

THE INVISIBLE HUSBAND

A Ten-Minute Dramatic Duet

by

Patrick Gabridge

Adapted from an Eskimo poem,

Collected by Knud Rasmussen and translated by Edward Field



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CAST: IRIS and MAX

SCENE: The kitchen of a very modest house. A table with two chairs.

AT RISE: IRIS, a young woman, is cooking dinner at the stove. MAX, a handsome young man stands right beside Iris. HE wears a mask, like from a Greek tragedy. Both are in simple, modern clothes. IRIS and MAX address the audience.

IRIS: The Eskimos knew. And understood.

MAX: They used to tell stories about a tribe of invisible men. We move around you like shadows--have you felt us? We have bodies like yours and live like you, using the same kind of weapons and tools. You can see our tracks in the snow sometimes and even see our snow houses, but never the invisible men themselves. We cannot be seen until we die--then we become visible.

IRIS: It once happened that a human woman married one of the invisible men. He was a good husband in every way: he went out hunting and brought her food, and we could talk together like any other couple. But the wife could not bear the thought that she did not know what the man she married looked like.

(IRIS returns to her cooking, then calls out.)

IRIS: Max! Supper's ready.

MAX: I'm right here.

IRIS: **(startled)** Ahh! How many times have I told you not to sneak up on me like that. How long have you been standing there?

MAX: Just a bit.

IRIS: Where are you?

(MAX leans forward and kisses her on the cheek.)

MAX: Right here, my love.

IRIS: That's nice. Very nice. Can you please set the table? The meat is almost ready.

MAX: Your wish is my command.

(HE sets the table.)

IRIS: My mother warned me about marrying an invisible man. How will you ever find him to help you do the chores, she said. He could be sitting around all day reading the newspaper and watching the clouds, while you're there trying to keep a clean house and put food on the table.

MAX: Your mother--

IRIS: Watch what you say.

MAX: Your mother was nothing compared to mine. How can you stand to marry a human, she'd ask. What if you get tired of looking at her face year after year?

IRIS: Yes, what if?

MAX: I never will. Never. No sight could bring me more pleasure than your face, no sound is more musical than your voice.

IRIS: You're sweet.

(SHE sets dinner on the table, and they both sit and MAX begins to eat. IRIS just sits and stares at MAX's chair.)

MAX: What's the matter?

IRIS: I'm not hungry.

MAX: It's very good. A lot spicier than you usually make it. I like it.

IRIS: How was work?

MAX: The same. George is always on my case about something. Today the cans weren't stacked exactly right, he said. Maybe a can was missing, he said. They don't trust me.

IRIS: George is a pig.

MAX: I try to fit in. I really do. But they just can't see past the fact that I'm invisible. Everyone is so hung up on looks. I do my work. I'm polite.

IRIS: Maybe you could go hunting with your old friends, or help out in one of their shops.

MAX: No, Iris. When I married you, I promised that I'd be a part of your world. No sneaking around. Honest work in the visual world. I'm sorry that I complain. It's not so hard. Really. I love you. No regrets.

IRIS: Never?

MAX: Never.

IRIS: You know I love you, too.

MAX: I know.

IRIS: Sometimes I feel it so strongly, and I know that I love you more than I love my own breath, or my own skin. The sound of your voice, the touch of your hand on my cheek.

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