

## REVIEWS

### THE UNKNOWN MRS ROSEN

By Andrew Sanger  
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This remarkable novel spans decades of a complex life, encompassing war, love, family, friendships and old age. The author ventures effortlessly from one area to another, holding the reader's attention throughout.

The protagonist is 90 year old Marjorie Rosen, widow and mother of three, who has been living on her own with daily carers. Although her husband died many years earlier, she constantly looks at his photo and believes he can still hear her. While she connects quite normally with her carers and family, her solitude is consumed in re-living noteworthy episodes of her life, including her early childhood. Most significant is her wartime story of how, as a young Jewish woman working at Bletchley Park, she was dispatched to Germany, to find a Nazi official's wife who is anti-Hitler and has access to the enemy's codebooks.

Marjorie Behrens, as she was then, was blonde, fluent in German and Russian, and an obvious choice to take on the identity of a dead German woman whose husband, a junior officer, was killed on the Eastern Front.

Before learning of her assignment, Marjorie is told of the Final Solution, something she can barely believe.

On her way to receive her orders, she is injured by an unexploded ordnance. She then undergoes training at the Beaulieu estate, after which, armed with an NSDAP membership card and wearing a little black and red swastika brooch on her uniform, she leaves for the long journey on a small Lysander plane, landing in Denmark and then taken by boat to Germany.

Her most significant act in Germany is to strangle a Nazi officer with her stockings while he is urinating. She also manages to find Erika, the Nazi official's wife, and they form a close friendship. When, later, Erika is betrayed, Marjorie hunts down her murderer in rural France.

Shortly after the war Marjorie met her husband, Harry Rosen, who had changed his name from Chaim Rosenzweig to prevent being mistaken for an enemy alien. Marjorie remembers him at the wedding of their daughter, Nicola, in an Anglican church. Their elder son, Philip, had several children, only one of whom was definitely his. Their younger son, Max, rescued a young woman during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and married her. Originally seeming the least concerned of Marjorie's children, alongside her daughter-in-law he is now the most caring.

This multifaceted tale is very engaging and beautifully written.

*Emma Klein*