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Just Killing Time

by Nick Barrett

Another manic Monday. Or what passes for one on this almost deserted, sun blasted, blonde sandy beach. Hammock starts swinging slightly in the breeze; that's what I've come to think of as a bit too exciting for my liking over the past few days I've been lying here, not moving much, not attracting attention.

Great view of the little wooden jetty from here. That's two people have walked down it now in the past half hour. And it's only half past ten; early risers, I hate them. Manic, I told you, all this activity, makes my skin itch.

Chaos, by local standards, will start soon. Here we go, the first coach load of tourists turns up. The bucket and spade family brigade. The thought makes a Bob Dylan tune, Buckets of Rain, run through my head:

Buckets of rain,
Buckets of tears,
Got all them buckets comin' outa my ears,
Buckets of moonbeams in my hand....

Buckets of tears; I've shed them. Grown ups eager to start their water skiing lessons with Domingo Joe, most useless driver of a boat I ever heard of. Hasn't killed anybody in one of his boating accidents for a couple of years, but that's an accident in itself. Accident prone they say, but that's not what I'm calling it.

The longer I lie strung between two palm trees here at the far end of the beach beside the rocks, the more I blend into the background. That's important.

I don't want to be noticed, I don't want to be remembered. Don't want anybody even thinking about me, ever. Well, until it doesn't matter anyway. They'll remember I disappeared like smoke, if they noticed me at all.

It'll be like that Dylan song:

I've been meek,
And strong like oak,
Seen pretty people disappear like smoke,
Friends will arrive,
Friends will disappear.
If you want me honey baby I'll be here.

Pity this lazy, sunny interval has to end. Just one phone call to make when Domingo Joe makes his move to head for home in the late afternoon today. Everything about him brings me misery, but he'll never get there.

That song again:

Life is sad,
Life is a bust,
All you can do is do what you must,
You do what you must do,
And you do it well.
I'll do it for you,
Honey Baby can't you tell.

I know all his regular movements by now, I've passed the details on all week. There he goes now for the last time, off the jetty, heading inland, disappearing up the path through the high dunes towards his favourite bar. I see a shadowy figure detach itself from a siding in the dunes and follow him.

That's my cue to go, I don't need to see what happens next, knowing's enough. I walk slowly towards the surf, the non-descript dinghy with the near silent outboard edging slowly towards me. I wade out to where it will pick me up, just another middle aged lady ignored by the holidaymakers, killing time in the surf. And time it goes so fast when you're having fun.