



Changing life stories

Dutch diaries: chapter 3

Friday 7th July 2017

You know that feeling you get when you wake up in bed, stretch your legs and arms under the warm covers and feel all happy and relaxed? Then you remember the lovely time you had yesterday and how amazing it was that you met an England footballer, took a selfie with her and – after all that – your head teacher thought you were EXCELLENT?

You know... you feel nice, don't you?

Until your BLOOD.

RUNS.

COLD.

Because it's just come back into your head that you lost your mum's book. AND that you've got an assembly talk to give on that book and you've not actually finished reading it, even though everyone thinks you have.

Do you know that feeling? I do.

Today was a day that I didn't want to happen. A day I should stay in my room. Not go out. Not go to school. A day to be locked up in a house where no one would come or go.

Like Anne Frank, a voice in my head said, making me feel like I was a mean and selfish, comparing my life to what she had to go through. So stupid. I got up.

Downstairs, in the kitchen, the TV was on. Dad had already gone to work before I'd got up. So, it was just me and mum. But not her book....

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'You're quiet, love,' Mum said, as I stuffed my face with cereal.

'Mmmm,' I said, mouth full, watching the BBC sports news. Joe Root scoring 184 not out for England against South Africa. Romelu Lukaku signing for Man U for £75 million. Updates from the Lionesses' warm-weather training for EURO 2017 in Valencia.

And then the news. The serious news. The not-sport news.

It took me by surprise. A film about those poor people who try to come across the Mediterranean Sea from places like Syria. (AWFUL.) They actually showed a ship pulling migrants out of a sinking rubber dinghy. Men, women and children weeping, but grinning at the same time. (CRAZY.) Then they showed the migrants arriving in a European port where some of the local people had flags and banners and were shouting that they didn't want the migrants in their country.

I dropped my spoon and started sobbing. Immediately, mum was next to me, arm around my shoulder. 'What's the matter, honey? What is it?'

I cried a bit more – feeling like a six-year-old – then stopped.

'Honey?' Mum said.

'I lost your book.' I couldn't hold it in. 'I'm sorry, Mum.'

Silence. Not for long, but long enough for me to turn to look at my mum's face, frightened of what I'd see. And what I saw was SADNESS: that look in someone's eyes when they can't hide it. Just for a second, though. Then Mum smiled. A wide grin that hid her real feelings. But I knew, deep down, she was sad and just trying to make me feel better.

And then I was blubbing again.

‘It’s okay, sweetie,’ Mum said. ‘Calm down. It’s fine. Tell me what happened.’

So, then I went to school. I could have done with a day sitting at the back of class, not talking to anyone. But... no. Today was assembly. I WAS assembly.

Mrs Malik introduced me. I stood up and moved my plastic seat out of the way. ‘Lily is a big fan of Anne Frank and her diary. So, ahead of the year seven trip to Holland next week, she’d like to tell you some things about Anne Frank that you didn’t know.’

I stood up. I coughed. I breathed in, then spoke really quickly: ‘Anne Frank was a German girl who moved to Amsterdam in Holland to escape the Nazis because she and her family were Jewish. They left their home because it wasn’t safe for Jewish people to stay in Germany, but then the Germans came to Holland too and Anne Frank and her family had to hide in an attic for years. The reason we know about her is that she wrote a diary...’

I stopped. That was the point I was going to hold up my mum’s copy of Anne Frank’s diary. My mind had emptied. I just stared at faces were staring back at me.

‘But I lost my book yesterday,’ I said. ‘The one I was going to read to you.’

Staring. STARING. STARING.

‘Erm...’ I said.

I saw Mo looking. He was smiling and nodding, like he wanted me to go on. But I couldn’t. I had nothing. Then I heard someone laugh. I looked. It was Anya. Then I heard several more



people laugh. But I still had nothing to say. I tried to stand there like it didn't matter that I had nothing to say, like it was normal. But it wasn't normal. And this, I knew would be remembered until I left school – and after.

I tried to work out what to say, but all I could think of was my mum and seeing those poor people on the boats in the sea on the news. So I started talking about that.

'We still live in a world where some families try to escape the dangerous places they are from,' I said. 'Like Anne Frank had to. Right now there are boats drifting across the Mediterranean Sea with babies and children and mums and dads and some of the boats will be rescued by ships but other boats will sink and those people will die.'

Silence in the hall again.

'What happened to Anne Frank was awful,' I said, 'but we can't do anything about it now. She's dead. She was killed by the Nazis. But we can do something about the families who are about to get into a boat that might sink tonight. We can do it in Anne Frank's memory.'

I stopped. And then they were clapping. All of them. Mo first, this funny look on his face. Then everyone around him. Then the teachers on the back row. I just looked at Mrs Malik then I sat back on the plastic seat. I didn't know what else to do.

'Would anyone like to ask Lily any questions?' Mrs Mahal said, putting her arm around me.

I stepped back. I didn't want that.

But it was too late.

Sam Jones had his hand up. 'So, where's your book, Lily?' he asked.

You Choose...

Now it's time for you to choose what happens next week in *Dutch Diaries*. We've selected three ways the story could go. Discuss in class what you would like to happen next and why. How does each scenario affect Lily, Anya and Mo? How happy or worrying do you want the story to get?

Scenario One

Anya has stolen Lily's Anne Frank book. Anya reads it and tries to become more of an Anne Frank expert than Lily. This creates conflict between the two girls. They argue and their teachers threaten to not allow them to go to Anne Frank's House when they are in Holland.

Scenario Two

Lily's book shows up on the bus. It had fallen on the floor. Lily – who, earlier, accuses Anya of taking it – has to apologise to her for thinking she stole it.

Scenario Three

It turns out that Mo took Lily's book. Lily sees it in his bag. He claims he didn't put it there and that someone planted it on him to make him look guilty. But, upset and confused, Lily does not believe him and falls out with Mo, her best friend.

Once you have chosen what you would like to happen next, please ask your teacher to email admin@tompalmer.co.uk by the end of Friday 7th July and put 'Scenario One', 'Scenario Two' or 'Scenario Three' in the subject line. (Tom will write the fourth chapter on Sunday, for publication on Monday morning.)

Thank you for reading.

