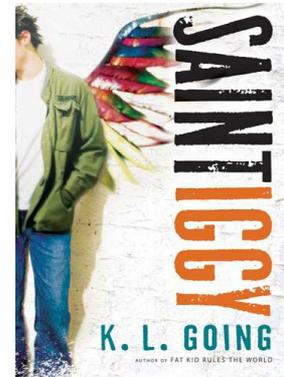


The Writing of *Saint Iggy*, by K.L. Going Plus a Deleted Scene

Like *Fat Kid Rules the World*, the idea for *Saint Iggy* originated with the first sentence, which came to me whole and suggested a voice and character that was too compelling to resist.

Iggy seemed to me a great anti-hero type of character. I was tired of reading so many YA novels where the main character is "artsy" and "quiet and mousy", and they "escape into books" and learn about the world through "making an awesome video or photography project". In so many ways, authors create and idealize themselves in character form, but so many kids are not like that. Iggy had a camera once, but he stole it, and then he broke it. He's not really talented at anything and he hates the kid at school who writes all the cool poems. But he does see the world in a way no one else can.



I also wanted to explore the ambiguity of life. There's almost nothing black or white in this book. Always shades of gray. Iggy makes the "wrong" choices for the "right" reasons and the "right" choices for the "wrong" reasons.

Setting the story in the projects seemed like an ideal choice because I spent part of my volunteer years with Mennonite Central Committee working and living in one of the New Orleans housing projects before it was demolished and then flooded. What I learned was that poverty clouds many issues that those of us privileged enough to live in wealth would judge from the outside as clear-cut. But if we were poor and living day by day, we'd find the world of morality is suddenly much more subjective than we thought it was.

This is Iggy's world.

Read a Deleted Scene

This deleted scene, where Iggy goes shopping with Mo's mom after he gets his haircut, was so much fun to write. We eventually cut it out of the book for pacing reasons and I was sad to see it go! But now I get to include it here so you guys can check it out.

-KL

"It looks good," Mo's mom says when we're in the car. "It's a very smart haircut. And with the right clothes . . ."

I look down at my clothes and my pants are all worn out so the black looks gray. I think about that party and the gray room and how I must have fit in without even knowing it, which is pretty sad.

Mo's mom sees me looking, so she tells the driver to take us to Saks. Then she calls ahead from her cell phone to let them know we are coming, and this is something I did not even know was possible. When we get there a salesperson will have already picked out choices of everything we ask for - pants, shoes, socks, sweaters and a coat.

"It's called personal shopping," says Mo's mom, and she says it like she is teaching me something important that I will need to know to be a good person.

Then she tells me about all the things we could buy and how I should pick out an outfit for a poor kid and we will bring it to the Christmas box on our way to my school. I am wondering how come I have to put it in the box when I could just bring it home with me and speed the whole process up, but then I don't have time to wonder anymore because we are pulling up in front of Saks.

Outside it is crowded with people staring at the window displays and I wonder if they ever use graffiti artists to paint the windows, but probably they don't because that stuff does not come off so easy. Then we push through the golden revolving doors, and inside it is packed and all the people move like they know exactly where they are going, and there is Christmas music, loud and insistent, so it is all JOY TO THE WORLD!!!! and I think, shit.

"This way!" Mo's mom points, and everything is so crowded I nearly lose her. I follow her up to the men's floor and once we are on the escalator she sighs and watches the displays on each floor we pass.

"Do you think Montell would let me buy him a few things?" she asks, as we pass the kid's floor. "He hates it when I buy him anything, but his shirt looked so threadbare."

I am thinking this is not such a great idea because we will get a lecture about materialism and how it is such shit to own things, so I almost say, "No way," but then I look at Mo's mom and she is real hopeful, so I shrug and she squeezes my shoulder hard.

"We'll just buy him a sweater," she says, and then she takes a deep breath. "Let me just find our shopper," she tells me, and just like that she disappears.

Now I am standing in the middle of Saks trying to look like I belong, and I start to sweat so I stick both hands in my pockets and hunch my shoulders, and then I wander around watching people to see if anyone needs me to do a great thing for them.

When you watch people hoping to do a great thing you see them different than usual. First you see the way they move around and if they are carrying a million packages that might fall and if they have a kid who might get loose and trip down the escalator, and then when none of that stuff is working out you have to look deeper until you see the lines around their eyes and the way they walk slow or fast and whether they look happy or sad when they are listening to the department store music which is all jingle bells and Christmas trees.

One woman looks real sad when they play Blue Christmas, so I stand next to her and say, "I hate this song." But she just leaves and takes her packages somewhere else, so I get bored after that and I walk in circles kicking at things and watching for mannequins that might fall over (after I have kicked them) and land on some kid. Then I decide Mo's mom might be looking for me, so I go back to the spot where she left me and that's when this tall guy in a uniform with a bad comb-over comes over.

"Can I help you, sir?" he asks, only he's already answering the question with his eyes, and the answer is, *No, I can't help you because you do not belong here.*

I think maybe I should run, only then the guy will call security and they will say I tried to steal stuff even though I didn't and Mo's mom will come up right when they are pressing my face into the floor. So I try to think of something else to do because Mo is always talking about options, but the uniform guy keeps asking me the same question again and again.

"Can I help you, sir?"

"Can I help you, sir?"

"Sir, can I . . ."

"I've got to try some clothes on."

The owner guy looks at me like we have not understood each other and of course it is my fault because I am stupid.

"Sir," he says, "I don't think that's such a good idea. Do you?"

I do or else I would not have suggested it.

But now I am in a bind because Mo's mom is probably looking for me, and she will not be happy if I beat the crap out of the sales guy. So I walk away real slow and take the escalator downstairs and when it is clear that I am not going anywhere I decide I better make a new plan. Here is what I come up with:

Plan A

Iggy goes home and gets his entire spray paint collection and brings every can of it back to the men's department where he proceeds to destroy EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF CLOTHING. The owner guy is so upset he does not even remember to call the police and Iggy gets away free. Ha.

I like this plan but it is not realistic because really I couldn't make it all the way home and back again before Mo's mom would be looking for me, and probably the owner guy would remember to call the police because mostly it is just my luck that people always remember.

Then I come up with Plan B.

Iggy waits outside and that is how he happens to see the armed robbers making their way into the store, so he runs up the escalator in order to stop them, and just as they reach the men's department and are about to shoot the owner guy, Iggy makes a flying leap and takes the bullet while tackling the robbers and knocking them out. Blood sprays everywhere, all over the fancy clothes, but no one cares because they can't believe what an amazing heroic person Iggy is. Both the owner guy and Mo's mom witness the whole thing, and while he is dying they pledge to always remember him, no matter what and someone writes a newspaper article about him the very next day.

This is a good plan, too, so I look up and down the street just in case any robbers are coming, but the thing about robbers is they're never around when you need them.

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