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The Invisible Man

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Jenkin, Lee, adapted from a story by H.G. Wells. *The Invisible Man*. 1993. 66 pp.

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A bandage-faced stranger checks into a mostly empty motel near a nuclear power plant. Jack Griffin, the mysterious stranger, befriends the caretaker's son, Jim Winters, who has recently lost his father. Jim trusts and assists Mr. Griffin, looking to him as a father figure. Soon, Jack Griffin reveals his secret that, through an accident at the nuclear plant, he has become an invisible man. As the play progresses, Jim begins to realize that Mr. Griffin may not be worthy of his trust and must ultimately decide whether to believe the man's explanations or to turn him over to the authorities.

The play is suspenseful and engaging. Like the young protagonist, the audience must constantly re-evaluate which characters can be trusted and who they hope will succeed. Mr. Griffin, as he is portrayed in this script, is reminiscent of Long John Silver, who betrays the trust of another young Jim in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. The conservative 1950's setting serves the material well and the structure of the piece is tight and economical.

While the play was relatively easy to mount at the Seattle Children's Theatre, the stage magic of the piece could be difficult to achieve. The multiple settings could be easily suggested by simple elements but it would be difficult for all but a handful of professional theatres to execute the invisibility effects as written. The text, however, is strong enough to stand on its own without the spectacle if simpler theatrical solutions could be devised.

This play is found in:

Jennings, Coleman A. *Eight Plays for Children: The New Generation Play Project*. University of Texas Press, 1999. ISBN 0-292-74056-5 cloth, 0-292-74057-3 paperback. \$44.95 cloth, \$19.95 paperback. 479 pp.

A Reviewed by John D. Newman