



Changing life stories

Dutch Diaries – chapter 4

Thank you for voting for what should happen next. Scenarios one and three led the way with the Lionesses' share of the votes, with very few votes for scenario two. As a result, this is what happened next...

Monday 10th July 2017

No one mentioned my Friday assembly talk as I went in through the main doors into school for registration on Monday morning. Everyone had forgotten. About me. About the people in the Mediterranean Sea. And about my mum's Anne Frank book.

I'd been thinking about those things all weekend. But no one else had. Why should they?

Everything was completely normal. Parents talking about the British Lions and Donald Trump. Some of the year fives were raving on about last night's *Love Island*. Like I said, normal.

On the school door there was a poster. I read it.

To all the Year 6s going to Holland
later this week, today's England Lionesses
value to live up to is PRIDE.

And don't forget about the parents' meeting
about Holland after school today.

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T: 020 7587 1842 W: www.literacytrust.org.uk Twitter: @Literacy_Trust Facebook: nationalliteracytrust

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I thought about PRIDE. I'd done EXCELLENCE so I guessed I could do pride. I just needed to understand what it meant. Was pride GOOD or BAD?

But, seeing the poster, I felt a shiver of excitement too. HOLLAND! I couldn't wait. My dream of going to Anne Frank's House was less than a week away. AND I'd get to see the Lionesses play live.

So, I put my worries behind me and decided to be happy. But HAPPY only lasted... about.... twenty seconds.

In the classroom, Anya was at the front, her back to the door and to me. Mo was standing up, pushing Sam and laughing, his bag on the floor behind him. I don't know why I looked into his bag. But I did. And that was when I saw my mum's book.

Mum's Anne Frank book!!!!!!!!!!!!!! In Mo's bag!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Then Mo looked round at me, a smile on his face. When he saw I was shocked, he turned to look where I was looking. Into his bag. That was when he put his hands to his mouth.

'I didn't...' he said across the room.

'I know,' I replied weakly.

'I wouldn't...' he insisted.

'I know,' I said, but I was so shocked to see MY missing book in HIS bag, that my voice could hardly be heard.

Then Sir came in and we had to get on with registration without me being able to talk to Mo. I didn't get the chance to talk to him until break.

At break we stood on the edge of the playground and he explained he had no idea how my book got there. I said I believed him. He smiled. I smiled. But something changed between us. Something was not right. Like he was thinking that I was thinking bad things about him. I don't know. Just not right. NOT RIGHT!

We didn't have lunch together: he had violin practice. Then it was the end of the day and time for the parents' meeting. My mum was in the hall as soon as I got there, so I went to sit with her.

The school meeting for children who were going to Holland and their parents began with a talk from Mrs Mahal. She talked about when we'd leave, how we could stay in touch and what we'd be doing. A pack was handed out to parents. Then she said this:

'This trip is a big adventure for Year 6. Being away from home for nearly a week is a big deal when you are only 11 years old. And going abroad is even bigger. But we know you are all sensible children. And if we didn't think you could cope we wouldn't be taking you.'

Mrs Mahal paused, then went on.

'But, children, you should know too that this is probably a bigger deal for the mums and dads. We want to take you away and show you a part of the world you have not been to before because we think you will grow. But it's good for your parents and carers too. They need to get used to the fact that you are growing up and – every year – need a little bit more independence.'

I heard what Mrs Mahal was saying. It went in. But I didn't really think about it until later.

After Mr Douglas ran through the timings, it was time for questions.

Anya's hand was up first. I gazed over at her. She smirked back at me when Mrs Mahal called her name.

'I just wanted to say that I managed to finish Anne Frank's Diary last night,' Anya began, then hesitated. And as she did, I felt dozens of eyes on me. Like everyone was thinking that I had not finished the book and she had, and that made her the expert on Anne Frank now.

'I wanted to say that the end was very sad and that, if anyone wants to talk about what I learned when I finished the book – seeing as I am the only one who has – then they can talk to me before or during our trip. And that includes...'

'Thank you, Anya,' Mrs Mahal interrupted Anya's flow. Stopping her saying I don't know what, but it didn't stop ME standing up and pushing past my mum and two other pairs of parents to storm out of the hall.

So, why did I storm out?

1. What Anya was saying was making me cross.
2. I was miserable about Mo and the book.
3. Everyone looking at me because I'd not read the book and she had
4. Everything else in the world was WRONG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Walking with Mum out of the school playground, past the shops and down our street, I knew I'd failed. Failed to be a good friend to Mo. Failed to live up to what I'd said in assembly about being positive in Anne Frank's memory the day before. And failed Mrs

Mahal's challenge to show pride in a good way. So, when I got home I ran up to my room and stayed there.

This is the conversation we had when Mum came to say goodnight.

'Mum?'

'Yes, love.'

'I don't want to go to Holland.'

Mum stayed quite for a few seconds. She was thinking. When I say something a bit dramatic, Mum always thinks before replying. There's a silence and you can hear her brain ticking over. Then she speaks.

'What is it, love? Tell me.'

'I don't want to go abroad without you and Dad,' I lied. 'I'm scared. After what Mrs Mahal said.'

'But what about Anne Frank's house?' Mum said. 'You so want to visit her house. And you've finished the book now.'

'You and Dad could take me. I'll save up and pay you back. For what you spent on the trip.'

We talked about it for a while. I didn't give anything away. And Mum didn't get cross or say I had to go.

'Sleep on it,' she suggested.

I shrugged.

'Please, love. Sleep on it. And I promise you that whatever you decide in the morning I'll back you 100%.'

Thank you for reading this far. The next episode will be published on Wednesday morning before 8 a.m.

