

*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.