

Perfecting Pratas by Desmond Sim

Annotations by Teacher Jo

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Scene 1

In the kitchen. Morning. It is a comfortable, extremely neat kitchen—small, but outfitted with several items to show that the owner is quite an accomplished cook: an egg beater, a blender, a convection-cum-microwave oven. The appliances are not expensive, but they are well used. BEN is getting ready to go to school. He is dressed in a junior college uniform. He is packing an omelette sandwich for lunch. ALBERT enters. He has just come back from shift work. He is also in uniform—navy pants and a white shirt with epaulette⁽¹⁾ tabs.

* There is a lot of respect for the kitchen as a space. We see this in both Ben & Albert, because of how clean & neat they keep it.

BEN Good morning, Pa ...

ALBERT Mm. Make sure you clean up the crumbs on the table before you go.

10

BEN How was your shift last night?

ALBERT Okay lah. Did you hear me?

BEN Ya, of course. I always do. I wouldn't dare mess up your kitchen!

No "Ben, here are some strawberries," or "Why don't you bring this to school." Just: here.

ALBERT puts a small punnet⁽²⁾ of fruit on the table. There is nearly some fear [Diction].

ALBERT Here. [characterisation] Again, we see here how Ben is the more expressive person, and Albert is more stoic.

BEN Strawberries? Ooh. Large ones. Expensive! You kena⁽³⁾ 4D⁽⁴⁾ or what?

He doesn't even pass it to Ben. Instead, he puts it on the table.

ALBERT From the co-op. The in-flight kitchen ordered too much. So we get to buy cheap.

BEN Yums. I take some for my lunchbox, okay?

ALBERT You'd better hurry. Don't be late for classes.

20

BEN I just wanna talk. You come home from night shift when I am going to school. And in the evening, when I get home, you go to work. We never get to talk.

ALBERT Talk? Talk about what?

Ben is more open about his feelings, [characterisation]. but Albert is more stoic. (Why? Culture? Asian culture - father figures tend to be more stoic, especially towards sons.)
* Nevertheless, we can tell he cares for Ben (strawberries, rushing him to school).

1. epaulette: an ornamental shoulder piece
2. punnet: a small, light basket or container for fruits and vegetables
3. kena: [Malay] denotes that something has happened
4. 4D: an abbreviation of '4-Digits', a form of lottery in Singapore and Malaysia

- What do these details about the setting (the kitchen) reveal about the owner? What qualities do they point to? (Lines 1-4)
- What does Albert's minimal reply to Ben's greeting reveal about Albert's character? (Lines 9 and 11)
- Ben seems eager to talk with his father, but Albert seems reluctant to talk. Why do you think this is?

A took Ben 7 tries before he could finally get to the point on his 8th attempt. We know he is the more expressive one, so it shouldn't be difficult. Also, he knew what the bills were really for, so there was no need to coax the truth out of Albert. So, why draw it out?

30

① BEN About ... um, Pa, how are your teeth?

ALBERT They are just fine. What a question ...

② BEN 'Cos yesterday, when you were out, the dentist called.

ALBERT What ... the government clinic called me?

③ BEN No. Uncle Reggie, your classmate. From his fancy clinic on Orchard Road.

ALBERT Oh. Probably a class reunion or something.

④ BEN No. Something about a payment.

ALBERT Oh. I had a filling done ...

Confrontation. => He wanted his father to be upfront and honest with him.
 BEN puts a whole stack of receipts on the dining table.

35

⑤ BEN What's this, Pa? Why are you paying 200 dollars a month to Uncle Reggie's clinic?

ALBERT I had many fillings done ...

⑥ BEN Nonsense, Pa! You do your teeth at the government clinic. It's cheaper there. You told me so yourself! And you don't have THAT many fillings.

> fiction. He is clearly sick of the lies and half-truths.

40

ALBERT You don't know that ...

⑦ BEN You sleep with your mouth open. I counted!

[Characterisation] Intelligent; Rational. Ben is thorough in his investigating. He thought of every possibility, found evidence to support/dismiss possibilities until he came to the most probable likelihood.

ALBERT You're going to be late for school!

⑧ BEN Look, I told you I didn't want braces once I found out how much they cost! Why did you insist we go to Uncle Reggie's clinic?

Ben is developing his own opinions and wants to be heard and involved in decision-making.

45

ALBERT Uncle Reggie gave us such a good discount, I couldn't say no.

BEN Come on, Pa! Count how many payments you've made to his clinic! My braces weren't cheaper at Uncle Reggie's—he charged you more!

ALBERT *(gathering all the bills)* Wait a minute ... how did you ... did you go through my drawer? Don't you ever, EVER go through my drawers again! I'm putting a lock on ...

50

- Why does Ben suddenly become angry? What is causing this escalation in the conflict with his father? (Line 37)
- How does Uncle Reggie, an offstage character, add tension in the play? How does Ben view him and his actions? How about Albert?

Albert vs. Ben
 Stoic || Expressive
 Sacrificial || Rational

Yet, we could say that being sacrificial out of love is a very expressive form of love versus rational love. And being rational and practical is a very subdued expression. ∴ They each care in their own opposing way.

once again, we see Albert's love for Ben. The cost didn't matter.

BEN Don't change the subject. You went to Uncle Reggie's only because he'd let you pay in instalments, which the government clinic wouldn't, am I right?

ALBERT All right! All right, Einstein! Your father couldn't afford your braces. I'm not rich. You don't have to rub it in!

BEN But I told you two years ago ... that I didn't need them!

ALBERT You needed them, Son!

BEN Isn't that for me to decide? They're my teeth, for goodness' sake ...

ALBERT You had teeth like mahjong⁽⁵⁾ tiles bursting out of your mouth. The kids were already calling you all kinds of names for being half Indian helps us to and half Chinese ... but with those teeth ...

BEN I didn't care what they called me!

ALBERT You were crying like a little girl at night after the kids teased you!

BEN (muttering) Stupid, paper-thin HDB⁽⁶⁾ walls ... I did NOT cry like a girl!

ALBERT You didn't smile for one whole year. Do you know that?

BEN It was too expensive. We can't afford it, Pa. Ma would have agreed with me if she were alive.

This is obviously a sensitive topic.

ALBERT You don't bring your dead mother into this!

BEN But you know it's true. If she were alive, she would have said ...

ALBERT In this house, you don't get to tell me what I can and cannot do. This is my house, my money! And if you ever DARE go through my things again ... you are not too big for me to give you a wallop⁽⁷⁾ okay?

TIPPING POINT. Previously, we talked about the drawer to change topic. But now, he is ANGRY.

BEN You always blow your top when I mention her. Why can't we talk about her? It's been 10 years. We should be able to talk about her without ...

* Atmosphere Tense.

And this is the sore point for Ben.

- 5. mahjong: a Chinese game usually played by four people, with a set of rectangular tiles based on Chinese characters and symbols
- 6. HDB: Housing & Development Board; the statutory board overseeing public housing in Singapore
- 7. walloping: a beating

~ Why are these lines important? Who do they introduce for the first time? (Lines 68-77)

ALBERT You don't know what you're talking about!

BEN's mobile phone rings. [Stage Direction; Interruption of climax]

80 BEN (whispering) Hello? Sushila. I can't talk now. Talking to my dad.

[Anti-climatic] Beat. → Awkwardness increases. Tension decreases.
Um ... me too. [Stage Directions] *ATMOSPHERE*

Beat. → Awkwardness increases by another notch. Tension deflates further.

85 What do I mean, 'me too'? You know what I mean.
(reluctantly) I ... um ... okay, okay. I love you too. Aha! girlfriend!
bye!

Pause. → And we, the audience, hold our ~~breathes~~ breaths. Do they continue fighting? Does the argument take a different direction?

ALBERT Sushila?

BEN She's just a friend from my junior college, Pa.

90 ALBERT First you secretly go through my things. Then you've got a girl stashed away somewhere. Why the secret? Is she pregnant?

BEN Pa ... [Quit it; feelings] → This is an irrational conclusion. Why is he being irrational?

ALBERT I might as well be living with a stranger in this house. At least he'll know how to pay rent! → Upset that Ben is hiding things from him, on top of everything else.

95 BEN You ... are ... I don't know what's wrong with you these days!

ALBERT What's wrong with me? Young man ... if I didn't pay to have your teeth straightened, you think you'd have a pretty Indian girl flirting with you on the phone? Talk about ungrateful ...
Using this to justify the braces decision

BEN I don't know how to talk to you any more. You're impossible!

100 ALBERT Ya. You are a total joy to live with.

BEN storms out of the room.

(calling out after him) And still not a word of thanks! → [*Feelings; frustrated] Yes, he isn't telling his father things, but how can he when it is impossible to communicate with that man?!

ALBERT waits. BEN does not come back.
Actually waiting for the gratitude.
As a father, Albert thinks he deserves more respect from Ben, especially for all his sacrifices (which he perceives as being justified, now that Ben has a girlfriend.)

- Do you believe Ben's words? Why or why not? (Line 89)
- Why is this moment ironic? Think about what the characters actually want and how this is undermined by their words and actions that point to the very opposite.

Scene 2

[setting] Vast contrast with the previous scene setting.

105 The same kitchen, that night. BEN is trying to make pratas⁽⁸⁾ on the dining table, but all he manages to make is a floury, oily mess. There is flour and oil on BEN's face. ALBERT comes back from a double shift. He is exhausted.

ALBERT (irritated) What ... are you doing? Aren't you supposed to be preparing dinner? → reacting to the mess. Remember: he is very particular about the state of the kitchen.

BEN This is dinner. Prata. I just need some practice.

110 ALBERT You don't need practice. You need a cleaning crew. Look at ... oh ... goodness ... what possessed you to ...

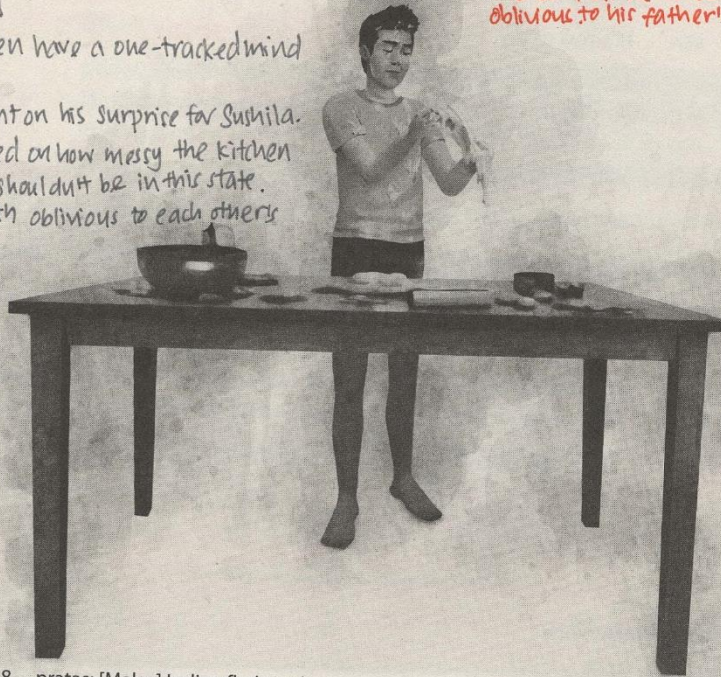
BEN Next week is our first month anniversary and Sushila LOVES a good prata. I want to impress her! → [Feelings] He is excited about his plan.

ALBERT Right. By showing her how messy you are? Good work!

115 BEN I can't remember how Ma used to make it. You used to help Ma ... Show me how to make a prata, Pa! → He is so determined and excited that he is being oblivious to his father's state. more irritable.

[Juxtaposition]

Both Albert & Ben have a one-tracked mind in this scene.
 Ben is hell-bent on his surprise for Sushila.
 Albert is focused on how messy the kitchen is, and how it shouldn't be in this state.
 And they are both oblivious to each other's feelings.



8. pratas: [Malay] Indian flatbread

What tone do you think Albert adopts here? (Lines 110-111 and 114)

120 → ALBERT Take Sushila to a prata stall lah ... so leceh^[9] ...

BEN You didn't think it was leceh when you made them with Ma.

ALBERT There are so many brands of frozen prata in the supermarket. Just go get a packet. She won't know the difference!

BEN Of course there is a difference! When you make it with your own hands ... then it's special. [Characterisation: Ben is sentimental]

ALBERT (holding up a badly made piece) When you make it with your hands ... it looks like it's been run over by a car. Give up lah, Son! [Tone: Discouraging]

BEN Why won't you even help? Why would you pay so much money for my stupid braces and not even spend 10 minutes helping me make Ma's prata? [Irony in behaviour]

130 Pause. BEN, seeing that his father won't help him, continues trying to make the dough. But he is getting more and more frustrated. He stops and glares at ALBERT, who softens. Then, hesitantly, ALBERT rolls up his sleeves and proceeds to help BEN knead the dough.

BEN It's too dry ...

ALBERT adds water.

Not too much!

135 ALBERT You want to do it?

BEN backs down respectfully.

Now, you see, the trick is to use the fleshy part of the palm of your hand to ... (he tries) to ...

BEN It's sticking all over, Pa ...

140 ALBERT looks darkly at BEN. Of course, he knows it's sticking. He tries to put a bit more flour, but it doesn't work. In fact, it makes the mess worse.

(wincing) That looks worse than when I was doing it ...

9. leceh: [Malay] troublesome

Albert is being extremely discouraging. Why? After that argument, the sacrifices, this discouraging tone is surprising.

→ Again, we witness Albert's subtle affection for Ben. He softens now, because he sees the effort Ben is putting in. Previously, he was irritated because all he saw was the mess.

His father's discouraging tone is getting to him.

→ Once again, we witness Albert growing more upset because he is showing a level of incapability/insufficiency. Just like the earlier scene, when Ben highlighted their poverty.

- What does Ben want from Albert? What does Albert want from Ben? Why can't they see eye to eye?
- Ben allows Albert to take over. What does this reveal about Ben's attitude towards his father? What does he want more than perfect pratas for Sushila?

As with the earlier scene, Albert is triggered again. And the more Ben pushes him, the more it pushes him over the tipping point.

ALBERT (giving up) You know what? I don't remember how to do it!

BEN Don't give up, Pa. We're just a little rusty... it's been a long time since Ma... *↳ ironic that it is the son encouraging the father, instead of the other way around.*

ALBERT It won't work. Neither of us knows how... *∴ Our parents are not infallible. We might not be aware of their struggles.*

BEN You always taught me never to quit. *What kind of example are you showing now?*

ALBERT This is different!

BEN How?

ALBERT You can't ask someone who doesn't know something... just to know it. It doesn't work that way. *Ben's persistence once again forces Albert to admit a personal failing.*

BEN Come on, Pa. You used to make so many pratas with Ma. I used to watch!

ALBERT (losing his patience) Your ma made all the dough! I just pretended to play along! *↳ Climax of tension*
Pause.

(sadly) Your ma just did everything perfectly when she was alive. *[Juxtaposition: Ma's pratas vs. Albert's pratas]*
Her bread loaves rose and browned perfectly. Mine just collapse and shrivel in the oven like an old man's buns. Back in our old kampong^[10] house, her garden bloomed with beautiful flowers...

BEN Ya, but we cemented it over because I wanted to practise basketball...

ALBERT I cemented it over because all her plants died after she did. *[Juxtaposition: Flowers when Ma was alive vs. Flowers when Ma passed away]*

BEN Oh ya. I remember you tried everything... fertilisers, new soil... everything.

ALBERT But still they died. So I cemented the garden, put up a hoop and bought you a ball to hide my failure. But that wasn't the end. You started having a host of problems once she left us. *- But not everything can be hidden.*

BEN Me? What did I do? *↳ He feels like he is a bad parent, hidden, and has to keep hiding his failings.*

[diction] choice of words describing Ma's baking vs. Albert's; to show clear juxtaposition.

10. kampong: [Malay] village

- How do you think Albert feels when speaking this line? (Line 146)
- How does the struggle with making pratas reflect Albert's struggle to be an ideal father? (Lines 151-152 and 155-156)

170 [Juxtaposition]
Ben under Ma
vs.
Ben under Albert.

175
Why "Albert"?
Why not "Pa"?
180 As if he isn't the
real parent.

But also, because this is
as much a play about
Albert's growth as it is
about Ben's.

185

190

195

ALBERT

→ This is the most Albert has said in the play so far.
He generally replies in short sentences, sometimes only one word.
When she was around, you were tall for your age. I thought you were going to be a basketball star. You were healthy and strong. And you had picture-perfect rows of milk teeth. But when she died, you just stopped growing. Within two years, you were the shortest and skinniest in the class. Suddenly you were falling sick every other month. Don't you remember? I had to bring you to the hospital in the middle of the night ... three times!

BEN

It was asthma, Pa. It could have happened even when Ma was around. [Characterisation] Ben being practical.

ALBERT

But it didn't. Only when I started taking care of you. And then your milk teeth starting falling out ... and those monster teeth started sprouting out from your mouth ...

BEN

Gee ... thanks, Pa. You couldn't have described me more freakishly!

ALBERT

Don't you get it? Your ma was a real mother. I'm not qualified to be a father. But while she was alive, you never noticed. She made me look good. Me? I was forced to sell the house and I can't even get a job that allows us to spend more than 10 minutes with each other at a time. [Characterisation] Low-self confidence. Imposter syndrome.

BEN

Nonsense, Pa.

Beat. Tension breaks.

Sometimes we even get 15 minutes.

ALBERT laughs sadly and throws a small lump of dough at BEN playfully.

Pause.

ALBERT

I'm sorry, Ben.

BEN

It's not your fault, Pa.

BEN goes over and gives ALBERT a hug.

ALBERT

(as if about to reveal something) Ben ...

BEN

Yes, Pa?

Beat. → Wanted to say something, but in that moment, decides against it.

Previously used to break tension in hatches. But now, it's like a breaking of "resolve".

- What does Albert reveal about himself? How does he feel about his abilities as a father?
- What is the dramatic effect of 'beat'? (Lines 188 and 197)

↳ It's not just a pause.
It is an amplified, more significant pause that changes direction. It's almost like an interruption.

ALBERT Uh, why don't you go wash yourself up, and I'll cook us something that we can actually eat. Okay?

200

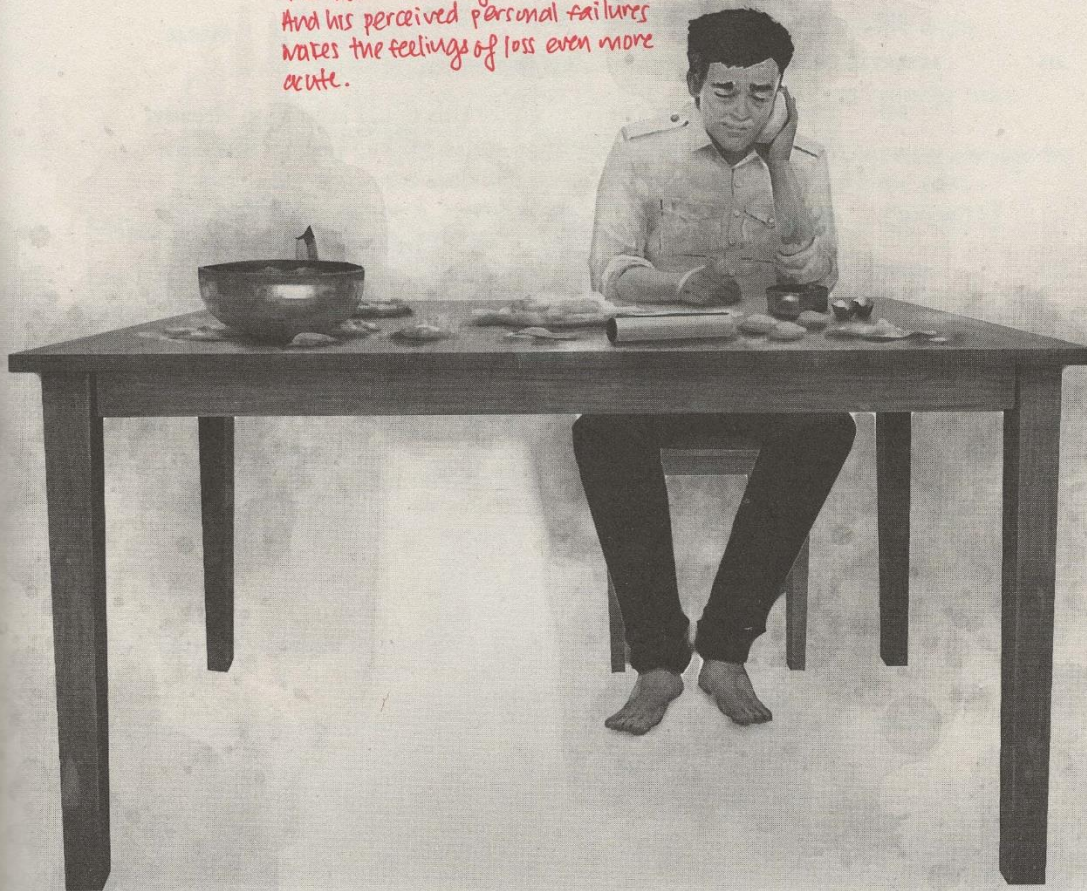
BEN Sounds good, Pa. Sorry for the mess.

ALBERT smiles and shakes his head. BEN exits. ALBERT sits down at the table, picks up a lump of prata dough, takes a deep whiff of it, rests his cheek against it and closes his eyes. BEN comes back in to say something, but sees his father deep in thought. He exits without saying anything.

→ The smell and the feeling brings back comforting memories of better, easier times.

This is a bittersweet moment.

The memories are good, but they also remind of the loss. And his perceived personal failures makes the feelings of loss even more acute.



~ How is the tone at the end of this scene different from that at the end of the previous one? What has changed?

Scene 3

Ben is indefatigable [characteristic]

205 The same kitchen, morning the next day. BEN is in different clothes. *But he is still trying to make pratas on the dining table—and the mess is worse.* There is flour and oil on BEN's face, hands and clothes. ALBERT has just woken up. He is in pyjama pants and a singlet. It is his day off.

ALBERT What the heck ... I just cleaned up last night!

210 BEN I had a dream, Pa. I dreamed of Ma making pratas and I think I remember now ...

ALBERT No, no ... this is my nightmare. I'm going to wake up to find that my clean and sparkling kitchen is exactly as I left it last night!

BEN No, Pa ... *I really think I can make it! *optimistic*

215 ALBERT Make what? You have class this morning!

BEN *(cheerfully)* I don't need to go for this one. I read it up already! Besides you have your off day today. We can perfect this darn prata ... *and spend some quality time together!*

[suspense] Beat. *Again, a pause. Does Albert prioritize spending time together, reminiscing together, or does he try to avoid it?*

220 ALBERT *(grabs BEN's mobile phone from the table)* I'm going to call this girl and tell her she'll have to settle for commercial prata from a coffee shop! *↳ He makes his decision; a disappointing one.*

BEN *(grabbing the phone)* Geez! Now look what you've done ... my phone is all oily ... and how am I going to get the bits of dough out from the buttons?

225 ALBERT Your phone? Look at my kitchen! Ben ... you're going too gaga⁽¹¹⁾ over this girl! You met ... what? One month ago? And suddenly ...

BEN It's not about Sushila ...

ALBERT Ya ... right.

230 BEN No, really, Pa. It's just ... recently ... I don't remember Ma that well any more. *→ We finally understand his true motivations. And why he wants to talk about her.*

ALBERT Look, Ben, it's been 10 years. You were eight. It's normal to forget some things. *Once again, Albert is so focused on the mess, he isn't listening.*

11. gaga: completely infatuated

↳ When we use ellipses (...) we are indicating that the character trails off in his or her speech into silence. Why are there so many examples of this at the end of this scene?

235 BEN (agitatedly) Not Ma! Last night when I dreamed of her making prata, I was watching her back. And when she turned to speak to me, I woke up! I never got to see her face. I don't remember her face! When I go to look at the albums, I see this woman smiling ... but she doesn't look so familiar any more. What's wrong with me, Pa?

[Imagery] We can imagine what Ben dreamt, and feel the panic he felt when he realises that he cannot remember her face.

ALBERT It's all right, Ben. You miss your mother. I get it ...

240 BEN That's just it! You don't get it. You're the only one I can talk to about her ... but you refuse to talk! Every time I try to talk about her or remember something about her, you get upset ... or angry ... or just shut up and pretend I didn't say anything. Are you trying to make me forget Ma or something?

[tone] Angry; confrontational. This is frustration built up over time, exploding at a climax.

245 ALBERT How can I forget? You've been missing her since you were eight. You've never let me forget her! From the way you make your bed ... the way you fold the clothes ... the way you put crunchy sugar in those darn peanut butter sandwiches ...

BEN She taught me all that...

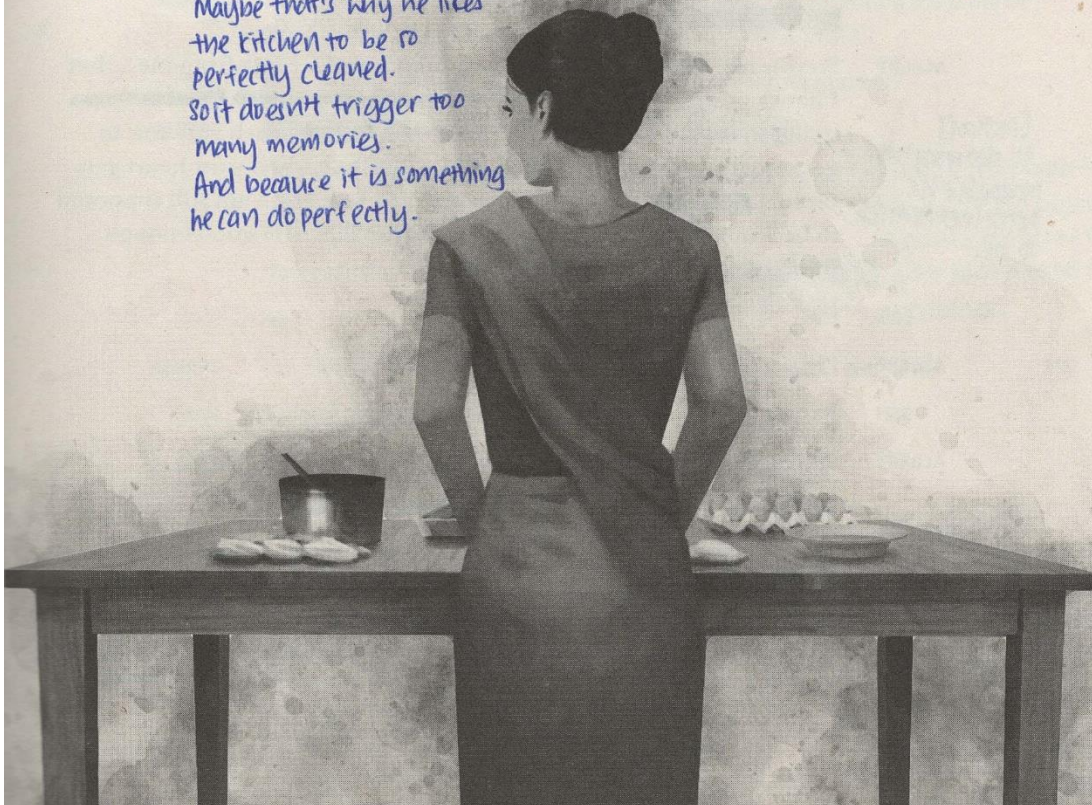
↳ [diction] Even little signs like this is triggering enough to bring back the pain.

→ He cannot get over the pain.

Maybe that's why he likes the kitchen to be so perfectly cleaned.

So it doesn't trigger too many memories.

And because it is something he can do perfectly.



250 ALBERT Not only those things. But the way you are smart with things ... the way you understand things ... and do everything perfectly. Every day in the past 10 years I've looked at you, you've reminded me that she's not here any more.

A pause to summarise.

Beat. Ben's perfection is from the mum.
Ben's problems is from Albert.
∴ Imposter Syndrome

I get it, Ben. Your mother was role-model material. I am not.

255 BEN It's not like a competition, Pa ...

ALBERT (holds up his hand) I am not jealous, Ben. I understand. But it is not healthy. Trying to remember all the things she was won't bring her back! This is Albert's own resignation. He can never bring his wife back.

260 BEN I don't only try to be like her, Pa. I also try to be like you. Most parents would be happy that their kid wants to be like them!

ALBERT Oh really? What part of me are you trying to be like?

BEN Uh ... lots of things!

ALBERT Like?

BEN Like ...

265 BEN is stumped. Long silence. ALBERT takes it badly. He is defeated, his worst fears confirmed.

270 ALBERT So you see, Ben, you want to learn how to make prata from me ... but I have nothing to teach. I don't do anything well at all. I've just been trying to manage since your mother died. I can't teach you how to get romantic with a girl. I can't give you advice when your heart gets broken. I am not all those things your ma was, and I am still supposed to be a mother and a father to you. Maybe that isn't good enough. But that's all I have. I'm so ... sorry. Again, a rare moment when Albert has so much to say and express. And everytime this happens, it is to detail his failures.

[Diction] All showing how incapable he perceives himself to be.

BEN Pa ...

275 ALBERT Please ... go get cleaned up and go to school. failed.

BEN Pa ...

ALBERT (firmly) Ben. You'll be late. I'll clean up.

Reluctantly, BEN exits. ALBERT stares at the messy table.
Another way to look at Albert's paranoia about mess:
Ben makes a mess, because he doesn't know how to make prata.
And Albert can't help him, so Ben makes an even bigger mess.
Every mess is just another failure for Albert to add to his list.

← How is Ben's attitude towards his mother different from Albert's? Explain why.

Scene 4

280 The same kitchen, that same night. The table is totally cleaned up. It is set for dinner. There are three settings. ALBERT is placing some fried pratas and a communal bowl of curry on the table. BEN enters. He has just come home from school.

ALBERT Just in time.

BEN Three settings. Who's coming?

285 *Beat.* → Pause for consideration. Who could this third person be?
Pa... you didn't call Sushila, did you?

ALBERT Ridiculous. I don't have her number.

BEN Then?

ALBERT I invited your ma to join us. *[Allusion]*

290 BEN You're creeping me out, Pa.

ALBERT You're always saying I'm always trying to make you forget her, and I'm showing you that I'm not.

BEN You're showing me that you're nuts, Pa.

295 ALBERT None of the above, my boy. I'm showing you ... (presenting the plate of prata to BEN) that I have perfected your mother's prata!

BEN You... didn't buy it from the coffee shop or supermarket?

ALBERT Well, you'll have to eat it to find out, won't you?

They sit down and ceremoniously contemplate the prata.

BEN (out of force of habit) Pa, jiaak... Ma, jiaak.^[12]

300 *They take their first bite of the prata. There is religious silence.*

Pa...

ALBERT Yes, Ben.

BEN You are wrong.

ALBERT What? This is exactly what your mother used to ...



↳ Traditional Chinese / Buddhists believe that you can honour the dead by feeding them. Albert has been trying not to think about her. This is a completely different because he is honouring & remembering her instead.

↳ first time in the play that Albert refers to him as "my boy".
↳ This is a surprising claim from Albert since he doesn't believe he can do anything perfectly.

↳ [Tone] light-hearted. It's almost like having figured out the method gave him a boost of confidence.

• [Allusion] Buddhists belief.
• Also, respectful.
• A reverence of this rare moment.

12. Pa, jiaak... Ma, jiaak: [Teochew] Dad, eat... Mum, eat; the Teochew way of asking one's father and mother to eat before oneself

305 BEN Not about this. About what you said this morning. You said I learned everything from Ma and you had nothing to teach me.

Pause. ALBERT continues eating. *→ The last time they had this convo, it ended badly, and continued Albert's worst fears. Now, it is brought up again. Eating pratas as a damper for what might come next.*

310 [Tone: confrontational] If you've taught me nothing, then how come I know I will be a good dad one day when I have kids? How come I know that I'll be there in the hospital when my kid thinks he's dying... and I'll know how to hold his hand till morning? I left for school very angry this morning, Pa. And I didn't know why. But over the course of the day I figured it out. I was angry because I think you think I am not very smart...

ALBERT I never said that! Never once did I...

Like father, like son. Observing each other only when one is asleep.

315 BEN You think that just because I miss Ma, I never notice the things you do—or how you do all those things for me. Of course I know that you measure me when I am asleep. How else do you go out and buy me all those awful clothes that fit me perfectly?

ALBERT They are not awful... they are very... hip!

320 BEN For your generation! And Pa... I know you go through my schoolwork every night when you come back and I am asleep. Otherwise how do you know I need Chinese and maths tuition?

ALBERT But I arrange everything in your bag perfectly every time...

325 BEN Not perfectly enough! Look, Pa... everything doesn't have to be perfect.

Also, a change in tone. → Beat. → pivotal moment. Ben points out where Albert has once again failed to be perfect. How does this end? But that's all right with me.

ALBERT Is that your way of saying that these pratas taste bad? *↳ [Tone: calm].*

Pause.

330 BEN They don't taste like Ma's.

Pause.

But, Pa... they're perfect. ∴ You are not Ma. But you are a perfect Pa.

ALBERT stops eating. He is blinking back tears. BEN goes up behind his father and hugs him from behind. Lights fade to black.

Why is making pratas so important to Ben? Explain your answer.