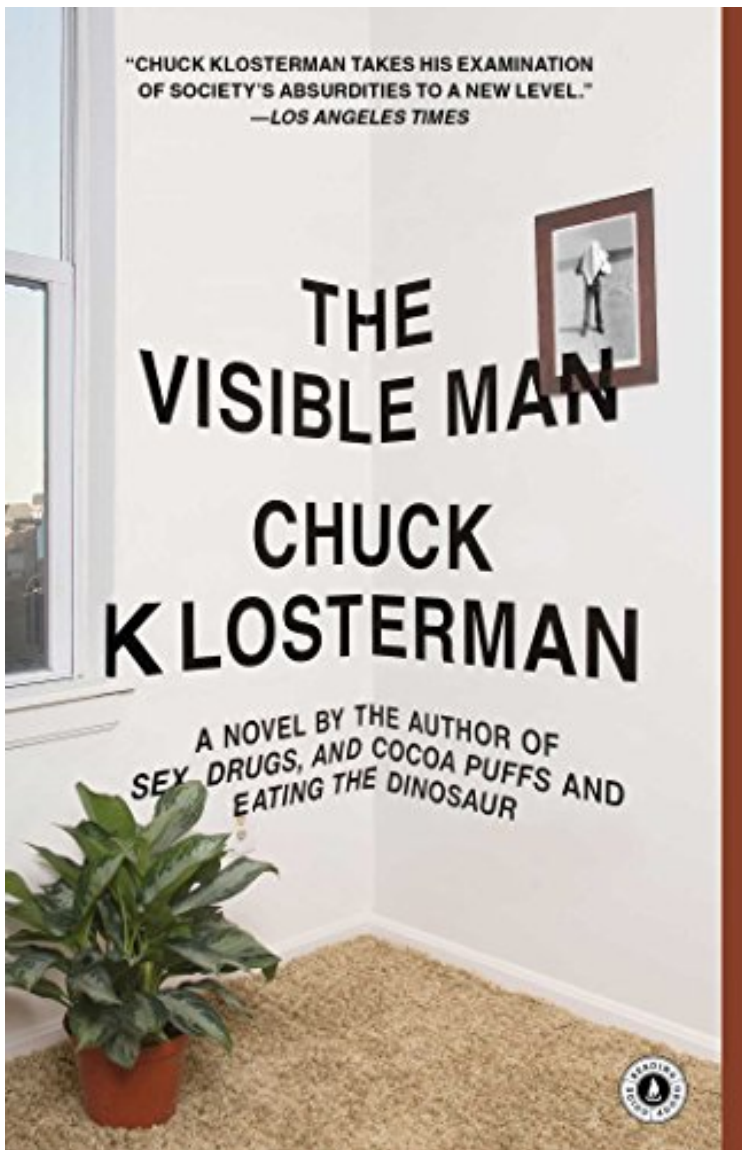


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The Visible Man: A Novel (English Edition)



Par Chuck Klosterman
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNew 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 novelan 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 Klostermans 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.

Extrait I was physically introduced to Y_____ in the most standard of ways: There was a knock at my office door, and I told the knocker to enter. The entrance swung open and a man stepped into the room. I knew who he was before he told me. There were no surprises. He was a man. A strange-looking man, but nothing more. He was tall and he was thin. Cadaverous. Perhaps six feet five or six feet six, but no more than 175 pounds. His head was a skull on a stick; it was shaved to the skin, but I could see a subtle shadow where his hair would sprout. The hairline was receding. He wore an oversized black T-shirt, khaki pants, and garish white tennis shoes. His arms were wiry and unnaturally long. His nose was large, as were his Adams apple and his ears. His teeth were jagged and yellow. Ichabod Crane, I thought to myself. He looks like an actor auditioning for the role of Ichabod Crane. It was a sweltering day in May, but he was barely sweating. I can recall this because I asked him where he had parked his car (at the time, I was in the midst of a minor parking dispute with a neighboring office building and lived in constant fear that my patients might get towed). He mentioned that he had arrived on foot. I could not imagine how a man in a black T-shirt could walk any distance in the 90-degree Texas heat without perspiring, but Y_____ was immune. When he shook my hand, it was cool and dry, like a brick from the cellar. I turned on the tape recorder. When I treat patients in my office, I never sit behind my desk. The desk creates a barrier, and barriers are the enemy. Instead, I sit in a white Eames chair. My patients have the option of sitting in an identical black Eames chair or on the couch. No one ever takes the couch, particularly during their first session (too overt). Y_____ looked at both options and requested that he sit in my chair. I said, No, thats not how things work here. I dont know why I used those specific words. Y_____ asked, Does it matter where I sit? Cant I sit in the white chair? If it doesnt matter, I responded, then why not sit in the black chair, like everyone else who comes here? Because I have a preference, said Y_____. I prefer white objects. If I express a preference for white objects, why not allow me to sit in the white chair? Perhaps I have my own preference, I said. Do you have a preference? Yes. I prefer the white chair. The white chair is my preference. Then by all means, take the white chair, said Y_____. I would never interfere with your preference. We both sat. I smiled. He smiled back, but only for a moment. So here I am, he said. You wanted to see me, and now you have. This is your office, and I am here. Im in your office. You are, I said. Thank you for coming in. Its really nice to see you. Yes, yes. Of course. Of course its nice. Lets talk about how nice it is. This is a wonderful office you have plants, carpeting, a relatively quiet air conditioner. Its contemporary in a classic way, or perhaps vice versa. Can we get to work now? Or do we still need to have a pretend conversation about how much your rent is? We can absolutely get to work, I said. Thats a good attitude. Ive really been enjoying our work thus far. The progress has been, you know progressive. But let me ask you something, before we get going: You mentioned that you liked white objects. Thats an interesting thing to like. No it isnt. Well, what if I think its interesting? What if I think its not? Theres no meaning here, Vicky. My affinity for the color white doesnt say anything about me. Look, were not going to do this. You need to accept that. I already understand the process. We both understand the process. I dont need to slowly grow comfortable with the conceit, and you dont need to understand why I like white objects. Lets get to the provocation. Lets start with what matters: You think Im telling a fictional story. Your stomach tells you that Im telling the truth, but your mind insists your stomach is crazy. Ive been thinking about this all week. When we last spoke on the phone, I realized I misspoke. I said that I didnt care if you believed me. Thats not accurate. That was my mistake. What I meant to say is that I dont care if you think Im an honest person. I dont care if you think Im a good person or a bad person. But I do need you to believe the specific things Ive told you. If you dont believe Ive done the things Ive done, it will derail our conversation. You will hear everything I say as an extension of a delusion, and the content will get ignored. I will say things like, I once saw Event A happen to Subject Zed, and you will wonder, What is his inner motive for telling that particular story about this particular fabrication? What does this story represent? But that wont be whats happening. Anything I elect to tell you wont be theoretical or metaphorical. It will be something real that happened in my life. So I need you to believe that what Ive said and what I will continue to say is not untrue. Y_____ stood up from the chair, jarringly, throwing himself upward by pushing down on the armrests. It was like watching a giraffe awaken from a tranquilizer. May I walk about, he asked. He began to pace around the room, erratically, looking

down at the floor while gesturing with his hands. This behavior is what I'd come to classify as the Y_____ Character. Whenever Y_____ became the Y_____ Character, his dialogue would feel rehearsed. It was like watching a one-man show. Though I'd already experienced several of these moments over the phone, this was the first time I witnessed it with my eyes. Over time, I've come to accept that the Y_____ Character was (probably) the real Y_____. It was everything else that was (probably) the show. So how can we do this? Y_____ continued. He loved semirhetorical questions. How can I make you believe me? What could I do, short of being cloaked in front of you, to make you accept my words at face value? That's an intriguing question, I said. Maybe it's an impossible thing for me to accept. So if I never accept this, how will it make you feel? Vicky, were not doing this, he said. Were not doing some kind of exercise where I make a declarative statement and you ask me how I feel about that declaration. Were not going to talk about my development or my primal memories. Maybe we will eventually, but not today. Right now, today, I need you to tell me how I can make you believe I'm not like other people. That I can do things other people cannot. He stopped pacing and looked at me, frozen, waiting, saying nothing. The moment I began to respond, he commenced his pace. If there were some witnesses to this partial invisibility, I said, and those witnesses came in here and verified what you had said, honestly and scientifically, I might believe you. There are no witnesses to my life, Y_____ said. That's one of the keys to being unseen: If there are witnesses, something went wrong. So what else? His pacing continued. Video evidence, I said. A videotape of you doing something that only an invisible person could do. That would prove nothing, said Y_____. This was a game to him. I could fake that with any computer. And even if my video was perfect even if it was so seamless and unimpeachable that it couldn't be faked by a moviemaker you'd still assume it was somehow unreal. You would merely think it was the best fake you've ever seen. You'd believe I was David Fincher before you'd accept who I actually am. Try again. Any reported evidence that this could be done. A Wall Street Journal article that describes your research. A textbook about the process. There is no such article or textbook, said Y_____. I would be the only person who could write it. Maybe you should do that. Not my thing. Not anymore. I hate writing. Y_____ returned to the black chair. He was smirking. I asked if he wanted coffee. He said he didn't want coffee or need coffee. He seemed calm, smug. Not very adult. More like a high school senior in the final days of May. Well, what about this, he finally said. What if you just considered everything I've told you and weighed that information against the degree to which I seem credible? That's what I've been doing, I told him. From the first day you called me on the telephone, I've been calculating that very equation. I've taken what you've said at face value, and I've considered the source. I've tried to be as open-minded and nonjudgmental as possible. I've taken all your statements seriously and professionally, and I've come to a conclusion. Do you want to know what that conclusion is? Yes. Are you sure? Do you promise to be as open-minded and fair with me as I have been with you? Because that's essential. Yes, yes. Yes. Then my diagnosis is this, I said, as evenly as possible. You are an educated, affluent, highly functioning person who has experienced a break from the life you used to live. You have become obsessed with an imaginary life, and you use your natural intellect as a crutch to make that imaginary life real. This allows you to ignore the pain that still exists from whatever caused that break to happen. I waited for a reaction, but he said nothing. His expression did not change. Now, that probably sounds very bad to you, and perhaps even insulting, I continued. I can't tell if you already know I'm right, or if you're about to walk out my door and never speak to me again. Obviously, I have no control over what you do or how you react. But this is a solvable problem. Your very presence in my office proves you understand that. You want to get better, and you know that a better life is possible. So here is what I want to do: I want both of us to get in my car and drive to Seton Medical Center. They don't have to admit you and you won't need to stay overnight. However, they will conduct a short interview and a few tests in order to decide what the next step should be. From that point on, it's totally your decision. There are people there who are better suited to deal with this situation than me. If you want to continue using me as your primary therapist, that would be fantastic. I enjoy working with you, and I care about what happens to you. But you need to talk to a medical doctor, and I am not a medical doctor. Y_____ waited until I finished. He wordlessly thought about what I had said (and seemed to treat my words seriously). But then he stood up and resumed pacing, instantly rematerializing as the Y_____ Character. It was as if I had said nothing at all. What about this, he began. What if I told you something I couldn't possibly know? What if I knew something that could only be known by someone who was able to make themselves unseen? I'm not sure what that would be, and I'm not sure what that would prove. You read a Malcolm Gladwell book last year, Y_____ said. What? You read a Malcolm Gladwell book. Last winter. Try and tell me that you didn't read a Malcolm Gladwell book last winter. What does that have to do with

anything? That happened. Right? It happened. So how do I know this? What Malcolm Gladwell book did I read? I can't remember. One of them. The first one, or maybe the other one. The third one? All the covers look the same to me. So, the fact that I read a book by one of the most popular writers in America, an author who sells several million books every year, this proves you have the ability to be invisible? Well, I would have liked to use a more specific example. But you don't seem to read many books. So, what are you implying that you've been watching me? Is that what you're claiming? Because that's a crime. Be careful what you say right now, Y____. Don't make up a story that will create a new problem for us. Well, that's why I only mentioned the Gladwell book, Y____ said. I don't want to scare you. If I told you something too specific, if I told you the color of your living room carpet, for example, you'd probably freak out. I'm not going to freak you out. What is the color of my living room carpet, Y____? He said nothing. Maybe he smiled, but I can't be certain. There's a reason you're not telling me the color of my living room carpet, I explained. And the reason is not that you don't want to scare me. The reason is that you don't know what the color of my carpet is. Now, maybe you think you know, or maybe you know you don't know. I can't tell. Right now, that's our problem. And this is why we need to go to Seton Medical. This scenario, right here. This thing we are dealing with, right now. This incongruity. This is the problem. Not your guilt over spying on people, not the stress from being an almost invisible man. Nothing that involves the outside world. Our problem is the chasm between who you are and who you want to be. Everyone deals with this problem, Y____. Everyone. You are not alone. Half the work I do with my other patients is about the difference between who someone is and who they wish they were. The only difference here is the degree. You have a fixable problem. Your condition just happens to be a little more severe than what I typically encounter. But I am on your side here. Do you see that? I want to help you. For the next thirty seconds, I thought I'd broken through. Y____ stopped walking and stood at the center of my office. He looked sad. He looked defeated. There was a moment when I anticipated (hoped?) that Y____ was going to cry. But then he changed entirely. His concern melted into stoicism, and then evaporated into low-level joy. He smiled and ran a hand across his bald skull; it was like a different person had jumped inside his bones. Okay, Vic-Vick: You win, he said. I thought this meant we were going to Seton Medical Center. It did not. Next week. I will see you next week. Things will be different a week from now. But just try and remember what we talked about, okay? Remember what I said today. Really think about the things I said. Digest my words. They will make sense later. How about this: If you still feel this way seven days from now, I will go to the hospital. That is my promise. But only if you've really considered the things I've told you. Okay? I did not believe him, but I shook my head up and down. What else could I do? Goodbye, Vicky. Your skepticism is adorable. Don't ever lose that, no matter what happens. And with that, Y____ walked out of my office. For the rest of the day, I seethed at my desk. He had dodged me again, and he talked to me like a child. He was so uniquely troubled. I should have known what was coming, but of course I did not.

2011 Chuck Klosterman *Revue de presse* Klosterman has conjured up a novel that manages to be both wildly experimental and accessible, while making perceptive observations about privacy, human nature, and of course, the author's forte, pop culture. *Entertainment Weekly* (A-) "The Visible Man is a rich, fast-paced and funny novel made to entertain lovers of literary metafiction, sci-fi and thrillers. *Dallas Morning News* Hidden beneath The Visible Man's kaleidoscopic structure and high-wire stunts in an irrefutable narrative logic. And like [his main character], Klosterman knows when to get out of the way.... All fiction should be so sly. NPR.org