

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Ray

by Tony Nicholls

EXTRACT

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RAY

CHARACTERS:

MEGAN

RAY, her husband

PAULA, their daughter

KEITH, their son

First presented at the National Conference of the Alzheimer's Association,
Performing Arts Centre, Mandurah, WA, September 23, 1999
with the following cast:

MEGAN – KELLY WALMSLEY

RAY/KEITH – HEATH MILLER

PAULA – KERRY MASON

DIRECTED BY TONY NICHOLLS

NOTE:

This piece was commissioned to be performed in three parts spread over the three days of the conference. Time is assumed to have passed between the three sections. However, for various reasons this format was changed and all three parts were performed together with only a moment of rest between the sections. The whole performance lasted about 45 minutes.

The circumstances of the original production dictated that Ray and Keith had to be played by one – young – actor. This worked very well but I can imagine a production in which they are played by separate actors with Ray a silent presence during the second and third parts. Either way, I think the play offers interesting opportunities for the performers and could work well as a festival production or as part of an evening of short plays.

TONY NICHOLLS

RAY

ONE: WE'LL MANAGE

THE THREE ACTORS SIT IN CHAIRS, FACING THE AUDIENCE.
THEY STAND WHEN THEY SPEAK.

MEGAN: I was in the yard hanging out some clothes, feeling a bit peckish, looking forward to a bit of something for lunch before I went to work. Thought I heard a car door slam. A minute later I look up and he's there. What you doing home this time of day? I said, Got the sack? Wouldn't have said it if I'd known of course. Bloody good as, he says, bloody good as.

RAY: I've never failed a test in my life. First aid, school exams, driving test, passed 'em all, flying colours, bloody distinctions some of 'em and then suddenly there's this kid with his bloody glasses and his poncy little laptop sitting there telling me I've 'failed to meet the required standard'. I mean, what?

passed and You've got it wrong, I said, your little machine's had the gong. I mean Kipper Hughes there, I told him, the only brains he's got are curled up in his jocks. You check your little mate I'm a person, I you'll see I'm right. There's no mistake, he says, we've verified the result. Look, he just smiles you said, people don't get failed by machines, your pc's got its digits in a twist. And wrong. Bastard. know the way they do like they're so superior and couldn't possibly be

MEGAN: I'd never seen him so worked up, I wondered if he'd punched the bloke - or worse. He looked angry enough. But there was something else, I could tell, it wasn't just anger, I didn't know what it was at the time, but later, well.

some So what's the story? I says. They've sent me home, he says, to do me homework, like six years. naughty kid! Given me the benefit of the doubt being as I've worked for 'em for twenty-

know, like Then he shows me this book, great thick thing it was, with that plastic wire binding you a manual.

That's Got to learn all this, he says, and then tomorrow they'll let me take the bloody test again. all very well, I said, but what if - ?

RAY: That's what I asked him. What if, I says, what if you still reckon I've failed? He looks at me, but he's not smiling. It'll mean you're not proficient, he says. Not up to what's required. In two months time the old system'll be gone, finished, this is all there'll be and if you're not proficient with it - What then? I says - then, he says, I have to report to your manager that we have a -

HE STOPS TO THINK OF THE WORD

- problem.

MEGAN: Then you'd better get on it with, I said. I'll make us a bit of lunch before I go to work. Keith's at school, Paula's at the uni till late so you can have the house to yourself. He didn't say anything so I went in and got him a cheese and salad sandwich, that he likes. Then I had to go down to do my shift at the minimart. When I left, he was sitting there, in the lounge room, just staring at this bloody great book.