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# Anna Kendrick Is Up in the Air

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Before filming began on *Up in the Air*, Anna Kendrick wasn't sure she could ever look down on George Clooney. Despite entering acting at a young age (earning a Tony nomination for *High Society* by 12), landing a part in the *Twilight* series (playing Bella's friend Jessica) and exhibiting an uncanny ability to play high-strung spitfires (as evidenced in the 2007 indie *Rocket Science*), the 5'1" brunette didn't think there was any way she could go up against the world's biggest movie star.

"I was like, 'How am I going to do this to George Clooney? How am I going to look at him and given him crap all the time and think I'm better than he is?'" Kendrick remembers.

In the film, Clooney plays Ryan Bingham, a man who spends 90 per cent of his life flying all over the U.S., firing employees of various corporations. Enter Natalie (Kendrick), intense new recruit who introduces a method of firing people over the Internet; when her proposal threatens to make Bingham obsolete, he decides to take her on one of his many firing trips to show her brutal reality of their job.

It was a daunting part for Kendrick to play, but she soon found herself in the long line of Clooney costars who were amazed with the actor's great capacity for putting people at ease.

"The second you meet George, it's just fine. I don't know how he does it," the 24-year-old says. "There are a lot of celebrities where you meet them and you realize that they're just human beings. But it's something that George does - I'm sure he's had to develop it over the years of being George Clooney, realizing that people get uncomfortable around him and having to charm his way into making people feel comfortable. He's very good at it."

Adding to her growing sense of ease was the fact that director Jason Reitman (*Juno*) had written the part of Natalie specifically with Kendrick in mind.

"Natalie is a character based on many women that I'd fallen in love with my life - young, extraordinarily brilliant women who are just too bright for the room and they're always frustrated," Reitman explains. "I saw *Rocket Science* and was just knocked out by [Kendrick]. I thought, 'What an original voice! She is this character.' I basically wrote it for her. She came in and read against every great actress of her generation and she just crushed it."

Which isn't exactly how Kendrick remembers it.

"I really, truly thought the audition went so bad," she insists. "I thought he hated me."

Reitman buries his head in his hands at this revelation.

"Here's what happened: I was so nervous to tell her that I wrote it for her because I didn't want to affect her audition that I couldn't even act warm to her," he says, laughing in embarrassment.

"I'm a bad liar so if I'm going to pretend that I don't care about your audition, I'm going to be as cold as humanly possible. Yeah, I was probably pretty mean to her."

Of course, it all worked out in the end, and Kendrick received rave reviews when *Up in the Air* debuted at TIFF. At this, Kendrick shows that her humbleness doesn't just apply to her diminutive stature, as she attributes most of the film's success to Reitman's screenplay and direction.

"I think that's the amazing thing about Jason: there were so many moments that were in the screenplay but I didn't see the moment on paper. You don't know how it's going to make you feel," Kendrick says. "The fact that he makes you feel so much when it's not necessarily something story-driven or dialogue-driven, is really admirable."

But, Kendrick admits, she is proud that she got past being intimidated by Clooney so that she could finally look down her nose at him.

"I think, at the end of the day, Natalie still thinks she's better than [Ryan] is," Kendrick muses. "She thinks, 'Oh, this guy embarrassed me, but I'm smarter than he is and I'm going to crush him.'"