

# PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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## *The Invisible Man*

By  
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From the Story by  
**H.G. Wells**

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## Cast of Characters

### In the 1990's

- MR JIM WINTERS, our Narrator, a middle aged man
- SIMON, Teenage boy, listener to the tale
- STAR Teenage girl, listener to the tale

### In the 1950's

- JIM WINTERS, a boy of 12
- MARJORIE WINTERS, his Mom
- LISA-MARIE, Jim's 12 year old neighbor
- CINDY, Lisa-Marie's Mom
- JESSE, Lisa-Marie's Dad, and the County Sheriff
- RON, a handyman
- JACK GRIFFIN, THE INVISIBLE MAN
- PROF. COSMO GIBSON, Director of the Nuclear Power Plant in nearby
- Glowville
- POLICEMEN

*6 Men, 2 Women*

## Act I

Late night at the roadside NOWHERE CLUB. We're in a large room that's a combination office/lounge. Offstage, a dancehall, and the open countryside.

A neon sign reads "Nowhere Club-Dining, Dancing." The image on the sign is of a man who isn't there: only a neon hat, then glasses, and at the bottom, boots. An office desk, niteclub tables, chairs. Off in a corner, a long black coat and a black hat hang on a hook They look like they've been there, unused, for years.

JIM WINTERS, the owner, is closing up the place after a high school prom. He hauls down a huge banner that reads: "GOOD LUCK, CLASS OF '93!!!" He grabs a broom. attacks the debris on the floor: balloons, streamers, empty bottles. As he sweeps, he talks to his cat, who remains unseen.

WINTERS                      Kittycat, I am beat. These high school proms are always a sloppy mess, and someone always throws up in the bathroom.

We hear a cat from somewhere, but we don't see it.

CAT                              Meow ...

WINTERS                      Did you hear that band they danced to? Oooh, boy! Whatever happened to old-fashioned music-like Elvis.

Winters sings, imitating Elvis. As he dances, in Presley style, with his broom.

WINTERS                      (sings) ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT?  
DO YOU MISS ME TONIGHT?  
ARE YOU SORRY WE DRIFTED APAARRT?

Winters stops dancing, tired out. It's late. He resumes his clean-up.

WINTERS                      It's been a long night, Kittycat. I was sure glad when they all got on the bus.

He puts down his broom, pours out a saucer of milk Again we hear a cat from somewhere. but we don't see it.

CAT                    Meow ...

WINTERS             Kitty, where 'you hiding?

I'll just put this saucer of milk out for you, and I'm going to bed.

*Winters puts the saucer on the floor, and is ready to turn the lights out, when he hears a noise. He stops, listens-then the sound of voices approaching.*

*Suddenly, two high school kids, SIMON and STAR, burst in. She's in a hip and sexy version of a prom dress, black lace with cowboy boots. He's in a rented tuxedo, glasses with Clark Kent frames. Nerdy and handsome at once. They are arguing full blast, oblivious to everything else.*

STAR                    You've become the ultimate jerk! You know that? We been going together for six months...

SIMON                 Seven.

STAR                    And during these seven months, a longer time than I've ever hung around with anyone else, I might add, you have completely changed. Jekyll to Hyde.

SIMON                 You haven't listened to anything I've been saying!

STAR                    'Cause there's nothing in your head but that science stuff, Mr. Hyde. God! To think I used to like you!

SIMON                 You won't let me explain the simplest thing about me, about what I'm doing, or feeling, or...

STAR                    I don't care. Anymore. You quit the Dead Weasels! You left the band, Simon. Our band.

SIMON                 So what, Star. Get a new drummer.

STAR                    You're the best drummer in the school.

SIMON                 What about Conrad?

STAR                    You mean the Animal? He can't even rip his T-shirt in the right places. Simon, you are gonna end up going away to college, to Harvard or somewhere, and I'll be working here in Pizza Hut, putting on the pepperoni.

SIMON                 That's ridiculous. You get straight A's, write all the songs - you can do anything.

STAR                    Not without you in the band. You're supposed to be my boyfriend, dweeb. You can't do this.

SIMON                 I have to. My future isn't music. It's molecular biology, genetics...

STAR                    Gene splicing. Making monsters that are gonna come up outta the bathtub drain.

SIMON                 That is not only uninformed, it's stupid. Women just don't .....

STAR                    That macho garbage is sooo corny. Women understand everything.

SIMON                 Oh yeah? Oh yeah? I bet you don't understand the...

STAR                    Simon - just shut up.

*Silence. STAR takes a breath to look around the room, and realizes that no one is there but Mr. Winters.*

STAR                    Oh my God. Everyone's gone. I missed the entire dance hanging around outside, arguing with you!

SIMON                 *(to Winters)* Excuse me, Mr. Winters, but where's our bus loading?

WINTERS               The bus left ten minutes ago.

STAR                    Great. Beautiful. This is all your fault, Simon.

SIMON                 Did I tie you to a tree out there, so you'd miss the dance?

STAR                    And the bus. Don't forget the bus.

SIMON                    If you weren't so hostile.....

STAR                     If you weren't so insensitive and rude....

SIMON                    Rude? You want rude? I'll show you rude, you bubblehead bimbo!

STAR                     Simon! How dare ....

WINTERS                 Excuse me. If you two are stuck here-I could put you both up for the night. Plenty of rooms upstairs. This used to be a hotel, you know, long time ago.

STAR                     Thanks, but I'm not staying under the same roof as the Geek Man over there. Can I make a call?

WINTERS                 *(pointing to phone)* Help yourself. But it's an hour's drive for someone from town.

STAR                     *(dialing)* My Dad won't mind picking me up. He stays up for me anyway, pretends he's into the late movie... *(into phone)* Hi, Dad?... Yes, I'm still with that jerk... Why are you defending him? ..... Dad, Listen. We're out at the Nowhere Club. We missed the bus...OK *(hangs up)* He'll take you too, Simon.

SIMON                    Uh Uh I'm walking. Gonna kill a grizzly bear out there-make a drum out of his hide. Bang it like a real man!

STAR                     Very funny, Simon.

WINTERS                 Very unlikely. The last big Griz around here was sighted ten long years ago.

STAR                     Extinct! See! See what science does! Mr. Winters, am I right?

WINTERS                 Please. Call me Jim.

STAR                     Am I right, Jim?

WINTERS                 About what?

STAR Science brings factories and shopping malls and cars and pollution. The air and water are poisoned, and the grizzly bears foam at the mouth and die! Right, Jim?

SIMON Science is the only thing that's saved the bears that are left. If researchers hadn't monitored the pollution, and botanists hadn't reforested, this whole county would be a dead zone. Right, Jim?

*Simon and Star, both look at Jim, waiting for his answer.*

WINTERS Science is only one kind of understanding.....

STAR The kind we don't need! (*stands*) No more science! Love and music!!

SIMON Love and music (*stands*) won't feed the hungry all over the earth. You need KNOWLEDGE and...

STAR Love and Music!

WINTERS Sit Down! Both of you. I'm a little older than you, and maybe....just maybe...I know something you don't.

*(A moment where Simon and Star resist-and then go along. They sit, calm down a bit...)*

Let me tell you a story. It's about science, and me, and this place you're in right now. It wasn't always the Nowhere Club. Not then, way back in the fifties. That's back when your Mom and Dad were babies, in the dark ages.....

*Snow starts to fall outside the window, and the place changes around them from the neon lit Nowhere Club, to a drab country hotel in 1957. The neon is gone. A sign reading "SLEEPY DAZE INN" appears over a reception desk in a lobby/lounge area various seating. Tourist items. The black hat and coat that were hanging in the Nowhere Club are gone from their hook.*

*There's another room as well: the parlor. In it, chairs, carpet, a long dining table, and a large 1940's floor model radio. This room is dark except for the glowing amber light of the radio dial. Next to the radio, a boy crouches. This is Jim Winters himself, at age 12. His ear is glued to the floor-model speaker.*

*We can still see Mr. Winters, Simon and Star in a small area to one side....*

WINTERS                    People lived in caves back then, and wore the skin of wild beasts! Actually, we had poodle skirts, blue suede shoes. huge cars, and Elvis - the King in his prime.

We even had atomic energy. Though we were still scared we'd blow ourselves up. Hiroshima was fresh in everyone's mind.

STAR                        What's Hiroshima?

SIMON                      Where the first A-bomb was dropped.

STAR                        A girl can't know everything.

SIMON                      That is the single most important...

WINTERS                    As I was saying, back in the fifties we knew a fabulous future was on the way. We had atomic power, and we had rock and roll.

Young Jim reaches for the radio volume knob and turns it up. It's Elvis, singing "Don't Be Cruel." We can see young Jim's body move to the beat in silhouette...

WINTERS                    This place was a small country hotel - the Sleepy Daze Inn. Dullest place on earth, especially if you were twelve, years old.

There's Ron, the handyman.

RON, the handyman around the inn, crosses through the parlor. A shovel over one shoulder. He's gawky, friendly, and maybe not all that bright He shouts over Elvis.

RON                         Hey, Jim! How you doin'?

Jim, with his ear in the speaker, doesn't hear him. Ron shrugs, and with a bit of Elvis' beat in his shoes, exits.

Elvis' song ends. A moment of radio static. Jim doesn't move.

WINTERS                    It was dullest of all in the winter, that is, except for the radio...

RADIO                      SPAAAACE PATROOOOOOOL!

Sound of rockets whooshing through outer space. Jim reaches behind the radio, takes out a Space Patrol Mars Invader Mask: a huge twofaced 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, the boy listens intently to the radio.

WINTERS, STAR and SIMON are gone. We are in 1957.

CAPTAIN CAPPY (on radio) Calling all space patrollers! Captain Cappy here. I hope you're all wearing your Mars Invader masks with Magic Forehead Vision. You can see out, but no one can see in. 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, fifty cents to Captain Cappy's Secret Message Decoder Ring, Space Patrol, Radio City Station, New York, New York.

Now get out those decoder rings! Today's secret message is: KIAatu Barada Nikto!

And now, Bosco, the chocolaty soda fountain treat you can make in your own home - brings you ... (whoosh of rocker ) SPPPAACE PAATROOOL!!!

Jim's mom, MARGE WINTERS, enters. She's an attractive woman in her mid-thirties. She turns off the radio...

JIM Mom!???..

He takes off his Mars Invader Mask.

MARGE Jim, there's two feet of snow out there and getting worse. I need you to 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                               Can I have two dollars and fifty cents? It's for Captain Cappy's Secret Message Decoder ring. I gotta know what those messages mean.

MARGE                           They don't mean anything. Till the Sleepy Daze 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                               Dad would have given me the money...

MARGE                           Honey, that's not fair. Don't make me upset by saying things like that. Please...

*Winters, from the 1990s, reappears for a moment at one side of the stage.*

WINTERS                        My Dad died the year before, and my Mom and I only had each other.

There wasn't a lot of happiness to go around, though my Mom tried her best.

MARGE                           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 listen to the radio.

MARGE                           You're always listening to the radio. Drives me crazy sometimes.

JIM                               I like it, O.K?

Marge shrugs her shoulders, sighs. It seems hopeless.

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

Marge exits.

Jim reluctantly hunts for his jacket, hat, and the snow shovel.

WINTERS                    Mom was right. I did spend a lot of time by the radio. Dad had been an engineer, and he 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. When the future came, all that radio didn't help. There was no way I could have gotten ready for my future. No way at all.

Winters is gone. Jim picks up the snow shovel and heads for the door. Suddenly it swings open.

The new arrival is a man heavily bundled 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 protrudes between his scarf and glasses, the only actual 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. In the other hand is a travelling cage. In it, a CAT. She meows. Silence.

GRIFFIN                    I need a room.

Marge enters, flustered with the arrival of a potential customer.

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

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

MARGE                    It's very restful here. Peaceful.

JIM                            Boring...

Griffin laughs.

MARGE                    Jim! Mr. Griffin isn't interested in your smart-aleck remarks.

*Marge moves hesitantly to behind the registration desk.*

MARGE                    Will that be for one night?

GRIFFIN                  For a week

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

GRIFFIN                  I'm still cold...

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

GRIFFIN                  I told you. I'm still cold. Frostbite. Here.

*Griffin reaches into his pocket and slaps a wad of cash down on the table.*

GRIFFIN                  Make it a month. Maybe longer. Payment in advance. 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, but Griffin steps sharply away.*

GRIFFIN                  Don't touch those books! I'll take them. Carry the cat.

*They exit, Jim carrying the catcage...*

*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 she can't suppress a grin of delight.

MARGE            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, slips the money back onto the counter.

GRIFFIN            The room is a cracker box. I need space.

Griffin heads for the registration desk, puts a hand on his wad of money to take it back, pauses, looks out the window at the falling snow. He turns toward the parlor.

GRIFFIN            What about that room?

Lights up in the parlor: a very large room with a fireplace, the radio, a long dining table.

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. Its 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 out into the snow.

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

MARGE            Mr. Griffin, you have a deal.

Griffin goes into the parlor with Marge, his scarf and hat still effectively concealing all of his face except his glasses and pink nose. Jim, overwhelmingly curious, follows them.

Griffin begins to pull down the window shades and close the drapes and blinds, making sure no one can see in.

MARGE            So, where you from, Mr. Griffin? (*no answer*) Fine. Set those shades anyway you like (*no answer*) You a skier? We get a few of those this time of... (*No answer*) Birdwatcher? 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 don't like intrusions, and I'll be installing delicate equipment that musn't be touched.

MARGE             O.K. 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.

GRIFFIN            Honest answer...

I need some food.

MARGE            We really didn't fix dinner today, but I can get you..

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, and as she leaves, she motions for Jim. As Griffin lowers yet another shade, the room descends into semi-darkness, lit only by a lamp or two inside.*

GRIFFIN            And a saucer of milk...for my kittycat

JIM                Sure thing.

*Marge and Jim leave. Griffin slumps into a chair. He's exhausted. Then he slowly rises, starts to take off his overcoat and hat as 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 its sunny...

MARGE            Ron, give me that napkin. (*Ron does*)

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.

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 on the tray, followed by Ron. Ron sees him first, and stares open-mouthed at the apparition: a man in a worn suit, tie pulled down and 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 25 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 there.

MARGE                    What happened to you?

*Griffin hesitates, then decides to speak*

GRIFFIN           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?

MARGE            I'm sorry.

GRIFFIN           Skip it. I don't want your pity. Who is he? The one with his mouth open.

MARGE            Ron's our handyman. Since my husband died last year, he's really kept the Sleepy-Daze going.

RON                I'm the main grown man around here. Protecting the family.

GRIFFIN           Protecting? From who?

RON                The guys who run those atomic power plants, like the one over in Glowville. They get their brains fried by radiations, and someday, they push the wrong button.

GRIFFIN           *(with passion)* I agree. They're idiots, a11 of them.

RON                'Zackly. That's why I'm digging my fallout shelter in the backyard. I got enough cans of beans down there to...

MARGE            Ron, please.

*Marge gathers up Griffin's coat and hat.*

MARGE            Mr. Griffin, I really hope you're gonna like it here.

GRIFFIN           ...I hope so myself.

*Marge and Ron are on their way out...*

GRIFFIN           You forgot the mustard.

MARGE            I'll bring it right back.

RON                Naw, I can get it.

MARGE                Ron, I'll do it. I .....

RON                    I can just...

GRIFFIN              Send the boy. And leave me in peace. Get out!

*Marge and Ron exit.*

*In the reception area, Jim is staring out the window at the snow. Marge rushes in with a jar of mustard on a tray. She grabs him.*

MARGE                He wants you bring in the mustard.

JIM                    Who?

MARGE                Mr. Griffin. The one who's paying all our bills this month.

JIM                    Why me?

MARGE                Jim, don't get smart-alecky. Griffin's not too polite himself, but the poor man's had an accident. He has bandages all over his face. Its pretty scary.

JIM                    Maybe Mr. Griffin is a space alien, and his saucer crashed over by the highway, and he transformed himself from a green octopus thing into human form, and now he's living with us so's he can discover all the secrets of human beings.

MARGE                No more games, Jim.

JIM                    He's a big gangster who had his face changed by plastic surgery. Or he's a top secret scientist hiding out here while he....

MARGE                He looks like something in a horror movie.

JIM                    I'm not frightened

MARGE                I am, but we need the business.

She hands Jim the mustard on the tray.

MARGE                    Take him his mustard.

Jim goes to the parlor with the mustard on a tray. Crossfade.

Griffin, in his bandages, is playing the radio. It's Elvis singin "All Shook Up." Griffin snaps his gloved fingers, wiggles his hips, and sings along - a very weird apparition. Jim stares.

GRIFFIN                    (sings with radio)  
My hands are shaky and my knees are weak  
I can't seem to stand on my own two feet  
What do you think when you have such luck  
I'm in love, I'm all shook up,  
Ummm ummrn ummm  
Ummmm Ummmm, Yeah yeah yeah  
I'm all shook up!

Music ends. Griffin takes an Elvis style bow, spots Jim, turns off the radio.

GRIFFIN                    You dig Elvis?

JIM                            Elvis is the best. The King. My Mom doesn't like me to listen to rock and roll. Especially Elvis.

GRIFFIN                    Crazy. Listening to Elvis will sharpen your mind.

JIM                            Here's your mustard.

He takes the mustard from Jim, sets it aside.

GRIFFIN                    Thank you.

All these bandages don't frighten a brave boy like you-do they?

JIM                            Just a little...

GRIFFIN                    Honest answer. Jim, I want to invite you to come in here and listen to this radio anytime you like, OK?

JIM O.K! I was worried, with you moving in here, I was gonna miss Space Patrol. Thanks, Mr. Griffin.

GRIFFIN Jack. Call me Jack

JIM O.K, Jack

You know what my Mom calls Elvis Presley?

GRIFFIN No...

JIM Elvis the Pelvis...cause he goes like this.

Its Jim's turn to do a very passable imitation of Elvis in performance.

JIM (sings and dances, Elvis style)  
I said shake, rattle and roll  
I said shake, rattle and roll  
Now you won't do nothing to save  
Your doggone soul!

Griffin applauds with his gloved hands.

GRIFFIN We're gonna be friends, Jim. I know we will. But right now, I need to rest...

Jim heads for the door. Griffin's voice turns him around.

GRIFFIN About my invitation. My scientific work is extremely important, and can't be interrupted. You might want to visit, but I could be in the middle of an experiment. Some new discovery! Jim - remember to knock.

JIM I will.

GRIFFIN Good. Never come into this room without my permission.

Crossfade to Ron and Marge in the reception area.

MARGE I wish Jim would spend more time with other people. Jesse and Cindy live right down the road. They're always inviting him over

to play with Lisa-Marie. He gets along great with her. Why doesn't he...

RON He just likes being alone lately.

MARGE Yes, but his imagination runs wild sometimes, Ron. He just makes up things in his head.

RON Like his father.

MARGE I guess, but with Jim, sometimes I worry he can't see past his own fantasies...that he'll get them mixed up with the real world we all have to live in.

RON You ain't seen half of it. You never saw him down at his secret place.

MARGE What?

RON You know the old drive-in theatre? He wears that Space Patrol Mars mask over there, runs around like he's in his own private movie.

MARGE That's why I'm not too sure about letting him get friendly with our new arrival.

RON Bandagehead? He's a smart one. Escaped convict, though. That's for sure.

MARGE What are you talking about, Ron? He's a poor man who's had a terrible accident.

RON So says he.

MARGE What about all that surgical tape and gauze?

RON He banged his head - going over the prison wall.

Ron laughs, but Marge is thoughtful.

Crossfade, to an abandoned drive-in movie theatre. Some snow is still on the ground. A raised stage, grass and weeds growing up through it. A large, tattered screen, everything unused for years. In front of the stage is a kiddie playground -a see-saw, other beat-up playground equipment.

Leaning against the stage is Jim's bike. Jim himself is onstage, wearing his Mars Invader Mask. He's got a tree branch microphone.

JIM                      Calling Captain Cappy! Calling Captain Cappy! We're about fifty kilometers from the Mantian Canal City, and coming in fast. What are your orders?

*(Holding branch to his ear, listening, then back to mouth)*

Right, Captain. Should we hold our fire till we talk to the Martians?

*(Branch to ear)*

From behind the movie screen, Jack Griffin appears. His head is still completely bandaged, with the ever present pink nose and blue glasses. A huge scarf, and a black fedora.

GRIFFIN      Shoot first, ask questions later.

Jim turns suddenly, surprised and frightened. He lifts off his mask.

JIM                      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 Invader 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 scientist like Space Patrol. Try your bike?

Griffin hops on, rides the bike in among the playground equipment. A very strange sight He toots the 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.

*Griffin hops off the bike, leans it up against the stage.*

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

Take it.

*Jim can't resist the money, and the idea of his own radio. He takes the cash.*

JIM Jack, you've got yourself a lookout!

GRIFFIN Watch out for Santa Claus.

JIM Who?

GRIFFIN Santa Claus. 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. Jim goes back up onstage, puts back on his Space Patrol Mars Invader Mask. His branch microphone is now a branch raygun. He steps forward boldly...

JIM Ready, Space Patrollers! Follow me! And if you see any Martians - Shoot first, and ask questions later!

Crossfade to the parlor, next day. It is rigged out completely as a chemical laboratory. A pile of bedding in one corner is the only indication that someone lives there.

What once was a dining table looks like something out of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: bubbling retorts, bunsen burners, racks of test tubes - but also radiation monitors, and lead lined boxes with glove inserts for working with radioactive material. Griffin, still with his bandages around his head, but now in a bathrobe that brushes the floor, scarf, blue glasses - is busy near the cat's cage. Attached to the cage is electrical wiring, food tubes, meters. An experiment with the cat is in progress.

Griffin takes off one glove, leaving it at the far end of the table, so he can more delicately pour a green liquid from a clear beaker into an opaque bottle on the side of the cat's cage. He appears to have no hand, and the beaker rises, pours, and empties, as if handled by a hand that isn't there.

Griffin continues working, very preoccupied. A KNOCK at the door. Griffin 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.*

GRIFFIN                                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, so I thought...

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

JIM                                        Do you want me to go?

*A 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 O.K. 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 to discreetly slide over to where his glove sits on the table. Jim picks up a large instrument labelled RADIATION METER. Out of curiosity, he flips the ON switch. It begins to tick loudly, and a red light on it flashes. Jim is surprised and frightened by it, and holds it out at arm's length, toward Griffin. It clicks louder than ever. A warning siren wails.*

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

GRIFFIN                                Give me that, you fool!

*Griffin grabs the meter with both hands, as it wails even louder. He flips it OFF, forgetting he isn't wearing one glove.*

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

Griffin looks down, realizes that Jim sees the one hand that appears to be missing.

GRIFFIN            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 isn't listening. He continues to stare at Griffin's invisible hand and seemingly empty sleeve.

JIM                    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 his gloved hand to Jim. Jim pulls the glove off. Again, there's no hand there, and the sleeve floats in the air. Jim stares, open-mouthed.

GRIFFIN            I hope you can keep an important scientific secret - and be a true friend.

Griffin suddenly pulls his nose off, and hands it to Jim.

JIM                    My god! Your nose!

Griffin takes off his blue glasses, begins to unwind the bandages from around his head.

JIM                    Your eyes - they're just holes...

Griffin tosses the unwound bandages to the floor. He is a man without visible hands, and without a visible head.

GRIFFIN            Happy Halloween, Jim!

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

GRIFFIN            I'm an invisible man.

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

GRIFFIN            Invisible.

JIM                    You're - an invisible man! But how can ... You're not there, and you're alive! It's a miracle. Some kind of miracle.

GRIFFIN            There are no miracles, Jim. Think. Most of the human body - or this table for that matter (*hits table with invisible hand*) is actually empty space. But the tiny panicles that are there, the atoms, are arranged so they reflect light, and make us visible. If you change the arrangement of those atoms, so they let the light just pass right through -Abracadabra. You're invisible.

JIM                    But...how did you learn to do it?

GRIFFIN            I was experimenting with plutonium.

JIM                    Plutonium? I thought that stuff was just a sci-fi fantasy.

GRIFFIN            No fantasy, Jim. Plutonium is a new element that can be a much greater power source than uranium. I was working on a plutonium fusion technique at Glowville. The experiments needed huge amounts of power, and high levels of radiation.

One night I was working with this photon accelerator chamber. I wasn't wearing lead shields - too clumsy. I accidentally stepped in front of the beta beam. I thought nothing of it, finished my work, and went home. Later that night, my hands went first. They became like clouded glass, and then clearer and clearer. My whole body became glassy, the bones and arteries faded, vanished, and the little

white nerves went last. The final thing was my shadow on the floor, there until almost the end. Light could find something, even if the human eye could not - and then even my shadow was gone.

It lasted only a few months, and I gradually reappeared. One night, I broke in and exposed myself to the reactor's radiation levels again. Again, poof! I disappeared. In my lab, I've been trying to perfect a radiation technique that works without the reactor's enormous power. No success, as yet

JIM But I've read...wouldn't it bum you alive? The radiation?

GRIFFIN Not if you set the timing fast, and the levels just high enough.

JIM Even though you're right in front of me - I can hardly believe it.

GRIFFIN It's true. Jim. Here I am, and I'm at your mercy. You must tell no one, not even your mother, about me. Those other scientists - they'll do anything to find me, and steal my discoveries. Once the experiment is perfected, once I can control the electron exchange levels perfectly without the reactor's huge voltage - I can tell the world. But the work goes so slowly! If only...

JIM I could help.

GRIFFIN Jim, you go to school already. You have homework This would be a lot like...

JIM We don't even have real science at my school. My Dad used to show me stuff sometimes, but the teachers never do. They don't know anything. I want to learn.

GRIFFIN Jim, I've been working alone so long I've gotten cranky, and rude. Comes from talking to yourself. I think having an assistant would help me, and help my work.

Assistant? No. Not an assistant. A partner.

GRIFFIN Once we perfect the process, the world will come to us. We'll be as famous as Elvis. You'll probably be on the radio yourself, Jim. And

your Mom, your Mom will never have to worry about money again. Shake, partner. Shake my invisible hand!

They shake hands, Jim's visible hand in the invisible hand of Jack Griffin.

Crossfade to reception area, where Marge and Jim are deep in talk with their neighbors: JESSE, CINDY and their twelve year old daughter, LISA-MARIE.

Jesse has a beer belly, a flannel shirt, and a gimme cap. Cindy is a fifties icon: pedal pushers, beehive hairdo etc. Lisa-Marie is a smart and lively young girl in jeans. She and Jim play checkers.

CINDY                    It's gotta be a disguise.

JESSE                    His face is on wanted posters in the Post Office, so he covers it up, Basic criminal thinking.

Lisa-Marie moves a checker.

LISA-MARIE            There! King me!

MARGE                    I can't think of a costume more likely to draw attention. Heck of a way to hide.

LISA-MARIE            Maybe he's got a terrible case of zits.

MARGE                    He's been here for two months now, and I still can't figure him out. But the Sleepy Daze Inn hasn't burned down, and he pays his bills. So far, so good.

CINDY                    I got it He's a movie star, hiding out from his fans. He's Rock Hudson - or Sidney Poitier. . . .

MARGE                    Unlikely. He never has a visitor, never says more than "Good morning." Jim's the only one who talks to him. I think Jim spends more time with Griffin than he does with me.

JIM                        Mom, please. It's interesting for me. I just help him a little with his work

MARGE                    And exactly what kind of work is that?

JIM I told you before. Research.

JESSE Come on, Jim. Tell us his secrets.

MARGE What kind of real scientist would play that Elvis the Pelvis music all the time?

LISA-MARIE Jim, what is he researching in there?

JIM I'm...uh...not really sure...it's complicated. Something about...uh...fruit flies.

MARGE Fruit flies?

JIM Fruit flies...and vampire bats.

LISA-MARIE *(softly, to Jim alone)* Jimmy, you can't have become as dumb as you sound.

King me. If you won't answer questions, at least you can play checkers.

JIM *(moving the checker)* Sorry, Lisa

CINDY I know a secret about Mr. Griffin.

*All heads turn toward Cindy. Jim is especially nervous, as their probing goes on.*

CINDY I saw him out walking the other day and the rude thing wouldn't even say hello, but I spotted a big hole in his pants leg and dropped my purse, the alligator with the gold clasp, and when I bent down I got a good look in that hole and I'll tell you one thing. He's black. Or his leg is.

MARGE Cindy, that's crazy. Look at his nose. His nose is as pink as paint.

CINDY Actually, it wasn't really like a skin color in there. It was just darkness.

LISA-MARIE           The man's a piebald, that's what it is. Black here and white there. A black mother and a white father, only the colors didn't mix. They came out in patches...like with horses.

JIM                     Lisa, that's stupid.

LISA-MARIE           What do you know about it, boo-bird? Have you seen him with his clothes off?

JIM                     He's just what he says he is. A scientist, who's had a bad accident. His face and hands need to heal.

LISA-MARIE           That's no fun. I want him to be a spy in hiding, or a bank robber escaped from prison. *(Looking down at checkerboard)* Would you move!

JIM                     *(moving a checker, any checker)* There. I moved.

JESSE                 If he's a criminal trying to conceal himself from justice, he'll have to deal with me. I am still the County Sheriff, and I got that old army 45 in a drawer somewhere.

LISA-MARIE           You sure that's your move?

JIM                     Yeah.

LISA-MARIE           *(jumping checkers)* Triple jump!

*Lisa takes a long look at Jim. She's suspicious, and curious.*

LISA-MARIE           You usually beat me two out of three. What's bothering you tonight, boo-bird?

JIM                     Nothing.

*Cindy beckons to Marge, taking her off to one side for a private moment.*

CINDY                 Marge, I've known you for a lot of years. I know you're an independent woman, and you're determined to make a go of this place, now that Ted's gone. That takes toughness, and hard work,

and we're behind you 100 percent. Just...don't be too strong all the time.

MARGE About what! Mr. Griffin?

CINDY About Jim. You're too hard on the boy. He needs his own friends, even if they are a little weird. He needs his own music. His own world. He can't just live in yours.

MARGE Cindy, I'm only trying to make sure he...

Handyman Ron rushes in suddenly from outside, his shovel in his hand. He's frightened.

RON A ghost! There's a ghost moved into my fallout shelter! It pushed over a case of baked beans!

MARGE Ron, slow down. What...

RON There was nothing there, and the beans just jumped up and crashed over.

JESSE Ron, the case just fell. Wind or something.

RON The ghost laughed.

Marge takes him by the arm, leads him to a chair.

MARGE Ron, you've been digging too deep in that shelter of yours. (*putting him in a chair*) You need to take it easy.

JESSE Probably hearing the wind in the trees.

MARGE (*Comforting Ron*) Jesse's right, Ron. There, there. That's better. (*to all*) He'll be all right.

CINDY Come on, Lisa-Marie. Jesse, we've got to get home.

MARGE Jim and I'll walk you out to the car. Ron, just relax. We'll be right back.

Everyone says goodbye to Ron.

LISA-MARIE           Bye, Ron. There's no such thing as ghosts.

Ron waves, as everyone else exits. He sits quietly in his chair. Suddenly, his hat rises up off his head, dances in the air in front of him, slaps at his face, and falls dead to the floor at his feet. Ron is terrified. He stands, backs away from his hat as if it was a dangerous living thing.

RON                    Ooooooo Weeeeeee! Oooh Weee!

Ron runs from the room. We hear, from the air, the sound of nasty laughter.

Blackout.

The parlor, some time later. Outside the window, springtime. Griffin's bioi-chemical experimental laboratory is in full swing. The focus is the cat's cage. Attached to the cage are electrical wiring, food tubes, meters, nozzles.

Jim is holding the cat in his arms, petting it. Griffin is coding data into one of his notebooks.

GRIFFIN            *(writing in notebook)* Invisibility. Experiment number three hundred and- nine; minimum burn beta ray, quantum field theta four. Experiment goal: permanent light pass through of ninety-nine percent.

*(He looks up at Jim)*

Three months work, ready for testing. You ready, Jim?

JIM                   Ready.

Jim puts the cat back into its cage.

JIM                   You ready, kitty cat? Just breathe in.....

GRIFFIN            Ionization level delta six, neutrino beam ratio epsilon three.  
CONTACT!

JIM                    Kitty cat, this won't hurt a bit.

Jim presses a button, and a blue ray zaps the cat's cage. In a moment it dissipates, but the cat remains!

CAT                    Meowww!

GRIFFIN              That's crazy. Impossible. Jim, you've made a serious voltage error. Check it again.

JIM                    It's been checked. And rechecked. No mistakes.

GRIFFIN              Neutrino beam ratio epsilon seven! CONTACT

Jim hits another button, and a pink ray zaps the cat's cage, concealing her from view. In a moment, the ray is gone. Once again, the cat remains. . .

CAT                    Meowwww!

GRIFFIN              You incompetent baboon! If you hadn't been so sloppy with the ion phasing. If you ....

JIM                    Calm down, Jack! It's not my fault I double checked everything.

*(Hesitantly)*

Maybe something's wrong with your figures...

GRIFFIN              Neutrino beam epsilon nine! Contact!

Jim doesn't move to throw a switch or change a setting.

JIM                    But those are burn levels! That could kill the cat! Jack, I know how much the answer means to you, but...

GRIFFIN              The answer can go hang! I want the power! The power to be invisible, whenever and wherever I please.

A silence.

GRIFFIN            Boost the neutrino beam.

Jim doesn't, so Griffin does. The machinery hums with renewed strength.

GRIFFIN            This is science, Jim. Not a child's game. Ready?

JIM                 (hesitantly) Ready.

GRIFFIN            Contact!

Jim throws the switch. Again the ray fills the cat's cage, and this time the Radiation Projector lights the cat with a green beam. The cat is gone. They wait. Jim goes to the cage.

JIM                 Poor kitty. It worked this time. All except her eyes. That shiny stuff that gives cats' eyes their glow - it won't go away. The cat's eyes are still there. Look like bright specks floating in the cage.

As Jim looks, we can see flashes of brightness in the cage.

GRIFFIN            Three months work. Useless!

Griffin swings his arm and smashes some glassware to the floor: CRASH!

GRIFFIN            That was my maximum voltage, and it barely handled the cat I'll still need the power plant

CAT                 Meow! MEOWWW!

GRIFFIN            Stupid animal! How can I think with you squalling in there!

Griffin goes over and shakes the cage in fury! Jim rushes over.

JIM                 Jack! Jack, please. It's not the cat's fault.

GRIFFIN            (calming) you're right, Jim.

CAT                 Meow...

GRIFFIN                   It's all right Jim, you're the best partner I could have. You're a good influence on me, Jim. A good influence. We'll keep working, that's all.

JIM                         I gotta get on lookout. This can be a busy afternoon out on the road

GRIFFIN                   Sure. Sure. Watch out for Santa Claus.

JIM                         I will.

GRIFFIN                   And Jim...thanks.

Jim exits.

GRIFFIN                   *(to himself)* Total disaster! Months of work, useless. I have to stay invisible! If they find me, I've got to be able to disappear. I'm running out of time...

CAT                        MMEEOOOW!

GRIFFIN                   Shut up! You're hungry, but I don't even have money for my food - I'm not about to buy cat food. Your meowing is driving me crazy!

Griffin reaches around and opens the cage.

GRIFFIN                   It's a hard world, kitty, and you're on your own.

Griffin shakes the cage, but the cat clearly won't leave.

CAT                        Meooooow!!

GRIFFIN                   Go! And don't bother to beg out there. No one will leave fishbones for a cat they can't see.

Griffin rattles the open cage, then picks it up, starts to shake the cat out of it. The cat squalls!

CAT                        MMMMEEEEEOOOOWWWW!!!

Marge Winters enters the room, without knocking.

MARGE                    Good afternoon.

*Griffin slams down the cage. The unseen cat becomes quiet.*

GRIFFIN                How dare you come in here without my permission?

MARGE                I will no longer be bullied in my own house.

GRIFFIN                And I won't be barged in on this way! And why wasn't any breakfast put by my door this morning? We have an agreement.

MARGE                You broke it. There are huge electric bills. They're threatening to turn the power off. And you haven't paid your rent for two months.

GRIFFIN                Do you think I can live without eating?

MARGE                Do you think I can? Or my son can?

GRIFFIN                I told you. I'm waiting for a check in the mail.

MARGE                I told you a month ago I couldn't wait any more. I've been very patient. I am patient no longer. No money? Then no food, and no room. Pack your stuff and get out.

GRIFFIN                My check hasn't come yet. It will.

*A long beat, as she considers.*

MARGE                Mr. Griffin. No more food, until that money is in my hand I've got my own family to feed. Times are tough for us too.

And stay away from Jim. He spends too much time in here with you.

GRIFFI                Talk to your son. I don't drag him in here.

MARGE                I already have. Mr. Griffin, the boy lost his father recently. He's always been attracted to science, and a kind of thinking I've been unable to share with him. Don't you dare use your hold over him to do him any harm.

GRIFFIN                    Are you threatening me? I'm not sure that's a smart thing to do, Mrs. Winters. If the boy comes here, that's his doing, not mine.

MARGE                    The rent money in my hand tomorrow, or you're out.

Marge and Griffin give each other ugly looks. Finally she exits.

The cat cage shakes, seemingly on its own.

CAT                        (invisible) MMeeeeoooooooooww! MEOW!

Griffin is tense and furious. He leaps at the cage, the door of which is still open. He lifts it over his head, and shakes it violently. SCREECHES and WAILS from the invisible cat.

With one final shake, the cat seems to have fallen free of the cage onto the floor. Griffin can feel the change in weight. He drops the cage, picks up a broom, and begins to whack at the floor around his feet, trying to chase the invisible cat out of the room.

GRIFFIN                    Out, you failure! Out!

A vigorous swing of the broom!

CAT                        MEOWWWWWW!

This battle continues as we crossfade to an area outside the hotel. Jim should be doing his lookout duty, watching the road approaching the Sleepy-Daze Inn for strangers. But he's got a portable radio. He's totally engrossed in Space Patrol, and oblivious to anything else.

RADIO                    Whooooooshoooo! (SOUND of futuristic rocket ship in flight, continuing under)

CO-PILOT BERT        Smokin' Rockets!! That ship on the atomic view screen? That's Agent X in his titanium starliner....

In the distance, behind Jim and unseen by him, a man appears. He is a huge imposing figure in a dark suit, with the flowing white hair and long white beard of a Santa Claus. He has one arm in a sling. He wears dark glasses and carries a heavy cane.

CO-PILOT BERT        ....We've gotta catch him, Captain Cappy!!!

CAPT. CAPPY      Looks like he's heading for Hydro City here on Mars, Bert!....

The sinister Santa has moved silently forward. He looms over the defenseless Jim.

CAPT. CAPPY      Full speed ahead! Burn up the rocket tubes if you have to, but get us there!!!

The sinister Santa raises his cane over his head, as if to smash it down on Jim. Freeze.

Dramatic music from the radio, ending with a crash.

INTERMISSION