

# ***A Mile in My Shoes***

## **Anna – Size 6**

***“I felt an incredible feeling of joy when my baby arrived  
- at the same time I was completely broken-hearted.”***

Of course, I used to wish for a family where a father, mother and their child, or maybe even two children, live together and are happy and do everything together, journeying together through life, that was what I would have wished.

But I started quite late, I'm a journalist and for a long time I thought that there was no space for a child in my life, how would I manage that?

How would I get to my evening appointments, which are my work, after all, and have a child at the same time? How was that supposed to work?

And that's why I probably hesitated over the decision to have a child for such a long time. Even though it was always clear that I wanted to have one, it seemed as if there was an infinite amount of time left.

Then, at 36, I fell in love with a man, who already had 2 children, and I found that incredibly attractive, because during a certain point in my life, I found fatherly men attractive, those who I knew had sunny, reliable, stable characteristics, whilst I always used to be attracted to neurotic artist types.

But my boyfriend at the time said he didn't really want any more children because he had two already.

And for a year we were able to avoid the topic and we were very happy. But then after a year, the topic was on the table again, and it was very profound when my boyfriend said, that's fine, let's stop using contraception.

Stopping using contraception doesn't mean you will get pregnant, especially at 37.

I knew that he was doing me a favour, because he wanted to be with me and that's the reason he said that he'd leave it to fate. It was a wonderful time, I really saw it as a token of his love, but nothing happened. I just didn't get pregnant.

And this became really stressful for me. It felt awful. It was terrible. Every month, I knew that at a certain time, I would need to make sure that we sleep together.

Suddenly this turned into a massive pressure, and all the lightness was gone.

It was very hard, and it was full of stress and it was getting worse and worse, then when the period pains started, at that moment I thought for a tiny second, maybe it feels like I might be pregnant... and then the fall in hormone levels, and that realisation: No. I've got my period.

It didn't work - again. Now I had to wait another month till it might happen.

And for me, it became more and more urgent.

I tried to capture it journalistically by writing articles about women who had managed to have kids by themselves.

At that time, I came across internet forums with women my age. I was there due to my personal interest, and also reporting about this phenomenon, because it wasn't only myself at 38/39, there were many women in this situation, and many didn't have a partner...

I went to my gynaecologist and had a hormone test in order to find out why I wasn't getting pregnant, and the results were earth shattering.

And I remember my gynaecologist saying, "You can still get pregnant, but you shouldn't miss a single ovulation."

That increased the pressure so much, and my boyfriend at the time couldn't deal with it.

And that was the moment that my boyfriend said he couldn't do it, that he could leave it to fate, but he was not willing to do something actively for it. His desire for children was not strong enough for that.

And that was a time of absolute crisis, of massive desperation for me. I found myself, at 39, without child, and without the opportunity to find a man.

How could I 'not miss a single ovulation' - what kind of man was I supposed to find, while I was still in love with my boyfriend at the time?

Then we put our relationship as we called it, on ice.

My job saved me at the time. My job often helps me to enter various worlds, and I then realised that the best solution for me was: Well, I never wanted to expect my child to grow up without a father, because I think it's extremely important for children to have a father.

And then I thought, maybe some kind of co-parenting may be an option...

Today, there are forums for this kind of thing, but at the time, around 11 years ago, that wasn't so common.

There were sperm donors, for example a man in Holland who had given his sperm to hundreds of women, but that was all a bit sketchy for me.

I then put an ad in the local Cologne newspaper, and in a Cologne gay magazine. I lived near a street where there were a lot of gay bars, and I went to one of the bars to get a newspaper there, and I thought these are cool gay party people, but they might not be proper dads, I wasn't sure whether it was suitable...

But then I just put together some ads and submitted them, and then a man wrote to me, he was so good-looking...

He was so good looking, I nearly removed him from the shortlist because he was too beautiful, but he insisted and we met each other, and in many ways we had similar ideas.

And I really trusted him. Within a short period of time, I stayed overnight with him and his partner without being afraid of sleeping in a strange man's house.

Within a few weeks, we agreed to have a child together.

They had a speedy AIDS test, and then we still didn't have sex, we did the whole fertilisation thing, so to say...

There were mechanisms, devices, which I could use to determine ovulation to the closest hour, and well, then he came and brought his part and gave it to me.

My son should know everything. Well, he knows everything - in child-friendly terms.

We share custody of our son, and we made rough plans before birth, how we would divide the parenting duties and I'm so happy that, so far, we have never breached any of our agreements.

We have kept all the agreements we made back then. He was also there at the birth. He was at the hospital and really supported us a lot.

Also in the early stages, when I was breastfeeding, I'd either spend a weekend with them, or once a week he'd come over so I could spend 2 hours outdoors, with pumped breast milk and so on.

I'm just so happy about it. I could just...

Sometimes I'm just so proud of this story and that I managed it.

I was... It is just an irony of fate that I couldn't get pregnant with my boyfriend for such a long time, and with my child's father it worked straight away.

I got pregnant immediately. It was a miracle.

And it was strange, I had this immeasurable feeling of joy when my baby was there, and it was embedded in this structure, which isn't a normal family of course, but it's still a family, which is something I still feel...

He has many attachment figures who are there for him, for anything.

But in the end, the feeling that remains, is this grandiose feeling of birth, and new, fresh motherhood and this baby...

I still remember the first moment, the first morning in hospital with my baby, and he opens his eyes... and blinks his eyes, and that baby is there [cries]... Incredible, truly incredible.

Such an incredible joy. And it's so wonderful to have people you can share this joy with.

And my child's father, we are not together, but we share this incredible happiness and that is really beautiful.