

***LESTER AND IDA***

The Fruit Doesn't Fall Far From The Tree

A Five-Act Play

by

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## LESTER AND IDA

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

- IDA - Lawrence's mother and interned in a nursing home, infirm with terminal cancer. Ida recounts her tales of 1938 Paris.
- LAWRENCE - Ida's son, fleeing a 4<sup>th</sup> wife, having taken care of his mother until incontinence occurred. A poet of the Disembodied Poetics School, and unable to hack code any longer as a Systems Programmer.
- MAX - Ida's distant cousin, who married Ida to flee France. Brought his family to America before the German occupation of France. Lifelong poet and Mayan archaeologist.
- LESTER - Ida's boyfriend, a sax player, hailing from Boston.
- MIMI - Jimmy's girlfriend; hails from the South of France. Loves the Paris scene.
- JIMMY - Roosevelt's cousin, an awesome bass player - Mimi's boyfriend; from N.Y.
- EDDIE - Jazz pianist supreme - Carol and Eddie have recently moved in together; hails from Kansas City.
- CAROL - Hails from Boston, came to Paris to write a book about the new music.
- ROOSEVELT - Jimmy's cousin, and a young enthusiastic jazz drummer; hails from N.Y.
- MORRIS - Max's father, and hopeful of becoming Ida's father-in-law.
- RABBI - Morris and Max's Rabbi; was a friend of Ida's father from Joseph's  
MENDELSON Previous visits to Paris.
- RICHARD - Friend of Lester and Ida, has an apartment on the third floor.

### SETTING

This play is split between two settings. Scene one of every act occurs in Largo, Florida in a park next to a nursing home. The remainders of the scenes for each act occur in Paris, France.

### TIME

The scenes in Largo, Florida occur in the present tense during February, 1997. The scenes in Paris, France take us back to September 1938. Edouard Daladier refuses to accept Hitler's timetables for German occupation, as the jazz expands, and an American Negro courts a Bostonian Jewess.

LESTER AND IDA

ACT ONE

Scene One

SETTING: Largo, Florida in a recreational park adjacent to Ida's nursing home. The play begins in February 1997, in the early afternoon. LAWRENCE takes his mother to the park, wheeling her wheelchair from the rest home. IDA has been confined to a wheelchair due to her cancer, and having recently lost the use of her legs.

IDA

Lawrence, did you pick up an extra beer today?

LAWRENCE

Sure did, and a cup of ice as well.

IDA

I guess the hospital won't write me up for unbecoming conduct, nor will they consign me to detention.

IDA chuckles a hearty little laugh, and turns her head backward to look at LAWRENCE, who is pushing the wheelchair about the figure eight constructed Largo park.

LAWRENCE

I don't think they will care mom, think they have bigger fish to fry.

IDA

We had fish for dinner last night, so said the menu. It was pure mush. Good thing I'm not here for the food, the cats in this park eat better.

LAWRENCE stops wheeling the chair and begins to pour a 12 ounce Budweiser into a cup, and adds a few ice cubes. LAWRENCE hands the cup to IDA as he speaks.

LAWRENCE

I spoke with the doctor and nurses today. They say you were in a lot of pain last night.

IDA

I begged the nurse for some more morphine, but she said no. She kept repeating, "you got to fight it lady! Ask the Lord, and he'll fill you with all power!" Fight what? I told her to give me the damn morphine!

LAWRENCE

Yes, I spoke with the doctor. I told him what you said on the phone to me last night.

IDA

I spoke to you last night?

LAWRENCE

I don't know if *spoke* is the accurate verb. You were screaming at the staff, and then some lady came into your room and tried to sleep in your bed.

IDA

I thought that was a dream. Hmmm. What happened then?

LAWRENCE

They gave you the morphine when I threatened to go visit the doctor at his home, and wake him up to review the monthly bill, as well as his staff.

IDA

You were going to visit his home? Do you even know where he lives?

LAWRENCE

No, but they didn't know that, and it was about midnight. Don't worry, you won't have to fight with her anymore. You won't have to beg them for another pill or shot. They're going to be hooking up an IV with a button while we're out. Anytime you want some morphine, you can just push the button.

IDA

That's wonderful. And about that nurse Ratchett, can you get me a different nurse?

LAWRENCE

Mom, I took care of that. She should have no more contact with you. I threatened to put a spell on her, then I recommended that the nursing director invite her to hold tent meetings, where she can fight it. Whatever she thinks it is.

IDA

By the way, what did the doctor say to you? They kept looking at my legs. I asked them if they were selecting someone to pose for a Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. They laughed; but nobody said a thing.

LAWRENCE puts his arms around IDA's shoulder.

LAWRENCE

They say that you are beginning to show marks on your legs. Some kind of marking pattern, which reflects body organs going through failure.

IDA

I've read about that. Oh; so, that is why they're giving me the morphine IV. Lawrence, it doesn't look good, does it?

LAWRENCE leans over, and gives IDA a hug and kiss.

LAWRENCE

Not really. No. Mom, it doesn't look good. This is just one of the many incarnations. At least, that is what I believe. There's got to be much more than this.

IDA

I sure wish I had just one more year. Now that your father has passed away, I would love to travel. This beer tastes so good, one thing about Florida; all the Cold Beer signs.

LAWRENCE takes out a bandanna and wipes the tears that have welled up in his eyes.

LAWRENCE

Everywhere - cold beer is flashing. On the way here that's all I saw on Route 19 - cold beer. Think people had nothing else to do but cold drink beer down here.

IDA

Matter of fact everything is cold in Florida - cold beer, cold ACs, and cold people. You would think that some of the people in this nursing home would open up. For crying out loud, most of them will be dead in a month, or less.

LAWRENCE

It must be nice not having raving Rose in your room reciting the creation of the world in Italian.

IDA

Lawrence, you can't imagine being woken up in the middle of the night with a woman reciting Dante's levels of hell to you. She scared the hell out of me when she would point a flashlight in my eyes and invoke the saints in Latin and Italian. The first night I thought I was in a movie like the Omen, or that I had already passed over.

LAWRENCE

What did she say?

IDA

She would chant this saint for the liver, and this saint for the colon, and this saint for the kidneys, the feet, and all parts of the body. Thanks for getting me the private room on the other side of the building. It's nice having the quiet, and being able to close the door when I want to. That woman is nuts. She would make mad contorted faces and moan saints names.

LAWRENCE

Glad she's out of the picture. Speaking of travel, where would you go if you could go anywhere?

IDA

I would love to go back to Paris.

LAWRENCE

What year did you go there?

IDA

I visited there twice. Once before the Second World War, it was 1938. Then, I went back again, a few years after the war.

LAWRENCE finishes his can of beer, puts it back into the empty paper bag, and begins wheeling Ida in the wheelchair once again.

IDA

Lawrence, you seem to be moving rather slowly, like an old man. Stop shuffling your feet. Too much partying last night, or should I not ask?

LAWRENCE

I had a few drinks at Dos Gringos, then went back to the condo to work on the poetry collection drafts, then I tried to get some work done for a client.

IDA

How are things going with your client in Virginia?

LAWRENCE

Not well, the telephone modem line keeps disconnecting, and my work needs to be re-transmitted some times three or four times. Testing has been difficult, and they are being very unreasonable.

IDA

Maybe you should head back to Virginia for a few days and get the project done.

LAWRENCE

No way! I'm here with you, and that's where I want to be. Screw them if they don't understand!

IDA

Well then, how is the poetry editing going?

LAWRENCE

Mom, reducing 3000 pages to 100 is not a trivial task. This collection is difficult to order, seeing that it came from chaos. Each collection gets more difficult, as I become more critical, and hear new sounds.

IDA

It should become easier, shouldn't it?

LAWRENCE

That bastard, the editor becomes more selective - he's a real pain in the ass!

IDA

What editor are you referring to?

LAWRENCE

One of my other personalities, who changes each time I think I have a good draft copy of the collection - he gets fussy, and then changes the theme, the criteria, the height of the bar, and so we go through one more series of edits, inclusions, omissions, and renditions.

IDA

Did you get much done last night?

LAWRENCE

Yes, until I got a call from a girl I met last month at the dive where we had a few beers last Christmas.

IDA

The place that did happy hours from 4 until 8 p.m., 3 crummy beers for a buck.

LAWRENCE

The place where I remarked that for 4 dollars I could do a dozen beers and skip dinner.

IDA

That was a dump, the food that filthy man cooked looked like dog food, out of a Sam's Club tin can.

LAWRENCE

Dog food looks much better. I tried his lasagna once; it tasted like pasty tomato juice with hunks of noodles matted together.

IDA

Forget about the dump, what about this girl? What do you do, just forget you're married? I don't understand you. You get yourself married, then you get bored, and then you attempt everything you can to get unmarried. You've had women stalk you, try to kill you, and then there's the present one who will sue you for the house, bank accounts, and will probably leave you with nothing.

LAWRENCE

What can I say; this gal is hot.

IDA

They are all hot, until they come after you with a hammer or a bat, or both.

LAWRENCE

Good thing I hid the gun the last time.

IDA

Yeah, it's a good thing you hid the gun, she can get very crazy. When we visited you, she would appear sometimes to be a wild animal. Remember the time dad and I visited Richmond? Remember how crazy she became?

LAWRENCE

That was a horrible time. She went nuts about something else everyday! She would go off, start screaming, then spout some crazed manifesto, slam the attic door, and remove herself for the night.

IDA

We would hear her pound down the stairs, go to the bathroom, and curse one or both of us, then slam the door, and go back upstairs. What did she do up there?

LAWRENCE

Who knows who cares? I don't think I want to go back there.

IDA

If you do, she'll probably shoot you. Good thing you hid the gun. You should stop getting married.

LAWRENCE

No more marriages for me, four is enough.

IDA

I would say more than enough. How are you going to leave this one?

LAWRENCE

I'm not giving anymore speeches. I'm simply not going to return home. A letter will suffice, and she'll visit her lawyer before the letter is completely read. I'll probably lose the house. This will cost a fortune, but I really dig being with this new lady.

IDA

How long do you think you'll last this time with this one?

LAWRENCE

Who knows?

IDA

You know Lawrence; this attitude of yours reminds me of when I was in Paris in 1938, a long time before I met your father. I said goodbye to Boston, and came to visit Paris and a distant cousin. The entire family had made plans for us to marry each other. We were to marry in Paris, and then he would come back with me to America, as my husband.

LAWRENCE

And how long before the remainder of his family would come to live with you?

IDA

Exactly!

LAWRENCE

So what happened?

IDA

Please wheel me to the trees over there? There appears to be a water fountain. I'd like to wash my face.

LAWRENCE

Sure.

LAWRENCE wheels Ida over to the water fountain.

IDA

I dated him a few times. Nice enough guy, but oh so straight. I wanted fun. I was in my early 20's, and the new jazz was happening. I loved staying up all night, going to new places, drinking, being away from my parents, and their continual nagging. Toward the end of my stay in Paris, Max revealed his true self.

IDA begins to muse her Parisian days and nights as she washes her face with a washcloth she had in her bathrobe. LAWRENCE disposes of the beer cans in the park's trash barrel, and returns to Ida.

LAWRENCE

What happened with your Parisian marriage plans?

IDA

Lawrence, it's a long story. Max and I did get married, and his immediate family got out of France, but not the remainder of the family. I got the news after the war, we hadn't heard a word for years, and then one day I got a letter from someone who escaped, and returned after the war. Almost everyone I had met in Paris was taken, and never heard from again. I've tried to block out the Nazi invasion stories for years. I won't even watch a movie about the war.

LAWRENCE

But I'm sure there were many good times.

IDA

There were wonderful times. Before I left Paris I had a magnificent party; it lasted for days!

LAWRENCE

Ida, the Parisian party girl.

IDA

It was more than that. We were exploring New World views in all night conversations. I met quite a few Americans who had to come to Paris to explore their art - especially American black musicians. They believed that America was no longer a home to them. The French were so much more permissive than the uptight racist Americans were. I lived in Paris for a little while with a black sax player. Lawrence, does that shock you?

LAWRENCE

Not really; actually, slightly surprised that I never heard about this before.

IDA

Then let me recount Paris in 1938. I will try to relate a few things I never told you, or anybody else. I've held all these things inside all these years. Even your father didn't know about any of my wild days. There was no way he could understand or accept anything I'm about to tell you.

LAWRENCE

Is that when you had your involvement with the Communist Party?

IDA

Yes, as well as with many other groups.

LAWRENCE

Such as?

IDA

In Paris 1938 there were socialists, anarchists, Trotskyites, madmen and jazzmen. Then there was Lester.

LAWRENCE

Lester?

IDA

Oh yes, Lester! He was such a sweet man. This world was not fit for men like Lester - he was from somewhere else, but not from this planet.

LAWRENCE

Was Lester the black sax player?

IDA

Yes, and he could play all night, so sweetly. He wrote poetry, composed, and then went wild. We had so much excitement together doing anything; doing everything.

LAWRENCE

A few years ago, I was living with a black woman in Atlanta in a hotel. I was working for a firm in Buckhead.

IDA

Is that why you went home so infrequently?

LAWRENCE

Yes, it was also because of whom I was living with. She had her daughter living in Richmond with us then. They would scream at each other and bang doors. Sometimes they would synchronize the door slamming. Lovely sounds at the end of a sixty to seventy hour work week.

IDA

How did people react to the two of you together in Atlanta?

LAWRENCE

Not well - blacks looked at us pissed off; and whites, they looked at us with disgust. Drunks were cool, they always wanted to drink with us and discuss some form of politics.

IDA

Why did you live in a hotel? Why didn't you get an apartment?

LAWRENCE

Just didn't know how long it was going to last. As well as after a few weeks I began to see warning signs from the lady. She was a daytime nurse, but turned into the evening's sensual drunk. One day, we drove to a hospital she had been fired from. I now know that it was for drug thefts. She began taking supplies from cabinets, signed out this and that, and used her old badge. I was wondering why some people looked shocked, when she passed them in the hallway. She was wearing a white robe she took from a hospital locker.

IDA

Did the two of you get caught?

LAWRENCE

No. While we were in the hospital I didn't realize what was going on. She said she was getting supplies for her work at a different clinic the next day. She repeatedly said that it was okay with the hospital if she took the supplies. When we came out of the hospital, she began looking over her shoulder, got into the car, and shot out of the hospital parking lot at a high rate of speed.

IDA

What happened next?

LAWRENCE

She dropped me off at a bar. She said she had to make a few calls from a pay phone on the corner. She then came back in 10 minutes, assuring me everything was fine.

IDA

How long did you continue to see her after that?

LAWRENCE

Maybe a month; I saw her for two or three months all together.

IDA

That's about how long I spent with Lester. Remember when you asked me the question about being able to go anywhere, and where would I choose to go?

LAWRENCE

Yes.

IDA

I would love to go back to France - to Paris. Maybe take a boat there, and stay for a while. Lawrence, seeing that I can't travel, let me take you back to 1938, to Lester, Eddie and Carol, Jimmy and Mimi, and Roosevelt. Back to the sounds of Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, and Thelonius Monk; before the German Occupation, and before the concentration camps. Let me tell you stories I've kept inside all these years. There's a reason why I'm telling you these things today, you'll see why later.

LAWRENCE wheels Ida from the tree-shaded area to a darkened area at the back of the stage. LIGHTS: Go dark.  
CURTAIN: It drops.

LESTER AND IDAACT ONEScene Two

SETTING: A sax solo plays during the scene setup of Lester and Ida's one room Paris apartment.  
SOUND: The sax solo fades out slowly. LIGHTS: Come on. A twenty-two year old IDA is sitting on a bed, amidst newspapers, notebooks, books, records, sheet music, and poetry scattered all about. Ida had received a letter from her parents, who live in Boston, earlier that day. Ida is re-reading the letter, portions of it out loud, and mocking the guilt trip that her parents are laying on her. Ida expects Lester to return soon from the band's afternoon practice session.

## IDA

My tatellah, darling child, please don't tell us that you're not in love with Max. People learn to love each other, and get along. Yeah sure, get along, that sounds like a swell life. At first, you could live in the downstairs apartment with Max, then when his family arrives, we could find all of you a nice place in Chelsea; you like Chelsea. Just love it ma and pa, that is why I'm in France. Just great - live with his family and then the free time I'd spend with my family. I'd prefer a bed at the State Hospital. Make us proud of you, as you always do. Ha! You'd be proud of the way Lester and I made love all night last night, and had champagne for breakfast, some red wine, and made love again. You'd be proud of the way I now can inhale hashish without coughing - or the way I hold my booze without falling down these flights of steep steps. You'd be proud, oh yeah; you'd be proud. If this letter isn't enough of a tearjerker, huh! There's a postscript, "do the right thing amidst all the excitement of Paris. We hear bad things about Germany, and we are starting to get worried. Please come home with Max as soon as possible. Don't forget that Rosh Hashanah comes late this year." What a bunch of crap! Have a great time with Max and his family, and don't forget to screw your life up permanently.

IDA lights a cigarette, places a Count Basie record on the phonograph, sits down, and begins to once again mumble segments from the letter. IDA pours herself a water glass of table red wine. Someone attempts to open the door, then raps a rhythmic knock. IDA opens the door to LESTER, who has a horn case in his hand, a bottle of wine in his other hand, and immediately places both on the bed, and proceeds to hug and kiss Ida.

## LESTER

Baby, you don't have to lock the door. Everyone is cool around here.

## IDA

Lester, not everyone is cool. Everyone we know is cool.

## LESTER

This isn't Kansas City, or Chicago, or Philly; everything is fine.

IDA

What have you been smoking this afternoon? Is that why everything is fine. You told me a few days ago to lock the door when you came home from the session.

LESTER

Yes, you're right. Well everything is fine now. I won't rant and rave how one day those filthy Nazis will be breaking down doors in Paris. You know how much they like us Bostonian blacks and Jews.

IDA

They love us with almost as much love as my folks sent in their letter, which I received this afternoon.

LESTER

At least this time I didn't find you in tears. I know how much those guilt trips make you sad and angry. Probably same old message - marry Max, come back to Chelsea, send for his family, and live happily together ever after.

IDA

Oh yeah, and do the right thing; make us proud of you, we expect to see both of you for the High Holidays. We'll get the downstairs apartment ready for you. On and on; frig that - life in dreary Chelsea with Max and the entire mishpathah - Lester, that means family. Then I can be a slave to Max, Max's family, and my folks - lovely, just lovely! Don't think so!

LESTER

Baby, would you like a sip of some wonderful wine?

IDA

Lester, all wine is wonderful wine to you.

LESTER

That's true baby.

IDA

Sure, pour me a glass.

LESTER turns up the phonograph's volume then takes IDA in his arms. They dance small circles due to the room's size and clutter. LESTER uncorks the wine, and gives IDA a glass, with last night's residue distinct. Ida stares at the residue and begins to laugh. Ida next looks out the apartment window.

IDA

At least this letter didn't contain a rundown of countries Germany is projected to invade, like the last two letters. If other governments know this, then why don't they band together and stop Hitler and Germany?

LESTER

If I remember correctly, the last letter's rundown resembled the following radio broadcast: Folks, we're so glad to be here with you today at Suffolk Downs on this lovely Saturday. We have the following odds posted on the board for the first race. Poland is going down at 2 to 1, France being subdued by 1941 at 3 to 1, Belgium being invaded at 4 to 1, and Holland being overthrown at 4 to 1. With the heavy money lately being placed by wire, it looks like all countries might go off even at race time for decimation. Okay, enough; you've said more than enough.

IDA

Thanks for being understanding Lester.

LESTER

I love you baby.

IDA

Oh by the way, how did it go at the club this afternoon?

LESTER

Great! Oh yeah, I didn't tell you. Sit down and dig this! L'Chaim! We have an engagement!

IDA

You do! As the house band?

LESTER

Yes, for next week; and if we draw people, we can have the job permanently. At least we have a place for us to play in the daytime. That is our arrangement.

IDA

That's great! Did they like the sound?

LESTER

Yes, Jean and his wife Lese enjoyed the sound, and danced to most of it, together. We were moving with their mood, and then we took it up quite a few notches. The music sounds great in Jean's club. This is a fantastic thing at this time, especially with Roosevelt having recently arrived.

IDA

Did you go over to Renault's?

LESTER

Sure did! His wife said he was still drunk and passed out from last night. I told her to wake him up cause I wanted the band's money for playing in his club.

IDA

What happened?

LESTER

She said she would call the police and tell them that I had threatened her husband's life with a knife, and they would believe her and I would be deported, "sure as shit." So, I said I would be looking for him, so that he could get his karma square before the plagues kicked in.

IDA

What plagues are you talking about now? Are you putting spells on people again? Didn't I tell you to stop that stuff, Lester? You know, what goes around, comes around; so why did you threaten him?

LESTER

She said they were square with us, and that I owed them money from the past. She kept repeating that we owed her money for the night we were to play at their place many moons ago. I couldn't make her understand that we couldn't come. That evening, the piano player, the drummer and myself were in Phillip's apartment and some girl Phillip had met a few nights earlier jumped out the window. So obviously, we couldn't play that night, we were at the police station until dawn.

IDA

I remember you telling me about that horrible night.

LESTER

Then she mentioned the night that I filled in for some guy from the Bronx who was in jail for murder, and I showed up drunk, and began cussing out the crowd. I had told them over the phone that I was messed up, and they said, "come! Please come in any condition that you are in. There are a lot of people here tonight, and we need you."

IDA

What happened that night?

LESTER

Shit! I went wild! I played my ass off, but I barked my mouth a little too loud, at a few too many people. I was avoided for a while after that night.

IDA

So how did it end today at Renault's place?

LESTER

While he was awakening, his wife tried to keep him out of the discussion in the foyer. I took a coat and tie of his, which were hanging in the foyer. He got dressed and came into the foyer and started screaming some stuff in French at me. I told him I wanted the band's money. He told me to go and take a crap. I said sure, but just remember my Aunt Mabel in Louisiana, she casts spells, she knows you, and I left. I'm sending the tie to Mabel. She'll return the tie after cursing it, and I'll bring it back to him. He will be so happy to have found the tie. He will put it on, and the spell will choke him.

IDA

Lester, what the hell is wrong with you? Leave him alone, he'll get his due.

LESTER

He sure will. When he puts on that dapper tie and attempts to be part of the aristocracy. Mabel will vision it, and so it shall be.

IDA

Who the hell is this Mabel, aside from being your spell casting aunt from New Orleans?

LESTER

Mabel, she worships Obatala, Oshun, Elegba, Shango, Tango, and a handful of other African gods. She sacrifices chickens, has crabs rotting and stinking with flies circling her living room altar, as incense billows about people dancing, writhing in trances, screaming out vows to Obatala, and then to Jesus; to Mary, then to Oshun.

IDA

I hope to hell the new club owner doesn't piss you off!

LESTER

Okay, okay; I got the message. I'm going to chill out. You're right, I'll be cool.

IDA

We know what you had in mind for the tie, what about the jacket?

LESTER

It was brand new. I gave it to a beggar on Boulevard Montparnasse. Looked beautiful on the man. Also gave him a few francs; he joked that he now looked like Otto Abetz, and was ready for a Baroness.

IDA

I'm amazed that the two of you didn't go looking for Baroness Von Einem.

LESTER

I wanted to, but the man said he had many important places to go. Just kidding.

IDA

Did you really give Renault's jacket away to a man on the street?

LESTER

Yes. What a gorgeous weave, he looked so suave in it.

IDA

Oh boy; anyhow. Congratulations on the gig. What do you want to do tonight? Are you playing with the guys?

LESTER

No. Actually, Jimmy said something about Mimi cooking tonight at her place. They have invited us to join them. We're going to practice tomorrow at the club sometime around noon.

LESTER hugs IDA, and they kiss. LESTER puts another record on the phonograph, and turns the volume up one additional notch. IDA pours another glass of wine for each of them. They resume their hug and look out the window, enjoying the darkening skyline.

LESTER

You sure you want to go to Jimmy and Mimi's tonight for dinner?

IDA turns around and looks out the window.

IDA

Okay; yes.

LESTER

I understand; the last time we visited, you wanted to leave almost as soon as we got there.

IDA

Well, hearing how heavy her menstrual cycles were the past 4 months, and the travails of her mother's suicide attempts. But with Mimi, I'm sure tonight will be different. Lester, I'll be nice. I know how happy you are to see your friends, and talk about where the music is going. As you would say, "any moment could become divine, with explosions of greatness!"

LESTER

Yeah baby, record what you just said. Let's use it when we play tonight after dinner. Please write some lines for it, and scat, and we'll plug in the groove.

IDA

Okay. Let me clean up, then go over to Mimi's and see if there is something I can do to help.

LESTER

We could grab a loaf of bread, some cheese, some more wine, and listen to music in here. And then make love all night; instead, eh?

IDA

We do that and your friends will be over here in no time flat, and will probably end up staying here all night instead? Eh?

LESTER

I'll go over and ask what Mimi needs from the store? Do you need anything, Ida?

IDA

A pack of cigarettes, and an international newspaper. The newspaper's date doesn't really matter.

LESTER

You need more blues? Wasn't the letter from your parents enough blues?

IDA

Guess I'm a sucker for punishment. Want to see the letter?

LESTER

I'll take a look at it.

IDA

See if you make much out of it. I'm going to bathe. If I'm not here when you return from the store, I will be at Mimi's. Lester, please don't get lost.

LESTER

I won't; I'll be right back.

IDA

Before you go, come over here and give me a kiss.

LESTER

Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you. Everybody is going to be at Mimi's tonight - Carol, Eddie, Jimmy, and crazy Roosevelt.

IDA

Sounds like one big party. I love wild parties, especially when the music starts and all the philosophy is dished out. Always seems like the next day there's an attempt to round up all the profound statements that were made the night before.

LESTER

Yes, usually with little success.

LESTER and IDA kiss a few times. IDA hands LESTER the letter. IDA gathers a towel, soap, and a few clothes, and leaves the apartment in a nightgown to go down the hall to the communal washroom. LESTER takes the letter out of the envelope.

LESTER

Who can read this stuff? Misspelled English words, Yiddish and Hebrew words, and all asserting some safety back in the States. There is no safety for the black man, there is no safety for the jazzman, and there is no safety in the States for a man speaking Truth. Ida, do the right thing; make us proud of you.