

**Young Writers Award
Winner
2017**

**Every Idea I Had For My Australian Literature Short Story Collection
by Jonathan O'Brien**

A divorced man seeks connection.

A divorced man drinks six tinnies on the back deck. He goes for a drive.

A divorced man goes to his son's cricket game. His son loses.

A divorced man calls his sister. She is preoccupied with a success he could never achieve.

A divorced man longs to work in agriculture, like all his friends. Out west, a storm hits.

A divorced man's brother dies in an industrial accident. Unions are a good idea.

A divorced man interacts with a gay man. Civil unions are a bad idea.

A divorced man wants to start dating again. His mother dies a week later.

A divorced man loves his hometown, but wants to move deeper into the Australian outback. If he moves he may never see his son again.

A divorced man wants to go surfing, like he used to, back when things were better, but his board comes off the roof of his car while he's on the M1. He goes anyway, and screams on the shore.

A divorced man starts a social AFL team with his friends. He kicks the winning goal two minutes after the game.

A divorced man never knew his daughter. When they meet, he gets too drunk and she vows to never see him again, even though he apologises a lot, over and over, both drunk and sober, inside the car and out. He promises her the world. He promises he will give her the world. She says: 'You've only got traditional Australian values, Dad.'

A divorced man receives a ticket for leaving debris on the M1. He'll deal with it after he's done drinking six tinnies on the back deck.

A divorced man's childhood hero dies. There is no state funeral, but he pours six tinnies out on the back deck for the great man anyway.

A divorced man never bloody knew about income tax. He drinks six tinnies on the back deck.

A divorced man goes camping in the Australian outback. He befriends two vaguely-European backpackers and learns something.

A divorced man goes to work and is confronted by a lack of job security typical for his demographic and line of work. He should have learned a trade. Out beyond the window, a tree is felled. He closes his eyes and sees his daughter in the car. Her makeup is running. He asks his boss about income tax.

A divorced man is kicked off his own social AFL team. 'Ha ha,' he says. 'Kicked off.'

A divorced man goes on an online dating site. A divorced man goes to the pub. A divorced man goes to the movies alone and looks for other people who are going to the movies alone.

A divorced man texts a divorced woman and asks when his son will be arriving today. Later, he drinks six tinnies alone on the back deck.

A divorced man goes fishing. He remembers when he was young always asking his own father when they could go home, and he wishes he had someone asking him the same thing.

A divorced man receives a follow-up letter regarding the debris he left on the M1. After six tinnies on the back deck he sends a reply.

A divorced man enters correspondence with an empathetic bureaucrat named Sally.

A divorced man walks down the road. He sees construction work; he sees shoes tied over the powerline. His town is not what it used to be.

A divorced man is sending continuous letters to an empathetic bureaucrat named Sally. The openings of her letters move quickly from 'To the owner of vehicle with registration number 211ASB' to 'Dear Fred' to 'My dearest darling Fred'. They correspond for a while. Sally replaces a bureaucratic number in one letter with her phone number, which begins with 04, and the divorced man calls her. They have phone sex, once, and he feels empty afterwards and hangs up. Sally keeps calling him and he just lies there. When he goes to call her back, his wireless landline has run out of battery.

A divorced man tries to sustain a long-distance relationship. He tries to install Skype, but finds that technology clashes with his traditional Australian values.

A divorced man tries to buy plane tickets online. His computer won't load the sites fast enough, so he goes to Flight Centre. The Flight Centre lady says: 'What are you going to be doing in Canberra?' and the divorced man says: 'I am going to visit my long-distance girlfriend.' The Flight Centre lady says: 'That's nice.' The divorced man says: 'Do you want to get a drink sometime?' The Flight Centre lady marks up his flights without telling him, and takes the bonus for herself.

A divorced man is with his son. He explains to his son that he might have a new Mum soon. His son says he already has a perfectly good mum, and that this situation interferes with his preconceptions of the ideal Australian family.

A divorced man explains to his son that two mums are better than one. He reminds himself that one mum would have been nice.

A divorced man's son isn't sure about a lot of things. A divorced man reminds him that civil unions are bad, and his son asks to go home.

A divorced man gets nervous before flying. He texts his friends apologising for not being able to make the game on Saturday. They remind him he is off the team. Tears gather on the rim of his seventh tinnie of the day.

A divorced man is met at Canberra Airport by a woman he has never met before. He goes to kiss her, but she only hugs him. He wonders how fast a return flight can happen. At the end of the story, she holds his hand.

A divorced man spends a week in Canberra. He wonders why anyone would prefer this place over the Australian outback. He asks his girlfriend and she says cities make her feel safe. He asks: 'Don't the trees make you feel safe? The horses and the bats? The spiders who are troubling but who are also your only friends?' and she says: 'No.'

A divorced man buys flowers for his girlfriend and sets them up in a vase on her table. He rearranges them as he thinks about his son and his daughter. He goes the toilet and he is still there, crying, when his girlfriend, the empathetic bureaucrat named Sally, comes home. She says: 'You leave tomorrow.'

A divorced man has sex with his girlfriend. This is the whole story.

A divorced man wakes up, walks around an apartment, looks for any trees at all out the window, and then dresses. He gets a lift to the airport. His girlfriend says: 'I don't think we should do this anymore.'

A divorced man gets nervous before flying. He texts his friends apologising for not being able to make the game on Friday. They remind him he is still off the team. Tears gather on the rim of his eighth tinnie of the day.

A divorced man returns home to the Australian outback after some time away. He feels disoriented and the story hints at depression without ever naming it. The bartender delivers a monologue about traditional Australian values.

A divorced man goes back to work after some time away. His boss breaks some news.

A divorced man feels his loyalty has been betrayed, and that he doesn't understand his own country anymore. He calls a lot of people's landlines. Many are disconnected. He doesn't understand why any of this has happened.