

Alex Jaros
Alex Jaros

The Southwest Chief

He had held the bucket, spoon-fed soup,
posted bail. He had given rides—that
odd, unsung toll on a junkie's parents.

Trevor Crown
Trevor Crown

Late-Period Ruiz

Feeling the plastic bag of an oxygen mask brush
limply down his forehead, Dampier recoiled
and stood into the aisle, steadying himself
with the seat backs on either side of him.

Kate Gale
Kate Gale

Australian Thieves

It was summer in Sydney and the
weather was good, so lots of crowds,
which meant plenty of money busking.

May Lee Chai
May Lee Chai

Shouting Means I Love You

It was his final act of defiance against the
encroachment of age. He'd had the heart
surgery, the stent, the radiation for his prostate.

Christopher Bundy
Christopher Bundy
80,000,000

Theo tried to let the hurt feelings go and
played chase with the satellite channels, finding
upcoming biographies on twentieth century
world leaders: FDR, Churchill, Stalin.

John Bensink

Throwing Out the Vizio Box

I bought the thing during lunch, and then went
back to NuTekMetal Designs and they fired me
after twenty-nine years: "Sales are down."

Akil Kumarasamy
Akil Kumarasamy
Brown Smurf

My brother had weak lungs and swam
poorly, but he wanted to one day
swim across the English Channel. The
notion struck him after he watched a
documentary on Florence May Chadwick.

Gabriel Houck
Gabriel Houck

You or a Loved One

Our routine is to miss each other,
leave messages, and then listen to them
on speakerphone while brushing our
teeth or pulling whiskers or sorting
the week's vitamins into pill holders.



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*"In two straight lines they broke their bread
and brushed their teeth and went to bed."
Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans, 1939*

Mary Kate Varnau
Mary Kate Varnau
Supernova

I've figured out that if you don't ask
permission, if you just go ahead and do, there's
a moment of confusion to capitalize on.

Bipin Aurora
Bipin Aurora

The Matrimonial Ads

People are alone, they are afraid. They are looking
for a companion. Is that such a bad thing?

Matt Sumpter
Matt Sumpter
Off Hours

Well, Mr. Benevolence. It's been two months,
and I'm afraid the report is generally unfavorable.

Steven Polansky
Steven Polansky
Obsequies

"You don't remember me?"
"I don't think so," he said. "Maybe I do."
"Or Howard?" she said.
"Are you Howard and Vicki?"
"Yes we are," she said, delighted.

Jo Walton
Jo Walton

Interview by David Naimon

Science fiction is not about rocket ships—
whiz-bang! It's about what these things do
to us, the us who are taking the trains,
the us who are taking the rocket trips.

David Long
David Long
Skull

It's the now-distant summer you sublet that
rathole on Grosvenor Avenue, a time when
your life still could go many ways.

Edward Porter
Edward Porter
Storm Dogs

I swabbed everything in the apartment with alcohol
and they got infections anyway. All the fluid ran out
of them, they dwindled, went silent, and left me.

Ariel Djanikian
Ariel Djanikian

Summerwalk Circle

A last defense. Like the children of 1945
Dresden pulling the blankets over their heads.

Claire Luchette
Claire Luchette
Moult

Skin cells want out. In a year we
lose more than a pound of them.