

Invisible El: Life Unseen

By Miciah Foster

**Thank you**

**James Baldwin**

**Walidah Imarisha**

**Erykah Badu and Nas**

**Ralph Ellison**

**Che Guevara**

**Olivia Porte**

**My classmates in Unsettling Literacy**

**Indigenouaction.org**

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

**My ancestors who have come before me and are with me now.**

## Characters

Chris: young, wears a fuck tha police/NWA shirt

Kayla: young, wears a symbol of allyship (might be a safety pin or a rainbow flag pin)

Cha Cha (Sharon/Ron)

Phil H. Davis: man in his 50s.

Radio Reporter: this character should never be at the center.

El: alien from the Invisible World, Hephaestus. should be Black, unless choosing to center some other marginalized group. The director may choose between having El always speaking English or speaking another language (perhaps ASL) or communicating without words.

## Setting

A confined space.

Music: INTRO TO "All Things Considered"

Radio Reporter

... and this is All Things Considered. This is part IV in our VII series collection, Invisible Worlds. We last left off with the Toussaint IX space rover bringing back evidence of possible life on that Invisible World, Hephaestus, from the far edge of our solar system. As we continue this space odyssey, we look at the life Toussaint IX discovered..

MUSIC: "SPACE ODYSSEY THEME" or similar music

*The room has a oddly coloured tint and there is a glow in the center. El stands there with a shackle and/or a monitor around its ankle. It seems to be sleeping. The room should hold many strange artifacts. It could be the bottom of a museum or a top secret facility or a zoo or a circus. Either way, El is behind a case of glass in a room that reeks of decay.*

El

**This bitter land**

**Watered with my soul**

**The fruit it bears**

**Leaves me so cold**

**This bitter land**

**Does nothing for love**

**This bitter land**

**Brings pain from above, oh-oh**

**Oh-oh-oh**

*The lights come up as Cha Cha edges onto stage. There is a single camera documenting what occurs, not at the center.*

Cha Cha

Watch your step.

Kayla

This better be good.

Chris

Babe, I told you. I'm taking you somewhere special.

*Kayla and Chris enter. Kayla is blindfolded.*

Kayla

(She tries to take off her blindfold)

What is that smell?

Chris

No, no, no, not yet. (to Cha Cha) What's the deal? Where is it?

Cha Cha

(busy counting money) It's right here.

Chris

Here.

Cha Cha

Uh huh.

Chris

Right Here.

Cha Cha

Yep.

Chris

Uh huh. Cha Cha, I have my partner here.

Cha Cha

Oh. Yeah, yeah yeah, of course.

*Cha Cha lines the two of them up, takes the blindfold off Kayla, puts "I saw the Invisible Creature" hats on them and*

*plays from a recording: "Presenting the Invisible Creature  
from far, far away."*

(Pause.)

Kayla

Chris, what is this?

Chris

I don't know, babe. Cha Cha, what the fuck is this?

*Cha Cha plays the recording again: "The Invisible Creature  
from far, far away"*

Chris

There's nothing there.

Cha Cha

It's "The Invisible Creature from far, far away."

Kayla

I have been blindfolded in a car for hours. I'm hungry.  
I'm tired. I don't even know how I look. Take. Me. Home.

Chris

I can't do that. You look fine. And if you give me a  
little bit of time, we can work this out. Cha Cha, told  
me that we could get in here to see this alien. I thought  
it was something cool we could do together.

Kayla

(pause) The camera isn't even for me?

Chris

I don't know whose camera that is. We'll go get dinner  
right after this. I promise.

Kayla

(sigh) Well, where is it?

*Kayla and Chris get extremely close to El. The feeling should be invasive.*

El

**to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time**

*Chris and Kayla jump back, visibly afraid.*

Cha Cha

Oh yeah that happens sometimes. Are y'all ready to go? Or can I offer you the Lovers' Special.

Kayla

Shh. Listen.

El

**i am a man and a citizen of this country**

Chris

(laughs) it sounds like you when you're on the toilet

Kayla

She's trying to say something.

Chris

How do you know it's a she?

Kayla

Maybe we should loosen the shackles. (to El) Yes, hello. Can you understand me?

El

**white people are trapped in a history they don't understand**

Kayla

I'm Kayla. Kayla.

*The Creature mimics Kayla, her motions. They should be participating in almost a trancelike dance.*

El

**Becky**

Kayla

Oh! Good. That's very good. You heard, right? She said my name! Say your name now. Who are you?

El

**the american idea of racial progress is measured by how fast i become white**

Kayla

El? El. Nice to meet you El.

*By this point these two should be connected, both palms on each other, but separated by glass.*

Kayla

We have to get her out of here. This is inhumane.

Chris

It isn't human. She isn't human.

Kayla

Don't you have a heart, compassion?

Cha Cha

(ding of a timer)

Your session is up. You can extend your time here by 15 more minutes with the Lovers' Special for a low price of 89.99.

Kayla

Chris.

Cha Cha

Act now before the offer expires.

Kayla



Could you live here?

Cha Cha

I'll throw in a complimentary picture.

Kayla

Would you let me live here?

Cha Cha

Time is fading fast. Act now. Act now. Act now.

Chris

We'll take it.

Kayla

I love you.

*Cha Cha snaps a picture.*

Chris

So, how the hell do we get this thing-

Kayla

El.

Chris

-out of here?

Cha Cha

The Invisible Creature from far, far away-

Kayla

El.

Cha Cha

-is in its youth, a healthy 5' 8". As a recent arrival, it's able to perform at peak production speeds, a single creature provides about \$23,000 worth of entertainment

services in a month. For its credit-or for mine-this one has gone above and beyond that.

Chris

Then, we'll buy it.

Cha Cha

These are pretty rare. It isn't every day one of these creatures chooses Earth to seek refuge. I believe it's my duty as a concierge, a guide, a parental figure to ensure it is taken care of. Also, it's my only form of income right now.

Chris

We'll cover those expenses as well. Double that even. We want to see El home.

Cha Cha

You'll have to wait for the auction.

*Cha Cha produces an auction poster.*

*There is a noise, similar to the opening of a hatch. Chris, Kayla, and Cha Cha all stop what they are doing. Enter Phil with water and food for the creature. Phil does not seem to notice the others, and instead, walks directly to El and delivers El the food.*

Phil

(muttering) Dark cell. Enclosed within glass. Scientists are not yet certain how it will react to our oxygen. Does it breathe? Still working to translate its language. For now, must teach it English. The translating piece, the rock from its planet, seems to help. If only to make it more comfortable during the medical evaluations. Dr. Green and Dr. Jean poked it and it screamed. Poked it again and it cried. Scientists continued to poke it. Eventually it stopped. Scientists lifted the scalpel to its skin, cut off it's flesh, the blood was visible. Dark. Red. Almost human, but not quite. It came from the creature. It screamed then too. Beautiful, the blood. The

screams were unfortunate. Must keep vigilant. Must keep the creature alive.

Chris

I don't think he sees us.

Kayla

What's wrong with him?

Cha Cha

Sleepwalking. It's becoming harder and harder to track when he'll drop in, which is why I usually keep the sessions short, excluding the Lovers' Special of course. Would you like another picture?

Chris

Maybe we should wake him.

Kayla + Cha Cha

No!

Kayla

You can't wake sleepwalkers or they'll go into shock.

Phil

Is it living? Can a creature truly live? What does it mean for one to live? This is not living. What is the value we attribute to one who possesses life? Speech is not enough. Almost though. Screaming is not enough. Almost though. Crying is not enough. Almost though, almost. Perhaps, the blood.

Chris

What is he doing now?

Cha Cha

I don't know. He usually doesn't get this far.

*As Phil is speaking, he gets closer to connecting with the creature, closer to breaking it free, all the while holding a*

*scalpel in his hand. El holds their palm in the same position that it held it out to Kayla.*

Phil

Must get to the blood. It's the only proof. Bleeding is the only truth.

*Phil brings the scalpel down to break the glass and connect with El's open hand.*

Cha Cha

NO!

*Cha Cha intervenes, the scalpel lands in his chest.*

Kayla

OH MY GOD!

Chris

Are you okay?

Phil

(awake now) Who are you? How did you get in here?

*Kayla drops Cha Cha to make contact with El again. Cha Cha pulls a stack of bills from behind their clothes. The money should have a hole in it from where the scalpel made contact.*

Cha Cha

My money! (to Phil) You know it's a federal crime to deface money.

Phil

It's a crime for you to even be here.

Chris

You just tried to kill him. This whole place is a fucking crime scene!

Phil

I have nothing to apologize for.

Kayla

El? El? Speak to me!

Phil

6HYo9 cannot understand you.

Kayla

Of course, she can. She said my name.

(to El)

El? Please, are you okay?

Phil

You're wasting your time. 6HYo9 only responds to direction when this is in someone's possession.

*Phil holds up the translation device.*

Kayla

Give it to me.

Phil

It's for research only.

Kayla

You don't think I'll know how to use it.

(pause)

At least loosen her shackles.

Phil

I don't know who you are.

Kayla

I'm her only friend. She needs me. She needs someone to understand, someone who's willing to do the work to get her out of here.

Phil

6HYo9 is part of an ongoing project. The subject will remain here. In the meantime, I suggest you leave or else I will have to contact guards to escort you out.

Kayla

She's in pain here. You said it yourself.

Phil

I cannot be responsible for what I say, while I'm sleeping.

Kayla

But you know it's true. You can feel it when you get close, the churn in your stomach, the fog in your head. She does that to you. Then you hear her make a noise on the verge of speech, and you know she's speaking to you. She wants you to let her go.

Phil

I know. It's true, but I can't. Nothing is certain in this world without proof and I must prove that the creature exists before I can prove that it feels anything at all. I have been trying to make this home more comfortable for it. I'm afraid there is nowhere for her to go. Earth's contact with Hephaestus has poisoned it, and there certainly isn't a place for her here in this world. I need more time.

Chris

You don't have more time. Shit like this gets out. What do you think people are going to say when they find out about all this?

Kayla

We won't be quiet about this.

Phil

You can't tell anyone about this before I finish my report. Without proper information, people won't have the tools to create good dialogue around what should happen

to the creature. I'm begging. If you absolutely cannot keep quiet, wait until I gather all the information.

Chris

No.

Cha Cha

(timer dings) Your session is up. I'll have to escort you out. I accept cash, debit, credit, checks, money orders, and venmo.

Chris

Fucking Fascist.

*Chris punches Phil, taking the translator for Kayla.*

EL

**We are very cruelly trapped between what we would like to be and what we actually are.**

Kayla

OH MY GOD.

Cha Cha

That isn't part of the package.

*Cha Cha snatches the translator from Chris.*

EL

**And we cannot possibly become what we would like to be until we are willing to ask ourselves**

Phil

CAREFUL! You cannot fathom how important that translator is!

*Phil gains control of the translator.*

E1

**just why the lives we lead on this continent are mainly so empty**

Chris

Translate this

(holds up middle finger)

*The translator slips from Phil's hands.*

Kayla

Can't we settle this in a civil manner?

El

**so tame**

Phil

Real mature.

Cha Cha

Each minute costs.

Chris

Fuck you.

El

**and so ugly**

*Phil, Cha Cha, and Chris battle each other. This battle should be grotesque and violent.*

*They reach for each other, wrestling to be in control, to be able to connect with El. Kayla never intercedes, but watches from a distance, waiting for the conflict to cease.*

*In a horrific moment, the glass around the alien shatters. The alien drops to the ground, gasping and reaching for the translator. The lights are replaced by red flashing lights with each flash the actors get into a new tableau. The dialogue happens in the lower light though. With each raise of the lights, the alien gets closer and closer to the translator.*

Chris

fuckshitfuckfuckfuckshitfuckshitfuck



Phil

I have to wipe the tape.

*Goes to the camera.*

Kayla

It's dying! You- We killed it!

Phil

We have to go.

Kayla

SHUT UP! It's dying! Look at it. Look at it.

*They all stare, frozen, looking at the creature as the red light flashes again. They are silent in this moment and for a bit after.*

Cha Cha

I don't see anything.

Kayla

Look harder! Listen! You aren't even trying.

Cha Cha

(the timer goes off) Cash, venmo, or check?

*Cha Cha holds out their hand for their cut and the red light flashes again. They are all in a new configuration. As the lights dim back to the lowlight, Kayla throws Cha Cha money and Cha Cha exits out the way they came.*

Kayla

You see it, right? You see it.

Phil

A man robs a bank. We all witness it. From your vantage point, you are able to see a man with dreads and wearing an hawaiian shirt. A few minutes later I see a man running from a couple blocks away from the bank with that same shirt on carrying a bag.

Kayla

So he did it.

Phil

False. The bankrobber was a woman with broad shoulders and braids leftover from her trip to Jamaica. The man I saw running was trying to catch his bus. Eyewitness testimonies are far from reliable.

Kayla

This isn't a crime! This is a living being!

Phil

How about another example: an emperor orders a tailor to make him a new set of clothes. The tailor only pretends to work on clothes. After many days pretending to work on an imaginary piece of clothing, the emperor demands his clothes from the tailor. The tailor hands him nothing, but insists that there are clothes there, so much so that the emperor believes him. The next day he wears his nonexistent clothes all throughout the city, essentially naked, and entirely a fool. I am not a fool.

*Phil exits. The red light flashes and a new pose is assumed.*

Chris

Kayla... Kayla! There's nothing left for us here. (Kayla sobs uncontrollably during this) That thing has been dead since the moment Toussaint 4, 5, 6 or whatever landed on its planet. Shit, you don't even know if it was ever alive. So what, we all get locked up in a cage? What kind of justice is that, you and me dying in bondage for it? We tried. I didn't ask for any of this and neither did you. I wanted to give us something to talk to our kids about. I'd say remember that time we snuck into a facility to see an invisible alien? You'd say, but the food at the restaurant was way more entertaining. Then, we'd both take turns saying that that was when I had asked you if you'd be able to love me for the rest of your life. We can still have that. There's hope in us, in love.

*Chris raises the translator up to her as a ring just as the alien is about to touch it. The power of the word love calms Kayla immediately by the time of the proposal, her demeanor should completely flip to match the essence of this power. The red lights again come up. As the lights come back up, the two lovers leave. The silence is uncomfortable, the audience should not know exactly whether the play is over until the alien begins to writhe again.*

El

(getting louder with each statement)

**I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breath. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.**

*The final flash of red lasts longer than the rest, no one remains in the room, but El lies on the floor, presumably dead. The video camera is still present. The lights remain on this as the NPR "All Things Considered" intro starts.*

Radio Host

...joining us to talk about the horrible accident is Phil H. Davis Phd, the author of Invisible El: Life Unseen. Phil was in close contact with El at the time of death. He fought for its freedom from Inside...

*The radio channel changes and a video of documented instances of police violence are shown followed by another sound of the channel changing and the final words of black victims of police brutality, vigilantism, and state violence are read out loud. The following are suggestions, but by no means is this list complete or the end.*

I don't have a gun. Stop Shooting.- Michael Brown

Mom, I'm going to college.- Amadou Diallo

You shot me. You shot me! - Oscar Grant

Why did you shoot me? -Kendrec McDade

What are you following me for? -Trayvon Martin

Please don't let me die. - Kimani Gray

It's not real. - John Crawford

I can't breathe. I need a pump. -Freddie Gray

I didn't even do nothing- Sam Dubose

I love you, too- Sean Bell

End.

## **My Notes**

### **Genre: Science Fiction**

**Thesis: As we know it, activism is a performance. Those who are most marginalized and at the intersections of oppressions, get lost in the desire to put on a show for its audience. By assuming that the audience has the power and not the people, the people as a whole succumb to the crumbling institutions that it seeks recognition from. Moreover, activism, again, as we know it, is the representation of others, their story, their voices, either representing it for them or amplifying it for them, however it is often the former.**

**Senior Thesis: Academic and Intellectual, exploits for the purpose of gaining research, parachutes in then leaves, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, never clear doesn't value the marginalized persons experience as credentials**

**Objective: Research, very comfortable with the creature, has been feeding it**

**Motivated by: Facts and Prestige**

**Safety Pin: Acquires many goods and merchandise to physically seem about it, but is never really about it, firmly believes in love trumps hate, pink pussy hat, "i have \_\_\_\_ friends," safety pin, gay flag shirt, black arm band, silent when actual conflict occurs (preserving their voice, speaks with something else maybe? Maybe 2 people?), has to fit their schedule never really wants to use their own body**

**Objective: Feel comfortable and at bliss, assisting, along for the ride**

**Motivated by: love**

**Fuck shit up: fucks shit up, doesn't build, never joins**

**Objective: Cause a ruckus**

**Motivated by: Anger, boredom, recognition, and malice**

**Elite/Profiteer: like starbucks, pepsi, and beyonce, selling goods all the time, following the trend, only held accountable to money, has tied hands, but is able to access their wallet and donate**

**Objective: money**

**Motivated by: Money**

**NPR: Radio host, other unseen character, pat on the back**

**Objective: to educate as an objective and "neutral" perspective, to tell a story**

**Motivated by: Cool stories**