

Dear Anne, From Nina (all rights reserved) – by Claudia Haas

CAST: 7 (5f, 2m)

Nina Jensen (female, 11-13 (16 end scene) student, sister of Jeannie; wants out of the farm life

Jeannie Jensen (female 14-16 (19-20 end scene), student, sister of Nina; content wherever she is

Alice Jensen (female, mid 30's) teacher, mother to Nina and Jeannie; the farm is all she knows

Charlie Miller (male, 16-18) (24 end scene) friend/neighbor of the Jensens; initially content to live his life in Danville

Anne Frank (female, 11-13) a young girl in Amsterdam; her cup runneth over

Margot Frank (female, 14-16), Anne's sister; inward, she is stronger than you know

Otto Frank (male, 40's) Anne and Margot's father; protector of his children

***Radio Announcer should be prerecorded**

TIME:

1940-1945

PLACES:

Parlor in the Jensen's farmhouse

Living room in Frank's Amsterdam flat

RUNNING TIME: 75-85 minutes

SYNOPSIS: In February 1940, a young girl in Iowa pulled the name of a pen pal out of a hat. The name was Anne Frank. They had a brief correspondence before the Nazis invaded The Netherlands. The play is a coming-of-age reflection of that time from 1940-1942. While Nina and Jeannie strive to be "citizens of the world" in their tiny town of Danville, Anne and Margot try to live their lives in a world that doesn't them.

Approved by the Anne Frank Foundation in Basel, Switzerland.

NOTES: The play is episodic and all changes should be done with lights and music. Projections and music may underscore time and place.

Dear Anne, From Nina

SCENE 1 – February 1940

PROJECTION: Danville, Iowa farmhouse. NOTE:
Electricity has not yet come to the farms.
Kerosene lamps provide light in the evenings.

AT RISE there is a split stage. JEANNIE is writing
in her diary. In Amsterdam, MARGOT is also
writing in her diary. They have electricity.

JEANNIE

February 10, 1940.

Dear Diary:

At last I have something to write about besides the weather. Avery Terry ran away from home and took his horse with him. Or maybe the horse ran away from home and took Avery with him. Avery's parents wanted to sell the horse and both the horse and Avery were upset by that. Happily, they found Avery late last night. He was a little chilly but nothing terrible happened. That's the most excitement anyone around here has had in years.

P.S. Avery's parents are not selling the horse.

(JEANNIE puts diary away and starts to set the
table for dinner as the lights focus on MARGOT in
Amsterdam.)

MARGOT

February 10, 1940

Dear Diary,

In six days I shall turn fourteen. That means that I will have had you for one year. It also means that I will be quite spoiled with presents (I am hoping for some books!). Pim and Mother outdo themselves with birthday celebrations.

It is wonderfully crisp here. Letty and I skate every day. It's usually for just an hour because we do have a lot of school work. This year has marked a turning point in my life. I go to classes to learn more about Judaism. I am grateful for this space to write down my feelings. I do not exclaim them to the world. But they are there and they

MARGOT (cont'd)

are intense and I love having a private place to be Margot Frank and not have to please anyone else.

(Lights switch to Danville. NINA bursts in.)

NINA

Jeannie! Mama! Jeannie! Mama! I have a pen pal!

JEANNIE

Quiet down! Mama's upstairs grading papers.

NINA

It is the most wonderful thing! Her name is Anne Frank and Miss Birdie says she is in the fifth grade – just like me. She lives in Amsterdam which is in Holland/

JEANNIE

/The Netherlands.

NINA

Right. And it has all those rivers running through it/

JEANNIE

/Canals. Help me set the table.

NINA

Right! Canals! I wonder if she ice skates like Hans Brinker and if she uses wooden skates like he did or if she uses the same kind we have but more old fashioned because maybe Amsterdam is more old fashioned/

JEANNIE

Nina! Breathe!

(NINA takes a deep breath.)

NINA

Do you think she's poor like Hans Brinker? I mean that would be all right – because we're poor/

JEANNIE

/We're not poor.

NINA

I'm going to write her tonight only I don't know what to say because I don't really know her. Maybe she'll think farm stuff is boring. I wouldn't want her to think I'm boring. I want us to become great friends and learn about her world/

JEANNIE

/Breathe!

(NINA breathes.)

NINA

Miss Birdie says having an international pen pal helps us to be citizens of the world! She thinks we need to know things outside of Iowa. And I agree – there has to be something more in life besides corn! And look – on my slip of paper it also has another name: Margot Frank. Age 14. Which means Anne has a sister your age. Which means you should/

JEANNIE

/Neeny! Come up for air/

NINA

/Write her. Maybe we can learn about things – like tulips! I think Holland/

JEANNIE

/The Netherlands/

NINA

/is famous for tulips. Do you think she likes to read? She must like to write or she wouldn't sign up to be a pen pal, right?

JEANNIE

Right.

NINA

What do you think?

JEANNIE

I think it is just peachy that you have a pen pal. Now, feed the chickens while I get dinner ready. Mama will want a nice, hot meal when she's done.

NINA

Should I tell Anne about the chickens?

JEANNIE

Absolutely. Everyone should know about our chickens.

NINA

You're making fun of me.

Just a little. GO!

JEANNIE

(CHARLIE enters.)

Tractor's fixed!

CHARLIE

Hi Charlie. Bye Charlie.

NINA

Hey Neenie-meeny-miney-mo -

CHARLIE

Catch a Charlie by the toe!

NINA

If he hollers, let him go -

CHARLIE

Neenie-meeny-miney-mo!

NINA and CHARLIE

(NINA exits.)

You two are so strange.

JEANNIE

CHARLIE
Been saying that to her since forever. Anyways, I changed the filters on the tractor, checked the radiator, replaced the thermostat and I think she's good to go come planting season.

JEANNIE
Thank-you. You are such a help to us. I told your Mom I'd have a plate of cookies ready for her. Small pickings for so much help. The cookies are for your parents - to thank them for helping us all winter. Help me finish setting the table, please. We can clear Nina's books.

CHARLIE
What's this? Anne, 10. Margot, 14.

JEANNIE
Anne is Nina's new pen pal. She has a sister named Margot and Nina being Nina thinks I should write her. They live in Amsterdam.

CHARLIE

That's a ways away.

JEANNIE

I know. It could be exciting – writing someone in another country.

CHARLIE

But – they don't speak English. So how can you write them?

JEANNIE

Someone somewhere must translate. Anywhos, could be fun, don't you think?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I'd write someone in – Florida or something. Not sure about overseas.

JEANNIE

Miss Birdie told Nina, this would make her a citizen of the world.

CHARLIE

I like being a citizen of America.

(NINA enters.)

JEANNIE

You fed those chickens awfully fast.

NINA

I threw the feed up in the air and then escaped before they could peck at me! Plus it's starting to snow. I don't want to melt.

CHARLIE

Melt?

NINA

Like the Wicked Witch of the West.

JEANNIE

Ever since she saw *The Wizard of Oz* last week, she keeps finding ways to bring it up.

NINA

Look, Charlie – I have a pen pal in Amsterdam.

(NINA takes out a map or a globe.)

NINA (cont'd)

She lives all the way – here. It's going to be so much fun. It's night-time there, now. I wonder if Anne is dreaming. What do kids dream about in Amsterdam?

JEANNIE

She probably dreams the same things you dream about.

NINA

I dream about corn and chores. She probably dreams about tulips. I have to work on my letter to her. That's my homework.

CHARLIE

No fair! My homework's eight pages of arithmetic and algebra! Yuck!

JEANNIE

How're you going to run the farm one day if you can't figure out what things cost?

CHARLIE

You could do it for me!

JEANNIE

But – I may not always be here. Who knows? Maybe - I'll be in Amsterdam! It's almost dinner-time. Run home! And make sure those cookies make it home.

CHARLIE

See you tomorrow!

(JEANNIE goes into the kitchen. CHARLIE exits.
NINA sits down to write.)

NINA

Oh pen pal! Pen pal! I love you.

Dear Anne: Hello. I'm Nina Jensen. I live on a farm in Danville, Iowa. We have chickens and pigs and a few cows.

This is drippy. *Jeannie!*

JEANNIE (O.S.)

Neenie!

NINA

I don't know what to write!

JEANNIE (O.S.)

Tell her about your wonderful older sister!

NINA

No. You're bossy!

JEANNIE (appearing)

But in the nicest way.

NINA

Jeannie! What if she thinks I'm a "nothing" – I'm just this kid from a tiny farm/

JEANNIE

She's just a kid – like you. Write about what you love. Maybe she loves the same things.

NINA

What if she doesn't?

JEANNIE

Then you get to learn from each other. I need to finish dinner if we want to eat before midnight.

(JEANNIE exits.)

NINA

Dear Anne:

My name is Nina Jensen.

(The lights change to ANNE'S living room.
Projection: Amsterdam. ANNE is reading NINA'S
letter to MARGOT. It is now April 1940.)

ANNE

"I live in Danville, Iowa. It's right in the middle of America. We live on a small farm and sometimes my sister Jeannie (who is a lot bossy and a little nice) takes me on tractor rides.

Margot! Tractor rides! That sounds like fun. And her sister is bossy. Just like you.

MARGOT

I am not bossy!

ANNE

Shh. Listen.

"I am in fifth grade in school."

ANNE (cont'd)

Just like me!!

“Right now we are learning our multiplication tables. It’s hard but my mother who is a teacher helps. We have to do a lot of work on the farm. I am in charge of feeding and cleaning up after the chickens. Sometimes when I get their eggs in the morning, they peck at me.”

Chickens! I wish we had chickens!

MARGOT

I bet you wouldn’t like getting pecked by them.

ANNE

“I know this is all boring stuff. I live in a cornfield and in the summer all I see is corn. I hope to travel the world someday like my teacher, Miss Birdie. Sometimes, in the winter when there isn’t much farm work, we go to Burlington and see a movie. I saw the *Wizard of Oz*. I loved it a lot. I’d like to go to Oz. Sometimes I think your home is a lot like Oz – it’s over the rainbow and filled with castles. My sister loved the Scarecrow but we see too many scarecrows in Iowa. My favorite character was the Cowardly Lion. Have you seen it?

Margot! She thinks we live over the rainbow! I must see that movie!

I love to read. Do you know the *Betsy-Tacy* books? It’s about a friendship between two girls. Maybe one day one of us will write a friendship book about us.

I live with my mother, and my older sister, Jeannie, who is fourteen. She wrote your sister a letter. My father died when I was little in an accident. I miss having a dad.

It is snowing out. It snows a lot here in the winter. Does it snow where you live? I want to know all about you. My teacher, Miss Birdie, visited Amsterdam and has showed us some very pretty pictures. It looks like a fairy-tale city. Do you ice-skate like Hans Brinker? Do you have wooden shoes? I hope we will become good friends and meet someday.

From your pen pal,
Nina Jensen, February 10, 1940”

She wrote it in February! It took two months to get here! I better answer right away. If it takes that long to get a letter from America, I’ll be old before the next one comes. Where’s your letter?

MARGOT

Pim's still translating it.

ANNE

Aren't you just dying to know what it says? You should tell him to hurry up!

MARGOT

I can wait a little longer.

ANNE

What shall I tell her? There's so much to say. I think she likes castles. We do have castles not far from here. Maybe she wants to know about them? And I should tell her about my best friends. And what I study in school. Or do I write about my family first? Ha! I could tell her about you and how bossy you are. Look - Pim left us a map of America.

(They set up a map or a globe.)

MARGOT

There's Iowa.

ANNE

That was fast.

MARGOT

She did say it was in the middle of the country.

ANNE

Do you see Danville?

MARGOT

Give me a minute.

ANNE

Let me look!

MARGOT

We both can look. It's faster that way. You take the north and I'll take the south part.

ANNE

It's not anywhere! But the letter came from *somewhere!*

MARGOT

Here's Burlington. Didn't she mention Burlington?

ANNE

Her town must be teeny-tiny if it's not on the map. I wonder if all of The Netherlands can fit into her state of Iowa?

MARGOT

Ask her.

ANNE

I will. And you should stop writing in your diary and write to a real person.

MARGOT

I write to myself. I'm a real person.

ANNE

What do you tell yourself?

MARGOT

I write about things that make me wonder. And I write down the books I read – to remind myself of my favorites. I loved *Amsterdam Stories*. I will save it for you.

ANNE

Is it a mystery? Or a love story?

MARGOT

Just thoughts about artists and writers.

ANNE

But – what's it *about*?

MARGOT

It's not *about* anything. It's little pieces of life.

ANNE

That sounds too much like school. I like stories that make you laugh and cry. That's what you should write in your diary.

MARGOT

I like to write about the world. The good times and even the hard times. How we can no longer travel to see Grandma in Switzerland because the Germans won't let us travel in their country.

ANNE

I wouldn't write about the sad stuff. If I had a diary, I would write about playing with my friends and my favorite ice cream.

MARGOT

You should keep a diary.

ANNE

Maybe some day. But for now, I will write Nina in America! I love America! They make wonderful dancing movies. Like this!

(ANNE does some of the dancing moves from the 1930's movies.)

ANNE (cont'd)

And they have a Statue of Liberty that welcomes people from all over the world. And ... they speak English! I should study English!

MARGOT

It's tricky. When I know more, I'll try to teach you.

ANNE

Should we see if Pim is finished translating your letter?

MARGOT

Yes. But don't nag him if he's not.

ANNE

Race you!

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 2

POSSIBLE PROJECTION: Danville, farmhouse

It is April 10, 1940 at the JENSEN farm. JEANNIE is writing in her diary. NINA is folding laundry.

It is night in Amsterdam. With a split stage, we see ANNE writing her letter to NINA. There is a mound of paper around her. She is writing a novel! Periodically, she shows her letter to a doll she is holding.

JEANNIE

April 10, 1940

JEANNIE (cont'd)

Dear Diary: It is finally spring. It's raining cats and dogs. It's good for the farmland but it is hard always being cooped up indoors. Especially after a long winter.

ANNE

Dear Nina: I loved getting a letter from America. It took a long time to get here.

(She crosses it out.)

Dear Nina: Thank-you for your letter. I have so much to tell you. Do you want to hear about ice cream? Or ice skating? Or my friends? Or the really funny boys in my class? Or my favorite movie stars? Or the royal family?

(She crosses it out. And writes again. We switch to Danville.)

NINA

Do you think we'll *ever* get outside again? It's been raining for days.

JEANNIE

Shhh. I'm writing.

NINA

What are you writing about?

JEANNIE

The rain!

(ALICE enters.)

NINA

Mama!

ALICE

No, Nina. Sorry

NINA

It's been forever! Why won't she respond?

ALICE

The letters have a long way to go. They need to cross an ocean just to get to her.

NINA

But it's been months!

JEANNIE

Pipe down! I'm trying to write!

NINA

Kathleen's already heard from her pen pal. She probably wrote a more interesting letter. She probably wrote about her new red bicycle and everything. Her life is better.

ALICE

Your life is perfectly fine. You're loved. You have food and shelter.

NINA

A new bicycle would be better.

ALICE

You have a perfectly good bicycle.

NINA

A boy's bicycle! And only because Charlie outgrew it.

ALICE

It works.

NINA

There will never be a letter. *Never ever ever.*

JEANNIE

That's it! I'll write in the barn – I can concentrate better with the cows mooing than with your whining!

(JEANNIE exits.)

NINA

Anne probably thinks I'm as boring as a rusty nail... And here I am folding laundry which is boring. I am so unbelievably boring!

(NINA takes two of the socks from her laundry and uses them as sock puppets.)

NINA as first puppet

Socketer, am I boring?

NINA as second puppet

Yes, Sockette. As boring as an old shoe.

NINA as first puppet
Don't be a heel! If you can't say something nice, don't say anything.

NINA as second puppet
Honesty is the best policy.

NINA as first puppet
Someone needs to teach you to toe the line!

NINA as second puppet
Stuff a sock in it!

ALICE
Nina!

NINA
Darn! Caught red-handed! Or would that be red-footed?

(The "Socks" giggle.)

ALICE
You are anything but boring.

NINA
You're just saying that because you're my mother.

ALICE
True.

NINA
Should I write another letter? *I don't know what to do!*

ALICE
Run around the corn field.

NINA
It's raining!

ALICE
Then dust all the furniture including the table legs.

NINA
Mama!

ALICE
You are driving me cuckoo! I need to finish grading papers.

NINA

You're always working. I'm always working. Jeannie's always working. No wonder we're boring.

ALICE

Put away the laundry. Please.

NINA

I'm nothing but a servant in this house!

ALICE

Funny – I feel like that, too. Make sure the socks make it into the drawers.

(NINA exits with the laundry and the lights turn back to ANNE. ANNE gets up and does a little dance with her doll. MARGOT enters with her letter to JEANNIE.)

MARGOT

Look at you, Miss Twinkle Toes!

ANNE

I've been writing all evening! My feet are itchy. They need to move. Are you done with your letter?

MARGOT

Yes. And with my diary entry.

ANNE

What does it say?

MARGOT

"Dear Diary: It looks like the Germans are winning the war in Norway. In happier news, Queen Margrethe II was born in Copenhagen, Denmark."

Don't you love the name "Margrethe." It's like my name but prettier.

ANNE

It's perfect for a princess. I hope the newspaper have photos of her. I wonder if she has a baby crown. I'd like a little crown. I'd walk the streets being all princessy and sweet.

(ANNE becomes Miss Princess. She sticks a sheet of paper on her head – which won't stay- and parades around waving at "people.")

MARGOT sees the many, papers around where ANNE was working.)

MARGOT

Goodness, Anne! It's supposed to be a letter – not a book.

ANNE

I want her to get to know me. How can she do that if I don't tell her everything?

MARGOT

It looks like a biography.

ANNE

It is. First, I told her about you and Mother and Pim and Grandmother. Should I tell her that Grandma is sick?

MARGOT

No, Grandma is getting better. By the time the letter reaches America she will be fine. Mother waits on her like a perfect lady-in-waiting.

ANNE

So then, I should tell her about Hanne and Sanne because they're my best friends. *Then* there's school. And she wanted to know about ice-skating. And I *had* to tell her that I don't know the *Wizard of Oz* but I hope the movie comes here because I'd like to know more about a cowardly lion. And she loves to read but I don't know her books so I told her about my favorites. *Then*, I needed to tell her about where we get ice cream. Ice cream is always interesting.

MARGOT

Did you want to list every flavor they sell in our ice cream shops!

ANNE

That's a good idea! I'll start with Dutch chocolate/

MARGOT

/Anne! I was kidding.

ANNE

Maybe I'll just list Butter Brickle and Dutch Chocolate. Of course the strawberry's awfully good.

MARGOT

You might want to start shorter and then expand as you get to know each other.

ANNE

But that's not what I do with friends! When you find a friend you just talk and talk and talk and/

MARGOT

/that's a lot for Father to translate. And then you need to rewrite it all again in English.

ANNE

I forgot about that.

MARGOT

Make it shorter. There will be lots of time to get to know one another. Years and years! Come on, I'll help you.

(They squeeze together on one chair as the lights dim.)

The lights switch to IOWA. NINA and JEANNIE are "papering" a wall with newspapers. NINA sports a "Dutch" hat made out of newspaper. It is April 28, 1940.)

JEANNIE

I'll help you mix. You're making a mess.

NINA

The walls will be much more interesting when we are done.

JEANNIE

I agree. Plus it's something to do in this never-ending rain.

NINA

Look, Jeannie! I am a citizen of the world!

JEANNIE

More like a citizen of the Netherlands.

NINA

The Netherlands: Population 800,954. Only 800,000 more people than us!

JEANNIE

Wow, Neenie! You actually know stuff! I'm almost impressed.

NINA

Miss Birdie says we need to find out about the countries of our pen pals. Amsterdam has tulips and windmills and you never see pictures of corn!

(Showing her a newspaper page.)

What about this?

JEANNIE

"Man Robs Liquor Stores. Shoots up the Windows." Hmmm.... Robbery and liquor. I don't think Mom wants to look at that during dinner.

NINA

These all have war headlines: "Britain Strikes Back at Italy." "Bombs Rain on Warsaw." I don't want to look at that during dinner. It's scary. I don't understand why people want to hurt each other.

JEANNIE

I agree. No war on the walls!

NINA

How about the comics?

JEANNIE

After five days of rain, we need some funnies.

NINA

April showers bring May flowers.

JEANNIE

And weeds.

NINA

And corn. And mud. And mosquitoes.

JEANNIE

Aren't we a couple of Negative Nellies? Rain brings rainbows.

NINA

And one day we'll go over the rainbow and land in Amsterdam. If we ever hear from our friends. Maybe Anne didn't want to hear about farm life. Did you tell Margot about the farm?

JEANNIE

Absolutely. I told her about Humpty and Dumpty/

NINA

/You told her about our pigs? No wonder we haven't heard from them.

JEANNIE

Good things come to those who wait.

NINA

Unless you're a bird. Early birds get the worms. Good thing we don't eat worms.
(Beat.) This won't stick. I think the paste is too thin.

JEANNIE

Add flour. Stick with me, Neenie, I have all the answers.

(NINA starts to add flour to the pail.)

NINA

You really want me to stick with you?

(NINA rubs some paste on JEANNIE and sticks herself to her.)

JEANNIE

Neenie!

NINA

You told me to stick with you!

(They splatter each other with paste and flour as ALICE enters. NINA and JEANNIE freeze.)

NINA and JEANNIE

Hi, Mama.

ALICE

I am not sure I like what I see.

NINA

You said we could paper the walls! We needed a fun project.

ALICE

Your bedroom walls. I'm going to go upstairs and finish grading papers. When I am done, I expect that all will be clean and dinner will be ready.

NINA

We were just trying to have some fun!

ALICE

But don't you see that your "fun" turns into more work for me?

NINA

I don't try to make more work for you.

ALICE

But you do! I'm sorry – I have to prepare tomorrow's classwork.

NINA

Always work! Nothing but work! I hate this place! I can't wait to leave!

(NINA storms off.)

JEANNIE

Should I go to her?

ALICE

No. I've made you be the mother too many times. She's right – I do work too much. Maybe we should go back to bringing in boarders. At least I'd be home.

JEANNIE

No, Mama, please! I like it better when this is just our home. I'm sure Nina feels the same way. Let me talk to her.

ALICE

I'll do it. Thank-you.

JEANNIE

I'll clean up. It's no trouble.

(ALICE exits as JEANNIE cleans up. The lights switch to Amsterdam. There could be a projection of Amsterdam.)

OTTO is getting ready to go to work. ANNE is jumping rope. It is early April 29, 1940.)

OTTO

Anneliese, you little troublemaker! Not in the house!

ANNE

Mother told me to get my energy out so I behave in school and don't chatter so much.

OTTO

Does that work?

ANNE

No. You're absolutely, positively going to mail the letters today.

OTTO

Of course.

ANNE

You won't forget.

OTTO

Never.

ANNE

Thank-you for translating it for us. Do you think I should study English? Like Margot?

OTTO

You seem to have enough to study right now. I recall a daughter who refuses to do her multiplication tables.

ANNE

I only like the ten times table. I think if I go to America, they wouldn't ask me to do multiplication tables. But they probably want me to speak English.

OTTO

Are you off to America now?

ANNE

Yes – in a few years. And really Pim, I can't bring you everywhere to translate. English would be helpful when I visit Nina.

OTTO

So, you will be visiting Iowa.

ANNE

I checked on the map. It is on the way for when I go to Hollywood.

OTTO

Hollywood?

ANNE

Wouldn't that be the greatest fun? To see movie stars? Maybe I could find Ginger Rogers!

OTTO

Maybe you should find your books for school.

ANNE

All ready to go!

OTTO

Did you kiss your mother and grandmother?

ANNE

Of course.

OTTO

Come, I will walk you part way.

ANNE

Pim! I'm hardly a baby. I'll meet up with Hanne.

OTTO

Very well. I'll see you tonight. Be good. Don't talk so much.

ANNE

I'm trying

(She jumps rope.)

OTTO

Faster, *faster*, ***faster!***

(As ANNE jumps faster, OTTO takes the jump rope and shows her how it's done. He's quite good at it.)

OTTO

Now, I won't chatter so much at work!

(They hug as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 3

It is early May 11, 1940. We are both in the JENSEN's home and the FRANK'S apartment. OTTO is writing a letter. NINA is doing homework when JEANNIE enters.

NINA! Stop working! JEANNIE

NINA
Goodness, Jeannie! You scared me!

JEANNIE
They're here! They're finally here!

NINA
The letters?

JEANNIE
From Amsterdam!

(They squeal and hug and NINA grabs them.)

NINA
Oh look at the stamp. This is a true-blue, cross my heart, actual stamp from over the rainbow. It sailed the sea and fought off high waves and sharks and pirates/

JEANNIE
Neenie! Open it.

NINA
I don't want to break the seal. You open yours first.

JEANNIE
No, you.

NINA
At the same time.

JEANNIE
One ... two ... two-and-a-half, two-and-three-quarters...

NINA
Jeannie!

JEANNIE
Three!

(They tear them open and read. Photos and a postcard fall out.)

NINA

Look! I got a photo! She's so pretty. And look at the postcard – it's like from a different world. She is so lucky to live in such a beautiful place.

JEANNIE

It does look magical.

(THEY pore over the letters as the lights focus on Amsterdam. The sounds of planes are heard. OTTO is writing a letter.)

OTTO

May 10, 1940

OTTO (cont'd)

Dear Nathan:

The situation is rapidly changing in Amsterdam. The Germans are attacking and I fear for the safety of my family. If there is a way of getting them to America, I will explore every means possible, and sell everything I own to get my children to safety/

(The plane sounds get more menacing. MARGOT and ANNE run in.)

MARGOT and ANNE

Pim!

(OTTO gathers his daughters in his arms. The plane sounds increase.)

OTTO

Shhh.... My daughters. I will protect you. I will ... protect you...

(The lights focus on Danville.)

NINA

What does your letter say?

JEANNE

Give me a minute. What does yours say?

NINA

It's private.

JEANNIE

Nina!

NINA

Jeannie! Amsterdam is even prettier than the Emerald City. I wish I could click my heels and go there. Look at that little bridge. We don't have anything like it. \

JEANNIE

It is special.

NINA

It's the most special thing ever.

(They read their letters.)

NINA and JEANNIE

Dear Nina ...

Dear Jeannie...

NINA

Thank you for the letter. I am in my fifth year just like you at a Montessori School.

JEANNIE

We moved to Amsterdam in 1933 from Germany. It's hard to visit our family in Switzerland because of the war. We cannot get visas to go through France or Germany. But happily, Amsterdam is neutral and we are not at war.

(The lights change back to the FRANK'S parlor. The plane sounds are again heard. NINA and JEANNIE continue to pore over their letters.)

ANNE

Will the bombs come here?

OTTO

They're only bombing Rotterdam. I wish you hadn't listened to the radio.

MARGOT

We have to know.

OTTO

I wish there was a world where no child ever needed to know these things.

(Gestapo sirens are heard as the lights also focus on NINA and JEANNIE.)

NINA

Hoping to hear from you, I remain your Dutch friend, Anneliese Marie Frank

JEANNIE

Your friend, Margot Betti Frank.

NINA

“Your Dutch friend.” I have a Dutch friend. So special.

(In Amsterdam.)

OTTO

My special daughters, don't worry. I will keep you safe. Whatever happens, I will keep you safe.

SCENE 4

(It is mid-May, 1940 at the JENSEN home.
CHARLIE is visiting. CHARLIE is shelling peas.
NINA is reading from a book on Amsterdam.)

NINA

Amsterdam got its name from the Amstel River. It has one hundred-and-sixty-canal. It has more bridges than Venice.

CHARLIE

I don't know about Venice but this postcard is pretty keen.

NINA

I know. Everything about Amsterdam is wonderful. And best of all, it's different than here.

CHARLIE

I like it here.

NINA

It's – fine. I wish we had a canal. Or a bridge. Or a river. One day, I shall travel the world and see the canals in Amsterdam and the ones in Venice and then decide for myself which are prettier.

(JEANNIE enters. She is a wee bit dirty.)

JEANNIE

Nina! Hug me!

(JEANNIE embraces NINA.)

NINA

Euhhhhh! You stink.

JEANNIE

I know. I cleaned out the pens. I even cleaned out the coop – which *you* were supposed to do.

NINA

I'm very busy.

JEANNIE

... watching Charlie do your work. *You* are the Mistress-of-getting-out-of-work.

NINA

My land Jeannie, you're worse than Mama with all your nagging.

(ALICE enters.)

ALICE

Good evening, all. Oh my, Jeannie. Take a bath.

JEANNIE

I've been busy. Doing my work – and Nina's.

NINA

I'm working! I'm studying Amsterdam.

ALICE

Yes, Amsterdam... that's good to do. Yes.

(Beat. ALICE just stands there.)

JEANNIE

Mom? Are you all right?

ALICE

Yes. Of course.

NINA

You have that "something's wrong" face on, Mom.

CHARLIE

Just like my mom. You always know when something's up.

(In Amsterdam, MARGOT enters and writes in her diary.)

ALICE

(Beat.) Sit. (To JEANNIE) Not next to me. You smell

(In Amsterdam.)

MARGOT

May 15, 1940.

Dear Diary, The Nazis have come to Amsterdam.

(Back to Iowa.)

NINA

Tell us

ALICE

You know how the Germans have been invading other countries/

JEANNIE

Mom!

ALICE

The German's invaded The Netherlands. They've taken over the country.

NINA

Anne!

JEANNIE

Are Anne and Margot at war?

ALICE

Goodness, no. The Germans have taken over which means they have to live under German law. But they're just young girls – hardly soldiers – so they should be fine. Did you answer their letters?

NINA

Not yet. I wanted to wait until I had something interesting to tell her. But nothing ever happens here.

ALICE

Write them. Write something cheery to keep their spirits up.

CHARLIE

Write about me! I'm interesting.

NINA

Not really.

(In Amsterdam.)

MARGOT

“We don’t know what that means for us. But I am scared. Because I remember we had to leave Germany when the Nazis came to power. I wonder if we’ll have to leave Amsterdam.”

(Back to Iowa.)

JEANNIE

I wish there was something we could do.

ALICE

Pray? Yes, this would be a good time for prayers... and for you Jeannie – take a bath.

(The lights change to the FRANK home. OTTO enters.)

MARGOT

How is Grandmother? She was sleeping when I peeked in at her.

OTTO

Sleep is good for her. It will help her get her strength back.

MARGOT

Papa, are things going to change? Now that the Germans are here?

OTTO

I hope not.

MARGOT

Are we going to move again?

OTTO

You and Anne are doing well in school. I like it here. The business is successful. I should be a very content man.

MARGOT

But we left Germany. Because we are Jewish. And the Germans hate us.

OTTO

But the Dutch don’t hate us. Remember that.

Why do the Germans hate us?
MARGOT

I don't think they even know.
OTTO

You look tired.
MARGOT

I spend too much time thinking instead of sleeping.
OTTO

Don't stay up too late. You need to work hard to support us. I grew a lot. I'm going to need a new outfit for rowing this year!
MARGOT

It's the best reason I know of to get up in the morning.
OTTO

(MARGOT exits. OTTO sits and writes a letter.)

OTTO
"Dear Julius,
I hope you are well. Your mother is gaining strength every day so we are grateful for that. The Germans are now here..."

(OTTO crosses this out and thinks. The lights turn to NINA and JEANNIE in Iowa. They are also writing letters.)

JEANNIE
"Dear Margot,"

NINA
"Dear Anne,"

JEANNIE
"Thank you for your letter. Our mother told us that the Germans have taken over your country..."

(JEANNIE crosses that out.)

NINA
"I loved your letter and postcard and photo and everything. I want to write something to cheery... and not just about chickens and corn."

(NINA crosses that out.)

OTTO

“I am writing to see if you can get in touch with the American Embassy about emigrating to the United States. Our visa situation is precarious. As you probably know, the Germans have invaded The Netherlands and Rotterdam was badly damaged. All of our visas were housed in Rotterdam and it appears they are now lost because of the bombing. I have applied for new ones but these things take time. With the German occupation, I worry about how much time we have before they enact the same sort of laws that drove us out of Germany. Time is of the essence.”

(Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 5

(In Iowa, JEANNIE is writing a letter. She is unseen by ALICE as she enters. It is the end of May.)

(It is also the last day of school and ALICE enters – dancing a jig and thrilled that her teaching duties are over for a few months. She carries a box cake.)

ALICE (cont'd)

“No more pencils, no more books!
No more students dirty looks!”

Mom? Mom!

JEANNIE

ALICE

(Abruptly stopping frozen in her “celebration” position.)

Oh! Hi, Jeannie.

JEANNIE

What are you doing?

ALICE

Just a little celebration for the last day of school.

JEANNIE

But – I thought you loved teaching.

ALICE

I do. I also love it when it's done. What are you doing?

JEANNIE

Writing Margot. I told her it was the last day of school and now I am in tenth grade.

(ALICE goes to sit with her.)

ALICE

Another beginning. It's special.

(ALICE and JEANNIE continue to converse as the lights change to Amsterdam and OTTO. OTTO is again writing a letter.)

OTTO

"May 24, 1940

Dear Mother,

And so it begins. As you must have heard, the Germans have taken Amsterdam. There is much speculation as we wonder if they will enact the same laws against Jews as they did in Germany. Even the Dutch are worried.

I have inquired about getting our visas in order in case we need to leave. We have been very happy in Amsterdam the last seven years. But maybe it's just been a fool's dream.

School has ended. I am sure Margot's report card will be exemplary. Edith and I hold out hope that Anne will have squeaked by in her mathematics class."

(The lights return to Iowa. NINA enters.)

NINA

We celebrated with Jello!

ALICE

Nina?

NINA

It wiggles! It giggles! It giggles! It's Jell-O! My new favorite treat!

ALICE

I've seen that stuff at church suppers. I don't know how I feel about food that moves.

NINA

Mama! We must get it. Kathleen brought strawberry Jell-O to the end of the year party and it was the best!

ALICE

Since you celebrated, does that mean you passed?

NINA

Of course. I am in sixth grade now. Sixth graders definitely need Jell-O.

JEANNIE

Don't you need an icebox for that stuff?

NINA

So we get an ice-box. It's worth it. I will be "the princess of Jell-O-land" and have it for dinner every night.

JEANNIE

Don't you need electricity for an ice-box?

NINA

We can get electricity, right Mama? Everyone in town has it.

ALICE

Certainly. Right after I get my diamond earrings.

NINA

Mama! Don't joke. Electricity is important. We could ... do our chores better if we could see at night.

ALICE

It's not up to me, sweetheart. It's up to the township and if they want to lay those power lines out to the farm.

NINA

We're so old-fashioned. Look at us! We wear flour sacks for dresses, read by kerosene lamps and can't even have Jell-O!

ALICE

We'll have Jell-O as soon as we figure out how to grow it in the garden. They can grow next to the Brussels sprouts. Maybe we'll even have Brussels sprout-flavored Jell-O!

NINA

Yuck! How about we grow Jell-O next to the strawberries instead?

ALICE

As soon as I find Jell-O seeds, we shall do it!

NINA

You are a silly, Mama.

(ALICE and JEANNIE look at each other. ALICE does one more dance move from her earlier "celebration dance.")

ALICE

I'm never silly. But look here – knowing full well my daughters would pass their grade level, I brought something special to celebrate.

NINA

A bakery cake!

JEANNIE

Chocolate?

ALICE

With many layers. *After* you're done with your chores. But *before* dinner.

NINA

This is the best day ever. Tonight I will finally write a letter to Anne. I've been wanting to cheer her up but I didn't know what to say. But now I can tell her about Jell-O and a bakery cake. And sixth grade and *everything!*

(JEANNIE and NINA get moving on their chores. ALICE puts the cake on a plate and sets the table for dessert. As that is happening, the lights switch to Amsterdam and OTTO.)

OTTO

"We are trying to keep everything normal for the girls."

(ANNE and MARGOT burst into the room.)

ANNE

I passed my mathematics class! I passed! I passed!

OTTO

And Margot, how did you do?

MARGOT

I did just fine.

ANNE

She lies. She got “specials” in everything! And now we are going to get ice cream to celebrate!

OTTO

Let me just finish the letter to Grandmother Frank.

ANNE

Pim! We're waiting! Even Mother has her bicycle out.

MARGOT

And Grandma feels well enough to come.

ANNE

What will you get, Pim? Margot wants a chocolate sundae but I want a banana split.

MARGOT

Maybe I'll have that, too.

ANNE

No! You have to get something different so we can share! *Let's go!*

(OTTO puts his pen down and allows his children to drag him out of the room. The lights change to Iowa where NINA is writing a letter by a kerosene lamp.)

NINA

“Dear Anne,
I loved receiving your letter. And your photos. Your hair is so pretty. Do you curl it? Mine is usually pulled back in a ponytail because it is easier that way. I also loved the postcard of Amsterdam. I have enclosed a photo of myself and of Danville.

I brought your letter to school to show everyone. A few of us are having fun sharing these letters from so far away. We feel very lucky to know all of you.

Mama and Miss Birdie told us about Germany invading your country. It makes me sad. But Mama says they won't do anything to you because you're just a child. That made me feel better.

NINA (cont'd)

Our school year ended and I am now in sixth grade. It is the same for you? Are you also now in sixth grade? We had Jell-O at school to celebrate? Do you have Jell-O in Amsterdam? It's kind of sweet. And cold – like ice cream but not like ice cream. It wiggles which makes me laugh. Your letter was the most exciting thing to happen to me in years, and I look forward to many more.

Your New Friend,
Nina”

(The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 6

(The lights change to AMSTERDAM. ANNE is piling up checkers into a tower. It is late August. Anne is now eleven and Margot is fifteen. MARGOT enters – a bit perturbed which is rare for MARGOT. MARGOT enters with purpose and sits – with purpose.)

What's wrong?

ANNE

Nothing.

MARGOT

Are you angry?

ANNE

Of course not. It's just – well this is the craziest, silliest, most wrong-headed world/

ANNE

What happened?

MARGOT

I can't row. Jews are now forbidden to be on rowing teams. Didn't I knock myself out playing tennis all summer so that my arms would be strong for rowing?

ANNE

Margot is mad. *Margot is actually mad!*

MARGOT

I'm not mad! Just – frustrated. Didn't I help the team win the championship?

ANNE

You did! I'd be mad, too.

MARGOT

I'm not. I'm just – well – perturbed. But I'm certainly not mad.

ANNE

You're mad.

MARGOT

I'm not mad! Maybe just a little miserable.

(The lights change to IOWA. NINA is hanging upside down off a chair or a table or even standing on her head – utterly and totally hot and miserable. ALICE enters.)

ALICE

Aren't you the perfect picture of misery!

NINA

I'm melting! It's hot. So hot. I hate August. Why do we have to can in August? Why can't we do it January?

ALICE

You might want to ask Mother Nature about that. If only the fruits and vegetables ripened in January, we could do that.

NINA

Why can't we just buy vegetables in tins like everyone else?

ALICE

Because we grow our own food. Consider yourself lucky that we can do that.

(ALICE exits into the kitchen. NINA will reluctantly follow.)

NINA

(To herself.)

I am lucky. I am lucky. Remember that, Nina – you are so – lucky.

(The lights switch back to Amsterdam.)

ANNE

Your team will never win without you.

MARGOT

They disbanded. To support me and the other Jewish rowers. They're not competing.

ANNE

I'm sorry.

MARGOT

This will change. Someday all these laws will be overturned and things will get back to normal. I hope. (Beat.) What are you doing?

ANNE

Multiplication tables. To get ready for school.

MARGOT

That doesn't look like multiplication tables.

ANNE

No. This is much more fun. Don't tell.

MARGOT

Just zipped my lips. Can I play?

ANNE

I'll be black. Red suits your mad face.

MARGOT

I'm not mad!

(The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 7

It is late October. We are in the JENSEN home. NINA has on a homespun Halloween costume. CHARLIE is pinning it so he can hem.

CHARLIE

Stand still! You're like a fish out of water.

NINA

It's itchy!

CHARLIE

If you don't stop moving, the hem will not be uneven and you could trip.

NINA

I really wanted to be Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* but of course, there's no money for fabric and Mom wouldn't have time to sew a new dress. So here I am in Jeannie's old costume. Which is too big and *itchy!*

CHARLIE

Don't complain. It makes you move too much! Tell me about the letter. The one from Amsterdam. Happy news. That will make you stay still.

NINA

Anne sounds so wonderful. She collects postcards from all over – she has 800 of them. And all of her friends have names that rhyme with each other. And she goes to this school that sounds very fun. It's called Montessori and they let you do whatever you want whenever you want. Sometimes I think I'd like Anne's life. Even though they are at war.

(The lights change to Amsterdam. MARGOT is writing in her diary. ANNE enters – playing dress-up in her mother's clothes. Nothing matches. All is improbable.)

ANNE

Good evening, my dahling daughter.

MARGOT

Mummy's going to scream.

ANNE

Mummy gave these to me. So I could learn to be more ladylike. More like Margot.

MARGOT

You're a goose.

ANNE

No, I'm you.

MARGOT

I would never dress like that.

ANNE

I'm Mummy then. "Why don't you stop twitching?" "Why must you chatter so?" "Why do you ask so many questions all the time?"

ANNE (cont'd)
(She approaches MARGOT and gently rubs her neck and maybe does a little squeeze.)

"Why can't you act like Margot?"

MARGOT
She doesn't really say that, does she?

ANNE
Every day.

MARGOT
How you must despise me.

(ANNE drops into MARGOT'S lap.)

ANNE
Don't *you* be a goose! You're my older sister. I adore you!

(The lights switch to IOWA. JEANNIE enters.)

NINA
Hello Jeannie, my hard-working sister. I adore you.

JEANNIE
The outhouse needs cleaning. It's your turn.

NINA
Oh my most wonderful sister who I admire, couldn't you do it? I'm busy.

JEANNIE
No.

NINA
But I just bathed so I wouldn't get my costume smelly. You're already smelly.

JEANNIE
No.

NINA
Mama says I can go trick-or-treating in town.

JEANNIE
So?

NINA

So I will get lots more candy than usual. If you clean the outhouse for me this one time, I will give you half my candy.

JEANNIE

Cross your heart?

NINA

And hope to die.

(They do some sort of “pinky swear” routine. JEANNIE exits to clean the outhouse. The lights switch to Amsterdam. Margot is continuing to write in her diary.)

MARGOT

“October 29, 1940

Dear Diary:

All the news is centered on Germany bombing Britain. Many people have died. Pim says they are trying to destroy the morale of the British so that they will surrender. I hope that never happens. If it does, we will lose all hope. Hope is hard during the war. But hope is how we face the next day.

(The lights switch back to Iowa.)

NINA

You are so good at this.

CHARLIE

Do you not remember the disaster years ago that was my costume for the Christmas pageant?

NINA

You did look like a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

CHARLIE

I was a scary looking sheep. John’s little sister cried when she saw me. I vowed to never let my mother sew anything of mine again.

NINA

I wonder if children have Halloween parties in Amsterdam. I should write Anne again and tell her about pumpkins and ghosts and bobbing for apples. Maybe I can cheer her up if she’s sad. I wonder if they bob for apples. I wonder if they ever/

CHARLIE

/Breathe, Neenie.

(She does so.)

NINA

When we visit Amsterdam, I am going to show her how to bob for apples because I am the best at it. Mama says I have razor-sharp teeth!

(NINA bares her teeth and makes a scary sound.)

CHARLIE

Not scary enough.

NINA

If only I could be scary. I'd show those Germans. I'd scare them out of Amsterdam.

SCENE 8

AT RISE, OTTO is writing a letter in Amsterdam. It is December 5, 1940. It is the eve when St. Nicholas arrives in the harbor. All of the Dutch celebrate it. Jewish and Christian alike.

OTTO

"December 5, 1940

Dearest Mother,

I hope you are well. It's been such a long time since we have heard from anyone. I hope my letters get through to you.

We are still doing well in spite of the German occupation. But I fear for the future. Radios are being confiscated. Jewish butcher shops – indeed anyone that sells kosher meat have been banned. Edith and I have lived through the Nuremburg laws before and know that things will only get worse.

I have written to my friend Nathan Strauss in New York about getting a visa to America. He is touch with the Jewish consulate there. I have also been in touch with Edith's brothers who are in America. They are also trying to help us.

German Jews are no longer considered German citizens. Can you imagine? I fought for Germany in World War One and now I am a man without a country. Being country-less, it is much harder to get a visa. But I persevere."

(Church bells are heard. They will grow throughout the remainder of the scene.
ANNE and MARGOT burst in.)

MARGOT

Pim! It's time!

ANNE

Do you hear the bells? Saint Nicholas is arriving. Hurry or we'll miss him.

OTTO

I will be right out.

MARGOT

Mother says the trams are already full!

ANNE

Hurry, Pim! Please. I love Saint Nicholas. This day is the best part of being Dutch!

OTTO

Go on. I'll catch up.

MARGOT

Listen to the bells! Saint Nicholas is already in the harbor! Hurry!

ANNE

We'll miss the treats!

(ANNE and MARGOT exit.)

OTTO

"Edith and the girls are doing well. Edith's mother is growing stronger but I fear she may never completely recover. It is hard to lose your homeland at such an advanced age.

Please kiss and hug everyone for all of us. We miss you all. "

ANNE and MARGOT (offstage)

Pim!

(OTTO puts the letter in the envelope as church bells peal. In the background, a Gestapo siren is heard. The lights fade to black.)

Possible Intermission

Scene 9

It is December 23, 1940 in the JENSEN household. Christmas decorations may be seen – stockings, a nativity, etc. ALICE, JEANNIE and NINA are putting the finishing touches on the decorating or baking cookies. Anything that would be traditional in America in 1940 could be used here. Maybe one starts a traditional Christmas carol and the others join in.

NINA

I love everything about Christmas! The way the house smells, the stockings, the candles, the cookies, the breads, the jingle bells, the/

JEANNIE

Neenie!

NINA

I'm breathing. I'm breathing cinnamon and oranges and vanilla. I love – everything. Even church. But only in December.

ALICE

Nina!

NINA

Well it does get sort of boring. But then there's all the pretty carols which I love. (Beat.) Do you think they sing Christmas carols in Amsterdam? Maybe Anne sings in church. And maybe Anne goes to church and thinks it's boring, too – but then she loves singing the carols just like me! (Beat.) I wish I'd hear from her.

ALICE

You will. And you'll have so much to tell her.

NINA

There are the new barn cats and what I am studying in sixth grade and the cookies that we baked... (Beat.) I hope she's having a merry Christmas.

ALICE

She's probably all nestled and snug with her family just like you are tonight.

NINA

Do you still get presents when a foreign country takes you over?

ALICE

Of course. Life goes on.

NINA

I don't think they're as poor as we are.

JEANNIE

My Land, Neenie, we're not that poor!

NINA

I think of us as the family in *Little Women* and the year that there wouldn't be any presents for them. But they were brave and tried to make the best of it and they were missing their father only their father wasn't gone forever/

JEANNIE

/Breathe, Nina.

ALICE

We are luckier than a lot of people. We have food and clothes/

NINA

/Jeannie's clothes that don't fit right.

ALICE

I'll make them fit.

JEANNIE

Maybe for Christmas this year, we can redo all our clothes.

NINA

Could we add a sash to my dress?

ALICE

I'm sure there are enough scraps to add sashes to everything – even your socks and pajamas!

NINA

You're having a silly attack, Mama.

ALICE

'tis the season.

NINA and JEANNIE

(Singing)

"To be silly! Fa la la la, la, la, la, la."

(The lights switch to the FRANK home. There is a lit menorah. MARGOT is with ANNE and the server candle is lit as is the first candle.)

MARGOT

I can't wait for all the candles to be lit. It's so beautiful

ANNE

It is. And I was surprised about all the presents and treats.

MARGOT

Why?

ANNE

With Pim having to give up his business, I thought we'd be poor.

MARGOT

Father's working. He just can't own the business.

ANNE

I know. And that's good. Mother says to look for the good. But then my mind turns around and asks why we're not allowed in restaurants anymore. Why can't we go skating at the rink? I don't even understand what being Jewish is! I don't go to services.

MARGOT

You should come with Mother and me. You might like it. And can I tell you something very special?

ANNE

Is it a secret? I love juicy secrets.

MARGOT

Mother and Father know.

ANNE

Everyone knows except me!

MARGOT

Listen! I joined a Dutch Zionist group. They want to emigrate to Palestine and create a Jewish state. Imagine, Anne – a place where nobody can make laws against the Jewish people. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

ANNE

I love Amsterdam. I don't want to leave. I want the Germans to leave.

MARGOT

They will. Father is certain the Germans will lose this war.

ANNE

And he's always right, right?

MARGOT

Right! Let's not think about the Germans. Tonight is the Festival of Lights and aren't we lucky to celebrate it?

ANNE

I love the candles. They're so pretty.

(MARGOT and ANNE draw close and watch the candles.)

(Optional: from both homes we hear a song. A Hanukkah song from the FRANK home and a Christmas song from the JENSEN home - interspersed. Sung by the children.)

(Lights change to the JENSEN home. It is late Christmas Eve. Maybe even Christmas Day. ALICE enters from the kitchen with a present.)

ALICE

Surprise! Merry Christmas!

(NINA and JEANNIE rush to open it. It's a box of Jell-O.)

NINA

Jell-O!!!!!!

ALICE

They're digging the poles for the electrical wires in the spring. Can you wait that long?

NINA

1941 will be the most special year ever because we will have Jell-O!

ALICE

And an icebox.

JEANNIE

And lights!

I have one more surprise. ALICE

(ALICE exits into the kitchen.)

Electricity! JEANNIE and NINA

We are so lucky. JEANNIE

We are, aren't we? NINA

(ALICE reenters with a cake.)

Is that – NINA

Yes. ALICE

A chocolate layer cake made with sugar? NINA

Yes. ALICE

You're sneaky, Mom. Where did you hide it? JEANNIE

If I told you, then I couldn't hide things there anymore. Come feast! ALICE

Wait! I also have some surprises! JEANNIE

(She hands two gifts wrapped in newspaper.)

They're very little. JEANNIE

Warm wool gloves! ALICE

JEANNIE

With removable fingertips which was very tricky. Now your hands won't get cold when you're doing your work in the winter.

ALICE

I am very grateful ... thank-you.

NINA

Omigosh omigosh *omigosh! The Wizard of Oz!!!!*

JEANNIE

It's different than the movie.

NINA

Good. Then there will be surprises which I love. Thank-you. So – here. It's not much.

(JEANNIE and ALICE unwrap tiny cards.)

JEANNIE

Two “free” days of doing Jeannie's chores. Wow! From Miss-very-busy-citizen-of-the-world, I appreciate it.

ALICE

“One week of canning without whining about anything.” That is a terrific present.

JEANNIE

I get two days and Mom gets a whole week?

NINA

Well, she is Mom after all. Do you know what would make this Christmas even merrier? If you would tell us one of your stories. It's been ages since you did that.

ALICE

Before or after we have the cake?

NINA

Now. I want to hear the one about the sleigh.

(ALICE gathers her daughters and they snuggle under blankets.)

ALICE

Once upon a time, there was a teenager named Alice.

JEANNIE

And she was very pretty.

ALICE

Indeed she was. And a man named Edward asked her to the Christmas dance.

JEANNIE

And Edward was very handsome.

ALICE

Oh my, was he ever! But then a blizzard blanketed the town. The dance was canceled. Alice put away her pretty dress and changed into her overalls and flannels and was very sad that she wouldn't see Edward. She settled down for the evening with her sewing. When suddenly – she heard jingle bells. And then there was a knock on the door.

“What kind of a fool goes out in this weather?” asked Alice's father. And lo and behold! There was Edward. He was wrapped up in a horsehair blanket and had one for me.

“Please, Father! Please let me go for a sleigh ride!”

“And come back with a frozen nose?”

“I'll put a scarf around my face like a mummy. Please let me go, please, please, *please!*”

And for some reason that only God Himself knows, Alice's father let her go on the sleigh ride with Edward. The winds died down and we stopped in a cornfield.

NINA

And – Edward held out his hand and asked you to dance!

ALICE

Yes, he did. And even though the snow was over Alice's boots, they waltzed in the moonlight.

(JEANNIE and NINA and even ALICE may do an impromptu waltz.)

Alice felt like she was Cinderella at the ball. And one year later, they married and lived happily ever after.

NINA

But they didn't. Because Edward died.

ALICE

But they did. Because they got their wish and bought a farm. They had two daughters that they loved very much. And their daughters would go on to have their own happily-ever-afters.

JEANNIE

Do you really believe that?

ALICE

With all my heart.

NINA

Merry Christmas, Mama.

ALICE

Merry Christmas, my "happily-ever-afters."

(The lights switch to Amsterdam.)

ANNE

Why do we need the shamash? Why can't we just light the candles from a match.

MARGOT

It's the helper candle. In times of darkness, we help each other to the light.

ANNE

Are you my "helper," Margot?

MARGOT

Of course. And Father and Mother. With a lot of help from the "One Above."

ANNE

Happy Hanukkah, helper-sister.

MARGOT

Happy Hanukkah, Anne. My 1941 bring us all good things.

(The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 10

April 1941

AT RISE, In Amsterdam, OTTO is seated at a table writing. In Iowa, We will see NINA and JEANNIE

enter with arms filled with forsythia branches (or other Iowa spring blooms). They will be playful, but busy themselves with cutting the stems and placing them in water.

OTTO

"April 21, 1941

Dear Mother,

I hope you are well. I do not know if my letters reach you. For all I know, the Germans read them, have a good laugh and toss them. But I remain hopeful. Amsterdam is alive with tulips. It's quite amazing/"

MARGOT enters – distraught.

MARGOT

Pim! **PIM!** Shut the lights! Close the curtains!

OTTO

Margot/

MARGOT

/Please! They're coming. They're on the square. I saw them take Mr. Schultz away. What could he have done? He's an old man? *Please!* Shut the lights so they don't see us.

OTTO

Shh. Nobody's coming to get us.

MARGOT

How do you know? They came for Mr. Schultz.

OTTO

We haven't done anything wrong.

MARGOT

Do we still have our radio? Maybe Mr. Schultz kept his radio.

OTTO

The police confiscated our radio in early April. We have followed the law.

MARGOT

But Mr. Schultz/

(ANNE enters thrilled with herself.)

ANNE

I won three marbles! Look! Aren't they beautiful? The blue one is my favorite. *And* I was a swing! Hanne and Sanne joined hands and I was at the end and they started turning in a circle and I went round and round – faster – and *faster* – until I got so dizzy, I had to lie down!

MARGOT

Were you on the Square? Did you see anything?

ANNE

What should I have seen?

OTTO

Why, tulips, of course!

ANNE

Oh yes! They're everywhere. I love April in Amsterdam.

OTTO

I'm going to sit with your grandmother for a bit. Your mother could use a break. Behave, my darling daughters.

ANNE

Margot always behaves.

OTTO

I know.

(OTTO exits.)

ANNE

What do you want to do?

MARGOT

Stay inside and read.

ANNE

That's no fun. Let's go out – it's spring! It's finally spring!

(The lights switch to Amsterdam.)

JEANNIE

Won't Mama be surprised!

NINA

It's spring inside the house! Happy spring, Jeannie!

JEANNIE

Happy Spring!

(The lights switch to Amsterdam. MARGOT stares out the window.)

ANNE

Margot?

MARGOT

I – don't want to go outside right now. We'll visit spring tomorrow.

SCENE 11

(AT RISE we are in the FRANK home. MARGOT is writing in her diary.)

MARGOT

"August 20, 1941

Dear Diary,

Our lives are changing. Jewish students may only go to special Jewish schools. Anne has had to change schools. She is hopping mad about that."

(ANNE enters with school supplies and throws them all in the air.)

ANNE

Why do I need all this stuff? The Montessori school wasn't this fussy!

MARGOT

Do you have to question everything?

ANNE

Yes.

MARGOT

Where are your forms?

ANNE

Somewhere is this pile. Or that. *I don't know!*

(ANNE sinks down into her school supplies.)

MARGOT

I'll help you.

(MARGOT sits down with ANNE and goes through the papers. She organizes them.)

(Meanwhile, in IOWA, NINA enters with a small box with papers. JEANNIE and ALICE are doing simple chores.)

NINA

Look what I found!

JEANNIE

The letters from Anne and Margot! I thought they were lost.

NINA

I threw them in with my school essays. I should have put them in the memory box. (Beat.) I wonder if we'll ever hear from them again.

(We switch to Amsterdam.)

MARGOT

There. These need to be signed by Mother and Father. The pencils need to be sharpened.

ANNE

I don't want to go to your school! (Beat.) I'll miss my friends.

(We return to Iowa.)

NINA

I can't wait to see all my friends. And I love the new sashes on my dress. It makes me feel all grown-up.

ALICE

I'll iron it just before school starts.

JEANNIE

Are you excited, Mama? To meet your new students?

ALICE

Always.

JEANNIE

I think you told a little fib.

ALICE

You'll never know.

(We return to Amsterdam.)

MARGOT

Aren't you just a little bit excited about going to the same school as me? You'll meet new friends.

ANNE

I know. But it's easier at my old school. I already know who likes me – and who doesn't. Suppose I'm not popular?

MARGOT

Is *that* what you worry about?

ANNE

Yes. I'm not good at every sport - like you. I'm not good at every subject – like you.

MARGOT

Goodness! I'm not good at *everything!*

ANNE

Yes, you are.

(We switch to Iowa.)

NINA

I wonder if this will be the year that I am popular – like Katie.

JEANNIE

You've always had friends.

NINA

But this year, I want something different. This year ... I want a boy to like me.

ALICE

Nina! You're way too young for boys.

(We switch to Amsterdam.)

ANNE

Margot ... do you like boys?

MARGOT

What a thing to say. Of course I do. Didn't I do my homework with Henke every week?

ANNE

But – do you *like* boys – for you know – dating.

MARGOT

That's for the future. First, I need to finish my studies. Then, I'd like to go to Palestine and only after that will I think about settling down.

ANNE

I like having boyfriends. And right now I don't have one which makes me sad. I thought Peter would be my boyfriend forever but he hardly talks to me. His friends told him I was too young for him.

MARGOT

You are a bit young.

ANNE

But fun to be around? And maybe just a little pretty? I am not a movie star, but I always curl my hair and try to look my best.

MARGOT

You're still so young. Boyfriends will come. You'll have to fend them away!

(We switch to Iowa.)

NINA

I am *not* too young for boys. Katie has a boyfriend. And Jeannie has an admirer.

JEANNIE

I do not/

NINA

/Yes! Peter follows you everywhere.

JEANNIE

Friends! We're friends!

ALICE

Tell me more.

JEANNIE

I prefer to be "mysterious."

ALICE

I remember wanting boyfriends.

NINA

Did you really care about that stuff in the olden days?

ALICE

Yes, us “old-folks” cared about the same things you do. When I was Jeannie’s age – there was Sam.

NINA

Whoa! So – not Dad.

ALICE

Sam was – a good, young man. Ambitious. Hard-working. But then I met your Dad at a church dance and what can I say? He was the one.

JEANNIE

I hope you let Sam down easy.

ALICE

I didn’t have to. He was going to study law in Chicago and we were going to go our separate ways. He’s a lawyer now. In Des Moines. I am happy to report he has done very well for himself.

NINA

Jeez, Mama – you could have been rich!

ALICE

Sam never would have taken me to a moonlit field to dance in the snow.

JEANNIE

You’re a sneaky romantic, Mama.

ALICE

Everyone is.

(We switch to AMSTERDAM. MARGOT and ANNE have gotten all the papers off the floor.)

ANNE

Do you think Pim and Mother had other romances before they found each other?

MARGOT

You certainly have “romance” on the brain today!

ANNE

We should ask them.

MARGOT

No. We shouldn't. But do you know what we could do? Go out for ice cream!

ANNE

Nobody sells to Jews anymore.

MARGOT

I know of one tiny place that sells it on the street. They just don't let Jews inside. What do you think?

ANNE

I never say "no" to ice cream!

(Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 12 – December 1941

(In the dark, we hear President Roosevelt's radio address to the nation delivered after the Pearl Harbor attack. Use as little or as much of the speech that fits with your production.)

When the lights return, we are in the JENSEN home. Christmas décor is seen. ALICE, JEANNIE, NINA and CHARLIE are huddled around the radio listening to the end of President Roosevelt's speech.

In Amsterdam, MARGOT, ANNE and OTTO are reading. ANNE is antsy.

CHARLIE

I should enlist. See the world.

JEANNIE

Is this the same person who never wants to leave Iowa?

CHARLIE

It's for the country.

NINA

You can't leave! You could get hurt!

CHARLIE

Neeny, Meeny, Miney, Mo/

NINA

Stop treating me like a baby! *I hate this war stuff.*

JEANNIE

I do, too. But we are – at war with Japan.

NINA

But not Germany.

JEANNIE

I think that's coming.

NINA

Mom?

ALICE

Let's not – jump the gun.

NINA

If we go to war with Germany, does that mean we're at war with Anne and Margot?

ALICE

Of course not, sweetie. It's never about the people. It's always about the crazy governments.

(We switch to Amsterdam.)

ANNE

Has the whole world gone crazy? It's not fair that we couldn't go to see St. Nicholas arrive in the harbor! What is the matter with the Germans? Why can't we go on trams anymore?

MARGOT

Are you still upset about that?

ANNE

Yes. It's one of my favorite days of the year! We should have walked.

OTTO

It's a very long walk. Especially in the rain.

ANNE

I hate this new government. Every day they find something new that we cannot do!
It's crazy!

(We switch to Iowa.)

NINA

Our government isn't crazy, right Mama?

CHARLIE

We were attacked. We have to defend ourselves.

NINA

I know that! I'm talking about Germany!

CHARLIE

Germany's attacking everyone!

NINA

Charlie! Don't make me crazy!