

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Andrew Bovell

LEON:

And I couldn't get this guy out of my head. So for the next couple of days I kept my eye out for him. And finally I saw him. Down at the beach. He was standing at the edge of the water. And I was running towards him. And I noticed that he was wearing the brown brogues again. And without thinking about it I stopped and I said, 'Don't get your shoes wet.' And he looked at me. I could see that he recognised me. But he didn't say anything. There was just this terrible silence. Neither of us knew how to broach what had happened the other day. So we just stood there for several minutes, looking out over the water. And I suddenly became very self-conscious. I suddenly thought, what the hell am I doing? What do I want from this man? And it was as if he sensed my discomfort because he started talking, to fill the silence, I don't know. And he told me this story, about himself and this woman he had once loved. They were going to get married and he was the happiest guy in the world. But before they were married she went to America for a short holiday. The idea was that they would be married when she got back. He would organise it while she was away. That was their plan. Anyway, it was all set, the arrangements all made, everything. He'd gone all out... And finally the day arrived for her to return. So he went to the airport to meet her, but she didn't get off the plane. He waited and he waited. But nothing. He went home, he made calls, he tried to trace her but there was nothing from her, just silence. And he didn't know what had gone wrong, whether she was in trouble or she just didn't want to see him again.

Time passed, years, and he never stopped loving her. He kept thinking that it would die, this hope that she would come back. But it was the not knowing. He couldn't let it go. It was like he was haunted by her. And then one day he's on the bus. The bus he catches to work every day of his life and there she is with her head in some book, this woman who had just vanished, reading a book as though her life was normal, like every other life on the bus that morning but it wasn't normal, not to him because she had this past and he just couldn't reconcile the two.