

Iggy's Thanksgiving

The Characters:

Iggy Lambini—An intelligent third grader in a wheelchair
Paolo Lambini—Iggy's widowed father
Kitty Conn—Everyone's friend and favorite bakery owner
Delia Henson—A recovering anorexic in the eighth grade
Jeff Dinello—Vista Falls Elementary School's art teacher
Nesta Chen—Iggy's friend, the nicest girl in the third grade
Violet Trotter—An elderly, very sophisticated lady
Fritz Danwinter—A German gentleman;
 Mrs. Conn's friend and employee
Nora Danwinter—Fritz's wife of many years
Sarah Cotswold—A sixth grader with spirit
Nancy Wu—Nesta's cousin, Sarah's best friend

The Scene:

Iggy sits in the center of the dining room at Kitty Conn's large, comfortable old house. He's pointing as he watches Mrs. Conn and his father hang festive Thanksgiving decorations on the walls. Seated in an armchair a distance to Iggy's right is Violet Trotter. She's a handsome, elderly woman in an elegant suit. She occasionally raps her cane on the floor to show her discontent. In another chair, some feet away to Iggy on his left, sits Delia Henson. She's resting her head in her hand and looking completely glum. In the background, Nesta Chen, Nancy Wu, Sarah Cotswold and Mr. Dinello are helping Fritz and Nora Danwinter fold napkins for the table. The occasion is Mrs. Conn's annual Thanksgiving Day feast. Each year, she welcomes her friends who would have nowhere else to go on the holiday. Some of Mrs. Conn's friends are pitching in to help before they go off with their families.

PAOLO: (*Calling out to his son.*) Iggy! How'd you like to come over here and show Mrs. Conn where this pumpkin would look the best?

IGGY: Mrs. Conn doesn't need my help. (*He doesn't turn around.*)

MRS. CONN: Sure I do. This sort of thing needs an artist's touch.

IGGY: (*Still not looking.*) Mr. Dinello's right over there. He's an art teacher. I'll bet he could help.

MR. DINELLO: (*Noticing that his name was mentioned.*) That's true, Ig. I am an art teacher, but I don't have the knack for pumpkin placement that you do. Really, Mrs. Conn you should see the picture that Iggy drew in my class the other day. It was just wonderful.

MRS. CONN: Really? Well, that doesn't surprise me. I've always known that Iggy has talent.

PAOLO: I can't wait to see this masterpiece. (*He smiles and teases Mr. Dinello.*) You know, Jeff, you could have let my son take his drawing home for the holiday.

MR. DINELLO: I did. Just yesterday, I sent all the art projects home with the students.

PAOLO: Oh? Iggy, why didn't you show me? You know how I love to see your drawings.

IGGY: Uh, I don't know. It wasn't very good, I guess.

MR. DINELLO: (*Walking toward Iggy.*) Sure it was, Iggy. I thought it was super!

IGGY: Yeah, super for a kid with cerebral palsy.

MR. DINELLO: Super for any kid, Iggy.

PAOLO: Iggy, I won't have you talking like that. (*He takes Iggy's chair and begins to wheel him upstage.*) You and I need to have a little talk.

MRS. CONN: (*Putting her hand on Mr. Dinello's shoulder.*) Don't you worry about a thing, Jeff. They'll talk it out.

MR. DINELLO: I hope I didn't upset anyone.

MRS. CONN: (*Glancing at Iggy and his father talking in the back of the room.*) No, Jeff, nothing could upset Iggy more than he's already upset himself. Now, come with me, I want you to taste my pumpkin pie.

MR. DINELLO: You don't have to ask me twice. You know, Kitty, I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't invited me over for dinner.

KITTY CONN: Hush. You're always welcome here—holiday or no holiday.

(*They exit.*)

VIOLET TROTTER: For Heaven's sake! Isn't anyone going to offer me something to drink?

FRITZ: Oh, I'm terribly sorry Miss Trotter. Would you like some lemonade or some tea?

VIOLET TROTTER: (*Grumbling.*) If that's all you've got, I'll have some tea.

(*Nora joins her husband with Miss Trotter.*)

NORA: Isn't this terribly exciting?

VIOLET TROTTER: Sitting in Kitty Conn's dining room? Hardly.

NORA: No, Miss. Thanksgiving! We didn't have such a holiday in Germany. Did we, darling?

FRITZ: No. Many holidays we had, but none such as this. It is great fun. Now, please excuse me, I'll go and get your tea. (*He exits.*)

VIOLET TROTTER: So you think all this is fun, huh? Well, it may be fun for you because you're here with your husband. But who have I got? My brother and his wife go on vacation and leave me alone in that big

empty house. Thanksgiving! Ha! For what have I got to be thankful? (*She angrily hobbles off.*)

NORA: Oh, dear. (*She exits, too.*)

(*Nancy, Nesta and Sarah all walk timidly toward Delia.*)

NANCY: Excuse me? Delia?

DELIA: Yes.

NANCY: My cousin wanted me to introduce her to you. I'm Nancy. We met at Mrs. Conn's store a few times.

DELIA: (*Glumly.*) I know.

NANCY: I'm surprised you remembered a sixth grader like me. Anyway, this is my cousin Nesta.

NESTA: (*A little awestruck by the older girl.*) I j-j-just wanted to tell you that you have the prettiest hair.

DELIA: You don't have to say things like that to cheer me up, you know. It's one thing if you mean it. But, don't make up things just to cheer me up.

NESTA: But... but... I do mean it.

DELIA: Sure you do. What are all you kids doing here anyway? I know for a fact that your family is having a big party at their restaurant.

NANCY: We just like to help out Mrs. Conn.

DELIA: Oh, charity.

SARAH: No. We like spending time here. It's like our second home.

DELIA: I'm sorry. I don't mean to ruin your good time. I see how comfortable you are here. Why don't you go talk to someone who's as fun and comfortable as you are? I'm just not...

NANCY: It's okay. Parties can be hard. I always feel awkward. But, you don't have to here. Mrs. Conn's parties are the best!

SARAH: They sure are. Everyone's laughing and eating. All this food! Look at it. You wanna come with us and get something? Mrs. Conn's got all kinds of snacks over there. And, we've got some time before dinner.

DELIA: No! Don't you get it? It's all this food... that's... oh, just leave me alone! I hate this holiday! I just want to be alone.

NANCY: Oh...

NESTA: We didn't mean to...

SARAH: Whatever. Come on, let's go help Nora in the kitchen.

(Mrs. Conn enters followed by Nora, Fritz, Mr. Dinello and Violet Trotter.)

MRS. CONN: Girls, can I get you to stay where you are, please? I want to tell a story.

VIOLET TROTTER: *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, joy!

MRS. CONN: Now, now, Violet. *(She smiles.)* It's a short story. Indulge me. It is my house, after all.

VIOLET TROTTER: Fine, fine.

MRS. CONN: Good. Now, when I was a little girl, my mother and father were very poor. We had very little of anything except each other. Now, like most kids, I was always wanting something—new shoes or a new dress or an apple from the fruit stand. But, my parents couldn't afford to buy me those extra things. I had a friend, Stella, whose mother and father owned one of the shops on our street. She had everything she wanted and then some. Oh, I wished I was like Stella! Well, I started to get angrier and angrier and I felt sorrier and sorrier for myself. And then one day, as I was walking home from school, I saw Stella walking with her mother. That's when I realized how much I had.

IGGY: *(His father wheels him forward to Mrs. Conn.)* How?

MRS. CONN: Well you see, this little girl was talking to her mother, trying to tell her about the day she'd had in school. But, her mother wasn't listening. No, she was too busy looking in the shop windows or at the other people on the sidewalks. And, my friend, she pulled and pulled at her mother's sleeves and said, 'Mama, and this happened...' But, her mother wouldn't listen. After awhile, Stella's mother got so fed up with her daughter's pulling on her sleeve that she turned and shouted at her. 'Stella, can't you see mummy's trying to think? Can't you be quiet?' I remember seeing the tears roll down my friend's cheeks. And, I'll tell you, I ran right home to my mama and I gave her the biggest hug right then and there.

IGGY: I think I understand.

MRS. CONN: I think you do, too, Iggy. I'm not saying my story and yours are the same. Not having extra money to buy apples and candy and having cerebral palsy are two very different things. But, deep down, the spirit is the same. I may not have had everything as I would have wanted, but I had people who loved me. For that, I was always thankful.

VIOLET TROTTER: I hate that you're making a point, Kitty Conn. And, as much as it pains me to admit it, I see what you're saying. Even though my brother and his wife took a vacation without me...

NORA: Begging your pardon, Miss, but Mr. Trotter and his bride are on their honeymoon. Aren't they?

VIOLET TROTTER: *(Huffily.)* Yes, but when I say they went on a vacation and left me behind on a holiday, it puts them in a worse light and makes everyone feel sorry for me.

(Everyone laughs.)

IGGY: I didn't need anyone to feel sorry for me. I felt sorry enough for myself. I was mad because I couldn't reach up high enough to help you hang the decorations.

MRS. CONN: You could have helped us, if you'd let yourself.

IGGY: I know. Sometimes, when you get in a bad mood, it's easy to feel sorry for yourself. *(He gets embarrassed.)* I do it from time to time.

MR. DINELLO: I do, too, Ig.

PAOLO: We all do, son. But, luckily, we all have people to remind us that we don't have to. We're all blessed to have as much as we do.

DELIA: Here I've been a big mess because we have too much. I've been so worried about what I don't want that I haven't seen what I have. But, it's so hard! Sometimes, I can't ever see the good in anything. It's because I'm so upset with myself all the time. I'm sure that's why my mom and dad left me here while they went to see my grandparents. They're ashamed of me.

MRS. CONN: Dee, your parents left you here with me because they thought you'd have more fun here. We all know how stressful you find visiting your grandparents.

DELIA: They're always saying things like, 'You could be so pretty if...'
Well, I'm pretty as I am. Why can't someone see that?

MRS. CONN: We see it.

DELIA: Thank goodness for... oh... *(She realizes.)* Oh, I see. I understand. I do have a lot to be thankful for.

NANCY: We all do.

FRITZ: See, isn't this fun? Everyone talking and understanding and realizing things. Only in such a free place can such things happen!

NORA: It's true. Here, we have the freedom to feel anything we want.

SARAH: Yes, we do. And, right now, I feel hungry.

MRS. CONN: Well said, Sarah. And, I think the turkey should be just about ready.

IGGY: Can I help in the kitchen, Mrs. Conn?

MRS. CONN: Yes, Iggy. There's a lot you can do to help me, too. I'd be very thankful for that.

IGGY: *(Sweetly.)* Not as thankful as I would.

END SCENE.