

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Happy House Show

by Linden Wilkinson

EXTRACT

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THE HAPPY HOUSE SHOW!

CHAIRS ARE PLACED EITHER SIDE OF THE PERFORMING AREA. ESSENTIAL PROPS, LIKE THE TELEVISION, A SUITCASE AND A LAPTOP ON A WHEELED TABLE ARE ALREADY SET. ALL OTHER PROPS ARE BROUGHT ON BY THE ACTORS. THE CENTRAL PERFORMING AREA NEEDS TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO VARIOUS INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR PLACES. A SCREEN AT THE BACK DISPLAYS IMAGES THROUGHOUT THE PLAY, PUNCTUATING SCENE CHANGES. LIGHTS FADE. BEAUTIFUL HARBOUR VIEW PROJECTED ON TO SCREEN.

The actors assemble on the stage in a gentle cross fade. Samir's theme music. Samir emerges and addresses the audience.

Poolside, Chris' Parents - 6 months previous

Samir: In the desert, when a stranger comes, he's made welcome. Lots of fuss, bring it on. Because in the desert, if some one's come so far, blazing sun, shit of a camel, if someone's come so far, then - you've got something in common. There are thirty words for sand for starters, so sand is a big topic. There's at least one day in the big tent just spent on sand alone. Bring a smoke into the equation and you could be in there for a week. Just on sand. Because the principle is: better to make a stranger your friend, you'll know if he's an enemy soon enough. And a stranger brings stories, sand is only the starting point. A stranger brings stories of wars and famines, of weddings, murders, babies born and ambition crushed, stories of old betrayals and new alliances.... stories that might one day become valuable information. The stranger tells us stories but he doesn't tell us what to think.

But here - here in this beautiful place - this wonderful place! - here the stranger doesn't speak. Like, why would you listen? Would you look at this place? Would you look at this place! Hey, I'm lookin', mate. I'm lookin'. You got de poo-el, you got de sound sysstemm, you've got one huge city stretched out below you, lying in the sun, water slapping up against her side. You are one lucky guy, mate. Someone's opened their door, someone's said, "Come in." And if they see me cryin', they'll know it's 'cos I'm happy, mate. 'Cos maybe, I've made it. Finally.

So I'm not saying anything. Here I do the listening. I'm looking out and listening and at last I'm seeing my future, down there glinting at me like the eyes of a great, big fly. You see those thousands and thousands of windows down there? One day one of them is going to be mine. My Aussie dream. Hey, yeah. My happy house.

Samir drifts back into the crowd. Maya emerges. The screen changes into an exterior shop front, inner city.

Everyone drifts towards their chairs during Maya's speech.

Refugee Support Office - three weeks previously

Maya: I - I've been thinking about getting on board for ages. This has so been on my list. I am just so ashamed. You know what I mean? I suppose everyone says that. Anyway, I'm here now. I'm here now and I'm signing up. (*Maya becomes aware she's on her own.*) What do you need to know?

What do you need to know about me? Like what I do, what I believe in? Look, I'm a little pressed for time. What do I believe in? Well, everything. Well, no. Helping people, obviously. I work from home. I work from home, mostly. But not at night, never at night. Sometimes I go out. I work at a hairdresser's, for instance.

I go out for that. But mostly I'm at home, in the city, in a big, old - house. I like my house. I've been there a long time and I work there so - it feels like *my* house. It feels like my house should feel. People come and go, of course. But it's friendly. I mean, it's a good place... for people... passing through. And I'm there, a lot. I read Tarot. I'm flat out like a lizard drinking! I have to turn people away. Really! Not that I ever do....so, sign me up.

Cross fade screen changes into a huge old foyer. Once it was part of a mansion, now the mansion has become a boarding house. Kelly and Maya arrive home at the same time.

In the configuration of the flats, all doors open into the foyer. Maya's flat is at the back; Chris and Kate's flat is stage right; Kelly, Sally, Leah and Jasmine's flat is stage left.

A staircase leads to Glenn's flat above.

Mansion Flats - Foyer - three weeks previously

Kelly and Maya arrive in the foyer at the same time.

Maya: You were supposed to come with me, Kelly.
You were supposed to meet me there.

Kelly: Shit, was that today?

Maya: I know you remembered.

Kelly: I've been at work, Maya.

Maya: Sure.

Kelly: I've been at work!

Maya: It was your idea! I'd never heard of an underground railway before that didn't involve trains. You were the one, who said it was all just so unjust. You were the one, who said we had to do something.

Kelly: Piss off, I'm tired.

Maya: Hey, no way. I signed up. They're waiting for your call.

Kelly: It's okay for you! It's okay for you, Maya.
You make money out of compassion, shit like empathy.
I'm a bloody store detective. One hint of compassion and I'm out of a job. I'm an unprofessional. I can't afford the feelings, you can, you hear what I'm saying? I can't afford it, not at this point in time.

Maya: Oh, so suddenly this all about money.

Kelly: What I'm saying, it's all a matter of timing. And this timing isn't all that practical for me. At the moment. Don't make me feel guilty. I've given this a lot of thought.

Maya exits to chairs.

Kelly: I'm not a hypocrite, Maya! I'm just looking after myself! That's what we're all supposed to do, isn't it?!

Screen cross fades into girls' flat. Kelly grabs the television. Jasmine joins her with a magazine and a biro.

Girls' Flat- 3 weeks previously

Kelly watches the races on television, Jasmine reads a magazine. Leah enters, holding a video tape.

Leah: You're both home!

Kelly: I'm watching the races.

Leah: I recorded the show. Let's watch it.

Jasmine: Watch what show?

Leah: "The Happy House Show."

Jasmine: Leah! It's total crap!

Leah: Yeah. And it's our way out.

Kelly: We're not - like totally take this on board, Lee we're not going on it.

Leah: Just watch it with me. Jasmine?

Jasmine: I don't want to go on television.

Kelly: Be a national dickhead on television.

Leah: Just watch this with me. Just watch this with me, okay. Look the show has three weeks left to run, this season. Then there'll be another. They'll audition on the same night it finishes, the show's that huge. And these guys, these guys on now, Spiro, Jugs and Oliver, are not dickheads, Kel. These guys are actually marketing consultants on thirteen weeks leave. Spiro, Jugs and Oliver are going to walk away with everything. Bet you. With the townhouse, the cars, the clothes, the lot.

Jasmine: Oh, yuk. You can see his bum-crack.

Kelly: That'd be the Dickhead Jugs. Jugs is practically

up to the full-frontal. And that'd be Spiro throwing up.
Jesus, Lee. This is so ordinary!

Leah: This is cutting edge, Kel. Because on this one contestants make their own rules. This is not a pack of wannabes, right? These guys know exactly what they're doing. Everyone who goes on this show names their own challenge. These guys have said: okay, we're as crass as *but* no matter how many farting competitions in the communal laundry, whatever, we're going to get everyone in the building liking us in thirteen weeks. That's the season. Thirteen weeks. And they will. So all we need is a challenge.

Kelly: You're off your brain, Lee.

Leah: We can do this! All we have to be is more of less of ourselves. You want a way out? You want to get out of here? Jesus! (*To Kelly*) You spend what you earn on the races, (*to Jasmine*) you enter enough competitions to fill a container once a month. Don't tell me you don't want a quick way out!

Jasmine: But who would we be?

Leah: The Aussie Girl! Big-heart, small brain, loud and nuggetty. She's reinforced inside us every day by just being here. Just like bum-crack Jugs and spewing Spiro. Our version of The Aussie Girl. Three different girls, who are almost exactly alike....Witchie, Bitchie and Swot.

Kelly: And our challenge is?

Leah: To – I dunno – bonk lots of guys. Something to do with sex. What do you think?

Jasmine and Kelly slowly return to their previous preoccupations. Kelly turns off the tape and ejects it. Jasmine reads out her competition question.

Jasmine: Why would I like to own a Subaru in twenty-five words or less?

Kelly: Audition for another ad., Lee. Why don't you go as a blonde next time?

Kelly leaves the television at the edge of the stage and goes

to the chairs. Jasmine returns to the chairs. Leah is left as the lights cross fade into Glenn's flat upstairs.

Leah: I hate this place...

Leah goes to the chairs, as Maree enters, holding a pad and pencil. She's making an inventory. Chris joins her on stage, watching as if from the doorway.

Glenn's Flat - three weeks previously

Maree slowly becomes aware that Chris is there.

Chris: I missed you.

Maree: It won't happen again, Chris. What happened yesterday.

Chris: I'm not so sure.

Maree: I didn't want to come back here. But I had to make an inventory; what they've taken, what they've left behind. This flat belongs to a friend. So someone has to do it – and seeing as how Mum's practically dead....

Chris: Is she?

Maree: Well, not enough to get excited about.

Chris begins to dance with Maree.

Chris: The landlady's daughter.

Maree: The writer from downstairs.

Chris: Who can't stop obsessing about you. I never knew sex could be so fantastic, so spontaneous, so wild.

Maree: You live with someone, don't you?

Chris: Not at this moment. At this moment I'm here with you, totally and utterly immersed in the overwhelming you-ness of you.

Maree: I don't this is really smart.