

CLASS XII
THE INVISIBLE MAN

Chapter 14. At Port Stowe

Summary: Marvel arrives in Port Stowe and is seen resting on a bench outside of town. He has the books with him, but the bundle of clothing has been abandoned in the woods. As he sits there, an elderly mariner, carrying a newspaper, sits down beside him. Citing the paper, the mariner brings up the topic of an Invisible man. According to the newspaper, the man afflicted injuries on the constable at Iping. Certain evidence indicates that he took the road to Port Stowe. The mariner ponders the strange things such a man might be able to do-trespass, rob or even slip through a cordon of policeman. Marvel begins to confide in the mariner, saying he knows some things about this Invisible Man. Suddenly Marvel is interrupted by an attack of some kind of pain. He says it is a toothache, then goes on to say that the Invisible Man is a hoax. Marvel begins to move off, walking sideways with violent forward jerks. Later the mariner hears another fantastic story-that of money floating along a wall in butterfly fashion. The story is true, however. All about the neighborhood, money has been making off by the handful and depositing itself in the pockets of Mr. Marvel.

Notes: Marvel tries to take advantage of a short respite to let someone else know about the Invisible Man, but he is caught by Griffin before he can complete his story. This chapter gives us a little insight as to how Griffin has been surviving to this point. He has been stealing money wherever he could find it. Now that he is obliged to remain invisible, however, he has to use Marvel as a repository for his ill-gotten gain. The irony is that although Griffin can steal unlimited amounts, he has no way to use the money in his invisible condition. And Marvel, who is for a time nothing more than a helpless victim, will be the one to benefit in the end.

Q1. Give an account of Marvel's encounter with the mariner in Port Stowe. Dirty, unshaven and weary, Marvel sat on a little bench outside a small inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe in a nervous and agitated state of mind. It was here that he met an elderly mariner who came and sat down beside him. After exchanging a few remarks about the weather, the mariner referred to the Invisible Man's story that had been published in the newspaper. He proceeded to give the details of this story. Marvel, who had firsthand knowledge of the Invisible Man posed to be surprised to hear such a story but later on, he offered to give a few details about the Invisible Man that he claimed to have got from 'private sources'. However, when he was about to narrate his version of the episode regarding the Invisible Man, Marvel was hit hard by an invisible hand. He understood at once that the Invisible Man was around and he did not want him to spill the beans.

Marvel pretended to have a severe toothache, collected his books and moved from his seat. In order to quell the curiosity of the mariner, marvel told him before leaving that in reality the Invisible Man was nothing but a hoax. To convince him further, he claimed that he knew a man who had floated the concocted story.

The mariner, however, did not believe Marvel and demanded to know why he had let him go with the story if he knew it to be a fictitious one. Marvel had no answer. Pushed and pulled by the Invisible Man he left the spot with the mariner fretting and fuming all by himself.

Q2. How did the mariner react when Marvel claimed that the story of the Invisible Man was a hoax?

The mariner, having read the story of the Invisible Man in the newspaper, believed every word of it. He felt only authentic stories with ‘names and everything’ and with extraordinary witnesses like doctor and a clergyman find place in the papers. The veracity of such incidents was beyond doubt. He shared this news with marvel because he was totally confident about its truthfulness. Marvel, too, initially responded positively. However, when he was about to give out the secret, he was interrupted abruptly by the Invisible Man. Marvel immediately changed his stance and made a complete turnaround by saying that the story of the Invisible Man was just a hoax. He added that he knew the man who had floated this false story. At this unanticipated reversal, the old mariner lost his temper and demanded that if Marvel knew that it was a hoax then why he let him narrate the episode. He accused him of fooling him and refused to believe any part of his ‘cooked up story’. After Marvel was gone, the mariner sat on a bench fuming and cursing.

Q3. What other extraordinary story besides the Invisible Man’s misdeeds at Iping did the mariner hear? How did he react to this story?

Besides the Invisible Man’s misdeeds at Iping, the mariner heard another extraordinary story about a fistful of flying money. He came to know that fellow mariner had seen an unbelievable sight at the corner of St. Michael’s lane. He had seen a handful of money floating in the air along the wall all by itself. It was neither carried by a hand nor did any bag hold it. The fellow mariner had tried to grab this floating money but was instantly knocked headlong. The butterfly money disappeared by the time he got up.

The old mariner declared that although he was in a mood to believe anything still he found this story too hard to believe. Afterwards he sat on the bench thinking about the whole thing indecisive about believing or disbelieving it.

Q4. The invisible Man’s activities in Port Stowe make him all the more villainous in the eyes of the reader. Comment.

Ever since the Invisible Man had come to stay in the ‘Coach and Horses’ he gave the impression of being a man of dubious character. However, his activities at Port Stowe make him all the more villainous in the eyes of the readers. The pitiable condition to which he had driven Marvel upsets the reader. His pushing, pulling and dragging Marvel against his wish is indeed disgusting. Exploiting a simple tramp and forcing him to be an accomplice in misdeeds make the Invisible Man a villain in the eyes of the reader. The manner in which he slates Marvel while he was talking to the old mariner is humiliating. The Invisible Man is guided in his actions by his overbearing nature and false ego. The stealing of people’s money by employing invisibility to his advantage lowers him further in the eyes of the reader. His heartlessness, selfishness and ruthlessness and greed make him appear to be such a vicious villain who can go to any extent to fulfill his unending desires.

Chapter 15: The Man Who Was Running

Summary: Dr. Kemp happens to be day-dreaming out his window when he spots a short, fat man running down the hill as fast as he can go. The doctor notices that the man is running “heavy” as if his pockets are “full of lead.” Kemp’s reaction is one of contempt, but the people on the street who see him approaching react a bit differently. The running man is Marvel; his expression is one of terror. A short distance behind him, people hear the sound of panting and a pad like hurrying bare feet. Soon cries of “The Invisible Man is coming” are heard in the streets along with the slamming of doors as people bolt into their houses.

Notes: This chapter simply introduces Kemp into the story. Kemp’s attitude is representative of the average established, self-confident, and self-sufficient individual. He sees a man in trouble, but his reaction is contemptuous instead of concern. He has heard warning cries about an Invisible Man, but clearly doesn’t believe any of it. He is a man who keeps himself apart from the concerns of the general public, is buried in his work, interested only in what award it will ultimately bring him.

Q1. Who was Dr Kemp? What impression do you get from his first appearance?

Dr Kemp was a young, energetic and enthusiastic scientist who was deeply immersed in some research which he believed would win him the fellowship of the Royal Society. His room was lined with bottles, some scientific instruments, books and some reagents. The doctor himself was a tall, lean and thin man with flaxen hair and a white moustache. Having a scientific bent of mind, he didn’t believe in superstitions. Thus, when people ran blindly for their lives, in mortal fear of the Invisible Man, he viewed them with a sense of contempt.

Dr Kemp was a very observant person. When he saw Marvel running down the hill he could make out that the man couldn’t run fast as his pockets were full of some heavy metal. Apart from

this, he also analysed things around him in a very logical manner. When all the people were busy bolting themselves indoors, he did not panic and tried to rationalize. However, his self-confidence made him appear to be somewhat proud and presumptuous.

Q2. What caught Dr Kemp's attention as he sat in his study? How did he react to the sight?

Dr Kemp was not superstitious like the other people. This fact becomes clear when, sitting in his study, he was attracted by the figure of a man running from the top of the hill towards Burdock. This short man with a high hat was running so fast that his legs were hardly visible. Dr Kemp was reminded of another man who, running blindly out of fear the Invisible Man, had collided with him in the morning. Having a scientific and logical approach towards things, the doctor looked at that man with a sense of disdain. The running man evoked similar feelings in his mind. He felt, that this man too was 'an ass' like the others who were superstitious and illogical. Guided by lack of proper knowledge they all believed in the existence of an 'Invisible Man'. However, the contempt that Dr Kemp had towards this figure stood in complete contrast to the sympathy that people had for him. They saw terror writ large on his face. His breathlessness, discomfort and haste aroused both their fear and curiosity. They asked each other the possible reason for all the apparent haste of the running man. Although they couldn't understand the problem, still they did not condemn him for running hurriedly. Kemp observed another thing about this man which was missed by other people. He observed that the man was in a great hurry but his heavy pockets didn't allow him to run as fast as he wanted to. Kemp conjectured that his pockets were loaded with some heavy metal that slackened his pace. Thus, the doctor's keen observation made him distinct from the ordinary people around.

Q3. Why did people start slamming and bolting their doors when they saw a dog yelping and sneaking under the gate and Marvel running down the hill?

People in the street were quite intrigued to see the terror-ridden face and utter haste of Marvel as he came running down the hill. Unable to understand the cause of his torment and hurry, they asked each other the reason for such a commotion. Just when they saw a dog yelp as though it had been hit hard. The dog ran for its life and sneaked under a gate. Here was another inexplicable situation and as people still wondered at the strange behaviour of the dog they felt someone run past them. His footfalls and heavy breathing was distinctly audible. Hence, people didn't take much time to put two and two together and conclude that the Invisible Man was around. Instantly the street was flooded with the sounds of screams, shouts and cries. The news spread all over that The Invisible Man was back. People ran blindly to rush into their houses. Hence, all over one could hear the slamming and bolting at the doors as terror pervaded the entire scene.
