

MACMILLAN READERS
PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

H. G. WELLS

The Invisible Man

Retold by Nick Bullard

 **MACMILLAN**

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The Arrival of the Strange Man

The stranger arrived early in February, on a day of cold wind and snow. He walked over the hill from Bramblehurst railway station, carrying¹¹ a small bag. He was wearing black gloves¹², and a long coat, and he was covered from head to foot. His hat hid his face and you could only see the shiny¹³, pink end of his nose. He threw open the front door of the Coach and Horses, and walked in.

‘A fire!’ he called, ‘And quickly, please. A room and a fire!’

He followed the landlady¹⁴ Mrs Hall into the guests’ lounge, paid her the two pounds she asked for, and sat down. Mrs Hall started to light¹⁵ the fire.

Mrs Hall left him by the fire and went to the kitchen to cook him a meal. This stranger was excellent news for her. Visitors were rare in the village of Iping in winter, and visitors with money were rare at any time. She started her cooking and then picked up some plates and a glass and carried them through to the table in the guests’ lounge. The fire was burning brightly and she was surprised to see that her visitor was still wearing his coat and hat. He was standing by the window with his back to her, and he was watching the snow falling in the garden.

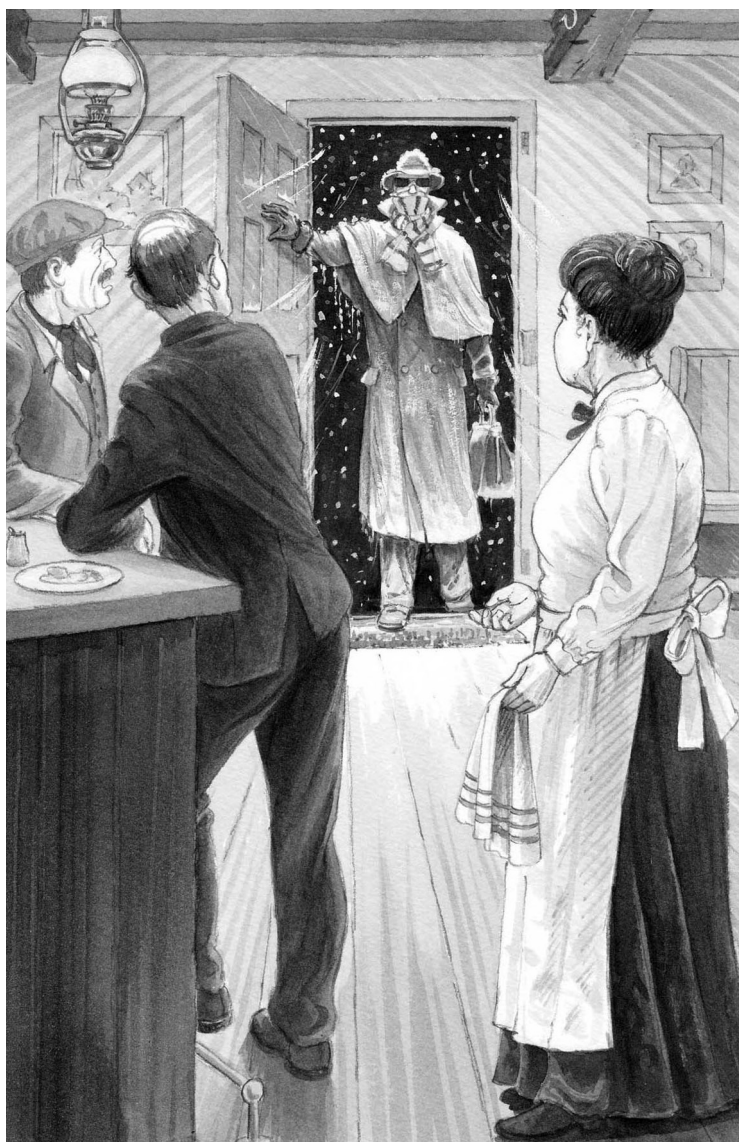
‘Can I take your hat and coat, sir?’ she asked. ‘I can put them to dry in the kitchen.’

‘No,’ the stranger answered, ‘I prefer to keep them on.’

He turned to look at her, and she saw that he was wearing dark glasses. He had a thick beard¹⁶ and she could not see his face at all.

‘As you like, sir,’ she answered.

He did not answer, and he turned his face away again. She finished with the table. She left the room, and returned to



'A fire!' he called, 'And quickly, please. A room and a fire!'

the kitchen. When she came back with his food he was still looking out of the window.

'Your lunch is ready, sir,' said Mrs Hall.

'Thank you,' answered the stranger.

She left, closing the door. But when she got back to the kitchen, she saw that she had forgotten the bread. She picked up the bread and returned to the lounge. She knocked¹⁷ on the door, and walked straight in. The stranger moved quickly and she saw something white. She put down the bread and then saw that his wet coat and hat were on a chair by the fire. His wet boots were standing beside them.

'I'll take these now, to dry,' said Mrs Hall, and she started to pick them up.

'Leave the hat!' he said suddenly, and she turned to look at him. For a moment she was too surprised to speak. He was holding a white handkerchief¹⁸ over his mouth. But what really surprised Mrs Hall was the bandage¹⁹. It covered all of his face above his dark glasses. Another bandage covered his ears. All she could see of him was the end of his shiny pink nose. He was wearing a dark brown jacket which covered him up to his neck, and she could see beard and hair between the bandages and the jacket.

He was still wearing gloves, and was holding a handkerchief in front of his mouth. 'Leave the hat!' he said again.

Nervously she put the hat back on the chair. 'I didn't know,' she began, 'that ...' and she stopped, embarrassed²⁰.

'Thank you,' he said, and he looked at the door, and then back at her.

'They'll be dry soon,' she said, and left the room with his coat and boots.

The visitor sat for a moment without moving. He looked across at the window, stood up, and walked over to close the curtains²¹. The room was now almost dark. He returned to the table and continued eating.

'He's had an accident or something, poor man,' Mrs Hall said to herself in the kitchen. 'And those dark glasses. And the handkerchief in front of his mouth. Perhaps he's hurt²² his mouth as well.'

A few minutes later Mrs Hall returned to the lounge to clear the table. The stranger was sitting by the fire and seemed to be more relaxed²³. But his mouth was still covered.

'I have left some bags and boxes at Bramblehurst station,' he said. 'Can somebody go and get them for me?'

'We can get them for you tomorrow, sir,' she answered.

'Could somebody get them for me today?' he asked.

'I don't think so, sir. There's a lot of snow. Last year my sister's son had an accident in the snow on that road. He hurt his head very badly. He had to wear a lot of bandages, and my sister helped him to take them on and off every day.' Mrs Hall looked at him closely. 'Sir, if—'

'Thank you,' said the visitor. And he turned away.

Mrs Hall was angry with the stranger. But then she remembered the money. She left the room and returned quietly to the kitchen.

The stranger stayed in the lounge until four o'clock. He sat by the fire and the room grew darker and darker.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, Teddy Henfrey came into the Coach and Horses.

'Good evening, Teddy,' said Mrs Hall. 'I'm glad you're here. We've got a problem with the clock in the guests' lounge. The minute hand is fine, but the hour hand doesn't move. It just sits on six. Could you look at it? I know you're good with clocks.'

'Certainly²⁴,' said Teddy, and he followed her to the lounge.

The stranger was sitting in the armchair by the fire, and seemed to be asleep. The only light in the room came from the fire, so the room was dark and red. For a moment it seemed to Mrs Hall that the stranger had a very big mouth. It was wide

open and seemed to take up all the bottom of his face. Then the stranger woke up, and his hand, with the handkerchief, went up to his mouth.

'Excuse me, sir,' she said. 'This man needs to look at the clock in this room.'

'Look at the clock?' he answered. 'Certainly.'

Mrs Hall went to get a lamp, and the visitor stood up. When she returned with the lamp, and the room was brighter, Teddy Henfrey was surprised to see the big dark glasses and the white bandages.

The stranger turned to Mrs Hall. 'I'm glad that someone is going to look at the clock,' he said. 'But usually I don't want people coming into this room. Have my things arrived?'

'Tomorrow morning, sir,' answered Mrs Hall.

'I must explain,' continued the stranger. 'I'm a scientist. I need to do some experiments²⁵, and everything I need is in my boxes. It's important that I can do my experiments alone, and that nobody comes into the room. Also, I have had an accident and I have to be very careful with my eyes. Sometimes I need to be in the dark. I hope you understand. That will be all,' and he turned away.

Mrs Hall left the room. 'I was right about the accident,' she thought. But really, this visitor was not very polite.

Teddy started to work on the clock. He took off the minute hand and the hour hand. He saw the problem immediately²⁶, but he wanted to talk to this stranger, so he started to push at things inside the clock. The stranger just stood and watched him with his big eyes and bandaged face.

'Cold today, isn't it?' Teddy said.

'Why don't you just finish?' said the stranger, angrily. 'You just need to fix the hour hand. You're playing.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Teddy. 'Oh yes, I see the problem now.' He fixed the two hands back quickly, packed up his things and went. He walked back through the village feeling angry with

the stranger. He turned a corner and met Mrs Hall's husband, on his way home.

'Good evening Teddy,' said Mr Hall.

'Good evening,' answered Teddy. 'You've got a strange man staying with you at the Coach and Horses.' He told Mr Hall about the visitor. 'I think he's hiding something,' Teddy continued. 'Perhaps the police are after him. I certainly wouldn't want a man like that staying in my house.' And he walked off into the night.

When he arrived home, Mr Hall tried to discuss the stranger with his wife. But she did not want to listen. She was worried about the stranger, too, but he had money, and that was the most important thing.

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One Thousand and One Bottles

The stranger's bags and boxes arrived in Iping the next day by horse and cart²⁷. There were bags of clothes, and there was also a big box of books – fat books with strange writing. And there were at least ten boxes of glass bottles. Mr Hall stood outside the Coach and Horses talking to the driver of the cart. He was also looking with interest at the bags and boxes. The stranger was getting impatient, so he came outside dressed in his coat, hat and gloves. He did not see the carter's dog under the cart.

'Can you get my boxes in quickly?' he said. 'I've been waiting for a long time.' He walked to the back of the cart and picked up one of the smaller boxes.

The dog did not like this. He jumped up at the stranger, biting first his hand, and then the leg of his trousers.

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