

ACT 3.

Scene 1. *Discoveries*

Characters: GEORGIANA, JACK

Georgiana begins setting out cups and a pot on a wicker table for morning tea.

Enter Jack from the paddocks.

GEORGIANA: Any news of Charlotte Summerfield yet? Mrs Summerfield's desperate- it's been so long since they've heard from her.

JACK: No nothing yet. I'll keep making enquiries. Perhaps she's left Perth.

But there's some news for us. Bad, I'm, afraid. We've lost another helper. Old Ludlow tells me he's decided to work for the Bussell's at the Vasse.

GEORGIANA: No Jack! After all you've done for him...

JACK: I'm resolved Georgie. We should make haste, and move to the Vasse too, as soon as your next confinement is over. *We must* think about our departure - it's inevitable.

We need to face the fact, the settlement has failed. The land's proving too hard to tame, and God knows we've tried. It's much more arable land up there. 'Parklands' that's the way John Bussell describes much of it.

GEORGIANA: It'd be hard to match our little house here, right on the bay. And the girls love the place as I do.

JACK: But they'll love the Vasse just as well in time. Think of this Georgie, there'll be flowers and plants afresh for your Captain Mangles- a whole new territory up there for your work. And I've chosen a pleasant aspect for the house, on the river, quite beautiful.

GEORGIANA: Yes, I'm sure it is Jack. But nothing could be more beautiful than Augusta. And after our terrible setback, the girls are blooming again now. So involved with everything here. Why this very morning after butter-churning Sabina followed me out to the garden to help.

She assured me she'd finished her lessons so I showed her a discarded pod and told her how the wee insect (*she rises to fetch a pod from the garden*) see here Jack, like this one, eats away quite slyly, getting inside to the seed when my specimens are all on board the ship inside the Mangles box. Do you know what she said?

JACK: Something clever no doubt. So observant a child...

GEORGIANA: She said, "Then we should get rid of them, áll of them Mama, before we put them in the Mangles box. All the wee insects! You and I."

JACK: Quite right, and quite smart for her to work that out

GEORGIANA: After what Sabina pronounced so vehemently in the garden, something came to me. I rushed inside and I dragged the Mangles box out here and I showed Sabina its contents.

JACK: Mangles ought to be more than grateful – the whole family involved in this seed gathering, even the children.

GEORGIANA; But let me tell you our discovery Jack, for it changes everything.

JACK: Of course, I'm sorry...

GEORGIANA: (*she turns to t he box on the verandah and drags it forward*).

Well I took out several of the pods I've so carefully stored, see here, and held them one by one out in the sunlight like this Jack.

JACK: Hmmm.

GEORGIANA: (*excitedly*) And we both saw it at once. Another insect at work! So I slit the pod with a sharp knife and there was the seed still perfect and intact inside. I cast aside the pod!

JACK: Yes?

GEORGIANA: Jack! Jack! Do you know what this means?

JACK: A lot to you my dear. And possibly a lot to young Sabina...but tell me.

GEORGIANA: A lot to Captain Mangles, perhaps a lot to the world! I danced a jig of joy with Sabina because I'd worked it out. We would go through the box, through the thousands of pods, and slit each one, inspect the seed and then send only the best. On that long, long journey. No pods, only seed. The best of the best!

JACK: (*warming up*) Why Mrs Molloy you *are* quite beside yourself! *Hugs her*

GEORGIANA: It's true I'm beside myself with joy, for it means no grubs or worms will be transported. It's the seeds that are so crucial. And now the seeds will go unspoiled to the other side of the world. Garden to garden and all over England. And beyond.

JACK: I'm happy for you, my dear. It's such important work I know, though I suppose it means a man's buttonless shirts will just have to wait...

Characters: MOLLY, WILL

Molly alone and downcast reading through a letter, the only from Charlotte.

MOLLY: (*Brokenly*) If only I'd gone with her. Her first letter from Perth. And her last. *Clutching it to her.* Charlotte! It's too late now. Her body found in the sand dunes outside of Perth. Charlotte

Only that young Will has read it aloud so many times - I know it by heart.

Intermingled voices of Molly and Charlotte

Dear Mother and Will,

My friend the draper is writing this for me though I am fast learning my letters now. I am settled in so well, and cannot but await with pleasure your arrival here in Perth. There's work a plenty and we shall be so happy here, I'm sure of it...

Molly draws in her breath in great upset. And then is startled by the sound of running feet, and pushes the letter into her apron pocket as her son arrives.

Enter Will through audience.

WILL: That bastard! I found it!

MOLLY: What son? What did you find?

WILL: Proof, that's what. I told you before that I've followed Thomas, Ma. Well I followed him today and I saw him hiding more things in the forest. His loot. Hiding it from us. His dirty, filthy money or so I thought, for his dirty filthy visits to Perth.

MOLLY: He's only been the once to Perth - to get the land grant- you know that!

WILL: Ma! I know now why we hadn't heard from Charlotte after *he* went to Perth. One letter that's all and then nothing. I followed him into the forest! And I found things. Things I don't want to tell you about Ma, but you have to know.

I had to get a pick axe to lever the log and there it was. His bag of stuff, only not money. His bag. And this Ma, this! *He reaches in his pocket and holds the locket up in front of her face.* Her locket. Our father's face. Charlotte's locket.

MOLLY: Give it here. Yes, yes it is! Charlotte's locket. Dear God!

Will begins his rampage, shoving and tearing at things, smashing things in his way whilst Molly looks on helplessly.

WILL: It was ripped from her neck, that's what. And put there in his secret cache for him to leer over like he does over other things he's got there. Other things like beads from native women, stuff from women he's murdered. That time he went to Perth. It was to look for her, to shut her up once and for all. He's evil Ma! Like Charlotte always told you. And now I know he's a killer, and he'll turn me into one, for by God if I can find him I'll kill him. I will I promise you.

MOLLY No Will!

Takes up and axe and breaks into a cupboard.

WILL: I'll break open this bloody gun cupboard. I'm going to kill him. I'll kill the bastard!

MOLLY: No Will. Don't do that! No *(brokenly)* Let's just leave here!

Act 3.

Scene 3 *The Real Thomas Summerfield*

Characters: WILL MOLLY, GEORGIANA. JACK

Will and Molly outside the Molloy's house. The Molloy's have come outside.

Molly is groaning as Georgiana and Jack help Molly to her feet. She holds her hand to her cheek. Will begins an agitated pacing

GEORGIANA: Are you all right, Mrs Summerfield? To strike a woman like that!
And disappear into the dark!

JACK: The man's half-crazed!

WILL: You saw the *real* Thomas Summerfield ma'am, sir. That's who you saw.
The real one!

GEORGIANA: *leads Molly to a chair.* And then take off into the bush like that!
Such a cowardly act.

JACK: I've sent Staples to the Barracks. We'll have Summerfield arrested for
violence by morning. He can't get far.

GEORGIANA: Sit here, you've taken quite a blow

MOLLY: I'm all right now, ma'am. He's a man never been able to control his
rage.

GEORGIANA: I can see that. He says Will went on a rampage, destroyed much
of the house.

JACK: Now let's go over this again, Will. You destroyed things in the house, and you baled up your step-father with a gun, and locked him up in a shed. But *you* say you had good cause.

WILL: Yes sir.

MOLLY: Tell them Will, for God's sake

Jack: Go on Will, in your own words, lad.

WILL: See, I'd just found stuff he'd been hiding in the forest, something that made me sick to the stomach.

Captain, Mrs Molloy, it's Thomas who murdered our Charlotte. I'm sure of it. Here, take a look at it this. It's inside this bag of Thomas's that he keeps in the forest, for his eyes only, up to now. I got it out from under the log where I saw him going lots of times. I thought it was money he was hiding from us. But it's not. It's other things like this. Charlotte's locket. The one she would never take from her neck!

He proffers the locket to the Molloys

Charlotte told Ma she suspected he'd murdered a native woman- she called his bluff too, the day she left here, and he went quiet because she threatened to tell if he touched Ma again.

So he went there to Perth to shut her up for good.

See here, Captain, Mrs Molloy, there are native beads too- like the ones they wear. They were in the bag. He collects things, he must, from women he's done away with. He's a murderer, Thomas Summerfield's a murderer!

And when I found this I wanted to blow him to smithereens. I wanted to so bad.
I got the gun and I was good and ready.

Stifled sob from Molly, Georgiana comforting her

JACK: Go on

But words went round in my head, my mother's words, then some of yours ma'am. About God and all. Words and somehow, and I don't know how, something must've stopped me. I didn't do it. Somehow, hearing him begging, well I fired a shot to scare him proper, but not into his back like I wanted. And then fell on his knees and... it was disgusting. When I locked him in I felt like the whole world turned upside down... but I felt happy, happy! For the first time -

God knows he's closed me in there, many's the time, and Charlotte too -and left us to rot for days at a time to teach us. So I gave him his own rotten medicine. No windows and the heat and the sound of that bar fixing you inside in the dark for God knows how long.

But I left him alive!

GEORGIANA: I can only thank God that you did.

The boy begins to pace quite agitated.

WILL: For what he's done, believe me, Thomas deserves to die! To kill our Charlotte like that!

GEORGIANA: This is shocking Captain Molloy. Terrible!

MOLLY: I'm certain the boy speaks the truth!

JACK: It seems that way and if it is...Look Will, I need to set this down, every word of it. If the man's guilty as you say, we'll find him, and he'll come to justice. Mark my words.

Epilogue

SCREEN

GEORGIANA MOLLY

Georgiana sitting alone in an easy chair with a letter on her lap. A feather pen in her hand, she does not write but speaks directly to the audience.

Molly on the opposite side of the stage in darkness.

GEORGIANA: We came to the Vasse as soon as the dear baby was born in Augusta, another girl, Amelia. It was good for us to have gentle Mrs Summerfield and Will with us for the few weeks they stayed. Will was sad but so proud his mother had at last stood up to Summerfield. It was hard to say goodbye to them.

And now two years on, darling Flora has been born, and you can see why I chose that name. And then so soon after Flora, dear little Georgiana who I think may be my last. I don't say this to Jack but I don't think I can survive another confinement

Since wee Georgiana's birth I've been unable to regain my health. My sister Mary was here from England at the time of my the confinement and I fear my burdens with the children and my passion for flowers has quite put her off- for she left again not a few months ago saying there was nothing here for her. Nothing here- why there's abundance in every direction.

I tried to explain the wonder of the plants and the flowerings, the glory of the coastline, but you need to let England go, as I've discovered, to behold the beauty and variousness of this place. It's as though you must give yourself

permission to see what is here, and not hark back on the past and what is *not* here.

To see what I was fortunate to see, from the beginning. Even in that dark time of the death of my firstborn baby Elizabeth. That sprig of blue I took from the bush and placed on her coffin, Mary was shocked when I told her it was the beginning of a love-affair with the flowers of this land. But I see now, that it was.

She seemed angry that whilst I was delirious with child-bed fever I cried out in my agony, 'Oh poor Captain Mangles! The seeds for Captain Mangles, I must get the seeds.' Even Jack seems short when I want to talk about the seed gathering these days. He says I must put them out of my mind. But how can I when the whole vast land lies before me offering such treasures?

Captain Mangles incurred a great honour on me in having all my descriptions included in an important botanical journal, though Mary was angry again that my name was mentioned nowhere; and quite furious that the kangaroo paw has been named Manglesi and not Molloyae. I'm not looking for honour but for revelation - and I've found it here in a way I could never have imagined in any church in England or Scotland.

But now, a cruel trick in that a haemorrhage and then child-bed fever and a weakness that simply increases in these long months in bed. I'm glad I could organise from my bed with its window onto the garden, the last box for dear Captain Mangles for now I am very tired.

My last ride out into the bushland was alone and I'll never, never forget the feeling. I'd been out twice three times to that tree, and it was surely God's will that my last ride before little Georgie was born, I arrived and dismounted to

find that I'd arrived at the exact time of the seeds ripening. The Nuytsia! And what a delight to realise their collection and despatch was utterly my responsibility!

I've found companionship in the bush and with flowers I've never thought possible. The silence they talk of out there is not silence at all but filled with music as glorious as any I've heard inside a church when those birds sing...yes I've found God here and my life's purpose, for surely, out there on that ride I've seen the flowers of Paradise.

Spotlight shifts to Molly

MOLLY: When Will brought me the terrible news of Mrs Molloy's death, at first I couldn't believe it. And then I cried as bitterly as I'd wept for Charlotte. So young at 37, and with a new baby just four months old. Our trip to their house, *Fairlawn* at the Vasse to see where she lay, would have been miserable indeed, except for dear Sabina. Her daughter is already taking over the reins of the house with the help of John Bussell's new wife, who has been such a friend to Mrs Molloy, it seems.

I won't ever forget my woman of flowers. They saved us in Augusta. Her word went a long way to saving my Will from doing murder! And then such a fine thing she and Captain Molloy did helping young Will set up his own leather trade in Perth. Helping us to lay Charlotte to rest with a proper burial the way they did.

Oh yes, he still longs for justice for Summerfield it's true, but his energy and passion are in his work. And he accepts what Captain Molloy told him, that Thomas made off on one of the schooners, and is in hiding in another part of

the world, for there's not been a trace of him here. Little did he know that he gave Will a solid trade, for we live well enough now...

It was important for me to see where she lay, her tombstone by the river, to put my hand on those etched letters of her name and bid my farewell. And then later and express the wish to Sabina that they add *Woman of Flowers* for that's what she was.

But the most beautiful thing has been to have a copy of the letter that Mrs Molloy wrote to her Captain Mangles – the very last one. Sabina herself hand wrote the copy for me. She told me Mangles' work has not gone unheeded in England and even in Europe, and I can only hope he makes mention of her.

To have known someone such as her, to have been inspired even in those terrible times with Thomas. She allowed us into her life. And for us, she was our life-saver. For me this letter is a treasure.

And having attended Miss Preston's School for Non and Struggling Readers, at Will's insistence, the dear boy paying so patiently for my tuition, I can read, if not a bit haltingly, then at least decipher all the words. So I often do read every word of this letter, but especially this paragraph about the the – well- think ecstasy is the right word I'm sure, that Georgiana Molloy felt in the bush with her plants and her flowers.

Molly reads haltingly

On screen

My dear Captain Mangles,

We can never converse with one another but I am sincere when I say I never met with anyone who so perfectly called forth and could sympathize with me in my prevailing passion for Flowers.

The seeds of the Kingia and Nuytsia you shall have. This is the precise time of their ripening and the last named grows here in great abundance, and splendid it is. It looks so richly among the sombre eucalypts of the present season. It presents to my mind the rich and luxurious trees which adorn Paradise.

Music

Lights down