



Changing life stories

Dutch Diaries

Chapter Two

The diary of Lily Halifax

Home. Nine p.m. Mum and Dad watering the garden. Katniss out. Mood 50/50.

I've had a good day and I've had a bad day. Something amazing happened. Then something terrible happened. Here are the full gory details.

So... we went to the England training camp, like I said. I'd been winding myself up about it for two days. I couldn't forget about Anya saying how great she was at football. And I couldn't forget about Mrs Mahal saying that we'd be training with the England team. AND that we had to live up to one of England's four values.

EXCELLENCE.

Yeah, right...

Me + football = excellence?

No chance.

On the way to the England training camp, I read my Anne Frank book. Well, it's my mum's Anne Frank book from when she was my age. Her mum had bought it for her. It's old and yellowish and crumpled, but that makes it even more brilliant.

Kind of important? Yeah. Kind of something I should look after? Yeah. That too...

I was making notes while I was reading it. For my talk about Anne Frank that Mr Douglas asked me to do for Friday. He said that because I was the only one who had read Anne Frank's diary properly – whatever that means – I should do a talk about it at school. So I said I would.

Anyway... we got to the England training camp. Huge fields. Trees swaying in the breeze. I left the book and my notepad on my seat in the bus. So that I didn't lose them.

We climbed off the bus. Anya in front of me. I can't stand her. Mo was behind me though, so at least there was one decent person around. And I saw a big scary pitch and two big scary football coaches. And next to them... A CAMERA CREW!

Anya SQUEALED when she saw the camera crew. Her dream had come true. Football. And TV cameras. She'd been going on all the way on the bus about how amazing she was at football and how she knew all the England players' names and how she was going to be the one who was the most EXCELLENT.

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On the pitch Anya started doing keepy uppies, the coaches clapping when she got to 50, the TV cameras all over her. I felt small. Tiny. MICROSCOPIC!

The better Anya was, the more I knew I was going to mess it up. Big time.

The coaches started the training session by talking to us. There was no sign of any of the England players. None of them. I'd watched the last three England games live on TV and I was pretty confident I'd have recognised any one of them.

But, as the coaches were talking to us, a woman with short blonde hair came and stood between me and Anya. The woman said hi to Anya. Anya said hi back in the snobby way she always does. The coach carried on talking, so I sneaked a look at the woman. Just in case it was a player...

... and it WAS!

Ellen White! E.L.L.E.N. W.H.I.T.E. The England striker. The player who scored TWICE against Denmark on Saturday! Who captained her country and does that funny action with her hands over her eyes when she scores.

She smiled at me. Ellen White smiled at me!

'Er... nice goals on Saturday,' I spluttered like a six-year-old. Then – OMG this is so embarrassing – I did the hands thing she does. And she laughed. Then she did the hands thing too. And I could see Anya looking at me all the time. She thought I'd gone mad. So I... er... introduced them.

'This is Anya,' I said to Ellen White. 'Anya, this is England's captain.'



The football training was actually good. We did close passing drills. Shuttle runs. All the time Ellen White was really patient with us. Encouraging us when we messed up. Which I did a lot of. But she messed up herself and then told us that there's no such thing as mistakes – only lessons to make us better. She could see I wasn't very good, but she was really nice to me.

Then we did some penalties. I missed. Anya scored. But I didn't care. I felt okay.

And at the end – ARE YOU LISTENING TO THIS?? – Ellen White said. 'Well done, Lily. That was fab. You were excellent today.' In. Front. Of. Mrs. Mahal.

Excellent. I'd been excellent. Challenge number one completed. I felt Mrs Mahal patting me on the shoulder. She'd heard.

'How about a selfie?' Ellen White asked. 'You and your mate?' She meant Anya. But I could see Anya was walking fast back to the bus for school.

'Me and Mo?' I said. 'He's my REAL mate.'

Me and Mo and Ellen White. A selfie. At the end, I said thank you and I told her I'd make a poster out of the selfie and put it up at school to encourage more people to watch the Lionesses.

Then we got back on the bus. Most of the others were fitting their seatbelts on, teachers counting us, taking the register. Anya was in the seat behind mine and Mo's. She had her eyes closed. Headphones on. With this little Anya-like smirk on her face like she was the best and all that...

But I wasn't bothered. I sat on my seat. I put my seatbelt on. I waved to the football coaches, even though they weren't looking at us. I was buzzing. Really happy. Really REALLY happy. I chatted some more to Mo, while I texted my mum to tell her we were on our way home.

And then I remembered my mum's book. My mum's Anne Frank book that she'd been given by her mum.

No. No no no no. NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

I panicked. I nearly cried. But, that would've been mortifying, so I stopped myself. The teachers tried to help. Mo tried to help. Everyone tried to help. But my mum's book was gone.

And now I am upstairs and Mum will be up from watering the garden any minute to say good night and I'll have to tell her. Or not tell her. And I have no idea which is worst.

The next chapter of Dutch Diaries will be published on Friday 7 July.

