



The Visible Man: A Novel

By Chuck Klosterman

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New York Times bestselling author of *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs* and *Downtown Owl*, “the Ethicist” of the *New York Times Magazine*, Chuck Klosterman returns to fiction with his second novel—an imaginative page-turner about a therapist and her unusual patient, a man who can render himself invisible.

Therapist Victoria Vick is contacted by a cryptic, unlikable man who insists his situation is unique and unfathomable. As he slowly reveals himself, Vick becomes convinced that he suffers from a complex set of delusions: Y__, as she refers to him, claims to be a scientist who has stolen cloaking technology from an aborted government project in order to render himself nearly invisible. He says he uses this ability to observe random individuals within their daily lives, usually when they are alone and vulnerable. Unsure of his motives or honesty, Vick becomes obsessed with her patient and the disclosure of his increasingly bizarre and disturbing tales. Over time, it threatens her career, her marriage, and her own identity.

Interspersed with notes, correspondence, and transcriptions that catalog a relationship based on curiosity and fear, *The Visible Man* touches on all of Chuck Klosterman’s favorite themes—the consequence of culture, the influence of media, the complexity of voyeurism, and the existential contradiction of normalcy. Is this comedy, criticism, or horror? Not even Y__ seems to know for sure.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Richly drawn and dryly funny...Klosterman is terrifically expressive, funny company.... Klosterman’s unique voice is never less than right out in the open.” —*Los Angeles Times*

About the Author

Chuck Klosterman is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven previous books, including *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs*; *Eating the Dinosaur*; *Killing Yourself to Live*; and *The Visible Man*. His debut book, *Fargo Rock City*, was the winner of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award. He has written for *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Spin*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Believer*, and *The Onion A.V. Club*. He currently serves as “The Ethicist” for the *New York Times Magazine* and writes about sports and popular culture for ESPN.

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The Visible Man

FROM THE OFFICE OF VICTORIA VICK

1711 Lavaca St.

Suite 2

Austin, TX 78701

vvick@vick.com

July 5, 2012

Crosby Bumpus

Simon & Schuster

1230 Ave. of the Americas

11th Floor

New York, NY 10020-1586

Mr. Bumpus:

Well, here it is. I never thought I’d type that sentence, but now I have!

This is such a bizarre sensation, Crosby. I have no idea how you’re going to react to what’s here, but I’m exhilarated, terrified, and mentally prepared for whatever is supposed to happen next. Let me reiterate (one last time) how flattered I am by your dogged interest in this project and how grateful I am for your limitless reserve of support, despite the apprehensions of your publishing house, your co-workers, your new boyfriend (!), and every other rational person in your life. If this really works out, it will be a testament to your vision and spirit.

I know we’ve had this discussion dozens of times over the telephone, but I need to say it once more, just to satisfy my own conscience: I am not a writer. I have no further ambitions in this regard, and this is the only manuscript I’ll ever submit to a publisher. I also need to stress (because there seems to be some confusion

over this, at least with your assistant and with the woman I spoke with from your publicity department) that I am not a psychiatrist, even though I'll undoubtedly be described as such if this manuscript is ever received by the world at large. I have not attended medical school and I'm not in a position to prescribe medication. It's important we're all clear on this point, because I don't want to mislead anyone. I received a masters degree in social work from the Univ. of Texas after earning an undergraduate degree in psychology from Davidson College in North Carolina. I do not have a Ph.D. I've been a licensed therapist and analyst for exactly twenty-one years, but my roster of clients is small (no more than twelve patients in any given week) and has never included anyone of public interest, sans the lone individual I will describe in the enclosed file. I'm sure my professional credentials will be savaged, but—if that has to happen—I want them to be savaged for the proper reasons.

Is this manuscript ready for publication? I think we both agree it is not (nor does my agent). I have no idea how the fact-checking process works in your industry, but I cannot fathom any system that would accept the majority of this text on face value. Like I said in our very first conversation: I can't verify the story I'm trying to tell. All I have are the tapes (which prove nothing) and one photograph of a seemingly empty chair. How will this not be a marketing disaster? I know you're strongly against recasting this work as fiction (and my agent has already informed me that such a switch would force a reworking of the contract's language and a substantial decrease in the amount of my advance), but I don't see any other option. Obviously, you understand the publishing game more than I do, and I trust your judgment completely. Perhaps we should revisit this conversation when you've finished reading my draft.

Five annotations regarding the structure of this manuscript:

(A.) After my second phone conversation with the Scribner lawyer in June, I've elected to use the pseudonym "Y____" in place of the patient's name or his actual initials. I now understand why using a fabricated name might create more problems than it solves. I initially used a different letter as a placeholder (first "V," then "K," then "M"), but my agent explained how those specific letters might cause their own unique dilemmas. I'm still open to your thoughts on this, assuming you have any.

(B.) During the very early phases of my relationship with Y____ (and particularly during the initial few weeks when we interacted exclusively by telephone), I took almost no notes whatsoever. Why would I? At the time, the case did not seem abnormal. The only things I wrote about Y____ were for my own rudimentary record-keeping, primarily so I could reference whatever we'd last discussed at the opening of our next session. These notes were brief e-mails I sent to myself, so please excuse the sentence fragments and incomplete thoughts (I've tried to fix misspellings and abbreviations, but I have not altered the language or syntax). Obviously, I had no way of knowing how unusual this situation would become. Hindsight being 20/20, I realize I should have asked him more pointed, expository questions about what was really happening here, but—keep in mind—it wasn't an interrogation. My intention was to help this person, so I allowed him to dictate the flow of conversation. So how should we handle this? My solution (at least for the time being) was to just print and attach those six self-addressed e-mails for your consideration. The e-mails are included in what's currently labeled as Part I: The Telephone. Should I try to turn that content into conventional prose, or should I exclude them completely? They're difficult to read and a little embarrassing, but I think some of the details are critical.

(C.) Once I became aware of my scenario's actuality, I started recording everything Y____ said during our sessions on audiotape (with his permission and at his urging). Much of this manuscript is a transcript of Y____'s unedited dialogue, augmented by my periodic queries and my (mostly unsuccessful) attempts at steering the conversation toward a reasonable resolution. It should go without saying that Y____ was among the most intelligent, most articulate patients of my career. His ability to speak in complete thoughts and full

paragraphs was astounding, often to the point of pretension and almost to the level of discomfort; I will always, always wonder if Y____ had rehearsed and memorized large sections of what he said during our sessions. It's my suspicion that Y____ (consciously or unconsciously) long believed I would eventually publish the details of our work together and felt an overwhelming desire to be as entertaining and narrative as possible. He was never able to accept the concept of therapy for his own sake. Granted, that troubling view made the compilation of this manuscript extremely easy—much of the time, I simply had to type a transcript of whatever Y____ had said in its raw form. But this chasm between the clarity of Y____'s words and his stark inability to understand his own motives inevitably undermined whatever progress we seemed to make. From a purely therapeutic perspective, I can only classify my work with Y____ as a failure. I wonder if we need to make this clearer to the reader?

(D.) The only other person who has read this manuscript is my husband, John (who, by the way, is doing much, much better and wanted me to thank you for sending us that wonderful book about Huey Long). He mentioned one potential problem: John believes Y____'s behavior and personality is too inconsistent, and that my portrayal of him generates (what he refers to, possibly incorrectly, as) "the pathetic fallacy." I suppose I see what he means, even though it didn't feel that way at the time. But if John sees this dissonance, other readers will see it, too. So how do I justify these contradictions? How do I overcome the fact that real people inevitably behave more erratically than fictional constructions? It's important to remember that—despite his rarefied intelligence and intermittent charm—Y____ was/is a deeply troubled individual without any sense of self, an almost total lack of empathy, and a paradoxical confusion over the most fundamental aspects of human behavior. I suppose it's no accident that he was seeing a therapist. Here again, I wonder if fictionalizing this story might be the best solution. Perhaps he would seem more believable if we made him more predictable?

(E.) Assuming this manuscript eventually becomes a purchasable book, there are a handful of private citizens who will see themselves in the text, sometimes in embarrassing contexts. I feel terrible about this, but there's just no way around it. I believe this work is important, and cultural importance often comes with casualties. It has to be done. I also believe the inclusion of those specific anecdotes will be critical to the commercial value of the book, and (as I explained in one of our early e-mails) that's something I don't necessarily want but very desperately need. It's humiliating to admit that, but you know my situation. So if this must be done, let's at least try to show these poor people the respect they merit. I deserve my humiliation, but they do not.

I think that's everything. Sorry this cover letter ended up being so long. Please call or e-mail when you receive this package, Crosby. I can't wait to work with you. Also, I'm curious—does your reception of this manuscript constitute its "acceptance," or does that not occur until you've finished reading and editing? I only ask because our contract states that 25 percent of my agreed advance will be delivered "on acceptance," and my agent can't (or won't) seem to give me a firm date as to when that will happen. I hate to keep bringing this up, because I know it's not really your department. But—like I said before—you know my situation.

Warmest regards,



Victoria Vick

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jane Kim:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the time or they will get large amount of stress from both way of life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not only a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer may unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is usually The Visible Man: A Novel.

Richard Forbes:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray anyone, why because this The Visible Man: A Novel guide written by well-known writer who knows well how to make book that can be understand by anyone who have read the book. Written throughout good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and creating skill only for eliminate your personal hunger then you still doubt The Visible Man: A Novel as good book not only by the cover but also through the content. This is one guide that can break don't judge book by its cover, so do you still needing an additional sixth sense to pick that!? Oh come on your studying sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

Lenore Cortez:

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Richard Lawrence:

Many people said that they feel uninterested when they reading a reserve. They are directly felt it when they get a half portions of the book. You can choose the book The Visible Man: A Novel to make your reading is interesting. Your current skill of reading expertise is developing when you just like reading. Try to choose simple book to make you enjoy to see it and mingle the impression about book and studying especially. It is to be initially opinion for you to like to available a book and go through it. Beside that the publication The Visible Man: A Novel can to be a newly purchased friend when you're sense alone and confuse using what must you're doing of that time.

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