

Yarrajan was watching from the back porch. “*I told you, child! I told you!*” she cried out in Nukunu, falling to her knees, wailing in her native tongue. The twins were listening to the screaming, standing in the doorway with horrified faces. They both began to whimper and crouched to the floor, hugging each other for protection and comfort. Yarrajan pulled herself up, gathered them in her arms like a mother hen, and brought them to their room before running back outside.

Anna was now hysterical. “You’re pregnant again; aren’t you,” she sobbed.

Rose dared not answer.

Anna shook as she glared at her, while the shouting prayer of an old Aboriginal woman echoed in her ears. Who was this woman whom her husband now wanted and was leaving with? In her right hand, she clutched the knife, and the light from the late-afternoon sun reflected off the metal, causing a silver shine to flicker into the eyes of her disloyal cousin. “Answer me!” she yelled.

Rose was too frightened to even move.

“And you’re leaving with James,” she said, sobbing even harder.

“Anna . . . ,” Rose entreated, her voice quivering. “They’re just letters; they mean nothing. We’re not leaving you. No one’s leaving anyone.”

Anna looked up at the sky and screamed, “Liarrrr! I saw how he drew you! I saw those disgusting images! You’re both going to hell!”

The Black Shuck looked up at the sky too and howled—a spine-chilling wail.

Suddenly Anna was no longer Anna, but her mother Elsa. She had left her body and was watching it all happen from some high, far-off place. “How could you do this to my daughter,” she growled in an outré, raw voice, her face deranged and demented. “Anna did everything for you, and yet you betrayed her! I won’t let you get away with this!”

As Rose stared at her unhinged cousin, her own mother’s portentous words rang in her ears, yet again, caroming about in her head: “There’s something wrong with Anna . . . Mental disorders plague the women in our lineage . . . A few even killed someone in a fit of rage . . . I’m warning you, dear, be careful.”

Anna became Anna again, turning her head to the left and whispering to someone. No longer was she just hearing voices; she was actually seeing her mother and sister incarnate, just as she did when they came out of the paintings. Elsa stood only a few feet away, and she was holding a five-year-old Blessing’s hand, personified from a picture Anna had in her drawer. Wrathful indignation enveloped her like a corona, and a commensurate scowl marred the little girl’s face.

“You need to discipline this Jezebel for what she has done,” Elsa said. Blessing nodded in agreement.

“I know, Mummy,” Anna replied to the hallucination. “I know.”

“Kill her, Turtle Dove! Kill her and protect your family!”

“Yes, kill her for betraying you,” Genevieve concurred, the black wolf with the bloodred eyes standing next to her. “I warned you, and you didn’t listen. Now fix what you have done.”

“Kill her! Kill her! Kill her!” all the hallucinations chanted together.

Anna only screamed.

Terrified, Rose tried to shut the door; Anna forced her way in. Bunching up her skirt, Rose prepared to run past her, but Anna spread out her arms, knife in hand, letting her know that if she did, she would only intercept her. Releasing her hem, Rose slowly withdrew the tortoiseshell comb from her hair that Anna had given her as a gift. Glossy white, with four long teeth, the striking comb was able to hold up the thickest of

hair; yet with its solid base, it could also be used as a weapon. She pointed the comb at Anna as her dark locks loosened, disseminating about her face, resembling wings unfolding.

Rose would defend herself at all costs.

It was a come-to-Jesus moment for them both. A day of reckoning and regret. They continued to stand their ground, hearts pumping, fear and anger mounting in a perpetual circle. The energy locked them together in a motionless dance, a silent duet of sadness and choler. With each second, they were closer and closer, and with each second, Anna's rage grew hotter and hotter.

"Anna, it's me!" Rose pleaded through her tears. "Please put down the knife!"

She gave no response. In her fury of temporary madness, transmuted back and forth between herself and her mother, Anna no longer knew the woman who adjured and cried before her. She was her cousin, she reminded herself. Her beautiful cousin whom she loved more than life itself. But as she narrowed her gaze at her once best friend, Rose's green eyes no longer looked so pretty and cat-like. Instead, they seemed wild and foreign. More like a strange, rabid feral that had bitten her and wanted to run away.

For some odd reason as Anna glared at her, the image of Joshua's birth flashed across her mind. Even the smell of the blood was still fresh in her memory. It was a spiritual moment, almost ceremonial, as if the red ichor from the birth—the bequeathed gift she had given her beloved cousin—had bound them together for life. Crushing her eyes shut, she no longer wanted to think of it, or to see this woman, or be where she was.

Everything was now in ruin. Nothing would ever be the same again. All that once was, was now lost, and as her mind continued to race, the voice of her husband rang in her ears: "What's done is done!" A searing wave of heartache swept over her, and with a sharp intake of air, Anna opened her eyes again, pointing the knife at her cousin while screaming in Danish, "*Hun stoled på dig! . . . Min datter stoled på dig!*" ("*She trusted you! . . . My daughter trusted you!*")

"Anna, you're talking crazy. You're scaring me," Rose cried.

"Anna? . . . No, you trollop, it's Elsa!" she screamed, frothing at the mouth. "And I will kill you for what you have done to my daughter!"

Rose dropped the comb and fell to her knees, raising her arms up to the heavens, pleading for mercy and begging Anna for forgiveness. But Rose wasn't Rose anymore, either, as Anna watched her cousin slowly transform, her eyes turning bloodred, her teeth growing long and sharp, her body morphing into a black wolf . . .

Was she the Black Shuck all along!

Anna kept pointing the weapon at the Black Shuck kneeling at her feet. She had killed this beast before with a gun, and now she was going to do it again with a knife. I'll make sure I kill it this time, she thought. Lunging, she stabbed at the air; she stabbed at the wolf. Several times.

There was blood.

Rose, in shock, held her throat while blood seeped through her fingers. Her face paled, and as she tried to stand, her knees buckled. "My son needs me," she cried out, attempting to stand once more before collapsing to the ground.



The scene looked like something out of a horror movie.

Or a war.

Rose was bleeding out on the floor, the ruby red ichor growing and spreading out like scarlet wings where she lay, smearing her white oleander skin. It made her aqua green eyes all the more vivid and piercing, even as they reflected the terror within.

There would be no more second chances. No getaway. No blissful life in Ireland with her lover James.

Inhaling a labored breath, colorful evocations flashed through her mind, as if a camera taking snapshots, awake in a lucid dream . . . James at the fisherman's cabin, whispering that he loved her. Joshua sitting on her lap, giggling at his mother. The unborn child in her womb, epitomizing their future.

"There's something wrong with Anna," interrupted the heavenly images, her mother's portentous words once again caroming in her ears. "Mental disorders plague the women in our lineage . . . A few even killed someone in a fit of rage . . . I'm warning you, dear, be careful."

Closing her eyes, Rose breathed her last.

Anna left her cousin's body and went back to James. Despite the previous multiple blows to his head, he was still alive, half unconscious and barely clinging to life. She could hear him fighting to breathe, and for a flicker of a moment she wanted to help him. Instead, she slowly walked over to his body, picked up the mallet on the ground, and with two hands lifted high above her head, swung down hard to finish him off. More blood splattered on her face and dress.

Now he too was gone.

Yarrajan appeared behind her, staring down at Mister James' lifeless body. "I warned you somethin' bad gonna happen, Miss Anna," she said, an incongruous calmness in her tone. "You should never have a single sheila with no children livin' with you, is what I said. But just like your mum, you never be listenin' to me."



That day, the stockmen and ringers were all out in the fields, tending to the sheep and cattle, mending broken fences, and inspecting the crops. To them, it was just another day at Sugar Alexandria, and they were unaware of what had just happened at the station. Yarrajan and her little white rabbit went to work, diligently eliminating any evidence of Anna's crime.

First they removed the dead bodies, stuffing them into empty grain sacks and hiding them in the barn. Then they scrubbed down James' distillery and Rose's windmill, removing any trace of blood. Finally, when the work was done, Anna burned her clothes and washed herself. "Goodness, where did all this blood come from," she rhetorically asked as the water cleansed away the gore. Pinning her hair in Marcel waves, as Rose had shown her, she put on her best Sunday dress.

An eerie darkness enveloped the land, and Anna and her Aboriginal accomplice dragged the cadavers with a horse over to the soul tree. It seemed the ominous shrine had been waiting for them, its branches covered in corn husk dolls and beads swaying in the gusty breeze. Anna dug the shallow graves while Yarrajan held the lantern. Close to sunrise, both women stood over the nefarious sepulchers as if to pay their last respects to their loved ones.

"Just like you taught me, Yarra, their souls will now be here forever," Anna said with a confident timbre. The Aboriginal woman was the one who had first created the soul tree, teaching Anna the ways of her people, their beliefs, and their traditions.

Yarrajan murmured something in Nukunu, and both women kneeled to pray to the Rainbow Serpent for a blessing, hoping they had appeased his anger.



The following day, Moony came to the farmhouse, bright and early, asking for James. Anna said he and Rose had run off together, leaving baby Joshua behind. She broke down as she handed him one of their love letters.

"That's a real shame, Miss Anna," Moony said with empathetic shock. "Never thought he and Miss Rose would do such a thing. But don't you worry none; we're here to support you. In time, everythin' will be right

as rain again.” Shaking his head, he went to tell the rest of the men.

As she watched Moony walk across the stockyard, a contriteness crept up on Anna, pricking her for what she had done. But then she went to the living room and stared at the family portrait Rose had painted, mounted above the fireplace, and the sensation dissipated. It turned to gratefulness, contentment, and even great joy, knowing that her beloved cousin and her loyal husband would never leave her.

Could never leave her.

No . . . Not ever.

Later that night, Anna made a wonderful feast—all of James and Rose’s favorites. She used her finest lime green jadeite dishes, her mother’s special lace tablecloth, and put a record on the gramophone. Grandmother Polston, Mummy, Blessing, and even Genevieve came out of their respective paintings to join her at the table. Then James and Rose walked into the room, giving Anna an uncomfortable pause.

“Don’t worry, Tin Tin,” James said. “We just had a silly quarrel, that’s all. Till death do us part, aye?”

“Yes, Kitten, all is forgiven,” said Rose. “Tomorrow we’ll go to Cassandra’s garden and have a picnic with the children.”

Suddenly baby Joshua started to cry for his mother. Anna bounced him on her knee. The baby’s screams sounded desperate and haunting.

“Shhh,” Anna said. “Shhh, my little kitten. You’re going to have a wonderful life here at Sugar Alexandria with me, your sisters, and Yarra. A beauty of a life. And you just wait until I take you to the garden. We’re going to spend lots of time there.” Giving him a bottle, Joshua calmed. “Oh, how I love you all!” Anna exclaimed, looking up from the child in her arms at all her loved ones sitting around the table.

“We love you too, Anna,” everyone replied simultaneously. But the only other people in the room were her girls, her cousin’s baby, and Yarrajan—her surrogate mother and friend who would be loyal to her death.

“And how lucky we are that we’re all together as a family,” Anna said. She smiled, dimples popping, gap between her teeth showing, her girlish spunk shining through. “As a family should be.”

The End

Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoyed the alternative ending to *The Consequence of Anna*, as iniquitous as it was. We are also curious as to which ending you preferred, and why. Please let us know at kate@katebirkinbooks.com.

Thank you so much!
Kate & Mark

