

MIDAS

# Anna Friel



The actress on conquering her fears, living through lockdown, and meeting her hero

Interview **Anna Solomon** Illustration **Russ Tudor**

## How much is an ounce of gold?

Precisely \$1,865. And I know that because one of my best friends is head of the World Gold Council and we were talking about it, so it just happened to be in my mind.

## What is your idea of happiness?

Being surrounded by family, my daughter primarily. Lots of laughter, friends.

## What are your best and worst traits?

Worst, I would say impatience, though I've learned more patience. Best, I'd say kindness, empathy and compassion.

## What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Being ballsy enough at 22 to go on stage for the very first time. Moving to New York at that young age, surrounding myself with people who were very familiar with

the stage, overcoming a huge fear and coming out winning.

## Which person, living or dead, do you most admire?

Sir David Attenborough. He is my all-time hero, and I was lucky enough to get to meet him once. He's just the warmest person, and what a legacy he'll leave behind, my God.

## Can money buy happiness?

It can definitely make life easier. Buy happiness? I'm not so sure. I've got a lot of friends who are wealthy, but are they the happiest people? I don't know. But it allows for more choices, and inevitably I'd say the more choices you have, the happier one is.

## What was your first pay cheque?

It's framed in my dad's house in a corridor called 'The Wall of Fame'. It's for £5.86 and it was for – do you remember photo stories,

where you tell a story with photos and little speech bubbles? After that it was when I was 13 and the first [acting] job I did. It was called *GBH* and I played Michael Palin's daughter.

## What are you most looking forward to?

Life getting back to normal! All of this being taken away, being able to hug again. From a personal perspective, being able to travel again and getting back on set. And I'd like people to see the third series of *Marcella* because I'm proud of it.

## Would you consider yourself more of a saver or a spender?

I learned from an early age that putting money into bricks and mortar was better than having it sitting in an account. So I knew how to save and in that regard I've never been in debt, apart from a mortgage.

## Where is your favourite place in the world?

I love all of Africa. It takes us back to a general sense of what humanity is and where it all began, I feel very free there. Also anywhere near water – I'm a real Cancerian, and if I'm by a lake, a river or the sea, I feel an immediate sense of comfort.

## What is your most prized possession?

A book of poetry that David [Thewlis, her ex-husband] wrote for me. That, and he also got me a music box from 1826. When people come over everybody will be drawn to it. It looks like Braille, and at that time it was the only sort of musical entertainment.

## What has lockdown taught you about yourself?

Oh my God, so much. That I'm better at being alone than I thought. Discipline and routine are usually things that are enforced on me, so it's about having that within oneself, finding that self-discipline, that makes the emotional state much healthier.

## What is the most memorable moment of your career so far?

I think most people would go for the time they made the biggest impact, and for me that was dealing with domestic violence before the watershed – going back to *Brookside* when I was 16 – and I think that was part of a huge movement. 📌

*Marcella* will return on ITV early in the year