

Free – Dear Anne from Nina

(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."

Just like me!

ANNE (cont'd)

"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. I'd like to go over the rainbow. 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? I hope we will become good friends and meet someday.

From,  
Nina Jensen, February 10, 1940"

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! I would.

MARGOT

I can wait a little longer.

ANNE

Look at the date - February. It's April! It took two months for the letters to get here.

MARGOT

If it takes that long for the mail to come from America, you should write her right away. Before you're grown up!

ANNE

I can't do that! I must think about what I want to tell her. I think she likes castles. There are no castles in America. 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 so we can look up Iowa.

(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

Wait! 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. I loved *Amsterdam Stories*. I will save it for you.

ANNE

Is it a mystery? Or a love story?

MARGOT

Neither. Just observations on artists, writers - that sort of thing.

ANNE

But - what's it *about*?

MARGOT

I'm not sure it's *about* anything. It's mainly little pieces of life. Essays.

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 changes. Some of the hard times. How we can no longer travel to see Grandma in Switzerland because the Germans won't give us a visa to travel in their country. So sometimes I use it to air my frustrations.

ANNE

I don't know if I would write about the sad stuff. If I had a diary, I would write about playing with my friends and my favorite ice cream - not all that boring stuff.

MARGOT

Perhaps one day you'll keep a diary.

ANNE

Maybe. 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.)

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.

Race you!

ANNE

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK