July

by Jeffery Klaehn

My coffee is too dark.
White skirt, white jacket, heels.
Her hair down. Longer than I'd thought.
"I think it's her," Noa says.
We haven't seen her since July.
She was here most nights when we happened by.
I came to like her.
Her hair always up.
Mopping the floor.
Positioning the tables until their stripes aligned.
"I haven't been there, but my sister has," she said once.
She knew exactly how much milk I take.
Employees come out from the back to talk with her.
Her voice is July.
Her face—
Porcelain.
November.
She looks straight at me.
Nothing.
I forget about the coffee.
Her heels against the floor.
"She would have said hello," I say.
Yet there she is, ten or so feet away.
"Striking," Noa says.
I get up to ask for three milkettes.
On our way out, I look back.
She isn't looking.

Later—
"I wonder."
"Why do you care?" Noa asks.
". . . if she ever reads Murakami, whoever she was."

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"Familiar stranger," Noa says.
I imagine her smiling.
"You could have asked."
"Which one?"

