

Yours Until Niagara Falls
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LINA

March 15, 1967

Dear Izzy,

I really do wish you were here. The beach is super-crowded with college kids. Plus, I don't fit into my swimsuit. I must stop eating donuts. And, we never should have ironed our hair. Now I have short hair because my mother wanted the burned parts out and I look like a dweeb. I will be home soon Toodles,

Lina

P.S. Before I left, Rocky called and asked me out on a date. Did you know that? I told him I can't date yet. Was that all right? He's kind of cute and everything but you know...

IZZY

March 30, 1967

Dear Lina,

What? Rocky never told me. Call me as soon as you get home! To tell the truth, I wouldn't date him, either. He's too loud. But he's good to play cards with. My parents had a long talk with me about dating. No, not the "sex" talk. Thank goodness. Just dating. How old I should be. How old the boy can be. How I should never get in a car with boys. I told them they had nothing to worry about since no one wants to date me.

April 5, 1967

Dear Izzy,

I'm glad you're not upset that I'm not going to date Rocky. That was a good phone call. All is right in our world.

Yours until the chocolate chips,

Lina

P.S. "Born Free" is coming to the Utopia soon. Do you want to go? It's about friendly lions. Ari says the ending is happy but you cry first.

IZZY

April 10, 1967

Dear Lina,

Your parents came over. I don't want to discuss this on the phone in case you put your "Now, now, Izzy" voice on. That just makes things worse when I'm upset. (And I am.) They're worried that I'm going to change you. Change you? You're the most stubborn person I know. I can't even make you want to be a famous musician. Even though you should and you could. That dating stuff? *What are they worried about? We can't even date until next year when we are sixteen.*

I don't get the stuff about not dating outside of your religion. Doesn't that separate people more than bring them together? Don't your parents want to bring people together?

Yours truly,

Izzy

LINA

April 14

Dear Izzy,

I don't know what to say. I know what I want to say. "Don't get in a tizzy, Izzy!" But you'll think I am trying to be cute (I am).

My parents are worried that you'll introduce to me to Christian boys – like Rocky. They're worried I might fall in love with one like Chava did in "Fiddler on the Roof." They have a different history than your family. Six million Jews were murdered. My family was murdered. My parents didn't survive so that they could have Christian grandchildren. Can you understand that?

Jeez, Izzy! We visited each other's religion. We shared holidays. Don't let religion divide us. Then, we're going in the wrong direction.

Yours until the chocolate chips (I'm trying here)

Lina

IZZY

Lina,

I don't think I am doing the dividing. I think that's your family. Sorry. It's how I feel. I don't even know any Christian boys except for my cousins. All the boys I know are Jewish. And for the record, my mother would be thrilled if I married a nice, Jewish doctor. I don't get why all this pressure is on you. Are you living for others? Don't you want to lead your own life? The terrible things that happened to your parents did not happen to you. Are you as determined as your parents to just seek out Jewish boys to marry? Is it because you are the child of survivors that you are as determined as they are to stay Jewish? This thinking won't ever bring us closer to a one-world. Maybe you should talk about it more so you can finally move on.

LINA

Izzy,

Move on? *Move on?* Are you serious? Those terrible things did happen to me. These "things" get passed down. They're in my dreams. My mother was fifteen at Auschwitz. I will be fifteen in three weeks. Believe it or not, when my parents were liberated, my mother *did* want to talk about it. Nobody would listen. All she heard was "We all suffered. We don't want to hear about you." So she and my father bottled everything up. I guess I do, too. But my parents worry that no matter where we live, we are all just a few steps away from the gas chambers. You don't "move on" from that.

I one told you that being Jewish is part of me. It's not some "residual" from the Holocaust. I believe in what we are taught – that we are ALL made in the image of God and should treat everyone – not just other Jews – *everyone* - with the utmost respect and kindness. I love my faith and try to practice it. After all these years together, I can't believe that you don't understand me. I will date, marry and raise my children in my faith. Even though there are some in the world who would kill me for who I am.

IZZY

The world is different. You are not a few steps away from the gas chambers. Remember that even while in hiding Anne Frank said that she still believed people are good at heart.

LINA

I wonder what Anne Frank would have written if she lived. You read. You have to know that there are many people who wish the Nazis would have won. I told you my family's story. I gave you my most sacred memories. My parents lived and because of that I am here. And I am going to use my life by being the best daughter, sister, friend, wife, someday-mother that I can be. All within my faith. But I will never move on from the past. I carry my murdered family with me everywhere I go. I think that you may never understand that.

Lina

IZZY

I can't understand things that I don't know. For years, all I've heard is "I don't want to talk about it." I don't think it's fair that you are blaming me for not understanding things you never explained.

Izzy

(LINA is writing.)

Dear Izzy,

Please use your intelligence to think. I told you everything. Pardon me for not going into morbid detail. I have no intention of becoming the "tragic heroine" in your little drama. The "How Did my Parents Survive Story?" Who knows? They just did. Enough!

We need a break from each other.

Lina