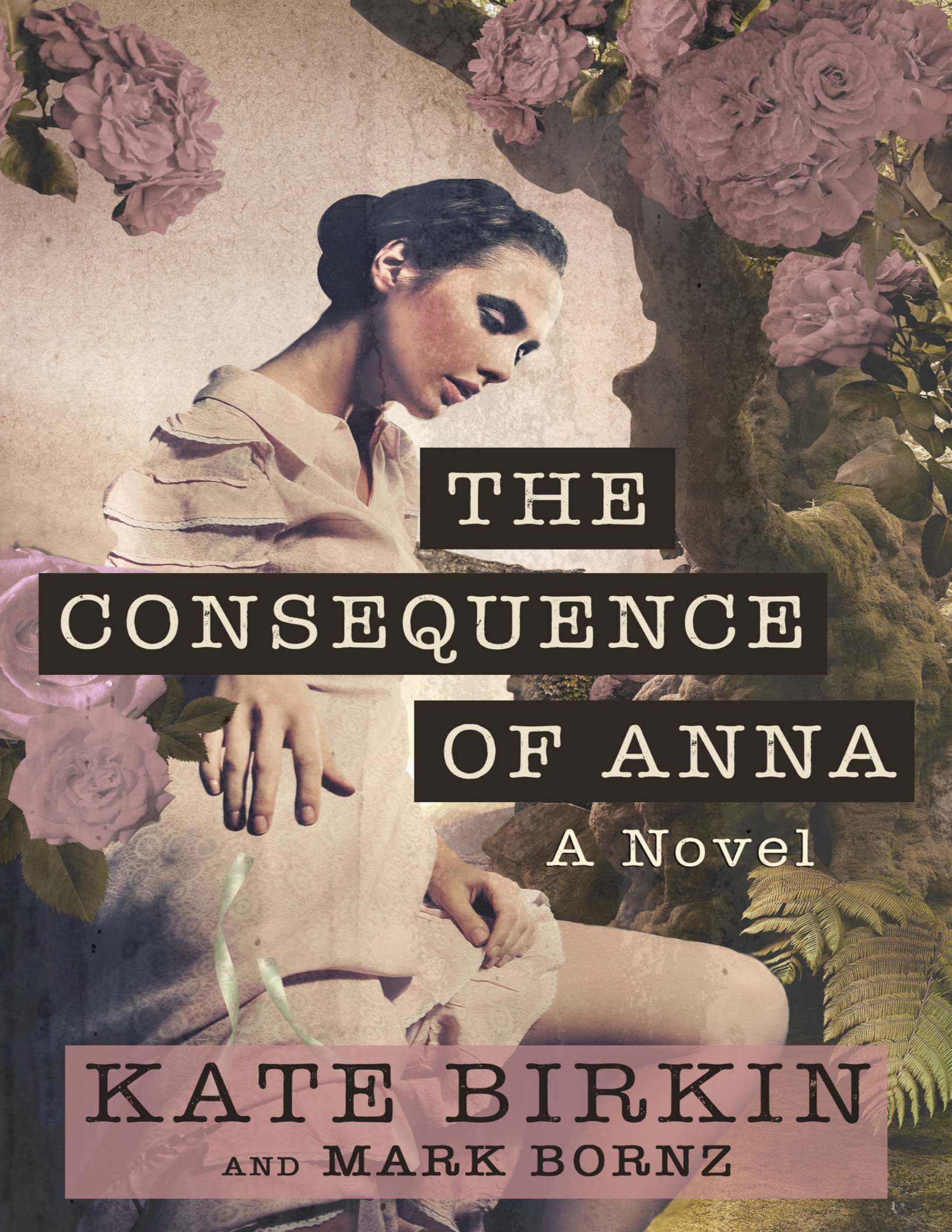




THE

CONSEQUENCE

OF ANNA

A Novel

KATE BIRKIN

AND MARK BORNZ

THE
CONSEQUENCE
OF ANNA

A NOVEL

KATE BIRKIN
AND MARK BORNZ

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, places, events, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual organizations, places, events, or persons, alive or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Copyright (C) 2023 by Kate Birkin

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book, or portions thereof, in any form whatsoever.

For more information about Kate Birkin, Mark Bornz, and their books, visit www.katebirkinbooks.com.

ISBN-13: 979-8-9891841-0-1 (eBook)

ISBN-13: 979-8-9891841-1-8 (Paperback)

In Loving Memory of Crystal and Tarja



CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

PART TWO

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 8

CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 10

CHAPTER 11

CHAPTER 12

CHAPTER 13

CHAPTER 14

CHAPTER 15

CHAPTER 16

CHAPTER 17

CHAPTER 18

CHAPTER 19

CHAPTER 20

PART THREE

CHAPTER 21

[CHAPTER 22](#)
[CHAPTER 23](#)
[CHAPTER 24](#)
[CHAPTER 25](#)
[CHAPTER 26](#)
[CHAPTER 27](#)
[CHAPTER 28](#)
[CHAPTER 29](#)
[CHAPTER 30](#)
[CHAPTER 31](#)
[CHAPTER 32](#)
[CHAPTER 33](#)
[CHAPTER 34](#)
[CHAPTER 35](#)
[CHAPTER 36](#)
[CHAPTER 37](#)
[CHAPTER 38](#)
[CHAPTER 39](#)
[CHAPTER 40](#)
[CHAPTER 41](#)
[CHAPTER 42](#)
[CHAPTER 43](#)
[CHAPTER 44](#)
[CHAPTER 45](#)
[CHAPTER 46](#)
[CHAPTER 47](#)
[CHAPTER 48](#)
[CHAPTER 49](#)
[CHAPTER 50](#)
[CHAPTER 51](#)
[CHAPTER 52](#)
[CHAPTER 53](#)

[CHAPTER 54](#)

[CHAPTER 55](#)

[CHAPTER 56](#)

[CHAPTER 57](#)

[CHAPTER 58](#)

[PART FOUR](#)

[CHAPTER 59](#)

[CHAPTER 60](#)

[AFTERWORD](#)

[BOOK CLUB](#)

I nspired by true events . . .

It had become a thing of legend. Everyone in the Shire of Esperance, Australia, knew the tragedy of Anna May Shahan and her English cousin, Rose Charlotte Moss. The saga of two women—one driven by passion to do the unthinkable, the other plunging into insanity—and a man bound between them.

In recent years, on learning of the tale, two historical writers researched the actual account, attaining all the existing documents, including court evidence, witness statements, medical notes from a psychiatrist about a young mother committed to an insane asylum, love letters, photographs, and a diary dating back to the 1930s. They pieced together the tragic and compelling chronicle, titling it, *The Consequence of Anna*.

This is that story . . .



“Shamed be the woman who alloweth such a sin . . .”





There's something wrong with Anna . . .





Anna May Shahan (née Polston)



Rose Charlotte Moss

She was beautiful.

In a movie star kind of way.

With clear, radiant skin; thick ebony hair; and brilliant, flashing, dazzling green eyes.

Green eyes like two shimmering emerald pools.

Green eyes that spoke with no words.

Green eyes that laughed as you cried.

Green eyes like a serpent, hiding, waiting, slithering, lurching, fangs ready
to puncture its prey . . .

The Kalgoorlie Miner Newspaper

Monday, April 10, 1933

ESPERANCE WOMAN ATTACKS FAMILY MEMBER

COMMITTED TO PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Anna May Shahan, a thirty-two-year-old wife and mother of three-year-old twin daughters, attacked one of her family members with intent to kill, also threatening harm to a newborn infant in a fit of rage. The incident took place Friday morning at the Shahan family cattle station known as Sugar Alexandria outside the town of Esperance, south of Kalgoorlie.

Senior Constable Daniel Higgins stated he was notified but did not arrest Mrs. Shahan, as she suffered a mental breakdown and was committed to the Pleasant Skies Psychiatric Hospital. Sources say she will remain there for evaluation and treatment prior to appearing before a judge. The police gave no other statement.

Immediate family members refused to comment. However, several members of the community were aware of the event and provided their own statements. "It was a love triangle with the most tragic of endings," Father Lothbrok lamented. "Sweet Anna did not deserve such a harrowing fate." Clarion Firestone had a differing opinion, though: "It served her right after what she had allowed. What good Christian wife would scheme such a thing for the happiness of another woman? It just wasn't natural." Yet Hazel Smuckers argued otherwise: "It's all the cousin's fault. Anna was a good girl. If that English tart with the gimp leg hadn't come here, none of this would have happened."

No other information or statements were given.

PART ONE



July 12, 1933

“This is all twisted,” I said, narrowing my eyes at my cousin from the other side of the visiting table. “I shouldn’t be imprisoned here.”

“Anna, please listen to me,” Rose pleaded, a sincere kindness in her voice that at one time would have made me move mountains for her.

I shook my head. “I should be at Sugar Alexandria with my husband and daughters. I should be with them, loving and taking care of them instead of here in this asylum.” I pointed my finger at her. “And *you* . . . you should be far away on the other side of the Indian Ocean.”

“Anna, you’re precious to me. You have always been precious to me,” Rose said.

“Precious?” I scoffed. “If I am so precious to you, why have you done this to me?”

“I didn’t mean to hurt you. You’re my best friend; you’re like a sister to me.”

“No, you’re not my clobber, and no sister of mine. You’re a liar, a thief, and a trollop,” I continued, seething with indignation.

She stared at me in shock, as if looking into the face of a lunatic uttering unholy nonsense.

“As for James, you have bewitched him,” I said, thinking how she had poisoned his mind and soiled his sheets.

An eerie silence followed, both of us feeling it. Despite knowing each other all our lives, we were strangers meeting for the first time. The grim reality was that I was no longer the Anna she knew and loved. What had happened transformed me, infected me. Inside and out. As if my bones had been broken and mended back together with pieces of wire.

Sitting there, I studied my cousin, her flapper bob done in perfect finger waves, her lips and nails crimson red—the same hue she always wore. The maternity dress—lavender, her favorite color—silky and expensive looking, bringing out the emerald in her eyes. She reminded me of cool vanilla ice

cream, of decadence, of an evil Siren. As her pale hand began to caress her stomach, my eyes gravitated along. It was apparent the bairn within was kicking. “Look, the baby is upset,” I said, breaking the silence. “Even your unborn child knows what you have done to me.”

“Anna, I never meant to hurt you,” she sniffled, wiping her nose with a handkerchief. “I love and miss you.” Yet as her words left her lips, she glanced over at the white-uniformed attendants. Was she frightened? Was she shaken that I no longer saw her as I once had? The truth was, I hoped she was scared, as all affection for her had been carved out of me like a gutted pig.

“Love me?” I sneered, appalled at the lie. “You only love yourself.”

“Anna,” she continued to entreat, trying to assuage my anger. “I do love you, and I came here to make peace.”

“You have destroyed me, and now you want peace,” I laughed.

“Please, let me explain,” she said with desperation. “If you listen, you’ll understand, and then maybe you can forgive.”

“You want me to forgive? How dare you!” I yelled, choking back my tears. Rising to my feet, I leaned forward across the table and slapped her face. In a rage, I cursed in Danish, “*You once came to me for help, which I gave. And how did you repay me? By killing my soul and abandoning me. I curse you for what you have done to me!*”

“Anna . . . ,” Rose said, holding her cheek, weeping.

Her display of emotion meant nothing to me. Once more, I slapped her as the attendants came running to intervene, curling their thick hands around my thin arms, dragging me away from her. “*I curse the very ground you slither on!*”

CHAPTER 1



*Anna May Polston
&
Ambrosia (Rose) Charlotte Moss*

Fifteen Years Earlier . . . December 14, 1918

“**T**his is your last summer here,” Anna said, wearing a white slip, looking at herself in the vanity mirror as a sea of freckles stared back at her. Freckles, freckles, freckles everywhere, she thought. Applying crimson red lipstick, she concentrated on not going over her lip line, just as her cousin had shown her.

Rose had been her mentor, her teacher, and her best friend since they were children, and Anna loved her like a sister, affectionately calling her Lottie at times—a shortened form of her middle name Charlotte. She thought Rose was beautiful, witty, and brave, walking tall and confident with her cane, and she would do anything for her. Anything in the world.

“Did you hear what I said, Lottie?” she asked. “This is your last summer here. I’ll probably never see you again after you return to London and marry.” Anna frowned, saddened by her certitude. No more knitting quilts

together; baking Danish pastries; taking hot, soapy baths at the side of the house, shielded by white sheets hanging from the clothesline; having tea in her childhood secret room, reading and laughing; or spending the day outside, picking mushrooms, herbs, and spices for dinner. “I’d trade my healthy leg for your sick one, if it would make you stay.”

Rose, already dressed in her finest chiffon and lace net gown, was waiting for Anna to finish. As she lay on her stomach on the four-poster bed, reading a magazine, she looked up at her younger cousin, so full of quirky bravado. She cared for Anna like a little pet. “Oh, Kitten, don’t say such things. I’ll be back.”

“You pinky swear?” Anna asked, voice cracking, glossy eyes meeting her cousin’s in the reflection of the mirror.

Rose lifted her pinky, and Anna walked over, interlinking hers. “I swear,” said Rose. The young women remained that way a moment, fingers tightly locked, grinning at each other.

Each summer, Rose would make the long trip from England to Australia to stay at Sugar Alexandria, a remote cattle station outside the town of Esperance. Her mother allowed her to go when Anna’s father first suggested it, seeking to soften his tomboy daughter by having her associate with his girlish niece. He was fed up with Anna’s behavior, always worried sick whenever his inquisitive and fearless child went missing. Yarrajan, the Aboriginal nanny, usually found her little white rabbit in the neighbor’s elaborate garden, playing with her invisible friends among the flowers, trees, statues, and ponds.

“Miss Anna, you come down here right now,” the Aboriginal woman would demand, looking up at Anna’s legs dangling from the branch of a beech tree. “You be too old to be actin’ like this, and your daddy’s spitfire mad. It’s time you be wearin’ a dress and some shoes, learnin’ how to be a lady.”

Anna would only giggle, dropping leaves or bugs on her nanny. But in truth, she loved the woman dearly. Yarrajan had taught her all about the land and the food that grew on it, enabling her to survive in the wild if need