

**THE ENCHANTED PENIS**

**DRAFT 5 - 22 May 2025**

by Jodie O'Regan

## MARGOT'S BOOK CLUB

Book: Hot Dogs For Breakfast

Wines: unspecified prosecco

Brindle Road cabernet sauvignon

NONI, overthinker, slightly chaotic

ALISON, comfortably academic

MARGOT, rather proper and well heeled

HELEN, younger than the others

Alison, Margot and Helen sit in a variety of chairs around a coffee table. There are bags, jackets, scarves slung on the back of chairs and on the floor beside the women. The coffee table has a plate of cake, some chocolates and some healthy salad options. The food is comprehensively covered in plasticwrap. There is an open bottle of prosecco and four glasses

**HELEN**

Did she say anything to anyone?

**ALISON**

I'm sure she's coming.

**MARGOT**

(offers wine) Prosecco? On the chat?

**HELEN**

(scrolls through phone)  
...hmmm...ok bookclub...hang on, tango night?...no...banana allergy?

**MARGOT**

Banana allergy? What? Who had that?

**ALISON**

That was in that book with the ornithologist love triangle.

**HELEN**

oh yeah...um...oh here we go...she had...dinner with Roger... Oh that wasn't tonight...I don't know.

**ALISON**

Roger? She had a date with Roger? Is he the one that  
(gesture that identifies Roger)? Good for her. About time.  
It's been years.

**HELEN**

Yeah. That Roger.

**MARGOT**

Well, we have to start. She can catch up. The door's unlocked. Alright. Welcome. "Hot Dogs For Breakfast." This won't be up to your normal standard Alison but -

**ALISON**

You dark horse. I would not have predicted this! It's such a -

**HELEN**

It's so trashy. What's his name, the main character: Bassingthwait? He could talk. Did anyone notice? Don't you think it's sexy when a man talks like that? You know? No brooding, or grunting. Wasn't there a really grunty one in that book last year? That Regency period one? Does anyone remember?

**ALISON**

Interesting. Do you think in that era, womanly desires were suppressed; codified as a certain haughty aloofness of the heroes? A refusal to speak coherently? Whereas in contemporary fiction-

**MARGOT**

Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. You can't talk about him. Bassingthwait is item five. I emailed the schedule to everyone over a week ago.

**NONI**

(entering disruptively)  
I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I hope you started. Good good good good good.

**MARGOT**

We did make a start. Actually.

**ALISON**

Only just. It's fine hon.

**NONI**

(Helen offers and pours her a glass of wine.) I would love one. (Noni finds a chair, helps herself to some food which requires removing the corner of plasticwrap.) Ok. So is there a hero in the book?

**MARGOT**

Noni, you can have one piece of celery. Cover it up.

**HELEN**

Bassingthwait.

**ALISON**

No. we can't talk about him.

**NONI**

What? Why?

**ALISON**

He's item five.

**NONI**

He's what? What?

**ALISON**

Item five. On the schedule. Margot, you know what might help keep us on track, if we each had a copy. On paper? Would you mind?

**MARGOT**

Good idea. Get started - we're already running late. Item one: his watch collection. (Exits on a mission.)

**HELEN**

Sure.

**NONI**

There's a schedule?

**HELEN**

Quick! Spill the beans. How was Roger? Was he Bassingthwait level? Where did you go?

**NONI**

We went to that place with the curtains. You know? Funny thing, he had one. I didn't really see it, it was under his shirt, and I didn't want to be obvious that I was looking. But what I did see - you know: nice. Good size. Normal. Not too flashy. Round.

**HELEN**

Round?

**NONI**

Oh my God, stop it! I'm talking about his watch. Item one!  
But you know, a watch is a nice touch right?

**ALISON**

No one wears a watch except to signal that they are wearing  
a watch. It's highly curated.

**HELEN**

What do you call that Al?

**ALISON**

Performative connoisseurship.

**NONI**

Yes! That's it. Performa-

**HELEN**

And then? She's only printing four pages.

**NONI**

Well then there was the wine. We both had the wine list,  
which meant he knew that I could see what he picked. And he  
ordered the Brindle Road. They had St Jude's too, which is  
more expensive but it's not as good.

**HELEN**

Brindle Road! You got him drunk so you could have your  
wicked way with him?

**ALISON**

Hush. You can't say that!

**HELEN**

And then?

**MARGOT**

(enters)  
There you go, This should keep you on track. One for you.  
And you. Where's my...? (looking for wine glass) So. Item  
one - what did you decide?

**NONI**

We thought the watch was a phallic symbol.

**MARGOT**

Really? How? I mean I could understand the lamborghini. Or the cactus in that cowboy bit. But a watch is round and ticks.

**ALISON**

Margot, I really fancy a red. Do you have any Brindle Road?

**MARGOT**

Downstairs. So how is it phallic?

**ALISON**

The wine?

**HELEN**

What else could it be?

**MARGOT**

Downstairs, in the back room. Help yours-

**ALISON**

Thanks. That'd be lovely.

**MARGOT**

In the reds on the left. Under "B".

**HELEN**

Ooh I'd have some too. Thanks Margot.

**ALISON**

If you don't mind.

**MARGOT**

It is a heavy wine for brie. (Tisks.) Anyone else need anything while I'm up? Again?

**NONI**

No. I'm good.

**ALISON**

Fine.

(exit Margot)

**ALISON**

Then?

**HELEN**

Did you tear his clothes off and ravage Roger rather roughly?

**NONI**

We talked. It was nice. It was fine.

**HELEN**

"Fine"

**ALISON**

I told you you're great at conversing.

**HELEN**

And you just "conversed" all night?

**NONI**

He was talking about his socks.

**ALISON**

His socks? Oh Roger.

**NONI**

How they're so comfortable

**ALISON**

Ah ha.

**NONI**

He doesn't take them off when he goes to bed-



**HELEN**

What? he talked to you about going to bed?

**NONI**

He was talking about his socks.

**HELEN**

In bed?

**NONI**

Come on, come on.

**ALISON**

His big man feet sheathed in protective socks, ready to leap into bed. Hmmm.

**HELEN**

Wouldn't they be slippery though? Doesn't he need grip?

**ALISON**

Exactly. Some serious traction.

**MARGOT**

(enters with multiple wine bottles, places them in front of Helen)

What are you laughing at? The octopus stuck in the tank? That's item seven. And supper, Noni is at the end. I'll have a glass of Brindle.

**HELEN**

In your champagne flute? Ooh, there's still some in the bottom. You sure you don't want to go and get a red wine glass to drink red wine out of?

**MARGOT**

No. It's fine.

**NONI**

So Bassingthwait? Did he-

**MARGOT**

No! He's five. But the octopus is seven. I'm confused.  
Where are you?

**HELEN**

You sure you want me to pour this lovely Brindle Road into your dirty little glass? You can drink this happily? Here you go, the very lovely Brindle Road Cab Sav in this small, used tulip of a glass? You lush.

**MARGOT**

Stop being ridiculous. I can do it. I'm not completely...OK. OK. Fine. (Margot exits)  
Don't touch the chocolate.

**HELEN**

So?

**NONI**

So the watch and the wine and all the "performative" dating stuff. I started thinking

**ALISON**

Oh dear

**NONI**

It's like surely he can't keep it up-

**HELEN**

Well!

**ALISON**

I mean it is Roger.

**NONI**

He can't keep up the performative behaviour. Right? If he wears socks to bed, then some time in the night, you know they get really hot and slimy and he'd push them off with his toes. Right? You know? And then does he think about them in the morning? Does he remember to clean out his night-before socks? Or does his bed fill up with them? What if he does that every night? And they pile up. How often

does he change his sheets? One, two weeks? Oh my God, what if it's a whole month. And he's got thirty pairs of socks in his bed. Just piling up in his bed.

**ALISON**

Cumulative sock pile? That's where your mind went hon?

**NONI**

Remember the first time round, dating back when we were kids? We thought it would be the big things that mattered. Like whether there's a God. But who cares. One of you goes to church, the other one sleeps in, you catch up for lunch. Easy. But this time it's different. I know what matters. Socks in bed. God isn't a problem at all.

**HELEN**

Wasn't he just trying to impress you?

**ALISON**

After that?

**NONI**

Well then we ate the cheese!

**HELEN**

And then?

**NONI**

A rather lovely pot of tea.

**HELEN**

After you left the restau-

**MARGOT**

(When did she arrive back? How long has she been listening?)

You haven't mentioned the octopus or, or item four. Let's see, the tennis match with the Bingletons. You know it went back to advantage server seven times? Did any of you even notice? Shall we discuss that now, or do you need me pop out to the night markets and grab some salt caramel

almonds? I know what you're doing. So you can just stop it. Tonight is my turn hosting book club. We're drinking Brindle Road. It's going perfectly. Hot Dogs For Breakfast is a good book. It's not literary but it is interesting to me. And there's nothing wrong with having a schedule.  
(Pours and drinks another glass of wine)

**ALISON**

Margot, the schedule is fine...It's just been what, four years? We just want Noni to get some colour back in her cheeks.

**MARGOT**

You think I don't care about Noni? You think I don't want her to get back out there, and find love or atleast a good fuck. Yes I can say fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. But Noni said she doesn't know if she's ready for socks. And you know what? It's all socks. Every day. Every single day. It's a bed full of slimy smelly socks. Thousands and thousands over the years if you count them up. Noni, if you're not ready for socks in bed, you're not. It's, oh I don't know. The same necklace for three birthdays. Three. And taking both cars for a weekend on the Peninsula. So Pete can "get back" early. And to "enjoy myself" sitting at breakfast alone. Surrounded by happy couples. Where do you look when you've been left alone and everyone else is in a couple, with that weekend of passion Sunday morning glow. There was a book sitting on a sideboard in the restaurant. I picked it up and read it. It was Bassingthwait. And I thought he was dishy. Bassingthwait and his fucking octopus. I shouldn't have said any of that. It's not on the schedule. Fuck.

(Silence. All drink.)

**ALISON**

When he's fighting the octopus, in a tuxedo at the museum? I'm sorry, how does an octopus hold a switch blade? And then he gets away in a black corvette, just drives down the front stairs? Why is there even a car inside the museum?

**HELEN**

There are lots of cars. I just went on the ride. I read it in one night. John's snoring was keeping me awake anyway. He sleeps with his face right up beside me.

**ALISON**

Is it deliberately ironic or sincere? On reflection maybe it's both. It might be brilliant. Margot. I'm going to set it next semester. Let's find out what the undergrads think of your Basingthwait.

**MARGOT**

Really? Brilliant? And irony. I didn't get irony. It's too late to put irony in the schedule.

**NONI**

Margot you're right. I'm not ready to deal with dirty socks left in bed where I'm sleeping. So you know (rummaging in her bag and pulling out two black socks) after well, after Roger...I just took them. They actually are really soft. Here.

(Overlapping as they pass the socks around.)

**ALISON**

They are quite big aren't they?

**HELEN**

I thought you had colour in your cheeks! They are lovely. They really are very nice socks.

**MARGOT**

Put them in your trophy cabinet.

**NONI**

Now can I eat?

**ALISON**

Have the cake.

## NONI'S BOOK CLUB

Book: The Classic of tea

Wines: Cheeky Mondays Tempranillo

ALISON, comfortably academic

HELEN, younger than the others

MARGOT, on European holiday

NONI, late but definitely not because she forgot and had to rush to the shop at the last minute

Four chairs in Noni's house. There is a large TV. You could add boho touches for eg a large pot plant, throws, cushions.

Helen and Alison are in the room.

**HELEN**

(Into the phone) Up to Dad, I don't care as long as no one loses an eye and no one comes home hungry. Ok. Bye. Love you. Somehow I manage to take care of the children every single day, but he can't manage one night.

**ALISON**

Oh: text from Noni. She absolutely didn't forget and will be here oh (checks time) ten minutes ago. Are you and John OK?

**HELEN**

Fine. Fine. Fine. No. No. No. It's fine.

**ALISON**

Just talk to him sweetheart.

**HELEN**

It doesn't work. It's fine. There's nothing to say. It's... he told me I couldn't ride a motorbike.

**ALISON**

A motorbike. Do you want a motorbike?

**HELEN**

I might. No. Of course I don't. I don't know. Maybe. What if I did? You know my sister Maddi was selling hers. I'm not wrong for a motorbike. Am I? He said 'it's not you'. How does he know what I am? Why does he decide? What is the criteria for a motorbike rider? Why does he know it, when no one told me? What is that? Sorry. It's fine. What would I even do with a motorbike? (noise of Noni arriving) I don't know if I can deal with Noni tonight. You better get Margot up on-

(Alison starts fiddling with tablet to connect Margot, Helen begins texting on her phone)

**NONI**

(arriving with shopping bags) Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Good. Good. You let yourselves in. (pulling out wine) Look I got Cheeky Mondays. It's that one from the place with the trees...Oh no...not the trees one...the one with the seashell...no what's it? The seahorse? Is that Margot? Is she connected? (distributing things from shopping bags and general hostess jobs)

**ALISON**

(Holding tablet, trying to connect to Margot) Still trying. (To Helen) Are you ok hon?

**HELEN**

~~Wine. I need wine.~~ (distracted by texting) I just want him to deal with them for one...night without...me. How hard is feeding three children dinner?

**NONI**

It's seacows. Seacows Winery. They should go to that pizza place with the tables. You know the? Hang on. I'm going to serve the wine in a teapot...(produces tea set)And...ta da...(puts a culturally inappropriate hair piece in her hair)

**HELEN**

Pizza places all have tables.

**NONI**

No, the funny tables. You know. They are swirly. And the red...thing. Don't you love my hair? Let's bow to each other?

**HELEN**

What red thing? No to the bowing.

**NONI**

What's it called? (gestures incomprehensibly) Not bricks. Thing that...you know...you know... Like an igloo.

**HELEN**

The fridge?

**ALISON**



(propping up Margot on the tablet). We've got her. Hi Margot, how's Italy?

**MARGOT**

Buongiorno. Ciao bella. I've got the whole morning for bookclub. Now. Noni. What is that? (the hairpiece). The tea book of yours...(with staccato as her words are cut off) it's... Ki' gu' gwa' ee'

**HELEN**

~~Hi Margot. Yes. The book. It's quite something eh?~~

**ALISON**

~~An intriguing read.~~

**NONI**

No. The opposite of a fridge. Margot, I would offer you wine but

**MARGOT**

(with staccato as her words are cut off) dah' go' ssaa'

**ALISON**

(back to adjusting the laptop). We've lost Margot. Damn. Hang on...

**HELEN**

The opposite of a fridge? What are you talking about?

**ALISON**

Well maybe we'll...begin? (retrieves *The Classic of tea* from bag) Noni? A non fiction. Care to introduce this "Classic of tea"?

**NONI**

It's about making tea. Look. It tells you how to make tea.

**MARGOT**

(muffled and indistinct noises)

**ALISON**

Yes it certainly is an instruction book on making tea. But ~~it's~~

**NONI**

It's a classic. Look. Right there. "The classic of tea".  
See? See?

**HELEN**

When you say "classic"-

**NONI**

It's perfect. Opposite of a fridge: with smoke?

**ALISON**

Perfect for what honey?

**NONI**

Perfect. This is perfect for me. I love tea - I can show  
you my teapots. I'm going to do it. Yes smoke. You know?

**HELEN**

Um, do what?

**NONI**

Tea making. I went to the first night of that course. My  
dried roses didn't...so I didn't...but I was really...and it's

**MARGOT**

(increasingly agitated muffled and indistinct noises)

**ALISON**

That's great I guess, if that's what you want to do.

**HELEN**

Are you planning to make tea as per the instructions in  
this book?

**NONI**

Sure.

**HELEN**

Are you really going to stir tea with "a stick made from the centre of a persimmon tree, with silver plating on both ends, in smooth and graceful movements?"

**MARGOT**

(more agitated muffled and indistinct noises)

**NONI**

Absolutely. I'm sure Amazon will have one.

**HELEN**

I mean...(reads) "Tea can look like breezy clouds streaming out from behind a mountain peak or have wavy patterns like the surface of a windswept lake."

**NONI**

Yeah. So? It's detailed. I want details. I love details. It's a pizza oven. pizza oven. That place with the pizza oven.

**HELEN**

You mean Bella Bella's? John would never go there.

**ALISON**

Noni you should think about some HRT, seriously.

**HELEN**

Listen Noni. (Reads) "In such mountains where several rivers meet staggering together, the water is not good, especially ~~between the hottest part of summer and the first~~ frost of autumn when the dragon is sequestered."

**ALISON**

Sequestered! That's quite poetic.

**NONI**

I could sequester a dragon.

**ALISON**

I don't think you need to. I think the dragon sequesters itself. Self sequestering.

**HELEN**

I don't understand why you picked this book. Do you know anything about it, how old it is?

**NONI**

Well, new. Didn't you buy it new? It's lovely. Look at it, it's got that shiny soft cover. Feel it.

**HELEN**

When was it written?

**NONI**

It's a classic. I don't know. The Victorians liked tea. ~~They took tea in the drawing room with cucumber sandwiches. The nineteenth century? Earlier? That's crazy. Did I pick a real classic classic. So the book is a bit old. But, like it's tea. You put it in hot water. You drink it. That hasn't changed.~~

**MARGOT**

(increasingly agitated muffled and indistinct noises)

**HELEN**

What is that noise? It's from the eighth century. Noni. This book is 1300 years old.

**NONI**

No.

**ALISON**

Look...(shows the relevant page to Noni)

**NONI**

well...that's just...well...~~That's just classic.~~

**ALISON**

What? What is that noise...(looks around) It's Margot. where is she? Where did we put her?

(everyone looks for Margot)

**NONI**

Found her. She's under the dip. Sorry Margot. Oh there's a bit... (retrieves tablet, wipes it down on her bum. Sets it back on the table.) We put the dip on you.

**MARGOT**

Show me.

**NONI**

Show you the book?

**MARGOT**

No. The dip. Show me the dip.

**NONI**

What, this? (Holds up dip for Margot to see)

**MARGOT**

Turn it around so I can see the label. Supermarket dip. You put supermarket dip on me. The Classic of tea. I need to talk about this.

**NONI**

Don't you start too.

**MARGOT**

No. I actually enjoyed it. I've been drinking coffee of-course, when in Rome, but it's just, it's not a word I use readily, but it's a (breaking up again)...beautiful...expensive...you wouldn't...even Pete...What have...others...say'?

**NONI**

Helen's being rude about how old it is.

**MARGOT**

Well that's inappropriate...not...and...se'...blasphemy..chicken...goo'ga'

**NONI**

It is inappropriate. Margot I can't hear you. I'm moving you. (takes tablet to TV and fiddles around with various tech and cables)

**HELEN**

Are you next to a pool? Where's Pete?

**MARGOT**

(face now very large on the TV screen) Prague. I won't see him until France. But the tea, Noni. You should know I approve.

**NONI**

Oh. Really? Well thank you. Margot. This means a lot. I've got the you knows. Heaps of them.

**MARGOT**

It's the right direction for you.

**NONI**

Absolutely. It's nice to have someone get what this means to me. I've been

**MARGOT**

Exactly. You have found something you can commit to. Settle down and do properly.

**HELEN**

Margot, did you read the book?

**NONI**

That's what I've been trying to say.

**MARGOT**

Of course I did. And I know what you think. So the book is old. Don't be an ageist Helen. Now Noni. The business plan for your tea -

**NONI**

A business plan? It's tea. I'm just making tea.

**HELEN**

There's sequestering a dragon.

**ALISON**

I guess that'd go under opportunities and threats.

**MARGOT**

Shoosh up. (To Noni) I'd like to see it-

**NONI**

I haven't, it's not really - my plan is...tea.

**MARGOT**

I can get emails here.

**NONI**

Well I haven't got anything written down exactly...it's more in my

**MARGOT**

Noni. You need to back yourself. You need to believe in yourself. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be a lot of hard work. A new business takes a lot of sacrifice. A lot of careful thought. And discipline. But, this is the right thing for you. I mean how many teapots did you say you have?

**NONI**

Um. I don't know exactly. But. Um Margot you're breaking up again. I'm sorry. I've got to. (Noni adjusts the TV and Margot continues speaking but her audio goes silent.)

(interspersed with a frustrated Margot clearly speaking but no volume)

I'm sorry Margot we can't hear you. I'll move you. I'll try you on my (Noni unplugs Margot and perfunctorily dabs at her phone) I'm just going to move you to my phone...

**HELEN**

Did you see her hat? She looks so. She's just so Margot wherever she goes...And that hotel. Fancy!

**NONI**

Putting people to sleep pays pretty well. (Casually pockets phone)

**HELEN**

What? Pete's a hitman?

**ALISON**

No, an anaesthetist. Did you see her sunnies? ~~She's going for Roman movie star.~~ I haven't been to Italy for...years.

**HELEN**

I'd have to wait 'til everyone's left home to go.

**ALISON**

You'll get there.

**HELEN**

I'm not jealous of Europe.

**ALISON**

I understand hon. I didn't mean to-

**HELEN**

John wouldn't want to go, anyway. He never wants to go anywhere. Where's Margot?

**NONI**

She's gone. I couldn't get her on my phone. Didn't work. You could always take Roger to Europe.

**HELEN**

Stop. Roger's not a library book, I can't just borrow him. I'll try her on mine?

**NONI**

No. no. Don't. She had to go anyway. Roger wouldn't mind.



**HELEN**

We can't all just sleep with Roger. Some of us have husbands. Oh sorry Noni I didn't mean...And Alison. But you know what I mean? Like you've got Tina. You wouldn't just run off on a holiday with Roger.

**ALISON**

She said she's got all morning. I'll call her. You'd enjoy a holiday with Roger. He's actually quite...lovely.

**HELEN**

Hang on. what?

**NONI**

Have you...?

**ALISON**

really...quite...lovely.

**HELEN**

No!

**NONI**

You sly dog. I thought I was the only one, but wow. Don't call Margot.

**ALISON**

Don't be silly, I've got the link. (on the phone organising Margot) It was a very long time ago. I still remember the...details though.

**MARGOT**

(back via Alison's phone) What details?

**HELEN**

Margot - Alison's had a turn with Roger too.

**MARGOT**

What? When? While I've been in Europe?

**HELEN**

No no. Years ago.

**ALISON**

Decades.

**NONI**

So you weren't always...a...a...suffra..suffix...saphire...damnit a ladygay...you know what I mean. There was a time you...

**ALISON**

"Ladygay"? Oh Noni.

It was a long long time ago. Things were messy. I was so young I still thought I could reach out and grab the world and just shake it. Remember that feeling? But yes, Roger was the last man - the last man standing. He was (smiles) there's something a bit...

**NONI**

I know what you mean. Mmmm, did he do that-

**MARGOT**

Noni! You need to get your ducks in a row -

**NONI**

(takes Alison's phone and addresses Margot) I'm sorry Margot you're breaking up again. (Noni puts the phone down and puts the dip back on top of Margot)

A business p-? For tea? I just want to make tea. She doesn't **get** me at all.

(a long drink of Cheeky Mondays)

**HELEN**

Well you have stopped being able to speak in sentences.

**NONI**

I'm doing the best I can. I just don't...I can't take HRT.

**ALISON**

**Why not? It really might help you.**

**NONI**

I don't have...shower fingers. You know?

**HELEN**

What? What? What are shower fingers?

**NONI**

Oh you know. Not the shower the other thing. With soaking.

**ALISON**

A bath? What? Patches are fine in the bath.

**NONI**

No, no your fingers. You know they get...? In the bath.

**HELEN**

Wrinkles? Are you talking about wrinkles?

**NONI**

Yes! I don't have WRINKLES.

**HELEN**

So?

**NONI**

I'm not old. Old women have HRT. I'm too young, I'm still, I don't know, you know well, I don't know but not old. Not OLD old. Not bath fingers.

**HELEN**

You know I'm not opposed to the book cause I'm ageist. It's just - what's the fucking point in dragons? For making tea? Doesn't anyone else think this is just-

**NONI**

I'm sorry if my interest in tea upsets you. I know you think I'm a flake, and frankly that's quite- oh what is that word? I need a what's it? a Naughty Thursday. (Reaches for wine-pot)

**ALISON**

(To Noni) While you're there, pour me a cup of wine too thanks.

**MARGOT**

(Emphatic dippy noises)

**HELEN**

Oh shit! Margot. What did you say? (Removes dip and holds up Margot on the phone)

**MARGOT**

Jesus. Get the dip off me.

Noni. I do take you seriously. I do understand you. You think being bohemian means failing to commit to anything. That this is some sort of special power. You talk. Even when you can't find words. You keep talking. But you don't put your money where your mouth is. You never make anything of anything. You love tea. You want to make tea. I want to start a business. I have opened Pete's cheque book and I'm ready to sign. So that's what this is. This is the universe knocking. I am the universe knocking on your door. And how will you answer? Don't talk. Think. Think about it. No. Don't talk. This is your moment. What will you do? Just decide. In or out. I'm here. I'm staying here. I'm in. No. Don't say anything.

Now, who's turn is it next with Roger?

## HELEN'S BOOK CLUB

Book: Don't Die With A Book Inside You

Article: Rethinking Non-Narrative  
Epistemology Through The  
Phenomenologically Individual Lens Of  
Contingent Singularities And Convergent  
Agentic Capacities

Wines: only gin

NONI, overthinker, slightly chaotic  
ALISON, comfortably academic  
MARGOT, rather proper and well heeled  
HELEN, younger than the others

As before, four chairs, a coffee table. No signs of wine or prepared food. Instead perhaps some evidence/detritus of family life, for eg folded clothes in a laundry basket, a guitar, school bags etc.

**HELEN**

(texting. Then puts phone down) Hopefully the house is ours now. If he can manage this one. So. Welcome. Noni. You're here. "Don't Die With A Book Inside You." What did you think?

**NONI**

Of course I'm here. Why wouldn't I be? (reads) Anna Brinkworth. I'd never heard of her. Did you look her up? She's written heaps of books. I had no idea. I haven't read any of them.

**HELEN**

And?

**NONI**

I do audio books now. In bed. I sleep through the boring bits.

**MARGOT**

How could you know which bits are boring if you are asleep?

**NONI**

I'm asleep.

**MARGOT**

That makes no sen-

**HELEN**

Did they read the acknowledgements at the beginning?

**NONI**

Oh God. I would have slept through that.

**HELEN**

Did anyone read them?

**MARGOT**

I didn't care for chapter seven. the divine-force, and the vibrational energy -

**NONI**

That sounds like good stuff -

**MARGOT**

"When you finally choose to walk the true path of your soul journey, the universe will bend over backwards to walk beside you." How blatantly ridiculous. That's not how the universe works.

**NONI**

It might -

**ALISON**

Thinking that is probably nicer ~~way to pass your days~~ than a chronic existential crisis.

**HELEN**

Maybe. You might know-

**ALISON**

Not really. (non committal)

**MARGOT**

I did the exercises. I wrote out every list. (produces a notebook)

**HELEN**

No way.

**MARGOT**

Didn't everyone?

**NONI**

Of course you did. (takes the notebook, casually flips and reads) Shit. You really did...Look at your writing. It's so neat. Golden life pillars... number one...good wine. YES! number three: a clean bathroom? What?

**MARGOT**

What's wrong with that?

**NONI**

It's just a bit, I don't know. Small. My bathroom is-

**MARGOT**

Small? Small!

If my house is in order, well my house is in order. I can do anything. A clean bathroom is the centre of my entire operation. Thank you. (takes her book back)

**HELEN**

So why did I pick this self help book?

**NONI**

I'm into self help. I love that stuff. But it's an odd choice for -

**HELEN**

Alison?

**ALISON**

I'm sorry hon. I didn't get a chance to read it.

**HELEN**

Really?

**ALISON**

It's been chaotic with the new bathroom, and Tina's foot and the car's theatrics. I thought we'd need to cancel Dolphin Bay but Tina became quite adept on her crutches.

**NONI**

I love Dolphin Bay. Do they still have that ice-cream shop?

**HELEN**

(To Alison) Didn't you read it when it first came out?

**ALISON**

Not that I can recall. It doesn't ring any bells. I thought of you when we were there Noni. The icecream shop. Yes. We got Tina's cake there. Are you still thinking of visiting?



**MARGOT**

You should make a dreamboard for Dolphin Bay. Chapter nine.

**ALISON**

Did you actually make a dreamboard?

**MARGOT**

Of course I made a dreamboard. It was one of the exercises.

**ALISON**

Did you bring it? Let's see it.

**MARGOT**

I had to throw it out.

**NONI**

~~If I made a dreamboard, I'd get glitter on my face. It always gets on my face. And then I go out in public and~~

**MARGOT**

The book was about writing books. I'm not a writer so I had to make adjustments.

**HELEN**

"Writing your book" is metaphoric, isn't it? Isn't Anna saying whatever is inside you, you need to bring it out?

**ALISON**

What are we drinking?

**HELEN**

I found a shiraz called 'writer's block' for us. Hang on... (speaks into phone.) What? Where's dad? Didn't he pick you up? Where are you? Ok, hang on...(addressing the members of bookclub) John can't find the kids. (moves away from the group and speaks into the phone.)

**MARGOT**

If you want metaphor - consider this. Tea leaves are dried up old weeds but -

(CUT HERE)

**NONI**

Why are you still on tea? Don't talk about tea. I can't think about tea. Can we please just talk about tonight's book.

**MARGOT**

Just because you've abandoned your tea dream. Doesn't mean tea suddenly loses its metaph-

**NONI**

I haven't abandoned anything. I still love tea. You're the one who made it intense and weird and now you're trying to make it poetic. You don't-

**MARGOT**

You dipped me. In cheap french onion dip so it's -

**HELEN**

Alison knows Anna, the author.

**NONI**

What? Do you? You should have said so.

**MARGOT**

From the supermarket.

**NONI**

You know Anna?

**ALISON**

No. Oh look she might have done a subject at uni. But we don't "know" each other. Margot, what featured on your dreamboard?

**MARGOT**

I put a man on.

**ALISON**

A man? Any particular man?

**MARGOT**

He had a nicely trimmed beard.

**HELEN**

You're being modest. Didn't you teach her?

**ALISON**

Not really. Possibly we met for a coffee. I can't remember. She might have been looking for ideas for her thesis. What colour beard?

**MARGOT**

Salt and pepper. A sea captain. Definitely not a Karl Marx or a -

**HELEN**

It was a bit more than that-

**ALISON**

Not really.

**MARGOT**

Father Christmas or a garden gnome.

**HELEN**

Weren't you her actual supervisor?

**ALISON**

I don't recall. A garden gnome!

**MARGOT**

Exactly. Chapter fourteen was quite specific.

**NONI**

What was chapter fourteen?

**MARGOT**

Rising to the challenge of the dreamboard.

**HELEN**

But Pete's a close shave.

**MARGOT**

Exactly. So I had Roger.

**NONI**

Oh he's definitely a sea captain. That man could rock one of those old wooden pipes. Can't you just see him on a ship, big cable knit woolly jumper staring out to the horizon -

**MARGOT**

I rang him up and asked him over. Pete was away. He came. I explained chapter fourteen. He was accommodating.

**NONI**

You...?

**MARGOT**

uh-ha.

**HELEN**

So you and Rog...?

**MARGOT**

Yes.

**ALISON**

You chapter fourteened Roger?

**MARGOT**

~~I didn't "chapter fourteen" anybody.~~

**NONI**

He rose to the challenge?

**ALISON**

OOh. You too. How was it?

**NONI**

Did he do that-

**HELEN**

Jesus Margot. Don't you care that -

**MARGOT**

What?

**HELEN**

What about Pete?

**MARGOT**

I straightened everything before Pete came home. It was fine. Roger left. I threw out the dreamboard and made roast chicken.

**HELEN**

Roast chicken? Margot! That's not what chapter fourteen was about. Was it? You know what I-

**ALISON**

Brilliant work, brilliant work, just brilliant, ladies. Ladies. Come on. Come on. You both went far above and beyond. I think it's wine time. Now Helen, where will I find the Writer's Block?

**HELEN**

But roast chicken -

**MARGOT**

Why are you stuck on that? Pete likes roast chicken. There's no harm in a roast chicken.

**ALISON**

And glasses, Helen? In the kitchen? Noni go find glasses will you?

(Noni heads to the kitchen)

**MARGOT**

You didn't mind when Noni had Roger.

**HELEN**

Noni's not married. You've got Pete-

**MARGOT**

I will add that I used a very nice lemon wedge in the stuffing.

**HELEN**

The roast chicken is not the problem here. (interrupted by her phone) Oh fuck! (speaks into it)...No. I told you. No. Bookclub. I did. I did. Yes. Yes tonight's my "little book club thingy"...At the hall. The hall. The Karate hall. The pizza place. The one with the thing that's the opposite of an igloo. I don't care. (Hangs up.)

John is driving me to fucking distraction and you don't even care that you're married. Didn't you say that you would 'forsake all others'? Didn't you agree to that? Doesn't that mean something? If you're not happy - leave. You can afford to. You don't have kids at home. There's no reason for you to stay.

**MARGOT**

I don't know what I said. I was nineteen. I wasn't paying attention to what anyone was saying, I looked amazing. I had lace up to my neck. John is around. He's there. You complain about him constantly but at least he's there. When you go home tonight he'll be in the same room as you. He'll ask you how tonight went. I don't know if Pete will be there. And if he is, he'll be in his study or asleep. Actually I will know where he is - he'll be behind whichever door in my house is closed. No it wouldn't be better if I left. It wouldn't make any difference. I've weighed it up. He can stay behind his doors. I have things to do.

**HELEN**

Like Roger?

**MARGOT**

He's a start.

**ALISON**

What about cheese? Noni, can you see cheese?

**NONI**

(from kitchen) Looking. Looking.

**NONI**

(reappearing with goods) Cheese. I couldn't find crackers, so there's bread. And olives. And whatever these are. Are they pickled onions?

**HELEN**

Yeah, they're John's. Help yourself. You know Alison, she specifically names you. In her acknowledgements.

**ALISON**

What? Who?

**HELEN**

Anna.

**NONI**

Anna who?

**HELEN**

Anna. The author. Tonight's book?

**ALISON**

No no. No she doesn't.

**HELEN**

When I was at Maddi's. She loves all this self help stuff. She had Anna's book. That's where I found it. She was feeding Charlie so I flicked through and saw your name. HOLY SHIT. THAT'S ALISON. That's why I picked this book for us. (flicks through book and starts reading)

**ALISON**

You really don't have to -

**HELEN**

"To Dr Alison Buckland. My north star. Thank you for being such a stalwart, a true mentor and inspiration. I relish all your insights, and our countless hours of wonderful conversations over the years. I couldn't have written a single book without you."

**NONI**

What? This is in the acknowledgements? That's amazing Alison.

**HELEN**

Maddi says she's sold millions of books.

**NONI**

You get a whole paragraph. Look.

**MARGOT**

A whole paragraph.

**ALISON**

A whole paragraph. Woo. hoo.

(general pause for confusion)

**ALISON**

(eventually)

She's probably (calculates) 32. She went straight through, submitted her PhD before she was 26. Look at her picture on the back. Look at that impeccable hair. Did you see her teeth? And she's got Mark. They ski. I know. Who skis? I didn't know it still snowed in Australia. She's written five books in six years and goes skiing with Mark and - I tell everyone, undergrads, postgrads, 'What do you actually want to say?' And they tell me what they actually want to say, and I tell them 'just write that down.' That's it. I have to teach them about rhythm and style and architecture and metaphors and gestures and blah blah blah. Otherwise they panic. But the crux of it is very simple - write down what you actually want to say. They look at me like, like I've said here in my class we pick each others' noses.



Not Anna. She goes 'of course' and writes five bloody books.

I'm not - It's fantastic. She's fantastic. People love her books - Her ideas are -if we overlook the questionable physics - actually sound and her writing's well structured. I don't want to - young maybe. But of course. Of course. She is young. And good at everything. She hasn't had any failure yet to soften the edges... there's a, just a whiff of not smugness but

**MARGOT**

Don't worry. All her failure is ahead of her.

**HELEN**

It's not her fault she's young.

**ALISON**

Of course.

No. look honestly -

**HELEN**

You've written heaps. Haven't you?

**ALISON**

People always assume I've written a book. I always assumed I would write a book. I teach writing for fuck's sake.

**HELEN**

You could take some time off. Focus. Write your great book.

**ALISON**

Remember that sabbatical Noni? The Desert Writers Retreat? Sitting on that verandah, looking out over the desert for four months. I didn't write a book. I didn't write a chapter. I didn't write an outline.

**MARGOT**

You did nothing? For four months? Not a single word.

**ALISON**

Nothing. Well not nothing exactly-

**HELEN**

What then?

**ALISON**

A small piece. You know, a...

**NONI**

What? What?

**ALISON**

I wrote an article.

**HELEN**

Well that's not nothing. Right? Isn't that what academics are supposed to write?

**ALISON**

It was a nasty dry little article. Awful. Then I drove back. And cried in the car.

**HELEN**

But you know, make that article into a book? What is it called? What's it about?

**ALISON**

I don't remember.

**HELEN**

Lies!

**ALISON**

You won't like it.

**NONI**

Try us.

**ALISON**

It's not really for non academic-

**MARGOT**

For goodness sake, we're not idiots. Just tell us.

**ALISON**

(pained) oooh. (pause) You ready? OK. Hang on, I'll find it...(searches phone) My great article, from four months' retreat is..."Rethinking Non-Narrative Epistemology Through The Phenomenological Lens Of Individual Reinterpretation Of Contingent Singularities And Convergent Agentic Capacities".

(Silence. All drink)

**HELEN**

Oh Alison.

**NONI**

Um...

**MARGOT**

It's not exactly catchy is it?

**NONI**

So it's about um..  
(a pause)

**ALISON**

It's fine. I know.

**HELEN**

Is it what you actually wanted to say?

**ALISON**

I don't know. I can't remember what it's about.

**NONI**

Ali -

**MARGOT**

The department would have hated that. Four months' salary.

**ALISON**

You'd think so hey? Actually they

**HELEN**

Margot! (To Alison) it's ok. You don't need to-

**ALISON**

gave me morning tea.

**HELEN**

What?

**MARGOT**

Why?

**NONI**

They gave you cake?

**ALISON**

and a a...certificate. framed. Apparently it was "very important". "my best work". It was a nice frame.

**HELEN**

They thought *this* was your best work? Ouch. That's gotta sting.

**MARGOT**

Did anybody read it?

**ALISON**

How could they? But it was published in a couple of obscure journals. I just, I thought one day I would write my own book. But I haven't got a book inside me. It doesn't matter. Anna couldn't have written hers without me apparently. So my life hasn't been for nothing. I can't die with a book inside me if I don't have a book inside me.

(long pause)

**HELEN**

I'll find the wine.

**MARGOT**

No. No. No. Have some sense of proportion and propriety.  
Alison needs gin. (Helen finds and distributes gin as  
Margot continues.)  
Here's your gin.

(Shock)

Ladies: to Alison. Who won't die with a book inside her if  
she doesn't have a book inside her. And to the prodigal  
Anna, who for all her millions of sold books, did not think  
of that possibility.  
(all drink)

**ALISON**

And to Roger.

**MARGOT**

Cometh the hour, cometh the man.

(cheers for Roger)

**MARGOT**

Helen. It's your turn next with Roger.

**HELEN**

Jesus.

## ALISON'S BOOK CLUB

Book: The Enchanted Penis

Wine: unspecified but clearly very fancy  
bubbles

NONI, teamaker at The Classic of tea

ALISON, author, rambler, semi-retired academic

MARGOT, international traveller, investor at The Classic of  
tea

HELEN, slightly older, L plater

Alison, Margot and Noni sit in chairs around a cafe table.  
There are boxes in various states of unpack, with items  
that suggest a teamaker's establishment. Alison is  
unwrapping, popping and pouring Fancy Bubbles into  
champagne flutes.

**NONI**

~~I feel like w~~We should be drinking tea (opens a box and smells)

**MARGOT**

Don't touch it. That tea is merchandise. If you want it you can pay for it. Thank you. (to the offered glass of bubbles) (takes the tea and puts it away from Noni. Picks up a package) Is this the aprons? I told you I wanted a blue one.

**ALISON**

Come on. Fancy bubbles for us tonight. There'll be plenty of time for tea. (handing Margot a glass of fancy bubbles)

**NONI**

You can't have blue. Blue is for dentists. ~~I got you brown.~~ Try it on, see if it fits.

**MARGOT**

(grumbles but does so) It's an apron. How could it not fit? Did you submit the receipt?

**NONI**

Receipt?

**MARGOT**

I sent you an email. There's a system. Aprons are a business expense.

**NONI**

Oh My God.

**ALISON**

(laughing) I think this is going to work out perfectly with you two. What could possibly go wrong? Where's Helen?

**MARGOT**

(scrolls through phone) Hmmm. No, no message.

**ALISON**

Is she OK? Does anyone know? I haven't seen her since last bookclub.

**NONI**

Let's start. We can open another bottle for the toast when she comes. So, The Enchanted Penis.

**MARGOT**

I read it on the plane. What a title. I had to hide the cover behind the safety instruction card.

**ALISON**

Do you like it?

**MARGOT**

I finished it before Singapore. I actually couldn't put it down.

**ALISON**

(pleased) Really?

**NONI**

Perfectly nice women. Who meet up to embroider together. I put it on the audiobook. And went to bed and then

**ALISON**

Is there problem with women embroidering together?

**MARGOT**

~~I've never heard of an embroidery circle. Is that a thing?~~  
~~But~~ The book wasn't really about the needlework.

**ALISON**

What do you think it was about?

**NONI**

~~I thought it would put me to sleep. But~~ I stayed up listening. I couldn't sleep. I thought embroidery circle would be an immediate sleeping pill. But. All the women in embroidery circle - every single one - one after the other



- had sex with the same man. ~~The same man. I had to go back over and make sure. Yes. Every single one.~~

**MARGOT**

Not at the same time.

**NONI**

With Richard. He was called Richard.

**ALISON**

They all liked a bit of Dick? Did you think that was funny?

**NONI**

They all knew about it. And none of them minded. He didn't mind. I got the kindle.

**MARGOT**

Of course Richard didn't mind.

**NONI**

Like it was totally democratic-

**MARGOT**

No. It was downright socialism.

**ALISON**

Redistribution of the penis? To each according to their needs?

**NONI**

Richard's penis was enchanted. It magically transformed the lives of everyone who touched it. All the women changed.

**MARGOT**

~~What's that writing genre with the two words? It's an oxymoron? Magic...~~

**ALISON**

~~Do you mean magic realism?~~

**MARGOT**

It was a socialist magic realism bodice ripper set in an embroidery circle.

**ALISON**

Did you notice the use of metaphor?

**NONI**

(Confused) I read the whole book. It's the first bookclub book I've read. Aren't you impressed?

**MARGOT**

This is the first book you've read. You've been in a bookclub for how long now? Five years?

**NONI**

I know. And. something. Listen. (Reads)  
"Richard had a pleasing beard. Threaded with silver and neatly trimmed. It brought to Margarite's mind nothing so much as the virile strength of a sea captain."

**MARGOT**

I did like the sound of his beard.

**NONI**

(Flicking through the book to a new place). And, and this.  
"From her pocket, Nanette produced a silk handkerchief. Embroidering circle pealed with delighted laughter as the significance of this souvenir dawned on each member. Nanette had indeed taken her "turn around the garden" with Richard."

**MARGOT**

A hanky?

**NONI**

Instead of socks. Now. "Alice had never married, instead she kept house with another spinster, and despite having never written poetry, she ran a class at the ladies' institute on the construction of sonnets."

**MARGOT**

Ah-Ha. Lesbians! (Looking at Alison realisingly) Ah.

**ALISON**

Do you think sonnets work?

**NONI**

They're not like us. They are us. They are actually us.  
They have embroidery,

**MARGOT**

we have books. They are Regency,

**NONI**

We're now. Richard.

**MARGOT**

Roger. Ah. See how useful you can be when you read the  
book?  
(Both drink)

**MARGOT**

But is Roger's penis enchanted? Like Richard's? Have we all  
changed? I invested in a tea venture.

**ALISON**

I went full "ladygay".

**NONI**

I read a book. An actual bookclub book. First book I read  
and I'm in it. I'm in a book. Am I famous now? That's a  
change.

**ALISON**

I doubt it, really-do you think Helen will like it?

**MARGOT**

Helen. Has she changed? We'll know if Helen has had her  
turn with Roger's magic phallus, if she's changed.

**NONI**

Oooh. In the book Helen is 'Eleanor'. She certainly has a turn with Richard. Then she buys a horse.

**ALISON**

Well there weren't motorbikes in Regency England.

**NONI**

What? What do motorbikes have to do with-

**MARGOT**

Someone has written down and published my life story. That's a complete-

**ALISON**

Maybe they didn't realise it wou-

**MARGOT**

Absolutely scandalous. I need to-

**ALISON**

What if they didn't mean any harm, what if they-

**MARGOT**

The law. Will have to be involved.

**ALISON**

What? The police. Oh my God. I'm sure that won't be-

**MARGOT**

Yes. Margarite-me-is very engaging and I make for wonderful narrative. But it's my life. I need editorial rights. I need input. I need final approval. And royalties. Right. Pete must have a lawyer. I will need a contract. Should I sue? Who is the? I can't see a publisher? Who's this author?

**ALISON**

(possibly collapsing into a chair) AAAHH!

**NONI**

(reads front cover) Alistair Bancroft? Do I know anyone called Alistair? There's so many people to remember. I don't know who I know any more.

**MARGOT**

They'd have to know about the...the details...the socks, the chicken. Clearly the author knows all of us.

**NONI**

It's...Is it...Roger? I mean he knows...a lot about us, you know? Write what you know, like he knows, KNOWS us. You know?

**MARGOT**

Roger couldn't write a novel, he wouldn't have the time. He's been far too...busy.

**NONI**

So who? How? Are we being spied on? Are we bugged? Is someone in the garden recording what we say? Oh My God.

**ALISON**

Why on earth would anyone bug our bookclub? Just a second, I can expl-

**HELEN**

(enters)  
I took a wrong turn. You didn't wait?

**MARGOT**

Fancy bubbles? We've started on the book. What did you think of The Enchanted Penis?

**HELEN**

No. No thanks. No.

**ALISON**

You sure? Tonight we are toasting the teamakers.

**HELEN**

I can't. Now this book-

**MARGOT**

I know. We're trying to establish the author. They need to send me checks.

**NONI**

Are you not having alcohol? Who doesn't drink fancy bubbles?

**ALISON**

Oh My God are you -

**HELEN**

Absolutely not. No. Shit. No. No. No. Nothing like that. No.

**MARGOT**

So not that.

**NONI**

That would have been quite a change. Quite a change.

**ALISON**

We can't toast the tea if you're not drinking. Are you sick? Hon. Are you OK?

**HELEN**

I'm fine. Honestly.

**MARGOT**

Then what?

**HELEN**

I got my Ls. I can't drink. But this book-

**ALISON**

What are you talking about? You've been driving for decades.

**HELEN**

I've got my motorbike Ls. I bought Maddi's motorbike. I read the book and there's-

**NONI**

You rode here on a motorbike? A motorbike? When did this happen? What? Where is it? What colour is it?

**ALISON**

So you got it.

**MARGOT**

You know...that's certainly quite a...transformation.

**HELEN**

I just wanted-

**NONI**

Like Eleanor's horse.

**HELEN**

Are you talking about the book?

**NONI**

Page 35, down here on the second paragraph. I marked that-

**ALISON**

Helen, you don't have to-

**HELEN**

(grabbing Noni's book. As she speaks she engages in some vigorous destruction of the book.)

How fucking hilarious. Yes obviously I'm Eleanor in this fucking book. And you're laughing because instead of a horse, I bought a motorbike.

**NONI**

My notes. (picking up a ripped out page.) page 103. That was a good one-

**HELEN**

And because of this stupid book that must mean I slept with Roger in real life. I'll tell you what's not funny. John

didn't mind about the motorbike. Apart from worrying I might hurt myself. He didn't get it, but he didn't mind. Then he read this book. This fucking book. Why is it such a good fucking book? He couldn't put it down. He read the whole thing. And then...And then...He realised it was us. I had to tell him about Roger and how everyone has had a turn and how it was my turn. And he thought the book proved I must have slept with Roger. Fuck. Fuck this book.

(Helen throws what's left of the book and Noni retrieves and nurses it)

**MARGOT**

You told him? First rule of bookclub! Don't talk about bookclub.

**ALISON**

Oh hon.

**HELEN**

And then. John said if I had an affair with Roger he would...

**NONI**

If he kicks you out you can stay with me, on my couch.

**MARGOT**

For goodness sake Noni. A couch. Helen you'll stay with me in my guest suite.

**HELEN**

No. It was worse.

**ALISON**

Worse? What did he say? I'm so s-

**HELEN**

He said. He said he would...understand.

**NONI**

Oh. No.



**HELEN**

He didn't shout. He just got really quiet. He said. He said he knew he was simple. That our lives weren't fancy. And that...all he needed was me. He said I was enough for him. Our house. The kids.

He said. Our wedding day was his happiest day. Except he said all the days together are his best days. He said life's good. Just laughing at the TV. A beer. Him and me.

He said he hoped he could make it work. That he could somehow be enough to make me happy. But that I always seemed restless. And he didn't know what to do.

Then. He cried. And whispered.

"I just wake up everyday and love you."

**NONI**

(Genuinely scandalised) Utter Arsehole. I can't believe he said that to you

**MARGOT**

Inexcusable. He had no right speaking to you like that. It's completely...disarming. Disarming.

**NONI**

What a bore.

**HELEN**

It's worse than that. He's...happy. He's happy.

**ALISON**

Oh God-

**MARGOT**

He's what?

**NONI**

Fuck.

**HELEN**

Then we held hands. I don't know if we were breaking up. Or reconciling. I was quite used to being unhappy.

Now I don't know what I am. Shit.

(Silence)

**MARGOT**

So you rang Roger?

**HELEN**

Only one person knew that I was thinking about buying Maddie's motorbike. Someone I told in confidence. I can tell who your frigging fucking bullshit Alistair Bancroft is. It's Alison. Fuckity. Fuck. Well thanks to Alison, My life is now completely fucked. My husband loves me. And is content and happy. Thanks a fuckton Alison. Maybe I will have wine.

(picks up a glass)

**MARGOT**

Alison wrote this? Damnit, I can't sue Alison. Can I?

**NONI**

Alison. You wrote this book? So...I'm not famous?

**ALISON**

Yes It's me. I'm Alistair. Hon, I didn't, I never tho- oh my God-

**HELEN**

Stop it. Enough of the "hon's" and the "sweetheart's".

You're a, I don't know, a viper. I'm not your

(breaks glass in her hand)

fucking-oh fuck. I've cut my hand.

**ALISON**

(trying to administer first aid)

Here let me

**HELEN**

Just fuck off. Alison. You've. done. enough.

**MARGOT**

First aid kit, in that box Noni. Quick sticks. Blood is hard to get out.

(Margot attends to Helen, Noni sweeps up the glass. Alison collects her belongings and exits unnoticed.)

**NONI**

They eat a lot of slices of orange cake. Anyone notice that? They're always eating slices of orange cake. Fourteen times. When they take tea in the library, did you-

**MARGOT**

Sorry Noni. Did you read this book? I must have missed that in all the excitement.

**NONI**

Alright. Alright. So what's with the orange cake Al? Where is Alison? She must have gone.

**HELEN**

Who cares? She ruined my life.

**MARGOT**

Right. That's it. Helen. Stop bleeding. Noni get Alison on the phone. She can't have gone far. Speaker. Thank you. Al, can you hear me?

**ALISON**

(over the phone)

Yes. I'm so sorry.

**MARGOT**

No. Just listening. Noni has a question for you. Noni?

**NONI**

What's with all the orange cake?

**ALISON**

I don't know what people ate. There wasn't time to do any research. I just started...I just. Look it just poured out of me. Tina was in Sydney I started and then I couldn't stop. I called in sick for a week and went on a bender. And then - there it was. The Enchanted Penis.

**MARGOT**

And then?

**ALISON**

And then, self publishing is easy enough. I just printed 4 copies. I just thought it would be fun. For us. For bookclub. I didn't mean to cause...

**HELEN**

Well you did.

**MARGOT**

What Helen? Actually? Wah wah wah. Your husband loves you. He supports everything you do. This book has ruined your life how exactly? All it did was make your husband even happier with you.

Now. Alison. I can't sue you. Noni isn't famous. And Helen is fine. She's stopped bleeding. You need to turn around and get back here. I have a proposal for you. Alright?

**ALISON**

Yes ma'am. Turning around. One mo...

**NONI**

(turns off phone)

Did anyone else read the acknowledgements?

(general flipping through books to the front cover, and a moment of silent reading.)

"Thank you to my bookclub friends. I couldn't have written this without you. AB"

(Alison enters. Silence.)

**HELEN**

So Anna was wrong. You actually had a book inside you.

**ALISON**

And now I don't. According to Anna I can die.

**MARGOT**

No. Anna doesn't get to decide that. I need you alive. I have a plan. The Enchanted Penis will be for sale in our tea shop. I will be your publisher.

**ALISON**

What?

**HELEN**

What?

**NONI**

What?

**MARGOT**

And I'm putting your name on the cover.

**ALISON**

I don't think so.

**NONI**

Yes. It must be you Alison. You wrote it. You should be very proud. It's the only book I-(sharp look from Margot)-Helen?

**HELEN**

What can I say? I'm sorry Al.

**ALISON**

Imagine what the English department would think if they knew.

**MARGOT**

What would they think? Not that it's their business. But so what?

**ALISON**

I think they would...I mean...they would...ah...

**MARGOT**

They're not going to fire you. For writing a book.

**ALISON**

Well, they might. It's trash.

**MARGOT**

Would it matter? You're not on a career trajectory at this stage of your life.

**ALISON**

Thanks for that.

**HELEN**

It's what you actually wanted to say. Exactly what you tell your students to do.

**ALISON**

Yes. This is true.

**MARGOT**

Well that's settled then. We will organise a run for the teashop with your name on.

**ALISON**

Fuck it. OK. Let's do it. More fancy bubbles. Ok. there's a lot to toast. We got a book, a motorbike, a teamaking establishment from the 8th century, Roger's eponymous enchanted penis. Raise your glasses. Ladies, it is my absolute pleasure to launch the...

**NONI**

Three weeks before official opening

**ALISON**

Three weeks before official opening, non official prelaunch, exclusive to bookclub Classic of tea tea making enterprise toast.

**NONI**

Fuck. I can't repeat all of that.

**MARGOT**

Shoosh. drink.

(toasting)

**NONI**

There's just one thing.

**MARGOT**

What?

**NONI**

It's Helen.

**HELEN**

What?

**NONI**

It was Helen's turn. And she did get a motorbike.

**MARGOT**

Oh. Oh! (to Helen) It was your turn.

**HELEN**

My turn?

**NONI**

With Roger?

**HELEN**

Roger?

**ALISON**

With the enchanted penis? Your turn in the garden?

**HELEN**

Was it really?

- FIN -