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THE INVISIBLE MAN

A Comedy Thriller

In Three Acts

By

EDDIE COPE

Suggested by the classic H. G. Wells novel

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE INVISIBLE MAN)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-094-9

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THE INVISIBLE MAN

(For 4 men, 7 women)

This play was first produced by Theater Suburbia in Houston, Texas, in June-July, 1980, under the direction of Harry Booker, with Toni Anderson, stage manager; Ron Schneider, technical director; Rod Harty, lighting designer; Kay Cash, properties; B. A. Mather, special effects; Renny Glover, set designer; and the following cast:

Hamilton Mike Walter
Linda Catherine Dickerson
Gertrude Bronwen Cooley
Karen June Cole Hainey
Susie Terri Connolly
Paige Linda Kissner
Roberta Debra Dombrowa
Jack Griffin Harry Booker
Fuller Beasley Jim Bratton
Jane Beasley Suzanne Bragg
Deputy Sheriff Carl Spiller

★

Scene: The lobby of Rainbow Lodge, an isolated old hotel in the Colorado Rockies

Time: The present

★

Synopsis

ACT I: Late afternoon in December

ACT II: An hour later

ACT III: A moment later

ABOUT THE PLAY

When six college girls take over the Rainbow Lodge, an isolated hotel in the Colorado wilderness, things begin to happen.

Indications are that a previous owner stashed a sack of gold somewhere in the hotel. The search for the “pot of gold at the end of the Rainbow” results in mystery, murder, and mirth. And in the middle of it all is an INVISIBLE MAN with a weird sense of humor.

This play, by the author of *Agatha Christie Made Me Do It*, is very loosely based on H. G. Wells’ science-fiction novel. The story was made into a movie, in 1933, starring Claude Rains. In the movie *The Invisible Man* wore bandages, and as he unwound the bandages, he disappeared. The unwrapping was a sensational special effect, and people flocked to the cinema to see it. You probably can’t duplicate this action on the stage, but you can provide others that are just as effective—a fight with a visible character and the way his voice moves around the stage. Suggestions for handling these effects and others are given on page 46.

Premiered by a community theatre, the play is also suitable for colleges and high schools—and all groups who like to mystify and thrill their audiences.



“Cope...moves the tale forward at a brisk and even clip.”—**Houston Chronicle**

“Mounds of murders and scads of suspects.”—**The Houston Post**

“It’s a laugh a minute.”—**Pasadena Citizen**

THE INVISIBLE MAN

By Eddie Cope

ACT I

[The scene is the rundown lobby of the Rainbow Lodge, an isolated hotel in the Colorado woods, in December. Door Right leads to the outside; door Left leads to the hotel interior. Door Right has a lock and sliding bolt; door Left has a lock and key. Up Center is the registration desk with a phone. Behind the desk are a set of pigeonholes containing room keys. A low counter runs along the back wall to the Up Right corner of the room. On the counter are a number of potted plants. The lobby furniture consists of chairs, a magazine rack, and a small table. A rocking chair is Up Right. All the furniture and registration desk are covered with white sheets. On the walls are deer heads and a mountain fish. Other potted plants decorate the room. The room has an eerie, haunted-house atmosphere.]

At rise, wind is howling. HAMILTON, an elderly man dressed in worn, patched overalls, is standing just inside door Left, examining one of the potted plants, mumbling to himself. (NOTE: Later, he will limp and stoop like an old man who has had a hard life; but when he is alone—as now—he stands with a posture and dignity that seem out of keeping with his worn overalls.) HAMILTON glances at his wrist watch, then crosses to phone on desk and dials a number; speaks into phone]

HAM. Hello, Chief, this is Hamilton, calling from Rainbow....I know the gold's hidden here somewhere, and I'm determined to find it....At least I won't be interrupted, because no one's here....Okay, Chief, I'll get back to you later. *[Hangs up the phone and resumes examining another potted plant]*

[A few moments later there is the sound of a key in the lock of door Right. HAMILTON nervously smooths dirt in pot and quickly steps out door Left. Door Right opens slowly and LINDA enters cautiously. She is an attractive young lady with a dramatic flair; she is extremely likeable, has a wonderful sense of humor, and speaks with something of a stagy precision. She looks around, a little afraid to enter the empty, ghostly room. Her trepidation is gradually replaced

with disappointment at the rundown appearance of the lobby. She crosses to registration desk, pulls off the sheet, and is greeted with a cloud of dust. She coughs and waves the dust away from her face. She surveys the desk and the pigeon holes, finds a bell (the kind that hotels used to have to ring for service), places it on the desk, dings it a couple of times, smiles happily at her discovery. She searches to see what else she can find. As she is bent over with her back to door Left, HAMILTON enters with a ski pole held in a seemingly threatening manner. LINDA sees him out of the corner of her eye, and screams]

HAM. Don't yell. [*He limps over to a point on the wall where he hangs the ski pole on a nail*] I ain't deaf.

LINDA. You scared me.

HAM. I thought you was a robber.

LINDA. Well, I'm not.

HAM. You don't look like no robber.

LINDA. I'm Linda Scott. From Denver.

HAM. Hamilton's my name. I'm the caretaker. [*Pause*] What you doin' here, girl?

LINDA. Didn't you get my telegram?

HAM. Never get telegrams. Too fur out in the woods to get them things.

LINDA. [*She returns to her job of arranging the registration desk. She finds a registration book, a "Ring Bell for Service" sign, etc.*] All it said was that our home economics class has permission to take over the hotel as a Christmas recess project.

HAM. [*Greatly agitated*] What! This ain't no place for a bunch of kids.

LINDA. Why not?

HAM. It's...it's dangerous. Strange things has been happenin' here.

LINDA. What kind of strange things?

HAM. Wal...like...wal, I ain't sure I oughta say. But you and your friends ain't safe here.

LINDA. [*She is obviously frightened and confused*] I...I...don't know what to think. We're all here...and I can't understand why you didn't get our message.

HAM. I didn't get no telegram. Where's the rest o' your bunch?

LINDA. They're unloading the bus.

HAM. Mebbe I better warn 'em to load up again.

[As he crosses to door Right, he takes a bandanna out of his back pocket. A telegram flutters to the floor, but he does not see it. He mops his brow as he exits]

LINDA. *[To herself, as she picks up telegram]* What's this? *[Imitating his accent]* "I didn't get no telegram." H'mmm. That's strange. *[She puts telegram on registration desk without reading it. Looks around, shivers. PHONE rings]* Hello, Rainbow Lodge...*[She listens with terrified disbelief]* "Get out or get killed?" Who is this? Hello—!?

[Slowly hangs up phone] Somebody out there doesn't like us.

[There is a commotion outside door Right, then a group of warmly-dressed college girls enters, some carrying suitcases; one carries a portable typewriter. The girls are all chattering: "This is going to be fun"; "I'm hungry"; "This place gives me the creeps"; "How gross"; "Where's my room?" etc. GERTRUDE, a scatter-brained blonde-folksy, good-natured, gullible—takes focus with the next line]

GERTRUDE. The old guy tried to scare us out of staying here. Isn't that a scream? *[HAM enters, loaded down with luggage. He pushes door closed with his foot, then stands there, still holding the luggage]*

LINDA. Settle down. Settle down.

KAREN. *[Quiet and efficient; hands clipboard to Linda, slightly sarcastic]* You left this in the bus,...leader.

LINDA. Thanks, Karen. *[Raises her voice and holds up clipboard]* All right, everybody! I've got your assignments.

HAM. I don't want no assignment. I just want to get the heck out o' here. Like you would, if you had any sense.

LINDA. Girls, this is Mr. Hamilton. He's the caretaker and I know he'll be of great help.

HAM. What you want me to do with these valises?

LINDA. Put them down for the time being.

HAM. I still say you girls is makin' a big mistake. *[He puts suitcases down, takes out handkerchief and mops his brow]*

LINDA. All right, girls. Listen closely. Susie!

SUSIE. *[A jolly, pretty, heavy-set girl steps forward smiling]* When do we eat?

LINDA. As soon as you get something ready—you'll be in charge of the kitchen.

SUSIE. Lead me to it.

LINDA. Mr. Hamilton will take you there. *[Smiling at Ham]* Won't you, Mr. Hamilton?

HAM. [*Grumbling*] Pick up the bags, put down the bags. [*To Susie*] Come on, foller me. [*He picks up the bags and exits Left, followed by Susie*]

LINDA. Paige. [*No answer*] Paige!

PAIGE. [*An expensively dressed snob; makes a face of disgust*] I just loathe and detest this place.

LINDA. You'll be in charge of the dining room.

PAIGE. Like a maitre d' ? Do I get an assistant?

LINDA. You'll set the tables and serve the food. Alone.

PAIGE. Everybody picks on me just because my father's in mining and ranching. We're not *that* rich.

GERTRUDE. My boy friend says your father is the biggest bull shipper in Colorado.

LINDA. Now, Paigey, nobody's picking on you. Be a good sport. In a few days we're going to rotate jobs. Then you can be the parking-lot attendant.

PAIGE. Thank you, but I prefer the dining room. [*She strolls out Left with her nose in the air*]

LINDA. Gertrude.

GERTRUDE. [*Holds her hand up*] Here!

LINDA. Suppose you start out as housekeeper. Check with Mr. Hamilton. Your domain will be the linen closet.

GERTRUDE. [*Naively*] Oh, goody, I've always wanted a domain. Just call me "Your Majesty." [*Exit Left regally, like a queen*]

LINDA. Karen, you'll be business manager and bookkeeper.

KAREN. Fine. Suits me fine.

LINDA. I'm going to be desk clerk, so I can study people...understand their motivations, listen to their speech patterns, and—

ROBERTA. Here we go with the dramatics again.

KAREN. If we need any entertainment, you can put on a talent show.

LINDA. Super!

KAREN. I'll ask Mr. Hamilton if there's a stage. [*Exits Left*]

ROBERTA. [*A short-haired bundle of energy*] And now, saving the best for last, h-e-e-e-re's Roberta! Publicity, promotion, and advertising.

LINDA. They're all yours.

ROBERTA. As a matter of factual fact, I started my work a week ago.

LINDA. You did?

ROBERTA. [*Taking a printed flyer out of her purse*] I had these printed at my dad's newspaper. Mailed them to every gas station, sporting goods store, and bus depot in the area. [*Reading*] "Rainbow Lodge is now open for guests. Come one, come all. Search for hidden treasure. Reasonable rates. Phone for reservations," and so on and so on...

LINDA. So now everyone knows we're here. [*To herself*] That explains the phone call.

ROBERTA. [*Picks up her portable typewriter*] Where's my office?

LINDA. Check with Mr. Hamilton.

ROBERTA. Let's go to press! Roberta gives good headlines!

HAM. [*Enters scowling*] Say, Miss Linda, I'm gonna quit. Cain't stand all that dang girl talk. [*He makes a chattering sound and flutters his hands*] Especially that snooty one. Got her dang nose three feet high in the air. [*He makes a poor imitation*] Jest cain't take it no more. [*For emphasis, he shoves an unlit pipe into his mouth*]

LINDA. [*Pats him on shoulders*] Don't say that, Mr. Hamilton. We wouldn't be able to get along without you. You're the nerve center of this place.

HAM. [*Not sure whether that's a compliment*] Nerve—how was that again? I ain't never been called thet before.

LINDA. Roberta will explain it to you. She's very good with words.

ROBERTA. I certainly am. Lead the way, Mr. Hamilton.

HAM. Yeah—let's go to your office and talk about nervous central. [*They exit Left. The PHONE rings*]

LINDA. I hope this isn't another threatening phone call. [*Gingerly picks up phone*] Rainbow Lodge....A double room....Yes, the rates are reasonable, just as it says on the flyer....No, there are no special rates for circus people....Fine. We'll be expecting you....Good-bye. [*She hangs up, then exits Left, calling*] Gertrude. Oh, housekeeper!

[A moment later, door Right opens slowly to reveal a tall man. He wears a mackinaw, ski pants, gloves, ski mask that completely covers his head except for a slit for his eyes, and dark glasses. He has no luggage. He surveys the lobby, walks over to desk, lightly taps the desk-bell three times]

LINDA. [*Entering from Right, smiling*] "Bells, bells, bells. The tintinnabulation of the bells." Good afternoon, sir.

GRIFFIN. [*Slight British accent*] Good afternoon. Would you please call the desk clerk. [*NOTE: He pronounces it "clark"*]

LINDA. I'm the desk...uh..."clark."

GRIFFIN. Fancy that, an American girl with splendid diction. For a moment I thought I was back at the Old Vic.

LINDA. Oh, you're an actor! I'm a drama major at Kirby College.

GRIFFIN. Are you now? How nice.

LINDA. May I help you?

GRIFFIN. I'd like a room for a few days...until my luggage catches up with me.

LINDA. H'mmm.

GRIFFIN. I'm willing to pay in advance.

LINDA. Excuse me a minute, sir. *[She goes to door Left and whispers loudly]* Karen! *[LINDA turns back to the man to explain]* Karen is the business manager. *[Another loud stage whisper]* Karen!! *[LINDA turns to the man again and smilingly explains]* That's a stage whisper... from the diaphragm. *[She holds her hands against her rib cage]*

KAREN. *[Entering]* What's the trouble, Linda? Stomach ache?

LINDA. No trouble. I want you to talk to this gentleman.

KAREN. May I help you, sir?

GRIFFIN. There was a bit of a mixup. I don't have my luggage yet, but I offered to pay in advance.

KAREN. That won't be necessary.

LINDA. You have an honest face. *[Pause]* I think.

KAREN. Please sign the register. *[GRIFFIN turns to sign register, his back to audience; KAREN stands at his side, her back to audience also]*

PAIGE. *[Entering from Left, haughty]* Dining room work is too degrading. I demand a different assignment.

LINDA. How about bellhop? You can start by carrying this gentleman's luggage to his room.

PAIGE. I don't see any luggage.

LINDA. *[Laughing]* It's invisible. *[GRIFFIN reacts by turning to get a close look at Linda]*

PAIGE. *[To Linda]* You're absurd. I'm going back to talk to Susie. At least she makes sense. *[As she exits Left]* Sometimes!

GRIFFIN. *[Observing Paige]* She's a feisty one, isn't she.

LINDA. Sometimes!

KAREN. I'll show you to your room, sir. *[She takes a key out of one of the pigeonholes and motions him to follow her out Left. As GRIFFIN crosses, he gives Linda another searching look]*

LINDA. [*Reading registration book*] Jack Griffin, Iping, England. Well, now we have a guest. Time to raise the curtain. [*She looks around the lobby; takes covers off the furniture, singing*] “White sails in the sunset,” etc. [*By now she has an armful; goes out door Left calling*] Who’s the best little housekeeper in Colorado!?

[*The lobby is empty for a moment, then HAMILTON enters from door Right. He sees he’s alone in the room, so he stops limping. Dials a phone number, and when he speaks, he does not use a hillbilly accent*]

HAMILTON. Hello, this is Hamilton, calling from Rainbow There’s going to be a delay, Chief. A busload of girls arrived and took over the place....I know, I know, but we’ve got to get rid of them before we get any action up here....Someone’s coming. Talk to you later. [*Hangs up hurriedly; resumes his old self as LINDA enters from Left*]

LINDA. Hello, Mr. Hamilton.

HAM. How be you, girl?

LINDA. I just love the way you talk. I’m a student of regional dialects, you know.

HAM. Are you a-funnin’ me?

LINDA. Why, no.

HAM. Regional whatalects?—Izzat anythin’ like central nervous?

LINDA. Huh?

HAM. Pardon me, girl, but I gotta go out and tie a wheel onto the donkey. I shore do. [*Exits Right*]

GERTRUDE. [*Enters with armful of sheets*] Do you have a storage place in here for these dusty dustcovers?

LINDA. Are you a-funnin’ me?

GERTRUDE. Do you feel all right?

LINDA. Pardon me, girl, but I gotta watch a man tie a wheel onto the donkey. I shore do. [*Puts on coat and exits Right*]

GERTRUDE. [*Bewildered; walks around room still carrying sheets*] Gosh...golly...heck sakes...[*PHONE rings*] Hello. Gertrude the housekeeper speaking....Huh?... Is this some kind of a joke?... Oh, get lost. [*She hangs up the receiver; then she does a double-take abetted by fear*] “Second warning?” [*POUNDING on door Right. GERTRUDE reacts; buries her face in the sheets she is still carrying*]

FULLER. [*Off*] Open up, the circus has come to town!

JANE. [*Off*] Fuller Beasley, you’re a riot. [*Laughs hysterically*]

[MR. and MRS. BEASLEY enter from Right. They are salespeople for a novelty company. Both are flashily dressed; each carries a suitcase and a sample case. JANE has a large purse. They go straight to Gertrude]

FULLER. Hustle up a room, kid.

GERTRUDE. I'm sorry, but we're not open to the public.

FULLER. That's not what your poster says. *[He takes flyer out of his pocket and holds it in front of Gertrude's face]* Read it, kid, you might learn something. And don't spare the fine print.

JANE. *[Laughing wildly]* Fuller, you kill me.

FULLER. Don't mind if I do. *[He exaggeratedly grabs her by the neck. She laughs riotously, going along with the act]*

GERTRUDE. Help! Someone's being murdered. *[Calls out door Right]* Help! In the lobby!

FULLER. Do I have your proper neck size? *[JANE keeps laughing. HAMILTON and LINDA enter from Right on the run]*

HAM. Here, now, mister, don't be a-doin' that.

FULLER. *[Releases Jane; he goes into an innocent stance]* I'm not doing anything. *[Pause]* Are you in charge here?

HAM. *[Pointing to Linda]* She is.

LINDA. I'm the manager...and desk "clark."*[She goes behind desk]*

GERTRUDE. *[To Linda]* He showed me an advertisement that said we're open to the public.

LINDA. We're open on a limited basis.

GERTRUDE. *[Giving the Beasleys a dirty look]* Not limited enough. *[Exits Left, still carrying sheets]*

FULLER. *[Going to desk]* Young lady, can you give me a room and a bath?

LINDA. *[Overdoing it]* I can give you a room, but you'll have to take your own bath.

JANE. *[Laughing wildly]* Hey, Fuller! Score one for the other side. I'm going to like this place.

FULLER. *[A sorehead]* Aw, they're just a bunch of smart aleck delinquents. I'll get even, wait and see...*[HAMILTON stands watching, unlit pipe in mouth, shaking his head in disapproval, as FULLER signs the register]*

LINDA. Welcome to Rainbow Lodge. We're operating this old hotel during the Christmas holidays as....

FULLER. *[Surly; interrupting]* Cut the sales pitch. My wife and I

heard 'em all when we were with the big top. *[To Ham as he pushes Jane out door Left]* Come on, Rube, grab the bags.

HAM. *[Picking up luggage and following them]* My name ain't Rube, it's Hamilton.

[PHONE rings. LINDA cautiously answers it, but no one is on the line]

LINDA. Hello...Rainbow Lodge. *[Hangs up]* Nobody!

[While she is thus engaged, door Right opens a few inches, very slowly; gloved hand with pistol is seen. LINDA screams. DEPUTY SHERIFF enters. He is a youngish man, well built, nice looking. He wears uniform and a Smokey-the-Bear hat]

DEPUTY. Hold it right there.

LINDA. Is...is something wrong?

DEPUTY. Suppose you tell me.

LINDA. Who...who are you?

DEPUTY. Deputy Sheriff Danny Thompson. *[Pause]* What's going on around here? Vehicles parked in front. This place is supposed to be closed.

LINDA. We're from Denver. Kirby College. Our home ec class is getting hotel experience.

DEPUTY. I see. *[He shows undue interest in the potted plants]*

LINDA. Would you care for a cup of coffee?

DEPUTY. Thanks, but I'll take a rain check. *[Pause]* Say, are all your classmates as pretty as you?

LINDA. *[Ignoring his question]* It won't be any trouble at all to get you a cup of coffee.

DEPUTY. Maybe next time. *[Strolls toward door Right]* Keep your doors locked. There's been some weird characters poking around here lately. *[He opens door, then turns around to admire Linda]* If you gals throw any wild parties...be sure to invite me. *[He winks, then exits]*

LINDA. *[To herself]* Speaking of weird characters....

ROBERTA. *[Enters from Left with notebook and pencil ready]* I glanced out of my window and saw some kind of police car.

LINDA. Deputy Sheriff Thompson paid us a visit.

ROBERTA. Cops make news. What was he doing here?

LINDA. He wanted to know what we were doing here.

ROBERTA. Blah—no story. I wish something newsworthy would pop.

LINDA. You might throw a newsworthy wild party.

ROBERTA. Huh? [*Exits Left*] You're out of your skull.

[LINDA goes back to desk and puts several sheets of paper together. Starts for door Left, saying to herself: "Bookkeeper, here I come, ready or not." Just as she has her hand on the doorknob, she hears the mournful howl of a wolf offstage Right. LINDA shivers, takes her hand off doorknob and turns her back to door Left as she looks toward door Right. Door Left slowly opens and a big, hairy, apelike arm slowly reaches for her neck. LINDA screams, drops her papers, and faints. The arm quickly disappears]

KAREN. [*Enters from Left, a few moments later*] Linda, you're supposed to give me duplicates of—Oh, what happened! Linda! [*She hurries to Linda's side and raises her head*] Are you all right?

LINDA. I'm...I'm all right. I was just practicing a stage fall. Fooled you.

KAREN. Maybe you did and maybe you didn't.

LINDA. Well, I did.

KAREN. Then why are you so pale?

[FULLER and JANE enter from Left, dressed for a walk]

FULLER. What's wrong with her?

KAREN. Something frightened her. Look how pale she is.

LINDA. I'm using pale stage makeup.

FULLER. In a pig's eye. I know a real real pale makeup from a real fake pale makeup.

JANE. [*Taking him by the arm*] Come on, Max Factor, let's take a walk before dinner.

FULLER. Did you ever hear the story about the old lady who took a tramp in the woods? [*They exit Right with JANE laughing loudly, and FULLER's voice fading out with:*] It was a bum trip.

LINDA. I'm sorry I bluffed about fainting.

KAREN. But what did cause you to faint? [*She picks up papers, then puts them on desk*]

LINDA. I saw...[*She points to where arm appeared, then realizes how ridiculous it would sound*] I mean...I haven't been feeling well... lately.

KAREN. That's a shame.

LINDA. If you'll watch the desk for a few minutes, I'd like to get

a Coke. *[Starts to exit Left]*

KAREN. Don't go yet.

LINDA. Anything wrong?

KAREN. Not exactly...wrong...but....

LINDA. Tell me.

KAREN. It's very confidential.

LINDA. This sounds serious.

KAREN. I think it is.

ROBERTA. *[Bursts into room through door Left]* Stop the press!

KAREN. Roberta! You frightened me!

ROBERTA. Tear out page one!

KAREN. Not so loud.

ROBERTA. Stand by for a replate!

KAREN. Please.

ROBERTA. Well, if Linda can be so gungho about dramatics, I can toot the horn for journalism.

LINDA. She's got a point there.

KAREN. *[Not very good naturedly]* I guess I've been overruled and outvoted again.

LINDA. Come on, Karen. You're the most efficient girl in the entire school.

ROBERTA. That's right.

KAREN. I wish I had Linda's leadership ability and personality.

ROBERTA. Well, I've got a story that will peel your potatoes.

KAREN. I'll bet.

ROBERTA. *[Reaches into her pocket and pulls out an arm-length hairy glove]* I found this tucked away behind a potted plant in the hall. *[She indicates door Left]*

KAREN. What's the story? *[For the next few speeches she unconsciously plucks loose hairs off her right sleeve]*

LINDA. That's why I fainted...that glove...with a real live hand in it...tried to grab me. Someone is trying to scare us out of the hotel.

KAREN. Who?

LINDA. I don't know. All I saw was the arm.

ROBERTA. Wow! That's a great story. *[Shouts the headline:]* "Mystery Man Attacks Co-ed!" *[Hastens Left]*

LINDA. What's the hurry?

ROBERTA. I'm going to find Mr. Hamilton and have him try this on for size. *[Exits Left, holding up glove]*