

THE INVISIBLE MAN

By Craig Sodaro

Based on the novel by H. G. Wells

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SYNOPSIS

The peace and quiet of life at the Coach and Horses Inn dissolves one wet, spring night when a mysterious stranger appears needing a room. Although frightened of his odd appearance - swathed head to toe in clothes and dark glasses - the landlady, Mrs. Hall, rents him her downstairs room.

The stranger claims to be a scientist, and indeed, his "experiments" keep other lodgers up all night. A reporter shows up at the Coach and Horses looking for information on an invisible man who supposedly terrorized a department store in London. When no one can offer her any information about strange things happening in Iping, the reporter prepares to leave. Just then Rev. and Mrs. Purdy enter claiming the vicarage has been robbed - while they sat in the house itself!

Curious, Mrs. Hall bursts into the new lodger's room while he is eating breakfast. She shrieks when she sees he has no face. The stranger, Griffin by name, then reveals he is indeed invisible and proceeds to terrorize the inn.

Escaping his pursuers at the inn, Griffin finds a hobo to help him steal his journals and scientific equipment back from the Coach and Horses. A young doctor, however, tricks the Invisible Man into having to come to the inn and get them for himself. The doctor tries to convince the Invisible Man to end a growing reign of terror and murder, but to no avail. The bitter Griffin attempts to kill the inhabitants of the inn, but is finally brought down by the doctor's gun.

CHARACTERS

(6 M, 6 W)

MRS. HALL: Nervous, but shrewd owner of the Coach and Horses Inn.

HALL: Her jovial husband, the barkeep.

MILLIE: Their lovely daughter, 18.

MIRANDA: Gypsy woman with an air of mystery.

CONSTABLE AYDE: Middle-aged, a kindly yet somewhat inept lawman.

GRIFFIN: Mysterious stranger whose bitterness pervades every fiber of his being.

DR. EDWARD KEMP: Handsome young doctor.

JENNY JEFFRIES: Young newspaper reporter.

MISS HENFREY: An older boarder, a nervous woman.

REVEREND PURDY: Older man, vicar of the local church.

MRS. PURDY: His wife, a kindly woman.

THOMAS MARVEL: A hobo.

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PLACE: The Coach and Horses Inn, in the quiet village of Iping, England.

TIME: Spring, 1900.

ACT I

Scene 1: A stormy spring night at the Coach and Horses Inn.

Scene 2: The following morning, a cold, gray dawn.

ACT II

Scene 1: That evening in a small marsh a few miles outside Iping. This scene may be played before the curtain.

Scene 2: A short time later that evening at the inn.

Scene 3: Later that same night.

SETTING

We see two rooms of the inn, the tavern and one bedroom. It is best if each can be lit separately.

The tavern is at SR and can be entered either UC through an arch or through a door, SR. A small bar dominates the upstage, with two or three stools before it. Two or three tables, with tablecloths and set with mismatching chairs, dot the DS area. (One tablecloth will be used to cover the body of Miss Henfrey.) Wall shelves display plain bottles, plates, and mugs. The simple walls are adorned with posters advertising turn of the century products. Cloths hang from hooks, and several lanterns glow gloomily behind the bar. The archway leads to a kitchen and the upstairs rooms at the inn.

The bedroom, SL, is separated from the tavern by the suggestion of a wall and a half-door, sufficient to provide the illusion that what goes on in the bedroom cannot be seen or heard in the tavern and vice versa. A window dominates the UPS wall. A bed is UL, with a dressing screen to the L of bed. A table and chair sit DL, while a shelf unit or nightstand stands to the R of the window. The room is drab, but clean. A rock or bush is needed before curtain for Act II.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A stormy spring night at the Coach and Horses. The bedroom at SL is shrouded in darkness. In the tavern, HALL stands behind the bar drying glasses. MILLIE sweeps the floor, while the CONSTABLE perches on one of stools in front of the bar. MRS. HALL leans anxiously over cards the gypsy woman, MIRANDA, gingerly overturns on one of the tables DS.)

MIRANDA: *(Ominously.)* And there! The joker!

MRS. HALL: *(Breathlessly.)* Well? What does it mean?

HALL: *(Jovial.)* Means the whole thing is a joke, darlin'!
Right, Constable?

CONSTABLE: I don't put any stock in fortune-telling, that's for sure.

MIRANDA: Fie on you!

CONSTABLE: In fact, wouldn't surprise me a bit if there weren't some law somewheres on the books here in Iping that forbids the tellin' of fortunes, professionally, that is.

MRS. HALL: Go on, Constable! You find a law like THAT on the books and I'll see to it your mug at the Coach and Horses dries up mighty fast.

CONSTABLE: *(Taken back.)* Now don't get all shook, Mrs. Hall.

HALL: Oh, now, my little darlin' takes these things very seriously.

MRS. HALL: And you would, too, if you knew what was good for you, Hall. Now, tell me, Miranda ... what does the joker mean?

MIRANDA: *(With relish.)* The joker means death!

MRS. HALL: *(Gasping.)* Death? Oh, the saints protect us!

MIRANDA: Before another full moon, this town will be plagued by fear ... and death!

MRS. HALL: *(Terrified.)* Not mine! Oo, please ... tell me it's somebody else's death!

MIRANDA: *(Touching the cards.)* The cards do not want you to know.

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MRS. HALL: Well ... it won't be me! And it won't be Millie here! Hall will protect us, won't you, Hall?

HALL: (*Laughing.*) And who'll protect me?

MRS. HALL: This ain't no laughing matter!

MILLIE: Don't be worried, Mother. Nothing will happen. Iping is peaceful as a spring violet.

CONSTABLE: That's my girl, Millie. You've said a mouthful.

MIRANDA: Mark my words! Before the next full moon-

CONSTABLE: Before the next full moon you'll be run out of the county, Miranda! Unless, of course, you start turnin' over some kindlier cards.

MIRANDA: (*Haughtily.*) I do not speak through the cards, Constable. They speak through me! They know!

MRS. HALL: (*Sitting, defeated.*) Oh, dear ...

MILLIE: (*Moving to MRS. HALL.*) I'll get you some milk, Mother.

MRS. HALL: Milk won't do no good. Not when death is in the air! Oh, Hall, I won't sleep a wink tonight!

HALL: Blimy! That means I'll be losin' all the covers.

MIRANDA: Do you wish me to finish? There IS one more card.

CONSTABLE: I think you're already finished, Miranda. (*HE slides from his stool, advancing to MIRANDA.*) Get along with you now.

MRS. HALL: (*Venomously.*) No! (*SHE flips over the last card.*) There! It's turned!

MIRANDA: Ah ... the queen of hearts!

MRS. HALL: She's fear and death, too, ain't she!

MIRANDA: Not at all. She bring romance. She brings love.

CONSTABLE: (*Chuckling.*) Romance, eh? Well, there you go, Hall!

HALL: (*To MRS. HALL.*) What do you say to that, love?

MRS. HALL: (*Shocked.*) I've had more romance than I can tolerate, Hall. Especially with that there joker staring at me!

MIRANDA: But what about Millie?

MRS. HALL: (*Looking at MILLIE.*) Millie? Why, that's ridiculous, it is! She's just a child!

MILLIE: (*With a laugh.*) Mother, I'm eighteen!

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MRS. HALL: So ... you're an old child. There's still not going to be any romance brewing under this house.

MIRANDA: *(Smiling.)* What will be will be.

MRS. HALL: And you'll be gone from the Coach and Horses as of now. I've got my money's worth and more.

HALL: Ever seen such a change of tune, Constable?

MRS. HALL: You go on and give Miranda her fee, Hall, or you'll be sleepin' on a bar stool tonight.

CONSTABLE: Now THAT'S love for you!

HALL: More like the reign of fear and death!

(The MEN laugh heartily as MIRANDA takes her money from HALL.)

MIRANDA: Laugh all you like, but the cards ... they do not lie!

(The door opens, SR. GRIFFIN enters wearing an overcoat, gloves, dark glasses and a hat. His face is concealed by a white mask. He carries a suitcase. This strange figure casts an immediate, perceptible gloom over the others who, for a moment, are too surprised to speak.)

MRS. HALL: *(HER courage mounting.)* Evenin', sir! Frightful night to be out and about. *(GRIFFIN does not respond, but looks the room over with a long, careful glance.)* Come in before you let all the heat out. Costs money, you know!

(GRIFFIN enters, eyeing MIRANDA carefully.)

MIRANDA: *(Slipping around HIM to door.)* Beware! I can only warn you once! *(SHE exits SR.)*

MRS. HALL: *(Cordially.)* Now don't you go minding her, sir. Sit right down at this table...warmest in the house. *(She has moved DR to table closest to fireplace.)* I'll take your coat and hat. *(As SHE reaches for his things, HE recoils.)*

GRIFFIN: No!

MRS. HALL: They ought to dry by the fire.

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