

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Precious

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by Barry Kay

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EXTRACT

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# PRECIOUS

A play by

**Barry Kay.**

A LARGE CRATE, BOLDLY MARKED WITH THE WORDS "VERY FRAGILE", APPEARS FROM BEHIND A PILE OF BOXES OF ASSORTED SIZES. IT IS MOVING WITH APPARENTLY NO VISIBLE MEANS OF PROPULSION. IT MOVES AROUND THE SPACE FOR A WHILE, AS THOUGH IT IS EXPLORING.

A MAN AND A WOMAN ENTER. THEY ARE MR AND MRS RALPH AND EUNICE RATTLEFAN. THE MAN IS CARRYING A REMOTE CONTROL CONSOLE (LIKE THOSE USED FOR REMOTE CONTROL CARS AND PLANES). HE APPEARS TO BE USING THE CONSOLE TO TRY TO CONTROL AND GUIDE THE BOX. HE IS NOT HAVING MUCH SUCCESS. RALPH AND EUNICE ARE BOTH CLUMSY AND TRIP OVER OR BACK INTO THINGS CONSTANTLY.

**Eunice: In here, Ralph. Yes, right here.**

**Ralph: Right you are then, Eunice. Brilliant! Just brilliant!**

RALPH MANIPULATES THE REMOTE CONTROL. THEY BOTH LOOK AT THE BOX. SUDDENLY, IT CHARGES AT MRS RATTLEFAN AND CHASES HER AROUND THE PERFORMANCE AREA.

**Eunice: Aah! Make it stop, Ralph! Make it stop!**

**Ralph: Don't worry, Eunice. It's perfectly harmless. Ow!**

THE BOX HAS RUN OVER RALPH'S FOOT. FINALLY IT COMES TO A HALT.

**There, you see?**

**Eunice: Give me the remote control, Ralph. Let me try.**

**Ralph: That won't be necessary, Eunice. I've got everything under control.**

**Eunice: Ralph Rattlefan. Dear oh dear. These Remote Control Boxes of yours are a brilliant invention. But not if you can't control them remotely. Aaaah!**

THE BOX GIVES MRS RATTLEFAN A BUMP. SHE JUMPS AWAY.

**Ralph:**Never mind, Eunice. We'll work out all the glitches and they'll be one of our greatest inventions. I'm sure of it.

**Eunice:**I hope Augustina is all right in there.

THEY KNOCK ON THE BOX AND CALL.

**Augustina?**

**Ralph:**Augustina?

FINALLY THERE IS A KNOCK IN RETURN FROM INSIDE THE BOX. RALPH AND EUNICE PLAY A LITTLE PERCUSSION PIECE WITH THE BOX. THEY TAKE THE LID OFF THE BOX. GUS EMERGES, BLEARY EYED BUT NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR. SHE IS COVERED IN PROTECTIVE PACKAGING AND WHEN SHE STEPS OUT SHE IS WEARING A PADDED SUIT, GOGGLES ETC. RALPH AND EUNICE CLUMSILY HELP GUS OUT OF THE CRATE. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY CLUMSY BECAUSE THEY ARE TRYING SO HARD TO BE CAREFUL. GUS IS A LITTLE DISORIENTED AND UNSTEADY ON HER FEET AT FIRST. DURING THE SCENE SHE BEGINS TO EXPLORE. HER PARENTS ARE AT GREAT PAINS TO PREVENT HER FROM TOUCHING ANYTHING WHILE AT THE SAME TIME FUSSING OVER HER. THERE IS AN ALMOST CONSTANT "SAFETY DANCE" AND/OR SLAPSTICK ROUTINE GOING ON, INVOLVING TUMBLES, FALLS, CATCHES, BALANCES, JUGGLING, ETC.

**Eunice:**Augustina!

**Augustina:**Gus, Mum.

**Ralph:**Are you all right, Augustina?

**Augustina:**I'm-

**Eunice:**Yes of course she's all right. Aren't you Augustina? You're all right aren't you? Yes of course you are.

**Augustina:**Yes, I'm fine. STRETCHING. A bit-

**Eunice:**Stiff? Yes of course you are, you poor thing. Never mind. That'll pass soon sweetheart.

GUS PICKS UP THE REMOTE CONTROL (FOR THE MOVING BOXES) AND STARTS TO PLAY WITH IT.

**Ralph:**Oh. Ah. Now give that to Daddy, sweetheart.

RALPH TAKES THE REMOTE CONTROL FROM GUS. SHE THEN CONTINUES EXPLORING.

**Eunice:**Well here we are, Augustina. A new home in a lovely, quiet little town.

GUS IS EXPLORING SOMEWHAT RECKLESSLY. RALPH AND EUNICE DANCE AROUND HER, TRYING TO KEEP HER OUT OF HARM'S WAY.

**Ralph:** But you've still got to be very careful, Augustina. You see - you're not like everybody else.

**Eunice:** No. You're not like everybody else. You're... well... you're...

**Ralph:** Different.

**Eunice:** Yes, you're different. You're special. You're precious. You need help and protection.

**Ralph:** And that's what we do, Augustina. Be careful there! We can invent things to help and protect you, from everything.

THEY BEGIN TO TAKE THINGS OUT OF THE BOXES AND PUT THEM ON OR ATTACH THEM TO GUS.

**Eunice:** Like this helmet with extra padding for your delicate little head.

**Ralph:** And this padded suit to stop you being hurt by running into things. You see? Now you can't hurt yourself.

**Gus:** Un-

**Eunice:** Yes, I know it's a little uncomfortable, darling. Nevermi-

**Gus:** Too-

**Eunice:** Hot. Yes. We've been over this before, Augustina. It's all for your own good. Oh! I know. I've got something for you. Now because we're in this new town, I've invented an "I'm Lost" Tape Player.

**Gus:** Why?

**Eunice:** In case you get lost, my darling. Silly billy. Now, where is it? Where did I pack it? I'm sure I put it somewhere safe. Ah here it is!

IN HER SEARCH, EUNICE ENDS UP ON TOP OF THE HIGHEST BOX ON THE SET.

**AAAAAAH!!** How did I get up here?! **Ralph!** Help me. Get me down **Ralph!** Quickly! Oh, **Ralph.**

**Ralph:** Don't panic, Eunice. I'll have you down in a jiff. Stay calm, dear.

RALPH MANAGES TO GET EUNICE DOWN IN A FUNNY ACROBATIC MANNER.