

It was a breezy evening in the summer of 2023, old friends and family members gathered at a college reunion in Oxford. Jazz music stirred with a medley of indistinct chatter played in the background. Anna arrived straight from the airport and saw a familiar face, a man in his late thirties dressed in a light blue suit. She smiled at him from a distance as she saw him for the first time in almost six years. Her cheeks turned pink when he waved back at her and her veins burst with fresh nervousness as all the memories came flooding back in the moment. They enjoyed these playful glances for some time and he eventually walked towards her to greet her. He immediately offered his left hand and asked her for a dance. She followed and turned elegantly, and her body was in tune with the music. There was something comforting about her presence that made this unexpected encounter smooth and organic for him.

He was never fond of small talk so he started the conversation by saying, "I knew our paths would cross again at some point. I can't believe it's been six years since we met. So much has changed, although it feels like nothing has changed. Also, congratulations on your new book, *Miss Smith*, I have never turned the pages so quickly!"

Anna replied in a humble tone, "I had to return to the place I once called home...and you know, for me, home has always been the people, not just bricks and walls. And thank you, you know it means a lot coming from you. I heard you accepted a prestigious professorship at the University. I am glad you could find the kind of stability you were always looking for."

He replied jokingly, "Well, if you remember, I had always wanted to open a cafe in the mountains, but I am not as brave as you."

Anna replied, "It seems like a perfectly stable life. Take it from a single woman in her thirties, who quit her full-time job to try an alternate career in writing."

He replies in his deep voice "Well, I expect nothing less from 'The ever-so Adventurous Anna'! I am so proud of you, you finally found refuge in writing stories for children!"

As they were bonding, a little girl came running towards him with a book in her hand titled '*An Unladylike Ladybird by Anna Smith*' and interrupted their conversation, "Papa, can we please go home now, I want you to read me the next chapter. I want to find out what happens when the ladybird goes to Nepal to find her purpose."

Anna goes through a rollercoaster of emotions in a split second. He looks at Anna with an apologetic face and doesn't find the courage to introduce his daughter. Anna understands and says hello to the young girl and tells her to never lose her curiosity. He bids Anna goodbye and leaves with his daughter for their home.