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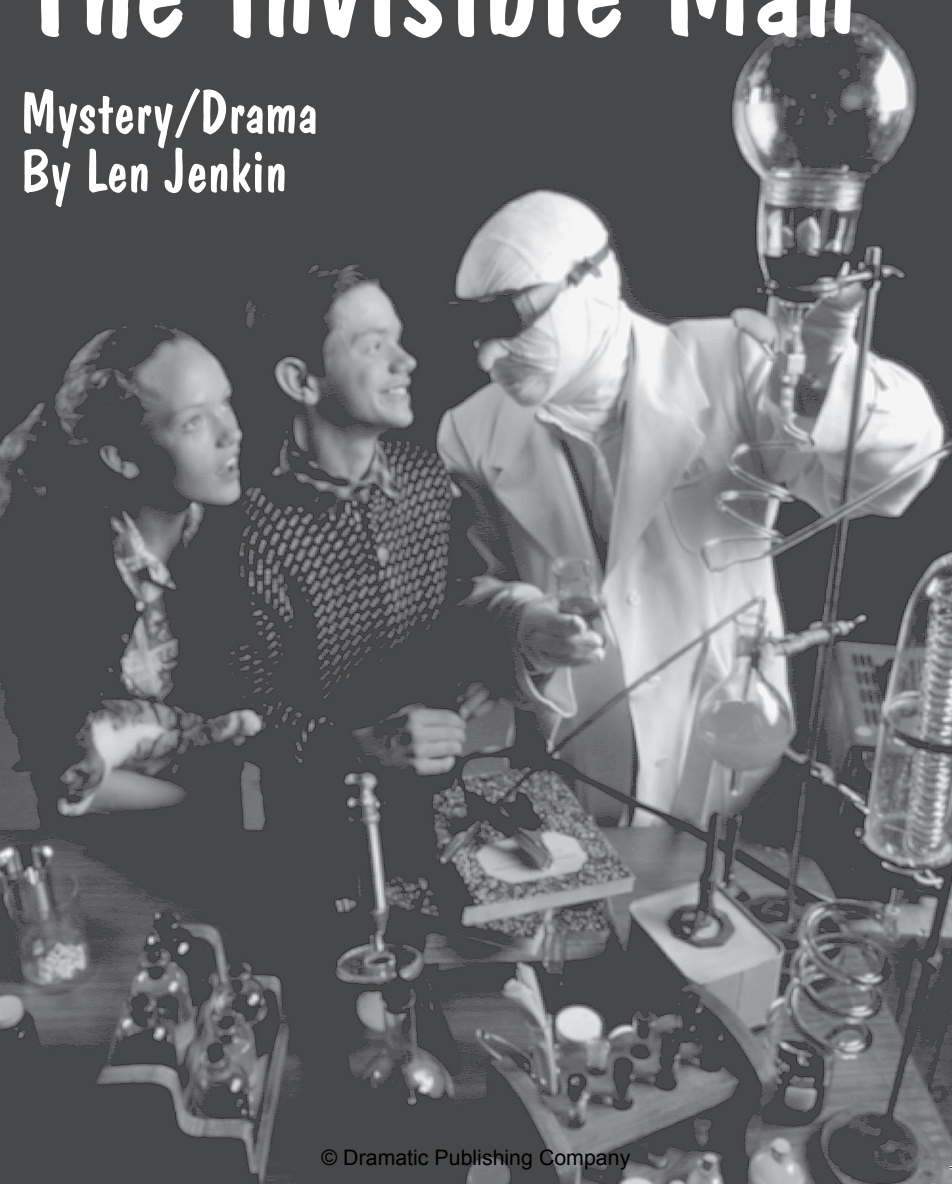
*Dramatic Publishing*

H.G. Wells'

# The Invisible Man

Mystery/Drama

By Len Jenkin



# The Invisible Man

***Mystery/Drama. By Len Jenkin. Adapted from the classic by H.G. Wells. Cast: 5m., 3w. (plus extras.)*** In this updated version of the H.G. Wells classic, a family running a quiet motel confronts a mysterious scientist who has found the secret of becoming invisible. The young boy, Jim, discovers that people are not always what they seem, science and discovery bring us all sorts of ethical questions—and even intelligence and imagination can be dangerous two-edged swords. The play is spooky, thoughtful, and funny. Drive-in movies! Nuclear power plants! Special effects!! INVISIBILITY!! *Area staging. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: 166.*

*Cover: The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, mainstage production with (l-r) Leah Curney, Luke M. Ingles and Gerald Drake. Photo: Jim Barbour. Cover design: David G. Sergel.*

ISBN: 978-0-87129-984-0



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# THE INVISIBLE MAN

From a Story by  
H.G. WELLS

Adapted for the Stage by  
LEN JENKIN



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Joyce Ketay, Joyce Ketay Agency, 1501 Broadway, Suite 1908,  
New York NY 10036  
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ISBN 0-87129-984-4

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*The Invisible Man* premiered in the fall of 1995 at the Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle, Washington. Linda Hartzell, the artistic director of the theatre, directed the production.

# THE INVISIBLE MAN

A Play in One Act

For 5 Men, 3 Women, plus extras

## CHARACTERS

- JIM ..... a young teenager
- MARGE ..... his mom, attractive, mid-30s
- RON ..... the motel handyman, gawky, friendly,  
maybe not all that bright
- JACK GRIFFIN ..... the Invisible Man
- PROF. COSMO GIBSON ..... an older scientist
- JESSE ..... a neighbor dad
- CINDY ..... a neighbor mom
- LISA-MARIE .. their 14-year-old daughter, friend of Jim's
- POLICE (non-speaking)
- RADIO VOICES (they say a lot, recorded or offstage)
- CAT (meows)



## SETTINGS

All settings should be simple, brilliant, easily changeable—a wonderful object or two and the furniture necessary rather than a full set with flats, etc.

Stardust drive-in theatre: the stage with screen

Sleepy Daze Inn: front desk and office

Sleepy Daze Inn: Griffin's room (becomes his lab)

A road near the inn

Glowville Nuclear Power Plant: fun dials, equipment, etc.

See end of script for a note on how to make an invisible man.

## THE INVISIBLE MAN

**AT RISE:** *The Stardust Drive-in Theatre is onstage as audience enters. Playground down front below the screen. Sound of cars pulling in, their headlight beams swinging across the screen—as audience is being seated. The sky darkens, and we see JIM sneak into his spot to watch the movie. Houselights out. Projector flickers and Movietone News rolls. Some suggested contents (depending on what's available): Home of the Future! Amazing New Appliances! / Dr. Cosmo Gibson Tours Us Through the Glowville Nuclear Facility! (or testifies in Washington in front of the president's atomic energy commission) / Poodle Skirts Are In In In!!! / Etc. Pompous and wholesome narration, etc. As the newsreel nears its end, JIM comes downstage. He's got a bag of popcorn. He eats some.*

**JIM.** Everything half price at the Snack Shack tonight. Last night of the season. I got a large—with extra butter.

You see that newsreel? The future is gonna be amazing. And since I'm only a kid, I get to live in it. It's 1957, so I figure by the year 2000, I'll be flying everywhere with a rocket on my back!

My dad told me one day there's gonna be people on the moon. And on the planet Mars. He was an engineer.

He was really smart. He used to take me to work and everything...

Anyway, he got killed in Korea. Fighting the Chinese communists. My mom says that war was stupid, and the whole damn country of Korea wasn't worth my dad's life. That was a few years ago. Since then, it's been just Mom and me.

The world may be exciting these days, but we're pretty much out of it around here, especially at the Sleepy Daze Inn. That's the hotel my mom runs, right up the road. Nobody comes in the fall and winter, but we stay open anyway. Mom's always hoping we'll get lucky.

Too bad tonight's the last night. Winter's coming.

*(JIM flings a handful of popcorn way up in the air and as it falls, it's joined by snow, which continues to fall.)*

*Set change to Sleepy Daze Inn. As the snow continues to fall heavily, MARGE crosses, carrying a stack of towels.)*

**MARGE.** Jim, would you get out the snow shovels? And the rock salt. *(MARGE is gone.)*

**JIM.** My mom. She never wears poodle skirts.

*(RON crosses.)*

**JIM.** Ron, our handyman.

**RON.** Hi, Jim buddy. How's it going? *(RON's gone.)*

**JIM.** You know, we don't even have a television yet. But we know a fabulous future is on the way. We have atomic power, and we have rock and roll.

*(JIM turns the large 1950's radio console on and we hear an instrumental 1950's rhythm and blues number. RON crosses back through the parlor, a shovel over one shoulder, a little dance step in his feet.)*

RON. Hey, Jim! It's really snowing hard out there ...

*(JIM doesn't hear him. RON shrugs, and with a bit of the beat in his shoes, exits. A moment of radio static and it segues into dramatic Space Patrol music. JIM rushes close to the radio, en route, collecting his Mars Invader mask: a huge two-faced cardboard unit that goes completely around his head and down to rest on his shoulders. He puts it on. He sees out through a piece of cellophane in the forehead. It makes him look like an evil fifties robot monster. Mask on, JIM listens intently to the radio. Music segues into Space Patrol.)*

RADIO. SPAAAACE PATROOOOOOOL! *(Sound of rockets whooshing through outer space.)*

CAPT. CAPPY *(on radio)*. Calling all space patrollers! Captain Cappy here. I hope you're all wearing your Mars Invader masks with Magic Forehead Vision.

JIM WITH CAPT. CAPPY. You can see out, but no one can see in.

CAPT. CAPPY. The best hideout ever. Even your own mom won't know who you are. If you don't have your Space Patrol Secret Message Decoder ring, send for it right away. Send two dollars, in coin, to Captain Cappy's Secret Message Decoder Ring, Space Patrol, Radio City Station, New York, New York.

JIM *(trying to write the address down)*. Slow down...

CAPT. CAPPY. Now get out those decoder rings! Today's secret message is: Klaatu Barada Nikto!

JIM (*as he's writing it down*). Klaatu ... Barada ... Nikto ...

CAPT. CAPPY. And now, Bosco, the chocolaty soda-fountain treat you can make in your own home, brings you ... (*Whoosh of rocket.*) SPPPAACE PAATROOOLL!!!!

(*MARGE enters and turns off the radio.*)

JIM. Mom!???

MARGE. Jim, there's two feet of snow out there and getting worse. I need you to help Ron shovel the drive. We can't afford to discourage customers.

JIM. Mom, we haven't had a customer in a month. We're not going to have one in the middle of a snowstorm.

MARGE. Don't argue with me, Jimmy.

JIM. Mom, can I have fifty cents? It's for Captain Cappy's Secret Message Decoder ring. I gotta know what these messages mean.

MARGE. They don't mean anything. Till the inn gets on its feet, we don't have money to throw away.

JIM. We're not throwing money away. It's for a decoder ring.

MARGE. For a smart boy, sometimes you've got no sense at all. And please get that ugly mask out of here. I told you never to wear that in the parlor. It could scare away customers.

JIM. I bet Dad would have given me the money.

MARGE. Honey, that's not fair. Don't make me upset by saying things like that. Please. Jim, maybe tonight after dinner, I could help you out with any homework.

JIM. Mom, the homework they give me is still so easy a five-year-old could do it. I always finish during study period at school.

MARGE. We could play some checkers, or ...

JIM. I don't think so, Mom. I'll just read, or we could listen to the radio together ...

MARGE. Sometimes I'd like to take an ax to that thing. Drives me crazy sometimes.

JIM. I like it, OK? And maybe if we had a television, I wouldn't listen to the radio so much.

MARGE. Jim, you know we don't have enough money for a television—especially with no business coming in here.

JIM. Well, maybe, if we had a television we'd have some business coming in.

*(MARGE shrugs her shoulders, sighs. It seems hopeless.)*

MARGE. Jim, shovel the drive. Please. I've got things to do.

*(MARGE exits. JIM reluctantly gets his jacket, hat, and the snow shovel.)*

JIM. Mom was right. I did spend a lot of time by the radio. Dad always told me that science was important, so I listened to Space Patrol, The Answer Man, and Mr. Wizard to get myself ready for the future. A future that did not include shoveling snow.

*(JIM exits with the snow shovel. Eerie music and lights; the door opens. The new arrival is a man heavily bun-*

*dled in a long black coat and black hat, with blue-tinted glasses, and a scarf pulled up over his mouth and nose, shielding his face. He wears gloves. His nose, which sometimes protrudes between his scarf and glasses, the only part of him we see, is bright pink. This is JACK GRIFFIN, THE INVISIBLE MAN. The snow swirls around him, dusts his hat and shoulders. GRIFFIN steps inside. In one hand he holds a bundle of notebooks. Silence. He sees the reception bell and rings it. MARGE enters, flustered with the arrival of a potential customer.)*

GRIFFIN. I need a room.

MARGE. Welcome to the Sleepy Daze Inn, Mr...

GRIFFIN. I need a quiet place to work, where I won't be disturbed.

MARGE. It's very restful here. Peaceful. Will that be for one night, Mr...?

GRIFFIN. Griffin, Jack Griffin. For longer.

MARGE. All right. Perhaps I could take your coat? And hat and scarf. I've got a dryer downstairs.

GRIFFIN. I'm still cold. You sure it's peaceful here?

JIM. Boring...

MARGE. Jim! Mr. Griffin isn't interested in your smart-aleck remarks. My son can get the rest of your things from the car...

GRIFFIN. I walked. My equipment and luggage will be delivered later.

MARGE. Uh, Mr. Griffin, I don't usually rent to someone whose face I can't see.

**GRIFFIN.** I told you. I'm still cold. Frostbite. Here. *(He reaches into his pocket and slaps a wad of cash on counter.)* Make it a month.

**MARGE.** A month...

**GRIFFIN.** At least. Payment in advance. *(He steps outside briefly and retrieves the cat cage.)* You don't mind cats, I hope?

**MARGE.** Love them. The room comes with two meals a day, breakfast and dinner. Jim, take Mr. Griffin's things. And show him our largest room, number three upstairs.

*(JIM reaches out to take GRIFFIN's notebooks; GRIFFIN stops him.)*

**GRIFFIN.** Don't touch! I'll carry them. You can carry the cat.

*(They exit, JIM carrying the cat cage. MARGE is alone onstage for the moment. She looks soberly toward where GRIFFIN has exited.)*

**MARGE** *(to herself)*. I'm not being too careful about my clientele. On the other hand... *(She picks up the bundle of cash and can't suppress a grin of delight.)* A month! Maybe more! *(Sings and dances, holding money high.)* "We're in the money! We're in the money!"

*(GRIFFIN bursts back into the registration area, followed by JIM. MARGE freezes in embarrassment, as GRIFFIN grabs the money from her.)*



GRIFFIN. The room is a cracker box. I need space. (*He heads for the door, pauses, looks out the window at the falling snow. He turns toward the parlor.*) What about that room?

*(Lights up in the parlor; a very large room with a fireplace, the radio, a long dining table. GRIFFIN enters the parlor, followed by JIM and MARGE.)*

MARGE. That's our downstairs parlor. It doesn't even have a bed.

GRIFFIN. Forget the bed. I'll sleep on the floor, and so will my cat.

MARGE. It's the sitting room for all my guests.

GRIFFIN. You don't have any other guests in this godforsaken place. It's the dead of winter. You may never have any. I am here now. I have real money, and I don't want to go back into the snow.

JIM. Mom, what about the radio. It's the only one we...

MARGE. Mr. Griffin, you have a deal.

*(GRIFFIN puts down his things and pulls a chair up to the fireplace.)*

MARGE. So, where you from, Mr. Griffin? (*No answer.*) You a skier? We get a few of those this time of... (*No answer.*) Bird watcher? The snowy owl is...

GRIFFIN. I'm a scientist. Is there a lock on this door?

MARGE. We don't have locks.

GRIFFIN. That's stupid, and dangerous.

MARGE. Not around here.

GRIFFIN. I'm not from around here. I have a condition of my stay.

MARGE. Try me.

GRIFFIN. No one must *ever* come into my room without knocking. And no one must *ever* come into my room when I'm out.

MARGE. Fine—but I clean the rooms while the guests are out during the day.

GRIFFIN. Forget about cleaning this room.

MARGE. I can't just let the dirt...

GRIFFIN. Forget cleaning! I'm having delicate equipment delivered in a few days. Mustn't be touched.

MARGE. OK. It's you that's gotta live here.

JIM. Are you really a scientist?

GRIFFIN. Are you really interested? Or just bored?

JIM. Both, I think.

GRIFFIN. For a smart kid like you, it must be dull as death around here. Isn't it?

MARGE. There's lots of things a boy can...

JIM. Yes, it is. Dull as death.

GRIFFIN. Honest answer. I need some food.

MARGE. We really didn't fix dinner today, but I can get you a hot dog or something.

GRIFFIN. Whatever. I'm starving.

MARGE. I'd still like to dry that coat and hat.

GRIFFIN. I don't blame you for wanting a good look at your guests. You can take my things when you bring back the food.

*(MARGE turns to go, taking JIM with her. Once outside, JIM lets his mother pass and returns to the parlor. GRIFFIN has taken off his hat and scarf. JIM gasps.)*

GRIFFIN. And a saucer of milk... for my kitty cat.

JIM. Sure thing.

*(JIM leaves. GRIFFIN shuts the door and turns off the light. He's exhausted. Lights fade.)*

*In another area, MARGE and RON rush to get GRIFFIN's dinner onto a tray. JIM watches, getting in the way.)*

RON. Maybe he's got a big tattoo on his face, like a tarantula, and he's tired of people saying "Hey, you got a big tarantula on your face."

MARGE. He wears those dark sunglasses.

RON. Me, too. Well, in the summertime. When it's sunny ...

MARGE. Ron, please get a napkin.

RON *(starts to go and stops, getting another idea)*. OK, OK, maybe he's an albino and he's got those little pink eyes and they're really sensitive ...

MARGE. Ron ...

*(RON gets the napkin.)*

JIM. He's a scientist, Ron. He said he was a scientist.

MARGE. Jim, I think the snow's letting up. Why don't you go down the road, hang out with Lisa-Marie or something? We've got work to do here.

JIM. I don't feel like it.

MARGE. You can't go back to the parlor with us just because you're curious. I think Mr. Griffin doesn't like crowds.

*(MARGE picks up a large tray, balanced precariously, and RON carries a tablecloth and a ketchup bottle. Crossfade to the parlor, leaving JIM behind.)*

MARGE. Mr. Griffin? Dinner!

GRIFFIN. Come in.

*(MARGE enters, backing in with the food tray, followed by RON. RON sees him first, and stares open-mouthed at the apparition; a man in a worn suit, tie pulled down askew, still wearing gloves. His coat, hat and scarf are on the long table in a neat pile. From the neck up he is nothing but bandages. His entire head is wrapped in layers of gauze, except for some hair, his pink nose, and blue-tinted glasses. GRIFFIN points to a spot at the end of the long table. RON nervously spreads the tablecloth, and MARGE clumsily sets down the tray. GRIFFIN dives voraciously into the food, holding a napkin over his face, so they can't actually see him eat. They stare. They can't help it. He is an extremely strange sight. GRIFFIN looks up.)*

GRIFFIN. Do you think I'm a movie? If I'm a movie you ought to pay twenty-five cents to stare at me. If I'm a man, you should let me eat this slop in peace.

MARGE. Sorry, Mr. Griffin. It's just...such a shock.

RON. Must be itchy in here.

MARGE. What happened to you?

GRIFFIN *(hesitates, then decides to speak)*. An accident in my chemical lab. Explosion. Acid. My face looked like a piece of meat. I had a long series of painful operations, and the healing will take some time. Satisfied?