



Sequel to *Wrapped up in You:* Christmas, the Following Year

Chapter 1

I can tell from the muted sounds of the early-morning village that it has snowed again overnight. Yawning, I open my eyes and look at the face on the pillow next to me. In sleep, Dominic is even more handsome than he is when he's awake. Every morning I thank God that he is here with me.

Gently, I kiss his lips. 'Merry Christmas, darling.'

Dominic opens his eyes and stares into mine. 'Merry Christmas, Just Janie.'

He pulls me in close and I luxuriate in the warmth, the scent of his body. I wriggle against him. That's waking him up nicely.

'Hmm. I think I have a very special Christmas present for you,' Dominic says.

'Oh, really?' Our bodies mould together. 'Is it the same "special present" that you *always* have for me?'

'Ah, yes,' he says, his beautiful mouth breaking in to a wide grin, 'but it is a present that you *always* like.'

'It's my *favourite* present,' I agree.

My husband moves above me and I stroke his face, sighing with pleasure. I still thrill at every touch of his fingers and I wonder whether the passion



between us will ever diminish.

Then a little voice says, ‘Da-da-da-da!’ and we both look at the cot next to the bed and convulse with laughter. The new addition to our family. The best passion killer ever.

‘My son,’ Dominic says. ‘How will we make you another brother or sister if you are awake when we need you to be asleep?’

In response he gets an even louder, ‘Da-da-da-da-da!’

Dominic kisses my nose. ‘Later,’ he says. He climbs out of bed, ties his kanga round his waist and lifts Samuel out of his cot.

He brings him back to our bed and hands him to me. We fuss over and cuddle him together while Samuel tells us a story in his baby nonsense language that keeps us enthralled. Then, when he starts to get at a scratchy, Dominic says, ‘I will get his milk,’ and disappears downstairs.

We’ve got in to the habit of giving Samuel some milk in bed before he has his breakfast of mashed gloop. In Dominic’s absence, Archie jumps on to the bed and curls up in the warm spot left beside us. Archie hasn’t been terribly impressed by the arrival of Samuel. If he doesn’t care for people much, then he likes babies even less. Still, all credit to Archie, he tolerates it stoically as Samuel pats him on the head with all the finesse of someone who’s not yet one year old and says, ‘Ca-ca-ca-ca-ca.’



‘Cat.’ Samuel dotes on Archie, but the feeling definitely isn’t yet mutual.

‘Ca-ca-ca-ca-ca.’

‘Close enough,’ I concede.

A moment later, Dominic returns with the warmed milk and slides back into bed.

‘*Na kerai*,’ Dominic says, which is a term of endearment meaning, Oh, child. ‘Look what your father has provided.’ Samuel grabs the bottle with both hands. ‘Soon there will be porridge for breakfast.’

Dominic has proved to be the model father; attentive and adoring. He’s happy to bring Samuel up in my very British, if slightly haphazard, style, which means that he changes nappies, prepares feeds, bathes Samuel and generally embraces the phrase ‘hands on’.

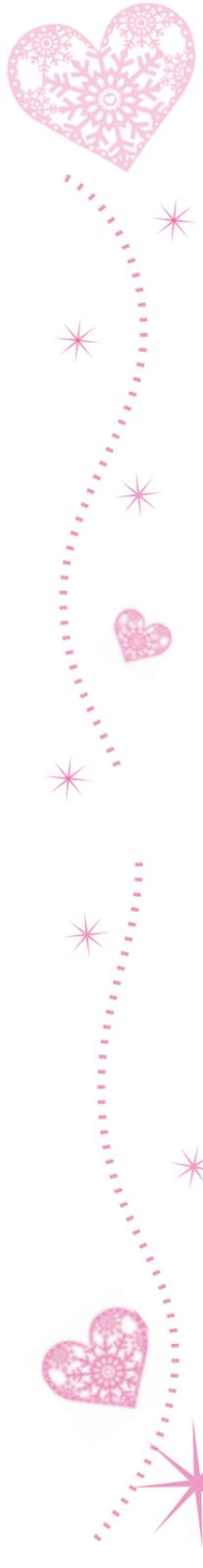
Once he’s happily ensconced between us with his bottle, Samuel settles down again.

‘I can’t believe that this is his first Christmas,’ I say to Dominic as our boy glugs his milk. ‘Where did the time go?’

‘It has gone by very fast.’

So it has. By all accounts, it’s been an action-packed twelve months since last Christmas.

Our son, Samuel Lemayian, was born on the third day of January this year and our lives were changed for ever. Samuel was a healthy nine-pound baby, with skin the colour of a chocolate button and his father’s



deep mahogany eyes. Now an equally healthy toddler, he has an energy level that I can't quite keep pace with. He seems to have taken Dominic's looks, as his features have that sublime blend of strength and delicacy that are so typical of a Maasai warrior. His forehead is high and proud. His mouth full and wide. It's already clear that he's going to be long and lean like his daddy.

'Are you looking forward to our first Christmas as a family?' I ask.

'I could not be happier, Just Janie.'

But sometimes I wonder if that's true. Occasionally, I see Dominic's eyes cloud over and I know that he's missing his family back home and the plains of Africa.

He's settled in incredibly well in England—against all the odds. Once we were married and Dominic was able to work, it didn't take him long to find a job. Shaped by his time living on the streets of London, Dominic was very sure that he wanted to work in the community. Currently, he's employed by a youth project where he's involved in mentoring a group of delinquent and disadvantaged teenagers. He helps them to sort out problems at home or school, tries to engage them in hobbies and sport and, hopefully, encourages them to stay on the straight and narrow. They regularly play football and he's done a deal with the local indoor ski slope to give the kids a course of free lessons in return for them helping out there. Of course, they are being trained in the art of jumping.



They're a tough, disenfranchised bunch but I think Dominic's charm and impeccable manners are gradually starting to wear off on them.



The only thing that he has insisted on is that he becomes the main breadwinner. That's one area where his Maasai traditions were unshakeable. He wanted it to be his responsibility to care for us both. Although financially it made sense for me to go back to work, Dominic wanted me to be at home with Samuel. So I gave in my resignation at Cutting Edge – amid many tears – and, as a compromise, all I do now is a bit of mobile hairdressing three mornings a week and all day Saturday when Dominic can be at home with Samuel. I know that many families struggle with this, but it's hard managing childcare for a baby when neither of us have any family around to help. The cost of putting Samuel into a nursery is prohibitively expensive and, anyway, that's not what I want for my child.

Needless to say, the good ladies of The Nashley Church Flower Committee have stepped into the breach and have all become surrogate grannies to Samuel. Mrs Duston, a real treasure, is self-appointed granny-in-chief and she sorts out a rota for 5 who will be granted care of Samuel on my working mornings. They're all fiercely jealous of him and catfights break out if one lady thinks that one of the others is getting more than her fair share of him.

Nina and Mike are wonderful too. At Dominic's request we had Samuel christened and our friends



have become his godparents. They love him as they would their own child and twice this year we've all been on holiday together.

Nina is now living in the village – happily settled in a small and very pretty cottage near the green. She and Mike are very much in love and I'm just waiting for the sound of wedding bells so that I can buy a new hat.

When Samuel has finished his milk, we get out of bed and I take him to the window to look at the snow. Holding him tightly, I let him stand on the sill. Samuel is totally bored with the limitations of crawling now and is eager to find his feet. Dominic comes and slips his arm round my waist.

'Look, Samuel,' I say, trying to inject the sound of awe into it. 'Snow.'

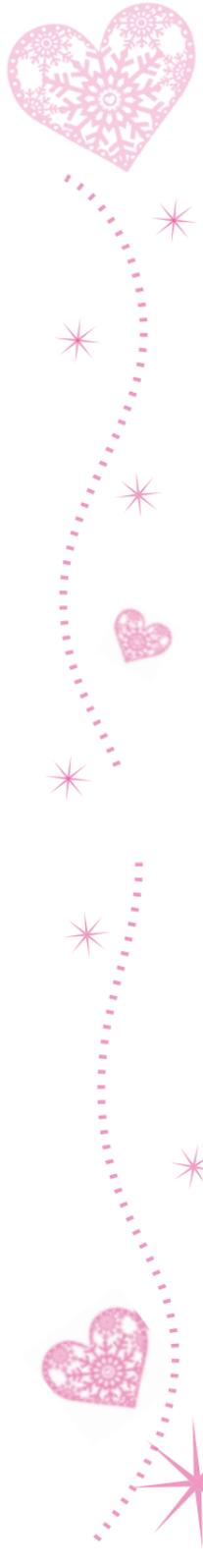
My son bashes the window frame with his curled up fist. 'Caca- ca-ca.' 'Snow,' I reiterate. 'Ca!' he insists.

'S. N. O. W.'

'Ca-ca-ca-ca-ca!' I sigh. We have a long way to go.

Together, we all look out over the winter wonderland that the snow has created. The chocolate-box cottages covered with icicles, the frozen pond with frosted grasses fringing it, the distinctly chilly-looking ducks waddling gingerly on the ice. Nashley is very beautiful in a small, twee way.

'Sometimes this feels a very long way from



Africa,' Dominic says as if reading my mind.

I think of the place where we fell in love. The searing heat, the dust, the exotic wildness, the immense barren landscape broken only by a lone acacia tree on the horizon. The big, bitey animals. I wonder if that's what Dominic's dwelling on too. After our initial troubles, he now seems to have slotted in here seamlessly but I guess that part of him will always be in the Maasai Mara.

'I know.' There's a frown on his brow and I'd like nothing more than to smooth it away. 'You must miss your home.'

'I miss my family. I worry about my mummy and daddy. They are getting older and I should care for them. That is hard. But I have grown to like the ways of our English village, where you and my son are. This is now my home.'

'One day we'll go back to Africa and take your son to meet the rest of your family.'

'I would like that, Just Janie,' he says with a wistful air.

'But now,' I say, 'we need to get this little man up and dressed. We have an appointment for champagne and canapés at the Codling-Benthams this fine Christmas morning and he needs to look his best.'

'I wished to wear my best shuka and my wedding necklace,' Dominic says, 'but I cannot find them.'

'Really?' I scratch my head. 'I thought they were in the cupboard.'

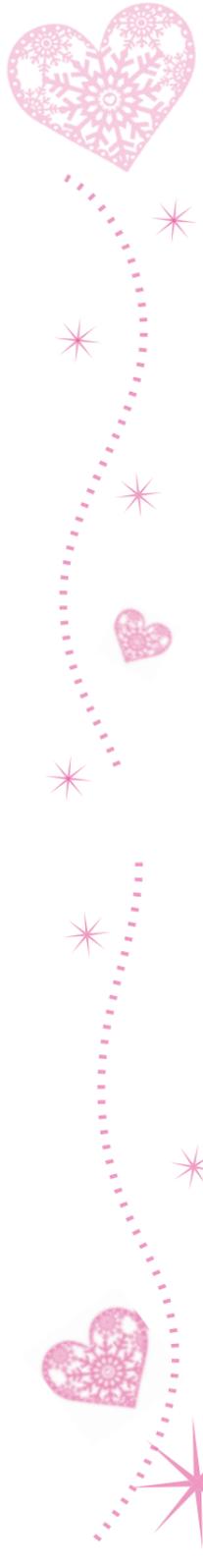


‘I also thought that. Would you see if you can find them, Janie? I must hurry and put the turkey in the oven before we leave.’

Under Granny Duston’s expert tutelage, Dominic has become quite the accomplished chef. He’s much better than I am. At his 7 insistence, he’s cooking lunch today and Nina and Mike are joining us.

‘Whatever you wear, you’ll look wonderful,’ I tell Dominic. ‘I love you. I think I am the happiest woman in the world.’

‘And I am the happiest man.’ Dominic holds me tightly. ‘Kuwa na Krismasi njema. Merry Christmas, Just Janie.’



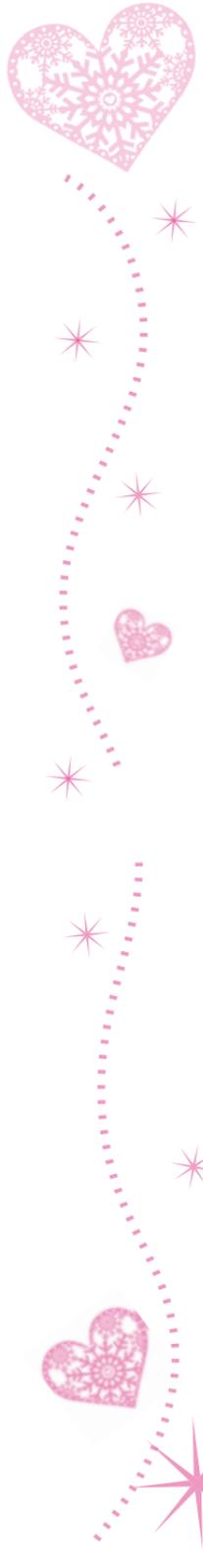
Chapter 2

It seems like the whole population of Nashley has turned out for Mr and Mrs Codling-Bentham's drinks party. We have very few highlights on our social calendar and have to make the most of them when we do.

Samuel, fully fed and content, is dressed in his new Christmas outfit. He seems to grow at an astonishing rate and if he keeps up this pace, I think he'll be six foot tall by the time he's ten, which, of course, means that he needs new clothes every five minutes. With me only working part-time now, money is tight and the baby clothes section of eBay has become my best friend.

Today, he's sporting a red top with a cheery reindeer design and blue trousers that will probably only last him for a few weeks. I dread to think how many pairs of shoes he's going to get through in a lifetime.

In the Codling-Bentham's vast hallway, a tall blue spruce is laden with lights and baubles. They are both drifting round, handing out drinks, offering trays of elegant canapés. The minute we're through the door, the ladies of The Nashley Church Flower Committee swoop on us. Samuel is out of my arms in seconds and is being passed around like a parcel. He bears all the attention affably. Clearly, he has inherited his father's temperament and smiles and flirts with the ladies, batting his long eyelashes at them all. Dominic takes a glass of orange juice and joins them.



I've squeezed into my best red dress – some of that baby weight just won't shift – and I've even put on some make-up for the occasion. Dominic, who is quite comfortable now in western clothes, still likes to wear his tribal outfit every now and then. Despite searching high and low – admittedly in a rush – I couldn't find his wedding necklace or best shuka. I'll have to have a good look another day. It's been months since he wore his best clothes and I wonder if they found their way into the loft as we were creating space for Samuel. So Dominic has put on the only other shuka he possesses but that's still heavily beaded and the deepest red. I couldn't see his headdress either, but I did manage to find his arm bracelets, so he's wearing those too. He looks stunning. I'm sure he does it on purpose to give the granny posse a cheap thrill. They coo over him as much as they do Samuel.

As I'm tucking into champagne and canapés, Mike and Nina come over.

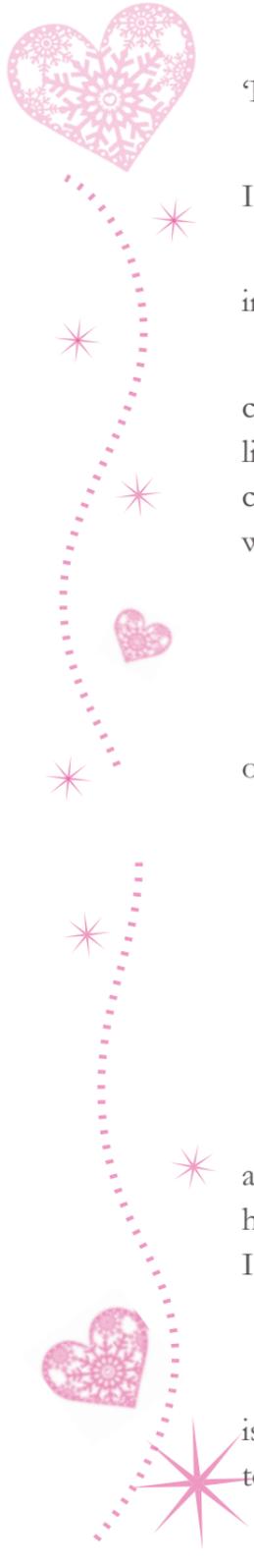
'Hi, hun,' Nina says. 'Merry Christmas.'

'And to you.' We kiss each other, then Mike and I do the same.

'Merry Christmas, Janie,' he says. 'I hope it's a good one for you all.'

'I'm sure it will be and we're looking forward to sharing it with you two.' My friends exchange an enigmatic smile. 'What?' I say. 'I saw that.'

'You'll find out soon enough,' Mike informs me.



'I'll go and track down the main man.'

'That'll be where all the old dears are swarming.'
I nod in the general direction.

'Ah, yes,' Mike says ruefully. 'They're all totally impervious to the Mike Perry brand of charm now.'

He wanders off to locate Dominic. A smile comes to my lips. Mike and Dominic have bonded like brothers. I don't think that two men could be closer friends and I'm so pleased that it worked out well for all of us.

'Looking hot,' Nina tells me, taking in my outfit.

'Thanks. Can't breathe in it though.'

She shrugs. 'A small price to pay.' Nina sips an orange juice.

'No fizz?'

'Just juice.'

'Are you ill?'

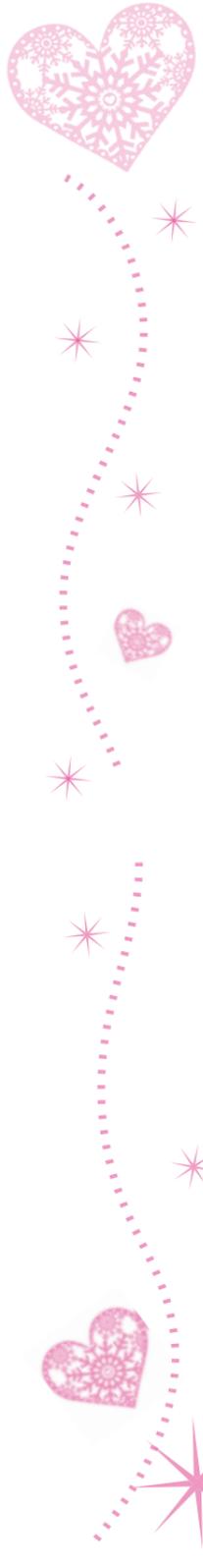
'Didn't fancy it.'

'You *are* ill.'

We both laugh at that. It's nice that Nina and I are as close as we ever were though she insists she hates working at Cutting Edge even more now that I'm not there. 'Samuel looks great too.'

'An eBay special.'

'He's adorable.' She looks over to where Samuel is still being passed around. 'I've never known a kid to have so many grannies.'



‘There’s certainly no shortage of babysitters.’ I toy with my glass. ‘The only thing that bothers me is the lack of children in the village.’ I look round the hallway. ‘There are only a handful and the few that do live here are all way older than Samuel. I don’t want to move out of Nashley, but I worry who he’s going to play with.’

‘Well,’ Nina says thoughtfully, ‘I might be able to help out there.’

My eyes widen. ‘You’re not!?’

She nods, teary now. ‘I am!’

‘You’re having a baby?’

‘I’m three months gone,’ she assures me. ‘I don’t know how we’ve kept it a secret. We just wanted to wait until everything was OK before we told you.’

I do a little dance on the spot and then hug my friend. ‘I’m going to be an auntie!’

‘You’re going to be the *best* auntie,’ she says.

‘I’m so pleased for you. Mike will be the perfect father.’

‘Remember all those times in the salon that you used to sing his praises to me?’

‘I still do.’

‘I thought you’d end up with him one day.’ She laughs. ‘Who’d have thought it would be me?’

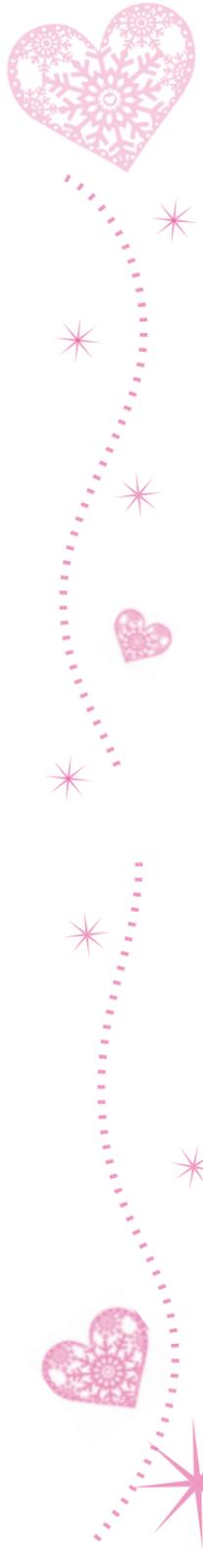
‘I’m so glad that you’re happy together. Can I go and buy that bloody hat now?’



‘Watch this space,’ Nina says. ‘You might have to be on bridesmaid duty yet.’

‘I’ll drink to that!’

Nina and Mike married, with a baby on the way. Then my happiness would really be complete.



Chapter 3

It's snowing when we walk back to Little Cottage. Big, fat, lazy flakes drift down from the heavy sky. Dominic wraps Samuel tightly in his kanga, sheltering him from the cold, and I take his hand in mine. It's not Africa and as he cuddles our son close to him, I worry about the faraway look in his eye.

Before Dominic serves Christmas lunch, we toast Mike and Nina's announcement. Mike blushes when we call him Daddy.

'This is excellent,' Dominic says. 'I could not have heard better news.'

Again, Mike and Nina exchange that smile and I know that they're plotting something.

We raise our glasses together. 'To friendship,' I propose and we all echo. 'To friendship.'

Little Cottage looks fantastic. It might be the world's smallest house, but it lends itself perfectly to this time of year and I always make sure it looks its best. I've even tidied away Samuel's toys for the day. Well, most of them. The tree is small so that it doesn't take up too much room, but there are presents piled high beneath it. There are fairy lights round the fireplace and tinsel draped across the beams. We've got dozens of cards that are all pinned up round the walls and the scent of a cranberry candle wafts into the air. It all looks so magical.

The excitement of the Codling-Bentham's festive drinks party and being manhandled by all and



sundry has left Samuel exhausted. His eyes are rolling and with superb timing, he slides into the land of nod and I'm able to put him down for a much needed nap while Dominic serves up the most succulent turkey with all the trimmings.

Dinner is wonderful. Dominic, I think, makes the finest crispy roast potatoes any Maasai warrior could. Dessert has been provided by Granny Duston in the form of one of her delicious home-made Christmas puddings, rich with fruit and brandy.

'I'm not sure I should be eating this,' Nina says patting her tummy. 'The baby could come out drunk.'

Afterwards, we insist that Nina and Mike slump in the living room while Dominic and I tidy up in the kitchen.

'That was lovely,' I tell him.

'Thank you, Janie.'

'Happy?'

He winds his strong arms round me. 'Very.' The snow is falling again. 'I should have arranged to call my mummy and daddy,' he says. 'I would like to speak to them on Christmas Day.'

'Will they be celebrating?'

'Oh, yes,' he says. 'All of the village will have a party.'

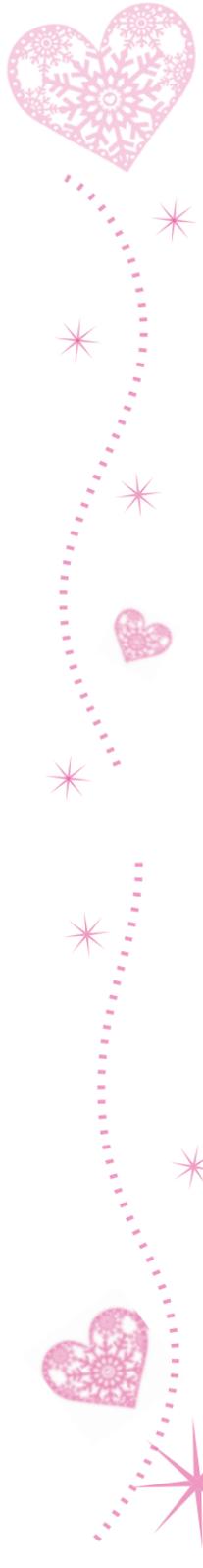
'Just like here.'

Dominic laughs. 'No, Just Janie. Not like here.'



‘Do you miss them very much?’ ‘Yes. I hope that I will see them again one day. I hope that they will meet my son.’

I nestle into him. ‘I hope so too.’ Though we both know that with Samuel in our lives, it will be harder than ever to save up to go back.



Chapter 4

Dominic makes coffee and we hand out some of Granny Duston's excellent mince pies. She beats Mr Kipling hands down. Upstairs, I can hear Samuel talking in scribble to the ducks dangling from the mobile above his cot, so I go to lift him out.

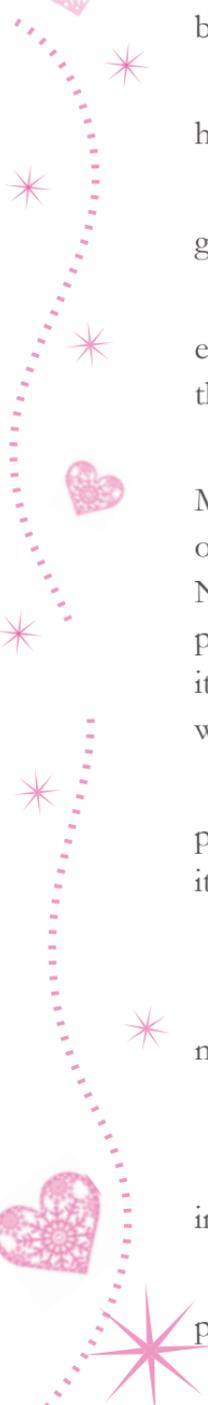
He's always so smiley that I think he must be the most contented child on the planet. I change him, blowing raspberries on his tummy to make him giggle, then I wash his face and take him back downstairs for the present opening ceremony.

Dominic, Mike and Nina are all sprawled out on the sofas, looking as if carb-slump has well and truly set in. Don't think I'll get them out for the bracing walk that I'd envisaged.

Under the tree there are piles of presents, but looks can be deceptive. We've been quite frugal this year and most of them are cheap and cheerful. There are some charity shop secondhand books for Dominic, whose appetite for reading is as voracious as ever. I give Samuel a present so he can tear the paper off, and I sit next to him on the floor to help.

Most of the clothes for him are from eBay and I hardly ever need to buy toys as the ladies of The Nashley Church Flower Committee keep him entertained with a steady supply of castoffs from their grandchildren. I've got a new scarf and gloves from Dominic.

As Mike and Nina have been so good to us,



we've splashed out and have booked them afternoon tea at a local manor house. It's cost us a fair penny but it has a great reputation.

'I hope you like it,' I say to Mike and Nina as I hand them the envelope with their voucher inside.

'That's lovely,' Nina says. 'I've always wanted to go there.' Kisses all round.

'Thanks so much.' Then Mike and Nina exchange that glance I've been seeing all day. Clearly, they're excited about something.

'I don't know how we've kept this to ourselves,' Mike says. 'Not more surprises!' I say. 'Just the one,' he admits. 'We have an envelope for you too,' Nina says and from the depths of her handbag, she produces a fat, festively wrapped packet. She hands it to me. 'We wanted to do something special for you while we have the chance.'

Puzzled, I pass the envelope to Dominic while I pull Samuel on to my knee. Slowly, Dominic unwraps it. Then he looks at Nina and Mike, open-mouthed.

'What is it?' I want to know.

Dominic stares at the envelope wide-eyed. 'I do not know what to say.'

'Let me see.' I take it from Dominic's hands.

Mike and Nina are laughing now. Dominic joins in.

'Is it a joke pressie?' I ask, but then I look at the paper in my hands and see that it is not. Now I, too,



am open-mouthed and wide-eyed. ‘You’re kidding me?’

Mike and Nina shake their heads.

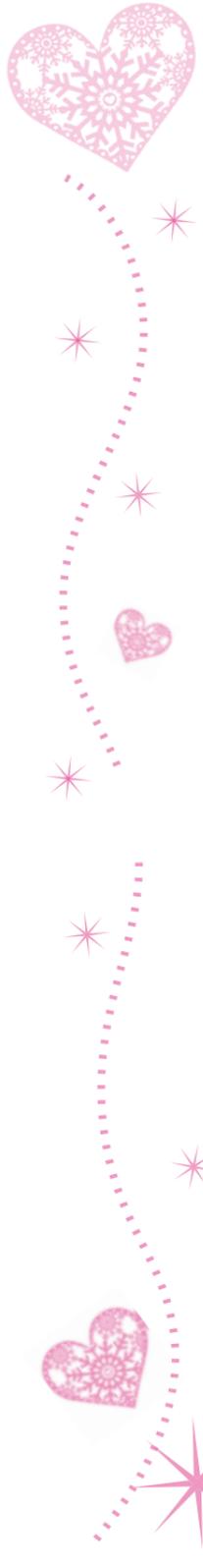
Our present is a set of plane tickets to Africa. Tomorrow, Boxing Day, all of us are travelling together to the Maasai Mara. I stroke them to check that they’re real.

‘I thought it was time that Dominic took his son home to meet his grandparents,’ Mike says, suddenly bashful.

‘You can’t do this for us,’ I tell him. ‘It’s too much.’

‘It’s all booked,’ Mike replies. ‘Nina and I wanted to see Dominic’s homeland too. Are you pleased?’

‘Pleased!?’ I think my heart might burst with joy. I turn to Dominic and my strong, macho Maasai warrior has tears of happiness rolling down his face.



Chapter 5

The small plane swoops over the vast plains of the Maasai Mara and I grip Dominic's hand. The big, yellow disc of the sun fills the window. It seems like a lifetime has passed since I was last here.

'Mummy and Daddy will be surprised,' Dominic says. He can barely contain his excitement and has fidgeted all the way from Heathrow. He looks at me now. 'This is the second time I have been in the air, Just Janie,' he says. 'It is easier with you by my side.'

I kiss him. 'We are so lucky to have such good friends.'

'Yes,' he says. 'I do not know how we will repay this kindness.'

Mike and Nina have booked for all of us to stay at Kiihu Camp, the place where Dominic and I first met, where we fell in love. I can't wait to be back there again.

Samuel, on my lap, has been an angel all the way here and I'm so proud of him. He's been on a ferry before, but never a plane and he's taken it all in his stride. The rest of Christmas Day was all a bit of a scramble as we rushed to pack, but Mike and Nina helped us to get ready. So now we're here! My second Christmas trip to Africa.

We bump down on to the dusty airstrip amid the scrub of the Mara and when we all disembark, there's a van from Kiihu waiting for us.

As we climb aboard, Mike says, 'I know you



want to see your family as soon as possible, Dominic, but I thought we'd stay in the camp tonight, recover from the flight a bit, relax and then go to your village tomorrow. If that's OK?'

'Mike.' Dominic clasps his friend's fist in his. 'I am humbled that you have arranged this. If this is what you want to do, we will do it.'

So we check into the camp and it's just as magical as I remember. Dominic is overwhelmed to be welcomed by his old friends again and, as is the Maasai way, struggles to keep his emotions in check.

We have the same tent that I stayed in on my first visit to Africa, except now they've added a little bed for Samuel. Dusk is falling and we quickly freshen up, sharing the bucket shower. I put Samuel down and, instantly, he's asleep – the excitement of the long day catching up with him.

Dominic collects Mike and Nina from their tent, just as he did with me on my very first visit and we eat outside, beneath the canopy of stars and enveloped by the velvet blackness. I think we're quite used to darkness living in a village, but this darkness is so all-consuming that you can't see a hand in front of you once you're away from the light of the campfire. After dinner, we sit and drink Amarulu as we watch the embers burn low, listening to the guttural roar of lions getting ever closer. I love the sounds of the night. And to think that when I first came here, I was afraid. I marvel at how much my life has changed.

'This is a very special place, Dominic,' Mike says.



‘Oh yes,’ he agrees. ‘And tomorrow I will be proud to show you the land of my birth.’

Nina is tired after the long flight, so we go off to bed early. I kiss my son and carefully tuck the blanket around his neck, even though the night is warm. The little catlike genets jump and scramble on the canvas. A hyena cackles and is answered by a grumbling lion. I lie back in Dominic’s arms.

‘Remember when we first made love in this tent?’ he murmurs against my neck.

‘Hmm. How could I forget? It was one of the best nights of my life,’ I answer. ‘I loved you from that moment.’

‘Perhaps we can make an African baby?’ Dominic teases.

I curl against him. ‘That sounds like a jolly splendid idea.’

Dominic laughs softly and as he holds me close, whispers, ‘Lovely jubbly.’



Chapter 6

Dominic can hardly contain his excitement. At home, he's got used to spending most of the night in bed instead of prowling the village, but now he can't sleep at all. In the middle of the night, he was up and out of the tent.

At first light, he comes back and wakes me up. There's a light in his eyes that I now know has been missing. I can tell myself that he's settled into the quiet village routine of Nashley but, underneath, I acknowledge that it must have been tough. This is a world away and it's what Dominic knows. It's his land. It's where he's most comfortable.

'Glad to be home?'

'I have missed the soil of the Mara on my feet.'

The sun is climbing in the sky as we have breakfast and as soon as we're done, we climb into the van and head out towards Dominic's village. Mike and Nina are sporting bulging rucksacks.

'My goodness,' I say. 'You two aren't exactly travelling light. What on earth have you got in there?'

'Just a few little essentials,' Nina says mysteriously.

'Not feeling sick?'

'I'm fine. Honestly.'

After last night, I am sure that under the African sky we have made a baby too, but we'll just have to wait and see whether it's just my romantic notion or if I can feel another child inside me. I only hope that



I am pregnant again.

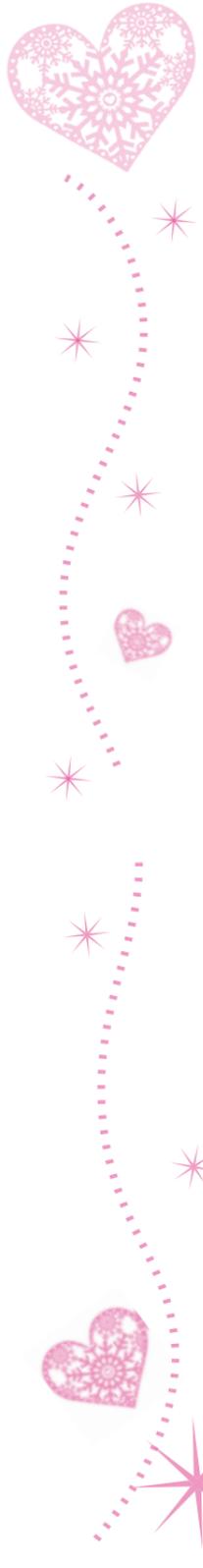
Samuel is tied tightly to Dominic's chest as we bump over the dirt tracks. The warthogs scatter in our path and we stop occasionally so that Mike and Nina can stand up in the open roof of the van and marvel at the zebra, ostriches and hyena that cross our path.

'We've plenty of time for a game drive while we're here,' Mike says. 'The important thing today is for you to see your family again.'

'If you are happy,' Dominic says, 'then I am happy.'

So we continue on to Dominic's village. The *manyatta* is surrounded by a tall circle of acacia fencing made from branches laid together, and the gates are closed to keep out the lions that will take the goats given half the chance. As we approach, the driver sounds his horn and the gates swing open. We jump out of the van and walk towards the village. Mike and Nina exchange that glance again and I know that the surprise isn't over yet.

Sure enough, as we get near, the gates swing open and the villagers come out to greet us wearing their finest clothes. They swarm out, a riot of colour, chanting songs. There seem to be an awful lot more people than were here before and soon we're surrounded. Everyone's smiling happily, clapping and swaying their hips. The men wear their finest headdresses and dance along with the women.



Dominic looks at Mike.

‘You have arranged this too?’ Mike nods.

‘What?’ Clearly I’m missing something.

‘This is a wedding song, Just Janie,’ Dominic explains. ‘My people, they are welcoming the bride and groom.’

‘Really? Us?’

Mike and Nina are obviously very pleased with their subterfuge. ‘We thought you should be married in your homeland, Dominic. We’ve brought everything you need with us.’

They produce the stuffed rucksacks. ‘Ah. So that’s where Dominic’s wedding necklace is.’

‘We had a devil of a job getting them out from under your noses,’ Mike confesses. ‘But you’ve got very tidy cupboards, by the way.’

‘I’ll never trust you two again,’ I tell them and then I hug them both tightly. ‘You don’t know how much this means to us, to Dominic.’

‘We do,’ Mike says. ‘That’s why we wanted to organise it while we could. You wouldn’t believe how many emails we’ve sent to Dominic’s family.’

But I can believe it and I can only be grateful for the wonders of technology.

Our brightly coloured escorts dance us into the village and, in the centre, Dominic’s father and mother are waiting. He goes to them and hugs them fiercely, then he hands Samuel to his mother and she



nestles the baby to her, love shining in her eyes. Her child has done her proud.

I don't know how they all keep their emotions so tightly controlled because I've gone completely to pieces and so have Mike and Nina.

Still surrounded by singing, we're ushered into a nearby hut. Mike and Nina follow and give us the rucksacks. 'I *hope* you've got all the right things in there.'

'Oh, Mike.' I throw my arms round his neck. 'How can we ever thank you?'

'Just be great godparents to our child. That's all we ask.'

'Done deal,' I tell him.

Then they're taken off to another hut to get themselves ready for the celebration.

When Dominic and I are alone, I say to him, 'Did you expect anything like this?'

'No,' he says. 'I am feeling overwhelmed.'

'Sure that you want to marry me again?'

He wraps his arms round me. 'I have never been more sure of anything in my life, Just Janie.'

'Then let's do it!'



Chapter 7

Dominic is dressed in his finery. His feather headdress is in place, as is his best beaded tunic and wedding necklace – the necklace that I searched for, not knowing that our wonderfully sneaky friends had already spirited it away.

In the rucksack Nina has packed for me, there's the simple white dress I wore for my wedding at home and the bridal necklace that Dominic gave me. Tenderly, Dominic places the elaborate jewellery around my neck and it drapes down to my feet. I'd forgotten how gorgeous it was. I have to say that it feels even more perfect in this setting than it did at Bletchley Registry Office.

'Do I look OK?'

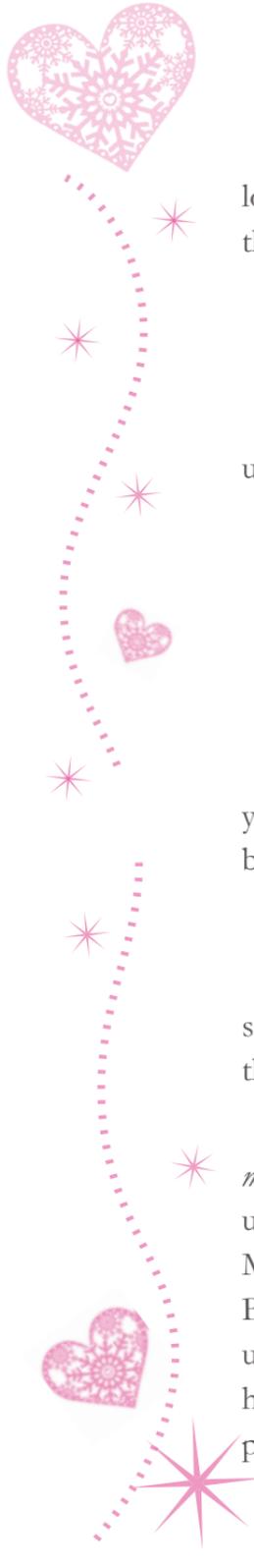
Dominic gently strokes my hair. 'You look beautiful.'

I smooth my hands over my hips. 'This dress is a bit tighter than the last time I wore it.'

'So is my shuka,' he jokes.

'It's all those home-made puds that Granny Duston provides for us.' Soon I hope it will be more than too much apple crumble that will be making my belly swell again. I wonder what the good ladies of The Nashley Church Flower Committee would think if they could see us now?

Dominic paints his face with ochre dye and then asks, 'Are you ready?'



I nod. 'Is there anything that I need to know?'

'Only that the wedding will go on for a very long time. You will be the most honoured guest. And there will be lots of dancing.'

'I expect jumping will be involved.'

Dominic laughs. 'There will be lots of jumping.'

'I hope Mike's been practising. We want to uphold the British honour.'

'Mike is a very fine jumper.'

'But he'll have his work cut out today.'

'Yes.'

'I love you,' I tell Dominic.

'I love you too. My soul is very happy since you came into my life, Janie. You have given me our beautiful son and I cannot thank you enough.'

'And I hope there will be many more.'

We kiss each other deeply, then hand in hand we step out from the cool darkness of the hut and into the blazing sunshine.

Even more people have arrived and the *manyatta* is thronging. Mike and Nina are waiting for us. Nina has changed into a white linen shift and Mike's wearing a matching shirt and light trousers. Both grinning like loons, they fall into step behind us. Dominic's parents and brothers and sisters are here too. Dominic's mother is still cuddling Samuel possessively and showing him off to the rest of the



gathering. Whatever our circumstances, we must try to come out here as often as we can. Dominic needs to connect with his land, his family, so that he can remain true to who he really is. And I want our son to be brought up knowing all about his wonderful heritage.

Dominic is escorted by the men of the village and I'm taken by the women to the place where the wedding ceremony will take place. In a bustling procession of singing and dancing, we're led down to a shaded spot beneath a crop of acacia trees.

Waiting for us is one of the village elders. As we stand face to face in front of a smiling crowd, we're given his blessing. We're wished a long life, much prosperity and many children. I couldn't ask for anything more.

As the singing and dancing starts again, Mike and Nina come to hug us and once again we pour out our thanks. They have made my husband's dream come true and I will, for ever, be eternally grateful to them. Then Dominic's mother hands me our son.

Together, Dominic and I cuddle Samuel between us under the unbroken azure sky. He kicks and gurgles and is generally unaware of how much this means to us.

Dominic looks deep into my eyes. 'Now you are truly my wife, Just Janie.'

'And you are truly my husband.'

'*Aanyor pii,*' Dominic says. 'I love you with all of



my heart.’

‘*Aanyor pii,*’ I echo.

And, because traditionally Maasai warriors don’t kiss women, we stand and grin at each other. The kissing will have to wait until later.