

Yours Until Niagara Falls
 By Claudia Haas
Claudiahaas12@gmail.com

IZZY

July 5, 1962

Dear Lina,

I am writing to your house because I don't know your address in the Poconos. The Fourth of July was boring. I even cleaned my room. It almost looks like yours.

And now you are away at camp for two weeks! Suppose something happens in July and we aren't best friends anymore? Suppose I get hit by a bus? My mother says that a lot. Or my father decides he hates his job and takes us to live in a swamp where we'll never see each other again and there are swamp monsters?

I've been thinking. I am going to tell you my most secretest secret ever. So you know how much I like being friends with you. It's something I have never shared. I read that if you do that, it shows that you are best friends.

Remember Puddles? You saw her under my pillows and thought she was a stuffed rat. She's really my stuffed duck. She used to have a beak which came off. And then her webbed feet fell off and now I guess she is a duck-rat. I can't go to sleep unless I sleep with her. I know it's babyish and my mom hates Puddles but I need her.

If you want to share a secret with me, I would never tell a soul. Please keep this somewhere like in your dirty socks and underwear where nobody would peek.

Tell me about camp. What is the funnest thing you do? Write a really long letter.

Yours until Niagara Falls (Isn't that cute? I saw that in a book and liked it),

Izzy

(LINA writes a letter.)

Thursday, July 12, 1962

Dear Izzy,

Happy Birthday! I wish I could be there with you. Now you are in the double-digits just like me! Ten is almost grown-up. Thank-you for sharing your secret. It's fizzy and fuzzy like you.

I do have a secret. You know the birthday present my mom dropped off at your house? That's my secret. After you read it, I will tell you more.

I will not keep your letter with my dirty socks and underwear. Sheesh! It's safe inside my striped shirts that make me look like an Easter egg. I will never wear those tops. Don't tell my mother.

Yours.... until the chocolate chips (A counselor made it up.)

Lina

IZZY

Dear my-friend-the Jewish-Easter egg,
I just finished “The Diary of Anne Frank” and I am super sad. I think it’s the first book I read that doesn’t have a happy ending. The Diary made me think a lot so I will go to the library to find out more. I have stuff in common with Anne. She did not get along with her mother, did she? Like me and my mother. I have hundreds of questions. Well, twenty-seven so far. I want to know what happened to her. The ending says she died. How did she die? She was so young. I am happy that Mr. Otto Frank lived. Is he still living? I want to know how he is doing now. Did he come to America like your parents? What does the book have to do with you? I still don’t know the secret. But thank-you for giving the book to me. Even though the ending is so sad.

I am sitting here in my tiny backyard thinking of how you are having fun at camp. You could play “Wizard of Oz” in the woods or “Peter Pan” down by the lake. They should have a pirate ship in the lake. Wouldn’t that be the best?

I miss you. I wish my parents would get me a dog who will listen to me like you do. I play “The Wizard of Oz” record a lot. I’m really good at doing the witch laugh. I will teach it to you. Maybe you can get some “Wizard of Oz” music and you can play the piano while I sing. I want to be the Scarecrow. Is it okay if the Scarecrow dances like an ostrich? Dorothy would be the best part but I’m not cute enough. We could enter talent shows. I really miss you. So I wrote you a poem.

My hair, how it crumbles
My teeth squeak and crack.
My knees make me stumble
My words sound like “quack.”

My ears, how they tingle,
My nose says “ahhh-chooooo!”
I can’t feel my fingers
Because I miss you!

Yours Until Niagara Falls,
Izzy

(LINA writes a letter.)

LINA

Dear my-friend-the-ostrich-dancer,
Thank-you for the funny poem. I am glad that you read “The Diary of Anne Frank.” I will send you my secret soon. The woods have poison everywhere. And bugs. I itch all over. They have a piano in the rec center so sometimes I practice. I like ping pong. Ping pong balls don’t bite.

I don’t think the counselors want a pirate ship. The boys would start pirate fights.

I don’t want to be in a talent show. Sorry.

Please don’t compare me to a dog.

If I learned the witch laugh, would it scare Ari?
 Yours until the chocolate chips,
 Lina-the-Jewish Easter egg

IZZY

Dear Easter Egg,
 It's been two days and I still don't know your secret. If you don't want to tell me, that's okay. But I really hope you tell me. I am good at secrets. I scared my sister with the witch laugh so you could probably scare your brother. Nothing has happened in the last two days. Because nothing ever happens to me. I have to make-believe something happens to me. Last night I dreamed about a witch and a fairy and the fairy saved me from the witch only I can't remember the rest and I really wanted to write it down. See? More things happen to me when I am asleep than when I am awake.
 Please write!!!!
 Yours until Niagara Falls,
 Izzy.

LINA

TOP SECRET! FOR YOUR EYES ONLY! DO NOT SHOW THIS TO ANYONE

Dear Izzy,
 THE SECRET. It's funny that you started this secret-stuff - because before I left, my mother said I could tell you some things. She said if we were going to be together all the time, there are things you should know. But I didn't know how to tell you. I am glad I am writing this to you because whenever we talk about it at home, I cry. I am writing this in the shower where no one can see me. I bet you went to the library and took out a hundred books about this. I bet you know about the camps and the gas chambers. Which were worse than dying in quicksand. I know you worry about quicksand.

My father was in a Russian prison. That's all I know – he won't talk about it and I don't ask. And you can never, ever ask!

My mother and her family were arrested from their home in Hungary because they were Jewish. They really arrested you for that. They were told they would be going on a train ride and they could take a suitcase. So they took sweaters and socks and probably underwear. They were put on a train for a whole week – with no water. They were brought to Auschwitz - where Anne was. And no, they never met and please no questions. My mom says you like to ask lots of questions and you do. But it's hard for me to talk about.

Yours until the chocolate chips,
 Lina