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Her life was full of them—new beginnings. Though they never went anywhere.

'She held her failures in her hands like roses roses roses.' That could do for a first line of a new novel, Ellen thought, as the storm clouds dropped their silver curtains. The picnic was over.

Now was the time to decide about Clem. Clem, an old lover, a failed affair, living out his time at the Mirror Book Home, waiting for years and years for the clot in his neck to move, writing his disquisition on the origin of time. Should she take a risk—pay him a call...

She calls Hector instead on her mobile. He's not communicative. He's been digging holes in his back yard to plant new trees—spitting in each one before laying out the roots like mandalas. He sounds as angry as a bee, she thinks.

'I've got a leak in my shower box Hec darling, can you come over now and fix it? Frida's frantic about it, she doesn't want a stain going through to her front room. It's an emergency, please come.'

'Can't—I'm too pissed off with Alpha for going off to see her sister in Darwin. I'll come tomorrow.'

Sigh, alright, Ellen thinks—I'll just go home and watch TV.

Next day Hector's there at dawn, in a better mood. It takes all day to remove her shower tiles and taps. 'Can you live a day in a day?' Milton had enquired of her, all those years ago when she'd worked in the jail.

'Did you watch *The Sopranos* the other night?'

'Nope, did you?' Hector was always monosyllabic, even in a good mood.

'Yes and guess what? Tony Soprano got shot.'

Ellen tells Hector about the new series where Tony, near death, acquires an alter ego called Kevin Finnerty, and how she had worked with this person herself, Kevin

Finnerty, now deceased, at Long Bay jail, and wasn't that weird...

'I mean, how did the script-writer come up with that? Was it from the funeral notices in the *Sydney Morning Herald* online? The timing would be about right...'

Hector only grunted, but as he twisted around to screw in the new taps he scraped his heel against the brick surround. It bled and he roared like a dinosaur—lurching about, tail thrashing, angry as yesterday. Ellen soothed him as she had done with the crims—like a paid mother—all those years ago.

'Look, Alpha won't stay up in Darwin long, she's got that gig to do at the Vanguard soon, and she'll have to practise. Here, I've got these huge bandaids. I'll put one on for you.'

Hector put his foot on the chair and Ellen tenderly applied the plaster.

'Thanks. Lets go for a burger at Maroubra Mall.'

At the Mall it is cool and reassuringly boring. They sit near plump kiddies eating their treats and citizens watching furniture on the LCD screens. Shit this is Ballard's *Kingdom Come* come true already, out here in the far flung antipodes, thinks Ellen. But thinking of Ballard only reminds her of her failed novels—all fifteen of them...starting at the beginning with the one about fish and the Easter Island murders.

'Hec,' she says 'Can you wait a minute? I have to get some fish oil tablets from the chemist for my varicose veins.'

She'd need five bottles to get through until Christmas. Have to pay with Mastercard. She digs in her bag, passing the New Profile Hair Salon. In the window the display of Omega 3 is startlingly beautiful—chains of golden capsules full of honey coloured oil. Beads for a goddess of success.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Loma Bridge.