



Changing life stories

# Dutch Diaries – chapter 6

## The Cruyff Turn Hostel, Amsterdam – 3.11 p.m.

We're in Holland. Actually IN HOLLAND. And it's fab.

Me and Mo bought some crisps at some motorway services when the coach stopped for petrol. The crisps are weird. Like... I dunno... crispier than crisps in England? Maybe. We bought some sweets too. Different sweets. They're weird too.

Everything is different. I wonder if Dutch children think English crisps and sweets are weird?

The teachers put us in dormitories at the hostel we are staying at. There are eight bunks per room. All the girls are in one room. All the boys in another. I've got Ella under me and Nadiya opposite. I am happy with that. Anya is at the far end by the door. I am happy with that too. I can't bear to be near her. GRRRRRRRRR!!!!!!!

Oh... we've been given another England Football Association challenge. We've done EXCELLENCE and PRIDE. My personal score is 1-1. Passed Excellence. Failed Pride. Now Mrs Mahal says we have to show INTEGRITY.

And it was funny, but when she said it, she looked at me, then at Anya. In that way adults do when they want to say something without saying it. Like she knew something about me and Anya. About the book Anya took.

After Mrs Mahal had gone, I had to look up what integrity means. It said 'honest with strong moral principles'. I still have to work out what that means.

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Anyway, here's my handy list of ten things about Holland that I have noticed:

1. It's got two names. Holland and the Netherlands. Which is odd.
2. The men and women here are tall. (Mo says they are the tallest people in the world.)
3. There are more canals than roads in Amsterdam – or it seems like that.
4. Girls look more fashionable. Boys too. We look scruffy. Especially me after that coach journey.
5. Most signposts are in English, even though they speak Dutch here. Why?
6. The countryside between the port and Amsterdam is flaaaaaaaaaaaaaat.
7. They have a lot of windmills. (Not the sweet old kind from children's books, but those tall white ones we have, except they've got loads.)
8. I saw a...

OH! IT'S TIME!!!

I have to go. We're to meet downstairs. NOW! In the hostel foyer entrance thing. Then we're going to walk. **To Anne Frank's House.**

I can't believe it. My dream is going to come true. Nothing is going to spoil this for me...

Bye!

### **Outside the Anne Frank House – 5.24 p.m.**

We're outside **your** house.

I hope this is okay. When you wrote your diary, you wrote it like letters to your friend. Now I am here outside your house, I feel like I have to write my diary to **YOU**. It's sort of because



Mrs Mahal set us that challenge of integrity and sort of because I worked out that the most **honest** person I've ever known was you. And I think you had **strong moral principles** too. If I understand what that means. That means you are the person with the most integrity.

Because:

## **HONESTY + STRONG MORAL PRINCIPLES = INTEGRITY**

And, after the things that just happened in the queue, I feel like a bit of your integrity has rubbed off on me.

Things happened. **Big things.**

Here's what.

We'd been in the queue to visit your house for over an hour. It was a queue of about 500 people snaking round the back of that cathedral you used to hear the bells from. Until the Nazis took the bells away. Anyway, everyone was getting a bit bored. And I was still cross with Anya. Really cross.

I'd told Mo I was going to find a way to shame Anya somehow. I was just waiting for my chance, I said. Mo said I shouldn't. He said I should leave it. But I was so cross that I didn't listen to him.

Anyway, we were all standing there, some of us plonking ourselves down in little groups every time the queue stopped. Then Mrs Mahal was standing over me. Next to her, Anya. Not looking me in the eyes.

'Lily?' Mrs Mahal said. 'I just overheard Bella talking about your mother's book. I heard her say that Anya took it. I have asked Anya about it, but she won't tell me anything. Anya is

already on a warning after her behaviour on the boat. If what I heard from Bella is true, I will have to take serious action against Anya. She will not visit Anne Frank's House. And she will not go to the football match. Even if she is...'

Mrs Mahal stopped herself saying it, but I knew what it would have been. *Even if Anya is the daughter of one of the school governors. That was what she had meant.*

I stood up to be face to face with Mrs Mahal and Anya. The whole of our school was watching. Half the queue was watching. It felt like the whole of Amsterdam was watching.

Then the church bells rang. Bong. Bong. **Bong. Bong. Bong.** Five o'clock.

In the time the bell was bonging, I looked at Anya. Her face was pale. She turned her face to look at me. That defiant Anya I'd had to put up with for months was gone. For the first time she looked scared. Not the usual *don't-you-know-who-my-mum-is* Anya. I saw her mouth the words *I'm sorry*. And I knew she meant it.

'Lily?' Mrs Mahal insisted.

We were stood in the shadow of the house where you hid for all those months. We were on the street outside your house. By the canal. The place where I read that you were dragged out and taken away by the Nazis before they killed you. I almost felt you were looking out of your window onto the street. Or standing next to me.

'It was a misunderstanding, Mrs Mahal,' I said. 'Anya did have my mum's book. But she thought I'd leant it to her.'

That was it.



Now I'm sat on the step outside the entrance to your house. We are the next group allowed in.

Was I right, Anne?

I don't know. I feel better than I would have if I'd have told Mrs Mahal that Anya stole the book. I also feel better, because, before Anya left, she put her hand on my arm and whispered thank you again.

The big thing for me is that I didn't want to go into your house feeling bad. Or feeling guilty. I wanted to go in feeling calm and like I'd done the right thing.

But did I?

Let's see what happens next. We're about to go into your house. I feel nervous, Anne. This is the house where you hid. This is where you wrote most of your diary. And all I've been writing about is me and Anya and our stupid argument.

Now I want to give you all my attention. They're opening the door. We're going in.

**A message from Tom Palmer, the author.**

**I'd be very interested to know if you think Lily made the right choice. As the writer, I am not sure myself. It wasn't what I planned. But Lily sort of took over the story. If you have time in class to let me know, I'd be very grateful. Just a few lines. Or you could even have a vote. Please see today's writing exercise if you need more information.**

**You can email at [info@tompalmer.co.uk](mailto:info@tompalmer.co.uk).**

**Thank you.**

