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Greeter

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GREETER

The hello man draws tourists to him. He greets couples in double time or a small crowd of girls who gape, remembering too late the cameras in their rooms. A group of boys splits as he approaches, and he pivots, addressing each one, meeting their eyes somehow as they pass. They are happy; they keep him fit for the summer's challenge. No stranger in town has passed without welcome. He has a record to preserve as he strides to meet them. "Hello" and "hello" and "hello" again, a boy running, unable to dodge. He is pleased but alert; he remembers his failure, the man he passed without greeting. When he fell, he was surprised how hot the sidewalk felt on his face. There was no point in opening his eyes. The boot met his head like he knew it would; he was punished. The cement smoldered and he moaned, the hands working at his pocket. When an umbrella of faces covered the sun, he looked for a boot that would fit his head and cried. "Hello" he whispered to the nearest face. Penitent, he repeated "hello," seeking forgiveness and grace, the heat still working at his skull. He would not be indifferent again; the town would love him, his greeting welcomed like a natural treasure.