

*PROLOGUE: MARNGROOK BEGINNINGS*

*The ensemble play a culturally stylised game (or flashes of a game) of marngrook. It is traditional, flashy, smooth, graceful and eloquent. It has an organic and instinctual feel to it.*

*It is in contrast to the AFL football we see later, which is rough and militaristic in its style.*

*JAYMA exits the game, finds his position on stage and begins to talk to the audience.*

JAYMA: Before an AFL football was kicked on this country, there were footballs kicked all around it, however, these footballs, they weren't AFL footies and they weren't made from cattle hides.

Nah.

The footballs I'm talking 'bout, they were made from reeds, from the kangaroo skins. And in Victoria, the birth place of AFL, they were made from possum skin and the mobs called this game *marngrook*.

Mobs played marngrook for hours, even days at a time. They'd drop punt that possum skin ball into the air and then before it'd hit the ground, someone would soar above the pack and mark it. And then it'd be that fullas turn to drop it on their foot, and launch it back into the sky. There were sides, but it was played for joy, no scores kept, but with the ball launched into that sky as a token of friendship between mobs. And at the end of the day, those old fullas, they'd bury that ball into the ground, to say thank you to that country and that country would look after that ball until they played the game called marngrook again.

*SCENE ONE: SEASON LAUNCH*

*The clubhouse.*

*The chanting voices of the TEAM are accompanied by clapping.*

TEAM: The General, the General, the General, the General, the General, the General, the General ...

*Lights come up and we first see two massive currawongs etched into the walls of the clubhouse.*

*As the lights begin to gather in brightness, we make out a lectern and two long tables, which are occupied by men. There is an inaudible raucous which is made from the collective voices that fill the space.*

THE GENERAL *approaches the lectern.*

THE GENERAL: Okay, okay. Thank you, thank you! You fellas, and ladies, make an old man feel like a rock star. I can tell you I don't get this reception at home. At home, I'm lucky to be called in late for dinner.

*Laughs in the room.*

Who's excited about the season ahead?

TEAM: Woo woo!

THE GENERAL: I SAID: WHO'S EXCITED FOR A FRESH OPPORTUNITY?!

TEAM: WOO WOO!

THE GENERAL: I should launch our season by thanking those people who will make it possible. Starting with our sponsors. Wheatley's Windows. East Coast Coaches, Robbo's Auto Repairs and of course, Herrings IGA.

TEAM: Up the IGA!

THE GENERAL: They say a football club is the heartbeat of a country town and in our case, you community-minded angels are the pacemaker that keeps that heart ticking. Thank you!

*Applause.*

Our members. This year we've already sold two thousand, three hundred and forty-two memberships.

*Applause.*

And considering this stretch of coastline we live a long only has a population of twenty-two thousand, this a monumental achievement.

*Applause.*

I'm pretty sure Ant's family brought two hundred of them.

*Laughs.*