

YOUNG IDA: Which I have earned.

HEADMISTRESS: Perhaps you can earn that from your newspaper writing!

YOUNG IDA: What are you saying?

HEADMISTRESS: It is not what I am saying Miss Wells. It is what you are writing in *The Free Speech*.

YOUNG IDA: The conditions in the colored schools are deplorable.

HEADMISTRESS: Most colored children have worse conditions in their own homes.

MIDDLE IDA: *(rising)* Can I quote you on that, Headmistress?

HEADMISTRESS: You can clear out your desk at Clay County School. You are fired.

MIDDLE IDA: I came into my own as a newspaper woman.

ELDERLY IDA: And became the Editor of *The Free Speech*.

*(THE FREE SPEECH sign appears. Young Ida sits at newspaper desk writing. All three Ida characters fervently write. Thomas Moss enters carrying the mail)*

TOM MOSS: Mail's here, Miss Ida !

YOUNG IDA: Thank you, Tommie.

TOM MOSS: *(hands her a stack of letters)* Look who wants to carry the articles of Miss Ida B. Wells. *Chicago Defender. Detroit Plaindealer. Topeka Times Observer. New York Review!* They all want to hear what you got to say.

YOUNG IDA: Appreciate that, Tommie.

TOM MOSS: Better open this one first! Special delivery from T. Thomas Fortune up in New York City.

YOUNG IDA: T. Thomas Fortune! *(rips open the large envelope)*

ELDERLY IDA: T. Thomas Fortune was the Editor of *The New York Age*. The biggest Black newspaper in New York City.

MIDDLE IDA: Born a slave in Florida, by 1892 Fortune was one of the most influential African American men in the United States.

TOM MOSS: So what the letter say?

YOUNG IDA: He wants me to write for his newspaper!

TOM MOSS: You can't leave Memphis!

YOUNG IDA: He says the people up North need to know what's going on down here. T. Thomas Fortune wants to carry our news.

TOM MOSS: Bet he heard about that lynching over in Mississippi.

ELDERLY IDA: Issac Lupton. A colored boy of seventeen.

MIDDLE IDA: Masked men broke into the city jail and strung him up.

TOM MOSS: Klan was behind that lynching, Miss Ida.

YOUNG IDA: That's what I'm going to find out. Put it in T. Thomas Fortune's paper.

TOM MOSS: You going down to Greenville?

YOUNG IDA: Gonna take the five o'clock.

TOM MOSS: No wonder you ain't got time for no man to catch up with you!

*(Tommie's wife, Betty, walks in carrying her baby)*