THE PHILANDERER

Anna had never been kissed by an admirer. As Sidney bent over her and gently kissed her full lips, she nearly swooned. They were standing in a quiet jacaranda lined road near her home and were walking back after a church service. It was the first time Sidney had visited the family's Anglican church. It was a beautiful church built of bricks, panted white, with a bell tower and red tiled roof giving it a rather Spanish look. "Do you love me, Anna?" he asked. "Yes," she replied, "as soon as I met you, I knew you were the Mister Right I have been praying for!"

Anna had the wedding of her dreams. She was a beautiful young woman with green eyes and long red curls cascading down her back. She looked radiant in her satin wedding gown, fingertip veil, and coronet of miniature roses in full bloom on her head. She held a small bouquet in her hands and had chosen her six best friends as bridesmaids. They were called Pamela, Rose, Marigold, Margaret, Violet and Patricia. They wore midcalf tulle dresses in a dusky pink shade and carried small bouquets of miniature pink roses. It was a morning wedding, and the sun shone brightly as the church bells of Trinity Chapel Anglican Church rang to announce the bride's arrival. There were many relatives and guests in attendance as the parents of Anna and Sidney had lots of friends. "What a wonderful day!" exclaimed Anna's mother, Angela, kissing Sidney's mother, Rosemary. "Yes!" she answered, "and for a wonderful couple. They were made for each other!" The wedding ceremony was

beautiful with Anna's favourite hymns, "Praise my Soul the King of Heaven" and "Take my Life and Let it be Consecrated Lord to Thee" being joyfully sung. During the signing of the Wedding Register, Anna's Aunt Jane sang "The Lord is my Shepherd" The lavish wedding reception was held in the ballroom of the Royal Hotel. Sidney's speech was applauded as he said, "We fell in love at first sight!" – which was not exactly true. After a fun-filled honeymoon, the happy couple returned to the attractive house in Rosebank that they had filled with modern furniture, simple curtains and every modern appliance. The house was surrounded by a pretty garden with a double garage and a sparkling pool. Anna was blissfully happy.

Anna could not wait to start a family. She had seen and shared in their friends' joy at the birth of little ones – the baby showers, the first birthday parties and the excitement of the expected births. "Sidney," she said, "I really want a little Sidney and a sister for him. I will stop taking the pill and we will soon be proud parents!" "No, Anna darling," he replied, "I don't want to be tied down with a family! Our life is so great now." Anna was heartbroken but being a committed Christian, tearfully asked her Lord to change his mind.

And that was only the start of her woes. One night after preparing a delicious supper, she waited impatiently looking at the clock. Eight o'clock came, nine o'clock came

and she picked up her cell to speak to Sidney, only to hear, “The speaker is unavailable. Please call later.” Anna was distraught. Had Sydney been involved in an accident? She phoned the central police station only to be informed that no car with the number plates she had given, had been involved in an accident. Weeping she went to bed but could not sleep. After lunch, Sidney’s car drew up in front of their house. A glamourous blonde was seated in the front next to him. “Get in, Anna,” he said pointing to the back seat, “we are going to visit Harold and Jenny.” Anna was mortified, she was wearing her gardening dress, and her face was blotched and tearstained. “What’s going on, Anna darling?” Jenny asked her when they were alone in the kitchen. “I don’t know,” she replied. “I will phone you later.” After tea, Sidney dropped her off at their house and he said, “We will be out tonight.” And that was the start of many such occasions. Anna did not tell her parents or in-laws what their marriage had come to and struggled on.

In the end she spoke to Sidney. “I want a divorce as soon as possible,” she said to him. “No! I will never agree to it! I am a good Catholic and I don’t agree with divorce!” Instead of consulting her parents or speaking to her in-laws, Anna laid plans for her escape from the house of misery and her future life. She had a very generous allowance for household expenditure and saved as much as she could. Sidney did not notice the cheaper meals she cooked because he was not there most days to eat them. She

searched for evidence of his philandering, and took pictures out of his photo album labelled MY GIRLFRIENDS, packed her case, tucked her red curls under a brown wig and left the house. Taking a taxi to the other side of the city, she rented a small flat in a middleclass suburb and looked for work. As she had no qualifications, she applied for a job as housekeeper for an affluent family but was turned down as she had no references. Then she wrote to her parents and in-laws telling them what had happened and saying they must not worry - she had made plans for her future and would tell them when the time came.

“It seems the only thing I can do well is cook,” she said to herself. She left the flat and went to the mall to buy supplies, her fridge and cupboards were almost empty. On returning, she made a delicious lunch for herself, popped it in a plastic container and went downstairs to eat it in the large garden set in a quadrangle and surrounded by four blocks of flats. It was so relaxing after the tension of the past weeks! She opened the container and began to eat things she had brought: a large wholewheat roll which she had filled with chopped lettuce, tomato, ham, mustard and mayonnaise, a small container of sliced pineapple, and a slice of chocolate cake. To finish she had brought a thermos cup of hot coffee. “I must do this every day,” she said to herself, and then a most astonishing idea popped into her mind! “Why can’t I make lunch boxes like these and sell them in the park across the road!” There are so many

people working here who would like a prepared lunch box to eat in the park and I could change what I put in them every day!”

The next day, Anna dressed carefully and walked to the Municipal Offices and asked to speak to the person in charge of setting up stalls in the city’s streets and public places. She was taken to the office of the person in charge of issuing licences and was surprised to find it was a middle-aged woman. Anna introduced herself and the woman said “I am Suzzette Pearson. How may I assist you?” Anna told her what she had come for and that she was getting divorced and couldn’t find a job and that the only thing she could do was cook. She took out a lunch box and handed it to Mrs Pearson. “Please open it and see if it meets your requirements,” she said. Now Mrs Pearson was overworked, had only eaten a rusk and cup of coffee before rushing to catch a bus to her office. “Wow!” she exclaimed, “this looks amazing!” “Please eat it, and I have a cup of coffee also.” Mrs Pearson leant back in her chair having eaten everything. “It was amazing!” she said. “I will sign your license now and I wish you the best of luck. I am sure you will have many customers. How about a stall in the Municipal Gardens? It will solve your problem! Go to the office next door where you can rent a large sunshade on a stand, a chair and a table. In winter these stands are moved into a room in the office buildings.” Anna went home in great excitement, had a short rest and set about drawing up

menus. There was a different one for every day. She planned to work from nine in the mornings until one in the afternoons, all seven days of the week. The stalls were setup and taken back in the afternoons. There were 21 stallholders run by men and women selling all kinds of products - greeting cards, second-hand books, dresses, jewellery, sunhats and children's games amongst other things. They all wore identical aprons and caps with their stall's name. Anna's had KATE'S BOX

One day when there was a lull in customers and Anna was sitting in her chair dozing, she was awakened by a man's voice. "Please may I have two lunch boxes? The man in the stall next to you told me how delicious they are?" Anna jumped up, shocked as she recognized Sidney's voice. He was standing in front of the table with a redhaired woman. "Certainly Sir," she replied. "I have been very busy this morning." She put two lunch boxes and two mugs of coffee in sealed containers in a white bag with "Kate's Box" in bright red, and handed them to Sidney. He gave her his credit card, waited while she processed it, said "Thanks" and left. "Come on. Betty," he said, "Let's sit on that bench under the oak." When they got back to his house, he turned to Betty and said, "I don't know what it is but there was something decidedly off about that woman."

He found out the following morning. His secretary, one of his exe's, brought him an envelope which had just arrived

by express mail. “Dear Sir,” he read. “I write to inform you that your wife has filed for divorce. She has ample proof in the photos removed from you GIRLFRIENDS PHOTO ALBUM, so I would advise you not to waste money in defending it. She will undoubtedly be awarded alimony plus compensation for the years of humiliation and suffering you brought on her.” “Yours,” RC Justice, Attorney.