



Tourist Beach

Andrew Burke

Only a local would sit
with his back
to the ocean. I wait.

My whole body
senses the ocean.

It's Monday. No seagulls.

Perhaps they have
a long weekend, a holiday for
Nesting Day. Rottnest Island
sits on the horizon, scene of
nesting days of my own.

Three women at
the next table laugh.

*Well, I can just imagine you
jogging along.* They are young
and fit. I can't
see the humor in this.

An American accent tones in,
*My first stop was New Zealand,
and I burnt there. The peeling
was the thing ... Now I need
some sun to take home.*

In whispered tones, two Brits
with north county accents
discuss camping provisions in
tones flat as the boardwalk.

mushy peas kangaroo steaks

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The edges of human speech,
this pastiche, are gentle as
small breakers on the shore.
A high light female laugh
drifts from four aged persons.
The women have
dressed for morning tea and
the laugh issues from
a lady in bright green with
little red flowers embroidered
on her linen jacket and
a broad brimmed straw hat
worn tight and symmetrical on
her round head. All her body
says *control* but that laugh
is a budgerigar set free
from its cage. One man
tanned in the blazing sun
points over at me and whispers
Only a local would sit
with his back to the ocean.