

Yours Until Niagara Falls
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Scene 1 – 1965: Izzy and Lina are 13.

(IZZY writes a letter. November 1965.)

IZZY

Dear Lina,

Isn't this blackout great? I hate ninth grade. I love that there's no school. I don't care if the lights ever come back on. I think it's pretty funny that your mother called my mother because she thought that Ari caused the blackout. I don't think chemistry sets for eleven-year-olds can take out thirteen states and part of Canada!

All the neighbors are talking to each other. Next door, they think the blackout was caused by aliens. Up the block, they're saying it's the Russians.

We've all got our ears glued to little transistor radios but nobody knows anything. I don't know what we'll do when the batteries run out because you can't get batteries anywhere. You also can't get milk. Maybe I can have soda with my meals!

The only downside to the blackout is there is no tv and I will miss The Patty Duke Show. I just love her and want her life. I bet her mother doesn't yell at her and everyone loves her. I wish I was Patty Duke.

Yours until Niagara Falls,
 Izzy

Dear Izzy,

1. I think Ari wishes he caused the blackout.
2. You don't want to be Patty Duke. Do you read Tiger Beat? She doesn't even live with her mother. She lives with her agents. I would hate that.

Dear Lina,

I would love to live with my "agent." I would love to have an agent. I would love to be in a TV show. I would love to be Patty Duke. I am boring and awkward with bad skin.

Dear Izzy,

You are crazy-imaginative and you listen to me practice the piano even when I'm bad. I'd rather be friends with Izzy Ross than Patty Duke.

(And IZZY is writing another letter. December 1965.)

IZZY

Happy Almost New Year, to Lina in Miami!

IZZY (cont'd)

I've been thinking. You know how we're reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* in school? Please don't let the little hairs on your arms stand on end – this is not about your family. Well kind of. But not the past. It's about the future.

I've been wondering to myself if all the terrible things that happened in Europe happened here – would I hide you? The first time I read it all those years ago, I was sure I would. I even made a plan that I would put your family in our attic. I would feed you all my broccoli and some of my ice cream and look for fresh fruit for you. It would be freezing cold in the winter and horribly hot in the summer but you would be safe. But today, I was wondering – would I be brave enough?

I'm scared of everything. Change, high school, my mother. I'd want to save you. Does that count?

(LINA writes a letter.)

LINA

It counts. I'd want to save you, too. Happy New Year, Izzy. See you soon. Look, I even bought my own stamps. I knew there'd be a letter waiting.

(LINA writes another letter. February 1966.)

LINA

Dear Izzy,

I am sending this sympathy card to you because I saw in Tiger Beat that George Harrison married Patti Boyd. I am sorry. I am sure if he knew you existed, he would have waited for you.

Yours until the Chocolate Chips,
Lina

IZZY

Dear Lina,

Thank you for the sympathy card. (Do people write thank-yous for sympathy cards?) I still keep George's poster on my wall because he is (ahem) the handsomest Beatle and very deep. I hold out hope for you and Paul. I know he is engaged to Jane Asher and she is very pretty but so are you. I wonder if he would convert for you.

Yours until Niagara Falls,
Izzy

Dear Izzy,

Paul would probably not convert. And it doesn't matter. Paul and George are just part of our make-believe world. I think we have to start focusing on real guys. I know it's hard. There's no guy in school I want to focus on. But maybe someday, "Our prince will come."

Are you going to the spring dance? Please say you will go. We can go shopping and get new dresses and shoes. It will be fun.

Yours until the chocolate chips,
Lina

Dear Lina,

I am never going to go to another school dance again. Only Eddie asked me to dance and he is very short. All the boys are shorter than me. When I danced with you, I saw Mary Ann and her “team of cool” pointing at me and laughing. That’s why I stayed in the bathroom until my dad picked us up. I appreciate that you have showed me all the latest dances but I think I will always be an ostrich.

Yours until Niagara Falls,
Izzy

(LINA writes a postcard. July 1966)

LINA

Dear Izzy,

LINA (cont’d)

Here’s a postcard of my camp just like I promised. I wrote you first! Are you impressed? It looks better in person. They should have taken a photo of the lake and not the rec center. Tomorrow is my first day as a junior counselor. Ari gave me a rabbit’s leg for luck. (Don’t get in a tizzy – it’s not real.)

Yours until the chocolate chips,
Lina

(IZZY writes a letter.)

IZZY

Dear Lina,

July 10, 1966 was the BEST day ever. I saw my first Broadway show. My mother said I can go on my own to Saturday matinees as long as I just take the subway to the theatre and then come right home. I saved up my babysitting money and saw “Fiddler on the Roof.” I was in the last row and it cost \$5.00 – and I did my arithmetic and that was ten hours of babysitting but it was worth it. They had to throw me out of the theatre. I couldn’t move at the end. I will never, ever forget it. I wrote ten pages about it in my diary.

I cried a lot. Is it all true? That story about Chava marrying a gentile and then she was dead to the family? If you married a Gentile, would your parents throw you out? I cannot picture your parents doing that. If you don’t want to talk about it – you don’t have to. I am just trying to understand.

Now, your turn. Tell me everything. How is it being a junior counselor? Do you get to boss the little kids around? Is it fun?

Yours until Niagara Falls,
Izzy

(LINA writes a letter.)

LINA

Dear Izzy,

I am sorry I am writing so late. Being a junior counselor is exhausting. I don't boss anyone around. The "real" counselors boss me around.

I will answer your question because it is about a musical in Russia and not the war. And because it probably is a good thing that you want to understand stuff,

I don't know how to put this into words that you would get. My parents would never understand if I married a gentile. They might even sit shiva for me. As if I was gone. Really, it would break their hearts. But Izzy, I would never marry a gentile. Paul McCartney would have to convert. It's just how it is.

Yours until the chocolate chips,

Lina

(Lights change.)