

Vacant Possession: R.K.Vasey

He had set up a table with two large paper shredding machines, a squat cardboard box supplied by the removalist and 20 or so colourful document files each labelled by Tax Year. She said, 'Just keep the last seven years of records, it's an opportunity to clear the decks!'

He selected at random one of the files with a dymo tag suggesting it was for the year 2004. Unlocking the dusty plastic lock revealed faded yellow file dividers with headings like 'banking', 'Centrelink', 'insurance' and something called 'miscellaneous'. He grabbed a handful of bank statements, removed the staples from the top left-hand corner and attempted feeding one of the sheets into a machine. Distracted, he started to read about the expenditures from all those years ago. He thought, did we always spend that much on alcohol, petrol and coffee?

A wave of memory took over and he found himself sorting through his father's papers again. Each power bill had been forensically analysed, comparing estimated usage with actual meter readings. All that time and effort to save a few pence when in the end all was shredded and forgotten.

His focus returned to the job in hand and one entry stood out from the rest, a payment of 1500 Mexican pesos. He was taken away to a different world, the vast Zocalo, the military flag ceremony, mariachi bands and fireworks. At that point she came in, looked at the empty cardboard box, sans shredding and said, 'Get a grip, we have to vacate this place next week.'

He thought, why do new beginnings always follow a dream of the past.