

JULIAN: Cool. So have your mom drop you off at my house. Here's the address. It's close.

(Julian grabs last musubi; Sean is about to protest, but stops. Julian starts to chew away. Laka appears and stands behind him, concentrating all her energy on him. His chewing grows difficult, and his face contorts as if there's a bad taste in his mouth. Laka smiles and exits.)

SEAN: Is something wrong, Big J?

(Julian spits out food, a rubber frog. He freaks out, and his shades fall again.)

JULIAN: What the — !!!

SEAN: I didn't do it! Honest!

JULIAN: I don't eat raw frog, OK?

SEAN: OK! Sorry! *(Aside to audience.)* How'd that happen anyway?

JULIAN: You get one more chance to enter the kingdom of cool, but be ready to earn it!

(Sean nods enthusiastically as Julian exits. Lights cross-fade to spotlight into which Sean enters. "Mom" music plays as pile of clothes/shoes gets tossed into light, and Sean puts them on.)

SEAN: *(Re: music.)* Ouch! Mom, turn that stuff back! *(Re: ensemble.)* How much these shoes cost? Whoa! These clothes aren't weird, Mom. They're cool! Like the Big J! *(Mom messes with his hair.)* No, Mom! I gotta wear my hair like this. Check out these sunglasses, Mom. Cool! Now I'm reeeaaaadddd!

The Invisible Man

Len Jenkins

Adapted from the H.G. Wells story and set in the 1950s, Jack Griffin — face bandaged — is living in an old motel near a nuclear power plant. He befriends Jim, a small boy, whose father had been the caretaker of the plant until his recent death. In the course of serving as the boy's "father figure," Jack reveals that he must wear bandages because a nuclear accident at the plant caused him to become invisible. But is this the truth? In the process of answering this question, Jim is forced to make difficult decisions.

Two Males

In the following scene, Jim, who is playing Martian Invader at an old drive-in movie lot, encounter Griffin, the Invisible Man, for the first time.



Drive-in movie theater. Some snow is still on ground. A raised stage; large, tattered screen. In front of stage is children's playground: seesaw, other beat-up playground equipment. Leaning against stage is Jim's bike. Jim himself is onstage wearing his Mars invader mask. He's using drive-in speaker for microphone.

JIM: Calling Captain Cappy! Calling Captain Cappy! We're about fifty kilometers from the Martian Canal City, and coming in fast. What are your orders? *(Holding speaker to ear, listening, then back to mouth.)* Right, Captain. Should we hold our fire till we talk to the Martians?

(Jim holds speaker to ear. From behind movie screen, Griffin appears, head still bandaged, showing only pink nose and blue-tinted glasses. He wears huge scarf and black fedora.)

GRIFFIN: Shoot first, ask questions later.

JIM: *(Turns, surprised and frightened, lifting off mask.)* Hey, what are you doing out here?

GRIFFIN: Sorry I scared you. Ron told me about this place. I thought I'd take a look. I been meaning to send for one of those Mars invaders masks, myself.

JIM: They're not for grown-ups.

GRIFFIN: Sometimes grown-ups need hideouts, too. *(Imitating Captain Cappy.)* "The best hideout ever! Magic forehead vision lets you see out, but nobody sees in." A lot of scientists like "Space Patrol." Try your bike? *(Griffin hops on, rides bike in among playground equipment, tooting horn, Jim comes down offstage.)*

JIM: Jack? What kind of science do you do? My dad was an engineer.

GRIFFIN: I'm no engineer, Jim. I'm a . . . an atomic power specialist. *(Hops off bike, leans it against stage.)* I used to work at the Glowville Nuclear Reactor, right up the road.

JIM: Glowville! I'd love to work there someday.

GRIFFIN: I quit. The other scientists tried to steal from me.

JIM: Steal? Steal what?

GRIFFIN: My discoveries. The results of years of research. Now, when I record my experiments in my notebooks, it's all in my own private code. Can you keep a secret, Jim?

JIM: I think so.

GRIFFIN: They're still after me — those thieves of science. They'll do anything to get their dirty hands on my notebooks. Valuable research. It's why I came to this quiet place, hoping they'd never find me here, and I could work in peace. I need someone to be my lookout, Jim — to watch for those thiev-

ing rats. Human slime. I'll pay you. If any strangers come near the inn, you run back and tell me.

JIM: I don't know, Jack. I've got a lot of stuff to do around the —
GRIFFIN: *(Holding out money.)* Here's an advance on your salary.

JIM: Twenty dollars!

GRIFFIN: Buy yourself a portable radio, so you'll have some company when you watch out there on the road. Take it.

JIM: Mom wouldn't like it if I spent money on something like that.

GRIFFIN: Then don't tell her.

JIM: *(Can't resist and takes cash.)* Jack, you've got yourself a lookout!

GRIFFIN: Watch out for Santa Claus.

JIM: Who?

GRIFFIN: A poison Santa Claus. A white beard, and long white hair. Walks with a cane. Professor Cosmo Gibson, my ex-boss at the atomic power plant. He'll say he's my friend, that he's trying to help me. Lies. He's a very dangerous man, Jim.

JIM: He won't sneak by me!

GRIFFIN: Jim, it makes me feel a lot safer to have you helping me. Tomorrow, all my equipment arrives! Chemical, radiological, biological. Once it's all set up in the parlor, work can begin. I have high hopes, Jim. High hopes!

(Griffin exits. Putting on space patrol Mars invader mask, Jim goes on small stage. Using speaker as ray gun, he steps forward boldly.)

JIM: Ready, space patrollers! This is Jim Winters, look out! Follow me! And if you see any Martians — shoot first and ask questions later!

(Cross-fade to parlor, next day. Parlor has become chemical laboratory with pile of bedding in one corner indicating someone lives there. On dining table are bubbling retorts, Bunsen burners, racks of test tubes, radiation monitors, and lead-lined boxes with glove inserts for working

with radioactive material. Griffin, in bandages and wearing floor-length bathrobe, scarf, and blue-tinted glasses, is busy near cat's cage. Attached to cage are electrical wiring, food tubes, and meters. Griffin takes off one glove, leaving it at far end of table, pours green liquid from beaker into opaque bottle on side of cat's cage. He appears to have no hand, and beaker rises, pours, and empties as if handled by hand that isn't there. A knock at door. Griffin, preoccupied, doesn't hear it. Jim enters, hesitantly.)

JIM: Uh, Mr. Griffin? Can I come in? Jack?

GRIFFIN: *(Jumps in fright, hides his seemingly empty sleeve behind him.)* Get out! I told you to knock! Can't you understand English, you little idiot! Knock means knock!

JIM: I did knock! You didn't hear me. I figured you were doing research, I thought —

GRIFFIN: You thought! Don't think! Just do what I tell you!

JIM: Do you want me to go?
(Pause.)

GRIFFIN: I'm sorry, Jim. When I'm involved in my work, I get tense and . . . you surprised me. I didn't mean to yell at you.

JIM: That's OK. I was just hoping I could tune in "Space Patrol."
It comes on pretty soon.

GRIFFIN: Sure, I'd like to listen, myself. Go ahead, turn on the radio. I've got to finish this procedure.

(Griffin works, still hiding his invisible hand, trying discreetly to retrieve glove from table. Jim picks up radiation meter and flips on switch. It begins to tick loudly, and red light flashes. Surprised and frightened, Jim holds it out at arm's length, toward Griffin. Warning siren wails.)

JIM: Help! Jack! This thing's goin' crazy!

GRIFFIN: Give me that, you fool! *(Grabs meter and flips switch off, forgetting he's wearing one glove.)*

JIM: Sorry! I didn't realize . . . Oh, my Lord! What happened to your hand?

GRIFFIN: *(Look down, realizing that Jim sees that he has no hand.)* I . . . uh . . . I . . . didn't want to tell you, Jim. In the accident when my face was injured — I also lost an arm. I've got a prosthesis — a wooden arm I use to look normal. I take it off sometimes when I'm working.

JIM: Oh.

GRIFFIN: Now this radiation meter probably picked up a trace amount of tri-oxy-neuro-chromo-ethanol in my jacket fibers.

JIM: *(Continues to stare at Griffin's invisible hand and seemingly empty sleeve.)* If you took off your wooden arm, how come your sleeve is still standing up like that? How come you could grab the radiation meter with a hand that isn't there?

GRIFFIN: You're a bright boy, Jim. I like that. I'm going to show you what my work is all about. I have to. You've seen too much already. Take off my other glove.

(Griffin holds out gloved hand to Jim, who pulls glove off. Jim stares, open-mouthed.)

GRIFFIN: I hope you can keep an important scientific secret — and be a true friend. *(Suddenly pulls nose off and hands it to Jim.)*

JIM: My God! Your nose!

(Griffin takes off blue-tinted glasses, begins to unwind bandages from around his head.)

Your eyes — they're just holes . . .

GRIFFIN: *(Tosses unwound bandages to floor. He is without visible hands and head.)* Happy Halloween, Jim!

JIM: I . . . uh . . . you're . . .

GRIFFIN: I'm an invisible man.

JIM: But you're . . . you're . . .

GRIFFIN: Transparent.

JIM: You're — an invisible man!

GRIFFIN: Bingo!