In this talk I present the range of uses associated with the particle *ke* in Persian. This particle has a core use as a complementizer, roughly equivalent to English *that*, but also functions as a modal particle contributing exclamative force or emphasis in an adversative context. Given that most modal particles are highly polysemous with more or less grammatical uses, I propose that one of the principles of grammaticalization at play is the loss of the complement-taking properties of a head. That is, elements can lose their selectional features and become ‘detached’ from their complements. In this way they no longer function as constituent-forming elements and take on life as mobile particles outside of the connected syntax.