

Annelies

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CHARACTERS

ARI - (Early 40s, Male) - A Jewish American, married to Ronia.

RONIA - (Late 30s , Female) - A Jewish American, married to Ari.

ANNELIES - (Teenager, Female) - Formerly German. Now Dutch.

SETTING

The show takes place in the year 2020 and the years 1942 - 1944. The primary action of the play takes place in Ari and Ronia's home office, which is set up in the center of the stage. The office does not take up the whole stage, however. The remaining space outside the office is to represent the rest of the world, then and now.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

The present collides with the past in the drama *Annelies*. Mourning the loss of his father, a bereaved man in 2020 begins to keep a journal, only to find himself in correspondence with the famous and tragic diarist, Anne Frank. A play about grief and friendship, *Annelies* explores the strength and legacy of the written word, and its power to change our lives forever.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

As the lights slowly rise we see Ari in his home office, sitting at his desk. Aside from a desk and chair, this office has a bookcase with many books, and a loveseat, which is not intended to have people sleep on it, though at the moment definitely looks slept in, as a crumpled blanket and small pillow lay atop it.

The office is a bit of mess. Some papers cover Ari's desk, shoes and socks on the ground, a dirty plate here and there. And a large open brown box with the name Schroeder written on the side.

Sitting on Ari's desk is an heirloom watch, a leather bound journal, and Ari's phone, which he is intently looking at as it plays the following voicemail.

JACOB (O.S.)

Hey Ar... it's dad. Sorry I missed you again. Call me when you get this. Actually, call me later today, maybe I'll go out on the bike now before it gets too hot. I'm biking every day now. Trying to get in shape. I found a 10-mile route I want to try today. It starts at the house and ends at the um... the donut shop on Congress. They've got a Nutella Donut there that will just knock your socks off. I figure I burn about 45 calories a mile, if I go 10-miles that's 450 calories. Average donut is about 400 calories. That gives me a surplus burn of 50 calories, so... Of course I'll probably have 2 donuts but... anyway... call me later.

The message ends. Ari picks up the watch on the desk, flips it over in his hand, reads an inscription on the back side while turning the crown to wind it. He then slips it on his wrist.

His wife, RONIA (30s), enters. She's wrapped in a robe and her hair is up in a towel.

Hey.

RONIA

Hi.

ARI

Ronia takes in the disheveled room and the blanket and pillow on the loveseat.

RONIA

Did you sleep in here last night?

Ari nods.

RONIA (CONT'D)

...Oh. I was wondering where you were.

There is an awkward moment between them.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Did you need me?

Ari looks at her confused.

RONIA (CONT'D)

You sent me a text. Told me to come up here.

ARI
(Remembering)

Oh. Right. Yeah. Did you write in this?

RONIA

Did I write in what?

ARI

This.

Ari shows her the journal from his desk.

RONIA

What is that?

ARI

It's... my journal.

RONIA
(She smiles)

You have a journal?

ARI

Don't be so excited.

RONIA
You seemed so resistant to the idea when I brought it up.

ARI

I'm still resistant to the idea.

RONIA
I don't know why you would be.

ARI

I just don't like writing.

RONIA
You're a writer.

Ari inadvertently recoils at the title.

ARI
Well... I don't... I don't like writing about me.

RONIA
Isn't that the job of a writer? Aren't you supposed to be putting yourself into your work?

ARI
I don't like thinking about- I don't like *writing* about my feelings... right now.

RONIA
Right. Of course. Why should now be any different.

This jab doesn't go unnoticed by Ari.

RONIA (CONT'D)
I just think you're in grief. It would probably be very helpful to think about them. Express them. Write about them in your journal.

ARI
That's going to help my grief?

RONIA

I think so.

ARI

How is it going to help? Is it going to bring my dad back? Because then I'd agree with you. That would be very helpful. I would grieve so much less if my dad wasn't dead. Is there something I could write in this journal that would bring my dad back?

RONIA

All I'm saying is you need to express your feelings, perhaps in your journal, because if you don't they turn into a cancer ball.

ARI

Oh, I didn't know there is a connection between NOT journaling and cancer.

RONIA

There is.

ARI

And you know this how?

RONIA

Because I have been journaling since I was 10 years old.

ARI

And?

RONIA

And I don't have cancer!

ARI

OK. Very good.

RONIA

I just think it will help. That's all.

ARI

Hasn't helped yet.

RONIA

How many times have you written in it?

ARI

I've written in it every night since I bought it.

RONIA

When did you buy it?

ARI

Yesterday.

RONIA

(Shaking her head)

OK.

Ronia grabs the dirty plates and starts to leave.

RONIA (CONT'D)

(Realizing something)

Wait...

(With a hint of accusation)

Did you buy that... because of what we talked about... yesterday?

Ari considers the question.

ARI

...No. I don't think so, no.

RONIA

Really?

ARI

I bought it because... you said it would help.

RONIA

I've been saying that for a while.

ARI

Yes. Right. I know. I just... I guess I felt it was time to start helping myself.

RONIA

...Good.

ARI

...Though... as I mentioned, it hasn't helped yet.

RONIA

You wrote in it once. Nothing changes overnight.

ARI

Well... Something changed overnight. There is a second entry in this journal.

RONIA

What do you mean?

ARI

I mean I wrote something in it. And then someone else wrote something in it.

RONIA

...What do you mean?

ARI

What don't you follow here?

RONIA

What do you mean someone else wrote something in your journal? Who would write in your journal if not you?

ARI

You, I thought. That's why I said, "Did you write in this?"

RONIA

Why would I write in your journal?

ARI

Because someone did. And you're the only other person who lives here.

RONIA

I wouldn't do that. As someone who writes in a journal, I definitely wouldn't do that. A journal is a sacred, private thing. It's no one's business but yours.

(Then)

Read it to me.

ARI

What?

RONIA

Read to me the journal.

ARI

You just said it's a sacred, private thing.

RONIA

It's private what you write. If someone else writes in it, that's totally shareable.

ARI

I would rather not-

RONIA

Just the second entry.

ARI

Why? All I needed to know was whether or not you wrote in it.

RONIA

Of course I didn't write in it, but now I'm involved. God forbid someone is breaking into our house and, and...

ARI

Writing in our journals?

RONIA

Maybe! I don't know. I'm concerned. We gotta get to the bottom of this.

ARI

What do you think I'm trying to do?

RONIA

Would you let me see the journal, please. I'm not going to read what you wrote. I'm just going to read the last entry.

Beat.

ARI

(Begrudgingly)

Fine.

He hands her the journal. She puts the plates down and opens it up to the first page and reads.

RONIA

Really? That's all you wrote?

ARI

I thought you weren't going to read what I wrote.

RONIA

I read it accidentally- there's not a lot here.

ARI

Would you just flip the page.

RONIA

This is not “writing” in your journal.

ARI

I’m pretty sure it is.

RONIA

All you wrote was,

(She reads)

“I don’t know what to say. You go first.”

ARI

...That’s writing.

RONIA

Ari.

ARI

Just turn the page, Ronia.

She shakes her head, then turns the page.

RONIA

What am I looking at? This?

She shows him the entry to confirm she is on the right page.

ARI

Yes. That. Does it look like my handwriting? Does it even sound like something I would say?

Ronia goes to read it.

Suddenly on the other side of the stage, a light goes up on a young girl, ANNELIES. She is holding a red, beige and white plaid-patterned journal.

ANNELIES

I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support.

The young girl's light goes dark.

Ronia closes the book and looks up at Ari.

RONIA

Is this a joke?

ARI

No.

RONIA

Ari.

ARI

What?

RONIA

Do you not know what this is?

ARI

Yes. I NOT know what that is.

RONIA

Really?

ARI

Am I supposed to know what it is?

RONIA

Yes.

ARI

What is it? Please tell me. And more importantly, tell me who wrote it in my book?

RONIA

No one wrote it in your book. It was printed that way. Obviously. By the publishers. It's part of the design of the journal.

ARI

It doesn't look printed. It looks handwritten.

RONIA

It's supposed to look handwritten. It's supposed to be the handwriting of the very famous person who wrote it.

ARI

That wasn't in there yesterday.

RONIA

You probably just didn't notice it.

ARI

How could I not notice that?

RONIA

You know what, you're right. Someone wrote in your journal. You should probably quit now. Don't ever pick this thing up again.

ARI

That's not why-I'm just saying I highly doubt I'd miss that page.

RONIA

Well I highly doubt someone broke into our house just to write in your book-

ARI

Really? Because just a few minutes ago-

RONIA

Especially the someone who wrote this quote, as she died over 75 years ago.

She hands him back his journal.

RONIA (CONT'D)

It was printed in the book, Ari. I promise you. You just didn't see it. If you don't believe me write something else in it, see if she responds.

(Then, pointedly)

At least it will get you writing.

Ronia starts to exit. He watches her go, but then:

ARI

Hey.

RONIA

I have a client in an hour. I have to get ready.

ARI

She? Who is *she*?

Ronia turns to him.

RONIA

I'm really surprised you don't know.

That writing in your book is the first entry from The Diary of Anne Frank.

Ronia exits.

Ari just sits there for a long pause.

He then re-opens the journal and flips through all the pages to make sure they are definitely blank. He closes the book.

After a moment, he re-opens it and re-reads the last entry. As he does, a light once again goes up on the young girl.

ANNELIES

I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support.

Ari lets out a small laugh. Did he really think this was real? He then grabs a pen and starts to write, humoring himself.

ARI

(Writing)

You can totally confide in me. My name's Ari, by the way.

He pauses for a moment, then decides to write one last thing.

ARI (CONT'D)

Who are you?

He laughs again. Then closes the book.

Black out.

SCENE 2

ARI is in his office, which remains in its disheveled state, if not slightly more so. The small loveseat looks once again slept in. Ari is holding his journal while perusing a bookcase looking for something. He picks up a framed picture of his father, which sits on the bookshelf. He looks at it for a long moment, then notices the book he was looking for. He places the picture down and picks up a pristine copy of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. He opens it up to the inside cover and reads. Just as he finishes, RONIA enters.

Morning. RONIA

What? ARI
(Distracted)

He quickly closes the book.

...Good morning. How long have you been up? RONIA

Not long. ARI

She nods, but doesn't really believe him.

Are you almost ready to go? RONIA

Go where? ARI

Aren't you coming with me? To town. RONIA

Oh right. That's today? ARI
(Remembering)

RONIA

Yes, it's today.

ARI

...Is it all right if I don't go?

RONIA
(Are you kidding me)

Really?

ARI

I just have some work I have to do.

RONIA

You're back at work?

ARI

Well, not work, work. Just a little... a project I'm thinking about.

RONIA

Today's the day you're thinking about a project?

Beat.

ARI

I... I'll go with you. If you want. If it's important.

RONIA

It's definitely important.

She notices the book in his hand.

RONIA (CONT'D)

What's that?

ARI

The Anne Frank book. *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

RONIA

In the mood for a little light reading?

ARI

Well, you shamed me for not knowing the epigraph in my journal yesterday so I thought I should revisit the source.

RONIA

At least you're acknowledging it was an epigraph and not a mysterious journal entry.

(Then, mockingly)

Unless she wrote something else today?

ARI

(Suddenly serious)

Why would you say that?

RONIA

It was a joke. Remember jokes? We used to tell them.

He eyes her suspiciously, then places his journal
and *The Diary of a Young Girl* in a drawer.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Listen, if you got something you're working on, I can handle it without you.

ARI

I said I'll go.

RONIA

Honestly, I can manage. I'm just glad you're working on something.

ARI

Was that sarcastic?

RONIA

No.

ARI

It sounded sarcastic.

RONIA

Do you know what sarcasm is?

ARI

I do.

RONIA

If anything, it was pointed, which is kind of the opposite of sarcasm.

Ari scrutinizes her.

ARI

I'm trying to hear what you're not saying right now.

RONIA

Really? Because I think I'm not saying it pretty loudly.

ARI

Why don't you just tell me what you want.

RONIA

I thought I did. I wanted you to go with me. But if you're working on something, I'm OK with that, too, because what I really want is to help you get through this time.

ARI

You think this is helping? What you're doing.

Beat.

RONIA

I need to help ME get through this time, too.

(Then)

Good luck with whatever it is you're working on.

She exits.

He waits a moment then opens his drawer and fishes the journal back out. He opens it up and rereads the latest entry.

SCENE 3

A spot light on Annelies comes up. She is there holding her journal.

ANNELIES

Hi Ari. It's so nice to meet you. My name is Annelies Marie Frank. You can call me Anne. This is my first diary. I've never written in one before. If I knew they wrote back I might have asked for one sooner. It was a birthday present from my parents. I just turned 13 on June 12th.

How old are you?

I actually have so many questions for you. Do you mind?

Do you live here in Amsterdam? If so, are you near Merwedeplein Square?

(MORE)

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

Are you a boy or a girl? I'm assuming Ari is a boy's name, though I did know one girl who went by Ari. I think that was just a nickname though and her real name was Ariana.

Do you go to the Jewish Lyceum? I don't think I know any Aris there but maybe we have some people in common. Do you know Sanne Ledermann or Ilse Wagner or Hanneli Goslar or Jacqueline van Maarsen?

Do you like Rin Tin Tin? I wish I had a dog like him. Are you a dog person or a cat person? We have a cat. His name is Moortje.

I'm asking a lot of questions, I know. But the faster we get all of this out of the way, the faster we can talk about more meaningful stuff, which is what I really long for. Would that be OK with you? Another question, I know. I'll leave it at that.

I'll conclude by simply saying that I'm really grateful that we've connected. I find it hard to believe anyone would be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old girl, but I am not going to look a gift horse in the mouth. Of course, now that you know I am a thirteen-year-old girl you might not be interested.

Listen to me, good grief. I don't even know you and I am worried you might leave. Am I so desperate that I should plead to have someone I never met before stay and be my friend? You might be a terrible person for all I know. A monster. Just plain crazy.

But I don't think you are. Don't ask me why I say that. I don't know. Maybe I am so desperate. In any case... I don't want you to leave. Please don't go. Please write back. The truth is... I don't really have a friend. I know that might seem hard to believe, and it's not entirely accurate. I mean, I have friends. People I have fun with. Just... no one true friend. No one to get deeper with. To really confide in.

And so... perhaps that could be you. If you want. I anxiously await your reply.

The light goes out on Annelies.

Beat.

ARI

This has got to be a joke. A really cruel joke. You want a reply? I'll give you a reply.

Ari picks up a pen and starts to write.

ARI (CONT'D)

(Angrily)

Is this a joke? Because it's not funny if it is. Honestly Ronia, if this your idea of a joke, then we're going to have a serious problem. Because this is just mean. I don't know what kind of sick form of old school catfishing you're doing here but it is incredibly cruel.

Did you write this? Of course you did. Why would I even consider the possibility that you didn't write it? It has to be you, Ronia. It has to be. I'm not an idiot, after all.

What's the alternative? Am I to believe this is real? Is that the hope? Is that what you want? That I start entertaining fantasy? Should I believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, as well?

True, this journal was hardly out of my sight. Only for a few hours during the middle of the night. And you sleep like a rock. So the idea that you woke up at 3am, snuck in my office, wrote in this journal and then pretended like nothing happened does seem absurd to me. Lord knows, you're not known for your poker face. Lying is not your gift.

Actually, empathy is. Or it used to be anyway.

It's clearly not anymore because...

Because this is not real. This is you. This is your doing and it is cruel! I can't even begin to imagine why you'd do this. What is this? Some bullshit scheme to heal me? Is that what this is? Some psychobabble bullshit you learned at therapy school! Are you trying to cure my grief? Why? So you can...

So you can leave?

That's it, isn't it? Well I have bad news for you. What you're doing... It's not going to work. This is not going to heal me. This is torture. This will make things worse. And I can't allow that. Things are hard enough already. So I'm going to put a stop to this now.

Sorry. But your plan has failed.

He closes the book. He reaches into his desk drawer and grabs some duct tape. He then proceeds to tape the whole book shut over and over until there is no tape left.

Black out.

SCENE 4

Ari is napping on a small couch in his office. He is cradling his taped up journal.

Ronia enters. She is holding a mug of tea. She sees her husband asleep. She places the tea on his desk then goes to her sleeping husband. She shakes him lightly.

RONIA

Ari.
I brought you some tea.

He doesn't stir. She shakes him again.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Ari?

The journal he's holding falls to the floor. She picks it up. As soon as she does, Ari wakes up.

ARI

Caught.

RONIA

What?

ARI

I caught you. Red-handed.

RONIA

Caught me what?

ARI

Caught you with that.

RONIA

I was picking it up off the floor.

ARI

I've got a lot of things on the floor. How come you're not picking all of them up? I've got some socks over there.

RONIA

Like I don't pick up your socks enough?

ARI

Don't change the subject.

RONIA

What is the subject exactly?

ARI

The subject is you. And the verb is trying to make me crazy.

RONIA

I don't think that's an actual verb, but I'm not the writer in the house.

ARI

Aren't you, though?

RONIA

Aren't I what?

ARI

Writing! In my journal!

RONIA

Is that what this is about?

ARI

Like you don't know.

RONIA

So you think I'm writing in your journal again?

ARI

"Again!" Ah. So you admit that you wrote in it before.

RONIA

No. I admit that you thought I wrote in it before.

ARI

I don't think. I know. So you can stop playing.

RONIA

I'm not playing. I honestly don't know what's going on with you right now.

ARI

What's going on with me? That's rich. First you catfish me. Now you're gaslighting me. What's next?

RONIA

I thought I might breadcrumb you, but I'm still learning what that is.

ARI

Give me the book.

RONIA

Take it. Please.

She hands him the book.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Why is it all taped up?

ARI

Why, indeed.

Beat.

RONIA

(Confused)

Am I supposed to... I don't know what that means. "Why, indeed." Am I supposed to know what that means?

ARI

Why, indeed.

Ronia is bewildered by his behavior.

RONIA

I think you need to speak with someone.

ARI

Aren't I already speaking with someone?

RONIA

Are you?

ARI

Am I?

RONIA

Whaaat the hell is happening here?

ARI

I think I'm speaking to you.

RONIA

I think you need to speak with a therapist. A different therapist.

ARI

I don't need to talk to a therapist. I need you to stop making me crazy.

RONIA

I'm making you crazy?

ARI

You're writing in my journal.

RONIA

I'm not writing in your damn journal. How can anyone write in your journal, it's all taped up!

ARI

So you admit it!

RONIA

What did I admit this time?

ARI

That you couldn't write in my journal because it's all taped up.

RONIA

No one can write in your journal because it's all taped up!

ARI

That's why when I take off the tape there will be no new writing.

RONIA

OK?

ARI

Thus proving that you have been writing in my journal all along but you couldn't last night because the journal was all taped up.

Ronia is mystified at this logic.

RONIA

...I'm sorry, you proved something just now? Do you hear yourself? You are acting insane!

Ari grabs a knife from his drawer.

RONIA (CONT'D)

OK. Hold on. Let's take a step back here.

He starts cutting the tape off the journal.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Ari, you are really frightening me lately. I don't know what the hell is in your head, but you've got to stop treating me like an enemy.

ARI

Oh, I'm treating you like an enemy? When you're the one messing with my brain. But I'm treating you like an enemy? What am I doing exactly? How am I treating you like an enemy? Am I secretly replacing your vanilla pudding with spicy mayo?

RONIA

What?

ARI

What?

RONIA

Who does that?

ARI

Does what?

RONIA

Replace vanilla pudding with spicy mayo?

ARI

People do that. People with enemies.

RONIA

Why would they do that?

ARI

Because that's what you do to your enemies!

RONIA

Why not just ignore them?

ARI

And let them eat good pudding? Are you kidding me? After what they did?

RONIA

What did they do?

ARI

I don't know! I thought this was a hypothetical situation!

RONIA

Ari! Jesus!

Beat.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Something is going on with you. I don't know what it is... But it's not my fault. I didn't do anything wrong.

Ari finishes cutting the tape off of the journal.

ARI

No? Well, we're about to find out, aren't we? The proof is in the pudding.

He holds up the journal to her.

ARI (CONT'D)

This is you. I know this is you. Your little scheme to cure me.

RONIA

It's not a scheme. Yes, I thought writing in a journal might help you deal with the pain of losing your dad. But you make it sound like I have some nefarious agenda here.

ARI

You have an agenda. You want me to get better.

RONIA

You say that like it's a bad thing.

ARI

You want me to get better so you can leave!

Beat.

RONIA

Ari... whether you get better or not... I'm leaving.

She reaches into her bag and drops a manilla envelope in front of him.

She turns to walk out, but then turns back.

RONIA (CONT'D)

I thought this was amicable. I thought we agreed to this. Eight months ago I thought we agreed to this! The only reason I put this conversation on hold is because your dad died and you needed me. But I can't wait any more. I have got to move on. And so do you.

Beat.

RONIA (CONT'D)

I am going to go to my parents for a few days.

She points to the envelope.

RONIA (CONT'D)

You need to read that. You need to sign it. So we can move on.

Ronia exits.

Once she's gone, Ari finally opens the journal, fully expecting to find no new writing.

SCENE 5

The special on Annelies comes up.

ANNELIES

Hello Ari.

ARI

(To himself)

...Holy shit.

ANNELIES

So... Wow! There's a lot about what you wrote that I don't understand. And it made me have more questions that I want to ask you. But I don't want to upset you any more than I clearly have.

So let me instead say... I'm sorry.

I'm not sure yet what I'm apologizing for but you seemed so angry when you wrote me. So if it's because of something I said, then I certainly apologize for that. I didn't mean to write... whatever I wrote... if it was in fact me that wrote something that made you upset.

I can't imagine what that would have been, but either way the last thing I want to do is have you be angry with me. There're enough people out there who hate me already.

So... please forgive me if I did something wrong. It was not my intent.

It's probably also worth mentioning that I'm not Ronia. I don't know who Ronia is. I don't know why you'd think I was Ronia. After all, I just told you I was Annelies. Why would I lie? If I were Ronia, I would tell you. Especially since Ronia is a much prettier name than Annelies. I think, anyway.

What does it mean? Do you know?

Annelies means "Grace." Or "Devoted to God." And I do think it's pretty, my name, I just don't know that it fits me. For one thing I don't know that anyone would describe me as graceful.

I'm not awkward or gawky or anything. I just think that if you're going to be named something that has a meaning, then the hope is that you grow up to embody that meaning, and I'm not sure I embody grace.

And devotion to God? I certainly don't embody that. We don't even keep Kosher!

(Don't get me wrong) I like God. I believe in God. And these days there's a lot of reasons not to. But devoted? That seems pretty strong, I think. I'm not sure yet what I'm devoted to. This diary, maybe. Depending on how things go with us.

My hope is that maybe you're just having a bad week or something and you took it out on me, which I completely understand. This last month for me has been horrible, you can't even believe it! So much has happened. The worst of it being I had to give up my cat, which was terrible. In any case, I've been pretty angry because of everything and I've been taking it out on my family, though in fact it has nothing to do with them. They were just the only ones I could take it out on. So... Maybe that's what's happening here, too.

(MORE)

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

That doesn't explain why you'd think I'm Ronia. Or why someone named Ronia would pretend to be me. I mean, who the heck am I? It makes no sense. I have to tell you a lot of what you wrote is a real mystery to me. But... it's a mystery that I'd love to solve. If you let me. If you don't hate me.

What is catfishing, by the way? That's one of the things you said that I was like, "what the hell is that?" I mean, I know what catfish are obviously. And I suppose I could guess that catfishing is when someone fishes for catfish. But context clues in what you wrote suggest otherwise, and whatever it is, it sounds fascinating. I'm not doing it to you, by the way. But I am intrigued by it. I mean, I say I'm not doing it to you, but since I don't actually know what it is, I guess I could be doing it and not know that's what it is I'm doing and it's a bad thing. Again, if I have said anything or done anything wrong, please know it was an accident. I hope you can forgive me.

I mean, you kind of have to, right? Forgive those kinds of mistakes. After all, there are so many people who willfully want to hurt us, do we really have the luxury of giving up on those who do it accidentally?

I tend to think not.

I really hope to hear from you again.

Ari closes the journal. The light on Annelies goes out.

Ari bites his nails as he tries to understand the implications of what he just saw.

SCENE 6

ARI grabs a pen and re-opens the diary. He starts to write.

ARI

Anne!

You're right! It's me that needs to apologize. I am so sorry I was angry. It had nothing to do with you. I was having a bad week. Actually the last 34 weeks have been pretty terrible. And, like you had guessed, I've been taking it out on people such as yourself who don't deserve it.

I have never written in a journal before either. I also had no idea they wrote back. You were able to accept it pretty quickly. I hadn't been able to do that.

(MORE)

ARI (CONT'D)

But I'm trying to accept it now. Perhaps even embrace it. I just have so many questions.

He once again closes the journal, puts his pen down and continues biting his nails.

A moment later he opens the journal again to write something else, but once he does he sees:

SCENE 7

The light comes back up on Annelies.

ANNELIES

I have questions, too. So many.

ARI

(To himself, in shock)

Oh my God.

ANNELIES

Maybe we can go through some now.

ARI

(At first tentative)

Sure. That would be great.

ANNELIES

You're there!

ARI

Yes. I'm here.

ANNELIES

I'm so happy.

ARI

(Still in shock)

Me too.

Pause.

ANNELIES

So... should we go through our questions?

ARI

Why not?

ANNELIES

I'll go first. Unless you want to.

ARI

No, no. You go.

ANNELIES

Well... I had all those questions from when I first wrote you, though I feel like in some ways we're past those, which is good. As I said, I like to get the small talk out of the way fast. So instead, I'll start with: Who's Ronia? Is she your sister?

Ari is surprised that this is her first question, though slightly amused at it, as well.

ARI

No. Ronia is my wife.

ANNELIES

You're married? Holy crap! How old are you?

ARI

...I'm 42.

*

ANNELIES

Oh my God! You're so old! I had no idea.

ARI

I'm sorry. I guess I should have mentioned that. We can still be friends, right? I promise you I'm not some weird pervert stalking after young girls or something like that.

ANNELIES

I believe you. Of course, we can still be friends. I mean, it's not like I have a lot of options.

Do you live here in Amsterdam?

ARI

No. I don't. I... I live in America.

ANNELIES

America! This journal is amazing! I mean, it gets really good reception, I guess.

ARI

You're going to find this even harder to believe. I'm not of your time exactly. It's the year 2020 here.

ANNELIES

Are you kidding me?

ARI

No.

ANNELIES

2020? That's incredible. It's only 1942 here.

ARI

I know.

ANNELIES

Wait! What year were you born?

ARI

I was born in 1978.

*

ANNELIES

Oh my God! So... I'm actually older than you.

ARI

...I guess you are. Yeah.

Annelies beams.

ANNELIES

Well, as the senior member of this journaling expedition, let me say it's a pleasure going on this adventure with you.

ARI

Likewise.

(Then)

Listen, do you have any idea what's happening here? What? How? Why? I can't really wrap my head around it. What are the rules? Is this real? Are you real?

ANNELIES

As far as I know, I'm real. Though I couldn't tell you what's happening here. Or how.

ARI

Aren't you curious?

ANNELIES

I'm... grateful. I'm actually more curious about you.

ARI

Me? Jesus. There's really nothing to tell, I promise you.

ANNELIES

Oh? What's going on with you and Ronia? Why do you need healing?

As Ari decides how to answer the questions, he accidentally knocks the mug of tea on his desk.

ARI

God dammit!

Ari immediately closes the journal and places it away from the spill. The light on Annelies goes dark. He runs off stage to get something to deal with the mess. He re-enters a moment later with a towel to clean the spilt tea. Once done, he re-opens the journal and starts to write.

ARI (CONT'D)

Here's the thing...

ANNELIES

You're back!

ARI

Yes. Sorry. I had an incident.

ANNELIES

I was afraid my questions scared you off.

ARI

No. I'm just not prepared to talk about that sort of stuff yet. I'm still trying to figure out what's going on here. It seems to me that whatever is happening between us is happening for a reason and it's probably important that we figure out what that reason is instead of dwelling on my personal life.

ANNELIES

Would it help if I told you something personal about me.

ARI

Anne-

ANNELIES

I'm mad at my family. I got into a fight with my sister this morning, Over something stupid. And then mother comes in and immediately takes her side without even hearing mine. Which is of course typical for her. But then when father did the same thing... that was particularly painful. I hate them all right now!

*
*
*
*
*

ARI

I'm sure that's not true.

*
*

ANNELIES

Even though I live in a house with seven others, barely a moment to myself, I feel such loneliness, like I've been deserted, surrounded by nothing but a great void...

ARI

Anne. If we're going to talk about such things... personal things... I'd rather we work up to them organically. You know what I mean? There's no rush, you know.

ANNELIES

Of course. Too fast. Sorry.
I guess we can refer to all of those questions I asked you when we first started talking. Do you remember?

Ari shakes his head slightly. She is relentless.

ARI

Sure.

He flips back a few pages in the journal to the beginning of their conversation, re-reads the questions, then returns to the current page.

ARI (CONT'D)

Uhm... Let's see... I told you my age. I told you I live in America. I'm a boy, if you haven't figured that out already.

ANNELIES

I figured. You said you were married. And Ronia is definitely a girl's name.

ARI

Well... two women can get married in 2020.

ANNELIES

They can?

ARI

And two men.

ANNELIES

Oh my God!

ARI

I mean, not everywhere. In America they can.

ANNELIES

We tried to go to America. But... we were denied.

ARI

Yeah. We don't always have the best record with refugees. Especially these days. Our current president is a bit of a nightmare. You can't even imagine.

ANNELIES

Huh.

ARI

And with the pandemic, things are even more complicated.

ANNELIES

You have a pandemic? We had one about 10 years before I was born. My parents told me about it. They say a lot of people died. And they had to wear masks everywhere, which was a pain. Though, I mean, if it's going to save your life. Or the life of your neighbor.

ARI

Right. You'd think people would just do it. But it seems more and more these days people care less and less about their neighbors.

ANNELIES

We have really good neighbors here. Most of them anyway. I guess we're lucky.

ARI

You are. People suck today.
What else?

He flips back a few pages in his journal again to read the other questions she had.

ARI (CONT'D)

Oh. I don't go to the Jewish Lyceum. Obviously.

ANNELIES

(Tentatively)

Are you Jewish? Ari and Ronia sound like Jewish names, but I don't want to presume anything. Is that an inappropriate question to ask? You don't have to answer it if you don't want. It makes no difference to me.

ARI

It's OK. I am Jewish. So is Ronia. And it's not inappropriate to ask. Though I should probably qualify it by saying we're not that Jewish. We don't keep Kosher either and most of the traditions are a little antiquated for us.

ANNELIES

I know what you mean. Though some are nice. I like Passover. That's always fun. And I like singing the Sh'ma. That one always makes me feel closer to God.

ARI

Right... Well... If I'm being completely honest... I'm not sure I believe in God anymore.

ANNELIES

That's OK. I don't think you have to believe in God to be Jewish. Well, you certainly don't have to believe in God to be treated Jewish. But what I mean to say is, I don't think God cares if you believe in him or not. So long as you're a good person.

(Then)

May I ask why you don't believe in him anymore?

ARI

Well... I just... I don't know...

Pause.

ANNELIES

Are you there?

ARI

...Yeah. Sorry.

ANNELIES

Too fast again? It seemed organic. We were talking about God and stuff. So I thought I'd go for it. You want to keep it light. I get it. We can talk about other stuff.

ARI

Anne. Can I ask you a question?

ANNELIES

Please.

ARI

How is it that you so easily believed in the magic of this journal? To be able to communicate like this, even in 2020, it's unheard of. But you accepted it so quickly. How? I don't understand. This is not normal, you know, yet none of this seems to faze you? Why is that?

ANNELIES

I don't know. I guess there are so many things right now that are not normal. Things that I was forced to accept. Horrible, horrible things.

I couldn't hardly believe that I had to leave Germany, the country of my birth, my homeland, simply because I was Jewish. And then even here in Amsterdam, it was unbelievable at first the things we were forced to do or forbidden to do just because of who we were. These decrees. Who could believe them?

We had to wear a yellow star; We had to turn in our bicycles; We weren't allowed to use streetcars or any cars for that matter; We could only shop between 3 and 5 P.M.; Only get our hair cut at Jewish-owned barbershops; Couldn't be out on the streets at night; Couldn't go to theaters, movies or any other forms of entertainment; Forbidden to use swimming pools, tennis courts, hockey fields or take part in any athletic activity; We were forbidden to sit in our gardens, our own gardens, after 8 P.M.; We couldn't visit Christians in their homes. We couldn't do anything!

I say "couldn't" as if we can now. I don't know why I wrote all of these decrees in the past tense. We still can't do them. Only now, instead of getting arrested for breaking a law, we get shot. And we're in hiding now, so none of those things are even options anymore.

I'm scared to go outside. That is unbelievable. Why would anyone be scared to go outside? I love being outside. One with nature, God, the heavens. All of it. Yet here I am, terrified. Sharing my room with some hideous man I hardly know, wishing more than anything that we had our own home, we had space to move around, I had someone to help me with my homework, I had homework from an actual teacher, I could go back to school.

There was a time, I'm sure of it, when hearing guns booming and seeing bombs falling was not normal. And I am almost forgetting about that time, which makes me so sad.

(MORE)

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

Soon the only normal I'll know is that if I sneak a peak out my window I'm likely to see a line of Jewish men and women shot. Murdered. Kids looking for their dead parents. I am likely to see something that once in a horrible dream I thought was... unbelievable.

Surely if all of those things can be believed now... I can believe the opposite might happen, as well. Something wonderful. Something magical. I could believe that I might find a friend when I needed one most.

Pause. Ari places his hands on his face.

ARI

(To himself)

I'm such an idiot.

He crosses to the journal and begins to write.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne, I... um... Thank you for that... I'm afraid I need to go.

ANNELIES

For how long?

ARI

Not long.

ANNELIES

Did I say something wrong? Are you mad at me? That was too personal, wasn't it?

ARI

Not at all.

ANNELIES

Don't be mad at me.

ARI

I'm not mad at you. I'm mad at myself.

ANNELIES

I don't understand.

ARI

I'll write you back as soon as I can. I just need to figure some stuff out. OK?

...If you say so.

ANNELIES

I'll be in touch. I promise.

ARI

Ari closes the book. Annelies' light goes dark.

Fuck!

ARI (CONT'D)

Black out.

SCENE 8

Lights up on Ronia in her own space. She is making a call.

In the office, Ari's cell phone is ringing. After a moment, he runs into the room looking for the ringing phone. He finds it on the couch and picks up, placing it on speaker phone.

Hello.

ARI

Hi.

RONIA

Oh my God, I'm so glad you called.

ARI

You are?

RONIA

I've really got to talk to you.

ARI

About what?

RONIA

Ari tries to think how to begin.

ARI

(Failing)

...Well, first of all, how are your folks?

RONIA

They're good.

ARI

And you?

RONIA

Also good. What is going on with you?

ARI

A lot is going on with me. So much. I'm not actually sure how to start. Why don't you start.

RONIA

I don't know what's going on with you.

ARI

I mean, you go first. What's up? Why are you calling? I haven't signed the papers yet, if that's why you're calling. I'm sorry. I'll get to it, I just have bigger fish to fry right now.

RONIA

That's not why I'm calling.

ARI

No?

RONIA

I spoke with Michael.

ARI

...Who?

RONIA

Michael Anders.

ARI

...

RONIA

Our marriage counselor!

ARI

Oh right. Michael.

RONIA

I told him something is going on with you and he said he'd be willing to stop by and check on you.

ARI

I wish you hadn't done that.

RONIA

You really scared me yesterday, Ari.

ARI

I'm sorry that I scared you. And something is going on with me. You're right. But it's nothing Michael Anders can fix.

RONIA

I really want you to speak with him.

ARI

Listen to me. I need you to come home. OK? I can explain everything when you're home. I can show you what's been going on with me.

RONIA

I'm not coming home. Not until you speak with someone.

ARI

I have been speaking with someone!

RONIA

Who?

ARI

I'm afraid it won't make sense if I tell you. I need to show you.

RONIA

Just tell me who.

ARI

You're not going to believe it!

RONIA

Ari!

ARI

I've been speaking with Anne Frank!

Beat.

RONIA

Are you speaking to her through WhatsApp or Google Voice?

ARI

I knew you wouldn't believe me.

RONIA

No. Of course I believe you. I've just been Facetiming with Walt Disney-

ARI

I've been speaking with Anne Frank. OK? I know it sounds crazy. Remember I showed you she wrote in my journal. You said it was printed by the publisher. But it wasn't! That was real! I have a magic journal. I don't know how it works. I just know she and I are able to communicate. We've been communicating. At first I didn't know why, but, but it has since become very clear to me... I have to save her!

RONIA

You have to save Anne Frank?

ARI

Yes. I have to save Anne Frank!

RONIA

Great. How are you going to do that?

ARI

(Panicking)

I have no fucking idea! I have been thinking about this all night. I don't even know what to tell her. About her life, I mean. She's 13. I should tell her she's going to die? That would scare the shit out of her! But how do I save her and not tell her she's going to die? What are the rules about this shit? I don't know! I have no idea what to do here! I really need your help! I need you to come home and, and we can figure this shit out! Together.

Beat.

ARI (CONT'D)

Hello?

RONIA

I'm here.

ARI

I'm not playing around, Ronia. This... this is real.

RONIA

(Delicately)

Ari... you understand you can't bring someone back after they're gone.

ARI

Are you not listening to me, Ronia? I... I can write to her!
I have a magic diary!

Beat.

RONIA

I hear you.
I'm glad... that I called Michael. He'll be there tomorrow. Please talk to him.

She's disconnects.

ARI

Ronia. Ronia!

Ari puts his phone down.

SCENE 9

Ari picks up his journal. He opens it. He is surprised to find something inside. He picks it up out of the journal. It is a small, knitted flower pressed between some pages.

After examining it for a moment, he sets it down, picks up a pen and starts writing.

ARI

Anne? Are you there?

He waits. Soon Annelies' light come on.

ANNELIES

Ari! So nice to hear from you again. I was starting to worry you weren't coming back.

ARI

I'm back.

ANNELIES

How have you been?

ARI

I've been good. Um, Anne, listen, I have an important question for you. I found a flower in my journal this morning. A knitted wool flower.

ANNELIES

Oh good! You got it!

ARI

(To himself)

Oh my God.

ANNELIES

I've had some time to kill so I thought I'd try a little knitting. What do you think?

ARI

Are you telling me that you put this flower in *your* diary?

ANNELIES

Yes.

ARI

Does it not amaze you that I was able to receive it in mine?

ANNELIES

I mean, I had hoped you'd receive it. But to answer your question, most things amaze me.

ARI

(To himself)

Holy shit.

He paces, marveling at the implications.

ANNELIES

It took me 6 hours to make that flower. Knitting is hard, though a fun way to pass the time. We have a lot of free time here in the Annex. Usually I spend it writing my stories, which I thought about including in the diary, but I didn't want to bore you with them. Not that I don't think they're good. I'm very proud of them. I just figured I'd keep the diary focused on us. So I just jot my stories down in an old notebook I found-

Ari approaches the journal.

ARI
(To Anne)

Anne!

ANNELIES

Yes?

ARI
I want to... Let me try sending you something back.

ANNELIES

Oh good! I love presents.

Ari reaches in his drawer and pulls something out. He places it in between the pages. A moment later the item is gone.

Annelies looks down at her journal. Sure enough there is something there.

ARI
Did you get it?

ANNELIES
I got it!

ARI
Oh my God!

ANNELIES
What is this thing?

ARI
It's called an iPod. It plays music.

ANNELIES
I love music!

ARI
This is incredible.

ANNELIES
How does it work?

ARI

Anne, do you understand what this means?

ANNELIES

How do you play it?

ARI

This, this, this could really help us. I don't know how yet, but certainly if one were to make a list of assets and deficits, this has got to be in the asset column.

ANNELIES

I don't know what you're talking about. I want to play music.

ARI

Yes. Good. You're right. We should test it. Make sure it still works.

He pulls out some headphones.

ARI (CONT'D)

You'll need headphones.

He puts the headphones in between the pages of the book.

A moment later, Annelies retrieves them.

ARI (CONT'D)

Did you get them?

ANNELIES

I did.

ARI

You need to plug the metal end into the port at the bottom of the iPod.

She does it.

ANNELIES

OK.

ARI

Then put the two earbuds one in each ear.

She does.

ARI (CONT'D)

You turn on the iPod using the middle button. There's only one playlist on it. It's all my favorite songs. Scroll through them using the jog wheel and once you've found a song you like, hit the button again. Wait. Let me know what track it is so I can play it here. I want to experience it with you.

She looks through the iPod tracks.

ANNELIES

This one looks promising. Track 7.

Ari looks on his computer and smiles.

ARI

Good choice.

He presses a button, as does Anne, and U2's "Beautiful Day" starts to play.

As the music kicks in, Anne can't believe what she's hearing.

ANNELIES

Oh my God.

The music is quite emotional for her. She can't contain her smile, and yet at the same time, can't hold back her tears. It seems the war she is living through is not the end of the world. Beautiful things continue on.

Ari, too, seems to hear this song in a whole new way.

U2

*The heart is a bloom
Shoots up through the stony ground
There's no room
No space to rent in this town*

*You're out of luck
And the reason that you had to care
The traffic is stuck
And you're not moving anywhere*

(MORE)

U2 (CONT'D)

*You thought you'd found a friend
To take you out of this place
Someone you could lend a hand
In return for grace*

*It's a beautiful day
Sky falls, you feel like
It's a beautiful day
Don't let it get away*

*It's a beautiful day
Don't let it get away
It's a beautiful day...*

When the chorus kicks in, the music overtakes them and they both jump to their feet and dance.

When the song ends, they both fall on the floor, euphoric.

Black out.

SCENE 10

It's night time. ARI and ANNELIES are sitting on the ground in their respective spaces.

Ari is eating some Chinese take-out food straight from the carton. After a few bites, he sets it down. He gets up and crosses to his desk where he retrieves from the drawer his faded copy of *The Diary of a Young Girl*. He's trying to muster up some courage.

ANNELIES

Are you there?

ARI

I'm here. I'm just trying to figure out... how best to proceed... and I can't think of a way forward without me telling you everything.

ANNELIES

I wish you would.

Ari has made a decision. He will Tell Annelies about her life.

ARI

But where to begin?

ANNELIES

Why did you stop believing in God?

ARI

(Relieved)

Sure... Good. Let's begin with that.

Ari's changed his mind.

ANNELIES

I'm not judging you, by the way. You don't have to believe in God.

ARI

Oh, I don't know if it's that I don't believe in him- Christ, I sent you an iPod through a magic journal- It's just that I'm not talking to him anymore. We're on the outs.

ANNELIES

Why?

ARI

Because I'm angry with him.

ANNELIES

He can take it.

ARI

I don't know. I'm pretty mad.

ANNELIES

Why?

ARI

Why not? If we have to thank him for all the good things that happen in our lives, surely that means we can blame him for all the bad stuff.

And there is a lot of bad stuff.

Beat.

ARI (CONT'D)

Eight months ago my wife told me she wanted a divorce.

ANNELIES

Oh Ari. That's the worst.

ARI

A day later my dad was killed in a car accident.

ANNELIES

Nope. Sorry. That's probably the worst-I'm going to let you finish.

ARI

Actually, he was on his bicycle.

June 12th, 2019. It was about eight in the morning. A woman was driving to work in her car. She hadn't slept well the night before apparently and... fell asleep at the wheel. She ran right into him. And that was it. He was killed instantly. One moment here, the next moment gone. All because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was only 67. *

ANNELIES

I am so sorry. I don't know what to say. What a horrible time that must have been for you. To lose your father... And your wife.

ARI

Well...

He sees the envelope with the divorce papers.

ARI (CONT'D)

I haven't lost my wife yet. After my dad died, she put the divorce conversation on hold. She said she'd stay with me. Help me get through this time, which was... real good of her. Though I guess she feels eight months is time enough to get through it because a few days ago she brought divorce back up. And things are moving quickly now.

ANNELIES

Why does she want a divorce?

Ari shakes his head, unsure how to answer.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

Did you beat her?

ARI
Jesus, No!

ANNELIES
Did you cheat on her?

ARI
Of course not!

ANNELIES
Did you sleep with her sister?

ARI
I just said I didn't cheat on her. How am I going sleep with her sister?

ANNELIES
Maybe it's a twin sister so you don't think of it as cheating.

ARI
She doesn't have a twin sister.

ANNELIES
Does she have a twin brother?

ARI
I didn't do anything!

ANNELIES
Did you stop loving her?

ARI
Absolutely not.

ANNELIES
Does she still love you?

ARI
I hope so.

ANNELIES
Then I don't understand. I'm not a pro here, but it seems that if you didn't do anything, why would she want to divorce you?

Ari thinks about this but then shakes it off.

ARI

This is not what we need to be talking about right now.

He again reaches for *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

ANNELIES

There's something else you'd rather talk about instead?

He half nods.

ARI

...I don't want to talk about my divorce. OK? You can talk about it with my wife if you want more information.

ANNELIES

This is already a lot deeper than I've ever gotten with Sanne Ledermann or Ilse Wagner.

ARI

(Facetiously)

Good. Good. I'm glad for that.

ANNELIES

Can we talk about your father? What was his name?

Ari sighs.

ARI

Jacob Schroeder. Of the Delray Beach Schroeders.

ANNELIES

What did he do?

ARI

He was a writer.

ANNELIES

You're kidding me. That's what I want to do.

ARI

(To himself)

I know.

ANNELIES

I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart. That must sound silly.

ARI

No.

ANNELIES

What types of things did your father write?

ARI

Books mostly. Fiction. Non-fiction. He was very successful.

ANNELIES

That's amazing.

(Then)

You know, I just realized I don't even know what you do.

ARI

Something less amazing.

ANNELIES

Tell me.

ARI

I write for reality TV.

ANNELIES

You're also a writer?

ARI

For reality TV.

ANNELIES

What is reality TV?

ARI

Reality television. It's like scripted television only without the quality. It's a horrible, horrible existence, believe me.

ANNELIES

Why don't you write books like your dad?

Beat.

ARI

I did. Well, not books. Book. One book. Seven years ago. But it wasn't like my dad's. It was terrible. One terrible book.

*

ANNELIES

I'm sure it was great.

ARI

So long as you don't measure quality by reviews or sales then yes, it was fantastic.
(Then)

Listen, Anne-

ANNELIES

He must have been so proud.

Beat.

ARI

(Shaking his head)

Proud is not the word I would use.

ANNELIES

I bet you were his favorite writer.

ARI

I definitely was not.

ANNELIES

Oh come on. If not you then who?

ARI

Probably you!

There it is. He finally started saying what he's
been needing to say.

ANNELIES

What?

He hesitates a moment.

ARI

Here's the thing, Anne. You're a writer. A very famous writer.

ANNELIES

I don't understand.

ARI

I'm from the future, remember? I know a lot about you. You're Anne Frank. THE Anne Frank.

ANNELIES

I can't tell if you're being sarcastic? In print it's hard to tell tone.

ARI

You are one of the most vivid and poignant writers in the history of the world. Your words will be read by millions and millions of people. Including my dad. He read everything you ever wrote. He even tried to buy some obscure poetry of yours but was sadly outbid.

ANNELIES

Someone bought one of my poems?

ARI

Something from when you were 10 years old, if you can believe it. I can't sell a syllable of my work. Even the checks I write are practically worthless. But you write a poem in your friend's yearbook and it sells for thousands.

ANNELIES

Oh, I know what you're talking about! It was a poem for my friend Juultje. It read:

*What shall I write here?
Wait, Dear Juul, I have an idea:
Good health and all the best!
Be good be full of zest,
And whatever fate may be divining,
Remember every cloud has a silver lining.*

I can't believe he wanted to buy that.

ARI

He loved words. Yours especially. When he wrote he said his sorrows would disappear, his spirits would revive, his courage would be reborn. Through writing, he said, he could... even live forever.

ANNELIES

I know how he feels.

ARI

I bet you do. I'm pretty sure he was quoting you. He was a real fan. He even bought me a copy of your book when I started writing. Inscribed it and everything.

ANNELIES

(Beaming)

What did he say?

ARI

It doesn't matter. I'm sure he hoped one day I would write something just as good.

ANNELIES

Wow. And I'm sure you have.

ARI

No.

ANNELIES

Maybe not yet. No one gets it right the first time.

ARI

...You do.

ANNELIES

(Excitedly rambling)

I'm a writer. A famous writer. That makes me so happy. It never occurred to me to ask you if you knew who I was or what I did. Not that I don't think I could be someone of note. Sure. Why not? I have these dreams. Why shouldn't they come true? I know I have skill. But of course, one never really knows for sure. And with everything that's going on here, it seemed fool-hardy to presume anything... But you're from the future... and you're telling me that I become a famous author... that's the best thing I've ever heard. Better than Italy surrendering from the war, this... This is a real gift, Ari. Thank you so much.

ARI

Consider it a belated birthday gift.

ANNELIES

Ha. Really belated.

ARI

But Anne, look... There's more I need to tell you that might not be so...

(Then)

What do you mean *really* belated? Your birthday was just a few days ago.

ANNELIES

I wish. My birthday was 6 months ago.

ARI

What are you talking about? One of the first things you wrote is how you just turned 13.

ANNELIES

13? Ari, I'm 14 and a half now.

ARI

What? No, no. No. That can't be.

He flips back in the journal, then returns to the most recent page.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne. I just re-read what you wrote. You just turned 13!

ANNELIES

How long do you think we've been writing?

ARI

I started writing you three days ago. April 12th, 2020.

ANNELIES

...We've been writing for a year and a half.

ARI

That's not possible.

ANNELIES

I don't know what to say. It may've been three days for you, but for me it's been longer.

ARI

A year and a half? How?

ANNELIES

All I can tell you is sometimes a day would go by before I'd hear from you. Sometimes a week. Sometimes a month or more. We'd be in the middle of a conversation and then... you'd be gone.

ARI

This conversation... the one we just had... It was not continuous?

ANNELIES

Sometimes it was. Sometimes no.

ARI

So... what's the date? By you. What's the date?

ANNELIES

It's December 21st, 1943. It's the first night of Chanukah.

ARI

Jesus. I've wasted so much of your time.

ANNELIES

Hardly. It hasn't been a waste at all.

ARI

But it has. There so many more important things I need to tell you.

ANNELIES

I want to hear them. I want to hear everything. You've already given me so much hope. I've prayed this war will end. I've prayed I will survive it. Now I know I do!

Ari hears a door slam in his home.

RONIA (O.S.)

Ari?

ARI

Anne, I have to go.

ANNELIES

I want to talk to you more about my future.

ARI

Yes, yes. Of course.

ANNELIES

And your stuff, too. Your dad and Ronia and stuff.

ARI

I have to go. I'll talk to you soon.

ANNELIES

Don't be long.

He closes his journal. Annelies's light goes out.

Ronia enters.

RONIA

Ari!

ARI

What are you doing home?

RONIA

I need to talk to you about something.

Ronia is scanning the bookshelf frantically.

ARI

I need to talk to you, too.

RONIA

God dammit! Where is it?

ARI

Where is what?

She sees what she's looking for on Ari's desk.
The Diary of a Young Girl. She opens it.

ARI (CONT'D)

What's going on?

RONIA

I was talking to my parents about what's happening with you. About how you're "talking" to Anne Frank.

ARI

Yeah, I'm in trouble here. I've been hemming and hawing about what I should tell Anne about her future and it turns out a whole year and a half has passed for her.

RONIA

Ari listen to me!

ARI

A year and a half, Ronia! And I've done nothing!

RONIA

My parents did not know who Anne Frank was!

ARI

...What? That's weird. Your dad is a history teacher.

RONIA

I then Googled her. Nothing showed up.

ARI

What are you saying?

RONIA

I'm saying I believe you. I believe you're writing her. And I think that's... done something.

She shows Ari a random page of the book.

RONIA (CONT'D)

The pages of this book are now blank.

Black Out.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Ronia sits in the office, which looks considerably cleaner. The blanket and pillow are still on the loveseat, but the blanket is at least folded. The journal sits on the desk in front of Ronia. She is reading it. In her hand is the iPod Ari sent Annelies. As she finishes the page, she closes the book.

Ari comes into the office and grabs the remaining dirty plates to bring them down to the kitchen. He sees Ronia is done reading, sets the plates back down.

ARI
(Anxiously)

Did you read everything?

RONIA

Every last word.

ARI

Incredible, isn't it?

RONIA

It's... not to be believed. I've never seen anything like it.

ARI

Did she write anything new?

RONIA

She did. It's amazing. The words appeared right before my eyes.

ARI

Let's take a look.

Ari opens the journal to the latest page and reads. A light shines on Annelies.

ANNELIES

February 2nd 1944-

Ari looks up, panicked.

ARI

(To Ronia)

1944! Oh my God, it's already February 1944! Do you remember when... when she gets caught?

Ronia shakes her head.

RONIA

1944 for sure. I'm not sure when. Summer, I think. Maybe August. I don't know. It's been a long time since I read the book. You don't remember?

ARI

(Sheepishly mumbling)

I never read the book.

RONIA

What?

ARI

I never read the book!

RONIA

Are you kidding me? Everyone's read this book. It's required reading in like every high school in America.

ARI

I didn't read the book!

RONIA

Your dad gave you an inscribed copy!

ARI

Well, I didn't do everything my dad expected me to do! Obviously.

Beat.

RONIA

...It was August, I think. 1944. I'm pretty sure.

Ari goes back to reading the journal.

Annelies continues.

ANNELIES

February 2nd, 1944. Hello Ari. It's been a while since I heard from you. I think I figured out why sometimes we are able to write continuously and other times days and weeks go by without me hearing from you. Write me back soon. I want to test out my theory.

By the way, the iPod stopped working a while ago. I hope I didn't break it. I'm thinking it just needs a new battery but I'm not sure how to change it.

I hope to hear from you soon.

RONIA

The iPod just materialized out of nowhere. I've never seen anything like it. I'm charging it for her. So you can send it back.

Ari looks at his wife. Troubled.

ARI

I'm not sure I should send it back.

Ari places the journal back down on the desk.

ARI (CONT'D)

I'm not sure I should write her again.

RONIA

Why?

ARI

...

RONIA

Ari? I thought you wanted to save her.

ARI

Sure. Sure. I'll save her. As if that's even possible. We're talking about history here! About fate. About destiny. Her destiny, which for all we know is written in stone. What makes you think I can change that? That I can change the past?

She picks up *The Diary of A Young Girl*.

RONIA

Obviously you can change the past. No one's even heard of her anymore.

ARI

Right. Yes. Good point! Let's look how I've changed things! I've made them worse! Think of all the damage I've already done by writing in that journal.

He takes the now blank *The Diary of a Young Girl* from Ronia.

ARI (CONT'D)

I've robbed Anne Frank of her legacy. And robbed the world of... Of one of the most important pieces of literature in the history of writing. One of the most read books ever.

RONIA

Said the person who never read it.

ARI

And now never can read it! Because of what I did this invaluable treasure that has taught, and would have continued to teach countless generations about the horrors of the Holocaust, has been destroyed... by me... complaining about my stupid life.

I destroyed it. I destroyed her! You understand? I killed her. She survived that horrible place because of this book and I wrote all over it. I defaced it like a common vandal, erasing her from history.

RONIA

All the more reason why we cannot stop!

ARI

I don't want to be responsible for anything else that gets messed up. If I keep writing in that book, I mean, who knows what other damage I can do? I could kill Shakespeare!

RONIA

I think Shakespeare is safely dead by this point.

ARI

Oh, you understand the magic of this diary? You know how it works? What the rules are? Because I don't. As far as I know, I flip a page, I'm suddenly talking to the bard himself as he pitches me the merits of Romeo and Juliet and I tell him about the trials and tribulations of reality TV.

Pause.

RONIA

Please Ari!

Ari looks at the ground, shaking his head.

ARI

...I don't know what to do!

RONIA

That's fine. So long as you don't do nothing. Not again. We have to do something. We have no choice.

ARI

...I'm afraid!

He looks at her.

ARI (CONT'D)

I'm afraid if I do something... if I make a choice... it will not only be the wrong choice... it will make things so much worse. Is it not better to do nothing?

He looks up at her. She holds his gaze.

RONIA

It's not. We can figure it out. Together.

(Then)

We just need to get her out of that house, right? Cause if she stays in that house, she gets caught. If she gets caught she dies.

ARI

She'd be terrified to leave that house.

RONIA

I know. But she has no choice. We need to make her understand that. We need her to understand what's at stake.

ARI

So we tell her? Tell her the truth? Tell her what happens if she stays?

RONIA

Yes!

ARI

I've been trying to do that, it's just-

RONIA

We tell her! And then we find her another place. Another safe house where she can hide out until the war is over.

Ari looks at his computer.

ARI

(Slowly coming around)

I guess we could... I suppose we could Google other Jews in hiding in Amsterdam during the war.

RONIA

That's right.

ARI

She can't be the only one. There must have been others who didn't get caught.

RONIA

I'm sure there were.

ARI

We should be able to do this, right? We know the history. We have the internet. Christ, we have a magic journal that will allow us to send her whatever she needs along the way.

RONIA

We can save her!

Ari is back on board.

ARI

We have to save her! We can't have a world without Anne Frank.

SCENE 2

Ari opens the journal and begins to write.

ARI

Anne? You there?

Annelies' light turns on. She is here.

ANNELIES

Ari! It's about time.

ARI

Listen, I have something I need to talk to you about.

ANNELIES

Me too! I think I figured out why sometimes we're able to write continuously and other times weeks go by without me hearing from you.

ARI

Great. I want to hear about that but-

ANNELIES

I think so long as both of our journals remain open, we can speak nonstop. But if one of us closes our diary, that's when I experience having to wait days, weeks or sometimes months for you to write again. I'm not sure why that is. I'm also not sure why it doesn't happen to you, but... Well, there it is. That's my theory.

ARI

Its sounds very reasonable. But listen, Anne-

ANNELIES

Let's put it to the test. Today is March 19th, 1944. I'm going to shut my book and then open it right back up and we'll see what happens.

ARI

No, Anne don't!

The light on Annelies has gone out.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne?

No response.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne!

He writes again.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne?

Ari looks at Ronia concerned. Finally, the light on Annelies comes back on.

ANNELIES

You're back.

ARI

Anne!

ANNELIES

Wow, that took longer than I thought. Did any time pass for you?

ARI

No. Just a few seconds.

ANNELIES

When I re-opened my book, you weren't there. I left it open for weeks. Nothing. Finally today I hear from you again. "Anne, Anne, Anne!" It's so weird.

ARI

Did you say weeks? What's the date? Over there, what is the date?

ANNELIES

May 2nd, 1944.

ARI

Oh my God!

ANNELIES

It's all right. I used the time to finish a story I was working on about life before the Annex-

ARI

Listen to me, Anne. Do not shut that book again! Do you understand me?

ANNELIES

Yes. Why? What is it?

ARI

I have to tell you something very important.

Beat.

ARI (CONT'D)

You can't stay in that house. You have to leave the Annex.

ANNELIES

Leave the Annex? Are you insane?

ARI

If you stay there, you will get caught? You do get caught.

ANNELIES

What? When?

ARI

Some time this year.

ANNELIES

This year? Jesus, why the hell did you let me close that book?

ARI

I'm sorry!

ANNELIES

When this year?

ARI

I don't remember exactly. Summer I think.

ANNELIES

When?

ARI

I don't know. August maybe.

ANNELIES

August? Are you sure?

ARI

I'm not sure.

ANNELIES

Can't you look it up? In the history books or something? You said I'm famous.

ARI

It's not that simple anymore.

ANNELIES

What do you mean?

ARI

Something happened. Because of what we're doing something happened.

ANNELIES

I don't understand!

ARI

You're famous... because of your diary. You wrote a diary during your time in that Annex. And you get caught. You and your family. And you're taken to a camp.

ANNELIES

Which camp? I've heard some are not as bad as others. I mean, obviously we survive. You said I'm famous. I'm a famous writer-

ARI

You don't survive!

You don't survive.

You, your sister, your mother... You all die.

ANNELIES

...That's not possible.

ARI

I'm sorry.

ANNELIES

...But you said... I'm a famous writer.

ARI

Your father survives. He finds your diary back at the Annex. And he has it published after the war. That's why you're famous. Because of what you wrote... and how well you wrote it... you change the world. Your diary changed the world. But... the thing is...

ANNELIES

(Realizing)

I didn't write it. Did I?

ARI

Not anymore.

ANNELIES

(Disdainfully)

Because I was busy writing you.

ARI

I don't know what to say.

ANNELIES

I need to go.

ARI

Please don't go!

ANNELIES

I need to lie down!

ARI

Don't close the book!

ANNELIES

I need to lie down! I don't feel right! My head hurts. I just want to lie down!

ARI

OK. Yes. Lie down, if you need to. I'll... I'll get you some medicine. Just please don't close the book. OK? Anne? Anne-

ANNELIES

I WON'T CLOSE THE GOD DAMN BOOK! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!

Pause.

Ari looks at Ronia, distraught.

ARI

Um... I'm going to get her something. For her head. Some ibuprofen or something. Maybe...

He hands Ronia the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

Maybe you can write to her?

RONIA

I don't think she's going to want to hear from me.

ARI

...please.

Ari exits.

Pause.

Ronia finally picks up the journal and writes.

RONIA

Anne?

Nothing.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Anne, please.

ANNELIES

That's not Ari's handwriting.
Who is this?

RONIA

It's Ronia.

ANNELIES

What do *you* want?

RONIA

We're going to fix this.

ANNELIES

Really? You can't even fix your marriage. But you're going to fix history.

Beat.

RONIA

Listen... I get you're upset.

ANNELIES

How can you possibly understand anything of what I'm feeling? Did you just find out you're going to die? Your sister is going to die. Your mother is going to die. Is there a war happening in *your* country right now that Ari forgot to mention?

RONIA

No.

ANNELIES

No!

RONIA

You're right. I have no idea what you're going through.

ANNELIES

That's right. You don't.

RONIA

I'm just trying to help.

ANNELIES

Go figure out your own shit, Ronia. Don't worry about me!

RONIA

Hey! Don't talk to me like that! I don't care who you are. I don't deserve that. I'm not the bad guy here. I'm a friend. I'm trying to help you. I'm trying to save your damn life!

ANNELIES

You're doing a hell of a job so far.

RONIA

(Combative)

Oh my God! I am so sorry, Anne! This is our first magic journal! Sorry if we didn't know exactly what was going to happen! We're doing the best we can. Ari is doing the best he can.

ANNELIES

Then why are you divorcing him?

RONIA

...Can we please stay on topic?

ANNELIES

This is the topic I want to talk about.

RONIA

It's none of your business.

ANNELIES

This is the only thing I want to talk about.

RONIA

I'm not talking to you about my divorce.
It would be inappropriate for me to talk to you about my divorce.

ANNELIES

Because you think I'm a child?

RONIA

Because I think you're Anne Frank!

Beat.

ANNELIES

...I don't want to talk about who you think I am.

RONIA

My problems are so trivial compared to yours. I am lucky that the only thing I have to complain about is my husband. Maybe I take that for granted, how lucky I am...that there isn't a war in my country. That I was born *when* I was born. *Where* I was born. In America. In the Tri-state area! Where I can be Jewish and no one checks to see if there are horns coming out of my head. I don't have to think about... any of the things that you have to think about.

ANNELIES

I don't want to think about them.

RONIA

You don't have that luxury.

ANNELIES

...Why are you divorcing Ari?

RONIA

No.

ANNELIES

Please.

RONIA

You need to get out of that house! We're willing to help you get out of that house. We have a plan that will help you get out of that house. But that's all we can do is help. *You* have to do it.

ANNELIES

...

RONIA

Anne.

ANNELIES

...

RONIA

Anne!

ANNELIES

...

Beat.

RONIA

I want to have a baby! OK?

Beat.

RONIA (CONT'D)

I want to do what married couples do and have a family and be happy! I want to move forward! And Ari can't seem to get past the past!

ANNELIES

He is grieving. His father died. It's only been 8 months.

RONIA

He's been grieving for years! Well before his father died. He is in a constant state of mourning! For what, I don't know exactly, but he just seems so unsatisfied all the time.

He was a very passionate man when we first started dating. He was artistic and creative and motivated and... Unstoppable!

Now he is stuck. Paralyzed! Unmovable!

We got married and suddenly he started acting like he was trapped. Trapped in a life that was making him miserable. I don't want him to feel that way. What's more, I don't want to feel like I'm making him feel that way.

If he wants to quit reality TV, he should quit reality TV. If he wants to write a book, he should write it. But does he? No. He doesn't do any of that. Why? Who knows? But I have a very low tolerance for people who say they want things to be different but do nothing to make a difference.

Sure. Maybe that's my problem. I'm not patient enough. I'm not supportive enough. Encouraging. Whatever! God knows I'm not perfect.

(MORE)

RONIA (CONT'D)

I'm not...

I don't...

She shakes her head, fighting emotions.

RONIA (CONT'D)

I don't know why... I brought this out of him.

Why do I bring this out of him?

ANNELIES

Do you still love him?

RONIA

I do.

But I can't fix him.

In fact, I think I broke him.

Beat.

RONIA (CONT'D)

We fantasized about all of our dreams when we were younger. We had so many dreams. We would tell ourselves such stories. He doesn't tell stories anymore. He used to love to tell stories! I feel like he doesn't dream anymore. Did I do that to him? Did I do that?

ANNELIES

I'm sure you didn't do that to him.

RONIA

You know, there was a time when he wanted a family, too. We talked about it early on. But now... well, clearly he just... I mean... he's not ready to be a father. He can't even take care of himself, how can I expect him to take care of anybody else?

Ari returns, still affected by Anne's outburst from earlier. He is carrying a box of supplies.

ARI

I got her some medicine. I also made her a sandwich cause I figured she might be hungry. Maybe that's why she's so upset, you know. Not that she doesn't have good reason to be upset. It's just that... I mean, if I found out I was going to be killed by Nazis AND I hadn't eaten... I think that would... compound things.

Ronia hands Ari the journal, then turns away from him.

Ari quickly looks at what was just written. He doesn't look at it long, but he doesn't have to. He sees enough.

ARI (CONT'D)

I'll uh... I'll take over.

He writes to Anne.

ARI (CONT'D)

Anne?

ANNELIES

...

ARI

I got you some stuff. First of all, here's a sandwich. In case you're hungry.

He places a sandwich on the journal. It disappears. A moment later, Anne is able to retrieve it from her diary.

ARI (CONT'D)

I also got you some baby carrots and a bottle of water. I don't know how much food you have there.

He places the rest of the food on the journal. Anne starts to eat.

ARI (CONT'D)

For your headache, here's some pain killer. It's acetaminophen.

He places acetaminophen on the journal. She gets it a moment later.

ARI (CONT'D)

And here's ibuprofen, as well.

He places ibuprofen on the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

You should use the acetaminophen for pain, but if you also have inflammation, then maybe take the ibuprofen instead. And, and don't take more than the recommended dosage. It says what that is on the bottle.

Ronia has slowly turned back to Ari during these exchanges.

ARI (CONT'D)

I also got you some... well...

Ari holds up some Tampons for Ronia to see.

ARI (CONT'D)

(To Ronia)

I got her some Tampons. She's nearly 15... she probably needs these, right?

Ronia nods.

Ari places the Tampons on the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

(To Anne)

So I got you some Tampons. I don't know if you had those back then, but there for your... Your... menstrual cycle. The way they work is... well, if you need help understanding how to use them, I think there's directions on the box. Or maybe Ronia can probably talk you through it.

Ari pulls out a few prescription bottles.

ARI (CONT'D)

And then this is if you're stressed or need help sleeping. It's called Xanax.

He places the Xanax on the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

(To Ronia)

I wouldn't normally give this to kids, but, I mean, it's probably pretty stressful there, so.

He picks the last prescription bottle.

ARI (CONT'D)

And lastly...

(To Ronia, showing her the bottle)

I found this in *your* drawer actually. Doxycycline?

RONIA

Yeah, I didn't end up taking it but it was prescribed to me for a UTI.

ARI

Oh.

He places it on the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

(To Anne)

So this is in case you get a uh... an infection.

Beat.

ARI (CONT'D)

Did you get all that?

ANNELIES

I did. Thank you. Please thank Ronia, as well.

ARI

I'm really sorry about... everything.

ANNELIES

Yeah, well... You didn't know. It was an accident.

ARI

(Quoting her from earlier)

...You have to forgive those kinds of mistakes. Right?

ANNELIES

(A slight nod)

...That's right.

ARI

Thank you.

Anne takes one final bite of her sandwich.
Swallows. Then:

ANNELIES

OK. So... What's the plan?

Black out.

SCENE 3

Ari sits at his desk winding the antique watch. With the exception of the blanket folded on the loveseat, and the pillow alongside it, the office is completely clean now.

Ronia paces nervously around the room.

RONIA

What time is it?

ARI

2pm.

RONIA

Not here. There.

ARI

It was 5pm her time when she last wrote. That was 3 hours ago. She said she would contact us again when the streets are empty. About 1AM her time.

Ronia nods.

Beat.

RONIA

(Suddenly more anxious)

Shit. I think I'm just now realizing how dangerous it is what we're asking her to do.

ARI

I know.

RONIA

I'm nervous.

ARI

Me too.

And excited.

RONIA

For sure.

ARI

What we're doing...

RONIA

It's huge.

ARI

I just hope...

RONIA

...Yeah.

ARI
(Nodding)

...I just hope we don't regret this.

RONIA

Beat.

ARI
(To himself as much as Ronia)
You don't regret the things you do... nearly as much as the things you don't do.

Ronia stares at Ari, impressed by this new perspective.

ARI (CONT'D)
I think Mark Twain said that. Or something like it. Of course he didn't have Anne Frank's life hanging in the balance. Still... hell of a quote.

Ari puts on the watch, then looks up at his wife.
She kisses him.

Sorry.

RONIA

No, it... We haven't done that in a while.

ARI

I know.

RONIA

ARI

I didn't think we'd ever do it again.

She kisses him again.

ARI (CONT'D)

We just did it again.

She nods.

RONIA

I know. I know the timing is weird. I'm nervous and excited and... I mean we have 5 hours to kill.

ARI

Right. I was thinking we'd play some Nintendo.

She kisses him again.

He pulls away.

ARI (CONT'D)

Wait. Are you sure we should... ?

RONIA

Unless you'd rather play Nintendo.

ARI

I mean, you know me. We can do this and then still have four hours and fifty minutes left for Nintendo.

She smiles

ARI (CONT'D)

I was just wondering... I mean, I just want to say...
You didn't break me.

RONIA

What?

ARI

Just... you didn't break me. *You're* not my problem. *I'm* my problem.

She nods slightly.

RONIA

I don't want to talk about that right now.

ARI

OK. But... Does this... What does this mean? If we do this?

RONIA

It doesn't have to mean anything.

ARI

What if I want it to mean something?

Ronia looks down not sure what to say.

Pause

ARI (CONT'D)

Never mind. It's fine.

They kiss again.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings. Ronia looks out the window.

RONIA

It's Michael.

ARI

Who?

RONIA

Michael Anders... Our marriage counsellor. He's here to check on you.

ARI

I don't usually like an audience.

She opens the window.

RONIA

(Calling out the window)

Hi Michael... Thank you so much for coming.

Yes, Ari is here, but, you know what, we're fine. Ari's fine.
So sorry to waste your time. Bye now.

She shuts the window and goes back to her husband.

Black out.

SCENE 4

A light up on Annelies.

ANNELIES

Ari? Ronia? Are you there?

A light up on Ari and Ronia in the office. Ari is at his desk; Ronia was sitting on the loveseat, which has now been cleared of all bedding, but at seeing that Annelies is writing, she joins Ari by the journal.

ARI

We're here. What time is it? By you.

ANNELIES

1:30 in the morning.

ARI

Do the streets look empty?

ANNELIES

They do. But...

ARI

But?

ANNELIES

Are you sure we shouldn't wake my family? Tell them. Should we not all go?

ARI

We've been through this. We are going to help them. All of them. As best we can. But it will be too noticeable for eight of you to cross Amsterdam in the middle of the night. We have to help you first, Anne!

ANNELIES

I don't think I can do this alone. I'm too afraid.

*

*

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*

ARI

I understand being afraid. Believe me I do. But... this will work.

ANNELIES

I don't know.

ARI

I promise you, it will.

ANNELIES

How do you know that?

ARI

Because I know.

ANNELIES

How?

ARI

Because why else do we have these journals? Why else are we able to communicate with one another, send each other objects, if not to do this very thing? These diaries, they're not like anything in the natural world, nor are they science fiction, they obey no such rules that I know of. These diaries, they're... they are...

ANNELIES

Miracles.

ARI

Yes. That's right. They're miracles. Created by some higher power... to achieve some greater purpose, and I can't think of any greater purpose than this.

ANNELIES

I'm not sure I'm worthy.

ARI

You are.

ANNELIES

And if we fail?

ARI

The only way we fail is if we quit. You have to have faith. That's the prerequisite of a miracle, isn't it?

Annelies nods.

ANNELIES

...If you don't quit, I won't quit.

ARI

I won't quit. We are going to save you. Then we are going to save them. *

Beat.

ANNELIES

OK. How do we begin?

Ronia takes over at the journal.

RONIA

Anne? We are sending you a map.

Ronia places a map she's been holding on the journal. Then she grabs a roll of tape and places it on the journal, as well.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Here's some tape, too. So you can tape it on the inside of your journal.

Annelies receives both.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Did you get them?

ANNELIES

I did but this map makes no sense. There are streets here whose names I don't recognize.

RONIA

Some of the street names have been changed over the years.

ANNELIES

And some of the names of these stores... What is a McDonald's?

RONIA

It's not important. The stores are different too, but if you follow the route on that map it will lead you to a safe house. The people inside are also hiding Jews.

ANNELIES

How do you know?

RONIA

We have access to all sorts of historical data. And now that there is no history of you... it's made space for the history of others to surface to the top.

ANNELIES

I see... And... These people that are hiding the Jews... What makes you think they will have room for me? I have no money. No means to pay them.

Ronia hadn't thought of this. Ari jumps in.

ARI

Anne, I'm sending you something now. Something you can barter with. It's worth a lot.

Ari takes off his watch.

RONIA

(To Ari)

What are you doing?

ARI

She needs money.

RONIA

That's not money.

ARI

We obviously can't send her cash. She can trade this for a month's stay probably. Maybe more.

RONIA

But it's...

ARI

I know. He would have done the same.

He places the antique timepiece on the Journal.

Annelies retrieves it. It's too much.

ANNELIES

Ari...

ARI

It's all right. Take it. And use it however you need.

Annelies pockets it.

ANNELIES

Thank you.

ARI

OK. First things first. You have to leave the Annex.

ANNELIES

OK. It's not hard. The door opens from the inside. And the cupboard blocking the door from the outside is on hinges. There's a catch which can unlock it.

ARI

Do it. Let me know when you're through.

Holding her journal with the map now taped inside, Annelies moves along the perimeter of the stage, making her way out of the Annex.

ANNELIES

I'm through. I'm in the old office now.

ARI

Go to the front door. Once there, look out the window. Make sure the coast is clear. Then make your way outside and head left. Follow the map. Stay in the shadows. Out of sight.

Anne heads to the front door of the building she is in.

ANNELIES

How far am I going?

ARI

It's about two and a half miles- Uh... Four kilometers.

ANNELIES

Four kilometers! That will take me an hour! I can't be outside for an hour!

ARI

You can do this. Just stay hidden as best you can. We will help guide you from here.

Ronia steps up to the journal.

RONIA

Anne...

(Ronias is getting nervous again)

Did... Did you bring a hat?

ANNELIES

I did.

RONIA

Put it on. Cover your hair.

Annelies is already wearing it.

ANNELIES

It is on.

RONIA

Good. Be brave! You're going to make it.

Anne nods. She looks out the window by the front door. The coast is clear. She is about to walk outside. Before she does:

*
*
*

ANNELIES

I just want to say... I don't hate my family. I think I told you once I hate them. I don't. I love them. I just... I want to say that... here.

*
*
*
*

(Then)

All right. I'm going out.

Annelies leaves the building. She knows she has to run and hide in a shadow, but can't help but look around, smell the air, see the stars. She hasn't been outside in two years.

After a moment, she starts to move around the stage, every so often hiding in a shadow.

ARI

OK Anne... When you hit the water take a right. Till you get to a bridge at Raadhuisstraat.

Annelies continues moving, glancing down at her diary every now and again.

ARI (CONT'D)

Stay on that road till you hit the Royal Palace of Amsterdam.

Annelies quickly writes.

ANNELIES

Nearly there.

ARI

How close?

Annelies steps in a shadow to respond.

ANNELIES

On *your* map... I'm standing right in front of a store called *Booty Club*.

Ari and Ronia exchange a look. Then Ari looks at his map.

ARI

Great. I see it. When you get to the Palace, you're taking another right.

Annelies looks at the map while walking.

ANNELIES

Yes. I see that. And then a left on Damstraat.

Annelies keeps walking.

ARI

(To Ronia)

She's... she's doing great.

ANNELIES

I'm on Damstraat now.

ARI

Where on Damstraat?

ANNELIES

On your map... Passing Ripley's Believe it or Not: Amsterdam.

ARI

Great. You're on this road for another 1/4 mile-

Suddenly!

ANNELIES

Ari!

Annelies quickly hides.

What is it?
ARI

Someone's coming!
ANNELIES

We start to hear what Annelies hears. Footsteps.

Where are you?
ARI

Hiding. In a doorway.
ANNELIES

Did they see you?
ARI

ANNELIES
(Terrified)
I don't know. I think... I think it's the SS.

The footsteps are getting closer.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)
They'll definitely see me if they pass this way.

Can you get to a better hiding spot?
ARI

They're going to kill me!
ANNELIES

Can you get to a better hiding spot?
ARI

ANNELIES
(Shaking her head)
It's... Too late for that.

The footsteps are nearly upon her.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)
I'm... I'm sorry.

Suddenly Annelies begins to run. A moment later the light on her goes out.

ARI

Anne! Anne!

Ari turns to Ronia. Their faces both stricken with fear.

RONIA

...What have we done?

A long pause.

Suddenly, the light on Annelies comes back.

ANNELIES

Ari, Ronia?

RONIA

Anne! Are you OK?

ANNELIES

I'm fine!

RONIA

Where are you?

ANNELIES

I'm back... in the Annex.

Ari and Ronia are both relieved.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

I got scared. So I ran.

RONIA

You did the right thing.

ANNELIES

I don't think I can do that again. I'm sorry.

RONIA

You have nothing to be sorry about.

ANNELIES

But I do.

When I ran... I wasn't thinking... I'm sorry, but... I closed the journal.

Ronia looks up at Ari horrified.

ARI

What's the date, Anne?

ANNELIES

I'm afraid it's August 1st.

Black out.

SCENE 5

A light up on Annelies.

ANNELIES

Hello?

A light up on Ronia in the office.

RONIA

Hi Anne. It's Ronia.

ANNELIES

Where's Ari?

RONIA

He went out. He said he had to do something urgently. He wouldn't tell me what it is.

ANNELIES

Is he disappointed in me?

RONIA

Of course not. And he hasn't given up either. Neither of us have.

Beat.

ANNELIES

Can I ask you something?

RONIA

Anything.

ANNELIES

How do I die?

RONIA

(Shaking her head)

Oh... shit... I don't...

ANNELIES

Yes, you do. You know. You can tell me. It's OK.
How do I die? Do I get shot? Gassed? What?

RONIA

I don't believe it's either of those things, no. And as I said, it doesn't matter. We haven't given up. You mustn't give up.

Beat.

ANNELIES

I think I owe you an apology.

RONIA

Me?

ANNELIES

I've been re-reading how I spoke to you earlier. Back in May. It was disrespectful.

RONIA

Wow. You are unlike any teenager I've ever met.

ANNELIES

Either way, I apologize.

RONIA

Forgiven! Please don't give it another thought.

Beat.

ANNELIES

You know what I do think about... All the time...
Whether or not... I'm still me.

RONIA

I don't understand.

ANNELIES

Am I still me? If I never did the thing I'm supposed to do, am I still me?

RONIA

Of course you are.

ANNELIES

Are we not defined by our actions? If I never wrote the diary-

RONIA

You did write the diary.

ANNELIES

I wrote this one. This version. To Ari. And you.

RONIA

That's right, you did. And I've read every word of it. And do you know what I take away from it? Someone who is empathetic. Compassionate. Friendly. Optimistic. Intelligent. Charming. Self-aware. Fun. Hopeful. Brave.

You're still you, Anne. You're still you. And you are such an inspiration. To me. To Ari. You have changed our lives. God knows, if ever we were to have a child, I'm quite certain we would name her Annelies. Girl or boy. It doesn't matter.

Annelies smiles.

ANNELIES

That makes me happy.

RONIA

Yeah? That we would name her after you?

ANNELIES

That you keep saying "*WE*." Makes me think there is still hope for you and Ari.

RONIA

Well... if you can survive... surely we can.

SCENE 6

Ari enters holding a small hard-cover case.

Are you talking with her? ARI

Yes. What's going on? RONIA

I wonder if I could have a moment alone with her. ARI

What is that? RONIA
(Re: the case)

Just a few minutes. Please. ARI

Ronia's uncertain what to make of Ari at this moment, but gives in.

Sure... I'll... make some tea. RONIA

Ronia exits. Ari approaches his open journal.

Anne. ARI

You're back. ANNELIES

I have something for you. Something that may... save your life. ARI

He places the case on the journal. A moment later, Anne retrieves it. She picks it up.

It's heavy. What is it? ANNELIES

Open it. ARI

Annelies opens the case and looks inside. She recoils immediately.

ANNE LIES
Is that... is that a gun?

ARI
It is.

ANNE LIES
Why would you send me this?

ARI
You have to use it. When they come for you, you'll have to use it.

ANNE LIES
Is that your solution?

ARI
It's the only solution I have left.

ANNE LIES
No one in this house is a murderer, Ari. The only murderers are out there.

ARI
And they deserve to pay for what they've done! For what they're doing!

ANNE LIES
That's not for me to decide.

ARI
You have no choice.

ANNE LIES
Yes. I do.

ARI
Anne!

ANNE LIES
No!

ARI
Dammit Anne, this could save your life!

Ronia rushes back in.

RONIA
What's going on?

He shakes his head.

ARI

Maybe you can talk some sense into her.

RONIA

What is it?

She crosses to the journal.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Anne? What's happening?

ANNELIES

I can't do what Ari wants.

RONIA

What does he want?

ANNELIES

He wants me to use this.

Annelies returns the case with the gun inside.
Ronias can't believe what she sees.

RONIA

(To Ari)

Are you insane?

ARI

No.

RONIA

Where did you even get this thing?

ARI

This is America. Like it's hard to buy an unlicensed gun in this country?

RONIA

Take it back!

ARI

Absolutely not. She has to use it. It's the only chance she has of surviving.

RONIA

By killing the people that come to get her?

ARI

Why not? They don't deserve it?

RONIA

And the others that come after them? Should she kill them, too?

ARI

If she has to!

And maybe there won't be others that come after them! Maybe the Nazis that find the Franks don't log where they're going. Maybe none of the other Nazis know where the Franks are. It could be months before anyone else checks the Annex again and by that time the war may be over. Maybe this will save her.

RONIA

Someone may be saved, but it won't be Anne. You make her do this, you are changing her. Irrevocably. And for the worse.

ARI

She'll be alive.

Ronia shakes her head.

RONIA

It will not be her that survives! Someone else will come out of that Annex.

She hands him the gun.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Get this out of the house.

ARI

I plan to.

He takes the gun out of the case.

RONIA

What are you doing?

ARI

I am sending it back to her.

RONIA

No!

Ronia grabs the journal.

ARI

Give it back!

RONIA

Ari! This is not the way. You know this is not the way!

ARI

I DON'T KNOW ANY OTHER WAY!

I can't do nothing. Right? RIGHT? But I can't think of anything else to do!

RONIA

We will figure something out. Have a little faith.

ARI

Faith in what?

He points to the journal.

ARI (CONT'D)

In that?

RONIA

You said yourself it was created by a higher power. Maybe this is a test.

ARI

How many times must I be tested by God only to come up short! Not this time! I won't let her die, too!

Give it!

He reaches for the journal, still holding the pistol in the other hand.

RONIA

Ari, no!

Amidst their struggle, suddenly, the gun goes off. The light above is shot. We are in darkness.

Beat.

ARI

Oh my God. Ronia? Ronia? Are you OK?

RONIA

...I'm OK.

ARI

I'm so sorry.

RONIA

Turn on the lamp.

Ari turns on the lamp.

ARI

You sure you're OK?

But Ronia doesn't immediately respond. She is looking to the ground.

RONIA

Ari...

Ari follows her gaze and sees it. The journal. In the chaos, it was dropped and fell to the ground... closed.

Ari quickly sets the gun down and picks up the journal. He opens it. He agonizes over what he sees.

RONIA (CONT'D)

What is it?

Ari fights to hold back his emotion.

ARI

She writes, "Ari? Ronia? Are you there? Where did you go? Did you shut the book? Did you shut the diary? Are you there? Are you there? Are you?"

Ari can't continue to read what comes next. Instead, a light on Annelies comes up. It is not her normal light. This one seems... different.

ANNELIES

It's too late. They're here. I hear them downstairs. Rounding us up. I don't have much time. I just want to say, I don't blame you. In fact, I am so thankful to have met you.

(MORE)

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

To have met you both. Thank you for being my friends these past two years. The time just flew by, didn't it? It hardly felt like more than a moment. But I guess so much can happen in a moment.

Please don't forget about me. Here is something with which to remember me by. Your friend, Annelies Marie Frank.

The light on Annelies goes out. Ari takes from the journal what she left behind. It is her badge. Her yellow star.

Ari falls to the ground devastated.

ARI

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Black out.

SCENE 7

The next morning. Ari and Ronia don't look like they've slept. Ari is examining his copy of what was once *The Diary of a Young Girl*. The previously faded cover is, like the rest of the book, now completely blank. He shows Ronia.

ARI

It's something, isn't it? Even the cover is now blank. *The Diary of a Young Girl* completely erased. She is truly gone. And it's all because of me.

RONIA

It's not *all* because of you. I think the Nazis had something to do with it, too. You seem hell bent on blaming yourself though. For everything.

(Then)

Last night... you said, "I won't let her die, *too!*" Do you know you said that?

Ari's head drops.

RONIA (CONT'D)

Ari?

Pause.

ARI

My dad called me a few days before the accident. He called to tell me he was disappointed...

RONIA

Disappointed how? Disappointed in you?

Ari shrugs.

RONIA (CONT'D)

No. Not possible. You could do no wrong by him. I can't tell you how many times he'd tell me, more than anything he's ever written or anything he's ever done, you were his greatest achievement.

ARI

That's right. And look what I did. I ruined it.

RONIA

Your father wasn't disappointed in you.

ARI

No? Why not? He certainly had good reason to be. I quit writing. I quit pursuing my dream. I was so afraid to fail again I... I quit everything.

RONIA

He wasn't disappointed in you.

ARI

I even quit that phone call. He wanted to talk. I said no. I can't talk about this now. I told him I had to go. We'll talk about it later, I said, but I had no intention of doing that. He called back a few times... including the morning of his accident.

The phone rang and...

RONIA

You missed the call.

ARI

(Shakes his head)

I didn't *miss* the call. I *chose* not to answer it. And so he went on his bicycle and got hit by a car.

RONIA

You think that makes you responsible?

ARI

If only I answered it? Spoke to him, if just for a moment.

(He cries)

I could have saved him if I just picked up that Goddamn phone!

Ronia holds him.

ARI (CONT'D)

The Talmud says, "Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world."

RONIA

I don't think your father, or Anne for that matter, would want you grieving for the entire world.

ARI

And I don't expect you to stay if I do.

Ari grabs the envelope with the divorce papers in it from the table. He starts to unspool the string from the button that keeps the envelope flap closed.

RONIA

What are you doing?

ARI

Letting you move on.

Ronia watches him for a moment as he continues unspooling the string around the button. Once done, Ari takes the papers out.

RONIA

(Motioning towards the gun)

I'm going to get that gun out of our house. I'm going to throw it in the river or something.

Ari reaches for a pen.

Ronia, still holding the now blank *The Diary of A Young Girl*, holds it up to him.

RONIA (CONT'D)

You know, *this* isn't completely blank.

Ari looks up from what he's doing. Ronia reads from the inside cover of the book.

RONIA (CONT'D)

(Reading)

"Dear Ari, this is without a doubt my favorite book. I am inspired by the bravery, tenacity and perseverance it must have taken to write it, and moved by the intimacy and honesty found within its pages. More than anything, however, this warm and stirring confession fills me with hope, as it so aptly demonstrates the power and legacy of the written word. Love, Dad."

ARI

A meaningless inscription now.

Ronia hands him the book.

RONIA

Not necessarily.

She takes the divorce papers from him and then heads for the door, grabbing the case with the gun in it on her way.

RONIA (CONT'D)

The only person who's ever been disappointed in you... is you.

She exits, tossing the divorce papers in the trashcan on her way out.

Ari thumbs through the blank pages of *The Diary of a Young Girl*. He looks at the inscription. He finally takes his pen again and starts to write in it.

ARI

My father...

My father has been dead for 8 months, but it occurs to me that I hadn't told him I loved him for more than 6 years. I don't know why I would withhold that. The truth is I loved him more than anything. Why couldn't I find the words to tell him? This has been a problem for me my whole life. Finding the words. The right words. Words that draw people in, instead of push them away. Like my father. Like my wife.

(MORE)

*

ARI (CONT'D)

I need to tell you a story now, for which you will need to suspend your disbelief because this story is... unbelievable. Whether you believe it or not though... I need to tell it. I'll try and only use the right words... beginning in 1942 and ending...

(Overwhelmed)

Oh, the ending.

Ronia re-enters. She is holding a large box.

ARI (CONT'D)

Are you back from the river already?

RONIA

Haven't gone yet. You got a package.

ARI

Who's it from?

Ronia shrugs, then grabs Ari's knife from the desk and cuts open the box. Ari grabs a letter from within. A light comes on. Annelies is there.

ANNELIES

Hello Ari. Hello Ronia. I trust this letter will come as some surprise to you. I for one have always liked surprises. I hope you do, too. I have been sitting on this one for quite some time. I thought it prudent not to have this box delivered prior to our journaling expedition, lest that change things. I don't know much about magic or time travel, but better safe than sorry. So instead, I aimed to have this box delivered on the day after we last spoke. I hope I timed it out all right.

As it has only been a day for you both, your minds probably haven't caught up with the *new* history of the last 76 years. Again, I don't know how the magic works, but there is a chance that you don't know what's going on, in which case I'm certain you have many questions. I'll do my best now to answer them.

First of all, I'm alive and well and living in Paris. That is, I'm as well as can be expected at 91 years of age. My body's not what it used to be, but my mind's still sharp. Thank God.

I survived... Thanks to you. I know you might find that hard to believe, considering our last entries in that magic journal, but I assure you it is very much true. I have enclosed my salvation in a Ziplock bag in the box before you. I don't know what possessed me to grab it before they came for me in the Annex. Perhaps it was divine inspiration. Or just the foresight to realize that if I'm not shot, and I'm not gassed, it just might come in handy.

Ronia retrieves the Ziplock bag from the box.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

I won't tell you how I hid it for those months I was prisoner in the Nazi death camp. Just know the contents of it saved not only my life, but that of my sister, as well.

Ronia opens the bag and pulls out a prescription bottle.

RONIA

The Doxycycline.

ARI

Your UTI medicine?

RONIA

(Realizing)

It's an antibiotic. They died of Typhus! Anne and her sister Margot.

ANNELIES

The Talmud says, "Whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world." You saved two lives. How to repay you? Well for one thing, copies of all my books.

Ronia pulls out numerous books. "The Short Stories of Anne Frank." "The Poetry of Anne Frank." And finally a book resembling Anne Frank's famous diary, only this one is entitled, "*Memories of a Young Girl.*"

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

I've written many, not only about my experiences during the Holocaust, but also about the wonderful things that have happened to me since. I won't bore you with all the details. You can read about them if you like... Or better, you can come here to Paris and let me tell you first hand.

Ronia pulls from the box some airline tickets.

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

You must come. You can stay with me. I have a very large house now, not only because I am an incredibly famous and successful writer, but also because I had the good sense to invest in a small company called Apple. Let's just say I had a good feeling about them. I took the liberty of buying you both some shares, as well.

(MORE)

ANNELIES (CONT'D)

None of this I realize, not the books, or the tickets, or the shares of stock, none of it repays what you have given me, not the least of which was your friendship during my time of need. I wouldn't trade it for anything. That's the key to happiness, you know. Friendship. Relationships. Love. Get out of your head. And get out of your office. And spend some time with the people you love. And do it in Paris.

I hope to see you soon. Your friend, Annelies.

P.S. Ari, not to bury the lede, but I have had good opportunity to travel all around the world promoting my books, and on one occasion, I found myself in Delray Beach. So I looked up your father. A delightful man. He couldn't stop talking about you and how amazingly proud he was to have you as a son. I thought you should know.

I wish we had spoken more, but he was about to go on his morning bike ride, so we only had a few moments. Still, everything can change in a moment, as you know. This conversation happened 8 months ago. June 12th, 2019.

The light on Annelies goes out.

Ari is not fully able to process the last post script before his phone rings. He looks at it. He can't believe what he sees. He answers it.

ARI

Dad?

Black out.

End of Play