

Tunes

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George walked the way he whistled. "That's just the way I walk," he said. No one had said anything about the way George walked. Everyone knew he was low key, off key, Ellison's invisible man without Thurber's Walter Mitty imagination. He married Sue two years later. She talked like a slide guitar and had the shape of an unrepentant electric bass. Together they learned the Nigerian kora, a quiet instrument, and had two children who did everything in the correct key.

George took a lover. She made love as if she were all by herself. Every time he was with her he felt she was collecting a piece of him for one of her collections. She was afraid of nothing, not the number thirteen, ladders, splitting a pole when they walked, God. She drank pearl milk tea, bought chickens with the head and feet attached, harvested fourteen-year-old locusts as they came from their birthing place.

His children grew like prairie tree weeds across fertile soil. They gathered other lives, moved across the country, and though they loved their parents, never let go of their embarrassment.

George held Sue's hand on the porch swing, the old Nigerian kora against the siding, and began to sing the only song his other lover had left him. It resonated across the yard. We opened our windows to hear better, came onto our porches, watched George and Sue swing back and forth, her hand now on his shoulder, his hands folded in his lap.