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## Disappearing

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**DISAPPEARING KEVIN KANE**

A young man walks past the bar, just opened for tonight in this horrid heat. The bricks look hot enough to bake bread with. He says hello to an old man who wears a black cowboy hat, and speaks very slowly in returning the greeting. The young man must lean in close to hear.

“Made it to Monday,” the old man says.

“Yeah, me too.”

“Haven’t found a girlfriend yet,” the older man says. He looks melted to his bench. Two middle-aged men stand beside the entrance to the bar, leaning on either side and looking sideways at the scene as if they feel suspicion for the world itself. They watch with interest as the young and old man talk.

The young man replies, “yeah, me neither.”

“Why not?” old asks and young must lean in close to hear him.

“Well, I know where they are, I just can’t touch ‘em,” says young.

Old repeats: “Why not?” His skin wrinkles have more wrinkles etched into them. The mass looks sticky in the heat.

“Well, I gotta get going but good luck with Tuesday,” says young. It was a moving conversation where young never quite stopped walking, but with each exchange moved a little farther away.

Old says, “come back later.”

“I’ll try,” from young, who has to turn around to say it.

The shopping district of aged, crumbling buildings housing coffee shops and clothing stores ends suddenly into hot open space devoid of shade or benches. The road heads into a residential district, out into the heat. Young turns around and heads back the same way, without crossing the street away from the emerging scene around the bar. Young stops and looks across the street first. A small, narrow alley leads behind the set of stores on the other side and on the wall, a mural of grape vines spreads across the bricks. The alley looks immaculate except for small piles of dust and dirt from the bricks. All the stores across the way are closed. No one walks along the avenue. The air itself hazes before young’s eyes, making the street seem too wide to cross. Old watches young walk back up.

Young: “Hey, take care,” toward old.

Gaining animation, pulling himself unstuck from the overheated bench and pointing at the bar, old asks, “Can I buy you a drink?” The finger looks made of wax, shiny and inhuman. Jutting from an equally strange, sculpted hand, it points toward the entrance to the establishment. Young feels the two men standing beside the bar’s entrance looking at him, waiting for his reply. The question rings around inside of young’s head. The sound of the voice which struggled so hard past the thin, cracked lips echoes and young can’t decide if the words themselves aren’t still out there, suspended in the heat, waiting to evaporate.

Young continues walking, carefully lifting one leg and putting his foot down, suddenly scared of tripping. The sets of eyes follow every movement. Even after he lies by saying, “no, that’s alright, I gotta get going,” and begins to walk down the sidewalk toward the closed shops and dusty masonry, the question echoes and chases.