

Legends of Elderly Slam Poetry  
Ep. #1 (Idamay Sweetwater)

written by

Mike Green

FADE UP

INT. VICTORY TABERNACLE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH - DAY

FONT: "Victory Tabernacle PCG / Wichita Falls, Texas"

It's a dank, square sanctuary filled with forty charismatic worshipers, who sing and sway their arms while a gray haired woman plays piano. A classic photo of Jesus hangs next to a portrait of Donald Trump, on the back wall.

The youngest person in the small Sunday service is PASTOR SPRADLING (53), bald, cheap leisure suit, who stands up front holding a microphone. He's shouting in tongues as the elderly crowd sings, "I'll Fly Away."

PASTOR SPRADLING

Oh shond-lilly yoki shondi! The  
Lord is here this morning! Just  
give him that arthritis! Yiti yoki  
shondi! Oh there's a person here  
this morning who needs new  
dentures! The Lord will meet that  
need! You've survived on creamed  
corn long enough sayeth the Lord!  
Oh yoke lilly yoki shondi!

The commotion continues a moment, as people sit back down in their wooden pews.

PASTOR SPRADLING (CONT'D)

Yes, you may be seated. Ida may  
Sweetwater are you here this  
morning?

IDAMAY SWEETWATER (98), sits quietly in a wheel chair just behind the back pew. She's frocked in her finest sundress and wears her favorite Sunday bonnet. Her face is deadpan and unemotional.

IDAMAY

Now I know you ain't that blind  
Tom. I'm right here!

BOB WILSON (75), gray hair, turns from the back pew.

BOB

Mama!

IDAMAY

Oh just wheel me up there Bob.

Bob stands, nods at Pastor Spradling, walks to wheel his mother up front.

PASTOR SPRADLING  
Yes it is always a blessing to have  
Idamay in service. She's gonna  
bless us with one of her poems this  
morning before we take the  
offering.

Bob reaches the front with Idamay. Pastor Spradling holds the mic toward her mouth, but she grabs it from him.

IDAMAY  
You make a better audience than a  
mic stand Tom, go sit down.

Pastor Spradling smiles, sort of smirks at the congregation.

PASTOR SPRADLING  
Ain't she funny. Ninety-eight-  
years-old last month!

The congregation applauds.

IDAMAY  
Now go sit down while I'm still  
breathing Tom.

Pastor Spradling quickly finds his seat on the front pew, looks back at the congregation.

PASTOR SPRADLING  
Always a blessing!

Idamay's hands tremble with age, as she holds the microphone. She looks up at Bob, who quickly finds a seat next to Pastor Spradling.

IDAMAY  
This poem is called Jesus and me.

PASTOR SPRADLING  
Oh shondi!

IDAMAY  
Jesus and me, we don't always see  
eye to eye.

PASTOR SPRADLING  
Help her Lord!

IDAMAY

Now you and Bob asked me to do  
this, so you all keep quite until  
I'm finished! You know I'm a  
Presbyterian. I don't wanna hear no  
shondi this or that until I'm done.

Pastor Spradling turns back to the crowd.

PASTOR SPRADLING

Always a blessing!

Idamay is annoyed, but continues.

IDAMAY

Jesus and me, we don't always see I  
to eye. With me in this wheel-chair  
and him in the sky. Recall those  
footsteps you see in the sand? Well  
I need firm pavement to hold his  
hand. My body is ancient but not my  
mind, yes God is good but time is  
unkind. For what did I do to grow  
so old, with a spirit so young,  
fearless and bold. I'll put off  
these troubles, or so I'm told,  
when I plant my fresh feet on those  
streets of gold.

Pastor Spradling stands, eyes closed, waves his hand in the  
air.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Go ahead Tom... let it out.

PASTOR SPRADLING

Thank you Jesus!

IDAMAY

Now sit down.

Pastor Spradling sits.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Jesus and me, we don't always see  
eye to eye. Oh I know that he loves  
me, but I still wonder why. I can  
get cranky, cantankerous and mean.  
But he knows I've earned every wart  
through troubles I've seen. I've  
been born again, but too many  
times. My vision is dim, my boobs  
now sublime.

There is a gasp in the crowd.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Oh get a life! For I've lived mine.  
 Jesus and me, we do just fine. No  
 we don't always see eye to eye. But  
 we've traveled together so long  
 that it's no surprise. For who  
 doesn't argue with God, when you  
 knew Methuselah, Moses, and some'd  
 idiot named Nimrod. You see, I've  
 been around, and walked the walk,  
 at least back when my legs worked,  
 so now I just talk. Yes, I speak of  
 the love that he's given me,  
 although I get angry, that my eyes  
 can barely still see. The small  
 things he's made, like hummingbirds  
 or butterflies, or grandiose  
 wonders like stars in the sky. It's  
 all sort of fuzzy when you reach my  
 age, what good is a bible if you  
 can't read the page? But please  
 don't you worry about Jesus and me.  
 I'll keep holding his hand, until  
 we stand together beside a glass  
 sea. And that brings me back to  
 that beach, along heaven's shores I  
 finally reach. I'll look him in the  
 eyes, of course I'll thank him for  
 carrying me, then demand, "Lord  
 change this glass into sand! For I  
 struggled so long with a bad hip,  
 and eyes that were dim! I love you  
 and thank you, but now that I'm  
 finally here? I just want to swim!"

The small, charismatic congregation sits in silence.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

That's your cue Tom.

Pastor Spradling jumps up, grabs the mic, exhorts the  
 parishioners.

PASTOR SPRADLING

Stretch your hands toward this dear  
 mother in the Lord, and let's pray  
 the Lord will heal her out of that  
 wheelchair!

The entire church stretches their hands forward, Idamay  
 motions at Bob.

IDAMAY

Please get me out of here!

Bob rises, unclicks her breaks, and pushes her back down the aisle. Everyone turns, shouting incoherently toward her as she rolls by, she looks up at Bob.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Dear God don't let 'em bring out  
the rattlesnakes until you get me  
out the front door!

BOB

Mama! You know this aint that kinda  
church. Show some respect.

Bob and Idamay reach the sanctuary foyer and exit the church.

INT. A LARGE DINING ROOM - DAY

It's an opulent dining room inside a luxurious home. Idamay sits in her wheelchair, still wearing her Sunday dress. Bob, CARL WILSON (53), and RONNY WILSON (29), are seated next to her in nice dining chairs, left to right.

-Ronny looks just off camera, at the DIRECTOR.

RONNY

So yawl can fit us all in the shot?

DIRECTOR

We're on a four shot right now,  
yes. We'll do M-C-U's when we  
interview you each, individually.

IDAMAY

I already know what I will say. I  
was a flapper in New York City. I  
was a loose woman. Each of these  
men sitting here have different  
fathers!

Ronny looks over at her.

RONNY

(Laughing)

And different mother's too Mama  
Ida.

Carl cocks his head at Bob.

CARL

Daddy I thought you took her to church this morning.

IDAMAY

Oh he did. There are a few pretty good-looking old broads that go to his church.

She pokes Bob with her elbow.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

But your secret is safe with me, Bob.

BOB

Mama!

CARL

Now Grandma I told yawl I wasn't gonna do this unless you can behave like a good Christian woman!

IDAMAY

Oh can it Carl. Bob's church is full of holy rollers and yours is full of hypocrites. I can't tell which is worst, but Tom Spradling's wife sure is a looker.

They now exchange words, over Bob, who shakes his head.

CARL

Some of my clients might be watching this!

IDAMAY

Just charge 'em higher interest on their mortgages or something Carl.

CARL

Why can't you just behave yourself?

IDAMAY

Ronny Dale run outside and bring me back a willow switch to take to your father's legs.

CARL

This is a Christian home!

IDAMAY

Oh, that's right. You don't drink,  
you don't smoke, and you don't  
chew.

Idamay looks over at the DIRECTOR, just off camera.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Darla honey, he might not, but I  
sure will go with girls that do!  
She's a pretty gal. Isn't she  
Ronny.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Uh. This is my boyfriend, SAM.  
Running the camera.

SAM (O.S.)

Hello!

IDAMAY

That's okay. He can watch.

Carl stands up in a huff, takes off his lapel mic.

CARL

Yawl can do this documentary  
without me. Vicky and I let all of  
yawl live in our home...

Carl is now out of frame. Ronny slides over, into his chair.

CARL (CONT'D)

All we ask is for a little decorum,  
and Christian discipline.

IDAMAY

You gonna confine us to our rooms  
warden?

CARL

You're going to hell Mama Ida!

IDAMAY

Says the Southern Baptist Banker,  
charging double interest on those  
shacks off Seymour Highway.

Idamay looks at Bob.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

How did you raise such a tight-ass  
kid, Bob?



BOB

Mama! Now that's my son! Show some respect.

INT. A LOCAL LIBRARY PUBLIC READING AREA - DAY

A small group of older people are gathered to hear Idamay recite one of her regionally famous poems. Idamay is frocked in a pale blue sundress, wearing a matching bonnet.

-The Librarian MELISSA (44), stands next to her wheelchair holding a microphone.

MELISSA

Welcome to the Wichita Falls Public Library's weekly book reading. Today's guest is local poet Idamay Sweetwater. You might have heard her featured on The Kid Kradrock Morning Show on ninety-two-point-eight-F-M.

Idamay looks up at Melissa.

IDAMAY

No one here is under fifty sweetheart, I doubt they've ever even heard of Kid Kradrock in the morning. Just hand me the microphone, sweetie.

Melissa chuckles.

MELISSA

Uh, well. Ladies and Gentlemen... Idamay.

Melissa hands the mic to Idamay, finds a chair up front. Idamay takes off her bonnet, tosses it toward Melissa. Her old arms can't fling it that far, and it lands just at Melissa's feet. Melissa bends down, picks it up.

IDAMAY

You'll need to take off those sexy Librarian glasses to sport that hat, gal.

The crowd chuckles. Melissa dips the hat over the top of her head, curtsies to the small audience, sits back down.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

This poem is titled, When I Was Young.

Idamay sort of clears her throat.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

When I was young. I never needed anyone. And makin' love was just for fun. Those days are gone.

Idamay stops, lowers the mic, holds it back up to her mouth.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I turned ninety-eight last month. Sometimes I recite seventies A-M radio tunes instead of my own poems.

The small gathering laughs. Idamay waits for the last chuckle to die down.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

When I was Young. The fun had not begun. Because I was a girl and not a strong man. I wanted a toolset, or toys to dig land. Oh Ida, my parents would moan, just play with your dolls and make them a nice home. How I longed for the trousers my brothers would wear, so I buried my dolls and pulled out their hair. Now don't you worry, I'm not a dark creature. I still learned to play baseball, to the dismay of our preacher. I married my beau and we had a nice son, he was my joy, my heart and my world all in one.

Idamay stops. She looks out at the small gathering, holds her free hand above her eyes.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Pardon me everyone, now I know Bob is sitting out there because he wheeled me in here. Stand up, Bob.

Bob is seated in the front row, he stands, turns and nods at the small gathering.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

That's my baby, everyone. He's seventy-five-years-old, but always just five to me. I love you Bob. They tell me I'm a world-class poet in my ungodly old age and all I could think to name him was Robert.

(MORE)

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

How unimaginative I was when I was young. Can you please give a hand for my baby, Bob.

The small crowd applauds. Bob waves his hand in the air, sits back down in his seat.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

That was not part of the spectacle. My poem that is. A ninety-eight-year-old woman who recites poetry? I know I am a spectacle. That's the only reason a documentary film crew would visit the Wichita Falls Public Library. No offense, Melissa.

MELISSA

We love you, Idamay.

IDAMAY

Don't forget to get that sexy librarian's number for me Bob. Anyways, where was I. Oh yes. When I was young, it's when I turned about fifty. My true love passed, so I moved to the city. New York was my Camelot, and I was still very quite hot. So, when I was young at about fifty-nine, I danced in clubs and mix vodka with wine. When I was young at about sixty-eight, I'd still have some wine and think it was great. When I was young, at about seventy-six, the wine was gone but I still got my kicks, it wasn't until I turned eighty-seven, my hip they replaced. and I thought more about heaven. Now I'm nearly one-hundred and each decade I show, in my face and my body but not my soul. For I know what you see, when you look at me. A broken old woman, a victim of time. A loud geriatric, who can still turn a rhyme. But what I hope you hear, at the sound of my voice? Is a little girl playing baseball, on a sandlot with boys. When I was young? It's right now in my heart. So, just wheel me on out. When the dance party, starts.

INT. A LUSH BACKYARD PATIO - DAY

Carl now sits with VICKY (50), on an expansive backyard deck, over-looking a small lake. Carl adjusts himself uncomfortably, as if he'd rather be somewhere else.

VICKY

You're gonna sit here and support your Grandmother Carl.

CARL

You know I love her Vicky but why can't she just show some respect in our own home.

VICKY

We wouldn't have this nice home if it weren't for Mama Ida and you know it.

Vicky looks at the camera.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Idamay made a lot of money when she moved to New York. She became a trailblazing advertising executive, back when the advertising business was still just mad men. She's legend.

CARL

But does she have to bring all that woke talk, into our home?

VICKY

She's no more of a lesbian than you are, Carl. And even if she was, that woman is still the very first prayer warrior everyone at our church, and Bob's church, will call on our prayer chain list.

CARL

It just makes me uncomfortable, the way she jokes around.

VICKY

Do you got a guilty conscious? She tries to get you to loosen up. What does she always ask you? Who killed Jesus?

CARL

Vicky, this is a Christian home.

VICKY

You never answer her Carl. Who  
killed Jesus? Was it the woke  
heathens?

Vicky spikes the camera.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Religious people killed Jesus.  
Probably Southern Baptists.

Carl buries his face in his hands, sobs.

CARL

I love my Grandma.

EXT. A LAKEFRONT BOAT DOCK - DAY

Ronny glances at the camera, as he loads supplies into a  
fishing boat.

RONNY

Daddy's a millionaire, a few times  
over. I live in Seattle, but I try  
and spend as much time as I can  
with Mama Ida, since they moved her  
back to Wichita Falls.

Ronny stops, looks out at the lake.

RONNY (CONT'D)

I wish I could take her out in the  
fishing boat just one more time  
while I'm here.

He looks at the camera.

RONNY (CONT'D)

My band is headlining South-by-  
Southwest in Austin this month. But  
she's gonna perform before our show  
at the Civic Center here in Wichita  
Falls.

Ronny places a few things in the boat, pauses.

RONNY (CONT'D)

If she can do it. I don't think  
she's gonna make it to one-hundred.

INT. CIVIC AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Local disc Jockey, KID KRADROCK, stands on a large stage, beside Idamay, in front of concert-level musical equipment.

KID KRADROCK  
Good evening Wichita Falls! Welcome  
to Crazy Lucy, presented by ninety-  
two-point-eight-F-M!

The crowd cheers.

KID KRADROCK (CONT'D)  
I'm Kid Kradrock, and I'm standing  
here with Wichita Falls favorite  
alarm clock! It's seven-thirty!

IDAMAY  
Get your ass out of bed!

The crowd cheers.

KID KRADROCK  
I know you're all looking forward  
to the performance by Crazy Lucy.  
But did you know Idamay Sweetwater,  
beside me here, is the great-  
grandmother of Crazy Lucy's own  
Ronny Wilson.

He looks off stage.

KID KRADROCK (CONT'D)  
Come on out here Ronny!

Ronnie walks out to greet them, hugs Idamay. The crowd  
cheers. Kid Kradrock hands the mic to Ronny.

RONNY  
What poem do you have for us  
tonight Mama Ida?

IDAMAY  
I know everyone is here to see you,  
not me, so it's a short and sweet  
one. It's called, Touchstones.

RONNY  
Nice! I'll be right back out with  
Crazy Lucy in a moment, but right  
now I present my great-grandmother,  
Idamay Sweetwater! Give it up!

Ronny hands the microphone to Idamay. He walks offstage with Kid Kradrock. Idamay clears her throat, as if she struggles to get started.

IDAMAY

I wrote this poem for Ronnie. He's  
my muse.

She finally gathers her thoughts.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Words fail because my heart feels  
bigger than my tongue. There's so  
much to say but in the end I just  
can't find right ones. Tumbling,  
stumbling, bumbling, like a baby,  
fussing, fudging, uttering only  
maybe, somehow, you realize here  
and now, You make my soul scream,  
wow!

Idamay pauses. Kid Kradrock looks at Ronnie.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)

Muse, is a gift of God that we  
don't often recognize. Yet when we  
need it, feel and see it,  
inspiration can arise. Enthralling  
eyes, our ears, calming fears, hope  
draws near. Like a vivid dream, how  
real it seems, visiting your gentle  
space of warmth and grace, it's you  
I can't replace. Touchstones are  
rare as gold like priceless pearls  
on earth. Searching them is futile  
because they never know their  
worth. Yet through tossing waves,  
shores they crave, though high seas  
rage. Arriving like a message in a  
bottle, to offer, fresh faith, hope  
and love, that lights the dark! You  
are a muse and blaze the fuse, yes,  
you provide my spark. So dear boy,  
please enjoy this gentle verse I've  
penned. Never be confused, you are  
my muse, until the very end.

Idamay drops the mic in her lap. Ronnie shouts at the stage crew.

RONNY

Close the curtain!

INT. IDAMAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Idamay lies in bed, wearing her nightgown, connected to oxygen. Her usually well-groomed gray hair, is disheveled and unkept. A nurse attends to her, as her family surrounds her bed.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Are you sure you want us in here  
Idamay?

IDAMAY  
I'm ninety-eight-years old. Can't a  
sister get some oxygen? I've had  
worse days than this. Thank you,  
Janelle. I'm fine, I'll buzz if I  
need you.

The nurse smiles at her. Gently strokes her hair, leaves the room. Idamay looks around at everyone.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)  
Now all of yawl get out of here! I  
want to spend time with the  
Director Darla and her boyfriend  
Sam, he's such a handsome  
photographer. And it's none of your  
business what we are doing in here.  
Ignore any pounding against the  
wall. Or all the growling sounds,  
you might hear coming out of this  
bedroom.

They all laugh. Bob kisses her forehead, exits with his son,  
daughter-in-law, and grandson.

IDAMAY (CONT'D)  
You never filmed Bob, did you.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
We tried Idamay. But he couldn't do  
it.

IDAMAY  
That boy is scared to death he will  
die before I do. He knows it would  
break my heart. He's a good boy.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
He's a fine gentleman.



IDAMAY

He was a perfect baby, perfect child, perfect teenager, perfect husband before his wife died, perfect dad, now perfect grandfather. But, I'm prejudice.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

I can tell. He is a perfect son.

IDAMAY

You better keep this one, Sam. She's pretty. And smart.

SAM

Oh I will, ma'am.

IDAMAY

I wanted yawl to see me like this because this is my war room.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Where you write your poetry?

IDAMAY

Honey. This is where I meet with the Lord. He's sits right here. At my bedside, each night. It's how I became a poet. I speak to him in rhyme. Do you and Sam know the Lord?

DIRECTOR (O/S)

Uh, I don't think we are comfortable discussing our religious preferences with you, Idamay. This documentary is about you.

IDAMAY

Oh, I'm not some Holy Roller, like Bob. But, rest assured I will add both of you to my prayer list.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

We are very grateful for that.

IDAMAY

Well. That's it. This is the last part of my life I wanted to share. Now, yawl get out of here. I have a nightly appointment with a rugged, but kind, middle-eastern carpenter.

(MORE)

IDAMAY (CONT'D)  
He gets jealous if I keep him  
waiting.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Shut it down, Sam.

INT. IDAMAY'S BEDROOM DOOR - NIGHT

A decorative plaque hangs on the door.

THE SIGN READS: "Beware of Old Lady"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

It's a low angle of a young girl, dressed in a one-piece swimming suit, walking along a sunny beach. She holds hands with a man, who wears a flowing white garment.

The little girl releases his hand as they reach gentle waves, washing the shoreline. She hugs his waist. Then the little girl runs directly into a sparkling blue ocean.

FADE TO BLACK