



Georgiana: Woman of Flowers

by Libby Hathorn

A play based on the novel

CAST

GEORGIANA MOLLOY: well-born 23 year old English woman, a young colonist, devout, devoted to her husband Captain Molloy and family; and with the keen eye of a nature lover which becomes a passion for flowers.

MOLLY SUMMERFIELD older than Georgiana by 10 years. and a working class woman, the bullied wife of second husband Thomas Summerfield who seeks land grants in the new colony. She is charmed by the Molloy's, interested in nature and collecting flowers for Georgiana, though is often controlled by Thomas.

CHARLOTTE SUMMERFIELD: the spirited eldest daughter 15 years old, of Molly, who longs for and plans her escape from her vicious step-father

WILL SUMMERFIELD: younger son of Molly, nervous of his step-father Thomas, admiring of Georgiana when he works for the Molloy's, and finally vengeful and courageous when he discovers the murder of his sister Charlotte.

CAPTAIN JACK MOLLOY, 46 year old ex soldier, aristocratic background, keen for vast land grants and riches in the West of Australia, magistrate for Augusta the new settlement, and loving husband and father

THOMAS SUMMERFIELD, competent horse-breaker, farmer, but a settler of dubious background and sordid intentions, using his new wife's money to settle in WA, bullies his step-children and wife and is capable of murder.

Some Notes

Comparison of two families and their interweaving lives, highlighted by the colonial women **Georgiana** and **Molly** who meet, in one sense on equal terms as colonists facing the wilds of Augusta WA in 1830's, though not on equal social footing.

-struggle for survival,

-opposing forces of good and evil - Thomas v. Molly, Will, Charlotte

-colonial struggle is the personal struggle of the two women, which implies the land, their families and their spirit. And the struggle of Charlotte to escape young Will to understand his mother's reluctance.

The interweaving of the lives of two very different families over colonial travails, family struggles, the terrain and the strange **bewitching plants** that abound in the new world of Australia

ORDER OF SCENES

ACT ONE- Homecomings

PROLOGUE Gypsy prophecy (screen)

Scene 1: GEORGIANA, JACK

The Return of Thomas Summerfield to Molly Summerfield

Scene 2: MOLLY, CHARLOTTE, WILL

The Return of Capt Molloy to Georgiana Molloy

Scene 3: MOLLY, CHARLOTTE, GEORGIANA, JACK

The well

ACT TWO- Before and After the Wedding

Scene 1: MOLLY, CHARLOTTE, WILL

At the Summerfield's

Scene 2: JACK, GEORGIANA, CHARLOTTE, MOLLY

The wedding

Scene 3: THOMAS, CHARLOTTE, MOLLY

Thomas

ACT THREE. FINDING OUT

Scene 1: GEORGIANA, JACK

Plant Discoveries

Scene 2: MOLLY, WILL, GEORGIANA, JACK

The cache

Scene 3: GEORGIANA, MOLLY

Revelations

EPILOGUE; Gypsy prophecy (screen)

PROLOGUE GYPSY PROPHECY AND SCREEN OF FLOWERS

(MUSIC)

Old English Scottish reel into clap sticks into gypsy music

\SCREEN

Voice heard of Gypsy beggar in Plymouth

*(As the Molloyes go to board the Warrior to make the journey to Australia
though this is not shown on screen.)*

GYPSY BEGGAR VOICE: 'Flowers m' lady. All your life. Flowers.'

Polite English music to begin, changing to clapstick or Aboriginal type
music, and then to gypsy music.

CHORUS of all players walking and murmuring Latin and common names
of flowers.

English lavender, violet, pansies, roses stocks, delphiniums, purple

loosestrife, meadowsweet,

English oak ash and elm and willow.

Eucalypt, Jarrah and Karri.

Banksia, Boronia Anigozanthos manglesii-Kangaroo paw

Hakea, Grevillea, Xanthorrhoea , Grass boys

Kingia Australis – grass tree, **Bottlebush** - *Stemodia speciosa*,

Dryandra Formosa , Jarrah, *Isopogon cuneatus*- Cone flower

Melaleuca suberosa -Corky honey myrtle, **Nuytsia**,

Blue fairy orchid-*Caladenia deformis*, *Pterostylis barbata*, Bird orchid,

White spider orchid, Lemon orchid,

Characters step out of the group one by one.

GEORGIANA: I'm Georgiana Molloy. We were five months on board the Warrior to get to this country. Despite the setbacks, the loneliness when Jack's away, I've grown to love this wild place and together with Jack, we'll build a life as surely as I've grown my garden out there.

MOLLY : I'm Molly Summerfield, and I was hoping for a better life in Australia for my children but it's all so hard here, so different. Strange animals and beggars of trees, and all of it hard work.

THOMAS : I'm Thomas Summerfield and I've come to the other side of the world, taking on Molly and her kids, on the promise of the land grant, and by God I'll get one.

CHARLOTTE: I'm Charlotte Summerfield, not exactly thrilled to find myself, cut off from any decent town. This wasn't the deal to be stuck here in Augusta so I'm getting out of here, soon as I can.

WILL: Will Summerfield. I don't so much mind working this hard, 'specially now I'm working for the Molloy's as well, but I 'm dead scared of him, scared witless of my step-father Thomas.

JACK: I'm Captain Jack Molloy and I'm Magistrate in out tiny town of Augusta. I to and fro from Perth to report to government. I'm biding my time here, now that I've taken a huge land grant at the Vasse.

ACT 1.

SCENE ONE *Thomas Returns*

Characters: MOLLY, CHARLOTTE, WILL

Molly, Charlotte and Will on stage in a colonial kitchen. All are working round a table- Will with leather, Molly is admiring a blue and white platter Charlotte is cleaning.

CHARLOTTE: (*Catching her mother's eye*) I know this much Ma! I'm going to Annie Turner's wedding, no matter what! And he won't stop me! And that's before I get on one of the whalers and get the hell out of here to Perth! I'm

sick to death of hearing you say we'll leave this hell hole in good time. Nearly two whole years already!

Anyway, I've heard some things about him that you two don't know— things Captain Molloy'd be interested in!

MOLLY: What are you talking about?

CHARLOTTE: Well for one thing he says he despises the blacks, but not so much it seems. I've been told-

Sound of dogs.

WILL: Shut up now Char- he's here! (*Going to the window*)

Yes, it's him Ma, he's back early.

MOLLY: Quick... hand me the platter, Charlotte.

WILL: (*alarmed*) – Hide it Ma! Hide it, hide it! Before he sees it, before he smashes it

CHARLOTTE :(*brandishing the platter in the air*) Let him see the platter. See if I care, the bastard.

I'll never understand why you married him Ma, and let him drag us to this misery hole.

WILL : Don't! Don't rile him up Char – you always do.

CHARLOTTE : *(dancing around with the platter)* Shut up, blabbermouth boy!

WILL: Ma, make her hide it! He'll belt into her first! Then me!

(Charlotte relinquishes the platter to her mother)

MOLLY: It's okay Will, we'll hide it good like always.

(Suddenly alarmed at seeing the plant, pointing it out) Ah! Mrs. Molloy's plant on the shelf there! He'll flare up if he knows I'm collecting things for her!

The boy takes the plant down with a muffled sound of fear. But Charlotte grabs it out of his hand.

Sound of dogs barking

MOLLY: Shove it into the cupboard Char.

WILL: NOW!

CHARLOTTE: *(Plant in hand brandishing it in her mother's face, challenging her. The two stare at each other for a moment)*

THOMAS *(Offstage)* You two little rats, get outside –

CHARLOTTE: If only you'd stand up to him, Ma. Just once!

MOLLY: *(she grabs the platter and hides it)* Not now Charlotte-

THOMAS: (off stage as *a voice from outside*)

Come and take the horse, you useless turd of a boy. And let's see what you lazy sods've been up to while I was up river. Bloody nothing I'll wager. Molly
MOLLLLLY! Get out here.

MOLLY: We're coming, Thomas.

Molly and Will file out to face Thomas. Charlotte hesitates a moment and the follows them.

THOMAS: (Roaring) MOLLY!

Stage lights down.

Act 1

SCENE 2 *Captain Molloy Returns*

Characters: GEORGIANA, JACK

Georgiana in her living room where we see a vase of Australian flowers. It is furnished simply with English furniture. We see her kneeling in prayer.

Oh merciful God – I can see the ship in harbour right now! Heartfelt thanks for bringing my husband, my love, home safely at last.

The hardships here in our struggling settlement have been almost unbearable with him away, with the household and then all his magistrate's duties on my shoulders. That horrific death of our servant on the island where I had to preside over her pitiful, rotting body!

So terrible. And with no woman of my class, no one to turn to, being alone here except for our child, our darling, darling Sabina.

If it weren't for you my Lord and Saviour who allows me the comfort of prayer, there were times I might have gone mad. I won't tell Jack of my night of dark longing and fear in the garden out at the well we worked so hard to shore up. I won't tell him there was such a feeling of malevolence in the air, I could scarcely pray. I won't say, for you Lord, as you always do, you showed me the way.

And in these three years here, I've found your glory in the bush, a wealth of flowers, and purpose, such purpose in my own garden, while I prepare as always, for yours, in Paradise.

Enter JACK who stands watching his wife complete her prayers.

And in your mercy and grace you have sent Captain Molloy home to me at last. My suffering is over, my loneliness at an end. I give thanks.

Stands, straightens her dress then sees him standing there.

GEORGIANA: Jack, Jack it *is* you, darling man.

JACK: Georgie!

(He takes her in his arms and then relinquishes her to hold her at arm's length)

JACK: Why Mrs Molloy you're crying, dear one

But let me look at you, Georgie. You've grown so thin in just three months.

GEORGIANA: And you Jack, why you can hardly do up your jacket!

JACK: It's quite true. Far too much good food and wine in Perth, while you my poor little mother-to-be...

GEORGIANA: Three months is too, too long.

JACK: And for me too. But I'm here now darling.

Jack puts his hand on his heart.

On my oath Mrs Molloy, dear Georgie, I will not leave on my
magistrate's duties to be so long away from Augusta, from you, ever
again! There I've sworn it.

She comes to him and rests her head on his shoulder.

He embraces her again but this time more warmly.

GEORGIANA: *(She pulls away)* The servants!

JACK: But only Mrs Dawson is out in the kitchen

They embrace but she disengages hastily.

GEORGIANA: Mrs Dawson's bringing tea dearest, any minute.

GEORGIANA: There's so much to tell you, all our farm news Captain
Molloy. Some you'll be uncommonly pleased with, and some- well -
some details can wait...

But give me *your* news of Perth, dearest, your letter said everything is so
expensive there: flour, and even kangaroo meat at One and threepence
a pound. And that you found kangaroo skin shoes!

JACK: I've brought you a pair – and some for Sabina.

GEORGIANA: *(interrupting and rushing on excited)* Oh there's so much
to tell you about here and on Dalton Island that's good news. The wheat
crop, the cattle, some plants I've found.

Just look here at this one, Jack. A most curious specimen, Sabina is almost frightened of it – you see, how cunningly made, it’s a flytrap. We watched an insect approach and Sabina was amazed as I was when it was gobbled up (*laughs*)

JACK: Somehow you see it all, Georgie, things I miss, most people miss!

Like those speckled eggs you found in our tree, the smallest of frogs on those strange plants, and those tiny, tiny bush flowers in the woods.

I told Governor Stirling and his wife of your passion for flowers and Ellen immediately made a request of you.

GEORGIANA: (*Gratified and surprised*) A request of me- why I’d be honoured - but what could that be?

JACK: On behalf of her cousin. He’s an adventurous chap, this Captain Mangles. Seems, he’s written a book on his travels in Egypt, and now he’s on a new mission. He’s taken up collecting plants specimens, Australian ones too.

He was in Perth a few years ago and began to collect. Seems that Darwin fellow, the one travelling round the world right now, was also here some years back too, and he is really interested in our plants. Well everyone in England is mad for news of our flowers and animals, eh? Including your family.

GEORGIANA: Mama's entreated me for more in all her letters.

JACK: Mrs Stirling's asked, as a favour, if you could send some specimens to her cousin in England. Especially some of the seeds of these strange plants, which they'll try grow in hothouses from Kew to who knows where.

GEORGIANA: I'd be delighted of course. I told Ellen that I was collecting for Mama, though I've not done nearly enough yet.

JACK: And as I came up the hill, Georgie, I could see at once, your garden's even more bountiful! You've done wonders...

GEORGIANA: Yes, but this Captain Mangles... I'm no botanist, Jack. Mind you I have the press and the flower book dear Mama gave me-

JACK : If you agree to the task, then Mangles will send you special boxes to transport everything safely. It appears many of the plant specimens sent from here arrive quite ruined from the long journey. But I told them you'd be sure to find a way...

GEORGIANA: *smiling at him* Jack!

JACK: Well you will, I'm sure.

GEORGIANA; (*Looking out the door and indicating her garden*) Our neighbours the Bussells and plenty of others, look askance as I put more value to my flower garden than my vegetable garden! Not that I care

too much about them! They proved ill-spirited leaving me alone on Christmas Day with Sabina, knowing you were so far away.

JACK: Come here Georgie. I'm so sorry to hear of your troubling time. I thought you'd have more fitting company of your own class now the Bussell women have arrived here, and that you wouldn't be so lonely.

(He puts his arm around her)

GEORGIANA: The Bussell sisters are kind with little Sabina when they call, it's true. But not one invitation to their table the whole three months you were away, when I thought I'd die of loneliness.

JACK: I know they go to their land grant at the Vasse. Perhaps they were away?

GEORGIANA: No Jack, all of them are at home here sometimes. I know it because I hear their laughter. And that makes me feel even more closed out! You know they way they can be so -so exclusive a family. And yet how you've helped them, getting Charles that job as Stores Officer so that they have steady money

JACK: Didn't stop them renting out their fishing nets when the cottagers were so short of food. I remember that. Charging the poor beggars!

GEORGIANA: I call it downright mean-fisted. Look at how you lent them our oxen to plough their land too.

JACK : Damned mean-fisted come to think of it.

GEORGIANA: (*shocked at his language but also mollified by his sympathy*)

Jack, language!

But it's true. I like John Bussell well enough and he's been kind in the past lending me some of his books. But as a family I have to conclude, they *are* mean-fisted Jack, even though we've been more than generous.

JACK: (*mockingly*) Mrs Molloy, steady now. I've never heard you criticize like this!

GEORGIANA: I've never been ignored like this!

I found more company with the natives. Sabina dances with the children when they come by...It gives me time to record their words. I've found the women are not so shy when the little ones play.

Fetches a scuffed leather diary

Look here Jack, I've 30 or 40 more words since you left.

Mandiga-that means young girl and Manjimup, a marsh flower.

Boyanup- that means rock. Wagerup they say is place of emus and

Wonnerup- a digging stick for getting food!

And you know don't you that they call you ?

Jack: What Molloyerup?

He looks at her fondly as she peers into the book and puts his arm around her again.

GEORGIANA (*laughs*) King-bin!

JACK: Well then, the King-bin is happy to be home at last with Queen Georgie . And our Sabina who'll have a brother we hope, quite soon.

GEORGIANA: I pray for it. And I don't care about any slight from the Bussells or anyone else, now that you're home again, dear, dear Jack!

They embrace

Music

Stage lights down.

SCENE 3 *The Well*

Characters: MOLLY, WILL and GEORGIANA

Will gathering some flowers. Georgiana frozen, staring into space on the other side of the stage.

CHORUS: Whispered sound of flower names.

MOLLY: What are you doing there, Will?

WILL: *(He comes to join her)* These are for Mrs Molloy.

MOLLY: How anyone here has time for flowers! They don't even look like flowers some of them. Now Will, you mustn't be away too long.

WILL: But now I'm working for Mrs Molloy?

MOLLY: Don't tell Thomas it's in her garden though. He thinks you're with the men in the tree felling party.

WILL: But it *is* in the garden, and the Captain, if he thinks that's all right then so will Thomas. He's in awe of Captain Molloy. We all know that.

MOLLY: And hasn't that made our lives a bit easier? Only don't go saying anything about gardens and flowers.

WILL: I'm not Charlotte, Ma, but I'm fed up with his bullying and the way you-

MOLLY: Don't start again. You're a good lad and getting bigger by the day. We'll leave soon enough, another few months that's all I ask...

She's that busy with the three little ones Sabina and Mary and at last the son John the Captain wanted so bad. I'm not sure she's had the time of late for those flowers rambles she talks of...

WILL: Just look here. *(He offers her a flower)* She's taught my eyes to see things, Ma. Lots of things you'd never notice. I'm going to tell I found some real strange plants by the rushes up the river there. She likes to know where things come from...

Molly as if to herself as Will continues gathering flowers

Three long years here and all the time waiting, waiting for Will to be old enough to make our escape from him. And then being bone-scared to even plan for it sometimes when he rages with his mad cruel eyes.

How did I make such a terrible mistake? Thomas seemed so kind at first when he came courting in Sussex. A bit gruff, after someone gentle as their poor father, but kind to me in my loneliness. And filled with hope for this new land. 'A holding of countless acres,' he said 'that could be ours, for the children!' he said. But the minute we were married, and I sold what little I had, the minute he got us all on board that wretched ship, he changed...and here with the back break of the work he turned even more sour, and with the drink, so frightening, so violent. A devil!

Sometimes I fear for their lives with him...I do...and no one I dare tell. ...Thank God the Molloy's are close by, they seem so kind and it's true Thomas is in awe of the Captain. Getting to know Mrs Molloy a little at her prayer meetings when I could go...somehow in all this misery she's the one gave me some hope. Not so much her prayers which I love to hear, but her quiet sure way of talking. So calm.

WILL: Ma – for you.

Will offer his mother a bouquet which she accepts, smiles, looks at, but then shrugs and sneezes

MOLLY: Achoo! *Offers them back* Best take them to her...

Music

The light falls on Georgiana who is speaking in anguish and disbelief

Offstage we imagine the well and the children gathered around it, as she points there, but is hiding away from looking at her child, as Jack brings him out of the well.

Music including the sound of little bells.

CHORUS murmuring the flower names and as ghostly spectators.

GEORGIANA: No, no, no! Don't bring him up out of there. Don't bring him up out of the well Jack. It cannot be our baby boy down there. Not Baby John. He wouldn't go near the well- we've warned him, all of us. Not Baby John.

He'll be wandering in the forest.

He'll be down by the shore.

He'll be in the fowl run where we found him yesterday trying to collect the eggs.

He'll be playing with his sisters Sabina so big now, so responsible. And little Mary so sweet with him, her darling baby brother.

I entreat you don't bring him up out of there.

I saw him not an hour ago bright and happy. Lottie was minding him I'm sure of it.

I called them all to come for their morning milk.

He was wearing his little bell so if he's wandering in the forest lost- we'll hear him.

So let's go and look again. In the field, down by the shore in the fowl run.

Let's not stand here wringing our hands like this.

No, no, no!

Don't bring him out into this sunshine.

I won't look!

It can't be him

Oh God in Heaven it can't be our boy!

Well then if it is, if you say it is, if you say. Dear God I can see his little shirt

I can see it, even from here.

You're lifting him out so tenderly? He must be stunned.

He's lying so limp and still.

My baby boy stunned, look his face is white as a sheet.

But it's perfect Jack, his pretty face, it's perfect and his flaxen curls so pretty-
all wet though they be.

Put him down gently Jack. Then he'll come to, once again.

Rub his little hands and feet. He'll be so cold.

So very cold.

Why are kneeling beside him so still?

Why are you looking at me like that?

Jack?

Stage lights down

Soft light. Georgiana is sitting in a chair, in her bedroom, her eyes closed.. Jack knocks and enters, carrying a small wooden box and a flower. He places a sprig of boronia on the table and kneels by her, stroking her hands.

JACK: You're making yourself very ill Georgie, staying here week after week like this. Ignoring your children, everyone, everything! Scarcely eating! You must stop this now dear heart. You must try-

She looks at him but doesn't speak

Mrs Dawson has cooked us a kangaroo stew tonight, and the girls Georgie, the girls will be so glad if their Mama would only join them. Come on now...

GEORGIANA: Grabbing his hands in appeal

You know, I've tried so hard to do good. I've loved and served God since I was a small child. I've lent my energies in every way to witness for Christ wherever whenever- you know that don't you?

JACK: Of course Georgie. Of course I know that- but don't upset yourself again!

GEORGIANA: When we lost our first little baby girl Elizabeth, just days after we landed here, I thought I might not survive my first weeks in Augusta. But I did!

I worked it out, that losing our firstborn like that, was a test of courage for me. When I understood that suffering, well then I vowed to work harder toward my own salvation and the salvation of others to prove my belief.

So how can I be punished like this? Our John boy- only two years old! What have I done?

JACK: Please, Georgie. You've done nothing. Nothing at all. And you must try to stop blaming yourself!

GEORGIANA: But I can't stop Jack I can't stop thinking such terrible thoughts as if God were-

JACK: *(vehemently)* Don't! Don't say another word about God, Georgiana.

Don't! *(more gently)*. He is still with us, but you must listen to *me* now

She looks up surprised. But he kneels down beside her- she looks at him, waiting for him to speak. But he is silent. Finally he lifts his head

JACK: John boy *(his voice breaks a little)* Georgiana, there are others in this household who are suffering too, you know.

He takes her hand and she looks at him as if for the first time

GEORGIANA: Jack, oh Jack! I'm only thinking of myself- of course you're- *(She hugs him and begins to cry and then recovering herself she looks round sees the boronia for the first time.*

Did you put this pretty thing here! *(inhales it long and deep and then looks at Jack)*. Of course you did Jack! You're always so kind.

JACK: The Summerfield lad left it. He and his mother- they've been here most days.

GEORGIANA: How kind people are...

JACK: And just take a look at this. The girls insisted I bring it to you. *Dragging the small chest in front of her chair.*

Sabina and Mary Dorothea told me to tell you're to look inside the flower box. Or as they call it, the Mangles Box. They've been putting precious things in it while they waited for their Mama to get better- Sabina a lock of her hair when Mrs Dawson cut it yesterday; and Mary Dorothea a peg doll that she thinks Captain Mangles may fancy!

GEORGIANA *(smiles as if the idea of her other two children has suddenly occurred to her.)*

Sabina! Mary Dorothea! *(She gathers herself with great effort to speak)*

But I must see them. I will.

It is as if she is waking from a dream. Rummages in the box.

My flowers. The seeds.

JACK: So many are ready to go across the sea to Captain Mangles, but you can see not nearly enough yet. You must work for Captain Mangles this season, as you planned Georgie. Fill the box to the brim. Be quite ready for the next ship,

GEORGIANA: Yes, with all these plants properly sorted and labelled. I must.

There's only me here to do it and the children with their sharp eyes, they love to help, Jack.

Turns from the box and stands up, tidying her hair, animated again.

JACK: And they'd love to see their Mama right now...

He takes her hand and they go together.

Lights down