

**THE PRINCE  
OF  
BRUNSWICK EAST**

a play  
by  
Alex Broun

**“Sometime family doesn’t always stay between the white lines”**

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**THE PRINCE OF BRUNSWICK EAST**  
was Runner Up in the 2005 Rodney Seaborn Playwright’s Award.

## **Characters**

STAN WILLIAMS (45 in 1965)

RYAN WILLIAMS, his son (25 in 1965)

LANE WILLIAMS, Ryan's son, (25 in 2005)

## **Setting**

Two seats in a covered grand stand at an Australian Football ground in Brunswick East, Melbourne, Australia.

## **Time**

1960 - 2005

## **ACT 1**

SCENE ONE. 1965 – BULLDOGS VS RICHMOND

SCENE TWO. 1965 – BULLDOGS VS CARLTON, TWO WEEKS LATER.

SCENE THREE. 1968 - BULLDOGS vs DANDENONG DEVILS

## **ACT 2**

SCENE ONE. 1978 - BULLDOGS VS GEELONG

SCENE TWO. 1981 – BULLDOGS VICTORY PARADE.

SCENE THREE. 2001 - BRUNSWICK DEVILS VS SYDNEY SWANS

**ACT 1**

**SCENE ONE. 1965 – BULLDOGS VS RICHMOND**

STAN and RYAN enter, STAN carrying a bag. STAN is dressed in his supporters gear, beanie and scarf. RYAN is casually dressed with no supporters gear.

They come down the aisle towards two seats marked D9 and D10.

STAN: Here we are. These are ours. Park yourself down.

RYAN GOES TO SIT.

STAN: Not there. The other one. Nine is my lucky number.

RYAN SITS IN THE OTHER SEAT.

STAN: Asked for the one on the aisle as well – more convenient for trips to the canteen and the gents - so this one was a winner on two fronts. On the aisle and number nine. (HE SITS.) Now just let me get set up.

STAN OPENS UP THE BAG AND STARTS TO REMOVE THERMOS, TUPPERWARE CONTAINERS, CHICKEN LEGS WRAPPED IN FOIL, PLASTIC CUPS ETC.

RYAN: All stocked up.

STAN: Your mother is a wonderful woman.

HE PULLS A CLARET AND ROYAL BLUE BLANKET FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BAG AND SPREADS IT OVER THEIR LEGS.

RYAN: (REFERRING TO BLANKET) I'm alright.

STAN: You'll be feeling it later.

RYAN RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTS THE BLANKET OVER HIS LEGS.

STAN: How about a coffee ?

RYAN NODS.

STAN: Hold that.

STAN PUTS A PLASTIC MUG IN RYAN'S HAND. HE OPENS THE THERMOS AND POURS SOME COFFEE INTO THE MUG. HE PUTS DOWN THE THERMOS.

STAN: Milk ?

RYAN NODS. STAN TAKES OUT A TINY TUPPERWARE CONTAINER OF MILK AND POURS IT INTO THE MUG.

STAN: Sugar ?

RYAN NODS. STAN TAKES OUT AN EVEN TINIER TUPPERWARE CONTAINER OF SUGAR.

RYAN: Like I said - all stocked up.

STAN: You want it or not ?

RYAN NODS. STAN PUTS TWO SPOONFULS OF SUGAR IN RYAN'S COFFEE.

STAN: And last but no means least.

RYAN: What now ?

STAN PRODUCES A SILVER HIPFLASK FROM HIS COAT POCKET.

STAN: Snakebite cure.

RYAN: Bit early for that ain't it ?

STAN: Never too early for snakebite cure.

RYAN NODS. STAN POURS SOME WHISKEY FROM THE HIPFLASK INTO THE MUG. RYAN TAKES A SIP.

STAN: Good ?

RYAN NODS. STAN BEGINS TO MAKE HIMSELF ONE.

STAN: (REFERRING TO SEATS) So, better than wooden planks down by the fence eh ? Nails stickin' up your arse. All nice and covered from the wind and rain up here.

RYAN: Guess so. So what's the story again ?

STAN: What's that ?

RYAN: With the seats ?

STAN: Like I told you - they're ours.

RYAN: You mean you own them ?

STAN: Good as.

RYAN: They let you buy seats now ?

STAN: It's called a Debenture.

RYAN: What does that mean ?

STAN: You rent 'em – permanently.

RYAN: Like forever ?

STAN: Fifty years. Might as well be forever – for me anyways.

RYAN: So you can come and sit here – whenever you want ?

STAN: Just for home games – and the finals. If we have 'em. Not for the cricket.

RYAN: What happens then ?

STAN: Somebody else has 'em. We've just got 'em in winter.

RYAN: So that means they sell them twice.

STAN: They don't sell 'em at all. I told you. I don't own 'em.

RYAN: Well rent them.

STAN: I guess so.

RYAN: Crafty buggers.

STAN: Probably got 'em for half price that way. Would've had to pay double if I wanted 'em for summer as well.

RYAN: And you don't have to sit through the cricket. It's even more boring than Ariel Ping Pong. Jesus !

STAN: Eh – Lord's name. Lord's name. (BEAT) Cricket's okay.

RYAN: Not to me.

STAN: Cricket is a lot like life. Nothing happens for a very long time then suddenly everything happens all at once. And besides, cricket or no cricket - it's all for a good cause.

RYAN: What ?

STAN: The club.

RYAN: How's that ?

STAN: The club wanted a new grandstand see ? Needed it really. Old one was pretty well falling down. And we wanted it too - the supporters. But one problem – the old spondooley. So the club offers us – the supporters – debentures in a new stand. That way they raise enough money and we get a new stand. Everyone wins. And they even had enough left over to buy a few new players – so we’ll be winning out there a little more as well. Or at least that’s the general idea. (TAKING OUT FOIL) Boiled egg ?

RYAN: What else you got in there ?

STAN: This bag is a real treasure trove. Our very own lucky grab. Who knows what your mother’s crammed in. (OPENING FOIL) So ?

RYAN: How’s it gonna go with the snakebite cure ?

STAN: Never had any problems. Peeled them as well.

RYAN NODS. STAN HANDS HIM AN EGG. STAN NOW PULLS OUT THE TINIEST TUPPERWARE CONTAINER.

STAN: Salt ?

RYAN: You’re having me on.

STAN: Like I said - treasure trove.

RYAN NODS. STAN SPRINKLES SOME SALT ON THE EGG.

RYAN: No pepper ?

STAN: Now you’re just being cheeky.

RYAN: You got everything else in there.

STAN: Next time.

STAN TAKES OUT AN EGG AND SALTS IT. THEY BOTH EAT THEIR EGGS IN SILENCE.

RYAN: So, who’s playing ?

STAN: Wait a mo. (REACHING INTO BAGS.) I got the Record here. We’ll check out the line ups.

RYAN: Not the players. The teams.

STAN: Ah. We’re playing Richmond. The Tigers.

RYAN: And who are we supporting ?

STAN: If you're planning on supporting the Tigers you won't be sitting there.

RYAN: Go the Red and Blue.

STAN: Claret and Royal. You better learn to call them that if you're gonna come along every weekend.

RYAN: I never said anything about coming every weekend.

STAN: But that's why I got two seats.

RYAN: I never asked you to.

STAN: You're mother thought it would be a good idea.

RYAN: Well she should've asked me if I like the bloody game first before you go spending all that money.

STAN: Didn't cost that much. In fact your seat cost nothing. They did a special deal for life members – two seats for the price of one.

RYAN: Well why didn't you bloody well say that ?

STAN: Because you didn't bloody well ask.

PAUSE. THEY COOL DOWN, SIP THEIR COFFEES.

STAN: Your mother thought it would give us a chance to you know ? Talk.

RYAN: What are we meant to talk about ?

STAN: I don't know. What would you like to talk about ?

RYAN: Nothing.

STAN: Fine. We'll just watch the game then and not say a word. Except for yelling out the occasional "Come on the Doggies !"

RYAN: And "Ball !"

STAN: See - you do remember ?

RYAN: Couldn't bloody forget. You yelled it in my ear every three seconds.

STAN: Is that why you stopped coming ?

RYAN: Course not. Hasn't been that long. Five years.

STAN: More like eight.

RYAN: Just got you know ? Busy.

STAN: What with ?

RYAN: Uni. Demos. Simone.

STAN: I see - and now that she's not on the scene -

RYAN: What do you mean by that ?

STAN: Well now you two have ...

RYAN: We haven't done anything. She's just moved to Sydney.

STAN: If you say so.

RYAN: And what does that mean ?

STAN: Doesn't mean anything.

RYAN: Doesn't sound like it.

STAN: Well you know – you're young. So's she. Sydney's a long way away. It'd be natural if you ...

RYAN: If we what ?

STAN: You know what I'm saying.

RYAN: It's not like that. Not like that at all. In fact I'm going up to see her in a couple of weeks time. Got it all planned. So you'll have a spare seat then.

STAN: But we're playing bloody Carlton. It's the local derby.

RYAN: Like I said – getting the extra seat wasn't my idea. I have to go that weekend. Big demo planned.

STAN: What is it this time ?

RYAN: What else ? The war.

STAN: Don't know how you can protest about something you know nothing about. I fought for this country –

RYAN: "And your mates died." I know. Does that mean I gotta fight too and my mates die ?

STAN: If you have to. Protect your country.

- RYAN: But I wouldn't be protecting my country. I'd be protecting South Vietnam. It's got nothing to do with us.
- STAN: Bloody will if those Commies get down here.
- RYAN: They're not gonna come down here.
- STAN: And how do you know that ?
- RYAN: Because they don't like Aussie Rules. (BEAT) Dad – we're not gonna argue about this here.
- STAN: Just tellin' you what I think.
- RYAN: Well you've told me what you think seven hundred times and I've told you what I think seven hundred times. Last time we told each other so loud Mrs Hindmarsh from across the streets called the cops.
- STAN: Bloody stupid woman.
- RYAN: Probably the sound of smashing crockery.
- STAN: I dropped that plate.
- RYAN: Full of mash potato.
- STAN: Not to mention the gravy.
- RYAN: Straight on Mum's good rug. Bullseye.
- STAN: Still haven't got that bloody stain out. (PAUSE) Got plenty of those bloody protests 'round here. What you wanna go all the way up to Sydney for ?
- RYAN: I told you. See Simone.
- STAN: Well why doesn't she come down here ? We can get her a seat as well.
- RYAN: Because she doesn't wanna come down here. She wants to stay in Sydney.
- STAN: You asked her ?
- RYAN NODS.
- STAN: And she wouldn't come ?
- RYAN: Not wouldn't. She'd *prefer* me go up there and that's why I'm going to Sydney next weekend. You happy now ?

STAN IS SILENT. PAUSE.

STAN: Maybe it's best ...

RYAN: You gonna advise me on my love life now as well ?

STAN: No but maybe it's best to ...

RYAN: Well don't stop now. What is it "best to ?"

STAN: You know ?

RYAN: No I don't know.

STAN: (RELUCTANTLY) Let her go.

RYAN: "Let her go ?" Is that what you'd do ? If it was Mum ?

STAN: But that's just it. Your Mum didn't move to Sydney. She wouldn't ever have left me.

RYAN: Well what about you ? Would you have moved to Sydney ?

STAN: Can't think why. No Footy up there.

RYAN: But if you had to – for some reason.

STAN: What reason ?

RYAN: I don't know. Any reason. If you had to move up there, before you and Mum were married. Would Mum have followed you to Sydney ?

STAN: Guess so.

RYAN: And would've you still married her ?

STAN: Of course.

RYAN: Then why shouldn't I go to Sydney for Simone ?

PAUSE.

STAN: It's only a weekend.

RYAN: Maybe.

STAN: You're not thinkin' of –

RYAN: Why not ? Nothing going on down here.

STAN: But you told your Mum you were going back to Uni next year. Finish your degree.

RYAN: Well I was but ...

STAN: But what ?

RYAN: Things changed.

STAN: What things ?

RYAN: Simone.

STAN: Son, now you listen to me. I know she means a lot to you –

RYAN: More than a lot.

STAN: And I know you can't see your way around this at the moment but you will in time. If you're meant to be together – you'll be together. If you're not – then you won't and there is not one single thing you can do about it.

RYAN: And how am I supposed to know that ?

STAN: I think you already know that. In your heart

RYAN: But I love her Dad.

STAN: And in time you'll love someone else.

RYAN: No I won't.

STAN: Yes you will.

RYAN: Could you have ever loved someone else ? Apart from Mum.

STAN: Well that was different.

RYAN: How was it different ?

STAN: I was about to go to war. That kind of put everything into focus. You realised how much things meant to you. What was important.

RYAN: Maybe I should sign up then.

STAN: You think that would make Simone feel any different ?

RYAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

STAN: It's like your Uncle Jimmy used to say: "Never run after a girl or a bus. There'll be another one along soon."

RYAN: Dad – Simone is not a bus.

STAN: You know what I mean.

PAUSE.

RYAN: Think there's another bloke.

STAN: Yeah ?

RYAN: Yeah. In Sydney. That's why she went up there.

STAN: How do you know ?

RYAN: Someone told me. Reckons they're shacked up together.

STAN: Bloody hell ! Already ?

RYAN NODS.

STAN: So how is goin' up there gonna help things then ? Just make things that much tougher for you.

RYAN: I reckon if I could just see her, talk to her, I know I could make her change her mind. Come back to me.

STAN: You sure about that ?

RYAN: Yes.

PAUSE.

STAN: Well, you better go then silly bugger. Even if you are gonna miss the most important game of the season. (REACHING INTO BAG) Now I've got a question for you. What came first – the chicken or the egg ?

RYAN SHAKES HIS HEAD. STAN PULLS OUT ANOTHER FOIL PACKAGE.

STAN: The answer ... (REVEALING CHICKEN) both ! Grab yourself a leg.

RYAN: No. Something a bit odd about eating chicken and egg at the same time. It's like your eating the whole family all at once. But I wouldn't mind some more of that snakebite cure.

STAN: Sure.

STAN TAKES OUT THE HIPFLASK. HE POURS SOME WHISKEY IN TO RYAN'S MUG.

RYAN: Keep going.

STAN: Be strong.

RYAN: The stronger the better right now.

STAN POURS IN A LITTLE MORE. RYAN TAKES A SWIG.

RYAN: Got a nice kick in the head now. Just what I need. When's this bloody game gonna start ?

STAN: Five minutes. Listen, you don't have to stay. Go home and have a sleep or somethin'.

RYAN: Maybe. You coming with me ?

STAN: You kidding ? First game of the season. Cranshaw up against Murray in the ruck. The new kid starting at full forward alongside Walsh. You know your way home. That is – if you want to go.

RYAN: (AFTER A PAUSE) Here now.

STAN: That's the spirit. Spirit of the Doggies.

RYAN: So, who's the new kid ?

STAN: Anderson. Lane Anderson.

RYAN: What sort of names that ?

STAN: Name doesn't matter. How he plays what counts.

RYAN: How's that ?

STAN: All reports – pretty fair.

RYAN: Where's he from ?

STAN: Place called Lake Cargelligo.

RYAN: Where's that ?

STAN: Bugged if I know. Somewhere up North. Played seniors up there since he was fourteen. Tall too. Six and a 'alf.

RYAN: That's good.

STAN: Thin too. Like a rake. Could get knocked off the ball pretty easy. It's a long way from Lake Whoop Whoop to Brunswick East.

RYAN: Further still to Sydney.

THE BULLDOGS CLUB SONG CAN BE HEARD FROM SPEAKERS ABOVE THEM: "YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE !"

SINGER: When you walk through a storm  
Hold your head up high,  
And don't be afraid of the dark.  
At the end of a storm,  
There's a golden sky,  
And the sweet silver song of a lark.  
Walk on through the wind,  
Walk on through the rain,  
Though your dreams be tossed and blown...

STAN: Come on chin up. Here they come.

STAN AND RYAN STAND AND APPLAUD.

STAN: (SINGING ALONG) Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,  
And you'll never walk alone,  
You'll never walk alone.

RYAN LOOKS AT STAN, SHAKING HIS HEAD AND LAUGHING.

STAN: What's wrong ?

RYAN: Nothing.

RYAN JOINS IN THE SONG.

STAN AND RYAN: (SINGING) Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,  
And you'll never walk alone,  
You'll never walk alone.

THE SONG ENDS. ROAR OF THE CROWD. A SIREN SOUNDS.

LIGHTS FADE.

**SCENE TWO. 1965 – BULLDOGS VS CARLTON, TWO WEEKS LATER.**

STAN sits alone, dressed almost identically to Scene One.

The bag sits beside him and the blanket is spread over his leg.

We hear a SIREN sound. STAN claps, not too enthusiastically, as the players make their way to the dressing room for half time. We hear a spattering of mild applause.

STAN gets out his thermos and pours some coffee. He goes through the milk, sugar and snakebite cure ritual. He pours in some snakebite, stops, considers (they are forty points down) then pours a little more.

Next he pulls out a cloth and lays it on the seat. He then takes out a large Tupperware container and opens it. He pulls out two slices of white bread and butter and opens them.

He then pulls out a piece of chicken and begins to pull pieces off the chicken and lay on to the bread. Eventually he replaces the chicken and closes the Tupperware container.

Next he gets out the salt container and sprinkles a little salt on the sandwich. Next he takes out another medium size Tupperware container and a knife. He opens the container. It contains mayonnaise.

He puts some mayonnaise on the knife and spreads it on the chicken. He then wipes the knife with another cloth from the bag, close the mayonnaise container and puts it and the knife away.

Finally he closes the sandwich. He is about to take a bite when RYAN enters.

RYAN: (CALLING) Dad. Dad !

STAN TURNS.

STAN: Ryan ? Well come on, sit down.

STAN CLEARS THE CLOTH AWAY AND PUTS THE MADE SANDWICH ON THE LARGER TUPPERWARE CONTAINER ON HIS LAP. HE MOVES THE BAG OVER THE OTHER SIDE, MAKING WAY FOR RYAN.

RYAN EASES HIS WAY PAST STAN AND SITS. STAN PUTS THE BLANKET ACROSS RYAN'S LEG.

STAN: Thought you'd be halfway to Sydney by now.

RYAN: I was. What's on the sandwich ?

STAN: Chicken and Mayonnaise. You hungry ?

RYAN: Starving.

STAN: (SLIGHT PAUSE, THEN OFFERING SANDWICH) There you go.

RYAN: No, it's yours.

STAN: I'll make another. Coffee ?

RYAN: (NODDING) And triple the snakebite cure.

STAN: Big snake ?

RYAN: Huge.

RYAN TAKES A BIG BITE INTO THE SANDWICH. HE SITS CHEWING IN SILENCE.

STAN: How'd you get in ? You don't have your pass.

RYAN: You're royalty round here. Bloke at the gate took one look at me and said: "Stan's kid. You're late."

STAN: Clarrie. Been comin' here long enough I guess.

RYAN: How we doing ?

STAN: 'opeless. Seven goals down.

RYAN: Seven goals ?

STAN: And we're lucky it's only that much.

RYAN: How's Lane doing ?

STAN: Lane ? You mean "Pain" ?

RYAN: He's been re-christened.

STAN: Yeah – cause he's so "pain" –full to watch. Reckon he comes from Lake Cargellico. More like Lake Nogo. Blues' players just have to breathe on him and he falls over.

RYAN: How much they pay for him ?

STAN: Too much. McCreadie's gonna have to pull him off or we'll lose this by a hundred. Which is almost how much we lost it by last year.

RYAN: Might come back.

STAN: Yeah – and I might be pregnant. (PAUSE.) You gonna tell me ?

RYAN: Not much to tell.

STAN: You're sitting here aren't you ?

RYAN: Got all the way to Wagga.

STAN: And ?

RYAN: And I thought to myself – what the hell am I doing ? Not exactly in those words, of course. So I pulled up at a service station and I rang her.

STAN: What did she say ?

RYAN: I don't know. Bloke answered the phone.

STAN: *The* bloke ?

RYAN: Conversation wasn't long enough to find out. After that - seemed pretty pointless.

PAUSE.

STAN: Well, probably for the best.

**RYAN NODS.**

STAN: Does your Mother know ?

RYAN: Came straight here. To see the Doggies' magnificent come from behind victory.

STAN: Not today. (PAUSE) Proud of you son.

RYAN: What are you talking about ? I threw in the towel. Got halfway there and turned around – tail between me legs.

STAN: Yeah, but you were man enough to admit your mistake before you made it any worse. Don't ever think you're beyond failure son. That's the biggest mistake of all. We all fail from time to time but the trick is to learn from it. Did I ever tell you about Prince McCann ?

RYAN: Only about a million times. "Nearly isn't winning." Whatever that means.

STAN: You know what it means. And you remember why we called him "Prince" ?

RYAN: Because he played like a king.

STAN: Not just because of that. Because of the way he carried himself – on the field and off. Don't get me wrong. During the game he was the hardest man you ever saw. He'd go up for a high ball against three of their bastards – punchin' 'im, elbowin' 'im, shoulders, knees – and the Prince wouldn't even flinch. He'd take the mark like he was swatting away flies and then get up, dust himself off and kick the goal - from fifty yards. I remember once against Hawthorn their fullback hit him so hard you could hear the crack from here to Toorak. Blood came pouring out from where his nose use to be. Damn thing was spread right across his face like a jam sandwich. Afterwards Prince stays down and we all thought – “He's done this time. Prince has finally met his match.” Then Prince lifts up his head, very slowly, and he signals to the bench. “Jesus ! He's calling for the stretcher.” But you know what the trainer runs on with ? A hankie. A white hankie. “What's goin' on ? The Prince is surrendering.” He just takes the hankie, wipes the blood from his nose, hands it back to the trainer and goes on with the game. Kicked six goals in the last quarter and we won by two points. Prince McCann – legend. That's why they named this stand after him.

RYAN: Easy when you're winning.

STAN: That's where your wrong. When Prince started we weren't winning. The next year we had our best season for twenty years. Finished third, beat North in the preliminary and reached the Grand final – for only the second time.

RYAN: When was this ?

STAN: Year before I went over. We played Dandenong in the Grand Final. Unbelievable game. Lead must have changed hands fifty times – more. Finally with about a minute to go – Tom Simpkins won a scramble in the centre and just swung a wild boot down field. Then out of nowhere – up leaps Prince. His head appears right in the middle of four Devils and somehow – he takes the mark. He's only twenty yards out from goal. Dead in front. The siren goes. It's all over. Prince kicks this and we win our first Grand Final for twenty one years –the year I was born. And you know what happened ?

RYAN: Sure. He kicked it.

STAN: No – he missed. Skewed right off the outside of his boot and went out of bounds on the full. Didn't even go for a behind. Dandenong players were so surprised they had to get half of 'em out of the showers. We just sat in the stand. Dead still, not a word. Didn't move a muscle for two hours. I was the last to go. Groundsman had to kick me out. Then as I was walkin' out I came 'round the corner and who was sitting on the kerb, behind the Members Stand at The MCG – Prince McCann. And you know what he was doing ?

RYAN: What ?

STAN: Cryin'. Bawlin' his eyes out. The greatest footy player of all time – blubbering like a little girl. Didn't know what to do. Here I am – standing two feet away from Prince McCann and he's cryin'. The Prince. And then I don't know why – instinct maybe – I went over to him and I put my hand on his shoulder and I said real quiet like: "Good game Prince." He was still for a moment, like he hadn't heard me, but then he raised his head and looked at me – eyes full of tears: "Ta mate." Then he got up and walked away. Next year he kicked seven goals in the Grand Final and we beat Essendon by fifty. Only bugger is by that time I wasn't there to see it. I was knee deep in shit on the western front.

RYAN: So Prince McCann was a cry baby ?

STAN: No, he was a hero. A hero who wasn't ashamed to let his emotions show when he failed. And then he came back from that pit of despair to emerge triumphant. That's what made him a champion.

RYAN: Not sure how I'm going to emerge triumphant. Getting dumped for a bloke called Boris.

STAN: Boris ?

RYAN: (HEAVY ACCENT) "Hello this is Boris. Simone is not here right now."

STAN: Boris. Bloody hell. Sounds like a Kraut.

RYAN: Dad, it doesn't matter where he comes from. It only matters that Simone is happy.

STAN: Bullshit.

RYAN: No, it's true.

STAN: Well then, spoken like a true Prince. Prince Ryan.

RYAN: Don't know if I'll be kicking any goals in a Grand Final.

STAN: No, but you might be cheering on the boys who do it. Not if they play like they're playin' today however.

PAUSE.

RYAN: Why didn't you ever play ? You love the bloody game so much. Why not get out there ?

STAN: I did. And I was stark, staring hopeless.

RYAN: Yeah ?

STAN: Yeah. Played at school and I was keen, bloody keen, but no matter where they put me it was the same story. Couldn't kick, couldn't mark, couldn't even tackle. Completely unco. Some blokes have two left feet. I had about nineteen of them and they were all moving in different directions. Had to make up a new set of stats. Other blokes you count their "hand passes" or their "kicks" Me, you had to count the number of times I fell over. Coach spent night after night personally training me but I still didn't get any better. Anyway – one week he bit the bullet and left me off the team sheet completely. Think we actually played one short, which considerin' I was the one was a definite improvement. First of all I wasn't gonna go to the game. Locked myself in my room and blubbered just like the Prince. Even threw me jersey out the window. Game didn't want me, then I didn't want the game. Then I looked outside and saw some of our players on the way to the ground. They were already wearin' their shorts and jerseys. Had their boots tied, slung over their shoulders -and I couldn't help meself. Before I knew it I was outside, chasing 'em down the street. When I got to the game the coach was feelin' pretty bad so he said I could sit on the bench with the reserves - but it didn't feel right. Bench was for players. So I sat up in the stand and when our team ran on everybody stood up and applauded - so I did too. Then the game started and we were getting' slaughtered. One of the other teams' fathers was sitting in front of me and he was yellin' out, urgin' his players on - so I thought "If he can yell out, then so can I." And being a stubborn kid I reckoned I could yell louder and longer. If I couldn't win on the field, then I could win in the stands. So I started yellin' and the louder I yelled the better we played. So the father startin' yellin' louder, so I yelled louder still and somehow we got in front and I kept yellin'. Even the father couldn't keep up with me. So I yelled and I yelled and – we won. We won. Afterwards the coach comes up to me and thanks me - in front of the whole team - and you know what they did ? They clapped. They all clapped me - and slapped me on the back. It was like I had won. Not them – *me*. So from then on I went to every game – sat in the stands and yelled. And the more I yelled the more we won. I had finally found my position. I was a supporter.

RYAN: You must really love it ?

STAN: Love. How can that word, those four letters, possibly contain what I feel for this game ? It's more overpowering than that, more constant.

RYAN: Come off it Dad.

STAN: It's true. Love comes and goes but this – this game – it's always here. Waiting, ready, every weekend, every year, every decade. And it's always the same. Alive with passion, drama, life.

RYAN: This isn't life.

STAN: No, it's far more important than that.

RYAN: You're havin' me on.

STAN: When I'm here nothing else matters. It's just what happens out there, thirty-six brave men in a contest of skill, strength and speed. And at the end – a champion is crowned. Every Saturday. And I'm here, takin' it all in, breathin' their air – playing my part. Adding my voice to the chorus of cheers. Willin' them on – to run faster, tackle harder, kick longer. To win. This is it. There is nothing else – only this great game. Love. How can that little word hold all of that ?

PAUSE.

RYAN: How does Mum feel about all this ?

STAN: Your mother understands that. She use to come, sit beside me – like you are now - try to cheer along. But she saw what happened to me at the first siren. The ... transformation as my body, mind and soul was consumed by the battle being played out before me. The passion, the excitement, the commitment. I think it frightened her in a way. But then she realised that this was the only time I truly felt alive. When I was sittin' in this ground, watchin' my team. She realised she could never compete with that. So one day - she stopped trying.

RYAN: That's kind of ... sad.

STAN: Why ? Minister's wife doesn't ask him to give up the Church.

RYAN: This is not a Church ?

STAN: It is to me. And to half the other blokes in this stand. This is our Church - we come here every Saturday and this is how we worship, by screaming out "Come on the Doggies." You'll find as you go through life that there's very few things you can rely on. But I know I can rely on two things. The first is your mother. The second thing is this football club. I know that every Saturday – rail, hail or shine - I can come and watch them play. They may get done by eight goals but I can still see them play and for that I'm grateful.

RYAN: Sport, the opium of the people.

STAN: What ?

RYAN: I'm paraphrasing Marx.

STAN: Groucho ?

- RYAN: Karl. (BEAT) Guess I should be happy for you. You've found something that keeps you going, sustains you, through life's little ups and downs. Thought Simone was that – for me. Guess I was wrong.
- STAN: You're young. You'll find somethin' else. Somethin' you can truly believe in. Maybe you should go back to Uni. Finish your degree.
- RYAN: Been thinking about it.
- STAN: Well then stop thinking. Do.
- RYAN: But I don't know if the Law is something I can truly believe in.
- STAN: You don't have to believe in it to start off – you just have to try to believe.
- RYAN: I don't know if I even can do that.
- STAN: I think you can. You're a Doggies supporter now. You can do anything.

THE CROWD ROARS.

- STAN: Hey, here they come.

STAN STANDS AND APPLAUDS. RYAN STANDS AS WELL.

- STAN: Come on. They need every ounce today.
- RYAN: Give us some more of that snakebite cure.

STAN POURS SOME WHISKEY INTO RYAN'S MUG. RYAN TAKES A BIG SWIG AND THEN STARTS TO CLAP LOUDLY.

- STAN: (CALLING) Come on Lane. Wake up son. Didn't sign you up to go walkabout.
- RYAN: (CALLING) Yeah come on Lane. You're playing for the Claret and Royal now. Not the Cargellico Cry-babies.

STAN LOOKS AT RYAN SURPRISED, A LITTLE PLEASED.

- RYAN: (CALLING LOUDER) And you Cranshaw. You're the Captain. Show a bit of guts out there.
- STAN: That's right Cranshaw. Fire up. Fire up.
- RYAN: That's the spirit Doggies. You can win this one boys. Do it for the Prince.
- STAN: (JOINING) Yeah. Do it for the Prince. Do it for our Prince.

THEY BOTH CONTINUE TO CLAP LOUDLY. LIGHTS FADE.

**SCENE THREE – 1968, BULLDOGS vs DANDENONG DEVILS**

The lights come up on STAN already in his seat, the slightly faded blanket already over his legs and bag already open. He wears his usual coat, scarf and beanie.

As the lights come up STAN is just opening up the bread and butter on the cloth laid on the empty seat just as he did in Scene 2.

But this time he takes out a different Tupperware container and opens it to produce a cold sausage. He produces a small knife and neatly cuts the sausage length wise, then lays the sausage strips on to the bread.

He puts the sausage container away and pulls out a bottle of tomato sauce. He pours a little on to the sandwich.

He puts the sauce bottle away and takes out a tiny Tupperware container, split in two. He opens the flap on one side and sprinkles some salt on to the sandwich. Then he opens the flip on the other and yes – sprinkles some pepper.

He puts the Tupperware salt and pepper shaker away and closes up the sandwich. He once more raises it towards his lips when a familiar voice is heard upstage.

RYAN: (ENTERING, CALLING) Carn the Doggies ! Carn the Doggies !

STAN TURNS AROUND TO SEE RYAN. HE THINKS FOR A MOMENT AND LOOKS AT THE SANDWICH. THEN HE TAKES A BIG BITE OUT OF THE SANDWICH, CLAIMING IT AS HIS OWN.

RYAN CONTINUES TO YELL, OBVIOUSLY A LITTLE UNDER THE WEATHER.

RYAN: (CALLING) Carn you Doggies !

STAN: Ryan ! Ryan ! Over here.

RYAN: Hey Dad. Just doing some pre-game cheering.

STAN: Save it for the siren.

RYAN: Gotta warm up. Players warm up. Supporters gotta warm up.

STAN: I agree, but just do it a little quieter.

RYAN: Oh sssshhh ! Sssshhh !

STAN: Come on, sit down. You're blocking people's view.

RYAN: What is there to look at ? Just an empty field. (TURNING TO OTHER SPECTATORS) Game hasn't started yet.

ONE OF THE OTHER SPECTATOR'S SAYS SOMETHING TO RYAN.

RYAN: (RESPONDING WITH A RUDE GESTURE) Same to you mate.

STAN QUICKLY GOES OVER AND GRABS RYAN, HE DRAGS HIM OVER TOWARDS HE SEATS.

STAN: Hey, pull your head in. Want us to get thrown out ?

RYAN: They won't throw you out. Your Stan Williams, Prince of the Prince McCann Stand.

STAN: That was Bruce Farrah.

RYAN: Who's Bruce Farrah ?

STAN: The bloody Club Chairman that's who. Doesn't take too kindly to blokes tellin' him to get stuffed.

RYAN: He started it.

STAN: And he'll finish it if you don't shut up. (CALLING BACK TO BRUCE) Sorry Bruce. Just a bit excited about the big game.

RYAN: Don't apologise. Why you apologising ?

STAN: Just keepin' the peace.

RYAN: Just like you did on the Western Front. (SEEING SANDWICH) Good sanger. What is it ? Sausage.

STAN: Yes and it's all mine. (STAN GRABS THE SANDWICH) You can make your own – if you're up to it.

RYAN: What does that mean ?

STAN: Come off it Ryan, you're half-tanked.

RYAN: Wouldn't say half. More like fully. (CALLING) Carn Doggies ! Go the Claret and Royal ! Go on Bruce's Boys !

STAN: Knock it off.

RYAN: What's wrong ? Can't a supporter support his team – 'specially when they're the best team in Australia !

STAN: Course you can. Just do it a little quieter – at least until the game starts.

RYAN: Why ? Am I yellin' louder than you ? The great supporters bein' out supported.

STAN: You can out support me all you like – once the siren goes.

RYAN: And I will. (LOOKING AT SANDWICH) That sure is a great sandwich.

STAN: And you ain't having it.

STAN TAKES ANOTHER BIG BITE OF THE SANDWICH AND SITS.  
RYAN TURNS AND WAVES.

RYAN: Hi Bruce !

STAN DRAGS RYAN DOWN IN TO HIS SEAT.

STAN: Will you button it !?

RYAN IS STUNNED MOMENTARILY BY STAN'S INTENSITY AND  
GOES QUIET. STAN EATS HIS SANDWICH IN SILENCE, THEN:

STAN: Thought you weren't comin' today. Don't you have to study for your Bar Exam ?

RYAN: Not doin' it.

STAN: Fair enough. All need a day off. Not till Tuesday is it ?

RYAN: I'm not doin' the exam.

STAN: What's happened ?

RYAN: Nothin's happened. They're all just corrupt – that's all. Fuckin' corrupt.

STAN: Jesus, language !

RYAN: Says him – takin' the Lord's name in vain. Naughty, naughty.

STAN: What's got into you ?

RYAN: About half a bottle of vodka and twenty shots of Tequila.

STAN: It's not even Two o'clock. When did you start groggin' ?

RYAN: Thursday.

STAN: Don't let your Mother find out.

RYAN: She already knows.

STAN: That you been drunk since Thursday ?

RYAN: That I been drunk since last term.

STAN: Think you better go home. Sleep it off. Hopefully you'll come to your senses before the exam.

RYAN: Not going nowhere. Come to s'pport the Doggies.

STAN: You're so pissed you can hardly say their name.

RYAN: Can too. (LOUDER) Doggies, Doggies !

STAN PULLS OUT THE HIPFLASK.

RYAN: Says him with his Snakebite cure.

STAN: What's wrong with that ? Just a few nips.

RYAN: Don't worry. Got me own.

RYAN PULLS OUT A SMALL BOTTLE OF TEQUILA FROM HIS POCKET. HE BEGINS TO OPEN IT.

STAN PUSHES THE BOTTLE DOWN.

STAN: Put that away.

RYAN: What's wrong ? Just me own little Snakebite Cure.

STAN: You can't drink that here.

RYAN: And what's yours – Lemonade ?

STAN: Yeah but I do it on the quiet. Everybody does.

RYAN: Well I'll do mine "on the quiet" as well.

RYAN PULLS THE BOTTLE UP AGAIN AND LOWERS HIS HEAD TO DRINK. STAN PUSHES THE BOTTLE DOWN AGAIN.

RYAN TRIES TO PULL THE BOTTLE UP AGAIN AND THE TWO MEN BEGIN TO WRESTLE.

AS THEY DO THIS THE TEAM SONG "YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE" BEGINS OVER THE SPEAKERS. IT CONTINUES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING.

EVENTUALLY STAN PULLS THE BOTTLE AWAY FROM RYAN AND PUTS IT IN THE BAG.

RYAN: (CALLING) Hey Bruce. He took my Snakebite cure. Dad took my Snakebite cure.

STAN: (VERY FIRM) If you don't shut your mouth right now I'll throw you outta 'ere meself. You're half cut and if you want to stay and watch the game you'll shut your trap and drink coffee and nothing else.

RYAN: With some Snakebite Cure ?

STAN: Wish I'd never brought the bloody flask in the first place.

RYAN: Coffee doesn't taste any good without Snakebite Cure.

STAN: (POURING BLACK COFFEE) It's okay – on special occasions.

RYAN: Every morning's a special occasion.

STAN: (HANDING MUG TO RYAN) Here, get that into you.

RYAN: (TAKING A SIP) Bloody strong.

STAN: Not strong enough.

PAUSE. STAN LOOKS AROUND. THE SONG COMES TO AN END.

RYAN: (SINGING ALONG) "You'll never walk alone."

THE SONG ENDS. APPLAUSE. RYAN IS MOMENTARILY QUIET.

RYAN: (LOOKING OUT TO THE FIELD) Who's that ?

STAN: Who do you think it is ? The Prince.

RYAN: You're the Prince.

STAN: The real Prince. Prince McCann.

RYAN: Yeah ! The real Prince. Shit eh ?

RYAN STANDS, CALLING AND WAVING.

RYAN: Hey Prince ! Over here.

STAN PULLS HIM DOWN.

STAN: (QUIET) Would ya' sit down ?

RYAN: Just sayin' hello to the Prince.

STAN: Very polite of ya.

RYAN: "Ta mate." (LOOKING OUT) He looks ...

STAN: What ?

RYAN: Small.

STAN: That's cause he's so far away.

RYAN: Still, not six feet.

STAN: Almost.

RYAN: Five foot, ten I reckon.

STAN: Five foot ten of solid granite. Not the size of the Dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the Dog. And the Prince had enough of that for the whole First team and Reserves.

RYAN: What's he doing ? Makin' a come back.

STAN: It's twenty years since we last won the flag. So the committee organised the old players from that team to come back and try and inspire the current boys.

RYAN: We're doing pretty good. Comin' fifth.

STAN: Only thanks to Lane and no matter how good he is he can't kick ten goals every week.

RYAN: Did it against Melbourne.

STAN: Yeah but he can't do it against everyone, 'specially when the other team's stickin' three blokes on him. The other boys have got help him out.

RYAN: Cranshaw's too old.

STAN: Leave him alone. Still got a few years left in 'im. Old war horse.

RYAN: More like old cart horse. They should move Blake to ruck. Lane'd get more ball then.

STAN: Blake ? He's hardly had a possession in the last two weeks.

RYAN: Cause he's playing on the wing. He should be in the ruck.

STAN: It's lucky you're pissed or I'd think you were serious. (PAUSE) How hard you been hittin' it ?

RYAN: Pretty hard.

STAN: I don't understand. What went wrong ? Last I heard you were happy in your course. Your Mum said you even had a few jobs lined up when you finished. You could pick and choose.

RYAN: Yeah pick and choose – between Tax fraud and Money laundering.

STAN: What's got in to you ?

RYAN: It's corrupt. It's all corrupt.

STAN: Not all of it.

RYAN: Why do you think they call it Commercial law ? Because it's about Commerce. Making money - and the way you make money is steal and lie.

STAN: Go into a different field then. Don't do Commercial.

RYAN: Bit late now.

STAN: Change over. Do something else. Study for another year. We're not gonna mind. Find somethin' you're happy with.

RYAN: She's already found somethin' she's happy with.

STAN: Who's she ?

RYAN: Simone.

STAN: So that's what this is all about. Miss Marmaduke raises her ugly head.

RYAN: You can call her what you want but she ain't ugly.

STAN: But she is trouble. Every time she pops her head up the rest of us are pickin' up the pieces for the next six months.

RYAN: Not anymore.

STAN: What do you mean ?

RYAN: She's getting married.

STAN: To Boris ?

RYAN: He's old news. Whittaker. Ben Whittaker.

STAN: Who's he ?

RYAN: Come on Dad – you know exactly who he is.

STAN: Don't follow politics much.

RYAN: Well you follow it enough to know he's gonna be the next Premier of cockroach land. And now she's gonna be the next Mrs Premier. You know where they met ? You're gonna love this.

STAN: Where ?

RYAN: A Vietnam protest - in Sydney – three years ago.

STAN: Hold on pal, you're not gonna blame this on me.

RYAN: You told me not to go.

STAN: I left it up to you.

RYAN: You advised me not to go then.

STAN: Wouldn't be so stupid to give a bonehead like you advice.

RYAN: You knew how I felt about her ?

STAN: The bloody Queen of Sheba knew how you felt about her.

RYAN: You should've stood by me.

STAN: I did stand by you.

RYAN: You should've encouraged me. Told me to fight for what's important. You did it for Lane.

STAN: That's been blown out of all whack.

RYAN: Not what I heard.

STAN: McCreadie should've twigged right from the start. Kid comes from the country. Doesn't know anybody down here – and he's living alone. Doesn't even know how to cook. No wonder he's so thin. All your mother and I did was invite him round to dinner a few nights.

RYAN: Every night for three months.

STAN: Not every night. Your mum's a good cook. You know that. Once he tasted her food we couldn't get rid of him. But not every night.

RYAN: No, not game day. He ate at the post match function, which Mum now says your regularly invited to.

STAN: So are all the members – once they get twenty years up.

RYAN: Anyway what do I care ? Made Lane a better player. Doggie's are winning. Well, more than they used to.

STAN: Then what's wrong ?

RYAN: What's wrong is you never invited me. You had Lane Anderson over the house every night for three months and you didn't invite me – once.

STAN: He's shy for a big bloke. Didn't want to pressure him with other people.

RYAN: I'm your son.

STAN: You don't even like the game. Said it yourself.

RYAN: Must like it a bit. I've been coming every second Saturday for the last three years.

STAN: He was lonely.

RYAN: And I wasn't.

PAUSE.

STAN: Well, if you must know, we did invite you. More than once..

RYAN: When was this ?

STAN: Start of the season – before we played Fitzroy.

RYAN: News to me.

STAN: And before Collingwood. Even left a message. You never rung back.

RYAN: Never got it.

STAN: Your mother even spoke to you on the phone. Heard you myself. Invited you round the next night. Set a place for you and all – Lane was really looking forward to meeting you.

RYAN: I don't remember.

STAN: Didn't show. Didn't even ring to say you weren't coming. Then next Saturday there you were. Bright and early – and you never even brought it up. So – neither did I.

RYAN: I don't remember.

STAN: She invited you. Heard her myself.

RYAN: I don't remember speaking to her. And that's not all I don't remember. Phone conversations, meeting people. Lot of times I wake up and I don't even know where I am. Or how I got there.

STAN: Didn't know it was that bad.

RYAN: You never asked.

PAUSE. RYAN FINISHES HIS COFFEE. STAN GRABS THE CUP.

STAN: You want another ?

RYAN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

RYAN: Too bad. Cause you're havin' one.

STAN POURS ANOTHER BLACK COFFEE FOR RYAN. HE HANDS IT BACK TO HIM.

STAN: Is this all because of Simone ?

RYAN: She was just the excuse - at the start. Drowning my sorrows. Then I drowned my sorrows so often I forgot what they were in the first place.

STAN: Why don't you do something about it ? Limit yourself to a few beers.

RYAN: I've tried Dad. I've tried. Thousand times. I go out with the best intentions – just a few beers. That's all. But every time it's the same. Once I have the first one I don't care anymore. Drink anything I can get my hands on. And every night it ends up the same – blind drunk in some shit hole with blokes I'd never go anywhere near if I was sober. Gotten so bad I only have two states of mind – drunk and waiting to get drunk. Whole life revolves around booze. And the funny thing is – even though I know I've got a problem, even though I know what it's doing to me - all I can think of now is the tequila bottle in my jacket pocket ?

STAN: My fault.

RYAN: How is it your fault ?

STAN: Getting' you started. Bloody Snakebite cure.

RYAN: I've been drinking stuff stronger than that since I was sixteen. This isn't all about you Dad, as amazing as that sounds. This problem is all of my very own invention. Me, you hear me ? Not you.

STAN: What do they say at Uni ?

RYAN: No idea. Haven't been there for six months.

STAN: Where have you been then ?

RYAN: At the pub. Early opener, late opener. All day, everyday.

STAN: Jesus.

- RYAN: Don't go all "mea culpa" now Dad.
- STAN: How come we never knew ?
- RYAN: Do most of my best work on the sofa at my place. Solo.
- STAN: Terrible thing when a man starts drinkin' alone.
- RYAN: You better believe it.
- STAN: But where did you get the money ?
- RYAN: Mum.
- STAN: She's been financing your drinking ?
- RYAN: She doesn't know. Been stealing it from her purse. She caught me one time. Didn't say anything though. Too embarrassed. Even pinched twenty bucks from you once.
- STAN: Me ?
- RYAN: From your wallet. Kept me going for two days.
- STAN: (RAISING HIS HAND) You bloody little – Stealin' from your own family. I should –
- RYAN: Well go on Dad do it ! Do it ! Wonder what Brucie boy would say about that ?

PAUSE. STAN LOWERS HIS HAND.

- STAN: I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.
- RYAN: Forget it. I know how you feel about me. How you've always felt. Disappointment, disgrace, no-hoper.
- STAN: Never said that. You're my son.
- RYAN: Not the son you wanted. He's running around out there every Saturday in the Claret and Royal with number seventeen on his back. Lane bloody Anderson from your precious Brunswick Bulldogs.
- STAN: That's not true. It's not true.
- RYAN: Oh bullshit ! Here, shove your bloody coffee.

RYAN PUSHES THE MUG TOWARDS STAN. STAN PUSHES IT BACK.

- STAN: Watch out. It's full.

RYAN: Take it then.

STAN: I don't want it, you drink it.

RYAN: Don't wanna drink it.

STAN: Careful.

RYAN SHOVES THE CUP TOWARDS STAN AGAIN, STAN DEFLECTS IT AWAY FROM HIM AND RYAN SPILLS THE COFFEE ALL DOWN THE BACK OF THE MAN SITTING IN FRONT OF HIM.

STAN: Oh shit ! Bloody hell. (STANDING) Sorry mate. Sorry.

RYAN IS STUNNED BY WHAT HE'S DOWN AND SITS MUTE FOR A MOMENT.

STAN: (TO MAN) I'll get you some water./How about a hankie ?/ Did it burn ya ?

RYAN: Cause it bloody burnt 'im. It's boiling hot coffee.

STAN: (STANDING OVER RYAN) Will ya shut ya big fat gob ?

RYAN DOES NOT RESPOND.

STAN: (TO MAN) I'm so sorry. It was an accident. Ya want to give me your shirt ? I'll take it home and get the wife to wash it. She can get any stains out.

RYAN: (MOCKING HIM) "I'll get the wife to wash it." Stop makin' such a fuss.

STAN: Ryan, you've scalded the poor bugger. (TAKING OFF JUMPER) Here take my jumper.

RYAN: (TAKING OFF JACKET) Stuff that. Take my jacket.

STAN: You've done enough.

RYAN: I ain't done nothin' yet. Watch this.

RYAN STANDS AND STUMBLES TOWARDS THE AISLE.

STAN: Where you goin' ?

RYAN: Out there. With the Prince. Show 'em what I'm made of. (CALLING) Hey Prince, I'm coming. I'm coming.

STAN: Ryan, sit down. Siddown.

RYAN: What ? You scared I'm gonna embarrass you. I'll give you bloody embarrassed.

RYAN STARTS TO UNDO HIS SHIRT.

RYAN: (THROWING SHIRT TO MAN) There you go. Hope it fits.

STAN: What are you doing you halfwit ? Sidddown.

STAN TRIES TO PULL RYAN DOWN BUT RYAN PUSHES HIM AWAY.

RYAN: (LEANING OVER HIM, SCREAMING) Don't you ever touch me again !  
Ever !

STAN IS NOW STUNNED BY RYAN'S FURY. HE IS SILENT.

RYAN PUSHES PAST HIM AND STARTS TO MAKE HIS WAY  
UPSTAGE. AS HE DOES SO HE RIPS OFF HIS SHIRT AND SHOES.

RYAN: (CALLING) Hey Prince ! Look at me ! Look at me !

RYAN UNDOES HIS JEANS AND CHUCKS A "BROWN EYE" UPSTAGE.

RYAN: Cop that one Bruce.

STAN: (GOING AFTER HIM) Ryan stop it ! Ryan !

RYAN PULLS OF HIS JEANS AS STAN REACHES HIM.

STAN: What do you think you're doing ?

RYAN: Another great Aussie tradition. Showing 'em what I'm made of.

STAN: What are you on about ?

RYAN: Watch me Dad ! I'm streaking !

STAN GOES TO GRAB RYAN BUT RYAN PUSHES HIM AWAY  
AGAIN. STAN FALLS TO THE GROUND.

RYAN RUNS OFF STAGE AND MOMENTS LATER HIS UNDERPANTS  
ARE FLUNG BACK ON STAGE LANDING ON STAN'S HEAD.

SOON WE HEAR APPLAUSE AND LAUGHTER.

THE LIGHTS BEGIN TO FADE ON STAN, STILL LYING ON THE  
GROUND AS HE RAISES HIMSELF UP ON TO HIS ELBOWS – RYAN'S  
UNDERPANTS STILL ON HIS HEAD.

LAUGHTER BUILDS AS THE LIGHTS FADE. END ACT ONE.

**ACT 2****SCENE ONE – 1978 BULLDOGS VS GEELONG**

Lights up on empty seats.

After a few moments STAN enters followed by a very pensive RYAN. RYAN is trying to stay inconspicuous, wearing sunglasses and keeping his head down.

STAN, wearing the now quite faded coat, beanie and scarf – and carrying the ubiquitous red bag - leads him towards the seats.

RYAN:           Everybody's smiling at me.

STAN:           They're just happy we're on top of the table. This is our year – finally.

RYAN:           No, they're smiling at me.

STAN:           'S okay. Natural to be a bit self conscious. You'll be alright in a few minutes. Once we get settled.

THEY REACH THE SEATS. RYAN SITS QUICKLY. STAN OPENS UP THE BAG AND PULLS OUT THE NOW VERY FADED CLARET AND ROYAL BLANKET.

HE PUTS THE BLANKET OVER THEIR LEGS AND DIVES BACK INTO THE BAG.

RYAN:           Dad, stop fussing.

STAN:           Just getting us a coffee. Take your mind off things.

STAN PULLS OUT THE MUGS AND THERMOS.

STAN:           (HANDING MUGS TO RYAN) Here we go.

STAN STARTS OPENING THE THERMOS.

RYAN:           What about the milk and sugar ?

STAN:           Already in. All pre-mixed now. Your mother makes it for me.

RYAN:           Good idea.

STAN:           Yeah, don't know why we didn't think of it before. Save me stuffin' around with all those Tupperware containers for the last thirty years.

STAN POURS THE COFFEES.

RYAN:           (DUCKING) Shit !

STAN: What ?

RYAN: It's Bruce Farrah.

STAN: Bruce is alright.

RYAN: Probably wants to come over and clock me.

STAN: He's the one who got your life ban lifted.

RYAN: Bruce lifted the ban ?

STAN: Bought it up before committee and everything. Ten years so he says "enough is enough. Let the kid back in." Just between us if Bruce had his way he would never have banned you in the first place. Told me it was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. First time he'd ever seen a stalker tackle a policeman, rather than the other way 'round. It was the others who made him do it. Stupid bastards.

RYAN: Probably the poor bloke I spilled the coffee on.

STAN: Might've been. You know, he got his seat swapped after that ?

RYAN: Really ?

STAN: Yeah. He sits up the back now. On the right. Doesn't wanna be anywhere in range.

RYAN: Can you blame him ?

STAN: Thought you forgot most of the stuff you did.

RYAN: Not that. Or my dash for glory. Emblazoned on my memory for all of eternity.

STAN: (LOOKING AROUND) All of ours too.

RYAN: Least I didn't hurt you. Physically I mean.

STAN: Just a bruised ego. And becoming the subject of about three hundred thousand bad jokes back at the club.

RYAN: Sorry.

STAN: Strong little bastard when you want to be. Took three cops to drag you away.

RYAN: Rocket-fuelled and indestructible.

BY HABIT STAN TAKES OUT HIS FLASK AND GOES TO POUR IT INTO HIS MUG.

STAN: A little Snakebite Cure. (REALISING) Oh shit. Stupid, stupid. Your mother told me not to bring it. Force of habit.

RYAN: Dad it's okay. Knock yourself out.

STAN: You sure ?

RYAN: I'm three years sober now. Not gonna bust because you pull out the cheap whiskey.

STAN: This stuff isn't cheap.

RYAN: Well I wouldn't know anymore. It's all plonk to me.

PAUSE.

STAN: Very proud of you son. We're both very proud of you.

RYAN: Haven't done it on my own. Wouldn't've lasted a day without Robyn and the meetings.

STAN: I know but still –

RYAN: Still nothing Dad. It's very important that I don't forget – what took me there and what brought me back. And the people who helped me. If I ever turn away from them – I'll go right back the same way.

STAN: But you gotta take some -

RYAN: No Dad. I mean it. It's got nothing to do with what I've done. It's about realising you need help and then accepting it. Rest does itself.

STAN: If you say so. Do you miss it ?

RYAN: Not one bit.

STAN: But three years ? Wouldn't hurt for you to have a glass of wine now and then ? With dinner, surely ?

RYAN: That's it Dad. I can't have just one. You know that. The only answer for me is total abstinence.

STAN: But I don't understand why I can have just one and you can't ?

RYAN: No one does Dad - and in the end it doesn't matter. The simple fact is I can't drink with any safety. Full stop.

- STAN: I guess I don't really understand.
- RYAN: That's why you should go to one of the family meetings. Mum goes.
- STAN: All the bloody time.
- RYAN: Then maybe you should go with her. A very wise bloke said to me once: "I'm allergic to shellfish so I don't eat it. You're allergic to alcohol so why do you drink it?"
- STAN: Yeah? Who was that?
- RYAN: He'll be running out in the number seventeen jersey in about ten minutes to play his three hundredth game for the club.
- STAN: Lane? Lane Anderson said that? When?
- RYAN: When I was locked up in Brunswick station that last time. The day you and mum wouldn't come and get me out.
- STAN: I'm sorry son. I just thought it was for the best. I didn't know what else to do.
- RYAN: It's okay. Long gone. Anyway sometime during the night I open my eyes and there is Lane Anderson standing over my cot. At first I thought it was just a hallucination – I had a lot of those near the end. Giant spiders, dark blue teddy bears.
- STAN: Dark blue? Yeah, I've often have nightmares about Carlton too. But why teddy bears?
- RYAN: Search me. So Lane started talking and pretty soon I realised it wasn't a dream it really was the greatest Brunswick Full Forward since Prince McCann – standing right there with me in the cell.
- STAN: What was Lane doing there? He wasn't... Shit! Better not let Bruce know.
- RYAN: No, Lane hadn't done anything wrong. He'd come down there to visit me.
- STAN: You?
- RYAN: Seemed I became something on an ongoing joke with the players after my little dash across the oval. They were always catching up on my mis-adventures, hearing about my latest escapade. Then Lane found out who I was – Stan Williams' kid – and the jokes stopped. He asked the cops down at the station to look out for me and if I ever ended up in lock up again to give him a call. Lucky for me that night - they did.
- STAN: Lane Anderson came to see my boy.

- RYAN: Not just to see me. To try and put me straight.
- STAN: Why ?
- RYAN: Why do you think ? Because he never forgot the kindness you and Mum showed to him, back when he really needed it. He wanted to repay that by trying to help me. And because he knew a little about the subject.
- STAN: You mean Lane's one of you ?
- RYAN: Not Lane. His father. Chronic. Used to beat his mum, him and his three brothers then one night Lane clicked - knocked him down and kicked him out of the house. They never saw him again.
- STAN: You're kiddin ?
- RYAN: Nup. That's why none of his family ever came to the games at the start.
- STAN: Geez, that all makes sense now. I remember he never spoke about his family, so one night I asked. He went dead quiet. Didn't say a word for about half an hour. Left it alone after that.
- RYAN: He didn't want people to know what happened.
- STAN: That's stupid. We wouldn't've cared.
- RYAN: He realised that after awhile – after you and Mum took him in. And he realised how important his family was to him and he started bringing his Mum and his brothers down to see him play.
- STAN: Thank god he did. His brother Mick is the best flanker we've had in ten years and the youngest one – Dan – he's even better.
- RYAN: So that's why Lane came to see me that night – because of his gratitude to you and because I think he feel a little bit guilty.
- STAN: Guilty ?
- RYAN: Because he'd taken my place in our house at a time which he realised was probably very important for me.
- STAN: But that's not true. No one could take your place.
- RYAN: I know. I was cutting myself off. Isolating myself from the people who cared about me because they might stop me drinking. For the first time I opened up to someone. I explained it all to Lane that night. Then he told me about his allergy to shellfish.
- STAN: What else did he say ?

RYAN: Not much. We just talked. And that was the great thing about it. He didn't once try to give me advice or tell me what to do. If he had I reckon the shutters would've gone up straight away. He just let me talk and he listened. Lane Anderson listened to me - for hour after hour as it all poured out. And then he said if I ever needed to talk to give him a call. After he was gone I realised something had changed. Something had shifted - inside. I didn't feel like a drink anymore.

STAN: Why didn't you tell me all this before ?

RYAN: Dad, this is the first proper conversation we've had since I got sober.

STAN: Funny that. This is the only place we really talk. We come here to watch the game but what we actually do is talk.

RYAN: And you listen. You actually listen.

STAN: Not when you're talking that crap about extra players in the ruck.

RYAN: Stop joking Dad. This is serious.

STAN: Yeah. I know it is. I'm just - I don't know - happy.

RYAN: Because we're top of the table ?

STAN: Because my son has come back to me. My only son. And I'm just so grateful. Grateful that Lane or the meetings or Robyn or that night at the police station or whatever has brought you back to me. I thought I'd lost you Ryan. I thought I'd lost you.

STAN IS OVERCOME WITH EMOTION. HE LOWERS HIS HEAD.

RYAN STROKES HIS FATHER'S HEAD.

RYAN: It's okay Dad. I'm here. I'm here.

STAN: (WIPING HIS EYES) Shit, boys better not see my crying or I'll be the next one getting a life ban.

RYAN: Bloody right, now pour your Snakebite Cure in your coffee and tell me what I've been missing for the last ten years ?

STAN: If you insist.

STAN POURS SOME WHISKEY INTO HIS COFFEE. HE RAISES HIS MUG.

STAN: Cheers.

RYAN: (RAISING HIS MUG) Cheers.

THEY DRINK.

STAN: Ah that's good. Your mother makes the best coffee and I make the best Snakebite Cure. (SUDDENLY) Hey, I brought something for you.

HE SCRAMBLES ABOUT IN THE BAG AND PULLS OUT A LARGE NEWSPAPER CLIPPING.

STAN: Here, read this. From Sydney.

RYAN: What's it about ?

STAN: Not what. Who. Ben Whittaker.

RYAN: Dad. Why would I want to read that ?

STAN: Seems his political aspirations have been cut short.

RYAN: (OPENING ARTICLE) Yeah ?

STAN: Did a deal with a shonky developer to re-zone some land. Reckon he picked himself up half a million on the sly. Won't see a cent of it now.

RYAN: Jesus.

STAN: Exactly. And look at this photo - (POINTING) right there. Look familiar.

RYAN: Simone.

STAN: Mrs Whittaker.

RYAN: And what possible interest would I have in this dad ? I'm married to someone else now.

STAN: Thought you might like to see it – that's all.

RYAN: It's a small man that takes delight in the mis-fortunes of others.

STAN: I know but –

RYAN: No come on Dad. It's terrible to enjoy their fall from grace. (BEAT) Great, but terrible.

THEY LAUGH.

RYAN: Now go on. Put it away and tell me about the important stuff. What's been happening with our Doggies ? The view from ground level.

STAN: Things are looking up.

- RYAN: You can say that again. Made the five for the past four seasons and the Grand Final two years ago.
- STAN: Yeah – but we got nothing to show for it.
- RYAN: Lane’s won the Bronlow twice.
- STAN: And more than deserved it both times. Just wish the other players had given half as much as their Captain. He’s carried this club on his back for the last five seasons.
- RYAN: And nearly won us a flag.
- STAN: You go down to footy headquarters at Jolimont one day. They’ve got a big board for winners of every year since 1897. No board for second place. As Prince McCann said:
- TOGETHER: “Nearly ain’t winning.”
- STAN: And he was right. It’s a wonder Lane hasn’t left years ago - the offers he’s had. And from good clubs. He could’ve had a room full of flags by now.
- RYAN: But he’d never leave us. We’re family.
- STAN: True. Very true. Speakin’ of which, when are you and Robyn gonna start poppin’ a few ?
- RYAN: Give us a chance. Only got married six months ago.
- STAN: Which means you should have one nicely baked by now ?
- RYAN: It’s not as easy as that. There’s other things to consider. We’re both working and I don’t want to ask Robyn to give up her job. Also there’s the question of money.
- STAN: You do alright.
- RYAN: Yeah, alright. Sometimes I wish I had gone in to Tax law, rather than legal aid. The number of pro bono cases we take on now – hardly earn anything at all.
- STAN: Me and your Mum will help you out. You know that.
- RYAN: Dad, with what ? You’ve got less than us.
- STAN: We’ll find a way. Williams always find a way.
- RYAN: To kick a behind from ten metres out straight in front ?
- STAN: Our forward line will take care of that.

RYAN: And how are you ? And Mum ?

STAN: Good, good.

RYAN: Mum said you had to go into hospital last week.

STAN: Yeah, yeah.

RYAN: What was that for ?

STAN: Oh just some check ups.

RYAN: What kind of check ups ?

STAN: Here they come.

RYAN: Dad, what kind of check-ups ?

WE HEAR APPLAUSE AND THE BULLDOGS THEME SONG OVER THE LOUD SPEAKERS AS THE TEAM RUNS ON.

STAN STANDS AND APPLAUDS.

RYAN STANDS AND CONTINUES TO SPEAK TO HIS FATHER ALTHOUGH WE NO LONGER HEAR WHAT THEY SAY – THE CONVERSATION LOST UNDER THE APPLAUSE AND SINGING.

RYAN ASKS HIS DAD SOMETHING AND HIS DAD ANSWERS. RYAN SUDDENLY GOES QUITE STILL.

STAN PATS HIM ON THE SHOULDER AND TURNS BACK TO THE GAME, CLAPPING LOUDLY.

RYAN SLOWLY SINKS DOWN INTO HIS SEAT, NO LONGER WATCHING THE FIELD IN FRONT OF HIM. THE LIGHTS AND SONG FADE.

**SCENE TWO - 1981 – BULLDOGS VICTORY PARADE.**

Lights up on the empty seats.

RYAN enters alone. He carries a large red bag – similar to STAN’s bag.

He makes his way to the seats and steps carefully past STAN’s seat. He opens the bag and pulls out the red and blue blanket – now very faded. He places this on his seat and then reaches in to the bag again.

He pulls out STAN’s beanie and scarf. He looks at them for a moment and then arranges them carefully on STAN’s seat.

Once he has done this he sits on his seat and covers his legs with the faded blanket. He takes a folded piece of paper from his pocket and studies it.

We hear the murmurs of a large crowd milling and then a loud round of applause.

A spotlight goes up on a microphone downstage. The applause fades and we hear the voice of BRUCE FARRAH, Club Chairman.

FARRAH: (VOICE OVER) My fellow Doggies, welcome to the Grand Final victory parade for the Brunswick Bulldogs – the 1981 VFL Premiers.

A HUGE ROAR FROM THE CROWD FOLLOWED BY CHANTS OF  
“BRUCE ! BRUCE ! BRUCE !”

FARRAH: (VOICE OVER) Soon we’ll hear from the Captain of Bulldogs and this season’s Bronlow Medallist - for the third time – Lane “the new Prince” Anderson !

ANOTHER HUGE ROAR FOLLOWED BY CHANTS OF “PRINCE !  
PRINCE ! PRINCE !”

FARRAH: But first as I look around today and see so many familiar faces – or should that be ugly faces, especially you Blocker –

LAUGHTER FROM THE CROWD.

FARRAH: I’m reminded that this club is much more than the players, the coaches, the committee, Lane – even me !

MORE LAUGHTER.

FARRAH: I’m reminded that the heart and soul of this club is actually you – the Doggies supporters.

A HUGE ROAR.

FARRAH: You’ve stuck with us through thick and thin and as we all know there’s been quite a bit of “thin” in recent seasons.

## CALLS OF AGREEMENT.

FARRAH: But despite that you've always stayed true to the spirit of the Doggies. Unlike the supporters of other clubs we could mention - you've never turned on the players or the coaches – although a few of you have been known to turn on me late at night after a few pots back at the clubhouse. You've remained proud, supportive and above all loyal. So we – the players, the coaches and the committee - would like to dedicate this flag to the blokes who really earned it – you !

## HUGE ROAR OF APPROVAL.

FARRAH: And to acknowledge that we thought we'd start the celebrations today by hearing from one of you – Prince McCann Stand debenture holder and life member number 1367, Ryan Williams. Come on down here Ryan.

## RYAN STANDS SLOWLY AND MAKES HIS WAY DOWN TO THE MICROPHONE.

RYAN: (AT FIRST NERVOUS, TENTATIVE) Ah thanks. Thanks Bruce. Everyone. My name is Ryan Williams. Although most of you probably know me as the streaker from 1968 against the Devils.

## LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE.

RYAN: Others probably know me as the son of the Stan Williams, one of the greatest Bulldogs supporters of all time.

## CALLS OF “HERE ! HERE !”, “ON YA, STAN !”

RYAN: Stan was pretty well a permanent fixture in the McCann Stand, ever since it was built and ever since Lane Anderson was a skinny kid from Lake Cargelico who couldn't get a kick. In fact many of you often wondered if Stan ever went home. Every home game for the last fifteen years – wind, rain, sleet or shine – Stan would be sitting up there in seat D9 (HE POINTS). Scarf around his neck, beanie pulled down over his ears and that bloody old “Claret and Royal” blanket on his knees.

## LAUGHTER.

RYAN: And most weekends I'd be sitting right alongside him – unless of course I was tearing off my clothes and running around the ground after Prince McCann.

## MORE LAUGHTER.

RYAN: As many of you know Stan – Dad – passed away a few months ago and as well as today being one of the happiest days of my life it is also one of the saddest as my father never lived to see the greatest dream of

RYAN: (CONT) his life finally come true – the Brunswick Bulldogs being crowned the VFL Champions.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

RYAN: I'd like to tell you a big secret now. And after you hear it Bruce – I hope you won't ban me for another ten years. I never used to like Football. In fact – I used to hate it !

MOCK CRIES OF HORROR.

RYAN: I now look on this club as one big Doggies' family. We remember the passing years by how we fared that season, we know the last time we beat Carlton and by how much and we can recount in exact detail every one of the one thousand and twenty seven goals Lane Anderson has kicked for our club.

HUGE ROAR OF APPROVAL.

RYAN: We're a family and we stick by each other, no matter what. And one day my son, who was born last week, the day we won the Grand Final – who never got to meet his grandfather ...

RYAN IS OVERCOME BY EMOTION. HE TURNS AWAY FROM THE MICROPHONE. SLOWLY HE COMPOSES HIMSELF AND TURNS BACK.

RYAN: Named him after you Lane – hope you don't mind.

MORE LAUGHTER.

RYAN: My son will take his place next to me – in Dad's old seat – and a new generation of Doggies supporters will be born.

GENEROUS ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

RYAN: Before I sit down I just want to say one more thing. There's one Prince who's not with us today. One who's looking down on us from the great oval in the sky, Snakebite Cure in his left pocket, folded up Record in his right. And to me he'll always be the one true Prince of Brunswick East – my father – Stan Williams.

APPLAUSE AND ROARS OF APPROVAL. LIGHTS FADE ON **RYAN**.

FARRAH: (VOICE OVER) Thank you Ryan and let me just say how much we all miss Stan and how much his memory means to our club. Now let's hear from the man we've all be waiting for – our Club Captain, a three-time Bronlow Medallist, the club's record goal kicker and the man who brought us our first Flag in forty seasons – Lane “the new Prince” Anderson.

A MASSIVE ROAR FROM THE CROWD. SUDDENLY A CHANT OF  
“PRINCE ! PRINCE ! PRINCE !” BREAKS OUT.

AS THE LIGHTS FADE.

**SCENE THREE – BRUNSWICK DEVILS VS SYDNEY SWANS - 2001**

LANE enters, casually but smartly dressed with subtle hints of “claret and royal”. He makes his way into the grand stand, taking a good look around at his surroundings.

He comes down the stairs and reaches Ryan and Stan’s seats. He looks warily at the seats knowing he should sit in D9 (Stan’s seat). But he feels strange and eventually sits in D10 (Ryan’s seat).

RYAN enters. He is wearing a new beanie and scarf of Claret and Royal, but a band of black has been inserted in the middle of the two traditional club colours.

He carries the same old red bag from the last scene. He sees LANE.

RYAN: Hey. Wrong one.

LANE TURNS AROUND TO SEE RYAN. RYAN HEADS DOWN TO THE SEATS.

RYAN: (INDICATING SEATS) That’s mine - this is yours.

LANE STANDS. RYAN SITS. HE BEGINS SEARCHING AROUND IN THE BAG.

LANE CONTINUES TO STAND. RYAN LOOKS UP.

RYAN: What’s wrong ?

LANE: Feel a bit weird.

RYAN: Why ?

LANE: It’s his seat.

RYAN: Yes it was – but now it’s yours.

LANE: But what about – you know – his ghost ? Where’s he gonna sit ?

RYAN: All ghosts sit on top of the stand. They’ve got a special enclosure up there – Ghosts Only.

LANE: Dad, you know what I mean ?

RYAN: Lane, your Grand dad bought the seats for us. His son and one day my son. He always meant for you to have it. Now are you going to disappoint him ? Then we might well see his ghost.

LANE: Alright but still feels weird.

LANE HESITATES THEN FINALLY SITS.

- RYAN: So, you're finally in the Prince McCann stand. Worth the wait ?
- LANE: Guess so. Bit grubby.
- RYAN: Grubby ?
- LANE: Yeah, needs a good sweep. (POINTING) And the paints flaking off up there.
- RYAN: Sorry it doesn't meet your high standards.
- LANE: No it's great. Really great. View is fantastic but you know, after building it up in my head for twenty one years I kind of expected a Palace.
- RYAN: Well it is a Palace. A grubby, sweep needing, paint flaking Palace but it was still a Palace to me and your grandfather.
- LANE: I know and I appreciate it. I do. I know how much it meant to you and Grand dad and it means a lot to me. Just don't know why I had to wait so long.
- RYAN: Club rules. Prince McCann stand is only for Life Members and you can't become a Life Member till your twenty one.
- LANE: Bloody stupid rule.
- RYAN: Maybe but the rule it is. A motion came up at the last general meeting to change it. Got voted down three to one. People like the tradition. The fact that things don't change. That's why they come.
- LANE: But Dad – the world does change.
- RYAN: Not at the Brunswick Football Club.
- LANE: Come off it Dad. Look at your scarf.

RYAN IS SILENT FOR A MOMENT, THEN:

- RYAN: Hey look – it's Lane. He's waving. (WAVING BACK) Lane ! This is my son.
- LANE: Don't Dad – you're embarrassing me.
- RYAN: He wants to meet you. You know you're named after him.
- LANE: And I'd like to meet him. Later.
- RYAN: Sure. Sure. I'll take you up to his box. At half time.

BEAT.

- LANE: Was he really as good as they say ?

- RYAN: And then some. You don't play over three hundred games and kick over one thousand goals if you're not something special.
- LANE: How many Bronlows did he win again ?
- RYAN: Three. 1975, 1977 and 1981 – the year we won the flag.
- LANE: Thought it was four.
- RYAN: No that was the other Prince. Prince McCann. He won it in 1935, 1938, 1941 and 1944.
- LANE: Alright, stop showing off.
- RYAN: Can't help it if I know the stuff.
- LANE: He's quite good looking.
- RYAN: Who ?
- LANE: Lane Anderson. For an old bloke.
- RYAN: Watch it. He's five years younger than me.
- LANE: What does he do now ?
- RYAN: He's the CEO. The other Prince is Club Chairman. Lane was coach for a few years after he retired – took us to two Grand Finals – but then he moved upstairs.
- LANE: Get booted ?
- RYAN: No one ever gets booted from the Bulldogs. Just wanted a new challenge.
- LANE: Whatever. Here they come.

RYAN AND LANE STAND AND APPLAUD AS THE HOME TEAM TAKE THE FIELD. WE HEAR A LOUD ROAR FROM THE CROWD.

THIS IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE TEAM'S NEW THEME SONG OVER THE SPEAKERS, A HEAVY METAL STYLE DITTY ENTITLED "GO, YOU DEVILS !"

- RYAN: Carn the Doggies ! Go the Doggies !
- LANE: Dad, they're the Devils. They've been the Devils for three seasons.
- RYAN: Not bloody going to call them that. Use to yell against them all my life and now I'm meant to yell for them.

LANE: But they're our team now.

RYAN: No they're not. Devils'll never be my team.

**LANE PULLS OUT A PROGRAMME.**

LANE: Yes they are. Look right there. The Brunswick Devils.

RYAN: They'll always be the Doggies to me.

LANE: Then why didn't you vote at the Board meeting to keep the name ?

RYAN: I did. I got out voted. Lane said it all came down to money in the end. We had the bigger ground so we had to play the home games here and we couldn't play here and keep the name as well. So I said "Already got to have their bloody colours on our jersey. That's bad enough." Then Lane said "It's got to be one or the other Ryan. The ground or the name. We can't keep both." And then I said: "We'll you can stuff your bloody club" and walked out.

LANE: Really ? Was this before or after the vote ?

RYAN: Before.

LANE: Then I guess your vote didn't count after all.

RYAN: Very clever. You sound like your bloody Mum arguing in court. Don't know why I bother sometimes. Should resign from the Board.

LANE: Dad – being voted as the legal representative on the Brunswick Football Club Board was the greatest day of your life.

RYAN: Was not. Second greatest day, no third.

LANE: What were the other two ?

RYAN: Well – in no particular order - the first was winning the Grand Final back in 1981 – which was also the day you were born.

LANE: And you won't let me forget that one.

RYAN: And the second was marrying your Mum. Although I could include the day I first sat here with your Grandfather – although I didn't really appreciate it back then. You want a drink ?

**RYAN PULLS OUT A MODERN LOOKING THERMOS.**

LANE: You know I don't drink coffee. It's bad for my skin.

RYAN: Don't worry. Got something else.

RYAN PULLS OUT STAN'S OLD HIP FLASK.

RYAN: How about a drop of Snakebite Cure ?

LANE: (ALARMED) Dad, you don't drink.

RYAN: I do know that.

HE OPENS THE FLASK AND POURS THE CONTENTS INTO SOME NEW STEEL MUGS.

RYAN: It's orange juice. See ? Although it still smells a bit like whiskey.

LANE: Whiskey flavoured orange juice. Why not ?

LANE TAKES A MUG. HE DRINKS.

RYAN: You want something to eat ?

LANE: What you got ?

RYAN: (PULLING OUT ROLLS) Tandoori wrap and a roast beef and mustard roll.

LANE: Where did you buy them ?

RYAN: The service station.

LANE: Dad, you know that stuffs like two days old.

RYAN: Fine. I'll eat 'em then.

HE STARTS UNWRAPPING THE ROLL.

LANE: Alright. Hand over the wrap. But you're paying the hospital bills.

RYAN HANDS IT OVER.

RYAN: So there we go. Two day old rolls and whiskey scented orange juice.  
The lunch of true Doggies !

LANE: True Devils !

RYAN: Alright. Alright. (RELUCTANTLY) Devils.

LANE: See ? That wasn't so hard.

RYAN: Says you. (REFERRING TO RECORD) And look at who we're playing – the Sydney Swans. Sydney ! Don't they know only one good thing ever came out of Sydney.

LANE: What's that ?

RYAN: The Hume Highway.

LANE: Harboursing a few resentments there Dad ?

LANE: Look at them out their parading around in that fancy crap. You call that a uniform.

LANE: I think they're pretty cool. I like those red shorts, they look so ...

RYAN: So what ?

LANE: Red. Besides, why are you so anti-Devils. I thought you'd have a bit of a soft spot for them actually.

RYAN: And why would that be ?

LANE: After your escapade back in 1968 ? That was against the Devils wasn't it ?

RYAN: Who told you that ?

LANE: Mum.

RYAN: I'll kill her.

LANE: Grandma.

RYAN: I'll kill her too.

LANE: Mr Santorini at the grocery store.

RYAN: And I'll especially kill him.

LANE: And everybody else whose ever had anything to do with this club since I was five years old. In graphic detail. It's like the biggest thing that ever happened to this club.

RYAN: Well I guess it was – in a way. Several people remarked -

LANE: Dad. Don't be gross. Way too much information.

RYAN: I don't see why we couldn't've just kept the club song at least.

LANE: Wasn't their song in the first place.

RYAN: What do you mean ? It's been our song since the club began.

LANE: Which was when ?

RYAN: 1897.

LANE: Well that's interesting since it was only written in 1956 ?

RYAN: Somebody wrote it ?

LANE: Of course somebody wrote it. Do you think the supporters just started spontaneously singing it one day ?

RYAN: I thought somebody at the club made it up.

LANE: Who ?

RYAN: Someone on the committee or one of the players wives.

LANE: Not unless they were married to Rogers and Hammerstein.

RYAN: Who ?

LANE: Rogers and Hammerstein. They wrote it for their musical – "Carousel."

RYAN: It was in a musical ? Does Lane know this ?

LANE: I imagine so. It was also a big hit for Gerry and the Pacemakers in 1963. Haven't you heard that ?

RYAN: I always thought they stole it from us.

LANE: Well they didn't. Anyway, we weren't even the only club to use it.

RYAN: Who else has been using our song ?

LANE: Uh – Dad. Liverpool.

RYAN: They play in some West Australian comp ?

LANE: Liverpool, England. The soccer club.

RYAN: You sure Lane knows about all this ?

LANE: He knows Dad and that's why he's not sad to see the song go where it belongs. The dust bin.

RYAN: It was a good song.

LANE: Sentimental clap trap.

RYAN: I've heard you singing it – at home.

- LANE: In moments of weakness. But no more – now it's (SINGING AND MIMING GUITAR) "Go De - vils ! Go-o-o-o-o-o you De - vils !" I love it. It's wicked.
- RYAN: Wicked ?
- LANE: Yep. (SINGING AGAIN) "Go-o-o-o-o-o you De - vils !"
- RYAN: (HOLDING UP ORANGE JUICE) I'd stop right there if you don't want to be wearing this.
- LANE: Better get used too it. You'll be hearing it often enough in the next five minutes, every time the Devils kick a goal.
- RYAN: Who's going to be singing it ?
- LANE: Everyone.
- RYAN: Not me.
- LANE: All the old Devils supporters then.
- RYAN: Not in here they won't.
- LANE: That's right. I heard about that. Not letting the Dandenong Life Members sit in the Prince McCann stand. Tssk ! Tssk !
- RYAN: Not enough room.
- LANE: Where are they meant to sit then ?
- RYAN: I don't know – back at their own ground.
- LANE: Not much of a view from there. Well I'm gonna sing the song for them. All my persecuted Demon brothers cruelly deprived access. (SINGING) "Go De - vils ! Go-o-o-o-o-o you De - vils !"
- RYAN: Calm down. You'll get us thrown out.
- LANE: Bloody stuffed shirts. Maybe I won't even sit here. Maybe I'll go back down on the fence where I've always been – with the masses.

LANE STANDS AND BEGINS TO CHANT.

- LANE: "Let them in ! Let them in !"

RYAN STANDS AND PULLS LANE'S HANDS DOWN.

- RYAN: What are you doing ? You're in the Prince McCann stand.

LANE: Just doing what you would've done twenty years ago.

RYAN: (HORRIFIED) I have never barracked for Dandenong !

LANE: I mean protesting. Taking a stand for what's right.

RYAN: That was different.

LANE: How was it different ? Grandma said you used to be out picketing against all kind of stuff. South African Rugby team at Treasury Gardens, Franklin Dam – all sorts of cool stuff. She said you even went up to Sydney once for a Vietnam protest.

RYAN: No.

LANE: What ? You mean you never protested ?

RYAN: I never went to Sydney. That one I didn't get to.

LANE: Still you went to tonnes. Linked arms on the front line, eyeballed the cops, stood up for what you believed in.

RYAN: And what good did it do ?

LANE: Lots. Things changed.

RYAN: How would you know ?

LANE: Think about it. You saved the Franklin. Vietnam ended. Apartheid's over.

RYAN: Some bloke called Nelson Mandela probably had a bit to do with that.

LANE: You played your part.

RYAN: Very minor.

LANE: Takes lots of minors to make up a major. Or something like that.

RYAN: And now you reckon what we did back then is "cool" ?

LANE: As. I go to protests all the time. End the Lies, Mandatory Detention. Even met my partner at a protest.

RYAN: That's the problem. They're not protests anymore. They're bloody social gatherings. And aren't you too young to have a partner ?

LANE: No one calls them girlfriends or boyfriends these days. It's way past it. Mum thinks it's cool I protest too. She even came with me to the protest against the War.

RYAN: Which war ?

LANE: In Iraq. Half of Melbourne was there.

RYAN: And what good did that do ?

LANE: We made a statement.

RYAN: Pity no-one heard. Where was I ?

LANE: Bulldogs vs Bombers.

RYAN: Lost by three. Dalton miss a sitter on the siren.

LANE: Big protest against volunteer Student Unionism next weekend. You should come.

RYAN: Pretty busy.

LANE: Come on – you used to care about that stuff. Important things in life.

RYAN: I know but -

LANE: But what ? You care more about Footy.

RYAN: As you well know - footy's more important than life.

LANE: Come on Dad.

RYAN: I do care Lane I do, but it's just ... things get in the way and you find you don't have time anymore.

LANE: What things ?

RYAN: You know - things.

LANE: No I don't know.

RYAN: Things ! Life ! Life gets in the way. (LEANING IN) What if Lane heard I was there ? Or the rest of the Board ?

LANE: If they were worth anything at all they'd shake your hand. I would.

PAUSE. THEY ARE SILENT.

RYAN: Pass me The Record.

LANE PASSES THE PROGRAMME. RYAN LOOKS AT THE TEAMS.

RYAN: Bloody hell ! He's not starting Andrews.

- LANE: What's wrong with Andrews ?
- RYAN: Danny Walsh is much better.
- LANE: Cause he use to play for the Bulldogs ?
- RYAN: No. He's just a better player.
- LANE: Crap he is Dad. Walsh is much better. My partner reckons he's the best in the squad.
- RYAN: Follows the game does she ?
- LANE: Devils supporter all their life.
- RYAN: And that's a positive ?
- LANE: Look Dad, how many games have we won in the past three seasons ?
- RYAN: Including this year ?

LANE NODS.

- RYAN: Twenty seven.
- LANE: And how many did we win in the three years before that ? Before the merger ?
- RYAN: Don't use that word. I hate that word. Next you'll be calling it a franchise.
- LANE: Alright how many games did we win before the clubs *joined* up ?
- RYAN: Including pre-season ?
- LANE: Of course not.
- RYAN: (MUMBLES) Eight.
- LANE: I didn't quite hear that.
- RYAN: Eight.
- LANE: That's right. A grand total of eight. The Bulldogs got the wooden spoon in their last two seasons and we would still be getting it if it wasn't for Dandenong. They played in the finals the year before we *joined* them and they would've played in them against the next year if they didn't have to use half of our hopeless squad. We almost made the finals last year and we've won three from four this season and we'll keep winning as long as Pringle – who's a much better coach than

LANE: (CONT) Lane Anderson ever was no matter how good a player he was or how good looking he is – keeps picking the good Devils players like Chris Andrews and leaving the hopeless Bulldogs players like Danny Walsh on the bench.

PAUSE.

RYAN: Never knew you followed it so closely.

LANE: Yeah well there's a lot of things you don't about me.

RYAN: We should talk more.

LANE: But we don't Dad do we ? And why don't we ? Do "things" get in the way of that too ? Does "life" stop you spending time with your only son. Your life ?

PAUSE.

RYAN: Heard that speech before.

LANE: Sorry to repeat myself.

RYAN: You're not. Said exactly the same thing to a bloke sitting in that same chair forty years ago. More or less.

LANE: Yeah, and what did he say ?

RYAN: He just asked me to come back next week. And I did. And I've been coming back for the last forty years. And hopefully from now on every time I come you'll be sitting right there alongside me. That's why I came in the first few years. I couldn't give a stuff about the Bulldogs – or the Claret and Royal. Hated 'em as much as I hated this stupid game. I came so I could talk to my Dad. Somewhere where he could open up without pressure or expectations. Somewhere where he could be himself and I could be me. I went along with him to the game he loved more than anything else in the world so I could be with the man I loved more than anything in the world. Now I know I haven't been the greatest parent - but I'm trying here son. I'm trying. I've been sitting here alongside an empty seat for twenty one years. And now finally it's been filled by the only person who could fill it. My son. His Grandson. And hopefully it will be the start of a better relationship between us.

PAUSE.

LANE: Good speech.

RYAN: Get me off the hook ?

LANE: Almost but only if you sing the proper club song – with the proper words – at least three times today.

RYAN: Once.

LANE: Twice.

RYAN: Deal.

PAUSE.

LANE: What was he like ? Your Dad.

RYAN: I don't know. He seemed soft at times but deep down you knew he was hard as nails. And quiet. Didn't say much – except when he really had something to say. And during a game. You couldn't get him to shut up then. He didn't smile much or laugh, but when he did it was a sound like the purest thing you'd ever heard. Water trickling over rocks, wind through the trees. And when he looked at you, just looked at you – and he listened – you didn't want to be anywhere else in the world except by his side.

LANE: Sounds like a great guy.

RYAN: He was. In his way. To me.

THERE ARE TEARS IN LANE'S EYES.

LANE: Someone get me a hankie.

SIREN SOUNDS.

LANE: Shit, here we go. (CALLING) Carn you Bull - ... Devils. Go the Devils !

RYAN: (CALLING) Come on Walsh. Hard into that first ruck. Hard !  
(SUDDENLY) Bloody hell ! Almost forgot.

RYAN SCRAMBLES AROUND IN THE BAG AND PULLS OUT THE MOULDY OLD CLARET AND ROYAL BLANKET.

RYAN: The blanket. Can't watch the game without the lucky blanket.

HE SPREADS THE BLANKET OVER LANE'S LEGS.

LANE: (HOLDING NOSE) Oh Dad. That stinks.

RYAN: Sorry, left it in the boot over summer.

LANE: Jesus, do something.

RYAN QUICKLY OPENS THE HIP FLASK AND HOLDS IT UNDER LANE'S NOSE.

RYAN: Hold that under your nose. Block the smell.

LANE TAKES THE FLASK.

LANE: Dad, I can't watch the game like this.

RYAN: Look Lane, your Grand-dad's already turning in his grave that we're now called the Brunswick Devils. He'll turn in his grave three more times if we don't sit under the blanket.

LANE: Things we do.

RYAN: And I got passes for us to the post match function. One good thing about the merger at least. Life Members get invited to the post-match. Then I can really tell Pringle where he's going wrong.

LANE: Lucky him. Alright but I can't stay long. Meeting my partner at a club in town later.

RYAN: Lucky girl. What's her name ?

BEAT. LANE TURNS TO RYAN.

LANE: Greg. Greg Brown.

RYAN: The Reserve team Captain ?

LANE: Oh and while we're getting through the home truths – I pulled out of Law and swapped to Graphic Design but don't tell Mum.

RYAN: About Greg or the graphic design ?

LANE: Graphic Design of course. She's known about Greg for a year.

SUDDENLY OVER THE SPEAKERS WE HEAR A FAMILIAR TUNE:  
"YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE."

LANE LISTENS.

LANE: Dad, listen. Listen. They're playing the old song.

RYAN: (STILL IN SHOCK) What ?

LANE: Listen, they're playing it.

RYAN LISTENS. HE STANDS SLOWLY AS IF THE SONG IS DRAGGING HIM TO HIS FEET.

THEY JOIN IN THE SINGING.

RYAN AND LANE: (SINGING) Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,  
And you'll never walk alone,  
You'll never walk alone.

LANE OFFERS HIS HAND TO RYAN. RYAN LOOKS AT IT. BEAT. HE TAKES IT AND TOGETHER THEY SING THE FINAL CHORUS.

RYAN AND LANE: (SINGING) Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,  
And you'll never walk alone,  
You'll never walk alone.

THE SECOND SIREN SOUNDS. THERE IS A MASSIVE ROAR. IT DIES DOWN.

LANE: It's good to be here Dad.

RYAN: It's good to have you here son. Here they go !

THE LIGHTS FADE TO A SPOTLIGHT ON RYAN AND LANE.

THEY RAISE THEIR ARMS IN EXPECTATION AS THE REF IS ABOUT TO BOUNCE THE BALL. THEY FREEZE.

ANOTHER ROAR FROM THE CROWD.

A SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON STAN WATCHING THEM AS THE ROAR OF THE CROWD CONTINUES. HE SMILES.

THE SPOTLIGHTS SLOWLY FADE.

THE ROAR OF THE CROWD CONTINUES IN THE DARKNESS FOR A FEW MOMENTS.

END PLAY.

AS THE AUDIENCE DEPART WE HEAR GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS SINGING: "You'll never walk alone."