



DAVID WILLIAMSON is Australia's best known and most widely performed playwright. His first full-length play *The Coming of Stork* was presented at La Mama Theatre in 1970 and was followed by *The Removalists* and *Don's Party* in 1971. His prodigious output since then includes *The Department*, *The Club*, *Travelling North*, *The Perfectionist*, *Sons of Cain*, *Emerald City*, *Top Silk*, *Money and Friends*, *Brilliant Lies*, *Sanctuary*, *Dead White Males*, *After the Ball*, *Corporate Vibes*, *Face to Face*, *The Great Man*, *Up For Grabs*, *A Conversation*, *Charitable Intent*, *Soulmates*, *Birthrights*, *Amigos*, *Flatfoot*, *Operator*, *Influence*, *Lotte's Gift*, *Scarlet O'Hara at the Crimson Parrot*, *Let the Sunshine* and *Rhinestone Rex* and *Miss Monica*, *Nothing Personal* and *Don Parties On*, a sequel to *Don's Party*, *When Dad Married Fury*, *At Any Cost?*, co-written with Mohamed Khadra, *Dream Home*, *Happiness*, *Cruise Control* and *Jack of Hearts*.

His plays have been translated into many languages and performed internationally, including major productions in London, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. *Dead White Males* completed a successful UK production in 1999. *Up For Grabs* went on to a West End production starring Madonna in the lead role. In 2008 *Scarlet O'Hara at the Crimson Parrot* premiered at the Melbourne Theatre Company starring Caroline O'Connor and directed by Simon Phillips.

As a screenwriter, David has brought to the screen his own plays including *The Removalists*, *Don's Party*, *The Club*, *Travelling North* and *Emerald City* along with his original screenplays for feature films including *Libido*, *Petersen*, *Gallipoli*, *Phar Lap*, *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Balibo*. The adaptation of his play *Face to Face*, directed by Michael Rymer, won the Panavision Spirit Award for Independent Film at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

David was the first person outside Britain to receive the George Devine Award (for *The Removalists*). His many awards include twelve Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Awards, five Australian Film Institute Awards for Best Screenplay and, in 1996 the United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Award. In 2005 he was awarded the Richard Lane Award for services to the Australian Writers' Guild. David has received four honorary doctorates and been made an Officer of the Order of Australia.

David has been named one of Australia's Living National Treasures.

# David Williamson

## COLLECTED PLAYS VOLUME IV

**Jack of Hearts**

**Cruise Control**

**Dream Home**

**Happiness**



Currency Press, Sydney

## CURRENCY PLAYS

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*Jack of Hearts* was first produced by Ensemble Theatre at the Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, on 29 January 2016, with the following cast:

EMMA	Paige Gardiner
CARL	Peter Mochrie
KELLI	Christa Nicola
STU	Craig Reucassel
DENYS	Brooke Satchwell
NIKKI	Isabella Tannock
JACK	Chris Taylor

Director, David Williamson  
Assistant Director, Susanna Dowling  
Designer, Anna Gardiner  
Lighting Designer, Matthew Marshall  
Sound Designer, Alistair Wallace  
Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Alana Canceri  
Stage Manager, Danielle Ironside

## **CHARACTERS**

EMMA, late 20s

JACK, early 30s, Emma's husband

DENYS, late 20s

STU, early 30s, Denys' husband

CARL, early 50s

NIKKI, early 20s

KELLI, 30s



## ACT ONE

---

EMMA, *a trim athletic woman in her late twenties, enters the living room of a modest apartment dressed in a well-cut and fashionable tracksuit and trainers.*

EMMA: Jack?

*No answer. She looks irritated and raises the level of her voice.*

*Jack!*

*JACK, her husband, early thirties, enters the room in daggy casual clothes whose colours clash. He tries to cover the fact he's anxious with a stream of fake extraversion.*

JACK: Hi, babe? How was your day?

EMMA: Good. Did you—?

JACK: Your new fitness class for young mothers. Get any more enrolments?

EMMA: No. Jack, Did you—?

JACK: I got your printer working again. It was a paper jam. I'll show you how to unblock it if it happens again. It's pretty simple, you just take the back off and push the orange levers down. I'll show you.

EMMA: Jack, that's very kind but—

JACK: And the television is working again. You switched it to HDMI accidentally so I'll show you how to switch back to the TV setting—

*He moves towards her with the remote control but she's not interested in that.*

EMMA: Jack, I got a call from the agent. He said the rent still hasn't been paid.

JACK: Ah—

EMMA: You said you'd paid it.

JACK: I'd forgotten that I used the Visa to pay the car rego.

EMMA: Jack, we're on our last warning. It's nice that you fixed the

printer but you're supposed to be looking for a job. Did you get any interviews?

JACK: Honey. I finally made a decision. A big decision but I think it could prove to be exciting.

EMMA: About what?

JACK: I can't go back to the law.

EMMA: What do you mean? You can't go back to the law. You're a lawyer. I know it's been stressful, but—

JACK: The big firms put enormous pressure on you. Twenty hours a day. They pit you against all the other young lawyers. Kill or be killed. It's inhuman.

EMMA: They treated you badly and you were right to resign but—

JACK: I was fired.

EMMA: Fired?

*Beat.*

JACK: I had a sort of a—breakdown.

EMMA: Breakdown?

JACK: [*ashamed*] I sort of—

EMMA: Sort of?

JACK: Cried. In my office. For four hours.

EMMA: Jack?

JACK: Then I stormed into the office of one of the senior partners and told him they were heartless, golf-playing, long-lunching, lazy bastards living the good life by sucking the lifeblood out of their juniors.

*EMMA looks at him.*

I thought if I put my case firmly it might appeal to their innate sense of fairness.

EMMA: Let me guess. It didn't.

*JACK shakes his head.*

So what are you going to do now?

JACK: I've got some ideas.

EMMA: That will earn us money?

JACK: Maybe not right away.

EMMA: Not right away. Jack, the thing is, ‘right away’ is when our rent needs to be paid.

JACK: If we could make do on your money for the short term—

EMMA: Eat boiled rice? Sublet the apartment and live in the garage?

JACK: You earn quite well.

EMMA: What I earn would make for a reasonable lifestyle in Gunnedah, but not here, where coffee and muffins for two goes over the tap limit on my Visa card.

JACK: Why *not* Gunnedah for a little while? It’s actually quite pretty.

EMMA: Jack, I’m a personal trainer. I need to live among rich, vain, borderline alcoholics. Mosman is perfect. What are these ideas you have for your future?

JACK: Cartoons.

EMMA: Cartoons?

JACK: I feel this very strong need to be—

*EMMA waits.*

*—creative.*

EMMA: A cartoonist? You said the only subject you failed at school was art.

JACK: It was a hormonal thing. I kept drawing inappropriate images.

*He picks up a pad.*

I had a few ideas. Cartoon ideas.

*He shows her. She stares at them. He points at one.*

It’s a play on the word ‘Deficit’.

*He laughs.*

Deficit.

*She is stony-faced.*

It’s a bit obscure I guess.

EMMA: Why a cat?

# Cruise Control

*Cruise Control* was first produced by Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, on 26 April 2014, with the following cast:

DARREN BRODIE	Peter Phelps
IMOGEN BRODIE	Helen Dallimore
RICHARD MANTON	Felix Williamson
FIONA MANTON	Michelle Doake
SOL WASSERMAN	Henri Szeps OAM
SILKY WASSERMAN	Kate Fitzpatrick
CHARLIE	Kenneth Moraleda

Director, David Williamson  
Assistant Director, Jo-Anne Cahill  
Designer, Marissa Dale-Johnson  
Lighting Designer, Ross Graham  
Assistant Lighting Designer, Alex Berlage  
Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Catherine Capolupo  
Stage Manager, Danielle Ironside

## CHARACTERS

**DARREN BRODIE:** Australian. Early 40s. Started life as a member of a tough Sydney surfing fraternity but has now become a very successful businessman with a worldwide franchise of fashionable men's casual wear.

**IMOGEN BRODIE:** Australian. Late 30s. In contrast to her husband, went to a very fashionable girls' private school. She's very sexy and bouncy with a determinedly sunny nature but her marriage to Darren is on the edge as she's recently been caught out having an affair with one of his friends while he was away on an extended business trip. This is meant to be a voyage of marital healing.

**RICHARD MANTON:** Late 40s. A supercilious English literary novelist whose career started with a lot of critical attention but has been on the slide ever since. He is a serial womaniser but tries to keep his marriage with Fiona together if only for financial reasons as his wife makes all the money.

**FIONA MANTON:** Was an adoring pupil of Richard's when he was an Oxford tutor, but the gloss has certainly worn off the marriage. She has a very successful career as a highly respected literary editor, but has started to drink too much as the strain of living with her husband starts to tell.

**SOL WASSERMAN:** A Jewish New Yorker in his late 50s. He's a periodontist which isn't a glamorous profession as it requires a lifetime of peering at decaying gums, but he earns a lot of money. He wants more than this however and is working on an airport novel which he's sure is going to make him famous. He is a total obsessive compulsive which drives his wife Silky crazy.

**SILKY WASSERMAN:** Worked as a theatrical casting agent in New York and wasn't very impressed with Sol when he first appeared in her life, but his persistence and his

money wore her down. She has a keen perception of other people's character flaws.

CHARLIE: The Filipino waiter who serves them during the seven nights of the Atlantic crossing. He's determinedly cheerful but is painfully separated from his family for nearly ten months a year in order to support them.

## **SETTING**

The action of the play takes place during a cruise on a large ocean liner that is travelling from London to New York. There is a table setting for eight in the top restaurant on board but only six people have been allocated as one booking cancelled just before the ship left London. This means that all six guests can more or less face the audience. We also move to their cabins, but as the cabins are more or less the same we only need one cabin for the three couples. We also occasionally use the sundeck of the ship and other places on board including the many bars. The set dressing for these only needs to be minimal.

## ACT ONE

---

*The play opens in the cabin of RICHARD and FIONA MANTON as they get ready to go to the evening meal.*

*Simultaneously on another part of the stage, CHARLIE sets the table for the impending evening meal. He sings softly to himself in Filipino. A mournful song.*

RICHARD: You're joking.

FIONA: Unfortunately not.

RICHARD: The steward told you?

FIONA: Yes.

RICHARD: We have fixed seating for the whole voyage?

FIONA: Only for the evening meal. Breakfast and lunch we have the option of switching to the casual eating areas.

RICHARD: But the evening meal we have the same two couples with us every bloody night?

FIONA: I tried to change it, but you didn't arrange for us to have an individual table.

RICHARD: When was that supposed to happen?

FIONA: Months ago. It was in the paperwork they sent you apparently.

RICHARD: Who has time to read all the bloody paperwork? I just assumed that we'd be able to dine where the hell we wanted to.

FIONA: Well, your assumptions, as often happens, didn't prove to be correct.

RICHARD: I never wanted to come on this bloody cruise in any case. I wanted a cottage in France.

FIONA: Yes, so you could finish your novel.

RICHARD: And that's not worth doing?

FIONA: Of course it is, but I wanted somewhere where you were actually here with me. Where you couldn't wander off to the nearest bar and flirt with the girls in your perfect French accent.



RICHARD: You didn't like my last book, did you?

FIONA: *Nero's Fiddle*. I did. I told you I did.

RICHARD: And you don't like the first five chapters of this one.

FIONA: What's brought this on? I told you about ten times how much I like the new one.

RICHARD: You said it was bleak.

FIONA: It is. But that's you. That's your strength. You look at the world with complete honesty.

RICHARD: Remorseless. You said it was remorseless.

FIONA: Well-written remorselessness is good. It is darker than anything you've done before. That's not a judgement. It's a fact.

RICHARD: Why shouldn't it be dark? Great novels are always dark. Are you joining the chorus?

FIONA: What chorus?

RICHARD: The critical chorus. 'His early work was compelling but he's getting darker and more convoluted'?

FIONA: No. Your work's changing but that's fine. You can't write the same novel over and over. I've never said convoluted.

RICHARD: Experimenting with form is what you said. Translation? Convoluted.

FIONA: I didn't ever say that.

RICHARD: That's what you meant. Same as the chorus. Convoluted. Not perhaps inventive, playful, innovative. Not perhaps trampling on over-worn conventions and striking out in bold new directions?

*She pours herself a large glass of white wine from a bottle that sits in an ice bucket and takes a gulp.*

FIONA: Your later work is more profound—the reader has to work harder. And that means of course your sales will suffer, but—

*She takes another gulp.*

RICHARD: I'm not about to write an airport novel.

FIONA: I'm not asking you to, but as an experienced editor I'm simply making the observation that the strong narrative drive of your early work made them page-turners. You can't have it both ways.

RICHARD: I don't want to be a page-turner anymore.

FIONA: Then all I'm saying is that you have to live with the drop in sales and the drop in income.

RICHARD: Ah, I see. That's where we're headed. You earn more money than I do these days. I'm sure you'll tell our dinner companions sooner rather than later.

*FIONA takes another gulp.*

Would you lay off the wine. You're turning into a drunk.

FIONA: I wonder why that is.

RICHARD: Oh, shit. Not this again. I'm sorry. How many more times do I have to apologise? At least we could've booked a cruise which stopped somewhere. Our only highlight is that we pass over the exact spot where the *Titanic* sank, which isn't all that reassuring.

FIONA: It's an historic boat and an historic journey. I know you hate all things American, but New York has the finest museums and art galleries in the world.

RICHARD: It's also full of New Yorkers. God forbid we get one of them at our table.

FIONA: New Yorkers are interesting.

RICHARD: You've never had to fly across the Atlantic sitting next to one. A litany of petty complaints about every tiny thing that had gone wrong in his life since birth. I nearly ran to the emergency door and jumped. New York accents everywhere out in the corridor.

FIONA: I heard some Australian accents too.

RICHARD: Jesus, imagine the sheer horror of being stuck with Australians for seven nights in a row.

FIONA: Yes, that is sobering.

*RICHARD tries to pour a wine but the bottle's empty.*

RICHARD: Thanks for drinking all the wine. Please stay on the mineral water at dinner.

FIONA: Before we go up, Richard, I have to reiterate you're on your last warning.

RICHARD: It was a stupid mistake. She sent me her manuscript and it was genuinely promising.

FIONA: [*getting passionate*] *She* was promising, not the manuscript. I read it.

RICHARD: It wasn't the sort of stuff you edit, but—

FIONA: You go for weeks without being the slightest bit amorous to me and a twenty-six-year-old comes into sight, bats her eyelids and you're rutting like a marmot on Viagra.

RICHARD: She threw herself at me.

FIONA: [*with a sigh*] It's not as if it's an isolated incident, Richard. You've consistently humiliated me since we were married and I still get the feeling there were others I didn't even know about.

RICHARD: Don't be so paranoid.

FIONA: Just don't try anything on this voyage.

RICHARD: Are you crazy? Look, I have had a problem with compulsive sexual adventurism, but you're the bedrock of my life. You believe that, don't you? Losing you would devastate me.

FIONA: [*nodding*] You'd have to earn a living.

RICHARD: Now who's being cynical? Darling, all that's over. It's been eating away at my soul just as much as yours.

*He smiles winningly and kisses her. They leave the cabin and switch the lights off.*

*CHARLIE keeps laying the table in the dining room.*

*When the lights go on in the cabin again it's now the cabin of DARREN and IMOGEN BRODIE. DARREN has a fairly obvious Australian accent, but IMOGEN, who has been educated at one of Australia's most exclusive private schools, has an accent that, while still Australian, is much more melodious. DARREN is trying to put on his bow tie.*

DARREN: A dinner suit. A bloody dinner suit.

IMOGEN: Only for three of the seven nights. Don't make a fuss, Darren.

DARREN: It's bullshit. [*He rips off the tie.*] I'm not wearing a monkey suit and I'm not wearing a jacket.

IMOGEN: [*moving quickly to help him with the tie*] There. You just clip it in there. How do you look?

Dream Home

*Dream Home* was first produced by Ensemble Theatre, Sydney,  
on 31 January 2015, with the following cast:

SAM	Justin Stewart Cotta
PAUL	Guy Edmonds
HENRY	Alan Flower
WILMA	Katrina Foster
DANA	HaiHa Le
CYNTHIA	Olivia Pigeot
COLLETTE	Libby Munro

Director, David Williamson

Set and Costume Designer, Marissa Dale-Johnson

Lighting Designer, Matthew Marshall

Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Margaret Gill

Stage Manager, Rebecca Coulter

## **CHARACTERS**

PAUL, mid 30s

DANA, his wife, mid 30s

SAM, a neighbour of Lebanese descent, mid 30s

COLETTE, Sam's wife, mid 30s

HENRY, a neighbour, 50s

CYNTHIA, his wife, late 40s

WILMA, a widow and neighbour, early 60s

## **SETTING**

A flat in North Bondi.

## ACT ONE

---

PAUL *and* DANA *sit in their new inner-city apartment in a state of euphoria. They are both in their mid thirties. They're an attractive couple, both in looks and temperament. By nature friendly and welcoming in new encounters.*

DANA: I still can't believe it. After all these years we're finally sitting here in our own place.

PAUL: The bank owns more than we do, but yeah, it's a great feeling.

DANA: We've dreamt of this for so long.

PAUL: There were times I thought it would never happen.

DANA: Whenever I started feeling sorry for myself [*looking around*] I kept thinking of this day.

*He indicates their new apartment.*

PAUL: One thing's for certain. After the effort it took us to get here, there's no force on this planet that's going to get us out again.

DANA: Amen. Especially now I'm pregnant.

*She pats her quite large bulge.*

PAUL: We were probably insane given our precarious financial situation.

DANA: Stop worrying and enjoy the moment. We're just so lucky to be here. Almost gazumped at the last moment, and the market's risen ten percent since we put down the deposit. We are lucky, lucky people.

PAUL: Yeah, and this place is brilliant. Block of four, not some huge impersonal tower with so many people you'll never get to meet them. I think I saw an older lady going into the place across from us.

DANA: Did she look nice?

PAUL: Well, I only saw her back. But as backs go it seemed... nice enough.

DANA: The thing we should do to get things off on a good footing is invite them all in for a drink as soon as possible.

PAUL: Exactly. Let them know you're friendly right from the start, and unless they're monsters they'll be friendly back.

*At that moment a loud blast of rock music comes from the flat above and at the same time there is a loud insistent knocking on the door. They go to open it and SAM, looking furious, stands on their doorstep. He's large and about their age, but dressed in a sharp suit and tie. He's just come home from work. PAUL beckons him in and SAM takes a step forward, but the music gets to him and he disappears. There's a clatter of him going up the stairs. Someone obviously answers the door as the volume of the music goes up a notch.*

SAM: [voice, loud] Henry, will you turn that God-awful music down?! How many times do I have to tell you?! Do it once more, mate, and I'll punch your fuckin' lights out! *Turn the fucking volume down!*

HENRY: [voice, loud] You can't play Creedence Clearwater at half volume!

SAM: [voice, loud] *I'll smash you, mate! I fucking mean it!*

HENRY: [voice, loud] Relax, mate! Chill out!

*We hear a woman's voice. It's CYNTHIA, HENRY's wife.*

CYNTHIA: [voice, loud] Sam, don't be so belligerent! Henry, turn the music down!

*The music level goes down considerably.*

[Voice] Second thoughts I'm going to turn it off altogether. Makes my head hurt too!

*The music goes off, the door upstairs slams. PAUL and DANA look at each other in horror, but it's not over yet. SAM, still furious, comes back downstairs and into their apartment.*

SAM: [to PAUL] Is that your shitheap parked in front of my apartment?

PAUL: Hi, there. [Extending his hand] I'm Paul and this is my wife Dana.



SAM: I don't care if you're Mahatma Gandhi, mate. Is that your shitheap parked in my spot?

PAUL: You're obviously one of our neighbours.

SAM: No, mate. I'm the fucking tooth fairy. Is that your shitheap parked in my spot?

DANA: Whoever the hell you are, you don't come barging in here shouting.

SAM: If someone parks in my space I'll do what I fucking like!

DANA: Anyone is free to park anywhere on that kerb. You don't own it.

SAM: Well, you try it once more, sweetheart, and I'll key your car so bad it'll look like it's been gored by a herd of shit-livered rhinos.

DANA: Try it and I'll spray yours with paint stripper!

PAUL: Dana. Let's calm this a little. [*To SAM*] It seems parking is the issue.

SAM: Aren't we fucking lucky? Einstein's grandson has moved into our apartment block.

DANA: There's no need to be arrogant and rude. Who do you think you are?

SAM: Someone who's lived here a lot longer than you have, cranky pants.

PAUL: Mate, even though I have a legal right to park where I've parked, I realise there's often a difference between law and custom, and I'm happy to try and accommodate that.

SAM: Well, you better fucking accommodate fast!

DANA: [*loud*] He didn't know it was your spot! It's our first day here and what an incredibly rude and aggressive neighbour we've turned out to have!

SAM: [*to DANA*] Cut the screeching, snowflake.

PAUL: Now hang on a minute, pal.

SAM: I am not your fucking pal. I am the man, I am the man who has parked in front of my place for three fucking years and that's not about to change. Now go down and drive that shitheap somewhere else.

DANA: It's not a shitheap. It's a perfectly good Suburu.

SAM: Well, if you don't think that's a shitheap, lady, you know nothing about fucking cars.

DANA: Do you need to swear quite as much?

SAM: Do you know how impossible parking is around here? You can use up half a tank of petrol circling round and round the block. [To PAUL] Now, mate, are you going to do the right thing and shift that car of yours? Or do want us to start out on a very bad footing?

PAUL: I'd prefer to keep the lines of communication open.

SAM: Cut the crap, mate. You gunna or you're not?

DANA: No, he's not. No way!

PAUL: Darling, let me handle this. [To SAM] On this occasion I'll shift, but whether I keep doing it in future depends on a lot more mutual respect that we've seen so far today.

SAM: Are you threatening me, asshole?!

PAUL: It does seem a bit the other way.

SAM: What the fuck are you saying? You'll shift it tonight but you'll do it again tomorrow.

PAUL: I'll do it tonight, then we'll sit down calmly and discuss what will happen in the future. Okay?

SAM: No, mate, it's not okay. Make sure your fucking car is never in that spot again.

*He glares at them both and goes out slamming the door behind him. PAUL and DANA stare at each other.*

DANA: You shouldn't let him speak to you like that!

PAUL: Our new neighbour is not someone who will change by shouting back at him. But if he keeps doing it I won't let him get away with it. Believe me.

DANA: Are you going to teach our little boy to back down to every bully who comes along?

PAUL: Do you want our boy to grow up in an atmosphere poisoned by long-term hatreds? Leave me deal with this in my own way.

*DANA is not convinced. There's a knock at the door. She charges towards it grim-faced.*

Happiness

*Happiness* was first produced by Ensemble Theatre in Sydney, on 9 May 2013, with the following cast:

RONNIE / RICHARD	Adriano Cappelletta
EVAN	Glenn Hazeldine
SAM	Peter Kowitz
ZELDA	Erica Lovell
HANNA	Anne Tenney
ROLAND MAKEPEACE	Mark Lee

Director, Sandra Bates

Set Designer, Brian Nickless

Lighting Designer, Peter Neufeld

Wardrobe Co-ordinator, Lisa Mimmochi

Stage Manager, Danielle Morrison

## **CHARACTERS**

ROLAND MAKEPEACE

HANNA

ZELDA

SAM

RICHARD

EVAN

RONNIE

## **SETTING**

Various locations around Sydney.

## ACT ONE

---

ROLAND MAKEPEACE, *early fifties, is lecturing to his students in the Master's course in wellbeing at a prominent Australian university.*

ROLAND: So here we are in God's own country. More affluent than any other country in the world. The sole survivor of the financial crisis. Wellbeing should be throbbing through our veins, but it's not. Read the newspaper columns. Listen to the rantings of the shock jocks on the radio. Strike up a conversation with your taxi driver, your neighbour, or your relatives. Everything, to be colloquial, is 'ratshit'. But it isn't. We are the blessed of the Earth. So what in the hell is going on? Electricity bills are soaring. Well yes, but they're still about three percent of our weekly expenditure and for that relative pittance we can have the miracle of flicking a switch and we're watching a movie on a flat screen so huge that we don't need to go to the cinema. We live in the largest houses in the world. We have more cars per capita than even the Americans. Donald Horne may have been being ironic when he dubbed us 'The Lucky Country', but the irony is lost these days because we *are*. And yet depression rates are soaring, and we're no happier now than we were forty years ago, even though we're three times richer in real terms. We walk out onto the streets, and instead of hearing the songbirds in the trees, we're deafened by a high-pitched chorus of whining. Every one of you here today has won a lottery of incredibly long odds. You're alive. Every one of your ancestors, going back three billion years to the first single-celled amoebas, survived and reproduced. You shouldn't be here. The chances are one in a billion, billion, billion, and yet instead of embracing this hugely lucky chance and saying, 'Wow, I'm going to make the best of it', you listen to that whining chorus around you and chances are you join in.

What the hell is going on? What kind of country are we?

Why hasn't our extraordinary luck at being alive right now in the most wealthy and fortunate country the world has ever known, made us all euphoric?

This course will investigate that very question and point to ways in which human wellbeing can be increased.

*Later: ROLAND is with his daughter ZELDA and his wife HANNA. ZELDA is visiting for a meal.*

ZELDA: I downloaded your lecture today, Dad.

ROLAND: What did you think?

ZELDA: ... Interesting.

ROLAND: Interesting?

HANNA: I thought it was a load of rubbish.

ROLAND: Thank you, dear. I should be thankful that it took one more drink than usual for your deep cynicism to cut in.

ZELDA: Mum, there was a lot I could relate to.

HANNA: Such as?

ZELDA: But, Dad, I did have difficulty with the concept that people can be taught to be happier.

HANNA: You're happy or unhappy. You can't be taught. It's just so American.

ROLAND: America is always wrong?

HANNA: We're what we are. If we're happy we're happy, if we're not we're not.

ZELDA: Mum, maybe listen a bit more before you make up your mind.

ROLAND: Zelda, it's okay, I'm used to it. One martini, she's querulous, two she's belligerent, three... God help me.

HANNA: [*to ZELDA*] I just think it's sad. Your father's career has been stellar up to now. First-rate research into which therapeutic techniques worked and which didn't. Then suddenly this? You can no more teach... happiness... than you can teach the blind to see, the deaf to hear or the stupid to switch off Alan Jones.

ROLAND: Hanna, you've made up your mind, so what I say won't change things, but there's a lot of evidence to show that with some relatively simple techniques people can increase their feelings of wellbeing. And not just temporarily.

HANNA: I think it's rubbish.

ZELDA: Mum, will you shut up?!

ROLAND: Zelda, it's fine. I accepted long ago that on the friendly versus hostile continuum, your mother is firmly on the hostile side.

HANNA: No-one is *born* hostile. Their marriages just make them that way.

ZELDA: Mum, you are a very bad drunk. Don't take another sip.

HANNA *glares at her daughter and takes a big sip.*

Dad, it's no use. She's in one of those moods.

HANNA: Here we go. Daddy's girl.

ZELDA: Well, when you're like this he's nicer than you are, that's for sure.

HANNA: Your father is wonderful. Warm, wise and kind. Wasn't I lucky?

ROLAND: Can we stop this?

HANNA: If we're talking hostility, then take a look at yourself.

ZELDA: I'm not hostile.

ROLAND: Can we stop this?

HANNA: [*to ZELDA*] If you're not, how come all your relationships end in disaster?

ZELDA: That's always my fault?

HANNA: Pretty much. I didn't start making your father's life a misery until *after* I'd married him.

ZELDA: Conrad? That was my fault? Dating another girl I didn't know existed? Then when I found out, suggesting we have a threesome? That was my fault?

HANNA: No, he has to bear some of the blame, but that other one, Wes—

ZELDA: He was a total kink, Mum. He wanted me to—

ROLAND: I really don't want to hear.

ZELDA: I'm starting to think what the hell in any case. Forget guys. I've decided that what would really make me happy is a luxury penthouse overlooking the harbour, a BMW convertible and at least one top-of-the-line luxury holiday a year.

HANNA: Bravo!

ROLAND: Zelda, you've had a rough patch with relationships,



but if you devote your life to material rewards, it's a never-ending treadmill. More, more more. And it makes you very little happier.

HANNA: A luxury apartment overlooking the harbour sounds *great!*

ROLAND: You're not happy with the house we've got?

HANNA: Of course I'm happy. Marrickville has such character. The view out over that ratty little park full of syringes grounds me in the real world.

ROLAND: You always say you love the cosmopolitan bustle.

HANNA: I said it once, thirty years ago.

ROLAND: We can't afford luxury apartments. A professor fifty years ago earned real money. Now I earn half as much as the average plumber.

HANNA: The plumber does something useful.

ROLAND: If you want to live more grandly, go back to your legal career.

HANNA: Dotting i's and crossing t's. Three times more boring than marriage. Being on the board of a first-rate charity, at least I know I'm doing something useful.

ROLAND: Which is wonderful for your wellbeing but doesn't earn money!

HANNA: Marrickville is fine. We've only been broken into five times in the last three years.

ROLAND: God, the negativity tonight is mind-boggling.

ZELDA: Dad, I am really in the market for increasing my wellbeing but it can't be simple.

ROLAND: I didn't say it was simple. You have to work at it. Hard. Look, I've no illusions that we can all suddenly become a nation of happy bunnies frolicking in life's sunlit fields. But something is seriously wrong out there and I want to try and do something about it.

HANNA: I'm going to bed.

*HANNA leaves.*

ZELDA: She's getting worse.

ROLAND: Yes, I'm starting to dread that third martini.

*Beat.*

Darling, I love you to death and it causes me a lot of pain when you're unhappy, which frankly seems to be a lot of the time.

ZELDA: If I told you I was suicidal, I'd definitely be lying, but if I told you I was near suicidal at times I wouldn't be lying all that much.

ROLAND: Then that's not a good place to be, is it?

ZELDA: No, it's not.

ROLAND: If you try what I suggest, it means working at it. Turning your life around isn't easy.

ZELDA: I'm not being cynical, Dad, but there've been zillions of theories about what makes people happy since the Greeks. What makes you so sure you've finally got the answer?

ROLAND: Science has finally got round to actually testing the theories.

ZELDA: How can you test wellbeing?

ROLAND: With difficulty, but you can.

ZELDA: And what do the results show?

ROLAND: That there are five main factors that determine how we feel about our life. The amount of positive emotion we experience, our engagement with life, our relationships, our sense of meaning, and our level of achievement. And there are ways of increasing all of them.

ZELDA: Sense of meaning?

ROLAND: Study after study shows that the most lasting satisfaction you get is when you help others.

ZELDA: No-one does anything for others now, Dad.

ROLAND: Your mother does. Works tirelessly for her Third World kids.

ZELDA: Yeah. You tend to forget she's got a good side.

ROLAND: As well as helping others you still need your own achievements.

ZELDA: I think I'm achieving, but my boss doesn't. He puts me down at every possible opportunity.

ROLAND: Must be very hurtful.

ZELDA: It rips the guts out of me. Reader surveys show I'm