

## The Choice

Mark and Anna had known each other since college where they were both studying English. They started off as friends. They did almost everything together. After about six months of not seeing each other (they had drifted apart after they both left college) they met up again. They went for a few drinks and had some laughs. One of the things that they talked about was what they were doing now. Mark explained that he was trying his hand at stand-up comedy. Anna wanted to be a teacher.

Mark had always wanted to ask Anna out. Her face was like the fire-gold glow of dawn. She had long flowing red hair down to her shoulders, stunning green eyes, the kind of eyes that stared into your soul. Her skin was a golden colour, flawless, utter perfection. A dazzling smile revealed the bronze glow of her cheeks. Beauty radiated from every pore in her body.

Now was his chance. He knew that Anna had had a few boyfriends who had messed her around quite a bit. Could Mark be the one for her?

He didn't have to answer that question. Even before he could ask her out, he felt her lips touch his. She kissed him passionately. Even though it was pleasantly unexpected it seemed a little too forward.

'Sorry Mark, I didn't mean to...'

'Anna, I...'

'I know, I kissed you too soon. I just think you're the loveliest guy I've ever known and I thought I...'

'Anna, you don't have to explain. The truth is, I've wanted to ask you out for a while now but I didn't have the guts to tell you how I feel. I want to see if there's any romantic spark between us.'

'Mark, shut up and kiss me and take me home.'

'Are you sure? We've only just agreed to go out together, and we need to...'

'Life's too short not to be spontaneous. Come on babe, live a little!'

After a few minutes of stunned silence, Mark decided to act on his feelings for Anna. Sleeping together so soon might not be the best idea, but, thinking about it, he felt so strongly about her, so why wait? And at the end of the day, all he wanted was to make her the happiest girl in the world.

They hurry home to a night of passion. Before they begin to do the deed, Mark tries one of his jokes out on Anna:

Two men were painting a house.

Pat: Have you got a good hold on that paintbrush, Mick?

Yes, I have, Pat. Why?

Pat: Well, hold on tight, because I'm taking this ladder away.

Anna laughed out loud. Whether she thought it was genuinely funny or she was just humouring him, he'll never know, but at least it made her laugh. *Women like a man who can make laugh*, Mark said under his breath.

Mark was slightly nervous, things going so fast at this early stage. He tried not to show it. He didn't know why he should be nervous, Anna was the girl of his dreams. Mark couldn't believe his luck, his dream girl and lovemaking on the first night!

They both got undressed and

'Anna, that was the best night of lovemaking I have ever had,' Mark said with a grin.

'It was pretty good for our first time together,' was Anna's reply. 'In fact, extremely good. You certainly know how to please a girl.'

'Well, thank you very much.'

'Yes, you were a very busy boy. It was so good, I think we should go downstairs, have breakfast, do some work, and make love after lunch. You could...' She hesitated but giggled as she added, 'You could have me as dessert!'

'Anna, you are naughty, but I like it. I'd love to make love to you again.'

They spent most of the day in bed, exploring each other, kissing, cuddling, foreplay, incredible passionate sizzling sex, and just enjoying being together.

'Mark, can I ask you something? You're not with me just because I'm good in bed are you?'

'Ummm, no. How could you think...?'

'I was just teasing. Now get on the bed, I want to feel you again.'

'Anna, you are insatiable!'

They spent a second night making love. It was as magical as the first time.

Their relationship was healthy in every department. Well, almost every department. They were both still looking for paid employment. Mark was still hoping to be a stand-up comedian, Anna was still hoping to be a teacher. Months passed by. No sign of anything for both of them. They were getting fed up with having no job, very little money (apart from the benefits they claimed).

They figured that if they wanted to pursue their chosen careers, they would have to show commitment and perseverance. Stand-up comedy was harder to get into than teaching.

Six months went by and Anna was doing rather well. She had enrolled on a teacher training course with a placement one day a week. Mark, however, was still trying to get into stand-up comedy. Through his contacts he had made on social media, he had managed to secure a few gigs, which made him a few pounds now and then, but it didn't amount too much. All he wanted was a big break, someone big to spot him which would propel him into the big time. Maybe though, he was aiming too high. Surely there was someone out there he would bump into by chance who would recognise his comedic talents. He was wondering whether he had made the right career choice. He spent days before a gig (when he got one) perfecting his comedy routine, and what for? To risk bombing? He did like it though, it gave him an adrenaline rush and he knew he was funny. It didn't seem fair, he was slaving away trying to get gigs, writing routines and little comedy scripts, getting rejected, going round and round in circles, not earning any cash (or very little) while Anna was earning doing what she loved.

A year later and both their careers were starting to gain momentum. Anna was beginning her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teacher training and Mark was getting more and more gigs thanks to the contacts he had made. He was starting to earn a lot more money as well. He was establishing himself as a big comedy star, putting himself out there, meeting the right people. His life was finally turning around. Then he got a phone call that could change his life...

'Anna, I have just got an offer to go and perform at the Edinburgh Fringe this year. Every comedian aspires to perform there, and it might lead to a spot at Montreal!'

'Mark, I'm pleased for you, but my teacher training is going well, I have a placement in a school I love. I can't just up and leave.'

'Surely you can find a place up there. I really want this'. Mark tried to reason with her. 'Hunny, another option is a long-distance relationship, and you can come and see me.'

'Mark, those don't really work. And look at my track record. I have had one before and it didn't end well.'

Even though they tried their hardest to find a solution, they were growing further and further apart. It got to the stage where they both decided it wouldn't work. They went their separate ways. They did stay friends though, not that he was going to see her much.

Mark had had a few positive gigs at the Edinburgh Festival, getting big laughs. All the comedians were there, they could elevate him to his dreams. However, he found his mind wandering back to one person – Anna. Yes, he loved his work, his comedy, but he also loved Anna. He'd thrown it all away, just like that.

He was hoping that she was still available when he made his decision. Comedy would be there in a few years, Anna probably wouldn't. He bought a ring on the way down. He hoped she'd give him the answer she wanted.

He found her. She was back living with her parents after deciding that teaching wasn't for her, too many hours, too much work. It was great while it lasted. Mark was all she needed at the end of the day. And he had walked back into his life, with a proposal.

Just three years later, they got married.