

Penguin



Readers



THE INVISIBLE MAN

H G WELLS

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CHAPTER ONE

A stranger arrives in Iping

The **stranger** arrived in Iping in early February. He walked in the cold wind and snow from the train station at Bramblehurst, carrying a small bag. He was wearing a long coat, and his wide hat was pulled down over his face. You could see only the bright pink end of his nose through the snow. He pushed open the door of the Coach and Horses, the only pub in Iping. He walked in and dropped his bag.

“A fire,” he cried. “A room and a fire!” He shook some snow off his clothes.

Mrs Hall showed him into a private sitting room. The stranger paid her £2 for a room in her pub with all his meals for a week.

Mrs Hall **lit** a fire in the sitting room and went to the kitchen to cook the man’s lunch. She felt lucky, because there were few visitors to Iping in winter, and this stranger had money. She wanted to cook him a good meal.

After a few minutes, Mrs Hall came back to the visitor’s sitting room with plates, knives and forks, and glasses. The fire was burning well now, and she was surprised that the visitor was still wearing his coat, hat and **gloves**. He was standing by the window, looking out at the snow. The snow on his clothes was **melting**, and there was water on the floor.

“Shall I take your hat and coat, sir?” she asked. “I can put them in the kitchen. They’ll soon be dry.”

“No,” he said, and turned to look at her.

She noticed that he was wearing big blue glasses, and that he had a thick beard and moustache. She could not see his face.

“Yes, sir,” she said. “The room will be warmer soon.”



She put the plates down on the table and went back to the kitchen. When she came back a few minutes later with the lunch, the man was still standing by the window. She put the food down on the table loudly, and said, "Your lunch is ready, sir."

"Thank you," he said, without moving.

Mrs Hall went back to the kitchen. Suddenly she remembered the salt and pepper, so she picked them up and went back to the sitting room. She knocked on the door and went in. The visitor's coat and hat were now on a chair near the fire. He was sitting at the table, and he was holding a scarf over his mouth. The top of his head, above his glasses, had a big white **bandage** on it. There was another bandage over his ears, and she could see only his bright pink nose.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Mrs Hall. "I didn't know." She picked up the wet hat and coat. "I'll dry these."

"Leave the hat," said the visitor, through the scarf.

Mrs Hall took the coat and ran back to the kitchen. "He's had an accident, or he's been in hospital, poor man," she thought. "That's why he has all those bandages."

When she went back to get his empty plates, the visitor was sitting by the fire. He still had the scarf around his mouth.

"I've left some bags and boxes at Bramblehurst station," he told her. "Could somebody bring them here for me?"

"Not before tomorrow, I'm afraid," said Mrs Hall. "The roads are too dangerous because of the snow."

“Are you sure?” asked the man. “Perhaps I can explain. I’m a **scientist**, and I’m doing some important experiments. All the things I need for my experiments are at the station. I came to Iping because I want to work quietly – I don’t want people coming in and talking to me. My eyes aren’t strong, and I sometimes need to work in the dark, with the door **locked**. I hope you understand.”

“Yes, sir,” said Mrs Hall.

Later that evening, Mr Hall came home, and he wanted to know all about the strange visitor. After the man went up to his bedroom, Mr Hall went into his sitting room and looked around. There was a paper with numbers on it on the desk, but he understood nothing.

“When the **cart** brings his bags and boxes tomorrow,” he said to his wife, “look at them carefully. There’s something very strange about that man.”

It was a little warmer the next morning. The snow was beginning to melt when the visitor’s bags and boxes arrived on the cart from the station. There were some clothes, but there was also a big box of books – fat brown books with strange writing in them. And there were about fifteen boxes of glass bottles. The cart stopped outside the Coach and Horses and Mr Hall came out to talk to Fearenside, the driver.

After about ten minutes they were still talking, and the stranger came out of the pub angrily. “Can you bring in my things?” he said. “I’ve waited a long time for them.”

He went to the back of the cart and picked up one of the smaller boxes himself. Fearenside's dog was watching. It was his cart, and he did not like people touching it. He jumped up at the stranger's hand and bit into his glove. Fearenside shouted at the dog, which then bit the stranger's leg before running off under the cart.

The stranger looked down at his glove and leg, and then turned and went into the pub. Fearenside and Hall heard him running up the stairs to his bedroom.



"I'll go and help him," said Mr Hall, and he followed the stranger inside. He ran up the stairs and into the stranger's room. In the dark room, he saw an arm waving but no hand. Then something hit him in the chest, and he was pushed out of the room and the door closed. He went back downstairs, where there were now three or four people around the cart.

"He doesn't want any help," he told them.

"He should see a doctor," said a woman.

"Come on," said a voice. The stranger was at the door. He was wearing new gloves and trousers. "Take my things into my sitting room."

"I'm sorry about my dog," said Fearenside. "Are you hurt?"

"It's nothing," said the stranger.

Fearenside and Hall carried everything into the sitting room. The stranger took all the bottles out of the boxes, and in a minute he started work. He took **chemicals** out of some of the bottles and started to mix them. When Mrs Hall carried his dinner in to him, he was very busy. She opened the door suddenly, and the stranger turned round in surprise. For a minute she saw two huge black holes in his face, but then he put on his glasses again.

"All these boxes," she said. "They're a lot of trouble. How can I clean the room?"

"I'll pay for the cleaning," he said. "Put it on my bill."