

Love can be a fragile refuge in a harsh and unforgiving land

# CATHERINE JINKS

THE /  
gentleman's  
garden

A NOVEL



# THE GENTLEMAN'S GARDEN

CATHERINE JINKS was born in Brisbane, Queensland, in 1963. She grew up in Papua New Guinea and later spent four years studying medieval history at the University of Sydney. She now lives in Leura, New South Wales, with her husband, Peter, and their daughter.

*The Gentleman's Garden* is her fifth novel for adults.

CATHERINE JINKS

THE GENTLEMAN'S GARDEN



  
ALLEN & UNWIN

First published in 2002

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National Library of Australia  
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Jinks, Catherine, 1963– .  
The gentleman's garden.

ISBN 1 86508 885 4.

I. Title.

A823.3

Set in 12/15 pt Cochin by Asset Typesetting Pty Ltd, Moruya  
Printed by Griffin Press, South Australia

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is dedicated to Margaret Connolly

With thanks to Martin Ahern, Kim Johnston, Dr J. O. Ward  
and Peter Dockrill for their assistance.

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# THE GENTLEMAN'S GARDEN



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New South Wales  
March 14th, 1814

My dearest Margaret,

*The misery attendant upon our parting was such that I find myself plagued by misgivings of a horrible nature. Did I express myself with sufficient feeling? Did I convey the deep sense of gratitude, of obligation, of devotion and attachment that overwhelms me whenever I reflect on your unremitting kindness, my dearest, my only sister? (Doubly precious to me, now that you are so far away!) I am cast upon a most unfriendly shore, dearest Margaret, and without your abiding affection feel utterly exposed to every blow that fate might bestow on me. How I long for you. How I long for England. How wretched I am, here at the outer limit of the world!*

*The voyage was unspeakable. I can hardly bear to give you an account of it, lest I be forced to dwell on its manifold horrors. The food was inedible, coarse and filthy; little wonder that I was ill. A putrid fever. It came upon Charles first, some two weeks out of Portsmouth, and I succumbed shortly after he had recovered. I believe that the convicts were to blame. We were surrounded by convicts, hundreds of felons, and they were all very much diseased. Five and thirty of them died on the passage, and there is to be a medical court of inquiry held, or so I am informed. As for my own sufferings, you should know that my unhealthy confinement in foul-smelling quarters (occasioned by an almost continual parade of convicts up on deck), the bad food, the noxious air, and the fever, all put an end to my most fervent hopes—you will know what I mean, dearest Margaret—which were raised within a month of leaving England, and cruelly dashed before we arrived in Rio de Janeiro. My despair can be imagined. But I am in good health again, and live in daily expectation of God's Greatest Blessing descending upon me once more. Kiss the children for me, by the by, and*

*tell Harriette that I shall be writing her a letter of her own, very soon. If I am able to find any shells for her collection, I shall send them also. I am told that the shells hereabouts are very fine.*

*There were no ladies on board. Not one of the officers, besides Charles, was married. The colony's newly appointed naval officer, Captain Piper, had brought with him the mother of his three fine children, but upon being informed that the Captain and Miss Shears were not, in fact, united in the bonds of matrimony, I felt that exchanging anything but the barest civilities with either of them was uncalled for. Charles says that this colony is notorious for such alliances. Can you wonder that we move in very restricted circles?*

*We have found a house not far from the barracks, but the rate at which a captain's lodging money is set here does not suffice to cover the rent, so we are slightly out of pocket in this particular. Within two weeks of establishing ourselves, moreover, a violent hailstorm smashed three of our windows, and the glass has yet to be replaced. This settlement lost most of its glass in the storm, and there is now a terrible shortage. I assure you, I was never more frightened in my life; the stones were three inches long, and knocked shingles off the roof. The climate of New South Wales is not friendly. When first we arrived, the heat was enough to fell a horse. To walk in the sun, at midday, is to court disaster.*

*Fortunately, Sir Robert's generous wedding gift enabled Charles to purchase spirits in Rio, and these spirits he has sold in the colony for a good profit. He also drew twelve months' pay before leaving England. So we have furnished the house to some degree, though at great expense, for prices here are very high. Stockings are ten shillings a pair, shoes sixteen shillings, butter seven shillings a pound, sugar three shillings a pound. We paid fifty pounds for a horse, and receive a daily allowance of half a crown for its upkeep, but cannot afford a close chaise—therefore my movements are very much curtailed. This is not a place where ladies of any sensibility can move about freely on foot. The heat is of little consequence when compared with the noise, or indeed the sights, which are so lacerating to one's nerves and spirits. I cannot be reconciled to what I see in this place. Every respectable neighbourhood is bounded by a wharf or a lumberyard, or something even more disreputable. The convicts, while they seem to abscond freely (and at*

*regular intervals) cannot themselves be escaped. They are everywhere. The streets are full of chained convicts. We must endure them at church on Sundays. You will scarcely believe it, Margaret, but we even have one in our employ—though since he is provisioned from the stores, and appears to be a quiet sort of man, he is not too great a burden.*

*I often reflect on the sweet and healthful walks about Ashcombe. I often sigh over memories of the hawthorn in bud, the gentle slopes behind Bideham Park, the shrubbery at the parsonage, and Tyler's cottage near the old bridge, with its fragrant mantle of roses. Closing my eyes, I retrace every step of my old journey under the chestnuts, where I would dawdle (sometimes) on my way to church. I cannot convey to you how much I miss it all. I ache for the sight of a willow tree. Even the cows here are dusty, angry, hard-edged things.*

*All my heart goes out to you, dearest Margaret, and to George, and to the children, and to my home. I think of you every minute; you are in my thoughts and my prayers before I go to sleep at night. Believe me to be,*

*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER ONE



THE LETTER HERETOFORE TRANSCRIBED was addressed to Mrs Margaret Goodwin of The Old Parsonage, Bideham, Devonshire, and was taken to the postmaster's house, where it was placed in an open bag destined to be transmitted under seal to Portsmouth. Dorothea Brande did not herself entrust the letter to the postmaster's assistant. Instead she gave it to her servant, Daniel Callaghan, together with the requisite threepenny postal charge—for she was not in the habit of frequenting that area known as 'the Rocks', where the postmaster's house was unfortunately to be discovered. She had been warned against the Rocks. She had been advised by her husband that it was a place of resort for a very bad description of persons. 'There is no cause for you to venture lower than Prince Street, if you find yourself north of Charlotte Place,' he had told her. 'Do not be tempted farther afield. There is nothing to see below Prince Street, except Gallows Hill, and the gaol, and the dockyard, and any number of vile drinking dens. It is no place for a lady.'

Thus cautioned, Dorothea had felt no desire to stray beyond St Philip's church—or indeed beyond the confines of her own home. It was her unvoiced opinion that Sydney Cove itself was no place for a lady. It frightened her and irritated her senses; the very light was harsh and abrasive. Plagued by headaches that she attributed to the incessant glare, Dorothea wanted outside venetian blinds, such as those adorning the

house of Mrs Bent. But on being informed that they would cost upwards of thirty pounds, Charles had refused to countenance so expensive a purchase. Already, he said, they were practically living beyond their means. His mess bill, owing to the price of spirits in the colony, was of monstrous proportions. Scarlet cloth was in the range of five guineas a yard, and oilmen's stores were horribly dear. Dorothea would have to wait until, by some stroke of good fortune, he might secure himself a civil or military appointment. Since the departure of the 73rd Regiment, several positions had fallen vacant; he had it on good authority that Captain Cameron, as Engineer and Artillery Officer, had been pocketing (in addition to his regular pay) a further ninety pounds a year.

'If an appointment of that kind should fall to me,' he had announced, 'then perhaps our income would support venetian blinds, and a swing glass, and a plate warmer. But at present you must be satisfied with what we have.'

Which was little enough. Small as it was—a mere four rooms, with detached kitchen—the house seemed almost empty. Dorothea's footfall would echo on bare, scrubbed-wood floors, there being no carpet or rush matting to soften her tread. Funds had been spent on crude necessities: on fenders and fire irons, roasting jack, dripping pan, boilers, linen press, clothes horse. No comforts of this sort had been supplied by the landlord—a man, like so many other men in the colony, whose elevation had come about through trade, and who, being in possession of a mill, an hotel, and sundry other businesses, could spare little thought for the needs of his tenants. The furnishings of his 'furnished' house were meagre; they comprised a very large and dilapidated tent bedstead, a double flapped dining table with six cane-bottomed chairs, a kitchen stove, a stone sink and one shabby sofa. The high, white rooms were innocent of all those luxuries without which a truly civilised existence may not be attempted. Captain Brande and his lady had even been obliged to purchase new bellropes, the previous tenant having borne away those in his possession upon departing the colony.

And the mystery of it was, as Captain Brande had once been driven to remark in Dorothea's presence, that the selfsame tenant—an officer in the 73rd—had left behind him at least two illegitimate children. It seemed rather hard that a man so liberal in one respect should be so ungenerous in another.

Dorothea had done her best to soften the starkness of her new home. Certain wedding gifts, including a portable writing desk, an elegant basin stand and a pair of silver candlesticks, were prominently displayed, so that they might testify to the taste and breeding of her past connections. The desk had been lovingly bestowed on her by her sister, Margaret. The basin stand had been the kind offering of Charles's uncle, the Reverend Henry Brande. And the candlesticks, like much of the fine linen that shamed the battered bedstead on which she now slept, had come to Dorothea courtesy of the Shortlands, upon whose goodwill her sister's happiness—and indeed, her own—had for some time been founded.

The Shortlands were distant cousins of Dorothea's brother-in-law, Mr George Goodwin. Though of elevated rank, Sir Robert Shortland and his lady had distinguished their less exalted cousin (who was a lawyer of modest means) with the most welcome attentions, admitting him into their domestic circle and appointing him Sir Robert's factor and agent. A house had been procured for Mr Goodwin at the very gates of Bideham Park. Ladies had been introduced to him whose manifold attractions, it was hoped, would tempt him into matrimony. But when Mr Goodwin did make his choice, his heart had led him somewhat astray. He had married, not one of the Shortlands' candidates, but the daughter of a clergyman—a Miss Margaret Hollins, of Ashcombe Parsonage.

Her father, the Reverend John Hollins, was the son of Lieutenant William Hollins, of the 121st Regiment of Foot, and the grandson of a well-to-do merchant who had retired to Wiltshire. Lieutenant William had received a very small share of the family fortune. Nevertheless, together with his pay, this share had been enough to furnish his four offspring each with a

small competence. John's came to two hundred pounds a year; on it he had married, while still a curate, the sister of another clergyman. Their daughter Margaret had been seventeen when her mother died; their younger child, Dorothea, only twelve.

Margaret's birth, therefore, was respectable—though her fortune, at two thousand pounds, was hardly that. The Shortlands might have been forgiven by the world at large if they had taken offence at Mr Goodwin's choice. But their principles were high, and their hearts generous. They had acknowledged the steadiness of Margaret's character, the sweetness of her temper, and the superiority of her understanding. They had welcomed her gladly into their home, where she had become as much a favourite as her husband. Moreover, upon the death of Reverend Hollins, they had been equally charitable to Dorothea. From the age of eighteen, Dorothea had become intimately acquainted with the Shortlands. She had enjoyed the fruits of their garden, sampled the contents of their library and ranged freely about their grounds. She had been indulged, consulted and admired. Plucked from the gloom and solitude of her father's house, she had been placed in a world of tranquil pleasures: picturesque views, cheerful gatherings, varied intercourse.

And now? Now she was all but confined to four rooms, from whose windows she could discern nothing but raw earth, a blistered paling fence, and a dirt yard in which only the strangest, spikiest, most unforgiving plants seemed to flourish. The vegetation of New South Wales filled Dorothea with dismay. She could see nothing in it to admire, though she had more than once heard Mrs O'Connell praise the beauty of a certain red flower, which to Dorothea's eyes looked almost malevolent in its fiercely jagged composition. But Mrs O'Connell was a lady of very sharp and decided views, who seemed to delight in shocking respectable people with her daring garments and contrary positions.

Dorothea did not know quite what to make of her.

Indeed, the society of New South Wales as a whole was not



suited to the taste of a lady accustomed to cultured opinions elegantly expressed. Aside from Mrs Bent, who freely indulged in what she described as 'novels of fashionable nonsense', few in the colony appeared very much given to reading for improvement. Books rarely formed the subject of any great degree of discourse in polite society, save when associated, in some fashion, with a local scandal. It was only through a recent letter to the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, for instance, that Dorothea had learned of the existence of a lending library at Parramatta, about fifteen miles from Sydney Cove. The letter had mentioned various 'liberal donations of books made by pious and charitable persons' for the use and benefit of the public; among the contents of the collection (as Dorothea subsequently discovered) were six sermons on original sin, twelve on the torments of hell, and an *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. But the same letter had cast some doubt on the intentions of the Reverend Mr Samuel Marsden, in whose custody the books had been placed. The public had been instructed to warn friends who might be arriving in the colony to bring their own literature. For the contents of Mr Marsden's library, it was claimed, did not appear to be circulating.

In reply, another correspondent had defended Mr Marsden. There had followed a heated debate in the pages of the *Gazette*, which had in turn become the topic of much spirited conversation among the ladies and gentlemen of the colony. Only then had Dorothea found herself discussing books at any length, because, as a result of the aspersions cast on Mr Marsden, there was a fleeting but fairly general interest in the question of who might have borrowed books from him.

The Reverend and Mrs Cowper had. Mrs Bent had. Even so, little was said about the contents of the books borrowed. Mrs Bent *had* remarked that Lindley Murray's *English Grammar* had been of no use at all to her son Ellis Henry, despite Mr Marsden's assurances. And from there the conversation had turned to the vexed question of children's education in New South Wales—the merits of local schools,

the risk of hiring convict tutors—leaving Dorothea once again dissatisfied with the tone of Sydney society.

Nevertheless, it was the only society now open to her. Pacing the exposed floor of her drawing room, she wondered if she could bring herself to entertain guests without a side-board. (Where would the wines be poured?) Then she saw, through the still intact drawing-room window, that Daniel Callaghan was approaching the house, and she quickly sat down. She had no wish to be seen prowling like a caged animal. Hurriedly she picked up her tambour frame and began to stitch; during the long voyage to New South Wales she had started to make a receiving cloth. It was her intention that, when completed, the cloth would present a perfect view of the Old Parsonage (her sister's home), complete with rose garden, kitchen garden, shrubbery, poultry house and venerable oak tree. Piecing it together would, she hoped, do something to stifle the pangs of homesickness that affected her with an almost physical torment.

Presently she heard the sound of Daniel's footsteps in the hallway, followed by a soft tap on her door. She told him to enter.

'I've been and delivered yeer letter, Ma'am,' he announced, looming suddenly into the room. He was very tall, for a man of such undistinguished lineage. 'Mr Nichols said to tell ye it'll be leavin' within the week.'

'Very well.' She kept her eyes on her work, because she was not easy in Daniel's presence. Not only was he an Irishman, he was also a thief. Charles had informed her that Daniel Callaghan was a convicted and admitted thief, but had dismissed her protests against allowing him to enter her house. 'You'll not find many servants here who are *not* Government men,' he had declared. 'Daniel will be dressed and victualled from the Government stores, so he will cost us almost nothing to keep. And if he misbehaves, we shall have him flogged.' The Brandes had therefore purchased, for Daniel's use, a blanket and a hammock (which was hung in the kitchen). The fact that he did not spend his nights under the same roof as the Brandes was

some small comfort. So was the fact that Dorothea's tea chest, tantalus, needlework box, linen press and writing desk could all be securely locked. She went about jingling keys like a housekeeper. 'It must be so, I assure you,' Mrs Bent had sighed, at their last meeting. 'I used to be careless of such things, until Mr Bent's desk was robbed by one of our staff.' Convicted forgers, she had claimed, were often genteel persons, who made good servants—but they were in great demand as government clerks. Therefore the respectable householder was forced to make do with thieves and rick-burners.

'Some say that thieves have the knowledge to protect a house from other thieves,' Mrs Bent had concluded, 'but I have never found it so. On the contrary, they are more likely to band together to commit their crimes.' Such advice, though well meant, only caused Dorothea further dismay.

With her gaze fixed firmly on a fragment of appliquéd rose, Dorothea instructed Daniel to ask Sarah if she required wood, or water. Otherwise, he could clean the lamps. He had already demonstrated that he could clean lamps without being supervised; in most other household tasks (with a few, very simple exceptions), he was utterly inexperienced. Sarah had been obliged to show him how to clean the silver, how to lay a breakfast table, how to wash ivory-handled knives. He was slow, Sarah said, but willing. She seemed undaunted by the prospect of having to acquaint an untutored Irishman with the customs of a genteel household. In fact, her demeanour had remained constantly cheerful since her departure from England, despite the trials of the voyage and the difficulties inherent in a colonial existence.

She had been one of Margaret's maids—a doughty Devonshire girl off a Shortland farm. Dorothea had assigned to her a hammock in the little room where the soap, the candles and the linen press were now stored; with unfailing good humour she served the Brandes as cook, housemaid and (occasionally) lady's maid. Captain Brande's own servant, Private Jack Lynch, was not often to be found on the premises,

for he slept at the barracks, and was required to attend his master at regular intervals throughout the day. So it was upon Sarah Wells that Dorothea chiefly relied, as she struggled to make a home for herself and her husband on this alien shore.

Sarah did not seem at all cast down by the change in her circumstances. Although shopping at the Sydney markets must have been quite distressing to the sensibilities of a country-bred girl, Sarah repeatedly assured her mistress that she liked the 'bustle' of it all. When emery paper, soda and spirits of turpentine proved almost impossible to procure, Sarah insisted that emery paper was hardly necessary, if sufficient 'elbow grease' was employed and that, in the absence of soda, wooden floors could be cleaned quite efficiently by the application of a mixture of soft soap, ash, sand and table beer. Even more remarkably, Sarah was quite prepared to share her kitchen with a convicted thief. Her conduct towards Daniel was unexceptionable. Dorothea had not once been troubled by any altercations, complaints or sullen remarks of the kind that can so often disrupt the tranquillity of a household where servants are feuding. While Daniel and Jack Lynch were clearly not on good terms, Sarah was happy to work with both.

Sitting in her drawing room, alone once again, Dorothea allowed her thoughts to dwell fondly on Sarah. She was a treasure. A blessing. She was the shield that protected Dorothea from many of the more repulsive aspects of life at Sydney Cove. Moreover, she was an embodiment of Bideham and all its cherished beauties; her Devonshire vowels caressed the ears of her mistress, and the sight of her round, freckled face, which closely resembled those possessed by so many of the Shortlands' staff and tenants (for Sarah's family was large, and hard-working), gave Dorothea much comfort. Occasionally, Dorothea even found herself discussing Bideham with Sarah, recalling events and people with whom they were both acquainted. She tried to stop herself from doing this, because she knew that if she made a habit of indulging herself in such a way, even Sarah might come to take advantage of her position.

But it was difficult to resist the urge. No one else in the colony had any familiarity with Ashcombe, or Bideham Park, or the country thereabouts. Not even Charles was well acquainted with that part of Devonshire. And he certainly had not frequented the Old Parsonage as often as Sarah had. Why, Sarah had been entrusted with the dusting of Dorothea's room there!

No—only Sarah could fully appreciate the extent of her mistress's loss. And as she surveyed her own attempt to recreate Margaret's roses, Dorothea thought: What would I do without Sarah? I am so *grateful* to Margaret for recommending her to me. I am so grateful to George for providing the little reward that, together with a few, gentle words on the subject of duty and experience, encouraged the girl to accompany me all this way. With Sarah in the house, we shall not be *too* uncomfortable.

Then Sarah herself knocked at the door, and declared—in the most cheerful of tones—that she wished to hand in her notice.

## CHAPTER TWO



‘BUT MY DEAR MRS BRANDE, this was only to be expected.’ With a sympathetic little smile, Mrs Bent glanced about her. ‘It is the fashion in this part of the world, I assure you. Bring a female servant from England, and she will immediately produce olive branches, set up for herself as a milliner or a publican, and realise a fortune. Nothing can be done to prevent it.’

A murmur of amusement greeted this remark, which, although directed at Dorothea, had been made with the object of entertaining those ladies who sat with her in the Governor’s formal reception room. Among the assembled company were the O’Connells, the Reverend and Mrs Cowper, and Colonel Molle, the guest of honour, who had been sworn in as Lieutenant Governor that very day. (His wife, naturally enough, had accompanied him.) Also present was Captain John Piper, who, in an unexpected demonstration of good taste, had left the mother of his children at home. Dorothea had been introduced to the Governor’s secretary, Mr John Campbell, and to the colony’s Chief Surgeon and Superintendent of Police, Mr D’Arcy Wentworth. She was already known to Dr Harris, whose acquaintance she had first made aboard the *General Hewitt*.

Mrs Macquarie, the Governor’s wife, was not present. The Governor had declared her to be ‘indisposed’. Mrs Bent, who was herself in an interesting condition, had observed to Dorothea, very quietly, that their hostess was almost certainly

confined by a Blessed Event. Not much, however, could be said on this subject—not, at least, in the presence of so many gentlemen—and the talk among the ladies had therefore turned to Mrs Brande's recent tribulations, while heads were occasionally cocked, and bright glances exchanged, at the sound of muffled footsteps or urgent voices overhead.

Dorothea had not yet recovered from the shock of Sarah's betrayal. Occupied as she was by the overthrow of her domestic arrangements, she found herself confiding in Mrs Bent, who had been so frank in revealing her own past problems with troublesome staff. Mrs Bent, though shrill and rather plaintive on occasion, was in many ways an ideal companion for an officer's wife. Married to the Judge Advocate, she occupied a distinguished position in the colony; she possessed a fine house, a growing number of children, a Braidwood pianoforte, a healthy constitution, and a fund of knowledge, culled during her four-year sojourn in Sydney, which she was only too willing to share with bewildered newcomers like Dorothea. Lively and accomplished, with a fair, pretty face (now marked, somewhat, by the strain of her husband's many illnesses), Mrs Bent had done her best to make Dorothea feel welcome. Though not many weeks from her anticipated confinement, she had twice entertained Dorothea in her lavishly appointed drawing room, which overlooked the street bearing Mr Bent's name. Here, despite the demands of her offspring, she had commiserated with Dorothea on all the miseries attached to her situation. Servants in New South Wales, Mrs Bent had confirmed, were corrupt and disorderly. The climate was unendurable, violent and extreme. The population was largely Godless, and the working women addicted to the most unsuitable finery; Irish peasants could be seen parading about in hats and stockings. Every department of governance was staffed by corrupt and idle men, many of them convicted criminals. News from England was always six months late, and everything—even labour—was impossibly expensive. Oh yes indeed, it was a wretched place. Wretched. It had ruined Mr Bent's health.

'You must abandon every thought of pursuing a civilised existence,' Mrs Bent had announced. 'It cannot be. Resign yourself to the most tiresome deprivations, to the most restricted amusements, and confine all your most intelligent observations to the letters you write. Because no one here, outside your family circle, will appreciate either your wit or your acuity.'

Mrs Bent always had a great deal to say in this vein. She bemoaned her circumstances at great length, and at every opportunity. Nevertheless, it occurred to Dorothea that, sitting in the Governor's reception room, most of the ladies surrounding Mrs Bent were paying her the compliment of close attention, and greeting her remarks with barely suppressed delight.

Mrs Molle asked Dorothea what Sarah was intending to do with herself, once delivered of her child.

'Oh—I should think that she will be married, by then,' Dorothea replied. 'It was her intention from the start, so she tells me. She wishes to marry a soldier who courted her on board the *General Hewitt*. A Private Allan Smith.' With a grimace, Dorothea added: 'I had no notion that she was thus engaged, I assure you. She was very sly.'

'Allan Smith,' said Mrs Molle thoughtfully. She seemed to be reviewing ranks in her head. 'I am not familiar with that name ...'

'You will *never* keep a free servant,' Mrs Bent interjected, placing a hand on Dorothea's arm, and speaking with humorous emphasis. 'Free women are too much needed as wives and shopkeepers and licence-holders. Even the most depraved of them will find herself an emancipated convict with his forty acres of land, and deem him a far preferable fate to service in your employ. Of course, there *are* the girls from the Female Orphan School, who are very well trained, but—'

'—they are always in great demand,' Mrs Cowper finished. 'If you wish it, however, I might have a word with the matron, Mrs Brande. On your behalf.'

'Do not trouble yourself.' It was Mrs O'Connell who



spoke, in her most direct and commanding tones. She had a voice as penetrating as that of her father, the former Governor, Captain Bligh (or so Dorothea had been assured by those who had known the man). 'Mrs Molle has brought her own nursemaid to the house that we recently vacated,' Mrs O'Connell continued, referring to the fact that she and her husband, the outgoing Lieutenant Governor, were on the point of departing for England. 'I was therefore obliged to dismiss a very willing and honest woman called Martha Potts. As far as I know, she has not found another situation. If you are searching for a maid, Mrs Brande, she would be the solution to all your difficulties.'

'Why—why, thank you, Mrs O'Connell.' Dorothea always felt a little delicate—a little 'niminy-piminy'—when conversing with Mrs O'Connell. She cleared her throat. 'Is this woman—that is to say ...?'

'Yes, she is,' Mrs O'Connell interrupted, with perfect understanding. 'Martha does *not* have her ticket-of-leave.'

'Ah,' said Dorothea. 'Which is to say ...?'

'She is not on her own hands,' Mrs Cowper supplied, without enlightening Dorothea to any degree. Sensing this, Mrs Bent hastened to explain.

'She is a convict who has not been excused from compulsory labour or assignment, and she may not work for herself.'

'I see.' Dorothea was struggling, somewhat, to comprehend these fine distinctions. 'But a person with her ticket-of-leave—this is not to say that she has served her sentence, or been pardoned at all?'

'No,' said Mrs O'Connell. 'Not precisely that.' And Mrs Bent smiled.

'You will come to learn our quaint little customs in time, Mrs Brande,' she remarked, eliciting more smiles from the ladies around her. 'I assure you, one day you will be as comfortable chasing natives from your garden as you would be chasing pigs.'

Then it was time for dinner, and the ladies rose. Dorothea found herself being escorted into the dining room by Dr Harris, her old acquaintance from the *General Hewitt*. So unhappy were her memories of that vessel, which had deprived her of her fondest hopes and tormented her with examples of the most depraved conduct, that she could not help regarding even her fellow passengers with some aversion, and tried to avoid them if she could. In this instance, however, she could not escape Dr Harris without appearing uncivil. Though normally rather gruff in his manner, he inquired very kindly into the state of her health, which had been so badly affected by the voyage. To Dorothea's dismay, he also began to speak of the court of inquiry, held to examine the deaths aboard the *General Hewitt*. 'I was called to testify,' he informed her, 'and defended Surgeon Hughes. As far as I can see, it was the wet weather that proved fatal. I frequently visited the prison, and never saw any place better fitted up, nor kept in a more cleanly state. As for the prisoners, they had frequent—indeed, almost constant—access to the decks, did they not? There could be no complaints on that score.'

Wincing a little, Dorothea murmured her agreement. Recollections of teeming tropical rain and wild-eyed convicts lurching in her direction did nothing to improve her spirits. She was pleased, however, to find herself seated beside Mr Bent at dinner—and although Dr Harris, on her right, continued to make various comments about wet bedding and salt beef rations, for the most part she conversed with Mr Bent, a grave, pallid, softly spoken gentleman, who exhibited a very courteous interest in her family, her friends and her Devonshire home. (His own family's estate was to be found in Surrey.) Dorothea liked Mr Bent. She appreciated the fact that he was so polite and refined. Balding and bespectacled, but with features finely drawn, he had the faintly liverish air, the colourless complexion and the laboured breathing of a man in poor health, yet he refrained from burdening Dorothea with a description of his many complaints. Only once did he approach

the subject of illness, when he advised her to buy a dripstone. A Norfolk Island dripstone, he said, would protect her from any impurities to be found in the local water. He possessed one himself, and had never regretted its purchase.

He also spoke of Bristol water, and of a cold sirloin of beef, roasted in London, which had recently been served up to him in New South Wales. It had been bought, he explained, at Hoffman's, in Bishopgate Street, where meat was preserved by packing it in a tin case which was then hermetically sealed, covered with tallow and enclosed in a wooden box. 'I must confess that I assayed my own portion with some reluctance,' he said, 'but suffered no ill effects as a consequence of sampling it.' The Governor's table, he added, was always mercifully free of all but the freshest produce, and provided a variety of dishes adapted to every taste.

Dorothea could only agree. The meal served to her was well cooked, with numerous courses. The wild duck was excellent, and the fricassee very cleverly conceived. (With the gentlest of hints, Mr Bent warned Dorothea off the oysters.) Several toasts were drunk; the Governor spoke little, but he spoke well. Dorothea watched him with interest, this being her first opportunity to do so at any length, and found him to be not utterly undistinguished. Though his complexion was coarse and mottled—here red, here yellow—he had a fine, aquiline nose. Though his hair was thinning, and of an indeterminate shade, he was fairly tall, with an upright figure. He wore a magnificent scarlet uniform, and displayed an admirable strength of resolve, exhibiting only on occasion the distracted, listening air natural to a man whose wife is undergoing the torments of a confinement in the room above.

Governor Macquarie's Scottish accent was a little harsh to the ear, but he seemed to have the manners of a gentleman. Indeed, he presided over the dining room with a stiff, old-fashioned, paternal air that Dorothea rather liked. She did not resent the fact that he neglected to address her directly during the course of the meal. There were, after all, thirty-eight guests

present, and Dorothea was seated some distance away from him. Besides which, many omissions can be forgiven a husband who is anticipating the birth of his first child.

Naturally, when the ladies withdrew for coffee, this fact was discussed with keen interest. Dorothea learned that poor Mrs Macquarie had had her 'hopes dashed' on previous occasions. Mrs Redfern—whose husband, it transpired, was at that moment attending the Governor's wife—confirmed that Dr Redfern had been very anxious about Mrs Macquarie for some time. Mrs Molle referred briefly to her own recent confinement; her little son, she said, was in vigorous health.

'The cause, I believe, is pure air,' she opined. 'Pure air and woollen garments. Woollen garments give the best protection against sudden changes of temperature. A child may wear outer garments of linen, but should always be dressed in wool underneath.'

'And white, always, at this time of year,' Mrs Bent appended. 'To prevent overheating.'

'Which may also be avoided by the correct placement of covers,' was Mrs Cowper's contribution. 'Nursemaids should always be instructed, when laying a child in its cradle, not to tuck the clothes in tightly, but to allow it full liberty to move about.'

The discussion then turned to regimental midwives, dusting powder, gripe water and leather mattress covers, while Dorothea listened in a wistful frame of mind, looking from one lady to another as each delivered herself of her opinions on child rearing. It was the darling wish of Dorothea's heart to cradle, in her arms, her very own infant. She prayed for a child every night. And here she was, surrounded by mothers, in a house whose mistress was about to be endowed with the very gift for which Dorothea longed so passionately.

She could not prevent herself from feeling a little sad.

When they finally rejoined the gentlemen, it was almost nine o'clock, and the company soon began to disperse. Mr and Mrs Bent departed on foot. The Molles and the Brandes were

to be conveyed home in the Governor's carriage. On taking her leave of their host, Dorothea once again presented her compliments to Mrs Macquarie. She hoped, she said, that they might be properly introduced before long. She also expressed her gratitude to His Excellency for granting her the use of his carriage. The Governor, for his part, smiled broadly enough to show his teeth (which were in quite poor condition), and lowered his voice to address her. Stooping a little to take her hand, he said that he was honoured to welcome a lady such as herself to the colony, that Mrs Macquarie was eager to make her acquaintance, and that he was only too happy to supply Dorothea with the means of returning home in comfort.

'He is not a very polished gentleman,' she observed later, to her husband, 'but he is a gentleman nonetheless. I am pleased with him—or "pleased enough", as they say.' Pausing in the application of her nightly pomade, Dorothea glanced across the bedroom to where Charles appeared to be counting out money. He was ominously silent. 'Are not you, my dear?' she asked.

He grunted. She had been watching him throughout the evening, and had noticed that he was not in the best of tempers. While remaining perfectly civil, he had been little inclined to talk, and his countenance had taken on the brooding, watchful quality of a person who had been offended in some way. He had conversed with most of the officers present, but had not attempted to widen his acquaintance. At dinner, he had picked at his food, hardly touched his wine, and had yielded to Mrs O'Connell on every point that she raised, his eyes rarely straying from the plate in front of him, his comments coming in abrupt little bursts. To the ladies who flanked him, he had almost certainly recommended himself as a shy young man, who perhaps required a little gentle encouragement before he could find the courage to speak freely. (Presented with his remarkably handsome appearance, ladies were always inclined to view his actions in the most favourable light.) Dorothea, however, knew him well enough to understand that he was not shy, but cross. Cross and uncomfortable.

She surveyed his knitted brows with a little inward sigh.

'Are not you, my dear?' she repeated, and he looked up.

'I would be better pleased with the Governor if he did not foist people of dubious notoriety on my wife,' he said. 'I would be better pleased with him if he did not force me to dine with emancipists.'

'Emancipists?' Dorothea gasped, whereupon Charles amended his complaint, somewhat. Dr Wentworth, he said, while not in the *strictest sense* an emancipist, had been thrice acquitted of the charge of highway robbery in his youth, and had been so doubtful as to the outcome of his third trial that he had, before judgement could be handed down, declared his intention of sailing to New South Wales 'in any case'. 'The man is a blatant libertine,' Charles concluded, 'and a speculator, and is not proper company for a woman of any breeding.'

'Oh dear,' said Dorothea, faintly. She retained only an imperfect recollection of Dr Wentworth, who had not been sitting near her at dinner. He had been about the Governor's age, she thought, but taller, and a little untidy in his appearance.

'If Dr Redfern had not been occupied elsewhere,' Charles went on, 'if he had been permitted to join us at the table, I would certainly have got up and left, I assure you.'

'Dr Redfern?'

'As a guest, I owe my host a duty of obedience. But I am also entitled to a certain amount of respect, and there are offences that cannot be overlooked.' Charles was speaking quite hotly, now, but his gaze was fixed on the wall, not on Dorothea. She sensed that he was unburdening himself of a speech that he would have preferred to deliver in the Governor's presence. 'As an officer of the 46th Regiment of Foot,' he declared, 'I entered into a resolution that I would never hold intercourse with, nor admit into my society, any of those persons who arrived in this colony under sentence of transportation. Though I have not, by this means, assumed to myself the right to prescribe laws for the society of other corps, nor the colony as a whole, I would expect

its commander in chief to display a certain tenderness towards the feelings of those respectable ladies to whom he offers his protection, when extending his hospitality.'

'But Charles,' Dorothea interjected, as her husband paused to draw breath, 'Mrs Redfern is perfectly respectable. Why, is she not the daughter of an officer?'

'Yes indeed. And the granddaughter of a convict,' Charles snapped. 'As for Dr Redfern, he himself came to this colony in chains.' Climbing into bed, he rearranged the pillows with some force, and cast Dorothea an impatient look. 'I am better acquainted with this colony than you are,' he pointed out, 'and I know who is, and who is not, fit company for my wife. As far as I am concerned, the society that you were offered this evening was little better than an insult.'

Subdued, Dorothea hastily completed her toilette. Then she blew out the candle and joined her husband in bed, wondering, with some dismay, how she would ever learn to navigate the treacherous shoals of colonial intercourse. Everywhere you turned, it seemed, there were emancipists waiting to disconcert you. Gentleman-like demeanours concealed monstrous pasts. People who should have been avoiding notice positively forced themselves on your attention.

As she recited her prayers (silently, in her head, so as not to disturb Charles), she implored God for divine guidance. Without it, she felt sure, she would not survive her husband's colonial tour of duty unscathed.

## CHAPTER THREE



CAPTAIN CHARLES EDWARD BRANDE was one of those rare mortals blessed with a very romantic appearance. While only of average height, he had a pleasing figure, and his features were extraordinarily good. They included a pale complexion, a straight nose, a well-shaped mouth, a firm jaw, a pair of strongly marked eyebrows, and eyes of a quite remarkable shade of blue, framed by long, sable lashes. His hair was thick and black, but not unruly. His teeth were very fine.

When Dorothea first met him, he was twenty-six years old, and she was three years younger. He had come to Bideham to visit his uncle, the Reverend Henry Brande, arriving in the spring of 1813; he was on his way from the 46th Regiment's quarters in Devonshire to the Isle of Wight, where most of his regiment was stationed, awaiting transport. Captain Brande, however, had been given leave to attend his dying father in Kingsbridge, and this leave had been extended in order that he might settle his widowed mother's affairs. His father, an architect of little renown, had left Mrs Brande and her two daughters with just enough money to pursue a modest existence—but Captain Brande had been left with nothing at all. Moreover, Captain Brande had been ill during his visit to Kingsbridge. This, together with the nervous strain attendant upon his bereavement, as well as the torment of his disappointed expectations, had left him in a rather delicate state.



His good-hearted uncle had therefore invited him back to Bideham Parsonage. A large, modern house, built by the Shortlands to supersede a smaller, darker, and (it must be admitted) damper Old Parsonage, the residence of Henry Brande was quite spacious enough to accommodate a sorrowful young man in fragile health, and Captain Brande had quickly recovered both his strength and his spirits. He had played with his nephews. He had exercised his horse. He had visited Bideham Park, promised to return during the hunting season, admired the pasturage, listened to music, sung a few songs, and spent a good deal of time with Miss Dorothea Hollins.

Dorothea, upon first seeing Captain Brande, had immediately thought him an angel sent from heaven. Never in her life had she beheld such symmetry of form, such grace of expression, such exquisite placement of colour. He was so beautiful that she had been afraid to look at him, for fear of staring. Not being particularly beautiful herself (though she was pleasing enough, with her plump, creamy face and round, hazel eyes), she had regarded him wistfully, as one might regard a duchess's collection of jewels.

Moreover, Captain Brande's recent trials had made him a very interesting object. His pale face, his moody wanderings, his sighs, his troubled looks, had all touched her heart. She would have been quite happy watching him—she would have been content to admire him from afar—without demanding the unexpected prize of his attention. But so intimate was Bideham society that they had often been thrown together, in her sister's front parlour or the Shortlands' blue drawing room, and on these occasions he had always sought her out. Sitting beside her, he had asked her about her books and her plants. He had admired the samples of her needlework that were placed about her sister's home. And Dorothea, in turn, had asked him about his life in the military, which had taken him to France and the West Indies, and which had furnished him with so many remarkable experiences.

She admired him inexpressibly. He was so brave, and at the

same time so retiring. He could be as awkward as a schoolboy, yet he had a strong, ringing laugh. He was proud of his horsemanship, but ashamed of his handwriting. In his scarlet uniform, he looked like a prince.

She was utterly smitten. She was in love. All thoughts of her father's former curate, now serving the new incumbent of Ashcombe Parsonage, were completely abandoned. She lived for Captain Brande's smile; she dreaded, as she would have dreaded death itself, the day of his departure. And as that day drew near, Captain Brande had also appeared to be affected by a sense of urgency. He had sought her out at more frequent intervals, and then only to smile sheepishly, and grope for things to say. He had confessed to an uncertain temper, and, when she expressed surprise, assured her that it had often driven him to speak or behave unwisely, though not in Bideham. 'The sweetness of your character,' he had said, 'would prohibit even the most ungovernable rage from erupting in the heart of any man sensible to your goodness.' Though recited like a speech carefully committed to memory, this remark had been a source of infinite delight to Dorothea. It had seemed to her, all at once, that her feelings must to some extent be reciprocated.

But then he had left. He had left, and, though he had promised to write, Dorothea had despaired. For three days she had wept unrestrainedly, behind closed doors—until the arrival of Captain Brande's first letter had put an end to all her misery. He had written from a roadside inn, and he had written, not to Dorothea, but to her brother-in-law.

He had written to seek her hand in marriage.

What followed is what will generally follow, in such circumstances. Captain Brande's fortune was practically nonexistent; his pay was but 170 pounds a year. Dorothea's modest settlement would not improve his annual income by more than one hundred pounds. But she was of age, and his prospects were good—therefore, despite the reservations of her immediate family, the two young people were married in late

July. Not even the knowledge that they would soon be leaving England for New South Wales could change Dorothea's mind. She was determined to marry her handsome soldier, and marry him she did—in all haste.

Now, although she was not exactly repenting at leisure, she found herself dismayed at the changes that had taken place in her life. Her wedded state was not one of unalloyed happiness. Foreign travel, while it may have provided Charles with many thrilling tales to narrate during his visit to Bideham, was not the romantic adventure that Dorothea had anticipated as she lay dreaming her maiden dreams. On the contrary, it seemed to comprise nothing but wretchedness. The regiment was not a continual parade of masculine virtues, all decked out in scarlet and gold, but a congregation of men who were often ill humoured, undistinguished and under-employed. As for Charles, the uncertain temper to which he had once confessed was by no means an imaginary affliction. More and more, as time went on, Dorothea saw evidence of it, as he struggled with envious and despondent thoughts.

His chief cause of resentment was his failure to secure the post of Acting Engineer, Artillery Officer and Inspector of Public Works. Captain John Gill was the fortunate officer who received this appointment in April 1814—becoming one hundred and eighty-two pounds a year richer in consequence. Charles, who had never been an intimate of John Gill's, was furious. Though ill suited to occupy such a position, he had been petitioning his commanding officer since early March for consideration as a candidate. Now his hopes were dashed.

In the bitterness of his disappointment, he persisted in blaming Colonel Molle for failing to recommend him to Governor Macquarie. Molle, he said, was a man who played favourites. Molle had only recently transferred to the corps, and was unworthy to lead the men under his command. So portly a frame as the Colonel's argued a fondness for sedentary pursuits. So languid and ponderous a manner of speaking argued a want of intellect. In the privacy of his own bedroom,

Charles would accuse the Colonel of such all-encompassing failure that Dorothea grew quite frightened. She implored her husband not to speak unwisely. It was dangerous, she said. Moreover, in her heart of hearts, she disagreed.

As far as she could tell, Colonel Molle had not merited condemnation. On the contrary, he had very kindly made Dorothea a gift of eight yards of zeno for mosquito curtains, which would otherwise have cost her one shilling and sixpence per yard—if, indeed, it had been at all procurable in the colony. Mrs Molle, for her part, had been no less generous. Having followed her husband across the world, she was a positive fount of wisdom, and allowed nothing to dismay her. After Egypt, she said, New South Wales was quite delightful; its climate was far less enervating, its air so much purer. A healthier country all round, she declared, though if Dorothea *should* suffer any unpleasant effects, she must consult Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, a copy of which Mrs Molle would happily lend her. *The Housekeeper's Receipt Book* was also very useful, especially when it came to the treatment of children's complaints.

'My eldest was much troubled by worms, in Egypt—which is a country sorely afflicted by parasites,' Mrs Molle revealed one day, as Dorothea sipped tea in the Molles' drawing room, 'and without *The Housekeeper's Receipt Book*, I should have been at a complete loss. But after treating the poor child with a solution of tartarised antimony, followed by a simple purging powder, the problem was entirely removed.' Fixing Dorothea with a commanding gaze, Mrs Molle squared her shoulders. 'One must learn to fend for oneself, in places such as this, Mrs Brande,' she continued. 'It is not difficult, provided one has good sense and a few helpful books of instruction.'

Meekly, Dorothea set her cup down. 'But I have brought no books of instruction,' she confessed.

'Then you must compile your own. I am forever copying down receipts and patterns—there is nothing more useful. I am also very attentive to the advice of more experienced residents. Barrack-master Mackintosh, for example, has supplied me

with some important information. He has warned me against purchasing any cheap shoes in this colony. He says that the leather made by Mr Wilshire, at the tan yards, is unexceptionable, but that many *cheap* hides are only stained, not tanned, and that these are sold for less than half the price of good leather.'

'I see,' said Dorothea. She always felt humbled by Mrs Molle, who was taller than Dorothea, and more erect, and who seemed to be settling into her new home quite nicely. Of course, Mrs Molle had the infinite advantage of a large, solid house—the commanding officer's house—and a resident staff. She also had her husband's enormous salary to draw on, and the services of a properly trained English nursemaid. Even so, it was to her energetic character that her mastery of the minutiae of a colonial existence could be chiefly attributed.

Her breadth of knowledge was truly astonishing. She had already, within the past fifteen minutes, warned Dorothea against using the soldiers' wives as laundresses ('Take my advice, Mrs Brande, and entrust your garments to a properly trained woman, as I have'), offered to provide Dorothea with some English half-pint basins, for preserving ('colonial jars are too porous, as I have learned to my dismay'), and recommended a seamstress who charged only four shillings and sixpence for making up a simple gown. 'Not for yourself, of course,' she added, 'but for any servant whose clothes you might be required to furnish. By the by, Mr Brande, how is that new girl of yours behaving? Mrs O'Connell's old maid? I hope that she is proving satisfactory.'

Dorothea groaned. She gazed out a window at the barrack yard, where squads were being exercised. A non-commissioned officer was measuring steps with a pace-stick. Another was demonstrating firelock drill. A soldier's wife was laying out clothes to dry on the sun-baked earth.

Dorothea preferred not to think about Martha Potts.

'Oh dear,' said Mrs Molle sympathetically, after a long pause. 'Not such a treasure, then?'

'By no means.'

'Untrained?'

'Utterly untrained.'

If that had been all, however, Dorothea would have coped well enough. It was certainly irritating that Martha Potts, a London shoe-binder convicted of stealing a teaspoon, should have lived in such a very slovenly way all her life that she appeared to be ignorant of even the most basic points of good housewifery. Nevertheless, this was not the chief of Dorothea's burdens. She had no objection to teaching her servants how to make a brine. She could understand how some women might be ignorant of those methods by which water might be softened or dishcloths sweetened. She could even endure having to remind her housemaid, repeatedly, that a joint *must* be wiped every morning and night with a clean, dry cloth, to preserve it. Even servants with training are not always properly trained, and a good mistress must always be vigilant.

But Martha Potts was so clumsy. And so unprepossessing. A woman of indeterminate age and doleful countenance, she was rather small and drab; she dragged herself about in a dispirited manner, her shoulders slumped, her hair lank beneath a drooping cap, sniffing in a way that Dorothea found difficult to tolerate. (Even when provided with a handkerchief, she continued to sniff.) To her credit, she was otherwise a very quiet person, quieter even than Daniel—who, when asked what he thought of her, had replied in his usual guarded way that she was 'very closed company'. But really, that was little enough of a recommendation, especially in a woman who was so stupid. Although Dorothea had repeatedly instructed her to avoid dark gills, sunken eyes and a flabby texture, Martha continued to bring fish home from the market that were not fresh. Despite having been told on numerous occasions that an egg cannot be shaken if it is newly laid, Martha continued to purchase eggs that were practically inedible. It was fortunate that Dorothea was able to procure vegetables directly from the regimental garden, and that her bread and meat were issued to

her by the Quartermaster; no fault could be found with these items. But when it came to milk, butter, eggs, cheese, raisins and so forth, Dorothea was already at her wit's end. She was beginning to wonder if she would have to go to market herself—or perhaps send Daniel.

Moreover, no piece of crockery was safe in Martha's hands. And no dish of food emerged from the kitchen, now, without having been disfigured by a burnt crust or some other irreversible damage. 'She is a dreadful cook,' Dorothea was finally driven to complain, after being pressed, 'and a terrible slattern. I am continually finding hairs in food. She has no more idea of domestic service than a—a—'

'A sow,' Mrs Molle finished. 'How unfortunate.'

'And yet she came so highly recommended!'

But Mrs Molle shook her head. 'As I recall,' she reminded Dorothea, 'Mrs O'Connell described her only as "willing" and "honest". I suppose, in this colony, that *is* high commendation. But nothing was said about her abilities.'

'Charles cannot abide her,' Dorothea sighed. 'He says that she harbours fleas, and transfers them to our bed linen. She has no idea how to shake or beat a feather bed—you would think that a chicken had been plucked. And she is forever banging doors and forgetting to extinguish candles.'

'A common fault,' Mrs Molle agreed.

'Yet she *is* willing,' Dorothea went on. 'And I have heard so many frightening tales ...'

'Of maids with vicious propensities. I know.'

'If only Sarah could have stayed!' Dorothea mourned.

Alas, however, Sarah was gone. And later, as she walked the short distance back to her house, Dorothea reflected on the problem of Martha Potts. It was so much worse than she had led Mrs Molle to believe. While Martha's faults were manifold, they were made infinitely worse by Charles's response to them—for Martha offended him, and he frightened her. Consequently, if she was going to break a teacup, she would invariably do it in his presence. Then he would rage at her, and

she would become even more clumsy. On one occasion she had completely lost all restraint while being chastised, throwing her apron over her head and running from the room.

Dorothea had been forced to instruct her to stay out of the Captain's way. Duties had been rearranged, somewhat, to enable her to do so. But there would be no comfort in the house until she was removed altogether, and Dorothea was considering the means by which this removal might be accomplished. She had not, so far, had any dealings with the government offices concerned with convict assignment, and was at a complete loss as to how the correct authorities might be approached. By written application, perhaps? Charles, when his opinion was sought, had been rather vague. 'I shall ask Gill,' he had replied, with feeling. 'Gill should know. He seems to spend most of his time with the gangs.' But either Charles had forgotten his promise, or Captain Gill was too busy to attend to the requests of his brother officers. For Dorothea remained unenlightened.

She was not sure, in any case, that replacing Martha would solve her problems. After all, a drunkard or thief would be worse than a slattern, and the transport ships were overloaded with drunkards and thieves (or so she was informed). Arriving at her front gate, she was weighing her chances of securing a girl from the Female Orphan School when Charles suddenly emerged from the house, flinging open the front door.

'Oh,' he said, upon sighting her. 'So you're back, are you?' He was attired in full regimental dress, and seemed most put out. His cheeks were flushed. 'If you would not keep running to Mrs Molle for every direction, this house would be better run.'

Not wishing to discuss her domestic affairs in full view of any passer-by, Dorothea hurried into the hallway. It was very dim, inside; she could hardly see. But by the time she had removed her bonnet, her eyes had become sufficiently adjusted to the shadows, and she was able to discern evidence of a recent altercation.

Martha was standing near the back door, with her head down. Jack Lynch, also in the hallway, was wiping his hands



on a dirty cloth, his face twisted into a kind of warily impatient grimace. There was no sign of Daniel Callaghan.

'See what that fool did to my new boots,' said Charles. 'Not satisfied with spilling hot fat on them, she tried to conceal her idiocy by wiping up the spill with a dirty plate-rag.'

'Oh dear.'

'The result being,' Charles continued, 'that they were unwearable, and Jack had to polish them again, and now I shall be late for the evening parade!'

'Oh, surely not,' said Dorothea, faintly.

'The fault was bad enough—the attempt at concealment was infinitely worse. What if I had walked onto the parade ground in those things?'

'But where did it happen?' Dorothea wanted to know. 'In the kitchen? Did Jack leave your boots in the kitchen?'

'In the hallway.'

'The hallway? Then—'

'It was colza oil, Ma'am,' Jack suddenly supplied, 'from one o' the lamps.' He had a flat, drawling, nasal voice that Dorothea disliked. 'No harm done, but I had to get out my blacking agin.'

The offence was a serious one, for the state of Charles's boots, like the state of his sword and the brass fittings on his scabbard, was something that occupied a very great deal of Jack Lynch's time. Nothing, in that house, took precedence over Captain Brande's uniform. Indeed, Charles's anxiety that he should always be well turned out bordered on the obsessive. He seemed determined that no one should ever find fault with him, in this respect.

'My dear, I am so very sorry,' said Dorothea. 'How vexing for you. I shall have a word with Martha.'

'Words make no difference!'

'I know.'

'What she needs is a beating!'

'Very true.'

Dorothea saw that her first act must be to remove the offending housemaid from her husband's presence, lest the sight

of that mournful, grease-spattered face drive him to an even greater pitch of fury. Therefore she dismissed Martha, curtly, before accompanying Charles to the front door, soothing his ruffled temper with many submissive expressions of agreement. (As ever, it required only deference to calm his rage.) Then, once he had left the house, she went to the kitchen. There she found Martha fearfully awaiting punishment; with her large, suety face, greasy hair and shambling gait, Martha seemed to belong in the kitchen.

Her appearance did not excite the same degree of irritation and disgust among the boilers and dripping pans as it did in more refined surroundings. Her clumsiness was perhaps more pardonable when only gridirons and saucepans were at risk.

'Martha,' her mistress declared sternly, trying to ignore the presence of Daniel Callaghan (who was quietly cleaning the silver), 'I am very disappointed in you.'

Martha stared mutely.

'Carelessness *may* be excused, Martha, but not dishonesty,' Dorothea continued. 'It was your duty to tell Captain Brande what you had done as soon as you did it.'

Martha mumbled an apology, her eyes cast down, her fingers working in the folds of her apron. Dorothea's gaze wandered towards the kitchen table, where Martha had been preparing a beef-steak pie. Boiled meat, already drying, lay in a dish lined with paste.

'Martha, where is the broth?' Dorothea inquired, briefly distracted from her purpose. 'You should moisten that meat with the water in which it was boiled, before you bake it.'

'Yes, Mum.'

'I have told you this before.'

'Yes, Mum.'

'If you do not improve, Martha, I am very sorry, but you will have to be dismissed. Captain Brande will not stand for it. He will not, Martha.'

'Oh Mum,' Martha whimpered, 'please, Mum, I ham sorry. I *ham*.'

‘So you say—’

‘Mum, *please*.’ The woman’s voice cracked on a sob. ‘Don’t turn me away.’

‘I do not wish to turn you away,’ Dorothea replied. ‘But if you do not apply yourself, Martha—’

‘They’ll send me back to the Fact’ry!’

‘Well ... perhaps.’ Dorothea was uncertain as to what this might mean. She could only assume that Martha was referring to the Female Factory at Parramatta, where—as far as Dorothea knew—convict women were housed and given work commensurate with their skills. ‘Perhaps you *are* better fitted to work in a manufactory—not having been trained to domestic service,’ she said. ‘Perhaps you would be better off weaving or dyeing.’

‘Oh Mum, the Fact’ry ain’t no fit place! No fit place for man nor beast! No—nor woman, neither! They—they shaved our ’eads! They put us on the mill! Ah God, Mum, not *that* place!’

The passion in her housemaid’s tone startled Dorothea, who fell back a step. In some discomfort, she watched Martha begin to cry, slobbering into her apron.

The sight of such distress was quite painful to behold.

‘Please calm yourself, Martha,’ Dorothea said, not as firmly as she would have liked. ‘There is no need for such an exhibition. Simply do your work well, and ... and no one will be dismissed.’

An empty promise, in many ways. But Dorothea did turn her attention to the problem of Martha’s shortcomings, and the next day, having given the matter some thought, she approached Daniel Callaghan with a suggestion. She was reluctant to do so, of course. Being still wary of his size and his history, she avoided speaking to him wherever possible. But she was forced to acknowledge that he had, against all expectations, proven to be a most dependable servant, respectful and retiring. He was also much quicker than Martha could ever be, and had mastered a good many household tasks without undue effort.

So Dorothea sought him out the next morning, in the yard,

where he was chopping wood. And she asked him if he considered himself capable of going to market in Martha's place.

'Martha will not learn,' she explained. 'Nothing makes the slightest impression upon her. She will never see the difference between good produce and bad.' Carefully averting her eyes from Daniel's dirty sleeve, squinting in the sunlight, Dorothea studied the shingle roof of the house next door. 'I believe that you might do better,' she went on. 'You clean the silver very well, Daniel, but our food is more important. From this day, Martha will clean the silver, and you will go to market.'

Expecting a soft 'Aye, Ma'am' from her manservant, Dorothea was surprised when no reply was immediately forthcoming. She looked at him, and saw that he had bent his gaze to the axe in his hands. His brows were knitted, as if in thought; he was damp, and red-faced, and breathing heavily.

She was hardly aware of her own mounting sense of alarm, however, before he suddenly spoke.

'Please, Ma'am,' he said, 'let me go to the market, and clean the silver also.'

'But —'

'Martha's that clumsy, but the more she does, the worse she is.' As was his custom, Daniel kept his eyes turned away from Dorothea as he conversed with her. He rarely raised them to look at anyone. 'I like to clean the silver, Ma'am. 'Tis a fine thing, to see it shinin' there.'

Dorothea could find nothing to say in response. She was almost too surprised to speak. At length, however, she murmured something that was not quite an expression of thanks, and went away to think about how Martha's cooking might be improved.

For even the best quality produce would fail to restore domestic harmony, if it was not adequately prepared.

New South Wales  
June 5th, 1814

My dearest Margaret,

*What a perilous life we lead here. I had thought us safe from the threat of artillery, at least, but I was wrong. Two weeks ago, one of the transports upon which the regiment sailed caught fire; because it contained between thirty and one hundred and thirty casks of gunpowder (I have not yet been able to ascertain the exact number), it was immediately cut adrift from the government wharf, and went sailing down the harbour, menacing us all with its broadside—for every gun was shotted. Fourteen of them went off in all, beginning at half-past six in the evening, and Captain Piper lost the lower sash of his parlour window to a charge of grape, which also destroyed a shutter and took the corner off his portable writing desk. The ship then drifted onto the rocks opposite Mr Hook's stores, where it exploded at about a quarter before eight.*

*As you may imagine, there was no promenade in Hyde Park that evening.*

*There have also been a great many native attacks on isolated farms and huts recently, and Mrs Macarthur lost one of her servants. (I have mentioned Mrs Macarthur, have I not? You may recall that we met at the Bents' house.) Mrs Macarthur, whom I admire exceedingly, is superbly courageous in the face of native threats—for she lives at Parramatta, and must manage her acreage there without assistance, her husband being presently in England—but I should not be so brave. Nothing will persuade me to accept her invitation to dine with her at Parramatta. The road that leads there is much frequented by highwaymen (or 'bushrangers', as the local cant describes them), and I can see no reason to travel from one part of this country to another, since it is all the same.*

*Charles is in good health. He was disappointed when the post of aide-de-camp to the Governor went to Lieutenant Watts, but is bearing up well. His temper has also been sorely tried by the recent loss of one of his company—a Sergeant called Morrow—who was killed by an Irish woman in a disreputable drinking house. She stabbed him with his own bayonet. Owing to the dubious judiciary of New South Wales, however (and I should tell you that Mr Bent has always much to say on the subject), the murderess and her husband were not hanged. They received only two years' hard labour at Newcastle, an outcome which Charles finds hard to stomach. He would like to sit on a bench, as certain other officers do, so that he might remedy such abuses; if he were a magistrate, moreover, he would have three convicts assigned to him, instead of only one, and our domestic situation would be much improved. But it must be confessed that I am not sanguine. Despite his active demeanour, Charles seems unable to recommend himself to those in positions of authority. I sometimes wonder if they are jealous of his looks.*

*For myself, I find hard to stomach the fact that such events as Sergeant Morrow's slaying—being horribly commonplace in this part of the world—must form the subject of dinner conversation among respectable folk. One's digestion suffers at most colonial tables. Not that we are wholly given up to social engagements here; indeed, I lead a fairly quiet life, Charles being so often from home attending mess dinners, Lodge meetings, and the like. But when we are abroad together, as we were the other night, our ears are continually assaulted by the most distasteful information. Is it unreasonable, I wonder, to hope that at a dinner held by my husband's commanding officer, to celebrate the christening of his four-month-old son (a darling child, Margaret, so quiet and good!)—is it unreasonable, I ask you, to hope that I might not be assailed by lurid accounts of bloody depredations? Lieutenant Cox seemed to take a positive delight in acquainting me with the latest reports on native activity, which would have the various tribes declaring their determination that, when 'the Moon shall be as large as the Sun', they will commence a work of desolation, and kill all the whites before them.*

*Can you wonder that I rarely leave the house?*

*On occasion, however, I must make my appearance at certain*

*gatherings. I drank tea with Mrs Macquarie yesterday, on the occasion of the anniversary of His Majesty's birth. All the principal ladies of the colony were invited, and the conversation was almost exclusively concerned with the care of infants, this being a subject very much on Mrs Macquarie's mind at present. She seems pleasant enough, though perhaps a little enthusiastic in her manner. I find that a Scottish accent, in a lady, is rather more difficult to endure than it is in a gentleman; I do not know why. But Mrs Macquarie was perfectly polite, and did not distinguish any one of the ladies present with the kind of special little attentions that can so often lead to disharmony and ill will.*

*As you may imagine, I continue to long for Bideham Park while in such company. My receiving cloth is now one-third complete, and I flatter myself that I have captured the very tint and shade of your old cinnamon roses. I pray nightly for that Event without which the cloth will never be used. Nothing in this world would make me happier than to see it wrapped around the Inheritor of all my hopes and dreams, whose coming will justify my very existence. Pray for me, dearest Margaret. And believe me to be*

*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER FOUR



SHORTLY AFTER WRITING TO her sister in June, Dorothea discovered that her existence was indeed to be justified. It was a marvellous and utterly unexpected discovery. Overjoyed, she informed her husband, whose moodiness—which had been aggravated by certain regimental incidents—dissipated at once. They conversed with equal pleasure about the expected arrival, and how it would almost certainly be a boy. Charles spoke of Dorothea's condition with great pleasure and excitement. He purchased for her a very beautiful, lace-trimmed handkerchief from one of the better Pitt Street shops; he praised her needlework, and urged her to be more attentive to her health; he read to her, on two consecutive evenings, from *The Absentee*, by Mrs Edgeworth—one of the novels lent to Dorothea by Mrs Bent. Unfortunately, he found it not to his taste. In his opinion, there were quite enough Irishmen about. 'I must speak to them constantly here—I do not want to be reading about them as well,' he said. Nevertheless, he comported himself with all the good humour and sensibility that any wife could justifiably demand, and Dorothea's spirits rose even further.

At first she did not make public her interesting state, instead nursing the treasured secret to her bosom. But a change in her habits was immediately apparent. Her condition was such that she felt justified in rising a little later than had



been her custom since disembarking from the *General Hewitt*. She had also taken to resting in the afternoon, and drinking milk with her breakfast. She began to walk with exaggerated care, and to make inquiries of Mrs Molle about the Molles' nursemaid. The question of nursemaid had begun to vex Dorothea a good deal. Martha was far too careless to serve in such a capacity, but Charles, she knew, would have to be persuaded that the expense of an extra servant could be countenanced.

Mrs Molle, of course, was instantly on the alert. 'My nursemaid, Mrs Brande?' she said, her piercing eye fixed on Dorothea's face. 'You wish to know the exact duties of my nursemaid?'

'If you please.'

'Why, what a very interesting question. Am I to understand that you foresee a time, in the near future, when a nursemaid is to become a fixture in this home?'

Blushing, Dorothea conceded that this was, in fact, the case. Mrs Molle then offered her most heartfelt congratulations. They began to discuss the correct deportment of a good nursemaid, together with all the many refinements expected of her while Martha shuffled in and out with tea, teacakes and sandwiches. It was to be expected that she would hear a part of her mistress's conversation, while in the process of serving. It was even to be expected that she would transmit news of Dorothea's condition to Daniel, the other member of the household.

What Dorothea did not expect was to find her weeping in a corner of the kitchen, after Mrs Molle had left.

'Why, Martha!' she exclaimed. 'What *is* the matter with you?'

Martha jumped to her feet, wiping her eyes with her apron. 'Sorry, Mum,' she muttered.

'Are you ill?'

'No please, Mum.'

'What are you doing?'

'Cleanin'.'

Dorothea could see no evidence of it. 'I see,' she said. 'Then you had better continue, had you not? Those shelves are filthy.' She turned, and would have left the room at that moment, if Martha had not—quite unexpectedly—addressed her.

'Mum—if you please—'

'What is it?'

'Are you expectin'?'

Dorothea was astonished. 'I hardly think it your business, Martha.'

'No, but—'

'Kindly continue with your work, if you please.'

Despite such annoyances, however, Dorothea remained, for the most part, in a buoyant mood. Her husband appeared to be reasonably content. She liked the winter weather, which was not so far removed from that which she had experienced in Devonshire. She had acquired, at a reduced price, a canvas carpet for the hallway, and her heart filled with joy whenever she contemplated the arrival of her child, some seven months hence. Such a prospect sweetened every common sorrow, and gilded every minor disappointment. With Mrs Molle's encouragement, she had laid aside her receiving cloth and attempted a few pieces of infant's clothing—a cap, a chemise. So cheerful was her frame of mind, in fact, that she had even turned her thoughts to the possibility of planting a kitchen garden. Could such an addition be achieved, in the poor colonial soil? Having surveyed the dusty plot behind her house, fingered one or two of the spiky bushes therein, and examined what appeared to be a failed attempt at raising runnerbeans, she approached Daniel. Did he, she asked, know anything about growing vegetables?

He had just cleaned the drawing-room grate, and had entered the hallway with his cinderpail and brushbox. Adjusting his grip on these articles, he replied that he did not; that while his grandparents had been farm labourers, he himself had been apprenticed early to a pump-maker.

'So you know nothing of gardens?'

'No, Ma'am.'

'A pity.'

But it is really of no consequence, Dorothea thought. An educated person can never be at a loss where books are available—and I can always consult Mrs Macarthur. Mrs Macarthur, she knew, had laid out a most impressive garden.

'Daniel, I am going to make a few purchases in Pitt Street,' she announced, and saw a fleeting look of surprise cross his face. 'I want you with me. Inform Martha, please, and wash your hands. And give your jacket a quick brush, or I shall be ashamed to be seen with you.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'Ask Martha to attend me in the bedroom, for I shall need my cloak and gloves.'

It was a brisk, bright day, and Dorothea had been seized by a sudden desire to purchase ribbons with which to trim her unborn infant's cap. She had never before walked as far as Pitt Street—nor even as far as the Tank Stream—but she felt strong enough, all at once, to attempt such a journey. The wind, though it blew hard, was not punishing. The air was clear, and the waters of Port Jackson were as blue as a cornflower. Standing at the front gate, waiting for Daniel, Dorothea was even able to gaze with benign interest on the people passing by: at the girls with their hair swinging in plaits down their backs; at the constable in his blue jacket, duck trousers and stock; at the little boy driving a pig; at the corporal with his musket. Then Daniel appeared, and she was pleased to see that he had combed his hair. He was not, she decided, an ill looking fellow, when decently groomed.

'Tell me, Daniel,' she said, as they proceeded on an easterly course, 'how are you faring with Martha? Is everything well, in that quarter?'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'And otherwise—you have no complaints?'

'None, I thank ye.'

'Good. I am very pleased with you, Daniel, though you have much to learn. Domestic labour, though humble, requires a high degree of skill and application if it is to be performed well.' Dorothea hesitated, for they had arrived at their first corner. 'Pray, which direction shall we take now?'

'We should take a turn to the right, Ma'am, and left into King Street.'

'Shall we be passing near the markets?'

'No, Ma'am.'

Dorothea was anxious to avoid the marketplace, having been told that floggings often took place there. No doubt the lash was a necessary evil, but her limited experience of it—cowering in her cabin on board the *General Hewitt*, while strangled cries penetrated the bulkhead—had instilled in her such an aversion to this form of punishment that she could hardly bear to have it referred to in her presence.

It was therefore particularly unfortunate that they should have encountered the sight that forced itself upon them, when they had crossed the little King Street culvert and turned into Pitt Street.

'Oh dear,' said Dorothea, and stopped. On either side of the street, gutters had been scoured into deep ditches, which were bridged with cut logs. Near one of these logs, prone across the clay and gravel, lay the body of a stuporous man.

His shirt was pulled up, exposing a back hideously scarred. His mouth was open, and his eyes were shut. He was snoring faintly.

Dorothea later chastised herself for having stooped to notice him. She should have walked on, without breaking her stride; she should have averted her eyes and feigned ignorance, not only of his condition, but of his very existence. As it was, however, she found that she could not disregard that fearsome back, to which her gaze was riveted in a kind of horrified fascination. It looked, she thought, like the street on which she stood.

The scars were not evenly spaced stripes, but a landscape of hillocks and ridges, ditches and knots. It was as if soft

dough, trampled, scored and twisted, had been par-baked and left to grow cold.

Slowly, she became aware of Daniel's voice.

'Ma'am,' he was saying. 'Come over the way, Ma'am.' And so dazed was she by the vision confronting her that she obeyed blindly, as she would have obeyed her husband.

Her destination was a certain house, owned by a former convict, that operated as a general store. (Mrs Molle had recommended it as a good place to buy dimity, calico and Japan muslins.) The front room of this house, which was altogether rather small and dark, had been fitted up with shelves, on which were displayed a greater variety of items than one might have expected to find in such an isolated colony. Shoes and gloves jostled with glass and earthenware, salt butter and Bengal soap with hose and handkerchiefs. Dorothea, upon entering the room, was so much disturbed by what she had just witnessed—and so dazzled by what she now saw—that at first she failed to notice her fellow customers. But it was not long before their strident tones caught her attention.

There were three of them: an older woman, a younger woman and a man, all of the most vulgar description. They were chaffing each other in what Captain Brande would probably have classified as 'flash cant'. Dorothea knew only that it was, to her ears, almost incomprehensible. The older woman was smoking a clay pipe, and seemed to have made herself quite comfortable. The younger woman shrieked and brayed while the man peppered her with coarse pleasantries. Then a fourth woman, who soon revealed herself to be the proprietress, rose from a stool in one corner. She was of middle age and decently turned out, with a worn and weary countenance.

She addressed Dorothea in a flat but respectful tone, as her companions fell silent. They appraised the genteel newcomer in a way that she found positively unnerving, for although not hostile, their eyes were bold and intrusive. She felt that they were silently estimating the cost of her apparel. She also

guessed that they would discuss her, in an offensive manner, the moment she left the shop.

'I wish to purchase some ribbon,' she declared, trying to ignore everyone save the respectable-looking woman who had inquired as to what her pleasure might be. 'Some white silk ribbon, very fine.'

'Yes'm. Broad or narrow?'

'Narrow.'

A roll of ribbon was produced, and a length cut off. It was wrapped and paid for, as the silence lengthened. Feeling all eyes upon her, Dorothea was almost stifled by discomfort. She finally fled the shop as she would have fled a drinking den, with a brisk step and a pounding heart.

She knew that her face was flushed, and she averted it from Daniel upon gaining the street. He had been waiting for her there, in obedience to her request; furious at her own weakness, she would have preferred to ignore him. But she was a little lost. In one direction lay the supine body. In another lay the marketplace. How was she to reach her home, without running the risk of yet another ugly encounter?

'Which way?' she inquired.

'Ma'am?'

'I wish to take another route, Daniel.'

'Ah.' There was a pause. Determined not to look at her servant, Dorothea was obliged to look at Pitt Street instead. It did not reward her scrutiny. Modest houses lined it, some fronting onto the street, some set back behind rickety paling fences. A scattering of proprietors' names could be seen, inscribed in black paint on brick walls. Those walls that were whitewashed with pipe-clay had a grimy, blistered look about them; there was a smell of slops in the air. The road had been churned into numerous ruts and furrows.

'Twould be best,' Daniel said at last, softly, 'if ye took Market Street, Ma'am. That'll bring ye to Clarence.'

'But the markets. Surely we would pass the markets?'

'Aye, that we would.'

'Then I would prefer not to take Market Street.' Dorothea spoke coldly. Studiously avoiding Daniel's eye, she was determined not to offer up an explanation.

'Tis a fair step to Hunter, Ma'am,' Daniel pointed out. 'And the causeway must be crossed. 'Twill be damp—aye, and messy, too.'

'Nevertheless.'

So it was that Dorothea, owing to the repulsive sights that positively littered Sydney Cove, was forced to return home using a lengthy, dirty, toilsome route, quite steep in places, and much bestrewn with manure. By the time she reached her gate, she was flustered and despondent, her hair blown about and her petticoat trimmed with mud. She felt that she had lost her dignity. Her head ached, and she was breathless. The pleasant afternoon stroll had become a feat of endurance. The whole day was spoiled.

Even worse, her manservant had seen her at a very great disadvantage.

This wretched place, she thought, as she retreated to her bedroom. Here, well secured against the sights, sounds and smells of the colony, Dorothea shuddered as she recalled the mutilated back, the appraising stares, the raised voices. She sat on the bed. She pressed her hands to her temples.

Never again, she decided. Never again will I even attempt such an errand.

Despite the fresh wind and bright sky, it had been far too great a burden on her fragile spirits.

## CHAPTER FIVE



IN JULY, THE TRANSPORT *BROXBORNEBURY* brought to Sydney Cove, not merely a load of convicts, but some gentlefolk as well. The most notable of these was Mr Bent's brother, Mr Jeffery Hart Bent, who had been appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of Civil Judicature in New South Wales. With him had sailed the new regimental chaplain, the Reverend Mr Benjamin Vale, and his family. Both of these gentlemen were among the guests at Mrs Bent's table in early August, when she invited the Brandes to dinner in order that they might welcome to the colony her 'brilliant' brother-in-law.

Mr Jeffery Bent was very quick in his speech and movements, and had a great deal to say on many subjects. He described his voyage in vivid terms, painting a fearful picture of its numerous perils and discomforts. The ship had almost foundered in a gale, and had almost fallen into the hands of mutineers. 'But that was as nothing,' he announced, 'compared to the torments of our ship-board diet. The water smelt so abominably, I could not drink it without using a little brandy to disguise its bad taste. As for the poultry served at dinner, it was so *very* ancient that there was no such thing as getting through a leg.' His face, as he spoke, was full of movement and expression; he was thinner and browner than his brother, though they shared the same long nose and small mouth. He looked healthy, whereas Mr Bent did not. He also ate heartily



of the meal served to him, while Mr Bent only tasted a spoonful of soup, rejected the tongue, picked at the kidneys and allowed the jellies to pass him by.

The Reverend Mr Vale was not as lively as Mr Jeffery Bent—indeed, his manner was rather plaintive and fatigued—but he too had much to say about the voyage. He and his wife had been almost constantly ill. He complained that the bad food and weather had prevented him, on many occasions, from preaching the Sunday sermon. Moreover, after the trials attendant upon his journey, he had been most disappointed to discover, when he arrived in Sydney, that promises made by the Secretary of State's Office had not been kept. 'I was told,' he said, 'that in Sydney I should have a separate parish and church assigned to me, and that I would be provided with a cultivated glebe, and a well-furnished parsonage house, together with an allowance of Government servants, rations and fuel. Instead, I am assigned to the Reverend Cowper—an excellent fellow, of course, I have no complaint on *that* score, but it is not the same as occupying one's own parish—and have received only one servant, and lodging money, and am expected to find my own residence until the parsonage at Liverpool is complete. And,' he appended, 'unless I am very much mistaken, Liverpool is *not* in Sydney.'

'No,' Mr Bent agreed. 'It is not.'

'I have raised the subject of a land grant, but can get nothing out of Mr Campbell,' Mr Vale finished. 'I wonder, now, if the Governor has even been appraised of my request.'

'Campbell can be most obstructive,' Mr Bent concurred, and his brother added, 'He has been positively offensive to *me*. I applied to the Governor for a private residence purchased at the Crown's expense, and was treated with absolute disdain by that fellow.'

'But was your request granted?' Mr Vale asked, suspiciously, and Mr Jeffery Bent shook his head.

'I was told,' he replied, his dark eyes snapping, 'that the Governor would rent a house for me on the understanding

that, if such an action were not approved by Lord Bathurst, the Government coffers would be reimbursed by me.'

A murmur of astonished disapprobation greeted this announcement.

'Naturally, I took offence,' Mr Jeffery Bent continued. 'Now I have decided to lodge in this house, with my brother's kind approval. I fancy that I shall be more comfortable here, in any case.' He went on to point out that Governor Macquarie had proved himself, time and time again, to be deficient in that attentiveness which distinguishes a good administrator from a bad one. For instance, he had neglected to mark Mr Jeffery Bent's arrival with a formal salute. 'I was therefore obliged,' Mr Jeffery Bent revealed, 'to commission Captain Piper to inform the Governor that I would not land, nor proceed to Government House, if I was to be received only as a private individual.' This display of firmness had resulted in a thirteen-gun salute. 'To omit such little niceties,' Mr Jeffery Bent concluded, 'is to denigrate the importance of the position which I inhabit. One salutes not the man, but the power that he represents.'

'Very true,' said Mr Bent.

'Certainly,' said Mr Vale.

'The Governor,' said Captain Brande, who had become quite flushed with wine, 'thinks very little of the rest of us. He prefers emancipists to gentlemen.'

Dorothea said nothing. She considered herself too ill informed to expound on such a topic, or indeed on any of the other topics that were raised during dinner: the commencement of the road through the mountains, for example. Later, however, when the ladies had retired, she expressed herself freely on at least one subject, and that was the failings of her maidservant. Martha, she declared, was a great disappointment. Despite all attempts to educate her, she remained sullen, dirty, careless and slow.

'How very disheartening,' said Mrs Vale, who was a small, sickly-looking woman with dark circles under her eyes. 'Do you know, we have resided here barely two weeks, and already

I have received warnings from all quarters about the untrustworthy nature of servants in New South Wales. Particularly convict servants.'

Mrs Bent smiled. 'Yes,' she observed drolly, 'people talk of nothing else here, you will find. It is the prime topic of conversation.'

'But with some cause,' Dorothea was driven to remark. 'We have all experienced difficulties in the domestic sphere, have we not, Mrs Bent? And every crisis can be attributed to servant problems.'

'Oh dear,' said Mrs Vale, in hopeless accents, 'I wonder how I shall cope? I am not at all strong since the voyage, and the children do *tire* me so.'

Dorothea, seeing Mrs Vale droop like a thirsty garden herb, hastened to assure her that servant problems in New South Wales were not insurmountable. Her own manservant, though Irish and a convicted thief, was perfectly capable and honest.

'Irish?' said Mrs Vale, and shuddered. 'I would never employ an Irishman. Never.'

'I understand your objections, Mrs Vale,' Dorothea replied earnestly, 'for I shared them once myself, but Daniel has given me no cause for displeasure. He has never once left the house without being directed to do so by me. He purchases no extra rum for his own consumption, nor troubles me with an insolent manner. In fact,' she added, struck by a sudden thought, 'I would say that he has been quite chastened by his unfortunate experiences.'

'It might appear so,' Mrs Bent remarked, with a yawn, 'but do not place too much confidence in his reformation. The Irish, you know, can never be *wholly* trusted.'

'Goodness, no,' Mrs Vale agreed. 'They are always plotting and scheming.'

'Is he Catholic, your manservant?' Mrs Bent inquired, and Dorothea confessed that he was, indeed. 'Even worse,' Mrs Bent opined. 'Take my advice, Mrs Brande, and keep your wits about you.'

Later, as she was returning home in the Bents' carriage, Dorothea pondered this remark. It seemed to her that Mrs Bent, with all her experience of life in the colony, would not proffer such a warning without good reason. In laying aside her natural distrust of Daniel Callaghan, was Dorothea perhaps letting her guard down? Yet she was unaccustomed to living with servants who merited only suspicion and doubt. At Bideham, there had been no such misgivings; everyone on the estate or in the village had been known to everyone else, without exception, since childhood, and their little foibles had been trying, rather than alarming.

It was an unforeseen hardship that Dorothea should be obliged to live warily, forever on the alert, in her own house. How could she be comfortable if that were the case?

The next morning, Dorothea decided against raising the possibility of hiring an additional servant. Charles had consumed a little too much wine the night before, and was also put out because Dorothea, in her concern for her unborn infant, had denied him particular rights that a husband might generally expect in more favourable circumstances. Therefore, instead of speaking, she remained silent. And after a somewhat trying breakfast—during which Captain Brande rejected his eggs with unnecessary force, before departing in a huff—she went to Martha's room, which she surveyed with a critical eye.

It was narrow and dark. The linen press occupied a very prominent position, and could not be moved, since there was not space enough anywhere else in the house to accommodate it. Martha's hammock was unobtrusive enough, and the soap and candles, kegs and corkscrews, boxes of blacking and medicines could be somehow inserted into the kitchen or larder. But the grubby walls, the unadorned window, the creaking door, were all unsuitable in a nursery. And even if a transformation could be effected—with whitewash, curtains, carpet and pretty things—the room would still be small, dark and crowded.

Dorothea wondered if it would be possible to rent another house, but dismissed the thought immediately. Even if a larger

one could be found that was within their means, Charles would never allow the expense of a larger house *and* four servants. No—she would have to make do. Wallpaper was unprocurable, so the walls would have to remain white. A great deal of muslin would soften the room's starkness. There would be *just* enough space for a cradle (borrowed from Mrs Molle?) and for a very small chest of drawers. Fortunately, the room contained a fireplace. A nursery could not have been attempted without one. The fireplace had not, however, been used since their arrival, so Dorothea reminded herself (once again) to have Daniel light a fire in it. A smoking fireplace would be most injurious to the baby's health.

With thoughts full of calico coverlids and milk puddings, Dorothea then went to speak to Daniel about a kitchen garden. She was beginning to feel, after consulting Mrs Molle on the subject, that supplementing the regimental produce with vegetables from her own garden would improve the family's diet immeasurably. She had seen with her own eyes, during her walk to Pitt Street, peach trees and broccoli beds. She had tasted Mrs Macquarie's cucumbers, and Mrs Cowper's broadbeans. So she approached Daniel, as he cleaned her bedroom grate, and said to him: 'Daniel, I wish to start a vegetable garden. And you must work it.'

He rose politely, his sooty hands hanging down. He had a way of watching her—almost as warily as she sometimes watched him—that annoyed her on occasion; his eyes were unreadable. Remembering Mrs Bent's caution, she took a deep breath.

'I have spoken to Mrs Molle about this,' she continued, 'and Mrs Molle, who is knowledgeable in such matters, tells me that certain seeds may be sown at this time, owing to the mildness of the winter, here. She says that German and Jerusalem kale, longpod and Spanish broadbean, carrots and coriander may be planted, as well as a late crop of cauliflower. To begin with, however, the ground must be prepared.'

Listening intently, Daniel nodded. 'Aye, Ma'am,' he said.

'Mrs Molle spoke of trenching, ridging and manuring. She said that when manure is applied, the ground should not be overdone with it. A little at a time, and often, is better than an abundance all at once.'

Daniel's expression shifted. 'We've an abundance o' nothin' here, Ma'am,' he murmured. 'Not even slops.'

'No. Quite. But come with me, Daniel. I wish to show you the place that I have chosen for the beds. The soil there must be thoroughly broken up, and turned, and turned again. It must be made rich and sweet. I shall borrow tools from the Quartermaster with which you might accomplish this. I have a notion,' she admitted, 'that you may find it rather stony, to begin with.'

The plot selected by Dorothea was in a sunny but sheltered position, hard against the fence. (She had visions of runnerbeans climbing up the palings.) Daniel, upon viewing it, studied its dimensions with an inscrutable face; gently, with the toe of his shoe, he dislodged a jagged pebble from earth that had been softened, somewhat, by overnight rain. Then he said: 'Tis perilous close to the fence, Ma'am.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'Ye'll get nothin' of yeer crop, if it can be reached from the road.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea. She reddened. 'Yes, of course. Then further in, perhaps. Over here.'

'Aye.' He stood gazing down at a patch of coarse grass until she began to grow irritable. Obviously, he still had some objection that he was reluctant to voice.

'Well?' she snapped. 'Have you nothing else to say?'

'Ma'am,' he began, then stopped, and hesitated, before proceeding. 'I know only one thing about the gardens hereabouts. I had it from a man at the markets, who works a place up yonder, by the Brickfields. Chickens and ducks, he raises, as well as the cabbages and the onions.'

'And?'

‘He was makin’ a great lament over the cost o’ raisin’ produce. The dirt, he said, must be brought from elsewhere. Not all the manure in the world would turn a profit on this land, without addition.’

Daniel lowered his eyes as Dorothea stared at him. After a while, she said: ‘I see.’ Then she said, ‘Well, if new soil is what we must have, then new soil is what we *shall* have. Mrs Molle will know where to find it. She has promised manure from the stables, and seeds as well. If I ask her, she may very well refer me to the regimental gardeners for good soil.’

Daniel said nothing, but inclined his head.

‘I shall visit Mrs Molle this afternoon, and I shall also ask Captain Brande to make urgent inquiries,’ Dorothea announced. It was beginning to rain; the wind had freshened, and she felt a droplet like a pinprick on her cheek. ‘Daniel? Do you understand? This must be accomplished quickly, in order that a summer crop might be sown.’

‘Aye, Ma’am.’

‘Very well.’ Wrapping her shawl more tightly around her, Dorothea retreated into the kitchen. Martha was out delivering books to Mrs Bent, so Dorothea gave the fire a poke, and inspected the larder. It was as she had feared. The shelves were soiled and the bottles of vinegar incorrectly placed; only the muslin-wrapped butter pats were sitting, as they should have been, in their bath of brine. Checking the bread pan, Dorothea noted that it contained a blanket of crumbs. Martha had neglected to wipe it that morning. She counted the eggs and sniffed at the meatsafe. She nudged a sack of potatoes with her foot.

Mrs Molle had not discussed with her the propagation of potatoes. She had touched on many forms of vegetable, but not all; the humble potato had been neglected in favour of cauliflower, celery and kale. Dorothea had been shown gooseberry seeds and walnut filberts, still packed snugly in different papers, which had in turn been placed in a large bottle, well corked and sealed, and thence into a small box,

padding with straw, for shipping. With enviable foresight, Mrs Molle had brought these seeds to Sydney with her. 'If you write to your family for seeds,' she had advised Dorothea, 'be sure that they are correctly packed.' Dorothea wondered if she might request seeds from Bideham. What a comfort it would be, to know that her child was eating Bideham vegetables!

Restlessly, she returned to the house. It seemed to her that Martha had been gone for too great a length of time. And yet how much more cheerful the kitchen was without her! The comfort of the Old Parsonage, in many ways, had been founded upon the contentment of its servants; Dorothea had not realised how greatly the tone of a household might be affected by the satisfaction of every member, high and low, until presented with the glum spectacle of Martha Potts. And Daniel, too—Daniel was not cheerful. Consequently, Dorothea could not be wholly at ease in his presence. It was foolish, of course, but it was so.

Gazing out of the drawing-room window, Dorothea saw Martha struggling with the front gate, a small pot of jam clasped to her breast. (Obviously, Mrs Bent had been making preserves, and was kindly presenting a sample to her friend.) Dorothea went to meet the damp and dirty housemaid in the kitchen, because the evening's fare was still to be discussed. There was also, of course, the matter of Martha's tardiness. Dorothea raised the subject immediately upon her entrance, surprising Martha so much that she simply gaped, stupidly, still clutching her jam.

'Now I shall say no more about it, Martha,' Dorothea declared, after concluding her brief but pointed lecture on the evils of wayward behaviour, 'for I have already spoken to you once. If you should persist in these long absences, I shall tell Captain Brande, and he may do with you as he likes. You know that he has little sympathy for persons in your, ah, predicament.' Captain Brande, in fact, was sometimes so uncivil to his servants that it caused Dorothea to wonder about his upbringing. To Jack Lynch he was genial as long as his



boots were properly cleaned. Upon finding fault with the appearance of any piece of his equipment, however, Charles would set upon Private Lynch like a low-born sergeant, bawling him out as if they were on a parade ground. To the convict servants he was uniformly brusque, despite the fact that Daniel never failed to give satisfaction. The truth of the matter was, Charles abhorred convicts. He had confided once to Dorothea that they made his 'flesh crawl'. 'I regard them as a disgusting necessity, like—like cesspits,' he had said. Female convicts, in particular, aroused his ire. He called them 'abominations', explaining to Dorothea that the vice to which they had, uniformly, been exposed was of an infectious nature; their moral energy, he said, had been irreversibly weakened. Loss of virtue in a female was always irretrievable, and one false step would inevitably tumble her down the path to endless ruin and debauchery. 'Never allow yourself to believe otherwise,' he had instructed Dorothea. 'You cannot know—you have not seen—the mire from which every female felon has emerged. It has left a stain upon her that cannot be expunged. I urge you not to put too much reliance on any woman of that description, for she will only disappoint you.'

From Captain Brande, as Martha knew full well, she could expect no lenience.

'Now,' said Dorothea, in more cheerful tones, 'I have decided what we shall have for dinner this evening. The rest of the cabbage soup, of course, and I will show you how to stew oysters. Stewing is the best way to serve oysters unless you are *absolutely* sure of their quality, and they make a very nourishing invalid dish. Mrs Bent gave me some oysters last night, as you know, because Mr Bent will not allow them in the house, but I find that if they are stewed, they are unobjectionable.'

'Mum—'

'We will make them together before the soup is served, because they must be warmed through quite slowly, and the soup is already made.'

'Yes'm.'

'Then salt beef, cauliflower and cheese, and treacle pudding. The pudding may be cooked early.' Noting a flush on Martha's cheeks, Dorothea said: 'What is it, Martha? Are you ill?'

'No, Mum.'

'Are you sure?' The maid's hands were trembling. Her eyes were glassy. 'You look feverish.'

'No, Mum.' Yet even as she moved away from her mistress's scrutiny, Martha stumbled, and dropped the jam on the floor. Dorothea uttered an exclamation of dismay.

'Oh, *Martha!*' she cried.

'Sorry, Mum.'

'What *is* the matter with you? Why cannot you be more careful?'

There was no reply. Dorothea watched as her maidservant began to pick up the shattered pieces of Mrs Bent's preserving pot. The very manner in which she accomplished this task—her plodding and dispirited demeanour—only heightened Dorothea's irritation. She found that she had to leave the room, lest her nerves become overwrought.

Really, she thought, how am I to *bear* this woman for another day, let alone another three years?

It was a question to which she could find no answer.

## CHAPTER SIX



TWO WEEKS LATER, DOROTHEA lost her baby.

This unhappy event, almost too painful to contemplate, occurred very early one morning between the hours of twelve and five. Awakened by her pains, Dorothea heard a constable pass, crying the hour; she lay in terror, silently praying, until the pains grew too insistent to admit of any hope. By that time, Charles had been roused by her muffled exclamations. He took one look at her, and rang for Martha. Then he scrambled from the bed and lit a candle.

‘My dear,’ he said, leaning over his wife. ‘What can I do? Tell me what I can do.’ The contortion of his fine features, the fear in his eyes, touched Dorothea profoundly, despite her own pain and despair. With his dark hair hanging awry, and his face full of feeling, he was at his most beautiful.

‘Oh Charles,’ she murmured brokenly. ‘Oh Charles ...’

‘Is it ...?’

She began to sob.

‘Damn that girl! Where is she?’ he exclaimed. ‘Lying abed like a sloven, I’ll warrant, in her usual fashion.’ With another forceful tug on the bellrope, he signified his displeasure. Then, after removing his nightgown, he cast about for a shirt. Jack had hung a selection of his clothes over the backs of two chairs, ready for the morning, but they were draped with linen dust-covers, and laid one over the other, and the outside of

each article had been turned inwards, as was customary. So Charles cursed as he flung garments about and struggled with inverted sleeves.

He was not accustomed to dressing himself.

'Martha!' he roared. *'Martha!'*

With his shirt in place—though hanging open—Charles was free to don the lower part of his uniform. He must have left the room after doing this, although Dorothea did not notice his departure. A gripping pain had seized her, and only after it had subsided did she realise that she was alone. She called for him, but her voice had no strength. She prayed aloud: 'Oh God, our Lord in heaven, please preserve my child. Please preserve my child ...' She thought: I need Margaret. She whimpered her sister's name, then tensed with the onset of the next wrenching pang. Only after it had passed could she find the fortitude to look for blood.

There was blood, certainly, but very little. And from this she derived some hope.

'The doctor,' she gasped, as Charles reappeared. 'Fetch the doctor.'

'Forster is coming. I have sent Daniel for him,' Charles replied. He approached her, and took her hand. His lips were trembling.

'What shall I do?' she groaned. 'What shall I *do*?'

'You—you must be strong,' he stammered. 'Forster will help you.'

'It hurts so much. Why does it hurt so much?'

'My poor Thea.'

An eternity seemed to pass. Dorothea writhed and groaned, and wept, and chewed her bolster, and gripped her husband's hand until he grimaced. But he did not protest. He stayed with her, sitting on the bed, stroking her hair and offering her what comfort he could. Dorothea begged his forgiveness ('Our baby!' she wailed. 'Our baby!') and he told her not to be foolish. Forster was coming, Forster would put things right, they were not on a ship this time, at the mercy of

Surgeon Hughes. 'But why?' she moaned. 'Why? I was *ill* on the ship! I have not been ill!' To this, he made no response. But he clenched his jaw, and looked around desperately, and said: 'Where has Daniel got to, damn him? I told him to return immediately.'

When Surgeon Forster at last arrived, he informed Captain Brande that Daniel had been dispatched to bring the regimental midwife, Mrs Thornton. A leathery, impatient man of about forty, Surgeon Forster was brisk and to the point. He dismissed Captain Brande, felt Dorothea's pulse, asked her what the duration of her pregnancy might be (the answer was approximately eight weeks) and, using his fob watch, timed the gaps between her pains. He then inquired as to the condition of her intestines (relaxed, with loose stools?), questioned her as to her recent diet, wanted to know if she had lately suffered a fall, a shock or an energetic ride, and finally declared, in grave tones, that while a little laudanum might ease the pain, he had no choice, in this instance, but to allow nature to take its course.

'The good Lord will dispose,' he said. 'There is nothing more that I can do, Mrs Brande. Your prayers are as good as mine.'

Dorothea covered her mouth to stifle the sobs. Surgeon Forster summoned Captain Brande back into the room, and asked him if there were any smelling salts to hand. Martha, who was hovering at the door in a befuddled and unkempt state, was instructed to bring a basin, spare linen and one-third of a cup of water, which Surgeon Forster used to prepare a laudanum solution for Dorothea's relief.

It was at about this time—and certainly not long after Mrs Thornton's arrival—that the bleeding began in earnest. Dorothea felt it before she saw it, and almost fainted away. As if in response to a signal, Surgeon Forster declared that he would go. He announced that Mrs Thornton was better placed to take charge now, but that if there should be an onset of fever, then he should be called back, because in that event Dorothea would have to be bled. Mrs Thornton, for her part, clicked her tongue, shook her head, and chased the gentlemen from the

room. She was one of the sergeant's wives—a large, sturdy, middle-aged woman—whose voice, with its Yorkshire burr, was surprisingly gentle. It gave Dorothea some comfort, as she rolled around, to hear 'There, there, poor dear' and 'Hush, now, hush' and other murmurings more suited to a mother than a midwife.

Then the effects of the laudanum took hold, and Dorothea lost all awareness of time. She was vaguely conscious of Mrs Thornton and Martha working away with sheets and sponges. As the pain diminished, she even dozed off briefly, waking to the sound of someone pounding on the front door. At regular intervals, she felt Mrs Thornton's hand on her brow, and heard shuffling footsteps. Doors creaked. People whispered. But gradually the activity around her subsided—or perhaps she simply fell asleep. In any event, she suddenly realised that the room was brightening, and it occurred to her that a new day had dawned. Being tired and distraught, she failed to understand, at first, that it was the day upon which all her hopes had been extinguished.

She saw Mrs Thornton dozing on a chair. In a hoarse voice, she pronounced the midwife's name—whereupon Mrs Thornton started, and opened her eyes, and blinked. 'So,' she said. 'Awake, now?'

'I should like some tea,' Dorothea whispered.

'Good. Good.' The midwife beamed. 'Tea tha shall have, this instant. Is there aught else tha might fancy?'

'No,' Dorothea replied. Her thoughts were slippery, and hard to grasp. 'Where is Charles?' she inquired.

'At Mrs Molle's house,' said the midwife. 'She has taken him in, poor gentleman, at this sad time.'

'My—my baby—'

'Is gone, Mrs Brande, God bless't. That sorry, ah am.'

Dorothea turned her face to the wall. She closed her eyes on welling tears.

'But there'll be many another,' Mrs Thornton declared bracingly. 'Ah can see't in thy face.'

Dorothea began to sob.

'Now, now,' said Mrs Thornton. 'Let me order the tea.'

By the time she had returned, Dorothea was in full mourning for her lost child. She wept quietly, for she had no strength left with which to demonstrate in a more passionate manner the grief that was in her heart. Her expectations, frail and half-formed, dissolved away. Her desolation at the pitifulness of that unlived existence was intolerable. She felt it so strongly that she could hardly breathe.

Mrs Thornton plumped up her pillow, gave her a handkerchief, and told her that the tea was almost ready.

'And here it comes!' she exclaimed, upon Martha's entering with a tray. 'Set it down here, there's a good lass. No, there's nowt else we need, here. Off with thee.' She poured Dorothea a cup, which she 'strengthened' with sugar; Dorothea sat for a while, staring blankly at it—at her hands clasped around it—before Mrs Thornton, with a gentle movement, nudged it towards her lips. '*That's* right,' said the midwife, comfortably. 'There's nowt like a cup of tea, eh? Drink it down.'

Dorothea drank. She refused the bread and butter that Mrs Thornton tried to press on her. Then she lay back, and covered her face, and gave herself up to her misery.

Not until much later did Charles return with Mrs Molle. At that point, Mrs Thornton was dismissed—or so Dorothea subsequently discovered. She herself was initially quite unconscious of all these comings and goings. She knew only that Charles was back, and she reached for him, and he held her.

'The baby!' she sobbed. 'The baby!'

'I am so very sorry, my dear.'

'It's gone!'

'I know.'

'My poor baby!'

He was all dressed up in his uniform—which must have been removed from its press during the night—and she soaked its scarlet breast with her tears. Nobly, however, he made no remonstrance. Only when she had exhausted herself, and

fallen back onto the pillows, did she see him dab at the damp patch, furtively, with his handkerchief.

'Oh Charles,' she sighed. 'Your coat ...'

'It is of no consequence,' he said.

'Forgive me.'

'My dear, think nothing of it.' He asked her if she felt well enough to eat, and she replied that she did not. He then declared that Surgeon Forster seemed quite satisfied with her progress; that she must rest, and grow strong, if she were to please her devoted husband; that if she preferred it, he would stay in the house rather than attend the morning parade, but that Mrs Molle had come to look after her, so there would be someone to attend her if he *did* go, in which case he would only be absent for an hour or thereabouts ...

'Oh, of course you must go,' said Dorothea, faintly.

'Not if you wish me to remain.'

'No, no.' To keep him at her side, in that stuffy, unwholesome room, was an action that she could not contemplate. Confinement of such a nature would constitute a very great hardship for someone of his restless temperament—though he was gallantly willing to make the sacrifice—and she could not bear to shoulder such a burden of guilt at a time when her heart was breaking. There would be no comfort in hearing him suppress a sigh, or shift in his seat. Therefore she urged him to go, to attend to his duties, and return to her when she was fit to be seen.

'Mrs Molle is here,' he reiterated, 'and she has Martha well in hand. That lazy creature would not get out of bed until I booted her out of it. But we can rely on Mrs Molle to make her work.'

It was not until late afternoon that Dorothea finally spoke to her housemaid. By then, she had been refreshed by a long sleep, and fortified by servings of Mrs Molle's beef broth and milk pudding, and a very little claret mixed with water. She had been wrung dry of tears, and was able to sit up in bed, unassisted. Charles had been in and out all day, once bearing



messages of sympathy from his fellow officers, once bringing a 'pleasant, strengthening drink' from Mrs Vale, which was composed of lemon, cinnamon, pearl barley and treacle. Mrs Bent had paid a brief visit of condolence, without asking to be admitted into Dorothea's presence. Surgeon Forster had appeared again, to check Dorothea's pulse and feel her brow. Mrs Molle, like a good angel, had spent a large portion of her time attending to all those little matters (such as the sweetening of air and the disposal of dirty laundry) that are the inevitable consequences of a lying-in of any description. As for Martha, she had been at Mrs Molle's beck and call, and while Dorothea had caught the odd glimpse of her now and then, the housemaid had been far too busy to pause in her efforts for the purpose of inquiring after her mistress's health.

Towards dusk, however, Martha did creep into the bedroom and station herself by Dorothea's bed.

'Why, Martha,' Dorothea said feebly.

'Mum.' The housemaid looked dreadful; her skin was pasty, her eyes were bloodshot, her cap was askew. 'Mrs Molle says, would you be wantin' a coddled egg?'

'No thank you, Martha.'

'Or some bread and butter?'

Dorothea shook her head, closing her eyes. But she soon became aware that Martha had not moved. There had been no sound of footsteps.

'What is it?' she asked, opening her eyes again. 'I want nothing, Martha.'

'Please, Mum—'

'What?'

Martha's mouth began to flap, as if she wanted to speak but could not find the strength of purpose. She blinked rapidly, as if blinking back tears. At last she stammered out, 'I—I'm that sorry, Mum! The baby! Oh Lor'!', before stumbling from the room with a suppressed sob.

Dorothea refused even to speculate on the cause of this odd behaviour. She was far too tired, and far, far too unhappy.

*New South Wales  
August 23rd, 1814*

*My dearest Margaret,  
I have received your letter, and wept tears over it. How I miss you all!  
How sorry I was to learn of Mr Henry Brande's indisposition! Though  
he may have improved with the summer, I recommend a liniment that  
I had from Mrs Molle, who swears by it as a cure for rheumatism:  
namely, soap liniment half an ounce, liquid ammonia one drachm,  
tincture of opium two drachms, apply night and morning. As I recall,  
our father used to employ an embrocation of liquid ammonia, soap  
liniment and spirits of turpentine, but I am unsure as to the comparative  
quantities required. In any event, it is my recollection that this mixture  
was not overly effective, for as you know, he suffered dreadfully to the  
very end of his life.*

*I regret most deeply the fact that I was not on hand to help you with  
your Entertainment. I do hope that you were not too much burdened by  
the need to produce sponge cake, custards, sandwiches, candied ginger  
&c with only Hannah's assistance. It astonishes me that you were able  
to squeeze a card table into the front parlour and yet leave room for a  
quadrille of sixteen, but I suppose I am grown accustomed to the small  
size of our own rooms here. I am sure that Harriette furnished you with  
many wonderful puzzles, enigmas and charades for the round table; I  
have enclosed another for her collection, which I had from Captain  
Wallis. It is:*

*My first cannot expensive be  
My second's part of you and me  
A London parish is my whole,  
And now goodbye, my good old soul.*

*The answer, of course, is Cheapside.*

*Please thank Lady Shortland for her generous gift of 'little things', as she called them. Her informant was perfectly correct; there is a great shortage of such articles in the colony, and I am now, I feel quite sure, more advantageously placed even than Mrs Macquarie in my possession of so many bodkins, shoe-roses, sheets of writing paper, fine nibs, darning needles, and bottles of spermaceti, isinglass and gum benjamin. Thank you also, my dearest Margaret, for the muslin and dried plums. It is the prettiest muslin I have ever seen. I shall cherish it all the more, knowing that my darling Harriette is wearing it also.*

*I was so sorry to learn about Ebenezer Healey—he was a good old man, however, and I am sure that he is at peace now. Has Dorcas married yet? I know that she was only prevented from doing so by the necessity of nursing her father. If she does marry John Beck, I suppose they will take over her father's cottage, and the field by the watermeadows. It has occurred to me lately, as I reflect on all the walks around Bideham and Ashcombe, that I only twice took a turn down the path by the watermeadows. Only twice, in my whole life! How extraordinary it seems, that I should have wasted so many opportunities. But undoubtedly I believed that I would spend all the years of my existence becoming intimately acquainted with every lark, hive and hedgerow in that dear country. (How mistaken we can be in our assumptions!)*

*I am pleased that dear little Richard has successfully cut his first tooth—indeed, by now he will have cut many more, and I hope that their appearance has been just as well managed as was the appearance of the first. He must be enjoying all the summer fruits at this time, and acquainting himself with every dangerous tool in the garden. How I wish that you could have had the miniatures completed! I have hung your own and George's in the drawing room, but the group is not complete without portraits of the children. I hope that they may come with your next letter.*

*I think of you without cease, for I have no happy expectations with which to occupy myself. My hopes, you see, have again been dashed. Charles is well, however, and sends his love. He has been very good. I am now reading 'Castle Rackrent', but am not much delighted with it,*

*though Mrs Bent recommended it to me. The sermons here give me no solace. (If Mr Cowper preaches, it will always be one of Barnes's sermons; there is no variety.) The servants are troublesome. The colony is raked by an unhealthy wind. I rarely go out, finding nothing that recommends itself to me in the entire length and breadth of Sydney Cove.*

*My prayers are with you constantly. Give my regards to Sir Robert and Lady Shortland. Kiss the little ones. And believe me to be*  
*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER SEVEN



IT WAS MRS MOLLE who preserved Dorothea from the more painful consequences of profound despondency. Had the matter of domestic arrangements been left to Dorothea during the first two weeks after her loss, nothing would have been accomplished; meals would have been insufficient and inadequately cooked, linen would not have been aired, floors would have been left dirty and mattresses left unturned—for Martha could not be relied on to bustle about unless closely supervised, and Dorothea, who found herself utterly deficient in strength and spirits, could not interest herself in such trifling concerns. She spent her days sitting on her sofa, wrapped in shawls, and languidly turning the pages of one of Mrs Bent's books or periodicals. The latter, being always several years old, gave her some comfort. She enjoyed musing over snippets of news, or illustrations of fashionable dress, that she had once exclaimed at in Bideham.

It was therefore left to Mrs Molle (who was of a nature framed for command) to ensure that Dorothea was not left to recover in a comfortless house. She did this by having a few 'strong words' with Martha, and by putting at Dorothea's disposal her own redoubtable nursemaid, Anne Ezzey. There could be no doubt that Anne's brisk and cheerful presence was good for Dorothea. The nursemaid—who had mastered every domestic art—was forever beating bolsters and cushions,

throwing open windows, whisking brooms about, and hurrying through doors with trays of tea and teacakes. Mrs Molle, too, was a frequent and invigorating guest in Dorothea's drawing room. She often brought her children (ignoring Dorothea's tearful looks), together with the latest gossip, and various gifts of preserved fruits, beef tea, acid drops, Hungary water, buttered apples and mint vinegar. Mrs Bent and Mrs Cowper occasionally joined her, offering always Mrs Vale's apologies: the Reverend's wife, it appeared, was generally too ill to pay social calls.

Under the sympathetic influence of these ladies, and the bombardment of Anne Ezzey's attentions, Dorothea recovered her spirits somewhat. Her husband's expectations worked on her, too. Charles—whom adversity always left angry, rather than glum—could not understand her state of mind. He was helpless before it, and, consequently, much troubled. His concern made him irritable and impatient. There would be no improvement in his temper, Dorothea realised, until there was an improvement in her own. So it was that, with an heroic effort, she returned to her customary duties. And she was just beginning to feel reasonably tranquil again, secure in the knowledge that the house was being properly run, when Governor Macquarie made an announcement which, for a brief period, threatened her own comfort as seriously as it ruffled her husband's temper.

It was Charles who transmitted the news. He arrived home on September the third in a towering rage; without stopping to consider the politeness of his conduct, he burst into the kitchen, where Dorothea was acquainting Martha with the proper way of boiling vegetables (for perhaps the third time), and began to rant about the Governor's 'pernicious actions'. Dorothea quickly conducted him into the drawing room, where he was less likely to be overheard.

She tried to soothe him with a glass of wine, but failed.

'That tyrannous, pot-headed old martinet,' he spluttered, 'has deprived us of our right to service!'

‘Our—?’

“I suppose the officers have the usual privilege of taking a servant from the ranks!” Charles spat, pacing the floor. ‘That is what he said, curse him. Those were his very words!’

‘Whose very words?’

‘Why the *Governor’s*, of course! He has decided that our Government men should be struck off the stores. That we should provide for them ourselves.’

In effect, it had been decreed that Daniel Callaghan would no longer be fed or fitted out at Government expense. Henceforth, Captain Brande would have to provide him with clothes, bread and beef, in addition to the daily payment of one shilling to which he was entitled (owing to the fact that he worked a longer day than that commonly known as ‘the Government task’). All the officers of the Regiment were to be similarly circumstanced, with the exception of those currently acting as magistrates.

‘A “servant from the ranks”, indeed! Curse his impudence.’

‘What—what *is* the set ration, for a male convict?’ asked Dorothea, who knew only that which was required to be issued to a female.

‘Something in the vicinity of a pound of meat per day,’ Charles replied, ‘and a pound of flour.’

‘Oh dear ...’

‘We cannot possibly afford it.’

‘Oh!’ Dorothea looked at him in alarm. ‘But my dear, we must.’

‘Tell me how, then.’

‘But we cannot lose Daniel!’

‘The Governor thinks differently. He would have Jack Lynch drawing water and chopping wood.’

‘Daniel does more than that. He cleans. He mends. He works in the garden.’

‘The Governor would have Jack Lynch performing all those tasks.’

At this point Jack himself knocked on the door, and

announced that dinner was served. So the conversation was interrupted, and subsequently continued only in a sporadic manner, as Jack went in and out of the dining room with the soup, meat and vegetables. Charles was very sullen. His anger had settled into a black, scowling mood. Dorothea was on the edge of tears. She could not bear to have her arrangements overturned, after so much effort.

She urged Charles to consider her health. To consider his own position. To consider the fact that economy could be practised in the preparation of daily meals, and in the management of laundry. General laundering could not be attempted without the aid of a copper, a mangle, and various other implements in which Dorothea's kitchen was deficient; a laundress must continue to be employed for general laundering. But for cleaning stockings, or removing resin, or lifting grease spots from silk—for such minor tasks, no special assistance was truly required. 'Mrs Molle has been lecturing me on the subject,' Dorothea admitted, 'and I am aware that there is no excuse for offering jobs of that sort to a laundress. Mrs Molle is very well informed about the methods that may be employed to remove small stains, or clean small items. I undertake to master these methods, thereby saving a modest sum every week. I only wish that Margaret's laundry-maid had been less efficient, else I would have mastered them long since.'

'A few pence saved every week or so will hardly cover the cost of Daniel's maintenance,' Charles grumbled, before Jack's entrance with the baked custard silenced him, briefly. It was not until Jack had withdrawn again that Dorothea was able to remind her husband that money would also be saved in the kitchen, by means of a greater reliance on dishes such as vegetable soup and broken bread pudding. 'Without Daniel, moreover, there will be no vegetable garden,' she pointed out, 'and I feel sure that, once producing, it will more than cover the cost of Daniel's maintenance, since we will no longer be forced to rely entirely on the regimental garden.'

'Hmmp,' said Charles.



‘Moreover, it seems to me that when you are dining out, of an evening, if I am to be left here with only Martha as my protector—’

‘Yes, yes,’ Charles interrupted testily. ‘I understand your position.’ Moodily, he poked at his custard. ‘Vegetable soup I can endure,’ he went on, in tones of discontent, ‘and broken bread pudding, and salt beef hash. But I shall not practise economy to the extent of admitting a pig’s head into this house. I *abhor* pig’s head.’

‘Yes, my dear.’

‘I should as soon eat harness blacking.’

With many grudging and ill-tempered remarks of this kind, Charles finally allowed himself to be persuaded to keep Daniel Callaghan. Dorothea was hugely relieved. She knew, however, that her husband was perfectly capable of reversing this decision if he felt out of sorts. Therefore she turned her attention once more to the kitchen garden, which had been marked out, dug and manured, but not planted. The sooner it was planted, the safer Daniel would be. And with the antipodean spring not far distant, it was undoubtedly time to give the matter of planting some serious thought.

Daniel had laid out eight large beds, under Mrs Molle’s direction, during the period when Dorothea had been recovering from her miserable reverse. According to Mrs Molle, these eight beds would be best employed if they were devoted to late strawberries, sea kale and rhubarb, potatoes (with the possibility of cauliflower, later in the season), early peas, scarlet runnerbeans, carrots, onions and radishes (later in the season) and perhaps some turnips, or celery—but again, they would have to be planted later in the season.

‘Until they are planted, you should prepare the soil,’ Mrs Molle instructed, bestowing on Dorothea another generous gift of horse manure, together with a selection of seeds and seedlings, a Dutch hoe, some earthenware pots, a geranium plant (‘It will need no encouragement, Mrs Brande—these things grow to eight feet high, hereabouts’) and, perhaps most

generous of all, a sturdy cutting from Mrs Macquarie's white dog rose. 'It has taken root,' Mrs Molle informed her friend, 'and should go very well in full sunlight. If you find that it takes, Mrs Macquarie has promised more cuttings from her musk and damask roses. She says that you shall even have part of her moss rose, once she has persuaded it to flourish. It is only lately disembarked, you know.'

Reverently, Dorothea bore the rose back to her house. She left Daniel with the task of transporting her other acquisitions, but would not be parted from her rose. While relaying to Daniel Mrs Molle's instructions regarding the best method of sowing and transplanting, she nursed the precious cutting against her breast; then, satisfied that he understood what was required of him, she began to drift around the property, in search of a place that might suitably receive the white dog rose.

It was not a reassuring tour, by any means. The stiff grass had blades that were keen-edged enough to draw blood. Huge, ferocious ants busied themselves in every corner. The fence palings were split and rapidly losing their paint. Nevertheless, all at once, Dorothea could envision a future fragrant with roses. Roses cascading over the fence; roses marching along the front path; roses peeping through her windows. She pictured a garden full of roses, peach trees, geraniums, lavender, hyacinths. She imagined a flowering hedge screening the road from her sight, and boughs heavy with cherry blossom enfolding her bedroom. She saw herself sitting under a lilac tree, or perhaps taking a turn around the colourful beds arm in arm with her husband, much as she had in Bideham, when their walks together through perfumed meadows had been so much sweetened by the tender words that they had exchanged ...

She went back to Daniel.

'Daniel,' she said, with decision, 'there must be flowers in this garden. This entire garden must be properly laid out. I shall have roses and lavender and geraniums. I shall have a proper English garden—a cottage garden—with a lawn.'

Daniel, who had been very carefully planting seedlings,

rose to his feet. Without allowing his gaze to brush against Dorothea, he surveyed the unpromising land around him, with its rocky outcrops and tufts of heavily defended foliage, all spikier than Scotch broom. 'Aye,' he said, in doubtful tones.

'It can be done, Daniel. It *will* be done. If we have to manure the entire garden.' Dorothea realised that this was an extravagant remark, for manure was hard to come by, and their own slops were hardly sufficient. 'There are—there are such things as artificial manures, I believe,' she went on, 'which may prove to be our salvation.'

Daniel looked at her. He said nothing, but was clearly perplexed. Dorothea explained that artificial manures were not *real* manures, but imitations of the genuine article.

'Not real manures?' Daniel echoed, wonderingly. 'How can that be, Ma'am?'

'I—I am not entirely sure,' Dorothea stammered. 'Mrs Molle touched on the subject, but could give no thorough explanation. I shall have to acquire a book, perhaps. A book about agriculture.'

Daniel dropped his gaze once more. Brushing his dirty hands against his grubby woollen trousers, he observed, very quietly, that chickens would enrich the ground better than anything. His uncle had kept chickens, and swore by them.

'Er ... yes,' said Dorothea. 'I understand. But we are not in a position to acquire poultry at this time—not, at any rate, in quantities sufficient for the purpose.' Colouring slightly, she glanced around, was momentarily disheartened by the amount of work that lay ahead, and forced herself to rally. 'I shall find a book on garden design,' she announced, 'and plan correctly from the very beginning. This task shall not be commenced in ignorance.' It occurred to her, suddenly, that she might even attempt to imitate the arrangement of her sister's garden, and her spirits lifted. 'It will be like a little piece of England,' she added, enthusiastically, 'transported to these colonial shores.'

The words were hardly out of her mouth before she regretted them. Daniel was not a suitable recipient of such observations. But he was nodding, not smiling, as his dark eyes travelled from corner to corner of the plot in his care. His voice, when he spoke, was slightly wistful.

‘Aye, Ma’am,’ he murmured. ‘’Twould be a great comfort.’

## CHAPTER EIGHT



AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS SPENT in comparative seclusion, Dorothea finally made a public appearance on September the tenth, when she attended the Sunday service at St Philip's. This barn-like church was Sydney Cove's only place of worship. It had been fitted out with new pews and galleries not two years before, but retained a worn and beaten appearance — perhaps on account of the great number of people (many of them convicts) who regularly surged through it. Dorothea disliked the building. It stood in a yard of bare, beaten earth, and its rough stone walls, round tower and crenellated parapets gave it the appearance of a fortification, rather than a house of God. Furthermore, she was deeply offended by the necessity of having to worship in the company of convicted felons. Every Sunday morning, not far from the church, several hundred convicts were mustered for inspection. After the Governor, stiff and straight in full dress uniform, had ridden past them they were herded into St Philip's like sheep or cows, where they would taint the already stuffy air with their odour throughout the service.

Dorothea was always unnerved, as she sat facing the pulpit, by the thought that behind her, not twenty paces away, stood row upon row of thieves, forgers, drunkards, deflowerers of maidens, and violent men of every description. It was hardly the congregation that one would hope to encounter

in the Lord's presence. And even when she was able to turn her thoughts from this menace, concentrating instead on the words of the Reverend Mr Cowper, she would often discover that they, too, contained references to the peculiar and unappealing circumstances in which she now found herself.

On the occasion of Dorothea's return to church, for example, Governor Macquarie took the opportunity to have a certain General Order read aloud. In it, he ordered that magistrates throughout the colony should muster convicts every Sunday morning for inspection by the district constable, before they were sent into church. He also announced the establishment of 'limited' gaol gangs in the interior, so that corporal punishment might be avoided wherever practicable. Where it was *not* practicable, magistrates were to confine themselves to sentences of no more than fifty lashes.

*'The Governor recommends in the strongest manner to the magistrates,' Mr Vale intoned, 'that they inflict corporal punishment as seldom as possible; but to substitute in its stead confinement in the stock for petty crimes, and either solitary confinement, or hard labour in the gaol gang, according to their judgement of the degrees of the offence, still keeping in view the general conduct and character of the delinquents ...'*

Really, Dorothea thought resentfully, as she attempted to ignore these disturbing pronouncements: how can one possibly hope to lead a genteel life if one is exposed to such distasteful remarks during worship? This would hardly be appropriate if we were soldiers on parade! By the end of the service she had lost all patience with the Governor, and was very subdued when Mrs Macquarie approached her on the stairs of the western porch with a few, kind remarks. No doubt Mrs Macquarie meant well, but her cheerful sympathy did not recommend itself to Dorothea.

It is all very well for *you*, Dorothea brooded, upon Mrs Macquarie's attention being claimed by Mrs Riley. *You* possess a child. You can counsel hope and courage easily, now that you no longer have any need of them.

She slipped away quickly, before being obliged to endure the painful courtesies of any other mothers of her acquaintance.

'The Governor is extraordinarily lenient,' Charles grumbled, as they walked home together. Jack and Martha were following some paces behind; Dorothea liked to see them in church whenever their duties permitted it. (Daniel, being of the Roman Catholic faith, did not attend any formal services. Instead he remained at home, protecting the house from sabbath-breaking thieves.) 'Solitary confinement and the stock!' Charles continued. 'Hardly a deterrent to hardened criminals. But then the Governor was ever inclined to favour those who deserve no such attentions.' Realising that he spoke a little too loudly, Charles lowered his voice. 'His Excellency is a military man, yet he seems more tender towards his precious convicts than he is towards His Majesty's regiments of foot. I have seen barracks on the Continent worse than any colonial gaol cell, four men to a crib, twenty men to a room, and an open cesspool outside the door. I have seen soldiers flogged for drunkenness until the skin was taken off their backs. Yet the Governor would preserve the very lowest class of persons from such "hardships".'

'Please, Charles,' said Dorothea. 'Enough mention has been made of floggings already this morning. I feel quite ill.'

'Yes,' her husband replied. 'How true. The Governor cherishes his precious convicts, yet gives no thought to the sensitivities of the ladies and gentlemen who are forced to mix with them. Commendable, indeed.'

'I have a headache,' said Dorothea, fretfully. 'I was never afflicted with headaches in Bideham. It is only since we came here.'

'I do not wonder at it. The Governor's decrees are enough to give anyone a headache.'

'Especially on Sunday,' Dorothea sighed. 'Really, it is not *nice* to refer to such things on a Sunday.'

So ended Dorothea's first excursion since her bereavement. A second, much longer excursion took the form of a regimental

picnic, organised (for the most part) by Lieutenant Madigan and Mrs Molle. This event saw many of the officers taken by Government boats to a picturesque inlet on Port Jackson. The site had been selected with care; a small beach, an open, grassy space and a tumbling rivulet together formed a very pleasant aspect, which was further improved by the encroachment of certain rocky escarpments, high enough to retain a dramatic appearance but low enough to climb without undue exertion. A scouting party had returned to barracks with the news that no traces of native habitation could be identified around the inlet, which also appeared to be unfrequented by the more vulgar class of Englishmen. A further recommendation was the fact that various large trees cast a refreshing shadow over one portion of the beach at midday. All in all, it was an ideal spot for a picnic.

As for the arrangements, nothing had been omitted in that quarter. Once the boats had been dragged onto shore, folding stools were set up, lengths of carpet were unrolled, and a fine collation was spread out for the enjoyment of the entire gathering. Some of the children were permitted to paddle in the shallows, while others played cricket with the more energetic young officers. A fire was lit, and water boiled for tea. Various shellfish were collected, but only a handful of courageous souls had the courage to partake of them. An attempt was made to catch fish among the rocks.

Dorothea, as one of the few ladies present, received more than her share of attention. Many of the younger officers were especially inclined to hover about her, peeling her fruit, complimenting her on the dishes that she had supplied (a tart, a salad and some cold ham), bombarding her with witty remarks and teasing her about her husband. No doubt, had she been of a more flirtatious disposition, she would have enjoyed herself very much.

But she did not enjoy herself. She had no talent for playful conversation, and knew it. Charles had won her heart, not with elegant speeches, but with his quiet, serious—even halting



—discourse on commonplace subjects. She was not accustomed to the kind of attentions which, at Bideham Park, would have occasioned disapproval. The young gentlemen were too noisy and rough. While it was their intention only to compete for her notice, they did so in a way that almost argued a want of respect. They laughed loudly, and fought mock battles over the honour of fanning her. They chaffed each other in a way that Dorothea herself would have found most hurtful. They discussed horses, and drill, and past campaigns, and other subjects about which she knew nothing, and cared even less. They told jokes which, though not in any way crude or offensive, were a little too *boisterous* for Dorothea's taste. Furthermore, Charles was inclined to regard her severely when she spoke for too long with other officers—none of whom, in any case, was as handsome as he.

She felt bewildered and uncomfortable. The sun grew hot, and the flies became troublesome. The light reflecting off the water was diamond-sharp, and made her eyes ache; Mrs Vale sat beside her, whining incessantly. It was Captain Gill who provided her with some relief when he served her tea, which had been made very strong, and which she accepted with gratitude (though Mrs Vale complained at its strength). Somewhat refreshed, she even made an attempt to converse with him when he sat down beside her. Charles was not fond of Captain Gill. He described him as 'the Governor's toady', but for her part, Dorothea could see no harm in such a quiet, pleasant-seeming gentleman. And Charles was deep in conversation at the far end of the beach. And Captain Gill, unlike so many of the junior officers, was content to sit still, and to speak quietly.

'Forgive me,' he said, upon occupying the space that Lieutenant Smith had recently vacated. 'I interrupted you, Mrs Vale. Please continue.'

'We were speaking of Mrs Bent,' Dorothea explained.

'Ah.'

'Mrs Bent is much troubled by her husband's health,' said Mrs Vale, to whom illness was a prime topic of conversation.

'She is very much concerned that he may be afflicted by dropsy of the chest if he continues on his present course.'

'Ah,' Captain Gill repeated, gravely. 'Yes, that would be unfortunate.'

'I believe that his condition has been aggravated by his disagreements with the Governor,' Mrs Vale went on, fanning herself feebly. 'The Governor is being very difficult. He refuses to give Mr Bent and Mr Jeffery Bent enough space for their new courthouse. They require the whole northern block of the new hospital, but the Governor insists that Dr Wentworth have it. All for himself, can you imagine?'

'The Governor has offered Mr Bent the northern half of the main building, and two rooms in the southern block,' Captain Gill pointed out. 'The northern block was built for Dr Wentworth. It was not designed as a courthouse.'

'Nevertheless—an entire building for one man!'

'And for all his children.'

Mrs Vale sniffed. She evidently regarded this reference to Dr Wentworth's children as verging on the indelicate, since many of them had been born out of wedlock.

'Mrs Bent tells me that Dr Wentworth could *easily* be accommodated in the southern block,' she said.

'At the risk of ejecting the assistant surgeons?'

Mrs Vale looked offended. Beside her, Captain Miller (who had been discussing horseflesh with Lieutenant Hemsworth) came to her defence.

'Wentworth has his pick of the hospital rooms,' he said, 'because Wentworth is one of the contractors. His claims would be laughed at, otherwise.'

'You think so?' said Captain Gill, still speaking very quietly and pleasantly. 'But have you been invited into his house, Miller? It is in such a wretched state of decay as to be unsafe to reside in.'

'Why should I enter the house of such a rascal? I would as soon frequent Mrs Waples' establishment on Pitt Street.'

There was a pause. Dorothea had no knowledge of Mrs

Waples' establishment, but realised that it must possess a very bad reputation indeed when she heard Captain Gill clear his throat, and saw Captain Miller flush. The latter officer was not one of Dorothea's favourites. Heedless and abrupt, he was exactly the sort of man who *would* mention vulgar places in polite company.

'In any event,' he continued, rather hurriedly, 'there is no reason why the lawyers should not have first choice. No reason except the Governor's wishes.'

'On the contrary,' Captain Gill replied, 'there is every reason. I am informed that the rooms in the northern block are far too small to accommodate the business of a courthouse.'

'Indeed? Then why should Mr Bent want the northern block?'

Captain Gill shrugged. 'I can only speculate,' he said drily, 'that Mr Bent and his brother might wish to make use of the coach house and stables that were built for Dr Wentworth.'

Mrs Vale gasped. She straightened, and two hectic spots of colour appeared on her pale cheeks. 'Captain Gill!' she exclaimed. 'That is a *most* ungenerous remark, sir! Kindly remember to whom you are speaking! Mr Bent is a *very good friend*.'

'Oh,' said Captain Miller, with almost a sneer, 'Gill will hear no one question the Governor's decisions. He would rather attack the motives of everyone else.'

'Since His Excellency is my Commander in Chief, sir,' Captain Gill rejoined, for the first time allowing a hint of steel to enter his voice, 'I am only doing my duty, in that regard.'

'Um—Captain Gill,' said Dorothea, desperate to turn the subject. She was quite flustered; disagreements of this sort were, in her opinion, to be avoided at all costs. 'I have been wondering if, in your position as Acting Engineer, you might have acquired, or perhaps secured the use of, any books on gardens?'

'Gardens, Mrs Brande?'

'Or—or agriculture. Farming. The cultivation of crops. But particularly gardens. The designing of gardens.'

'The designing of gardens,' said Captain Gill, thoughtfully, adding after a pause: 'I must confess, Mrs Brande, that I have no such book to offer you. But I understand that Mrs Macquarie possesses a small library of useful books. It is quite possible that she brought from England a pattern book of garden designs. Shall I make inquiries for you?'

Dorothea replied that she would be most grateful. Then the talk moved to safer subjects—fruit trees, apple jam, the weather—as a restlessness seized those members of the group who were not satisfied to sleep off the effects of their meal. Soon Charles approached, and urged Dorothea to join him; he was intending to take a short walk. According to Lieutenant Madigan, there was a very fine aspect to be enjoyed from the top of a neighbouring promontory. The approach was neither too steep nor too heavily wooded, and the Molles were eager to attempt it.

Dorothea demurred.

'In this heat?' she said. 'Charles, only consider ...'

'It will be cooler up there,' he replied, pointing. 'This inlet is sheltered, but up there you will feel the sea breeze.'

'My dear—'

'Come,' he said, and she capitulated, knowing how deeply he resented being defied in public. A little party was formed, led by the Colonel and Mrs Molle. Canteens of water were distributed. The cricket game was interrupted as young officers, in a somewhat hilarious mood, acknowledged the departure of their commander.

Lieutenant Madigan led the way. It was he who picked a path between rocky outcrops and twisted tree roots. (The ground was so rocky as to prohibit a very dense undergrowth from forming.) Here and there, the rocks—which Captain Wallis identified as 'freestone' or 'sandstone'—had been weathered into remarkable shapes, sometimes assuming the appearance of a wave, sometimes hollowed out so that miniature caves had been formed, sometimes presenting a jagged profile not unlike that of a man, or beast. The children picked up

curious seedcases, many of them also bearing a strange resemblance to some monstrous countenance. But despite the distraction that these objects provided, the little ones soon began to protest against the length of the walk—whereupon they were permitted to ride on the shoulders of Lieutenants Smith and Cox, and in the arms of Assistant Surgeon Bush. Captain Wallis, who painted pictures, spoke with authority on the views to be enjoyed around Sydney Cove. Mrs Molle reminisced about Egypt. Colonel Molle, who was rather stout, fell a little behind, and eventually called a halt.

‘Let us catch our breath,’ he advised, ‘before attempting the steepest ascent. Where are those canteens? The ladies, of course, will precede the gentlemen. A sip of water, Mrs Brande?’

Refreshments were enjoyed as the company rested. Glimpses of blue could be discerned through a canopy of leaves, but sea and sky were still, for the most part, concealed by it. There was a strange, spicy smell in the air. Mysterious birds chattered and whistled around them. Dreamy Captain Wallis surveyed one ferocious looking tree with interest, but the rest of the party confined their attentions to each other, making polite conversation.

Lieutenants Smith and Madigan, in particular, were anxious that Dorothea should be comfortably seated. They dusted off a slab of rock with their handkerchiefs, made solicitous inquiries, and were altogether so pointed in their attentions that Charles seemed to take offence. In any event, he took Dorothea’s hand, and bade her follow him—so she assumed that he was offended. But when he had conducted her around the edge of a stony cliff, to a situation that was out of sight of their companions, he stopped and kissed her.

‘Charles, no!’ she squeaked. ‘The children might follow!’

‘Let ’em.’

‘Charles—’

‘Hush.’ He pulled her along, and she stumbled after him, not sure whether to be delighted or distressed. He had been

drinking—that much was clear, for she had tasted rum on his breath. Presumably, she thought, some of the other officers had secreted flasks of spirits about their persons. And it occurred to her that, had he not been drinking, he would not have been so amorous. He was always at his most attentive when he had been drinking.

‘Oh,’ he said, pushing her—pressing her—against a wall of rock, ‘I wish we could stay for a while.’

‘Charles, wait—’

‘You have a lovely colour in your cheeks. You should walk more often.’

‘Charles, that smell! What *is* that *smell*?’

He had been too preoccupied, until that moment, to have paid it any heed without prompting. But now he wrinkled his nose, and released her.

‘Good God,’ he said, grimacing.

‘Come away.’

‘Wait here.’

‘Charles!’ She raised her voice as he moved from her. He was sniffing the air like a hound. ‘Come back, Charles, something is dead!’

But he continued to advance, skirting the base of a low cliff that eventually resolved itself into a jutting shelf, beneath which a creamy hollow, or cave, had been formed by the actions of wind and water. Here he stopped, abruptly, and uttered an exclamation of disgust.

‘Charles?’ Dorothea was very anxious. ‘Come back!’

He did so, his fine features distorted by an expression compounded equally of repugnance and resentment.

‘A native,’ he said, upon reaching her. ‘A dead native.’

‘Oh!’

‘Filthy creatures. Leaving their dead exposed to the flies. Unspeakable.’

‘What shall we do?’

‘Do?’ said Charles. ‘What else, but retrace our steps? I am not tempted to remain in *this* vicinity, even if you are.’ He

caught her arm, and hurried her along. Dry leaves and sticks crackled beneath the soles of her flimsy shoes. 'There is not a quiet place to be found in this accursed country,' he continued, 'that is not in some way soiled or defiled.' (Clearly, his resentment was gaining ground.) 'A nice spot for dalliance, I must say!'

Dorothea stumbled and nearly fell. Then she saw a face, and her hand went to her bonnet, which had been somewhat dislodged by clawing branches.

'Why, Mrs Brande!' Colonel Molle exclaimed. 'Is something wrong?'

'A dead native,' said Charles, answering for Dorothea. 'Up there, in a cave.'

'A dead *native*?'

'Left to rot.'

There was a horrified murmur, although one of the children broke into cries of delight.

'May we see? May we see?'

'No,' said Mrs Molle, firmly.

'I was planning to proceed in that direction,' Lieutenant Madigan pointed out, in worried tones, 'but if we must pass a corpse ...'

'It is out of the question,' Mrs Molle declared, and her husband agreed with her.

'An unsuitable sight for the ladies,' was his view on the matter. 'Is there no other way up, Madigan?'

'Sir, not that I know of.'

'Then we must return to the beach.'

No one raised any objection—indeed, no one dared. The party retreated, clumsily making its way back down the rugged incline that it had so painfully scaled not long before. Scrambling over fallen boughs, clutching her husband's hand, Dorothea wondered why they had come in the first place. To admire a view, she had been told. But a view of what? Of Sydney Cove? There was nothing to admire in Sydney Cove.

Unless, perhaps, it was surveyed from a distance. From a

distance, neither the convicts nor the state of the roads could be discerned. From a distance, the bristling foliage had a gentler, softened appearance, and it was impossible to smell the odour of slops, dung, butchers' yards or tannery waste. From a distance, Sydney's houses looked white, and its gardens looked green. Only at close quarters could the depraved cast of its inhabitants' physiognomies be made out.

Dorothea recalled that, on first sighting, New South Wales had appeared to be a very lush and fertile land, brimming with promise. Not until it was examined with close attention was the startlingly arid and unyielding quality of its soil finally discovered. It seemed to her that the very nature of the land was such that only disillusionment could be derived from it. Either one remained satisfied to admire it from afar (as she had admired the high, wooded ground enfolding the beach) or one ran the risk of encountering all kinds of shocks, reverses and disappointments—such as dead natives, for example.

'I was never very sanguine about this picnic,' she remarked, a long time later, as Charles helped her into one of the bigger boats. 'If it had not been spoiled by a dead native, it would have been spoiled by something else. Snakes. Escaped convicts. A thunderstorm. No matter where you go in this country, some kind of doom prevails. There is no escaping the essential ugliness of it.'

Charles said nothing. He was sunburned, of course; it seemed that the very light of New South Wales was dangerous.

Dorothea foresaw a gloomy evening ahead.



## CHAPTER NINE



SOME TWO WEEKS AFTER the picnic, Mrs Molle arrived at Dorothea's house bearing a parcel from Mrs Macquarie. Within the parcel, carefully wrapped, was a book entitled *The Gentleman's Garden*, by E. M. Wells. In the note accompanying this volume, Mrs Macquarie expressed the hope that 'Mr Wells's fine work' would prove to be 'Useful and Instructive', adding that she herself had no immediate need for it, and that Mrs Brande should therefore feel free to retain the book for as long as she might require its 'Invaluable Assistance'. In a postscript, Mrs Macquarie added that the portion of the book dealing with picturesque designs was *most* illuminating.

'How kind,' said Dorothea, leafing gingerly through page after page of elegant engravings. 'How very kind.'

'Being at present in Parramatta,' Mrs Molle observed, 'Mrs Macquarie was unable to deliver the book herself, though according to Captain Gill she would have liked to.'

'How very kind.'

'She *is* very kind,' said Mrs Molle. 'A good-hearted soul, though she has grand ideas.' As Martha withdrew from their presence, carrying an empty tray, she added: 'What ails that girl of yours, Mrs Brande? She looks positively seedy. So pale, and her manner so abrupt.'

'Oh—Martha has been ill,' Dorothea replied. 'I *am* sorry, but she is afflicted by a recurring headache, or so she tells me.'

Mrs Molle assumed a sceptical expression.

'Are you sure that she is not *increasing*, Mrs Brande?'

'Oh.' Dorothea flushed. The possibility had crossed her mind, albeit briefly, when pondering Martha's peculiar conduct after her own miscarriage. 'Of course, that did occur to me—'

'Of course.'

'But I have asked her, and she assures me that she is in no such condition.'

'I see,' said Mrs Molle, and dropped the subject. They discussed instead the possible arrangement of Dorothea's garden, and Dorothea took her friend to see the vegetable plot, wherein feathery sprigs of Surrey carrots, entwining peas, crimson rhubarb and the first, green spears of the onions were scattered across the symmetrical, loamy beds. She was very proud of her vegetable plot. Daniel, she explained to Mrs Molle, was quite devoted to it, and appeared to possess a natural talent for coaxing plants out of the earth.

'Though a pump-maker by trade,' she observed (her enthusiasm perhaps causing her to speak too freely), 'he has an aptitude for gardening which can only be derived from his inheritance. He tells me that his grandparents were farm labourers.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs Molle.

'As you can see, he has been trenching and ridging other portions of the garden. I fully intend to bring it all, every inch, under cultivation. I wish to have a shrubbery, a lawn, a herb border, flower beds, fruit trees—all tastefully arranged in the modern manner.'

Mrs Molle nodded. 'An ambitious plan,' she said, 'but not unattainable, if proper attention is given to the enrichment of the soil. I understand now why your Daniel has been seen about the Rocks. My maid tells me that she encountered him collecting manure in the streets. A clever idea—was it your own?'

'It was his,' Dorothea replied. She had not enough familiarity with the streets of Sydney to have noticed that they

abounded—particularly in the Rocks—with horse manure, duck droppings, and the excrement of cows, pigs or sheep being led to slaughter. Upon acquainting her with this fact, Daniel had recommended that they make use of an otherwise wasted resource.

Though the suggestion disturbed her, Dorothea had been unable to object to it on any grounds save that of her own vague sense of unease. It was not, after all, as if *she* were obliged to scour the streets for ordure. That was Daniel's job.

'He has only resorted to such an expedient as many as two—perhaps three times,' she mumbled, whereupon Mrs Molle smiled broadly.

'Yes,' she said. 'It cannot be an easy task. My maid declares that your man was being pursued by an absolute flock of urchins—by which I suppose her to have meant those horrid children who positively *swarm* around the dirtier parts of this settlement, like flies around a cesspit. One sees them throwing stones on the wharves, and burning stumps on Brickfield Hill.'

'But I don't understand,' Dorothea said, in bewilderment. 'Why were they following Daniel?'

'I should think to torment him, should not you? Tormenting others seems to be their main ambition in life.'

'But why?' Dorothea was still utterly perplexed. 'How? For what reason?'

'My dear Mrs Brande, need there be a *reason*?' Mrs Molle stooped to examine the potatoes. 'These are coming along nicely. You should commence sowing strawberries very soon. I shall give you some of mine.'

'But these children,' Dorothea pressed, 'why are they not prevented from doing such things? Are their parents incapable?'

'Lazy,' Mrs Molle replied. 'Lazy, immoral and ill bred. My dear Mrs Brande, what would you expect? They are felons.'

Dorothea was left much troubled by Mrs Molle's remarks concerning the 'urchins' and their conduct; she did not like to contemplate vicious behaviour in young children. It seemed

incredible to her that any parents—even those of a low description—should allow their offspring to adopt foul language, and pursue activities dangerous to both their physical and moral health. How often had she read of children in the colony falling off wharves and drowning? Falling into fires and burning? It seemed to her that some people were altogether too lackadaisical in their supervision of the children with whom they had been blessed.

After Mrs Molle had departed, Dorothea fretted for a while about the strange dispensations of God—who deprived her of her own babies while showering infants on those too careless to raise them properly—before turning, with resolution, to Mrs Macquarie's book. It was a very fine book. With perfect taste, and great elegance of expression, it discussed all manner of gardens—large and small, formal and picturesque, English and continental—offering advice on everything from avenues to waterfalls. Naturally, Dorothea sighed over the plates depicting the carefully designed parks and pasturages of England's noblest families. Of no use to her were Mr Wells's remarks on hahas, lakes and glass-houses. But she soon came upon a chapter dealing with cottage and villa gardens, which she found enthralling. The engravings, in particular, were a source of great interest to her.

After studying them for a long time, she went to the kitchen, where she found Daniel methodically cleaning the silver.

'Ah, Daniel,' she said, and glanced about. 'Where is Martha?'

'In bed, Ma'am,' he replied, rising to his feet. 'She's feelin' poorly.'

'Again?'

'So she says.'

'Hmm.' Dorothea surveyed the hearth, the floor and the kitchen table. Nothing about them offended her greatly; the floor was swept, the treacle pudding was boiling over the fire (it required at least another two hours' boiling, in Dorothea's estimation), and the table bore a neat arrangement of chopped

turnip, sweet herbs, shredded celery, pork broth, puree of peas—all the requirements for pea soup. The cold beef was ready to be served.

‘Hmm,’ Dorothea repeated. Although highly displeased, she was aware that her dinner was not yet threatened by Martha’s absence. Furthermore, she was eager to share her new-found knowledge with Daniel, who would surely be as profoundly impressed by it as she was.

‘Look,’ she said, placing *The Gentleman’s Garden* onto the table in front of him. ‘This is what I should like, Daniel. This is a design very much suited to my garden. Simple, you see, but refined. Simplicity is essential. It says here: *I do not advocate intricate plans on a small scale, as they only entail extra labour without an equivalent return.* There is some sense in that. Mr Wells also recommends that a small garden should have small beds.’

*It is a common mistake to make one large bed, usually in the form of a circle or oblong square. It may be easy enough to plant a large bed, beginning from the middle and working outward; but when the plants come to grow, it is impossible to tend them properly without risk of injury. Accordingly, for any central space, let the ground be divided, so that access to all the plants is freely open.*

Dorothea pondered the wisdom of this remark for a moment before proceeding. ‘Mr Wells appears to prefer the picturesque to the formal,’ she continued. ‘He regards formal gardens as neither modern nor in the English mode. He describes straight, sharp angles as being very objectionable, and harsh to the eye. He recommends that all walks, beds and borders be curved for that reason.’ Cocking her head to one side, Dorothea studied the engraving before her. ‘I think that we can accommodate him, in this case,’ she went on. ‘He advises that if a small garden is surrounded by open fencing, the best arrangement is a flower border running around three of its sides—but if a wall or close fence encloses it, then walks must replace the flower borders.’

Fortunately, our fencing is open, or we would be obliged to offend Mr Wells with straight walks.'

Realising suddenly that she was speaking without regard for her audience—in effect, almost thinking aloud—Dorothea flushed, and looked at Daniel. He was staring intently at the book. He put his fingers to his mouth.

'I shall use this design to make my own,' Dorothea explained to him. 'I shall draw up a plan, and we shall work from that.' Still he made no remark. 'Do you understand, Daniel?'

He hesitated. Then he murmured, 'Is this a garden, Ma'am?'

'Yes, it is. I told you.'

'And this ...' His finger hovered over the engraving. 'This is a part of't?'

'That is the shrubbery. Number three—the shrubbery.'

'And that?'

She glanced at him again, struck by a sudden thought. 'Can you not read, Daniel?' she asked, already knowing the answer.

'That I cannot, Ma'am.'

'I see. Well ...' She took a deep breath, sat down, and with a motion of her hand indicated that Daniel should seat himself, also. This he did awkwardly, almost cautiously, his long frame folding up in an angular fashion, like a hinged Field Standard. 'Look,' said Dorothea, pointing. 'That is the letter "b". Here it is again, "b", and beside it, the word "herbs". So this plot must be dedicated to herbs.' Peering at Daniel, Dorothea saw him nod, and was satisfied. She explained to him the rest of the design, reading occasionally from the text below it. She read:

*If there is room for a grass plot, well and good, but a lawn can be too small to be effective ... Nothing can be more gracefully elegant than the simple yet tasteful arrangement of this garden ... The limes and elder trees in the shrubbery, with the laburnums in the centre of the garden, give it a refreshing shade of green that is seldom surpassed in any large and elaborately ornamented garden ...*

Daniel listened, and nodded, and seemed very much struck by the thoroughness of Mr Wells's treatment of the subject. But he said nothing. Only when Dorothea had finished, and had turned to him, asking him if he had any comments to make, did he voice an opinion.

'Aye,' he said quietly, 'twill be a fine spread.'

'There is a chapter on paths,' Dorothea pointed out. 'On the construction of paths. I will acquaint you with its contents when the time comes.'

'Aye, Ma'am.' He rubbed his cheek. 'Yeer pardon, Ma'am—'

'Yes?'

'Is there a portion that speaks o' the artificial manure, by a mercy?'

Dorothea was thrown off balance. 'I—I'm not sure.' She began to turn the pages. 'Perhaps ...'

'For it has been exercisin' me mind at all hours, so it has. The artificial manure ...' Dorothea heard a trace of expression in his voice, and looked up in astonishment. For the first time, she saw a faint smile on his face. 'Yeer pardon, Ma'am, but I've been askin' meself, would the artificial manure be sweeter than the real stuff?'

He spoke so gently that it was impossible to take offence. Slightly confused, Dorothea looked away, and consulted the book for an answer. In doing so, she discovered that 'bone rubbish' from freshly slaughtered animals, if crushed or reduced to ash, could be used to fertilise soil; that the hop farmers of Kent had been known to employ chopped-up rags to enrich their fields; and that pig dung possessed 'odorous properties noxious to most of the cultivated crops'.

*'However cleanly fed the pigs might be,' Dorothea read aloud, 'their manure should be thoroughly fermented with salt and gypsum until its noxious properties are corrected, which will be readily ascertained by the change of smell. Oh dear,' she added, 'I cannot think how that is to be accomplished.'*

'We'll not be needin' to. I'll sally out no more for the pig

dung—just for what the cows and the horses have left behind,’ said Daniel. Whereupon Dorothea found herself impelled, almost against her will, to ask if he had encountered any trouble while accomplishing ‘the task that he had set himself’. (She could not think how to phrase the question more delicately.) ‘Mrs Molle tells me that you are pursued by wicked children,’ she remarked, her gaze fixed firmly on Mr Wells’s work. ‘She tells me that they taunt you. Is it true, Daniel?’

There was a short silence.

‘Ah, well,’ he sighed at last. ‘They’re only children.’

‘But why do they do it?’

Another silence followed, so lengthy that Dorothea looked up and saw the rueful smile on Daniel’s face as he rubbed the tabletop with his hand. Catching her eye, he hastened to provide an explanation.

‘Any man who spends his time shovellin’ dung into a bag,’ he said, ‘must always have the children laughin’.’

‘But they have no business laughing at you!’ Dorothea protested. ‘You should make them go away, Daniel.’

‘That I do, Ma’am. But they’re like the flies, so they are—flap at them as you will, they’ll always be comin’ back.’

‘It is very wrong.’

‘Ah, no.’

‘It is. You should report them to the constable.’ Seeing him drop his head, as if to hide his expression, Dorothea added: ‘I shall report them to the constable.’

‘Ah, no.’ The smile was wiped off Daniel’s face. He turned towards her in a sudden access of barely concealed alarm. ‘No, Ma’am, do not, not on my account. ‘Twould be of no use, no use at all.’

‘Well ...’

‘Their words cannot hurt me. No words can. Pay’t no mind, Ma’am. There are worse things, far worse.’

The feeling in his voice unnerved Dorothea, who did not want to know exactly what he meant by this remark. So she cleared her throat, and turned her attention to the book in



front of her, and was about to begin reading aloud once more from Mr Wells's chapter on 'Principles of Good Taste in the Arrangement of Small Gardens' when she suddenly heard her husband's voice outside, and caught her breath.

'Good God!' she exclaimed. 'Can that be—is it so late?' Rising, she went to the door, where she encountered Captain Brande. He was looking dusty and out of sorts; having returned home for his dinner, he wanted to know when it would be ready, and why the table had not been laid. Dorothea had no answers to give him.

'I—I—' she stammered.

'Where is Martha?' he demanded, peering into the gloom of the kitchen and favouring Daniel with a suspicious glare.

'Martha is indisposed,' Dorothea replied, 'but I was just going to rouse her.'

'Indisposed? She is always indisposed.'

'Yes.'

'D'you mean to say,' he exclaimed incredulously, as the full import of this news suddenly impressed itself upon him, 'that she is in *bed*?'

'Yes—'

'By God, I'll give her bed.' He turned and marched back towards the house, with Dorothea at his heels. She urged him, breathlessly, not to be too hard on Martha.

'I should have wakened her some time ago,' Dorothea confessed. 'Charles? I was diverted from my duties. Mrs Molle brought a book.' She nearly collided with him as he stopped, abruptly, at the door of Martha's room, and pushed it open. 'A book from Mrs Macquarie—'

'Get up, you lazy slattern!' Charles roared. From behind him, Dorothea could see Martha lurch up from her bed, dazed in the dying light, her covers falling onto the floor and her hair falling into her face. 'What is the meaning of this, damn you?'

'Oh—oh,' Martha gasped. 'I'm comin' ... I'm comin', Sir.'

'Where is my dinner? Get out of there! Out!' He aimed a kick at her as she passed, but his foot failed to connect with her

hindquarters. Dorothea winced. 'I want my dinner within the hour, or you shall answer for it!' he shouted after the maid, and strode away to unlock the tantalus.

Dorothea followed him.

'Forgive me,' she said, 'I was in error. Charles? I am so very sorry.'

And she was. It seemed to her a shameful thing that she had allowed herself to be so ... so *waylaid*. She had been in error, utterly in error, to permit the allurements of a book (however excellent) to outweigh the needs of her husband. Her conduct, she felt, had been questionable, not only because she had neglected her duties, but because this neglect had resulted in a quite unnecessarily lengthy conversation with a servant—an *assigned* servant.

A Government man.

I was stupid, she thought. So stupid. No good will come of consorting in such a way with servants. They will only take advantage, and I shall be faced with more trouble than I am encumbered with already.

She made a resolution that she would not, from that time forth, put her garden before her husband's appetite.

New South Wales  
February 6th, 1815

*My dearest Margaret,*

*You must forgive me for not writing sooner. The truth of the matter is that we have been in poor health, since last I wrote. My own indisposition, a trifling cold, was not to any great degree debilitating, but Charles has been afflicted by a putrid sore throat for three weeks, and is only now beginning to show signs of improvement. I fear that he may have a weak constitution; all the honey and vinegar in the world did him no good at all, and Surgeon Forster's remedy was slow to take effect. At present, though the pain has subsided, poor Charles is much troubled by hoarseness, and I am quite at a loss. I do recall, however, that Lady Shortland's housekeeper had in her possession a receipt for a preparation that did much to ease Sir Robert's misery, when he lost his voice three winters ago. It is my recollection that the mixture was one of water and sweet spirits of nitre, but I cannot remember the exact quantities required of each. Will you kindly make inquiries, my dear Margaret, and convey the results to me in your next letter? If Charles's problem ever recurs, I should be grateful for the use of this concoction.*

*What with my own sufferings, and those of Charles and Jack Lynch—who was briefly afflicted by the same cold as that which tormented me—I have begun to feel as if I more properly belong on the staff of the new hospital, since I spend all my time mixing doses of medicine to force down reluctant throats. It seems to me very hard that we must suffer so during the summer months, at a time when one naturally hopes to recover one's strength after the depredations of winter. Perhaps we are all still attuned to the English seasons.*

*On the subject of the new hospital, you should know that it is now almost complete—and that the new courts within it are complete—but that Mr Jeffery Bent refuses to make use of them. He will not open the*

*Supreme Court until the arrival of Mr Frederick Garling, one of two solicitors who have been sent from England to improve the administration of justice in this colony. The other solicitor, Mr William Moore, arrived a few days ago. According to Mrs Bent, Governor Macquarie would have her brother-in-law make use of the services of two other 'attornies' until Mr Garling comes, but since these 'attornies' are in fact former attornies, convicted and transported for crimes committed in England, Mr Jeffery Bent, quite rightly, refuses to countenance their appearance in his court. (Unless, he says, they are to appear as defendants!) The rumour is that Mr Garling has been taken by pirates, so I do not know how the matter is to be resolved. Mr Ellis Bent confesses that the two convict attornies have been permitted to practise in the court of civil jurisdiction for several years, owing to a dearth of more respectable law agents hereabouts, but he says also that they were never allowed to consider themselves as being admitted as attornies of the court, and that they were always warned that their permission to act as agents would be withdrawn upon the appearance of more suitable candidates.*

*He said all of this during a dinner that we attended at his house, not long ago, and I should tell you that Charles and I have enjoyed no other social engagements in the last month, at least, owing to illness. But of course we have not been the only sufferers. Poor Mrs Bent is quite frantic about her husband. He has been very ill, with dropsy of the chest, and cannot now either stand or move about freely. That, of course, is why he has recently taken to remaining seated when Governor Macquarie enters the church on Sundays. We are all accustomed to stand on these occasions; the Governor in Chief, as representative of His Majesty, merits nothing less. But it seems strangely petty and vindictive that the Governor should take such exception to Mr Bent's remaining seated, when poor Mr Bent is so ill. Mrs Bent insists that the Governor now views Mr Bent as an enemy, because the two have disagreed over certain port regulations (do not, I beg you, ask me to elucidate—I am quite at a loss when it comes to port regulations), so of course His Excellency regards Mr Bent's failure to stand as an act of defiance. But I do not believe that Mr Bent is capable of an act of defiance. He is so very polite and soft-spoken, not to say sickly. Poor Mrs Bent—I do feel*

*for her. Charles informs me that she and her husband are much oppressed, at this time, by concerns about money, and have been forced to sell various land grants. I only hope that their dispute with Governor Macquarie will not impoverish them still further.*

*Charles also says that the whole affair of the convict attornies is yet another example of how indulgent the Governor can be towards convicts and former convicts. Only last month, the road over the mountains was completed, and every convict who worked on it was granted his freedom as a result. Charles finds this fact deplorable. He says that muscular strength is not the equivalent of moral strength, and that in any case a job of work is a job of work, not deserving of any particular reward. As you may imagine, his temper has been sorely tried by his virtual inability to speak at all, so episodes of this nature irritate him more than they are accustomed to.*

*I find it difficult to believe that we have been in New South Wales for a year. At times I feel that I must be dreaming, and will soon wake up in my little room at the Parsonage, with blackbirds singing outside my window. The heat here is oppressive, just now. No matter how vile your winter might be, I would gladly endure it in place of this summer. My one comfort is the state of my vegetable plot, which is coming along beautifully, and already providing us with very good onions, peas, carrots, potatoes and celery—though nothing as fine as the produce of your own garden, my dearest sister. Oh, if I were only with you now! I close my eyes and picture your dear face, and long for you, and for the home that I cherish more tenderly than I ever have before. Kiss George for me, and Harriette, and Emily and John and Catherine and Richard, and believe me to be*

*your eternally loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER TEN



IN MARCH, CHARLES DECREED that he and Dorothea should invite some of their friends to dine with them one evening. A date was decided upon, invitations were issued, and Dorothea found herself confronted by the daunting task of entertaining ten guests in four very small rooms.

Fortunately, Mrs Molle was only too happy to offer a little discreet assistance.

‘My dear Mrs Brande, I beg you will not concern yourself,’ she remarked, upon Dorothea’s confessing to her that she had not a sufficiency of chairs to seat twelve. ‘How many chairs are you in possession of? Six? Then I shall supply the other six. Now—what else will you require? If you are to seat twelve, then you will need four servants, in addition to the cook. I would suggest that you make use of *my* cook for the evening—your own girl being not, perhaps, trained to such a task—and one of Mrs Bent’s servants: I believe her cook to be thoroughly reliable, and he will not, of course, be needed at home. In fact you may find it expedient to employ Mrs Bent’s John as your cook, and my Henry as an extra man—John being by far the more skilled of the two.’ In the face of Dorothea’s objections, Mrs Molle was adamant; it would not inconvenience her in the least, she insisted, and as for Mrs Bent—why, she had already raised the subject with Mrs Bent. ‘I had a premonition that you might require additional staff,’ she concluded, ‘so I took it upon

myself to make inquiries of Mrs Bent. You really must not *fret*, Mrs Brande. In circumstances such as these, we must learn to cast aside certain formalities, and share our advantages.'

It was therefore arranged that Mrs Bent's cook, John Harvey, should take charge of Dorothea's kitchen on March the tenth, and that Mrs Molle's cook should serve at table. Dorothea was then obliged to plan the bill of fare. After discussing the matter with Charles and Mrs Molle, she decided that sorrel and potato soup would be followed by fricasseed fowl, sweetbreads with white sauce and green peas, salt tongue, stewed oysters, roast loin of beef with a summer salad, custards, plum pudding, peaches, strawberries and cream cheese. While not, perhaps, the most *elegant* repast, this succession of dishes was nonetheless a good, solid, unexceptionable array, which would cause no offence to even the most delicate appetites. Dorothea's one concern was that John Harvey might not be equipped to prepare it, but her misgivings were laid to rest after she had interviewed him, some three days before the dinner was to be served. When he came to her house and inspected her kitchen, she discovered that he was a brisk, nuggety little man with a wide experience of cookery, and that he was quite familiar with every dish under consideration.

He told Dorothea that for fricassee of fowl (he pronounced it 'frik-case') he always took care, when the joints were soaking, to change the water three times in the hour, so as to achieve a *very* white meat; that he always threw a few, extremely thin slices of bread into a sorrel and potato soup; and that he knew several ways of cooking plum pudding, one without eggs, one economical, and one with blanched almonds.

Dorothea was very pleased with him.

She was beginning to feel a little less fearful at the prospect of playing hostess, and a little more excited by it. Even so, she left nothing to chance. Repeatedly, as the meal drew near, she lectured her servants on the correct way of dressing the table, conveying the courses, and serving the wine. She showed them the manner in which the white cloth must be removed before

dessert, and had the laundress starch and iron this cloth on the day. She bought extra wax candles, obtained flowers from Mrs Bent, and had Daniel polish the silver until it gleamed with a rare brilliance. She also turned her attention to her own wardrobe, which, though meagre, was enhanced by the purchase of some new lace. Finally, she ensured that the house was spotlessly clean by driving Martha into every corner with mop, brush and broom, by ordering Daniel to wash the windows, and by mixing, with her own hands, a polish that she insisted Jack apply to all the furniture. (He was not very happy about that.) So vigorous were her efforts, indeed, that by the afternoon of March the tenth, she was utterly exhausted.

'Oh dear,' she said, upon surveying her drawn face in the glass, 'how very bad my colour is.'

'Nonsense,' Charles replied. 'You look ravishing as always.' Since he was adjusting his stock, and was perforce obliged to stand with his chin raised, he could not even spare her a glance before passing judgement. Consequently, she discounted his remark.

'I look ill,' she said. 'How ill I look! My complexion so sallow. No brilliance. This pomade seems to be doing it no good at all.'

'Your concern is unfounded, my dear.'

'Perhaps I should try Gowland's lotion.'

'Gowland's? I was under the impression that Gowland's lotion was for the treatment of eruptive diseases.'

'No doubt they will come,' said Dorothea, gloomily. What had befallen her lilies and roses? She had—yes, she positively had dark circles under her eyes. Fleetinglly, she considered the possibility of mixing up a rouge (Margaret had once showed her how) before remembering that, even had there been carmine in the house, Charles would not have stood for such artificial enhancement.

'Where is Martha?' she said irritably. 'Why does she not come?'



'Ring again,' her husband advised her.

'Perhaps she was waylaid—'

'Ring again, I tell you.' He was now applying oil to his hair, studying himself intently in the glass. He looked magnificent. 'There is no time to waste. Our guests will be arriving soon.'

But Dorothea had no opportunity to ring again. For at that moment someone knocked on the door, and when Charles said 'Enter!', Daniel's face appeared. His expression boded ill. It was fixed—blank—in a way that Dorothea had come to recognise as the outward form of an acute, but concealed, apprehension.

'What is it?' she inquired. 'Where is Martha?'

'Ah ...' He hesitated. 'Could I speak t'ye, Ma'am?'

'Speak,' snapped Charles.

Daniel swallowed. 'Sir ... Ma'am ...' he began, then stopped. Dorothea rose. She knew that Daniel did not want Charles's wrath visited upon his head, though by what means this knowledge had been conveyed to her, she was unsure. (Through the medium of Daniel's eyes, perhaps?) In the circumstances, however, she could understand and applaud his desire for a peaceful resolution.

Should Charles give way to a fit of temper, her own nerves would not recover quickly.

'I will come,' she announced, forestalling her husband's objections. 'My dear, it is no doubt a domestic crisis occasioned by the presence of strange staff.'

'But—'

'I shall return in an instant. *Please* do not trouble yourself.' She thought, as she left the bedroom, that if John Harvey had burned the pudding, she would expire on the spot.

But the news was worse than that.

'Ma'am,' said Daniel softly, upon stepping outside. 'Wait. Not in there, if it please ye.'

Dorothea, who had been heading for the kitchen, paused, and looked at him in surprise.

'Tis Martha,' he continued, running his fingers through his neatly combed hair.

'What do you mean?' Dorothea demanded. 'Where is she?'

'Here.' He beckoned. She followed. They went around the kitchen, to the back of it, where the buckets were kept, and the hoe, and a broken basket, and an earthenware vessel filled with lye and ashes. Here Martha lay, with her eyes closed, dirty and bedraggled in the fading light.

Dorothea gasped at the sight of her.

'Is she breathing? She is breathing. Daniel, she is breathing!'

'Aye, but —'

'She must have fainted.' Dorothea began to wring her hands. 'Oh dear! Oh dear! Why must she be taken ill *now*? Today, of all days!'

'Ma'am —'

'We must send for Surgeon Forster. Daniel —'

'Wait.' He raised his own hand, and such was her astonishment that she fell silent. 'Wait,' he said, pointing. 'Ma'am, only look. There's no call for the doctor.'

Peering down at Martha's supine form, Dorothea noticed that the housemaid was cradling something in her arms—a black glass bottle.

She put her hand over her mouth.

'That'd be the rum, Ma'am, I'm thinkin',' Daniel said, in a low voice. 'Sure, and you can smell it on her.'

'But ...' Dorothea almost staggered where she stood. 'But how—where—how did she come by it?'

Daniel shrugged.

'Daniel, you *must* know!'

'That I do not,' he said firmly. 'She has her beef and tea and sugar. She runs errands. There are houses aplenty would sell her the spirits.'

Dorothea's hands were on her temples. She was frantic.

'What shall I do?' she whispered. 'Our guests will arrive soon. Martha was going to wait at table.'

'Not this night,' said Daniel. He spoke thoughtfully. 'No, nor any other, if I've the measure o' this.' As Dorothea turned

to him, wide-eyed and staring, he added: 'I've a notion that Martha's troubles are not in her health, Ma'am, but in the bottle you see.'

'Oh, no!'

'I—I had a suspicion of't, but never saw her take a drop, not one.'

'You should have said!'

'Ma'am.' He spread his hands. "'Twas suspicion only.'

'What am I to *do*?' Dorothea squeaked. She could not seem to think clearly. 'There must be four to wait at table!'

'Is there no other man ye might find? In another house?'

'What? I—perhaps. Yes, perhaps. But—'

'I'll put her in her bed, Ma'am. Then I'll go to Mrs Molle.'

'But—'

'Shall I tell Mrs Molle that Martha is ill with the headache? 'Twould be no falsehood. And there's no one but us to say otherwise.'

'Yes. Yes.' The fog in Dorothea's own head was beginning to clear. 'Yes, tell her that. Ask her if she can recommend a good servant. Apologise to her, Daniel—do not omit my apology.'

'No, Ma'am.'

'I had—I had better return, now.' Looking at him, she wondered if anything more need be said. She was almost weeping with mortification as it was, and had no desire to suffer further indignity. But should Daniel mention Martha's true state to Charles at any time during the evening, there would be hell to pay. 'Something must be done about Martha,' she went on. 'Certainly, something must be done. At present, however, nothing useful can be attempted.'

'No, Ma'am.'

'If—if we should tell *anyone* the truth, this evening, it would cause great consternation, and—and confusion. And the night would be ruined. Do you understand, Daniel?'

'Aye, Ma'am.' His voice was as solemn as his face. His gaze sought hers, and held it. 'That I do.'

'Very well.' She instructed him to wait until she had

returned to her husband, before carrying Martha indoors. It was her intention that Charles should be kept busy and happy until the guests arrived, that he should not become aware of Martha's absence at least until dinner was served, and that the other servants should also remain ignorant for as long as possible. 'It is very hard,' she murmured, with a trembling lip, 'that I must resort to such deception. I shall never forgive Martha, never. It is *inexcusable*.'

Daniel said nothing.

'If I were to throw her into the street, just as she is, it would be no more than she deserves!' Dorothea continued brokenly. But she knew that such recriminations were fruitless. Furthermore, she knew that she must calm herself—and quickly—lest her feverish flush and puckered brow arouse her husband's suspicions.

So she blinked, and took a deep breath, and went back to the bedroom.

What followed was perhaps a more fortunate conjunction of circumstances than might reasonably have been expected, given the smallness of the house and the uncertainty of Captain Brande's temper. Captains Thompson and Miller arrived early, thereby preventing Captain Brande from invading the kitchen for the purpose of inspecting it (as had been his intention). Then, when the two officers sampled his madeira, they were so loud in its praise, and so envious of his 'damnable luck' in acquiring it, that he was delighted. Nothing could have gratified him more. The conversation flowed, and with such ease and spirit that it barely faltered when Dorothea left the room. She went to seek out Daniel, but he had not returned. Jack Lynch, who had been persuaded to shell peas, was so sharp on the subject that Dorothea was forced to reveal the news of Martha's 'illness', which was received with barely concealed dismay. But before John Harvey could throw down his stewpot and lament his ill fortune (as he had half a mind to do, Dorothea suspected; she could see it in his eye), Daniel stumbled in, breathing heavily, and announced that Mrs Molle had 'taken the matter in hand'.

‘She’s sent to Mrs Cowper for a man,’ Daniel said, ‘and will not have ye fret, Ma’am—I was to give ye those very words.’

‘Did she say anything else?’

‘She said I was to hurry back.’

At which point Dorothea realised that nothing more could be accomplished for the time being. So she returned to the drawing room, where she suffered in silence until Mrs Molle’s arrival. It was a great test of character to remain smiling in her chair, when her one desire was to be in the kitchen, rescuing her arrangements. But at last Mrs Molle came, and delivered her from her misery. Although attended by the Vales, and of course by her husband, Mrs Molle was able to exchange a few private words with Dorothea on the threshold of the dining room.

‘Have no fear,’ she said kindly. ‘Mrs Cowper’s generosity knows no bounds.’

‘Then—?’

‘We are late for that very reason. We brought her man with us—a sturdy young fellow. I sent him through to the kitchen.’

‘Oh, Mrs Molle.’ Dorothea almost wept. ‘How can I ever repay you?’

‘Nonsense, Mrs Brande. It was for my comfort as much as yours, please remember. Inadequate service will always result in cold food, and cold food is a punishment to the digestion.’

The evening was therefore saved—although Dorothea, exhausted by her efforts, did occasionally wonder if it had been worth saving. Captains Thompson and Miller were unrefined company, at their best solely when discussing military tactics such as the ideal thickness of a fighting line. (An admirable topic, but not one to win a lady’s heart.) The Reverend and Mrs Vale were at their most plaintive, moaning constantly about colonial prices, colonial weather, and colonial insects. Mr Bent, though polite, was obviously unwell, and could neither eat nor converse without a great expenditure of effort—much to his wife’s distress. *Her* distracted air, and the attention that she paid to every tremor crossing his counten-

ance, prevented her from conversing as freely and wittily as was her custom. The ponderous structure of Colonel Molle's sentences affected the flow of every conversation in which he partook, much as an iron ball will affect the gait of a convict, and while Mr Jeffery Bent was as vigorous as ever in *his* remarks, they were of a nature that the Colonel appeared to find unwise, if not objectionable, because he repeatedly and clumsily tried to change the subject when Mr Jeffery Bent's censure of Governor Macquarie became too heated.

Dorothea herself had nothing of worth to contribute, for she was too anxious to say much. She was too busy watching every entrance and exit, as the courses were conveyed to the table. She was too concerned that her husband would notice the presence of two—not one, but two—strange footmen. Fortunately, Captain Brande was so passionately preoccupied with a discussion of the *Rules and Regulations for the Formations, Field Exercise and Movements of His Majesty's Forces* that he barely took heed of the food set in front of him, let alone the men who put it there. He was in a very genial mood. His sweet, boyish smile illuminated the entire company. Dorothea even began to hope, when the ladies withdrew, that the worst of the evening was over—that with the table now cleared, Charles would have no opportunity to note that Martha was absent.

Naturally, Mrs Molle refrained from broaching the subject of Martha's illness even over coffee, lest she embarrass Dorothea in front of Mrs Vale. But towards the end of the evening, before taking her leave, Mrs Molle accompanied Dorothea to the kitchen in order that that she might 'collect her staff', and it was then that she aired her views on sickly servants.

'Take her to a doctor, Mrs Brande,' she advised, 'and if that comes to nothing, get rid of her. However charitable one might wish to be, one cannot support an invalid on one's staff.'

Dorothea said nothing. The prospect of her next interview with Martha filled her with gloom; she had decided to put it off until the morning. Meanwhile, she thanked all the servants who *had* been present, distributing among them small packets of tea.

She said goodbye to her guests, grateful that they were leaving. She undressed without assistance, and offered up a prayer of thanks that Charles was too happily inebriated to wonder why Martha was not brushing Dorothea's hair that night.

'A very successful evening,' he beamed, still smelling strongly of spiritous liquors. 'Do you agree, Mrs Brande?'

'Yes indeed,' Dorothea replied.

'Miller is an amusing fellow. You do not like him, I know—'

'Oh, but I do!'

'No, no. Make no attempt to deny it, he is not to your taste. Well, he is a rackety fellow, and never a favourite with the ladies, but he makes me laugh, he does indeed. And Mr Jeffery Bent—what a firebrand! Sharp as a pin, though. I admire his principles.' Climbing into bed, Charles reached for Dorothea. 'Miller said to me tonight, "You are a damn lucky fellow, Brande. How did you win such a wife, with a face like yours?"' Laughing, he added: 'We toasted the ladies. You were much praised. Wallis wants to paint you.'

Submitting to her husband's caresses, Dorothea did not know whether to be gratified or not. On the one hand, it was pleasant to be admired. On the other hand, it was less pleasant to know that she had been freely discussed by a gathering of somewhat intoxicated gentlemen. The very thought made her uneasy.

Margaret, she knew, would not have approved.

'We must invite our friends to dine again,' Charles mumbled, into his wife's neck. 'We must do it often.'

'Oh!' said Dorothea, faintly.

'As often as we can support the expense. It will be very little work for very great gain. There's not many a fellow in this regiment who can be so obliging; I am a source of great envy. Besides, if I am ever to secure an appointment, I must do it by feeding the Old Man. Shovel enough roast beef down him, and he will be too much in our debt to tell me nay.'

Very little work for very great gain, thought Dorothea, wondering if her sudden access of dismay and resentment was

ill judged and unwifely. On reflection, she decided that it was. And her sense of guilt was such that she welcomed Charles into her arms with a fervour that pleased him very much.

Even so, she could not banish from her mind the dread that she felt at the prospect of confronting Martha. It stayed with her despite her compliance, and she could only be grateful that Charles was too well wine-d, that night, to notice the slight abstraction in her manner as she performed her conjugal duties.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN



CAPTAIN BRANDE WAS NOT in a cheerful mood the next morning. Fortunately, however, he was fit enough to attend the morning parade. Dorothea waited until he had left the house before approaching Martha, who—surprisingly—had been up and working since daybreak. Though sluggish and morose, she had cooked a perfectly acceptable breakfast for the Brandes. And when Dorothea marched up to her, she was shuffling about, helping Daniel to wash dishes.

Even so, she did not look well.

‘Martha,’ Dorothea said sternly, ‘this way, if you please. I must speak to you. *Now.*’

Martha winced, as if her mistress’s voice was causing her some discomfort. Daniel dropped his gaze. Dorothea turned on her heel and led the way to the drawing room, where she seated herself, straight-backed, on a hard chair. Here it was that she confronted Martha, after the housemaid had removed her apron and walked the length of the hallway on dragging feet.

‘Well?’ said Dorothea coldly. ‘What have you to say for yourself?’

Martha sniffed. She did not dare raise her eyes.

‘Sorry, Mum,’ she murmured, ‘but I were poorly—’

‘Do not lie to me!’ Dorothea cried. Of a sudden she was so overcome with anger that she leaped up, eyes blazing, as

Martha cowered and hid her face. 'You were *intoxicated*! I saw you! You were *drinking*, Martha! Do not attempt to deny it!'

The housemaid sniffed.

'How long? How long have you been drinking?' Dorothea demanded. 'How long have you been lying to me?'

Still Martha did not reply.

'Very well. Since you refuse me the courtesy of an answer, I have no choice but to inform Captain Brande. He will dismiss you for drunkenness, and provide you with no references, and you will never work again for any respectable folk in this colony. Is that what you want, Martha? To work as a housekeeper for a hutful of convicts?'

'I don't care!' Martha retorted, and burst into tears.

'Martha—'

'I don't care!' The housemaid began to sob out a disjointed tale of a husband lost to hunger; of an infant daughter torn from her breast on the journey to the prison hulks, and never restored; of a savage attack on board the hulks, resulting in a pregnancy that was abruptly terminated by a brutal kick during the voyage to New South Wales ...

'Enough,' said Dorothea.

'My daughter was taken! My little girl ...'

Martha's face was a terrible sight, all streaming fluids and gaping mouth. She collapsed onto her knees as Dorothea edged away, clutching her shawl tightly about her in consternation.

'I ain't got nothin'!' gasped the housemaid. 'They took it all!'

'Martha—'

'Ah God—ah God—won't you take *me*?' And Martha began to beat her head against the floor.

'Now stop that!' Dorothea exclaimed. 'Stop it at once!' She hurried to the bellrope, and rang for Daniel's assistance. Later, it occurred to her that Daniel must have been waiting nearby, for he appeared almost immediately. One look at Martha told him all that he needed to know; Dorothea was not required to offer an explanation. Seeing that Martha was apparently

attempting to raise a bruise on her forehead, Daniel disappeared again, returning in a few minutes with a vessel of water, the contents of which he cast over the housemaid's bowed head and shoulders.

This act, though somewhat extreme, served to silence her at last. As Dorothea sat down, Daniel stood with his dripping saucepan, awaiting instructions, his eyes flicking from Martha to Dorothea and back again. Martha did not move.

Dorothea could hear her snuffling breath.

'This is—this is most unfortunate,' Dorothea stammered. Her heart was pounding, because she could sense that horrible visions—unwanted reflections—were about to encroach on her peace of mind. A kick in the belly. A stolen child.

An assault ...

She shook her head, as if to chase away unwelcome imaginings. She could not afford to accommodate such thoughts. She had not the strength for it.

'I am—indeed, I am sorry for your troubles,' she said quickly, 'but they are no excuse for drunkenness. I will not tolerate drunkenness. Do you hear, Martha? I will not.'

A sniff was the only reply.

'If you swear to me, on the holy scriptures, that you will not touch another drop of rum,' Dorothea continued, 'then I have a mind to be lenient. Martha? You may stay and work, if you promise not to drink.'

Martha moved. She raised her head slightly.

'Will you swear? On the Bible?' asked Dorothea, and waited. After several minutes, Martha nodded. Water was pooling around her. It dripped off her chin, off her nose, off the sodden ruffles on her drooping cap. Her hair was plastered across her face.

When Dorothea fetched the Bible, she felt a strange reluctance to approach the wet, hunched, despondent shape of her housemaid. So she set the book down on the floor beside Martha, and retreated.

'Put your hand on that Bible,' she instructed, her voice

lamentably unsteady, 'and swear that you will not drink spirits again, Martha.'

Martha's head moved.

'Nor any other intoxicating beverage,' Dorothea added. She cleared her throat. 'Come, now. Say: "I swear."'

Martha put her hand on the leather-bound scriptures. Hoarsely, she repeated the words, 'I swear'. Then she wiped her nose with the selfsame hand.

There followed a strained silence. Dorothea found herself at something of a loss.

'Very well,' she said at last. 'You may go. Thank you, Daniel.' She wondered, in a distracted way, if Daniel should have been privy to the incident. Perhaps a more capable mistress would have dealt with Martha alone; Mrs Molle, for example, would not have had to ring for assistance. But I am not Mrs Molle, Dorothea thought fretfully, watching the two servants withdraw. I am not accustomed to such excessive displays—they are quite outside my experience. What was I supposed to do, in the circumstances?

Charles, she knew, would have been ruthless. He would have expelled Martha from the house instantly. But Charles would not have been obliged to deal with the consequences of such an act. It was not his duty to find a suitable housemaid to replace Martha. If the colony had been better stocked with good housemaids, Dorothea would no doubt have been as unyielding as her husband—lost daughter or no lost daughter. She would have hardened her heart (against what might very well have been a fabrication; how was it possible to know?) and turned Martha away, rather than allowing a moment's weakness to place her in a very undesirable position.

For it was only now, upon considering the matter, that she realised what her promise to Martha would really entail. It would require that she lie to her husband—or, if not lie, at least conceal from him an episode of very great importance. To tell him about Martha's weakness would result in a broken promise, since he would almost certainly disregard any oath

that the housemaid might have sworn, and throw her out. He would override Dorothea's decision. He would inform her that bargaining with servants was not only a profitless exercise, but a mode of conduct so far beneath her dignity that no undertakings given during such an ill-conceived exchange could possibly be regarded as binding, or indeed as anything but ridiculous.

And he would be right, Dorothea decided mournfully. I am in error. I am caught in a trap of my own making, set upon a course of deceit. Whatever I do, whether I keep my promise or not, I am behaving without honour.

So distressing was this realisation—so disturbing had been her interview with Martha—that Dorothea immediately took to her bed, and remained there, nursing a headache, for the rest of the day. She was horribly ashamed of herself. Perhaps, if her husband had returned from the barracks in a cheerful and confiding temper, her shame might have driven her to confess. But as chance would have it, he was very put out when he finally came home. Captain Wallis had annoyed him, and, being unable to vent his spleen at the barracks, Charles was forced to do so at the dinner table.

It appeared that Captain Wallis had ingratiated himself to a great degree with Colonel Molle that day, by confessing to having lived for six months in accordance with his own personal rules of conduct, as drawn up in the journal that he also kept religiously. These rules of conduct governed the disposal of his day, requiring him to rise no later than six o'clock, occupy himself between the hours of twelve and two with serious reading and study, drink no more than one bottle of wine when he dined abroad, and go to bed before eleven.

'Like a snivelling schoolboy,' was Captain Brande's opinion. 'But of course the Old Man thinks him so *very* admirable. A model officer. A future Commander in Chief. Soon we shall all be encouraged to paint in watercolours, and abandon our drill for the study of botanical texts.'

Clearly, it was not a good time to trouble Charles with

further exasperating news. And the longer his wife refrained from doing so, the more difficult the task became. Indeed, after a few days, she decided that she would remain silent on the whole subject of Martha's tippling. Time, and the housemaid's apparent willingness to abandon her former habits, softened the pangs of guilt that had tormented Dorothea. Her headache went away. Her appetite came back. She was able to leave the sanctuary of her bed, announce herself recovered from her 'bad spell', and resume the duties that were hers by right.

One of these, of course, was the management of her garden. Before preparations for the formal dinner had overwhelmed her, she had found time to draw up a plan of the beautiful garden that she most fervently desired—an arrangement of flowery beds and borders, cunning walks, well spaced trees and sensible proportions that did credit to her taste and gentility. She had then submitted the plan to Mrs Molle for consideration. Mrs Molle, after making one or two corrections, had passed the plan to Captain Wallis—a gentleman of artistic sensibility—and to Captain Gill. They too had approved it. They had even acquired for Dorothea's use a load of good soil from the regimental garden. Dorothea was therefore soon ready to have her beds and walks marked out in preparation for planting, and it was Captain Gill (again) who generously provided her with the means by which this might be accomplished. Within four days of studying her plan, Captain Gill had sent to Dorothea, free of charge, a Government bricklayer named McLeod, who made the required measurements using a roll of string and a Government Field Standard.

Two half-days had sufficed for this task. When it was completed, Dorothea set Daniel to work on trenching, ridging and manuring, while she pored over Mr Wells's advice as to the correct construction of a garden path. The first necessity, she soon discovered, was a load of gravel, one portion fine, the other coarse. As she informed Daniel, a layer of fine gravel would have to be placed upon a layer of coarse gravel, but not

until a trench of eighteen inches was dug, and spread with stones, broken crockery, burned brick clay, or other rubbish.

*'So as to fill it to the surface,'* Dorothea read aloud, cradling *The Gentleman's Garden* awkwardly in her arms, *'we permit it to lie for a time, ramming it down every now and again until it has become perfectly solid.'* She was standing near one of the intended flower beds, from which Daniel was removing numerous small stones by means of a rake and his hands. *'In a week or more, according to the weather and labour bestowed,'* she continued, *'it will be sunk to a distance of six inches from the top of the trench.'* Then, according to Mr Wells, you must put down three or four inches of coarse gravel, two inches of fine gravel, and stamp it firm.' Looking up, she added: 'Those stones you have there, Daniel—they will do nicely for the first layer. Perhaps you should set them aside somewhere.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'I feel that the paths should be built early. They will allow us to pass through the garden without muddying our feet, before the beds are fully planted. In fact, you should probably begin digging the trenches and laying the rubbish as soon as possible, since a week or two must pass before we can put the gravel down.'

'Aye,' said Daniel. He straightened, wiped his arm across his brow, and leaned on his rake. 'But what if it should rain, Ma'am? What if yeer trenches should fill, in the meantime?'

Dorothea considered this question, which was a good one. She consulted her book for an answer.

'It says nothing about drainage in *those* circumstances,' she confessed. 'Only that all garden paths should be somewhat higher in the centre than at the sides, to allow water to run off freely.'

'Sure, and if the trenches fill, I'll bail 'em dry,' said Daniel. He flapped at a fly, and squinted around him; the autumn sun was surprisingly hot. 'Where is the gravel to come from, Ma'am?' he inquired. 'From a river? From a quarry?'

'I shall ask Captain Gill.'

'Ye'll be needin' a goodly load.'

'Captain Gill will know where to look.'

It occurred to Dorothea, as she went indoors, that Mrs Molle might also be helpful. So she donned her bonnet and shawl, took note of Martha's progress in the kitchen, and trotted off to Mrs Molle's house—where she was provided with tea, cake and a lot of good advice. Mrs Molle had not furnished herself with any gravel for her paths. It appeared that the Commanding Officer had always employed cinders for that purpose. Mrs Molle *had*, however, required stone for repairs to her house, not long before, and had applied to Charles McIntosh, the Barrack Master, for assistance.

'He got the stone from the quarry of one Edward Cureton, at Cockle Bay,' Mrs Molle revealed. 'Cureton is apparently supervisor of the Government stone gangs, so is capable enough, and as honest as anyone can be, in this place. I should go to him for gravel.'

'Oh!' Dorothea exclaimed, shrinking back, 'I could not approach him *myself*, Mrs Molle!'

'No, no, of course not. Captain Brande must do it. Or Captain Gill. Or you might appeal to the Barrack Master—he would be happy to oblige, I am sure.'

'Chips of stone,' Dorothea murmured. 'I only require chips of stone. Cast-off remnants. Would they cost very much?' She was thinking of Charles, and how reluctant he was to spend money on the garden (or indeed, on anything at all of a domestic nature). 'Veritable sweepings, Mrs Molle—they cannot be very valuable, surely?'

Mrs Molle did not feel competent to pass an opinion. Nor was she much interested in the subject. Instead she began to talk of other things—the price of butter, the native problem, Mrs Bent's interesting condition—until Dorothea realised, with a start, that the hour was late. Charles would perhaps have returned home, and found no wife there to greet him. He would not be at all pleased.

So she hastily restored her bonnet to her head, took her



leave of Mrs Molle, and hurried back to her own house—hoping that, by some happy coincidence, Charles might have been delayed at the barracks. Upon gaining the front door, she realised that her husband had indeed arrived home, for she could hear him shouting somewhere at the back of the house. In the kitchen, perhaps? With a sigh, she removed her bonnet. Then she went to find out if she could render him any assistance.

He was in the kitchen, and he was in a towering rage. All three servants were lined up before him: Jack stood to attention, his chin in the air; Daniel was hanging his head, every line of his body expressing fear and hopelessness; Martha was trembling, whimpering, as Captain Brande paced back and forth, shouting imprecations.

On catching sight of his wife, however, he stopped, and waited for her to ask him what was wrong.

She obliged, of course.

‘My dear, is something amiss?’ she queried nervously. ‘I was delayed, I fear, but—’

‘Come with me, Mrs Brande.’ Grim-faced, glowering, he took her arm, before turning to address his staff once more. ‘No one else will *move* from this spot!’ he barked, in his parade-ground voice. ‘Do not move, do not speak, do not so much as *cough*, do you hear me? Or you shall suffer for it.’ Then he led Dorothea back to the house, marched her into the dining room, and showed her certain marks on the tantalus which demonstrated, beyond dispute, that someone had been attempting to steal the decanters—or, at the very least, the spirits within the decanters.

‘Someone has used a knife,’ he pointed out, ‘and, being unable to pick the lock, has tried to force the hinges. These marks were not here last night. The damage was done today. Have any strangers been in the house today, Mrs Brande?’

Dorothea felt faint. Unable to speak, she shook her head.

‘Then there can be only one culprit,’ Charles said coldly. Dorothea’s presence seemed to have calmed him, somewhat;

though his cheeks were still flushed, his voice was now steady. 'Jack Lynch I discount. The occasional dressing-down can only do him good—without it, he would become careless and lazy—but he is not the man who did this thing. He was at the barracks most of the day, and has too much sense to run such a risk. No—the culprit is certainly Daniel Callaghan. Once a thief, always a thief.'

Dorothea shook her head. She opened her mouth, but was unable to make a sound. Captain Brande, who was looking at the damaged tantalus, did not regard her.

'That Irish ingrate,' he said, with concentrated venom, 'will rue the day. Oh, but he will rue the day.'

'Charles,' Dorothea whispered.

'I shall have him flogged till his ribs show.'

'*Charles!*' Dorothea caught her husband's arm, as he turned to carry out his threat. 'Wait. Please.' Seeing his expression change from one of surprise to one of dawning suspicion, Dorothea hastened to explain herself. Her lips were trembling so pitifully that she could barely force them into the required shapes. 'It—it was not Daniel,' she stammered. 'I know it was not Daniel.'

His eyes narrowed.

'How can you know?' he demanded.

'Because it—I think—because it must have been Martha.'

Naturally, this reply was not in itself sufficient. Dorothea was forced to elaborate on it, propping herself against the table as she acquainted Charles with the story of Martha's insidious failing. Her eyes filled with tears as she did so. She was blinded by them, and could not see his face. She knew herself to be utterly at fault. She had been foolish—treacherous—naive. She could offer up no excuse for her stupidity.

'Forgive me,' she whispered. 'Forgive me.' And, as if from a great distance, his reply reached her—brittle with suppressed fury, cracking in an effort to retain control.

'You knew Martha to be a drunkard,' he said.

'Forgive me ...'

'You knew this, and you let her stay?'

'Oh—oh—'

'Without *deigning* to inform your *husband* of the fact?'

Dorothea wept.

'Oh, this is very fine behaviour. Yes indeed, this ... this beats everything.' He began to move about the room—she could hear his uneven footsteps as she covered her eyes. 'My own wife conspires to deceive me. Yes! Deceive me! *Knowing* what my opinion will be, she conceals the truth, and expects to profit by it!'

'My dear—'

'*With the inevitable result!*' Charles cried. 'With the result that she is *betrayed* and *robbed*! Because that is the *natural consequence* of defying good sense, proper conduct, and the advice of someone *better placed to direct her actions!*'

'I am so sorry—'

'Are you *mad*? Good God, are you not a *lady*? How could you even tolerate the presence of a drunkard? I fear that I was mistaken in you. I fear that I expected a certain daintiness—a certain refinement of conduct—where there is none!' He began to pace the floor once again, as Dorothea sobbed. She could hardly catch breath, she was crying so bitterly. 'How could you do this? How could you behave with such little regard for my wishes? For my *rights* and my *entitlements* as the master of this house? I am *master* of this house, Madam!'

Dorothea was unable to reassure him. She had not the voice to do so. But gradually, after he had unburdened himself of many more remarks concerning her treachery, his disappointment, and the folly of accommodating vice in any form, Dorothea's pitiful appearance began to work on his sense of outrage. He stopped shouting. He stopped pacing. He told her, in more measured tones, that she should take time to reflect on her errors, while he removed Martha from the premises.

'I shall take her to the nearest watchhouse,' he said hoarsely,

'and inform the constable that we have no more use for her—that she is a suspected thief, and a confirmed drunkard. Then Superintendent Hutchison may do as he wishes.' Floorboards creaked under his heavy tread. The door opened. 'You would do well, Madam, to remember that I merit more consideration than a convicted felon,' he concluded. 'You would do well to honour me as your wedding vows require. I am your *husband*. I *know what is best*.'

Then he was gone.

Dorothea ran to the bedroom. She threw herself on her bed, and gave herself over to misery. The wretchedness of her situation struck her as unendurable—her domestic woes, the loss of her unborn children, the absence of respectable society, and now this terrible falling out with her husband—how was it possible to survive such misery? She wept and wept, and when at last she could shed no more tears, lay sniffing and groaning as Captain Brande's accusations returned to haunt her. Again and again she heard them, as if her mind was a chamber of echoes. How were they ever to be expunged? They had scarred her for life. She wanted to go home. She *had* to go home.

At last someone knocked on the door.

'Who—who's there?' she quavered.

'Ma'am?' It was Daniel. 'Would ye be wantin' yeer dinner?'

Calf's cheek? Dorothea felt ill at the very thought. 'No,' she said faintly.

There was a long silence. Dorothea could not hear the sound of Daniel's retreating footsteps; she knew that he was still standing outside the bedroom, and she resented his proximity, because it prevented her from giving way to her grief.

'Can I fetch ye some tea?' he finally suggested.

'No!'

*Go away*, she silently begged him, hot with shame and despair. She lay rigid, clutching her wet handkerchief, until at last she heard his heavy tread. He was withdrawing. He had gone.

She realised that he had undoubtedly heard Captain Brande upbraiding her—that all the servants must have heard—and was so mortified that the tears began to flow again.

The thought crossed her mind that she might henceforth never leave the bedroom.

## CHAPTER TWELVE



MRS MOLLE WAS VERY sympathetic when she learned of Martha's disgrace. Eyeing Dorothea's dull face and drooping form, Mrs Molle inquired with great delicacy how her friend was getting on without a maid. 'Of course it must be difficult. Do you find yourself *greatly* discommoded, Mrs Brande? Is there anything that I might do to help?'

In a small, flat voice, Dorothea replied that she was managing very well—that Daniel had simply abandoned the garden, so that he might take over many of Martha's duties, and that she herself, with Daniel's assistance, was preparing the meals. 'Charles would prefer that I not cook,' she went on, 'but realises that I have no choice, in the circumstances. He has applied to Superintendent Hutchison for another housemaid.' Captain Brande, in fact, had insisted that he assume all responsibility for hiring staff. He had already turned down one convict offered to him, as being 'obnoxious and deplorable', and had offended the Principal Superintendent of Convicts very much by accusing him of 'favouring' certain other applicants, principally Mr Riley, Captain Gill and Mr John Campbell.

Dorothea was burdened by an awful suspicion that they would never acquire an acceptable housemaid, if Superintendent Hutchison had anything to do with it.

'Ye-es,' said Mrs Molle. 'I see.' Gazing into her teacup, she seemed to ponder the problem. Dorothea wondered if she had

heard about Captain Brande's disagreement with the Principal Superintendent of Convicts, and decided that she almost certainly had. Colonial gossip thrived on such affairs. The thought made her feel tired. She felt dreadfully tired nowadays, what with all the cooking required of her, and the necessity of keeping her spirits up. Fortunately, Charles appeared to have forgiven her—was, in fact, indulgent of her as of a child whose conduct, although deserving of reproach, can be attributed to innocence rather than malice—but even so, she could not seem to shake off her gloom. It had even crossed her mind that Charles's magnanimity might stem less from generosity of spirit than from a need to resume conjugal relations.

He was, in every respect, a passionate man.

'Really,' said Mrs Molle at last, 'I begin to wonder if you should be seeking out an assigned servant at all.' Looking up, she addressed Dorothea in gravely inquiring tones. 'One must begin to question the suitability of convicts fresh out of their irons. Have you considered, Mrs Brande, engaging a girl who has been pardoned, or given her ticket-of-leave? She would, of course, be a more expensive proposition, but the evidence of her good character would lie in her very emancipation. And one must always pay more for a superior article.'

Dorothea frowned. 'I was told that such women were in great demand,' she objected. 'I was told that I had no hope of procuring one.'

'Certainly, I have heard of no such paragon seeking employment among our friends and acquaintances,' Mrs Molle admitted. 'But if you were to advertise in the *Gazette*, Mrs Brande, you might reach a wider circle.'

'Advertise?' said Dorothea, doubtfully. Public advertisements had always been regarded somewhat askance at Bideham.

'Of course I should help you to write it,' Mrs Molle went on. 'The terms must be clearly stated, and the requirements so carefully worded that no misunderstandings will arise.'

'I—I cannot be sure—'

'Naturally, you must consult your husband,' Mrs Molle concluded—rather impertinently, Dorothea thought. It was not up to Mrs Molle to tell her when she should or should not consult her own husband. But Mrs Molle was so very energetic in her wish to be of use, and so very much convinced of her own good sense, that she could sometimes overstep the bounds of what was, if not decent, at least mannerly.

For this, however, Dorothea could easily forgive her. Where would she have been without Mrs Molle? Of course, Mrs Molle could be a little *domineering*, at times, but after all, she *was* the wife of Captain Brande's commanding officer.

And she had never once made a suggestion that was not worthy, sensible, or kindly meant.

'Mrs Molle believes that we might be better off hiring a free servant on full wages,' Dorothea remarked to her husband that night. They were picking at some rather tough, dry mutton, and she would normally have refrained from making an appeal to him at such a time—for even a very fine accompanying dish of stewed onions could not, in his opinion, compensate for the hardship of dried-out meat, and he was consequently not in the best of moods. But on this occasion Dorothea decided that she could use the dry meat to her advantage. She pointed out, in dutifully humble tones, that they faced a future replete with dry mutton (not to mention burned pie-crusts and watery puddings) if they did not acquire another housemaid. Another *good* housemaid.

'I begin to doubt that good housmaids can be had from Superintendent Hutchison,' she said quietly. 'Or even that they exist, among the Government gangs. I begin to wonder if Mrs Molle might be right.'

'Oh, Mrs Molle is *always* right,' Charles snapped. 'How could the Old Man's wife be wrong?'

'You do not agree with her, then?'

'A free woman would cost us more than a convict, do you realise that? Between two and three shillings a day, I should think.'



Dorothea said nothing.

'The rate of hire in the colony is deplorable,' Charles went on. 'McIntosh was telling me the other day that when the harness rooms were fitted up in the light horse barracks, three years ago, the carpenter charged *twenty-one pounds* in spirits at thirty shillings a gallon! Ridiculous. Utterly ridiculous.'

Still Dorothea said nothing. She allowed him to rant about the iniquity of colonial prices until he had practically exhausted the subject, and even then she did not break the ensuing silence. Sitting with her head bowed over her plate, she simply masticated her mutton. She heard him push his own plate away, with an exclamation of disgust.

'Do you know what my mess bill is?' he growled. 'You must understand that it behoves me not to fall behind in generosity. All the other fellows are free with their money—am I to be different because I have a wife to support? It will not do. If I cannot pursue the habits of a gentleman—if I cannot be open handed—then I might as well resign all hopes of a special appointment.'

'They must be abandoned in any case,' Dorothea replied.

'What?'

'They must be abandoned in any case.' She raised her voice a little. 'Without a housemaid, we cannot possibly entertain guests here again. Not in the evening. And you said that such entertainments would win Colonel Molle's support.'

Charles began to drum his fingers on the table. Then he flung himself out of his chair and rang for Jack Lynch, who came and cleared away the dirty crockery. After he had withdrawn, Charles said: 'If I am forced to appeal to Hutchison again, I shall almost certainly kill him.'

Dorothea fixed her husband with an inquiring gaze.

'He is unspeakably vile,' Charles continued. 'Though his character is irretrievably soiled, he is so puffed up with pride and vanity that he thinks himself superior to the convicts under his direction. He makes my skin crawl.'

Dorothea looked down at her folded hands.

'And Gill, of course, is of no use whatsoever. He maintains that he has never found Hutchison to be impertinent or obstructive in any way.'

The door opened. Jack Lynch entered, and set down before his master and mistress a dish of boiled custard sporting a thick, yellow skin. Beside it he placed a portion of crumbling soda cake, its shrivelled currants presenting the appearance of dead flies.

Charles regarded this offering.

Then he looked at Dorothea.

'Oh, all right!' he barked. 'Go and hire an emancipist! I suppose that I shall have no peace—no, nor edible food—until you have your way!'

'Thank you, Charles.'

'But there will be no more additions to this house,' he grumbled. 'No more servants. No more furniture. No more wax candles when we dine.'

'No, my dear.'

'And I shall expect a very superior class of service from this overpaid wench, or out she goes!'

The advertisement finally placed in the *Sydney Gazette* called for 'a sober, steady Woman, of unexceptionable character, who can cook and will make herself useful about the house of a small, genteel Family', and announced that 'a Person of the above description may hear of a comfortable Situation by applying at the *Gazette* Office'. Dorothea was not sanguine as to the possibility of finding such a paragon; she was most surprised when her advertisement prompted two applications, one from a woman who seemed, if not ideal, at least not *utterly* unsuitable. Her name was Peg Whiting, she was fifty-one years of age (though hale and hearty still), and she did not take exception to the sum at which her wages were to be fixed. As long as she earned enough for her bed and board, she said, all would be well. She was living with her daughter, but her daughter's husband insisted that she pay four shillings a week for fire and lodging, not to mention an additional sum for her food.

'E's as 'ard as they come,' she cheerfully informed Dorothea, 'but I pay 'im no mind.' On being asked what experience she might have, Peg replied that she had once been the mistress of a public house, but that her husband had brought it into disrepute by allowing all manner of unsavoury persons to frequent it ('If I said no, 'e'd give me a bloody nose,' she explained), and that, as a result, she had lost her licence shortly before he had drunk and gambled away the house itself—which she had owned outright.

'E's in Newcastle now, on the chain gang, and good riddance,' she declared. 'Warn't never no good. But I kept a clean 'ouse, Madam, and cooked a good stew. And I'm a-thinkin' as 'ow I'd like to know more about good 'ousekeepin'. The way it's done—proper, like—among the quality.'

'I see,' said Dorothea. She was somewhat taken aback by Peg Whiting, whose voice was rather strident, and whose manner, though brisk and cheerful, was a little too exuberant for Dorothea's taste. In addition, Peg could offer no recommendations from past employers; she *had* worked as a cook for a member of the New South Wales Corps upon her arrival in the colony, and through his offices had secured a ticket-of-leave before her sentence expired. But the officer in question was long gone. It was therefore impossible to deduce whether she had won his favour on account of her efficiency, or for other reasons of a more questionable nature.

On the other hand, however, Peg was clean, and with a cleanliness that testified to more than hurriedly applied soap and water. Her clothes were starched and pressed, her skin was remarkably clear (for a woman of her age and history), her hair shone, her very fingernails gleamed. Furthermore, she was evidently a woman of good humour—a plump, beaming, handsome matron—and Dorothea was homesick for happy servants.

It will not do any harm to give her a trial, she thought.

'Would you consider sleeping in this house, Peg?' she queried. 'I would prefer that, if it can be managed. Your room, as you will see, is quite pleasant.'

But Peg shook her head energetically. 'No, Madam, if it's all the same. Family's family, and my daughter likes to 'ave me there.'

'But you must rise very early, in that case. Very early. You must be here to cook breakfast. Nor can you retire until your master and mistress do. Where does your daughter live?'

'Not far from 'ere, Madam, near Charlotte Place,' Peg replied. 'Won't take me any time, so don't fret. You'll never know I've gone, of a hevening.' She laughed suddenly. 'Or maybe you will. My daughter says as 'ow I never stop talking. But I can be quiet enough when it's needed.'

'Well—you will need to be quiet in this house,' said Dorothea, nervously. 'Captain Brande will not stand for idle chatter. You must confine your talking to the kitchen.'

'So I will, Madam. So I will,' Peg assured her, with breezy confidence. Dorothea wondered if such confidence was entirely appropriate in a housemaid. But she was desperate, and Peg's smile was beguiling. Without further ado, she offered Peg the situation, stipulating only that there must be a testing period of two weeks, during which Captain Brande might very well decide that he disapproved of his new servant.

'His standards are exactingly high,' Dorothea warned, 'and he cannot abide an intrusive manner. You must be careful not to offend him, Peg.'

'I'll hendeavour to give satisfaction, Madam,' came the unabashed response.

Peg had no objection to starting the next day. So Dorothea showed her the kitchen and introduced her to Daniel, who was scrubbing the kitchen floor. Peg seemed delighted with Daniel; she said that it was always good to have a 'big, strapping feller' about the place, for all he was a croppy, and that they would deal very nicely together. She praised the fittings, exclaimed over the pantry, beamed at the pots, and assured Dorothea that before anything else, she would learn how to grind and brew coffee.

Then she left—whereupon Dorothea, having shown her out, went to talk to Daniel again.

'Peg will continue to lodge with her daughter, near Charlotte Place,' she informed him. 'Consequently, Daniel, you might wish to occupy Martha's room.' Dorothea had given this offer some thought before making it, and had concluded that she would no longer feel uneasy if Daniel were to sleep under the same roof as herself. 'You may sleep there until ... until the possibility arises that someone else may require it, in the future,' she continued. (Not having informed anyone of her desire that it might be transformed into a nursery, she did not elaborate. Doubtless he would assume that she was referring to other housemaids.) 'In many ways it would be more comfortable than the kitchen,' she finished, 'because it has windowglass. You may find it warmer. In any event, you must decide for yourself.'

He was standing in his customary attitude, head slightly bowed, eyes downcast. His hands were red and chapped, his sleeves were rolled, and his trousers were rolled, too, up to the knees. Below them his naked calves and ankles, newly exposed to Dorothea's drifting gaze, showed evidence of the most dreadful mutilation.

'I thank'ee, Ma'am,' he said, 'but I'll keep me bed here. 'Tis warm enough in winter, with the fire always lit, and in summer there's no need for the windowglass.'

Dorothea was sickened. The scars on his ankles were disfiguring—she had never seen them before. How had he come by them? The flesh, in some places, had been penetrated to the very bone.

'Sure, an' I'd not want an empty kitchen at night, if I were you,' Daniel continued. "'Twould be a sad temptation, for all those seekin' a quick profit.' He faltered, suddenly; Dorothea, who had been staring fixedly at his ankles, wrenched her gaze away from them, and saw that he had coloured.

A flush mounted to her own cheeks. She found that she could not break the silence.

'I was in double irons on the hulk *Leviathan*, before they moved me to the *General Hewitt*,' Daniel finally murmured,

studying his scars. 'I could not pay the warder for the easement, and the irons were on for eight months.'

Dorothea put her hand to her mouth.

'You were on board the *General Hewitt*?' she gasped, unable to prevent herself.

'Aye.'

'That was *my* ship!'

'I know't.' He glanced up—a brief glimpse of darkness—before looking away again. 'I saw ye, the one time.'

Dorothea was utterly at a loss. She wanted very much to speak, but could not find the words.

So she nodded, and rearranged her shawl.

Then she left the kitchen.

New South Wales  
May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1815

My dearest Margaret,

You will be delighted to learn that I have acquired a new housemaid since last I wrote, and that she is proving to be, if not precisely a treasure, at least not a thief or a drunkard. She is a cheery soul—indomitably cheerful—and continues to beam at me whether I am praising her parsley sauce or chastising her for her tardiness. One out of every four mornings she is late to work, and breakfast must be prepared in a terrible rush; she will offer as her excuse all manner of tales about her daughter's domestic tribulations—whether I want to hear them or not—and will then excel herself in the production of apple dumplings, or roast loin of beef, so as to forestall my complaining to Charles. She really is an excellent cook. I am astonished at her prowess, for she has had little training, and must for the most part follow her instincts—which are remarkably sound. Never have I consumed a more admirable stewed shoulder of mutton than the one she prepares. (Charles, as you may imagine, is very pleased with her, for this reason alone.) Yet she is forever flitting off to the markets, and returning only after she has 'looked in' on her daughter (who seems remarkably ill equipped to face the trials of existence). Furthermore, she will not work if she can talk instead, and many's the time I have come upon her in the garden—which is not her rightful domain—chattering at Daniel when she should have been making the bed or scrubbing the floor. I say chattering at Daniel because he gives her not one word of encouragement. He has been constructing the garden paths recently, and it is heavy work that often leaves him short of breath. Consequently, he cannot converse with any ease, while thus occupied.

Do not believe, however, that Peg is for one moment put off by this circumstance. If she receives no reply to any one of her singularly banal observations, she simply moves to the next. I have never heard anything

like it in my life. And nothing will shame her into silence. She cannot be squashed.

Forgive me for my endless talk about servants, which you must find very tiresome. As I have previously remarked, servants are the chief topic of conversation here, and I find myself adopting the local custom in this regard. Believe me, my dear Margaret, when I tell you that one day last week, when I was taking tea with Mrs Molle, Mrs Bent and Mrs Vale, we spent almost the entire afternoon discussing the Quartermaster's servant, who took his own life late in April. The inquest is now over, and it was established that he went to the stables with the Quartermaster's firelock and shot himself. I must confess that I have found the whole affair most distressing. Who can say that we are not all exposed to such a hideous eventuality? But Mrs Molle informs me that Thomas Cowup (for this was the dead servant's name) was given to liquor, and from this I derive some comfort. Daniel, you see, does not indulge, and Peg, for all her failings, is neither morose nor a tippler.

I suppose I must be thankful that I was preserved from discovering Martha in an extinct state. No doubt, had she not been removed, such a circumstance would have been inevitable. It is one of the many risks that we run in this benighted country.

As to the other main topic of discussion, hereabouts, I beg to inform you that after a delay of some eight months, Mr Jeffery Bent at last opened the Supreme Court of Civil Judicature. Unfortunately, the first order of business was the presentation of petitions, submitted by the emancipist 'attornies' to whom I have previously referred, seeking admission to practice. Mr Jeffery Bent wished to reject them, but his fellow magistrates, Mr Riley and Mr Broughton, disagreed with him. I am told that there was an unseemly exchange. Mr Riley and Mr Broughton later wrote to Mr Jeffery Bent, stating that they would not again sit with him on the Bench until assured that he would mend his manners. Mrs Bent says that their letter was very offensive to her brother-in-law, who pointed out in his reply that he had a right to feel irritated at their gross disrespect; should a barrister of near ten years' standing be obliged to learn law from two laymen? Meanwhile, he is determined that he will never sit in a Court where emancipist attornies are admitted to practice.



*So the proceedings of the Supreme Court are again suspended. I am told that a public meeting had been called to protest Mr Jeffery Bent's actions, but that the Governor (quite rightly) intervened to prevent it. Of course Mr Jeffery Bent's principles are perfectly sound, but I cannot help wondering if his manner works sometimes to his disadvantage. He is such an excitable gentleman, with such an impetuous tongue. I am convinced that the fault cannot all be on the side of Mr Riley and Mr Broughton, no matter what Mrs Bent might say.*

*Charles is well. He wishes me to transmit to you, and to his uncle's family, his fond regards. I am well enough, though pining (as always) for my only sister. I see that I have forgot to thank you for the miniatures, which arrived two days ago. I cannot bear to be parted from them, and carry them around with me, alternately smothering them with kisses and bathing them in tears—for it is sweetly sad, to see how much the children have changed since last I saw them. My dearest darlings! Harriette will be a beauty. I am convinced of it. And little John will be his father all over again—I am astonished at the resemblance. Margaret, you must thank the Lord, on bended knee, for the gift of His blessings. You are a fortunate woman. You are rich beyond calculation. I envy you with all my heart.*

*Yet I cherish you even more than I cherish your babies, and remain  
your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN



IN JUNE, THE BRANDES were invited to dine with Colonel Molle and his lady, in order that they might welcome to New South Wales Captain Edward Sanderson. Dorothea was anxious to meet Captain Sanderson. Her husband had described him as ‘a very fine fellow’, and Dorothea was eager to welcome *any* gentleman newly arrived from England, whoever he might be. The society of New South Wales being so restricted, a new face was always greeted with delight. And when that new face belonged to an officer of the 46th, bearing tidings from England, the enthusiasm for his company was unequalled. Had Captain Sanderson talked of nothing but the rain afflicting South Devonshire, he could have done so throughout his entire visit to the Molles’ house without eliciting a single objection, even from his Commanding Officer. Like everyone else present, Colonel Molle would have listened intently to his every word.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that Captain Sanderson should have been pronounced ‘charming’, ‘amusing’ and ‘a very fine fellow’ by those who watched him drink his claret at Mrs Molle’s table. No other judgement would have been kindly received. But in her heart of hearts, Dorothea quickly came to realise that she did not like Captain Sanderson. She did not like his voice, which was loud and rough. She did not like his appearance, which — though large and imposing — was

also distinguished by a high colour, a thick neck and a pair of very small, very pale blue eyes. Most of all, however, she did not like his manner of speech. Though not blatantly offensive, it would have met with her sister's disapproval. Captain Sanderson's coarseness—the overwhelming quality of his unrefined humour—argued a want of regard for the ladies present, which was further suggested by his slightly doubtful treatment of Dorothea during the course of the evening.

When she asked him for his comments on the latest fashions, he observed that while the man who travels a thousand miles in a thousand hours might be judged tolerably quick-footed, he cannot compare to the woman who keeps up with the fashion. 'I'm a stumble-footed fellow, myself,' he boomed, 'and never notice a new cut or curl until it has almost passed me by.' He did add, however, that the waltz was now widely danced among people of good society, and that it ought to be introduced into New South Wales. 'Stumble-footed I might be,' he said, 'but although I would never normally inflict myself on any dancing partner, I would make an exception for the waltz. Once the waltz is introduced, there is not a man who would decline to dance with the plainest girl in the room, I assure you.'

A ripple of laughter greeted this sally, though Dorothea merely smiled. Mrs Molle, who was the bolder of the two ladies present, remarked that the waltz was purported to be 'very shocking', and that, while it might serve to attract gentlemen onto the floor, it would surely repel the ladies. Captain Sanderson, however, disagreed.

'Nothing will prevent a plain young lady from dancing when the opportunity presents itself,' he said, 'and when the pretty ones see the plain ones up and about—by my hat, they will join them soon enough, I'll warrant!'

Again there was laughter, but Dorothea did not like Captain Sanderson's tone; there had almost been a sneer in his voice. She found that she had no taste for his jokes. She could see nothing funny in his story about a gentleman who, upon asking a young

lady why she was so fond of officers, received the reply: 'Is it not natural that a lady should like a good *offer*, *Sir*?' Nor did she join the general merriment when, upon the words 'capital offence' being uttered during a conversation about the judiciary, Captain Sanderson interrupted with a quip concerning his niece, who had defined kissing gentlemen as a '*capital* offence'. It was Dorothea's opinion that Captain Sanderson lowered the general tone of the conversation at dinner.

After dinner, when Mrs Molle and Dorothea had withdrawn, they heard raucous laughter in the dining room. It punctuated their discussion of winter gardening at more and more frequent intervals, until Mrs Molle was driven to comment. ('Captain Sanderson appears to have put everyone in a very hilarious humour,' she remarked.) When she and Dorothea rejoined the gentlemen, it was to discover that a decision had been made: the company would henceforth play lottery tickets, and talk of points and fishes. No one could object to such a harmless game, which would be much better sport than enigmas, charades or recitations. If there had been a piano in Mrs Molle's drawing room, then perhaps a little dancing might have been attempted—but since no piano was at hand, lottery tickets would do just as well.

Dorothea, who had committed to memory a portion of Cowper's *Boadicea* in preparation for the evening, was very put out. But she said nothing. She played lottery tickets politely, if without enthusiasm, and made civil replies to Captain Wallis's even more civil inquiries. Once again, the talk was not to her taste. From perfectly respectable subjects it kept veering away, dwelling instead on topics such as gambling and horse racing. Captain Miller spoke at length about an event at Green Hills, where 'Mr Benn's Scratch was matched against Mr May's roan', and where 'several by-bets were made at starting, but no odds offered for the first half-mile, when Scratch became the favourite'. Captain Sanderson told a joke about pickpockets at a racetrack, and another about pickpockets at a gaming table. He mentioned, with a laugh, that anyone who came from New

South Wales was regarded as a pickpocket in England. 'Let fall that you are recently arrived from Botany Bay,' he said, 'and your neighbours will edge away, checking their pockets.' He seemed to think this hugely entertaining.

Finally, the hour grew late. Dorothea was at last able to remove herself from Captain Sanderson's company. But as she and her husband walked home, he recited several of Captain Sanderson's jokes that she had missed. He also described to her an incident that had taken place on the Isle of Jersey, involving Captain Sanderson and another officer. The two men had been refreshing themselves generously at a local hostelry, and had fallen into an argument about the relative merits of their horses. Captain Sanderson had then declared that a race should be run, in order to settle the matter. So he and his companion had mounted their horses and galloped off—never to return. They had not paid the innkeeper before doing so.

'Oh, he's a wily one,' Captain Brande declared, wiping tears of mirth from his eyes. 'What a fellow he is! Never a dull moment with Sanderson.'

At this point Dorothea realised, with a sinking heart, that Charles was quite taken with Captain Sanderson. As the days passed, moreover, this fact became increasingly evident—for Charles was forever returning home from the barracks full of tales that perfectly demonstrated Captain Sanderson's wit and daredevilry. On one occasion, for example, Captain Sanderson had been drilling his company, and had become dissatisfied with its appearance; the men had been showing the soles of their boots while they marched. He had therefore disappeared into the barracks, and had emerged onto the parade ground, minutes later, with a firelock in his hand.

Raising it, he had declared: 'The next man who shows me the sole of his shoe will do it because he is running for his life. Do you hear?'

Charles was also delighted with Captain Sanderson's solution to the problem of idle soldiers. Unless detailed for guard, many of those in the humbler ranks were left with

nothing to do between their midday dinner and the tattoo. Consequently, they made mischief—as one of the privates in Captain Sanderson's company certainly did, when he tore some palings off the fence of a lady friend, and attempted to beat her with them.

Captain Sanderson, in response, had taken to measuring his company's rolled greatcoats with a Field Standard.

'Unless they are *exactly* eighteen inches across,' Charles explained, between bursts of laughter, 'they will not pass inspection. He has his men rolling and unrolling them all afternoon, until the dimensions are *precisely correct*. Keeping them on their toes, he calls it. Oh dear. Oh dear.' He rocked back and forth. 'That fellow will be the death of me.'

Dorothea could only wonder if there was more truth in Charles's remark than he knew. She had heard about Captain Sanderson's explosive temper. He had once thrown a chamber pot at his servant's head because the aforesaid pot had not been emptied. He had once broken a door by slamming it, hard, in a fit of rage. And there had been certain other incidents of a violent nature involving animals, natives and convicts—none of whom were safe from Captain Sanderson's wrath if they displeased him in any way. But Dorothea had not believed Captain Sanderson's fellow officers to be in danger until one afternoon, early in July, Charles stumbled home with his arm in a splint and his jaw badly scraped. With him were Jack Lynch, Captain Miller and Captain Sanderson.

Dorothea saw them approaching through her drawing-room window. She immediately flew to the front door, flung it open and shrilly called her husband's name. What had happened? Was he badly hurt? While Charles replied in petulant tones that he was not, Captain Sanderson grinned and Captain Miller giggled. They seemed to be highly amused about something.

'But your arm!' Dorothea exclaimed, as Captain Brande mounted the front steps with a slow and heavy tread. 'Is it broken?'

'Of course it is!' Charles retorted testily. 'Would I be wearing this thing, if it were not?'

'Do not be overanxious, Mrs Brande,' Captain Sanderson interrupted. 'A cracked bone will mend easily enough.' Having helped Captain Brande into the drawing room, he lowered him onto the sofa and winked. 'Though a sip of brandy would be of great comfort, I feel sure,' he added.

'But what happened?' Dorothea was almost weeping with distress. 'Who did this to him?'

'A boy with a fowl,' Captain Sanderson replied, and Captain Miller snorted.

'A *boy*? With a *fowl*?' Dorothea gasped. 'Do you mean to say—'

'I fell off my horse!' Charles snapped. 'That cursed boy startled it! Now where are the keys, Mrs Brande? I need a restorative.'

'Doctor's orders,' Captain Sanderson agreed, whereupon Captain Miller snorted once again.

'Surgeon Forster has seen you, then?' Dorothea wanted to know, as she unlocked the tantalus. Captain Miller was asked to pour the brandy, since Dorothea's hands were shaking too much to have granted her any facility in such a task (had she even wished to undertake it). 'What are his orders? Should you be in bed, Charles?'

'No! What do you take me for?' Swallowing his restorative, Charles grimaced. 'A knock like this is nothing. The merest nothing.'

'An officer of His Majesty must take such blows in his stride, Mrs Brande,' Captain Sanderson announced, in such gravely majestic accents that Captain Miller was again overcome by a fit of giggles, which he was obliged to suppress behind his hand. Charles, with a fierce look, instructed Captain Sanderson not to be 'such a damned fool'—before begging his wife's pardon for this intemperate language.

'I am not myself,' he complained. 'Indeed I am not. Good God, my head aches like the devil.'

'Did you strike your head?' Dorothea exclaimed. 'Oh Charles, you must go to bed at *once*! I shall darken the bedroom, and give you a saline wash.'

'No, no ...'

'Be easy, Mrs Brande,' said Captain Sanderson. 'Say the word, and I shall have him on his back in no time.'

'Be damned you will!'

'Oh—oh no,' Dorothea stammered. 'Thank you, but—no. Really.' She simply wanted Captain Sanderson to go, and to take Captain Miller with him. She was afraid that they would settle down with the brandy bottle, and not leave until it was empty.

But her fears were unfounded. The two officers did leave, within half an hour of their arrival; they seemed eager to go. Charles observed bleakly that they were no doubt anxious to return to barracks, where they could discuss his condition freely, without risk of being overheard by him. Having witnessed at first hand his ignominy, they would naturally want to share their observations with their fellow officers.

'Let 'em have their fun,' he growled. 'I'll not prevent it.'

'But Charles,' said Dorothea, 'why would anyone find your injury laughable?'

'Because it *is* laughable!' her husband replied. 'I was winning, you see, and then that cursed child—he was chasing a deuced *chicken*, would you credit such a thing? They crossed my path, and my horse had not the sense to run over them.'

Dorothea winced. He did not mean it, she felt sure.

'I was convinced that Miller would rupture a vein, he was laughing so much. You would think that no one had ever taken a tumble before. At least Sanderson showed *some* restraint. He even had the sense to send a man after my horse.'

'But Charles,' said Dorothea, 'what do you mean, you were winning? Winning what?'

Charles mumbled something incomprehensible. Then he winced, and Dorothea became concerned with his discomfort and how it might be alleviated by the positioning of cushions, the ingestion of a soothing syrup, and the summoning of



Surgeon Forster. Nursing her husband was a very absorbing pastime. During the next few days, although he insisted on visiting the mess on several occasions, Dorothea was kept busy satisfying his restless need for food, drink, medicine, amusement and an extra pair of hands. Jack Lynch was invaluable at this time. He supplied Captain Brande not only with his skilful tendance, but with someone upon whom Charles could vent his anger. Nevertheless, Jack Lynch was not present at night—and it was at night that Captain Brande, unable to find a comfortable position so as to ease the ache in his arm, became most troublesome. Dorothea slept very little during the first three nights after her husband's mishap. She found that his constant moaning, and shifting, and calls for hot or cold compresses made her as wakeful as he.

At last, however, the pain subsided. And it was at about this time, during a visit from Mrs Molle, that Dorothea learned the truth about Charles's injury.

She discovered, from Mrs Molle, that it had been sustained during a race in Hyde Park. Captain Brande and Captain Sanderson had been racing their horses.

'A race? In Hyde Park?' Dorothea said. 'But why would they be racing horses in Hyde Park?'

'I have no notion,' Mrs Molle replied.

'Had they nothing more useful to do with their time? Why were they not employed in their duties?'

'The duties of most young officers do not appear to *me* to be very onerous,' said Mrs Molle, with a half-smile. 'But that is a matter I leave to the Colonel.'

'I had thought that Charles must have been engaged in an exercise. In some kind of drill,' Dorothea murmured, much perplexed. 'To be injured in the course of one's duty—there is nothing shameful in that.'

'No,' Mrs Molle agreed.

'But a race in Hyde Park ...' Dorothea shook her head. 'It seems very foolish,' she concluded, fretfully. 'I wonder at him, indeed I do.' She did more than wonder; she marvelled. Was

Charles so keen to earn the approbation of his fellow officers (no matter how unpraiseworthy they might be) that he would risk his neck in the process? It seemed to argue a want of character. Moreover, Dorothea regarded as insulting the fact that Charles had neglected to tell her the truth about his accident. In consequence, she had been shocked into making certain unwise remarks to Mrs Molle. But when accused of failing her in this particular, Charles defended himself vigorously.

'I made no secret of the circumstances,' he declared.

'You did, Charles. You did not mention a race.'

'I did, indeed.'

'You did not.'

'I beg your pardon, Madam, but I told you that I was winning! What other conclusion could a woman of any *sense* have drawn?'

Dorothea flushed. After sleeping so poorly, she was not herself in a very good temper.

'I cannot understand it,' she said. 'Why would you do such a foolish thing?'

'Excuse *me*, Mrs Brande—'

'Little wonder that you made a spectacle of yourself!'

'I'll *thank* you, Madam, to keep a civil tongue in your head!'

'It seems to me that Captain Sanderson has had a very bad influence on you! You would not have done such a stupid thing before *his* arrival!'

They were sitting at the dining table, opposite each other, and for an instant Dorothea was afraid that Charles would strike her. But the moment passed, almost before she was aware of it. Charles contented himself with merely lurching to his feet—so abruptly that his chair fell to the floor—and slamming his open palm down onto the tabletop.

'You,' he said, through his teeth, 'are one of the most *tiresome* women of my acquaintance.'

And he went off to the mess, leaving Dorothea to finish her meal alone.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN



CHARLES RETURNED HOME VERY late that night. Dorothea had been long abed (though wakeful) when she heard the sound of someone knocking at the front door. Having left a candle burning, she was able to rise quickly; she went into the corridor, and demanded, in an apprehensive squeak, the identity of the person seeking admittance.

‘Jack Lynch,’ came the reply.

‘Jack?’

‘With the master.’

As Dorothea fumbled with the latch, she heard another voice—Charles’s voice—forming a series of incomprehensible grunts and sibilants. When she opened the door, she saw why his tongue was moving with clumsy incoherence.

He was so drunk as to be incapable of standing upright.

‘Mind,’ said Jack, lurching past her. He was supporting Captain Brande with one arm. ‘Yer pardon, Ma’am, but where should I ...?’

‘Th-there.’ Dorothea pointed to the bedroom. Seeing Jack hesitate, she realised that the bedroom was dark, and quickly went ahead of him, lighting the way.

Charles began to mumble something about a ‘pot’.

‘Jest set it down there,’ Jack advised. ‘The candle, Ma’am ... there.’ In the dimness, his face was inscrutable. ‘I’ll see to this.’

'But —'

'I'll see to it, Ma'am. Best leave it to me.' His voice was firm, but kind, and Dorothea was too shocked to take offence. She retreated into the moonlit drawing room, where her numb disbelief gradually gave way to a sense of mortification. She could hear Charles croaking and honking across the corridor. She could hear Jack Lynch's reassuring murmur. Never had she seen her husband in such a state. Had it affected his arm? Had he fallen, and disturbed the splint? She could not comprehend how any gentleman, how any *officer*, could disgrace himself in such a way—and before a common private! It was Jack's presence that troubled Dorothea most of all. When he finally emerged from the bedroom, and approached her with the candle, Dorothea could hardly bring herself to look into his pock-marked face.

'I put the Captain to bed,' he remarked. 'Will you be needin' me further, Ma'am?'

'No. Thank you.'

'Then I'll be gettin' back to barracks.' He stood regarding her for a moment, his long eyes as black as pitch in the shadows. Dorothea sensed that he was enjoying himself to some degree, though he did not show it by any flicker of expression or turn of phrase. Perhaps his feelings were suggested by his easy posture—so different from his parade-ground stance.

'Thank you, Jack,' she said faintly.

He turned, and left. Dorothea shut the door behind him before braving the bedroom, where her husband was groaning softly in a nest of blankets. He was wearing a nightshirt, but no nightcap. His eyes were closed.

As Dorothea timidly advanced, they opened suddenly. With a yelp of alarm he threw himself sideways, and vomited onto the floor.

Dorothea retreated.

'Ah ... ah ...' She could hear him moaning—retching and moaning. The sound made her own stomach turn. She

stumbled back into the corridor, tears welling in her eyes, and propped herself against a wall. It was too much. It was too awful. But she knew that she could not stay where she was forever.

Presently, when the sound of harsh snoring reached her ears, she dabbed her eyes with her sleeve, sniffed vigorously, and went off to the kitchen.

She was hoping that Daniel would be asleep. She was hoping that he would be so deeply, so profoundly asleep that she would not wake him in her quest for a bucket of water. While she had no wish to clean up her husband's unspeakable mess herself, she thought it a preferable outcome to that which would inevitably follow if she shirked the task. For she could not endure the thought of having two of her staff—not one, but *two*—witness the depths to which Charles could sink, given sufficient encouragement.

She was quite sure that Captain Sanderson was to blame. Captain Sanderson was a notoriously heavy drinker. His abilities in the field of intemperance had been much remarked upon by Captain Brande.

Captain Sanderson, she decided, was leading Charles astray. And Charles could not seem to prevent it.

The kitchen door creaked as she pushed it open. Holding her breath, she slipped into the richly scented shadows, which were only faintly illumined by the glowing embers in the hearth. Copper gleamed. Grease glistened. Ranks of bottles stood to attention on a window sill.

Dorothea squealed.

'Oh!' she cried. 'Oh ...' She put her hand to her heart. 'What are you *doing*?'

Daniel looked at her in slowly dawning astonishment. He had been sitting on a stool, in the dark, with his head in his hands. He rose clumsily.

'Ma'am,' he said.

'What—what are you doing, sitting there? You should be asleep!'

'I was awakened, Ma'am.' He sounded confused. "'Twas a bad dream.'

'Oh.'

'They trouble me ...' he began, but trailed off, and seemed almost to shake himself. 'Is somethin' amiss?' he continued, more sharply. 'Can I help ye?'

Dorothea was tempted to say 'no'. If she were to take water and a cloth—two cloths—back to the bedroom, Daniel would be none the wiser. She said: 'I need water in a bucket. And some rags.'

'Rags?' he echoed, staring.

'Now, if you please!'

'Aye, Ma'am.' He retrieved a pail, which he filled from a brimming pitcher. Then he fetched a couple of dishcloths.

'Give them to me,' said Dorothea.

'Ma'am?'

*'Give them to me!'*

Silently, he offered them up. Dorothea could feel him watching her as she tucked them under one arm and tried to lift the pail.

'Will ye be carryin' the bucket, also?' he asked softly.

'I shall.'

'Ma'am—yeer pardon, but—'

'Go to sleep!' she snapped. She was so ashamed of herself that she had to speak curtly, lest she burst into tears. Turning her face from Daniel, she staggered through the door, bent almost double. The water was extraordinarily heavy. She was forced to set it down at frequent intervals—once just outside the kitchen, once halfway between the kitchen and the house, and twice inside the house. Upon reaching the back step she looked over her shoulder, and saw a dim silhouette hovering at the kitchen door.

It disappeared when she instructed it (for the second time) to go to sleep.

But she was not to be left in peace to accomplish her task. No sooner had she settled herself by her marital bed, beside

her husband's foul deposit, than the sodden dishcloth was plucked from her hand. Daniel, it appeared, had used the noise of Captain Brande's penetrating snores to conceal the noise of his own approach.

He apologised, very softly, for having disobeyed her orders. 'Tis not fit for ye,' he whispered. 'Tis not, indeed.'

She opened her mouth. No sound emerged.

'Ma'am, will ye let me do it? Please?' Without touching her, he somehow propelled her from the room. She found herself on the sofa, waiting in the dark. She had no handkerchief. Her nose was running.

She sniffed, and sniffed again, and hid her face in her hands. I cannot cry, she decided. I *will* not cry. Not now. By firmly refusing to think about anything—least of all her current predicament—she was able to exert some self control.

Daniel's big, dark shape was suddenly discernible in the corridor, straining only slightly to support the weight of a full bucket. Every detail of his appearance was lost in shadow.

'Will that be all, Ma'am?' he asked quietly.

'Yes.' Dorothea was acutely conscious of how unsteady her voice was. 'Thank you.'

He hesitated. Then he said: 'A drop or two o' the rosewater—'

'Yes. Thank you. I shall.'

He nodded. Dorothea waited until she heard the back door close before she went to it and drew the latch, groping around in the darkness. Then she returned to the bedroom, where she was able to change her nightgown—and sprinkle rosewater across the bedroom floor—without rousing her husband. Despite his snores, he slept quite soundly. He twitched, and groaned, and made other sounds associated with a disturbed digestion, but he never once woke. Dorothea lay rigid beside him until the watch cried three. After that she dozed fitfully until sunrise.

She was awake and dressed, and sitting on the drawing-room sofa wrapped in a woollen shawl, when Daniel came to

light the fire. With no maid sleeping in the house, and nothing but a latch on the back door, Dorothea had been forced to give Daniel a key to the front door so that he might admit himself of a morning. He was therefore half inside the room, struggling with his cinderpail and brushbox, before he noticed Dorothea.

He gasped, and dropped a brush.

'Has Peg come?' she asked him, without meeting his eye.

'Aye. That she has,' was his murmured response.

'Then I shall speak to her about breakfast.' Dorothea knew that breakfast would have to be served late if Captain Brande was to be accommodated. For herself, she had no appetite. The thought of food revolted her. The thought of Peg Whiting also revolted her. Peg Whiting's cheerfulness was hardly to be endured on such a morning; it was an offence to her own fragility. But to stay in the drawing room while Daniel built a fire was unthinkable. What if he should take advantage? What if he should *say* something—something impertinent?

No. Even as the possibility crossed her mind, she dismissed it. Daniel would say nothing intentionally impertinent. If he spoke at all, it would undoubtedly be to offer assistance—practical assistance—and the look accompanying his offer would contain nothing but sympathy.

He would not understand that any expression of sympathy would be an impertinence in itself.

So Dorothea went to the kitchen, and spoke to Peg. They discussed lard, pewter, vinegar and hashed veal en blanquette. They agreed that the bread needed freshening in a gentle oven before it could be consumed. Hearing a bell ring, Dorothea realised that Charles must be conscious, and at least partly ambulant; she returned to the house just in time to admit Jack Lynch, who had arrived from the barracks impeccably groomed. There was a jauntiness about him that sickened Dorothea. It was an affront to her after such a night. But she said nothing. Wordlessly, she allowed him to attend her husband, who requested—through Jack—only a tisane for breakfast. Then she put on a bonnet, and escaped from the house.



She could endure it no longer. It was full of people whom she wished to avoid, most particularly her husband. Charles, she was aware, would be in a most unappealing condition that morning, and she was frightened to confront him. She did not want to turn from him in disgust. She was already disgusted—disgusted and angry—and she knew that if, upon their next meeting, his words or appearance did not reassure her in some way, there was a danger that they might become seriously estranged from each other. She had no desire for such a separation of interests. To live in a disunited state would be insupportable. It did not bear thinking of.

Feeling almost stifled, therefore, she rushed out into the street and headed north. It was bitterly cold. The lowering sky was grey, and the wind had an icy edge to it. Dorothea might almost have been in England, save that no English prospect would have offered so little completion—so insubstantial and makeshift a character. Everything was raw. The land appeared to be newly cleared (except for the roads, which were perilously well used). To her left, the churned mud and rickety dwellings fell away to Soldier's Point and Cockle Bay. To her right, the freestone wall of the barracks loomed as straight as a sentinel. Against it a small child was leaning, his two hands meeting above his head, his feet placed apart. Dorothea did not instantly comprehend that he was mimicking the attitude of a convict on the triangle.

When one of his companions brought a reed down onto his back, however, the child's melodramatic shriek quickly enlightened her.

She staggered, and turned away.

I cannot endure this, she thought. I should not be here. For a moment she contemplated the possibility of seeking out Mrs Molle, but decided against it. At this early hour, questions were bound to be asked, even if the Colonel had *not* witnessed Captain Brande's disgraceful retreat from his mess the previous night. And Mrs Vale's house, of course, was an equally impossible destination. Mrs Cowper's residence?

Perhaps. Mrs Cowper was not of the Regiment, and would probably remain uninformed regarding Captain Brande's disgraceful behaviour.

But as she approached St Philip's, Dorothea suddenly changed her mind. She entered the church instead. All at once she could not bear the thought of making civil conversation with Mrs Cowper—and to walk any further was out of the question. To walk any further was to cross Charlotte Place, and plunge into the Rocks. It was to risk encountering Gallows Hill. So Dorothea sought the safety of her parish church, hoping that the Reverend Cowper was not, at that moment, attending to his pastoral duties within it. She knew that Mrs Cowper would not be in evidence. At such an early hour, Mrs Cowper was more likely to be feeding her brood than arranging flowers on the altar. Her husband, however, might be inspecting his domain, or reflecting upon the Godhead in the tranquillity of an empty chancel. To Dorothea, he had always presented the appearance of a man much given to solitary musings.

Therefore she was greatly relieved to find the church uninhabited, save for one lone young man, of obviously diminished intellect, plying a broom. He did not look up as Dorothea sat down. Her shoes and stockings were too thin; her feet were already frozen. Surreptitiously, she blew on her hands—and her breath emerged as a puff of white vapour. The church was a cold and cavernous barn. It offered no comfort. God was not lurking among the rough-hewn pews. If He was anywhere, He was back in her father's former church, at Aschcombe. She felt sometimes that God had turned away from her, because she had followed her baser desires (all firmly directed at Charles's classical profile and silky eyelashes) to the very lowest portion of the earth, a place of moral inversion—or perversion—where criminals arrested criminals, and rode about in carriages clad in silk and pearls.

She wondered what her sin had been to deserve such punishment. Did it lie in marrying for love? She was so terribly

tired of this place. She was afraid that it would destroy her love for her husband.

Briefly, she whispered a prayer of entreaty. She could not stay longer, for the cold was eating into her joints. She knew that she would have to return to her husband's house, although she was reluctant; she knew that she could not flee because there was nowhere else to go. Consequently she rose with an effort and shuffled back into the churchyard. In the sullen light, it looked bleaker than ever. The clock on the tower indicated that the time was a quarter after eight.

With her head bowed, and her shoulders hunched against the wind, she made her way slowly down Clarence Street. By now she was thinking of little except her desire for a hot cup of tea. Picking her way between the gorge-like ruts, blinkered by her enfolding bonnet, she did not see Daniel until he was almost upon her. When he spoke, she started. She looked up with a pounding heart.

'Oh!' she said. 'Daniel.' His nose and cheeks were bright pink. 'Have you been searching for me?'

'I was sent to find ye,' he admitted.

'Well, here I am.'

'Aye.'

She stared at him dully. He watched her. His eyes looked as heavy as his frame. His melancholy face was even longer than usual.

'I was sent to find ye at the Colonel's house,' he added after a pause, and Dorothea straightened.

'You have not been to Mrs *Molle's*?' she exclaimed.

'Aye.'

'Oh—oh—' She could have stamped her foot in despair. 'Oh *bother* it all!'

'He sent me. Captain Brande.'

She brushed past him rudely. She knew that he was not to blame, but she nevertheless resented him because he had alerted Mrs Molle to her predicament. As she neared her husband's house, however, she regretted her display of ill humour, much as

she regretted the necessity of having to advance up the front steps. She slowed, and stopped when she reached the gate. She turned back to address Daniel, who was following several paces behind her.

'Of course you had to obey Captain Brande,' she said. 'I understand that.'

He gazed at her mutely.

'Thank you, Daniel,' she added. 'As you see, I am perfectly all right.'

He seemed unconvinced. Nevertheless, he did not follow her through the front door. She entered it alone, with a heavy heart, and immediately smelled ginger. Charles was sitting in the drawing room, nursing a spicy tisane. He was wrapped in a gown, but his hair was oiled and combed. There was a rueful look on his face, which was pale, but not particularly ravaged. Illness or debauchery never seemed to deprive Charles of his beauty. They simply lent it a frangible air.

Dorothea entered the room, shutting the door behind her. Charles sighed.

Their eyes met.

'How could you expose me in such a way?' she said at last.

'It was unforgiveable,' he muttered. 'I drank too much. I undertake not to do it again.'

'The servants ...'

'Jack will not take advantage of his position,' Charles declared, his eyes narrowing. All at once there was more vigour in his tone. 'I shall see to that.'

'But Charles ...' his wife began, before trailing off helplessly. It was clear to her that he did not understand. The *shame* of their situation—the dismally sordid nature of it—could he not comprehend how mortifying it was? 'Do you understand what you did? Do you understand what *Daniel* had to do?'

'Daniel knows his place, I hope. If not, I shall have a word with him.'

Dorothea put her hand to her brow. Charles set down his cup, and reached for her with his good arm.

'Come and sit on my knee,' he implored her. 'I feel like the very devil, you know.'

'How can you — ?' She stopped.

'How can I what? Out with it.' His countenance took on a sulky aspect. 'I suppose you must read me a sermon, and I would rather have it all at once. So we can be comfortable after.'

The injustice of this reproach caused Dorothea's lip to tremble. She cast her gaze to the ceiling, so as to prevent her tears from spilling over.

'I want to go home,' she whimpered.

'Eh? What's that?'

'I want to go home. I cannot stay here. I cannot.' Her voice cracked on a sob. 'I want to go home to Margaret!'

Abandoning herself to misery, she was not at first conscious of Charles's arm around her. He had risen, and was patting her awkwardly. 'There, there,' he said. 'There, there.' A fire crackled with inappropriate liveliness in the hearth.

'Everything here is wrong,' she gasped.

'I know.'

'Please ...' She turned a pair of wet, pleading eyes on him. 'Send me back.'

'What?'

'I have to go back! I *cannot* stay here!'

'What you need is a hartshorn,' he said, with decision. 'A hartshorn and a good, long rest.'

'I need to go *home*!'

'My dear Thea, I do sympathise. But that is out of the question. Go back to England? On your own? Impossible.'

His face, hovering before her, dissolved in the blur of her tears.

'Come now,' he continued kindly. 'Do you know what such an undertaking would cost us? All of thirty pounds, in addition to the provisions—one hundred and twenty gallons of water, the flour, the raisins, the tea—'

'I want to go!'

'And so you shall—within two years. The Regiment will not remain here forever.'

'I want to go *now*!'

But he was becoming impatient with her. She could deduce it from the tone of his voice. Speaking more firmly, he reminded her that she was an officer's wife, that like her husband she must do her duty. She was constantly running to Mrs Molle for comfort—why not imitate Mrs Molle's energy, devotion and cheerful hardness?

'You think so highly of Mrs Molle's advice,' he went on, with a not entirely appreciative smile, 'that I am astonished you do not model your conduct on hers. She is, after all, a most superior officer's wife.'

Dorothea gazed at him in despair. Did he really think that she had rushed off to discuss her troubles with Mrs Molle? Was he really so insensible to the delicacy of her feelings? Had he no appreciation of her dutiful regard?

'Of course you must stay here,' he concluded. 'You are my wife, Mrs Brande. What sort of a figure would I cut, if you were to sail off to England without me? I would not be able to show my face in the mess, if that were so!'

He laughed, then, and winced—his head was still troubling him.

Defeated, Dorothea went to make him a cold compress.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN



THE WINTER DRAGGED ON. Slowly Charles's wrist healed; his splint was removed late in July. Mr Ellis Bent continued very ill. Dorothea herself contracted a cold, which she treated with an excellent remedy that was rendered less excellent by the impossibility of acquiring aniseed in New South Wales. Mrs Molle and her children went to visit Mrs Macarthur (and Mrs Macquarie) in Parramatta, returning with a gift of bulbs for Dorothea, each carefully wrapped in a rough hempen cloth.

Dorothea penned a note of thanks to Mrs Macarthur for her thoughtfulness.

Her interest in the garden had flagged somewhat. Although the vegetables continued to flourish in Daniel's attentive care, Dorothea's twelve tiny rose cuttings remained leafless in their winter hibernation. Gazing out of a window at the four naked twigs that flanked her gate, Dorothea felt sorry for them. They seemed to cower beneath a foreign sky. They were suspended, as she was. Frozen, as she was. They waited to bloom like the roses on her receiving cloth, which she had abandoned, unfinished, some time ago. Why tempt fate? Though she knew it to be a superstitious notion, she felt that completing the cloth would by some means ensure that she would never produce the infant for whom it had been designed. As if God were a vengeful God, or at least one who delighted in dashing hopes and foiling expectations.

Standing at the drawing-room window, Dorothea studied her pitiful roses. They were well nourished, well watered and well placed in full sunlight, yet still they did not flourish—not yet. She suddenly recalled a discussion in Bideham Park on the subject of roses. How beautifully, how elegantly, they had spoken! Lady Shortland had recited a portion of Ben Johnson's song to Celia: *'I sent thee late a rosy wreath/Not so much honouring thee/As giving it a hope that there/It could not withered be.'* Mr Henry Brande had made many learned observations on the use of roses in classical times; he had pointed out that they were sacred to Venus, that the Graces had worn them, and that Cupid was fabled to have conferred the first rose on Harpocrates, the God of Silence. Even Miss Louisa Shortland had made a delicate contribution, observing that in certain parts of Surrey it was customary to plant rose bushes on the graves of unmarried men and women.

'Ah, but what a sad association,' Mr Mainwaring had protested. 'I prefer to reflect on the festival of St Medard, wherein the rose crown of Salency was presented to the maiden who, by general acclaim, was considered to be the most modest, good-tempered and obedient.' He had added, in a low voice, 'How sad it is that the season prevents me from cutting roses!' and Miss Louisa had blushed—like a rose.

Naturally, Miss Louisa Shortland had soon after married Mr Robert Mainwaring. She had worn a wreath of roses on her wedding day. Dorothea remembered with pain the poetry of this gesture, and of the courtship that had preceded it. She remembered, with a kind of dismayed astonishment, the richness of many other discussions at Bideham Park. Little wonder that she felt deprived, in this land of banal conversation. Social intercourse here was like a desert in which one circled, as if lost, the same unwholesome ground over and over again. Convicts. Servants. Emancipists. Illness. The weather. The harvest. The natives. Governor Macquarie—and back to convicts again.

There was a knock on the door.



‘Yes?’ she said, after returning quickly to the sofa (and her workbasket). ‘Come in.’

Daniel entered. He smelled of earth, though he had clearly made an effort to wash. Still, however, the dirt clung to his clothes and remained beneath his fingernails.

‘Yeer pardon, Ma’am ...’

‘Yes?’

‘Would ye help me with the beans, by a mercy?’

Daniel had been planting broadbeans. These had come to Dorothea courtesy of the regimental garden, via Mrs Molle, who had instructed Dorothea to sow the beans in late August, in some warm corner of the garden where the soil was ‘light and mellow’.

Dorothea had forgotten about them completely, until Daniel had brought them to her attention.

‘Help?’ she said vaguely. ‘What do you mean?’

‘I’m not well acquainted with the beans, Ma’am,’ he replied. ‘Can ye tell me the distance that must fall between each, and how deep they must lie in the earth?’

Dorothea blinked. She had received from Mrs Molle no advice of so detailed a nature.

‘Indeed, I—I am not sure,’ she replied.

‘Can the book tell us?’

‘The book?’

‘Yeer book about gardens.’

Dorothea had not consulted *The Gentleman’s Garden* for some time. But it lay quite near, on the draped stool that served her as a table; it was sitting on top of the Holy Scriptures, and beneath Mrs Bent’s latest offering—another Gothic tale from Mrs Eleanor Sleath. Dorothea reached for it.

‘I think it unlikely that such topics will be addressed in this particular volume,’ she warned Daniel, as she bent her gaze to the table of contents. She was mistaken, however. Attached to the chapter entitled *The Kitchen Garden; its purpose, situation, exposure, aspect, extent, soil, walls, irrigation, form &c* was an appendix dealing with vegetables and their propagation. Mr

Wells's advice concerning the broadbean followed hard upon his study of the asparagus plant.

*'Plant all the early kinds,' Dorothea read, 'both for early and late crops, in rows two feet and a half apart, three or four inches distant from each other in the rows, and two inches deep.'*

'Ah,' said Daniel, nodding.

*With a rake fill in the holes, leaving the ground smooth and even; and thus proceed until the whole of the space is completed. As soon as the beans are up about three, four or five inches, they should be earthed up on each side of the row, and all weeds removed. The hoeing must be repeated as often as necessary. If the ground between the rows were stirred with a fork, after the hoeing is finished, it would be of considerable advantage to their growth.*

Daniel nodded again. 'Aye,' he said reverently, 'tis a fine, full book. Would it be speakin' of any other produce?'

'Red beet,' Dorothea replied, her eye running down the page. 'White beet. Cabbage and kale. Carrots. Cauliflower. Coleworts. Celery. Cucumber—'

'Cucumber!' Daniel exclaimed. 'What is that?'

'A vegetable.' Dorothea turned the page. 'Fruits are discussed here, also. Flowers ...'

'Roses?'

'Exhaustively.' Mr Wells even proffered suggestions for a 'dry bank or border', pointing out that cornflowers, red valerian and wormwoods were not thirsty plants. Dorothea related this fact to Daniel with mounting enthusiasm, mindful of Sydney Cove's parched summers. They discussed the possibility of planting violets, pansies and forget-me-nots. Daniel requested that Dorothea read aloud the paragraphs dealing with orchards. *'Espaliered fruit trees provide a useful ornament to warm walls,'* she murmured. 'Our northern wall is very warm. Could we fashion a peach tree against it?'

'A peach is a royal fruit, so 'tis,' said Daniel. 'I ate a peach

once, and 'twas gold in the flesh, with a blood-red heart. Like a prince of the ancient fables.'

'Of course, if we *were* to plant a peach tree, I might not be here to see it fruit,' Dorothea observed. 'The Regiment will move on, and I shall move on with it.' For the first time, this knowledge caused her a small—a very small—pang of regret. It would have been pleasant to see her garden come of age. 'Two years will hardly suffice,' she continued, idly flicking through page after page of instruction. 'Oh look—hyacinths and daffodils. Tulips.'

The silence that followed these remarks suddenly alerted Dorothea to the irregularity of her situation. Once again, she had been speaking carelessly, not to a gentleman gardener, but to a convict. Looking up, she saw that he was watching her gravely.

'Perhaps,' she said, averting her eyes again, 'you might stay on when we leave, Daniel. Stay and tend the garden for the next tenant. That is ...' She faltered as the realisation dawned on her that she was all but touching on the subject of his sentence. She did not like to think about his sentence. It was far too closely related to the fact that he had once committed a crime.

He himself seemed unaffected, however.

'Aye,' he said. 'I'll not be a free man, not in two years. I was sent down for seven.'

'I see.' Dorothea cleared her throat.

'I'll be lookin' at three years more when you go, Ma'am, and if I was to live 'em out in this garden, I could ask for nothin' better. I could ask for nothin' better than to see it grow.'

'Yes, of course,' said Dorothea, her colour high, her nose buried deep in her book.

'And if I live the last three years of my sentence as I've lived the first two,' Daniel finished, 'God would have served me well. I'm grateful to you, Ma'am. This has not been hard labour.'

*'A very good way to protect beans from birds, mice and slugs is to strew a layer of sawdust half an inch thick over the drill after the beans have been sown and covered,'* Dorothea read, speaking rapidly.

*'Mice never touch it; birds do not like it, and never meddle with the beans when they appear through it; and it hinders the slugs by sticking to them. What an excellent notion!'* She continued to read, her gaze fixed firmly on the page in front of her, until she sensed, by some noise or movement or shift in the light, that she was no longer the subject of Daniel's undivided attention. Looking up, she saw that he was staring over her shoulder, out of the window.

She turned her head, and gasped.

A cluster of natives, dressed in an ill-assorted smattering of clothes, had taken up a position beside her front gate. Several of them were propped against her fence, laughing and chattering. One was smoking a pipe, another nursing a naked infant. They presented a fearsome aspect, with their wild, dark hair and shambling gait.

'Oh dear,' Dorothea whispered. She glanced at Daniel, who was reassuringly large. His shoulders were broad and his wrists were thick. He would have towered over any native who dared challenge him.

'It is the Governor's fault,' she said huskily. 'He is far too tender with the natives. He thinks that by building them a town, and sending them to school, he will win them over!' All at once the dark-skinned figures began to move, and Dorothea held her breath. They ambled past the gate, along the fence, around the corner. They vanished from her sight. But they appeared to be skirting the boundaries of her garden, so she could not be easy.

'Are they following the fence?' she asked. 'Daniel! Can you see?'

'From the next room, I'll see,' said Daniel, and hurried into the dining room. Dorothea pursued him anxiously. They sidled to the window and peered out. The natives had paused again, this time near the kitchen garden. Leaning over the fence, they pointed and gestured. Dorothea clutched Daniel's arm.

'They will eat our winter vegetables!' she wailed.

'Ah, no,' he said.

‘Yes! Look!’

‘They must climb the fence. Would they climb the fence?’

‘Of course they would! They are savages!’ Dorothea urged him to take action. ‘You must chase them away, Daniel! Go! Quickly! Before they steal everything!’

He hesitated. Dorothea wondered, suddenly, if he was afraid. She dropped his arm and he moved away from her, out of the room, out of the house.

Through the window she could see him approaching the natives, rather tentatively. But she could not hear what he said to them.

Oh dear, she thought. There are so many, and Daniel is unarmed. I should have told him to fetch a spade or a broom.

Whatever he said, however, did not appear to enrage them at all. On the contrary, they responded in the blithest manner possible, two or three speaking at once, with a great show of grinning white teeth and fluttering hands. They seemed to be asking questions. When Daniel replied, there was a burst of laughter on the other side of the fence. Then more questions. Then another, reluctant response.

What is he doing? Dorothea thought crossly.

Becoming impatient, she went to the back door, and arrived there to see that the natives were in the process of being dislodged. Their group had begun to scatter. Their smiles had faded. But Daniel was not responsible for this change of mood. For one confused moment, Dorothea was under the impression that he had, indeed, effected the transformation. When she heard a sharp voice, however, and saw a flash of steel, she realised that someone else had arrived upon the scene.

It was Captain Sanderson, wielding his sword. Captain Brande was following close behind.

‘You vermin!’ roared Captain Sanderson. ‘Out! *Out*, you curs! By God, I’ll have your lights and livers!’

Sullenly, the natives dispersed. They seemed to melt away (like the shadows they so closely resembled) before the challenge of a naked blade and the overwhelming quality of

Captain Sanderson's stentorian voice. Charles was laughing. His hand was on the hilt of his own sword, but he was bent double with laughter, and presented no great threat.

He leaned on the fence as his companion pursued the natives for fifty yards or so, shouting imprecations.

Dorothea approached him.

'You are early home,' she said.

'By a lucky chance,' he replied, still grinning, his gaze fixed admiringly on Captain Sanderson's receding figure. 'You might have lost your vegetables, else.'

'Why is Captain Sanderson here?' Dorothea's tone was such that it caused her husband to look at her.

'Why should he not be?'

'I have told you why.' She kept her voice low. 'You know my feelings.'

'Your feelings are altogether too sensitive,' he growled. 'I must consult Captain Sanderson.'

'About what?'

'About the letter from Greenwood, Cox and Co.'

Dorothea was familiar with the letter. It concerned a slight disagreement involving stoppages for provisions.

'I should have thought that your Paymaster would give better advice concerning the regimental agent,' she protested. 'How can Captain Sanderson help you?'

'By not continually questioning my every decision!' Charles snapped. He was prevented from commenting further, however, by Captain Sanderson's return. Resplendent in his uniform, Captain Sanderson was breathing heavily, and his face was almost the same shade of scarlet as his coat. He stopped by Captain Brande, wiping his forehead.

'The impudence of those scoundrels!' he exclaimed. 'Ah! Mrs Brande. I hope those black rascals were not bothering you?'

'I—I was a little concerned—'

'As you should be, when your servant consorts with natives.' Captain Sanderson lifted his gilded blade, and pointed

it at Daniel. 'I saw him chatting with them, brazen as can be. Shall I teach him a lesson for you?'

'Oh no!' Dorothea was aghast. 'No, no, Daniel was following my instructions! He was sending them away!'

'And making a suspiciously bad job of it,' Captain Sanderson observed. Eyeing Daniel across the fence, he slowly sheathed his sword and added, in jovial accents: 'If you ask me, he is pursuing one of their dusky belles. Is that not so, my fine fellow?'

Charles began to laugh again. Daniel's glance flickered to Dorothea.

'Well?' said Captain Sanderson. 'Answer me. Is it the smell of rotten fish that excites your interest?'

'Daniel provides us with excellent service,' Dorothea interrupted, flushing as her husband continued to laugh. 'He has never given us cause for concern.'

'For all he is Irish,' Charles broke in, and Captain Sanderson slapped his thigh.

'Is he? Is he, indeed? Then that will account for it.' Turning away, proceeding towards the front of the house, he noisily remarked to Captain Brande that the native Irish had notoriously primitive tastes. 'One only has to look at their women to see why,' he declared.

Then the two officers disappeared from sight. Dorothea looked at Daniel. She felt sorry for him; he was staring at the ground, his arms hanging loose at his sides. For such a big man, he seemed curiously defenceless.

'In my opinion,' she offered, 'when it comes to delicacy of taste, Captain Sanderson compares unfavourably to you, Daniel.'

She meant this to be a compliment, but perhaps it was perceived as faint praise. At any rate, Daniel acknowledged it with a barely perceptible nod, and did not raise his eyes.

He returned to his gardening while Dorothea, with a sigh, went into the house to make welcome her unwelcome guest.

New South Wales  
September 28th, 1815

My dearest Margaret,

*This letter must serve as an addendum to the last, in which I provided you with all of our more domestic news. I write now only to acquaint you with certain public events of interest. You must remember my speaking of Mr Jeffery Bent, the brother of Mr Ellis Bent. You may recall that he is a man of fiery disposition, who staunchly refused to open the Supreme Court until the arrival in the colony of one Mr Garling, an attorney of unblemished reputation. Mr Garling arrived in August, and it is expected that the Supreme Court will re-open soon. But that is not the matter deserving of your attention.*

*From March last, Governor Macquarie has been charging a toll at the turnpike gates on the road to Parramatta. (I believe the sum to be threepence for a horse, and tenpence for every score of sheep or swine.) Until recently, Mr Jeffery Bent was not required to pay this toll, any more than the Governor himself, or Colonel Molle, or Mr Ellis Bent, who are exempt owing to their high position. But in August, the toll was once more levied on Mr Jeffery Bent—I do not know why. Perhaps his views on emancipist attorneys have soured the Governor's feelings towards him. In any event, he has recently been asked to pay his threepenny toll, and has refused to do so, being in the habit of riding past the tollbar without stopping. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that tempers should have become inflamed.*

*Three weeks ago, Mr Jeffery Bent was riding with a friend when he approached the tollbar. The gatekeeper immediately shut the gate and slipped the chain around the post. When Mr Jeffery Bent demanded to be let through, the gatekeeper told him that he must pay his toll first. Mr Jeffery Bent (who confesses, in the privacy of his sister-in-law's parlour, that he can become 'rather too excitable' when challenged without*



*justification) declared that he would not. 'I'll pay no toll,' he said, 'I am Judge of this Colony, and if you don't let me pass, I'll send you to gaol!' He then grabbed the gate, said that he would have it cut down and burned, and shook it so violently that the chain was released and the gate swung open. Whereupon he mounted his horse and rode through.*

*A few days later, he received a summons issued by the Superintendent of Police, Dr D'Arcy Wentworth. The summons required him to appear in person before Dr Wentworth at the Police Court, to answer a complaint brought against him by the licensees of the tollbar. I need hardly inform you that Mr Jeffery Bent was enraged. To begin with, he has no faith in the legality of the toll, for he believes that Governor Macquarie holds no legal power or authority to levy taxes upon the subjects of His Majesty the King. Secondly, he abhors Dr Wentworth. Dr Wentworth, he says, is a notorious highwayman, whose medical duties are almost entirely neglected and whose ignorance of the law renders him unfit to be Superintendent of Police. Dr Wentworth, in fact, is so abhorrent to Mr Jeffery Bent that Mr Bent ignored his summons.*

*The case therefore proceeded in Mr Bent's absence, and he was fined two pounds.*

*Since then, he has striven to avoid further insult by avoiding the tollbar altogether. Insult, however, has been offered to him in the pages of a Government order, issued on the day he was fined, wherein the Governor not only enjoined all farmers of tolls, and all magistrates, to enforce the collection of tolls (which was his right, I suppose), but mentioned 'an officer of very high rank in the civil service of this colony' who had refused to pay his dues. According to Mr Jeffery Bent, this reference was very wrong. The Governor, he says, has no authority to censure at all one of His Majesty's judges—and certainly has no right to print his reprimands in a Public Gazette, nor insert them into the Order Book of any regiment in garrison here. Mr Jeffery Bent intends to complain to Lord Bathurst about his ill usage.*

*As you may imagine, the incident has been very much discussed in the drawing rooms of our acquaintances. It is generally felt, among people of any standing, that Mr Jeffery Bent has been most unfortunate. For myself, I cannot help but feel that Mr Jeffery Bent's temper has*

*aggravated his woes. Perhaps, as he says, the toll is illegal. Perhaps, having once been exempted, he should have remained so. Undoubtedly his being singled out in a Government order was very bad. But can you admire the man's conduct at the turnpike, Margaret? I cannot. For all that it may have been justified, I cannot like it.*

*Charles does. He says that, although Mr Jeffery Bent thinks a little too well of himself, he is a man of high principle and good courage. He applauds Mr Bent's actions—no doubt because his fellow officers do the same. I find that I am much exercised as to whether I should applaud them or not. I am troubled by the notion that there are faults on both sides, though of course I have never said as much in Mrs Bent's drawing room. She is greatly attached to her brother-in-law, and will not have a word said against him.*

*Your thoughts on the matter would be of comfort to me. Captain Gill, I should tell you, contends that a toll is not a tax, but something entirely different, and that the Governor therefore has every right to levy it. Would George have any opinions bearing on the issue? Please ask him. I have come to rely on the unshakeable integrity of your principles, Margaret, and know that, where I am guided by you, I shall always walk safely.*

*Kiss your darlings for me, and believe me to be  
your affectionate sister,  
Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN



IN THE SPRING, CAPTAIN BRANDE was once again afflicted by a troublesome sore throat—together with the costiveness and general debility that seemed to accompany this complaint. Though he was able, for the most part, to attend to his duties, they were performed in a sluggish manner from which he could derive no satisfaction. He was morose and short-tempered. He did not sleep well. He faced great difficulty when eating all but the softest foods, and was soon restricted to a diet of arrowroot, broths, soups, stewed oysters and milk puddings. He submitted to Dorothea's prune tisanes and soothing syrups without much grace, but she forgave him his truculence. In truth, she was concerned about his health.

Then Surgeon Forster began to dose him with mercurial pills. This treatment, which had proven successful in the past, did not effect so rapid a cure upon its second application. Charles began to complain of pains in the stomach. His gums became swollen. Though Surgeon Forster declared that such symptoms were to be expected after the consumption of mercurial pills, Dorothea was not happy. She hated to see her husband so weak. When some of his teeth became loose, she appealed to Surgeon Forster, who agreed that the treatment be suspended. Two weeks after its commencement, Captain Brande's throat appeared to have improved.

By this time, Charles was confined to the house. Though

beginning to recover, he was too ill to resume his duties at the barracks, and spent most of his time lying in bed or on the drawing-room sofa, cursing his fate. He was not fond of reading. Dorothea would read to him sometimes, but she could not always be doing so, and Jack Lynch was illiterate. Moreover, though Jack Lynch was always on hand to play cards or chess, his inadequacies in this regard were very trying to Charles's already irritable temper. Charles would not occupy himself with any pastime of a useful nature, such as netting purses, writing letters or mending pens. He was not, in fact, a very satisfactory invalid, requiring constant attention even when his complaint was boredom, rather than discomfort. Lack of occupation made him sullen, snappish and plaintive.

Consequently, Dorothea welcomed as eagerly as her husband did every visitor to the house. Only a continual stream of visitors could keep Charles happy. Even Captain Sanderson was received in a cordial manner, for he improved Charles's spirits, and was forever urging him to 'get up and look alive'. Captains Sanderson, Miller and Clarke were Charles's most frequent visitors, and, although Dorothea discovered that they did not by any means recommend themselves to her on further acquaintance (being noisy and careless), she acknowledged that they nursed a genuine regard for Charles. Only a genuine regard would have brought them to the house so often.

The Molles paid several calls, as did the Reverend Mr Vale—to whom Charles was not much attached—and Surgeon Forster. The Bents were not in a position to call, Mr Bent being very ill. Mr Bent, in fact, was so gravely ill that his wife at last resorted to a measure which she thoroughly deplored. Though in an advanced state of pregnancy, Mrs Bent had been a tireless nurse, hardly leaving her husband's bedside. Her circumstances were such, however, that she was unable to provide unstinting care to both her husband and her children. Therefore, when Mr Bent's condition worsened, his offspring were 'farmed out' (as Charles languidly put it) to various

obliging friends. For twelve days, they lived with other families.

So it came about that, at the end of October, Dorothea welcomed into her home Mr Ellis Bent's seven-year-old son, Ellis Henry—the one visitor for whose company at this time Charles Brande displayed very little enthusiasm.

It was Mrs Molle who proposed that Dorothea should take young Ellis. She herself had offered to care for Mrs Bent's youngest child, and the remaining two had fallen to Mrs Cowper. (Mrs Vale having declared herself 'too poorly' to assist.) Mrs Molle's suggestion was that Mrs Bent be relieved of the burden of her family until her husband's crisis had passed. Mrs Molle herself, being accustomed to infants, would not be troubled by the addition of another to her nursery—and Ellis Henry, she said, would give Dorothea no cause for concern.

'Being the eldest, he is the most well behaved,' she informed Dorothea, 'and will not pine as much for his parents. If you keep him satisfactorily occupied, I believe that he will do very well. He is an intelligent child—as one would expect—and of an age to keep himself amused in a respectable fashion.'

Dorothea was delighted. She could hardly believe her good fortune. She had always admired Ellis Henry, whose grave demeanour she found quite touching, and whose sweet face was a flawless example of God's most skilful handiwork. Now it appeared that she was to enjoy his presence at close quarters—to supervise his daily progress, to play with him, to offer consolation, to observe all his guileless little ways. Nothing could have been more to her taste. Although Mr Ellis Bent's condition was of course upsetting, Dorothea could not regret it quite as much as she should have. Not when it had presented her with such a prize.

In preparation for the boy's arrival, she had the little back room cleaned, and cleared of most of its contents. Had she been afforded more time, she would have had the walls whitewashed. One shelf of the linen press was emptied, and Ellis Henry's bed was transported from his father's house, to be re-erected in his

new sleeping chamber. His toys, books and clothing accompanied his bed. Flushed with excitement, Dorothea even went out—with Daniel in attendance—and bought young Ellis a set of cardboard 'spellers' (which displayed pretty pictures in addition to the letters of the alphabet) in order that she might decorate his dingy walls. By the time Ellis arrived, just two days after his visit had first been proposed, Dorothea had stocked the house almost to bursting point with milk, eggs, jam, coloured inks and as much scrap paper as she could lay her hands on in such a paper-starved colony.

Master Bent, for his part, viewed these preparations with a blank countenance, and asked if he would 'be here for long'.

'No, my dear, not for long,' Dorothea replied. 'Just until your poor father is well again. See? I have unpacked all your beautiful toys. What a fine ark you have! So very big and handsome.'

'Mother took the elephants,' said Master Ellis, bleakly. 'The elephants and the camels and the lions.'

'For your brothers and sisters, Ellis.'

'I should like to read my books, now.'

Dorothea left him to read his books, for he seemed to desire solitude. He was, in fact, rather a solitary little boy. He spent his first day with the Brandes shut up in his room, reading, drawing and playing complicated games with a set of ornamented clothes pegs. When he emerged, it was only at Dorothea's request, that he might eat the meals that had been planned very much with his own tastes in mind. Charles, though he regarded the parade of bland dishes passing before him with some dismay, offered no objections. If he had, Dorothea might not have lent an ear—for her attention was taken up wholly with the child, whose appetite was disappointing.

'Will you have a little more pudding, Ellis?' she inquired at last, in despair.

'No, thank you.'

'Some cheese, perhaps? Or stewed apples?'

'No, thank you.'

'You must eat something else. You really must.' Dorothea cast about for inspiration. 'A soft-boiled egg? With butter?'

'No, thank you.'

'If you want to leave the table,' Charles interjected firmly, 'you must eat a little more, Ellis. Your mother would wish it so.'

'Yes, indeed. What would your mother think of me, if I were to let you starve? Now why not finish that dumpling, and if you do, you shall have a piece of candied ginger. Would you like that?'

Ellis's delicate appetite was a source of great concern to Dorothea. So was his behaviour in other respects. As Mrs Molle had promised, he was not a troublesome child. On the contrary, he was like his father in being very quiet and soft-spoken. But Dorothea knew that he was unhappy, and nothing she did served to lift his spirits. Every day she would take him to play with his siblings, or with Mrs Molle's children, and every day he would half-heartedly join their games, his anxious gaze always turned to the door, as if he expected some fearful tidings. He would ask, repeatedly, if he might visit his 'Papa and Mama'—and when, after two days, the visit was paid, he seemed even more unhappy at its conclusion than he had been before its commencement. Dorothea tried to talk to him. She explained to him that his mother was very well, but busy tending his father, and that his father would almost certainly improve. Although she rather thought that he might be afraid of the alternative possibility, she had not the courage to discuss it with him. After all, what comfort could she possibly offer? Only his mother could soothe him in that regard. So she shied away from the subject of his father's mortality, and concentrated instead on providing him with food, warmth, shelter, amusements and her undivided attention.

Charles, it must be confessed, suffered a loss of consequence in the household during this time. Having recovered sufficiently to walk about, get dressed, drink his claret and complain about things other than his throat and gums (which

were no longer swollen, though still a little tender), he had been deprived of his wife's constant tendance, which was now distributed equally between her husband and her young charge. Though he must have resented this, he took it surprisingly well. He did not accuse Dorothea of neglecting him. He did not storm, or glower, or comment unfavourably on the nursery food served up to him. He did not even decline to attend prayers after breakfast. Dorothea was only aware of his feelings because he made certain remarks about young Ellis, in the privacy of their bedroom, which, though not of a disparaging nature, were at least dismissive.

'That child has no interest in soldiering,' he would say. 'He has surrendered his tin soldiers to his brother without so much as an exchange of blows! At his age, I was hoping to be a General.' Or: 'What a lackadaisical fellow our guest is. I asked him if he wanted to play cricket, and he declined. I daresay he would prefer to mope about with his books and chinks.' Or: 'Young Bent is cut out to be a Nonconformist clergyman. You should have seen his face, when I offered him a sip of madeira!'

Dorothea ignored these observations. She identified them as symptoms of Charles's discontent, and was grateful that they were the only symptoms. She knew that she was at fault, in her devotion to Ellis Henry. She knew that Charles had a right to her care. So she forced herself to refrain from hovering around the child, especially once it became apparent to her that he would not emerge from his room unless he was permitted to do so unnoticed and unremarked. Questions regarding his needs or intentions always drove him back into his dim little chamber, where he gathered his toys around him like a bulwark. Only by allowing him unsupervised freedom in the house was she able to lure him into the healthful air of the garden.

Here, on the fourth day of his visit, Ellis Henry became acquainted with Daniel Callaghan. During one of her journeys to the kitchen, Dorothea saw the boy at Daniel's side, as the convict turned sods. A little later, from Ellis's bedroom window, she saw him following Daniel about with a watering



can, deep in conversation. She was a trifle hurt. What, she wondered, could they have been talking about? It was not as if Ellis had displayed the slightest interest in gardening. Even now, he was not attempting to help Daniel in any way. He simply stood there while the convict worked, talking sometimes, but mostly listening. Dorothea had never before seen either of them—the boy *or* the man—so garrulous.

She was determined to find out what it was that they said to each other.

‘Master Ellis seems to enjoy Daniel’s company,’ she remarked to Peg, as the housemaid chopped carrots with her customary precision. Normally, Dorothea refrained from discussing with Peg anything but the task at hand, for Peg was an irrepressible gossip. Given the slightest encouragement, she would launch into a debate on the merits of leading strings for children, or a commentary on the best Pitt Street shops, or a lament on the subject of her daughter’s marital difficulties, and it was almost impossible to stem the flow of her confidences. On this occasion, however, Dorothea was willing to take such a risk.

‘Bless ’em, they’re a pair, haren’t they?’ Peg replied. ‘Never seen the croppy so free with ’is tongue.’

‘But what do they talk about?’

‘Hotters.’

‘Otters?’

‘And pigs and swans and I don’t-know-what. Funniest talk as I ever ’eard.’ Peg shot her mistress a speculative, sidelong glance. ‘I’d not let it trouble you, Madam. The croppy won’t lead ’im hastray. They’re two of a kind, is all. Tender lads, both of ’em.’

Dorothea blinked.

‘You wouldn’t think that, would you?’ Peg went on. ‘But hit’s true. I’ve bin watchin ’em. I allus watch ’em. So don’t fret your ’eart, Madam,’ she added in comforting accents. ‘That dear lad will come to no ’arm.’

Nevertheless, Dorothea was uneasy. While tucking Ellis

into bed that evening, she asked him about the otters. Why had he and Daniel been discussing otters?

'Because of Dobercoo,' was his cautious response.

'Dobercoo?'

'The giant otter of Glenade Lough.'

'Oh.' Dorothea pondered, for a moment. 'Would that be an *Irish* otter?' she queried.

'Yes,' said the child, and a hint of animation entered his voice. 'It killed Grace Connelly, and her husband killed it, but then another came, and chased him, and he killed it with a spear.'

'I see.'

'But that was a long time ago,' Ellis continued—noting, perhaps, Dorothea's puckered brow. 'In Ireland.'

'I hope that Daniel has not been frightening you with such tales, Ellis?'

'Oh no,' he assured her. 'They are only stories.'

Even so, Dorothea resolved to watch Daniel closely. She was unsure as to whether Irish stories were suitable for the ear of an English gentleman's son—though she was reluctant to forbid their narration utterly and immediately, because Ellis seemed to enjoy them so much. Of course she said nothing to Charles. Charles, who had a fear of Irish insurrection, would have assumed the worst. He would have decided that Daniel was filling young Ellis with rebel's tales, and acted accordingly. He had once stormed at Daniel for humming as he scrubbed the drawing-room floor, crying that he would 'have no damned Irish treason songs' sung in his house.

Consequently, Dorothea was careful to shield her husband from the sight of Ellis conversing with Daniel. This was easily done, for the most part. When Charles was at home (less often, now that he was mending) he spent most of his time in the bedroom and drawing room, whereas Daniel's conversations with Ellis normally took place at the rear of the house. Ellis, in fact, seemed to prefer the rear of the house. He would drift in and out of the kitchen, dodging Peg's lavish caresses while he plucked raisins or pastry-cuts from her hand. He would dig

trenches in the dirt, or watch Daniel wielding the hoe. He would lean against a wall, and read one of his books—a curious collection comprising, not suitable works like *A Pretty Little Pocket Book* and *Gulliver's Travels*, but Cook's *Voyages*, and Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, and various examples of his mother's dubious addiction to fashionable nonsense: *The Provoked Husband*, *The Lying Valet*, *The Intriguing Chambermaid*.

One morning, however, while Captain Sanderson was paying a call, Ellis wandered into the front garden, where Daniel was feeding the roses. Dorothea saw them from the bedroom. She had retreated into the bedroom after offering the excuse of a headache to escape the sound of Captain Sanderson's voice. Now, looking up from her book, she saw Ellis's slight figure stop by Daniel's broad back, which was bent over the rosebeds. She saw Daniel straighten, but not rise, as he turned to answer the boy's inquiry. Face to face, they presented an interesting contrast.

Almost without thinking, Dorothea let fall her book. Throwing on her shawl, she hastened out of the house, conscious that her husband's eyes might, at any moment, stray to the drawing-room window. She approached Daniel. She heard him speak. Though he had resumed his work, it did not prevent him from talking.

'... so she went to Connla's well,' he was saying, 'to catch the Salmon o' Knowledge.'

'Is that the same? The same as that which Finn MacCool ate?' Ellis asked.

'Aye, the same. It fed on nuts from the hazel trees o' science and poetry ringed about. 'Twas a wise fish.'

'Daniel!' said Dorothea.

The convict looked up. Ellis turned. Two pairs of anxious dark eyes regarded Dorothea, who did not know what to say next.

'I—I need you,' she finally stammered.

Daniel rose. Ellis began to retreat, almost nervously, in a way that distressed Dorothea. Why was he so unsettled in her presence? Then she heard a voice from the house.

'There he is! Master Ellis!' It was Captain Sanderson. 'I had heard that you were a guest, here—has Captain Brande shown you his sword?'

Advancing towards them, big and loud in his scarlet coat, Captain Sanderson cut an imposing figure. Dorothea was visited by a quite unreasonable urge to shield little Ellis; had she succumbed to it, she would have stepped in front of the child.

'Well? Has Captain Brande not shown you his sword?' said Captain Sanderson, who obviously desired an answer. When Ellis shook his head, the captain drew his own sword with a flourish, and laughed as the assembled company fell back. 'You see the lion on the pommel?' he boomed, waving it in front of Ellis's face. 'That is there to remind me that I must be as brave as a lion. And the royal cipher is there to remind me that I am in His Majesty's Service.' As Ellis, with a trace of curiosity, craned his neck to peer at the gilded motifs, Captain Sanderson executed a neat lunge with the blade which, though it would not have harmed the boy, sent him stumbling back into Dorothea's skirts.

The captain laughed. 'Come,' he said. 'Take it!' He proffered the hilt to Ellis. 'See if you can lift it.'

Ellis shook his head.

'*Come. Be a man.*'

Dorothea began to protest. 'If he does not wish to, Captain—' she said, but Captain Sanderson ignored her. He continued to address the boy.

'You must learn to use a sword,' he declared, 'for the law will not protect you in this colony. Why, you are living with Irishmen! Like this fellow! Do you know what the Irish do? They crush men's knees and gouge out their eyes. They are wild and lawless. They plot and scheme.' Grinning, Captain Sanderson seemed to be enjoying a huge joke. 'But with a sword at your side, you will always be safe from the Irish.'

Dorothea was suddenly filled with a most uncharacteristic rage. Putting a hand on Ellis's shoulder, she glared at Captain Sanderson.

'You have no right to talk like that here!' she snapped. 'You will frighten him!'

'Nonsense. A big fellow like this one? He is not afraid of the Irish.' The captain sheathed his sword, and extended his hand to Ellis. 'Come,' he said. 'Have you ever seen the parade? No? Then I shall take you to the barracks, and show you the parade, and teach you how to prime a firelock.'

'Captain—'

'Have no fear, Mrs Brande. He will be back for his dinner.' Captain Sanderson winked, but Dorothea detected within that wink a certain degree of scorn. 'Keep the boy busy and he'll not repine, eh?'

Dorothea was lost for words. Not being Ellis's mother, she could offer no real grounds for objection. So with great reluctance she allowed Ellis to go, watching with a heavy heart as Captain Sanderson marched him away. He did not even look back, she noticed.

'What in heaven's name were you telling him?' she said irritably, turning on Daniel. 'What was all that about salmon?'

Daniel eyed her warily, just as if she were another Captain Sanderson to fear and placate. The thought made her even more cross. 'Tis an old tale, Ma'am,' he mumbled.

'Like the otters, no doubt.'

'The otters?' He looked puzzled. Then his brow cleared. A fleeting smile flickered over his face. 'That would be the Glenade Dobherchu,' he said softly. 'Aye, we've touched on the Dobherchu.'

'What are you filling his head with, Daniel? Old Irish tales can be very dangerous things—surely you know that?'

'Ah no, Ma'am, not these,' he replied. 'These are the anciant tales o' magic, and Bandog and the Ban-Sidhe, and Ossian the deer's son. They are not rebel tales.'

'Nor do they sound very Christian,' Dorothea said. Then, as Daniel dropped his gaze to the ground, she relented a little. 'If they are faerie tales, Daniel, I have no objection to your telling them,' she continued. 'There can be no more harm in

magic fish than in magic beans, I suppose. But please do not speak of them in front of Captain Brande. Irish stories do not sit well with him.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'The roses are blooming beautifully. I had not expected it.' Hesitating, Dorothea wondered why she always seemed to be choosing her words with care when she spoke to Daniel. It was annoying. For what reason should a lady of her breeding feel such constraint? 'You are doing good work,' she concluded, abruptly, and went back indoors.

There she confronted Charles, who was reclining, fully dressed, on the sofa.

'Captain Sanderson has taken Ellis to the barracks,' she informed him.

'Yes. So I saw.'

'Why? For what purpose?'

'So that he might teach the boy to prime a firelock. You heard.'

'But why would he wish to learn such a thing?'

'Because he is a *boy*, Thea. Soon to be a man.' Charles yawned, flicking through the pages of the *Sydney Gazette*. 'Bent may be a decent fellow, but he is soft, and sickly, and never raced a horse nor shot a pistol in his life. No wonder his son skulks about like a Jew in a counting house. I said to Sanderson, that boy is the most bloodless youth I ever laid eyes on.'

'Is that why Captain Sanderson took him to the barracks?'

'I assume so.'

'To teach him to shoot?'

'To acquaint him with the manner in which a manly and gentlemanlike fellow spends his time,' said Charles.

'That is to say, not lying about sick indoors, being tended like an infant?' Dorothea snapped, in heavily ironical tones. Then she left the room quickly, before her husband could devise a suitable retort.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



A WEEK LATER, MR ELLIS BENT DIED.

His spirit failed him rather suddenly, in the middle of the night, with the result that the Brandes were roused one morning at a quarter before two by a sharp rapping on their front door. When Captain Brande went to investigate, he found Mr Jeffery Bent seeking admittance.

‘I’ve come for the boy,’ Mr Bent gasped. ‘His father is dying.’

From the bedroom, Dorothea heard this announcement and gave a little cry. Charles shuffled, and blinked, and grunted. He was still half asleep.

‘I must take him,’ Mr Bent continued. As white as chalk and carelessly dressed, he presented a somewhat unnerving spectacle in his black riding cloak. Dorothea therefore suggested that she wake the child herself.

‘Very well,’ Mr Bent agreed. Though Dorothea was wearing only a nightgown under her shawl, he did not appear to be disconcerted. In fact she wondered if he truly saw her at all; his eyes were blank, as if fixed on some internal horror.

Quickly she went to fetch young Ellis.

The sight of him, lying wrapped in the pure slumber of childhood, almost broke her heart. She roused him slowly and quietly, stroking his brow and murmuring in his ear. When he woke, with a start, she told him that his mama needed him.

‘Why?’ he asked, his dark eyes huge in the dimness.

'Because your papa is very ill,' Dorothea replied. Her voice quavered, and he took note of that. He took note of his uncle, waiting on the threshold. He missed nothing, Dorothea suspected, for he was not a stupid child. He asked no questions because he doubtless knew the answers already.

Mutely, he allowed himself to be dressed in the clothes that Dorothea had laid out. Then he went with his uncle, riding on the same horse. They were accompanied by a police constable, and a servant with a lantern.

Dorothea watched them from her front door, until the glow of the lantern disappeared from view.

Though Charles insisted that she return to bed, she slept no more that night. To begin with, she half expected another summons. (Mrs Bent might need her. Ellis Henry might need her.) Furthermore, she was full of grief—not so much for Mr Ellis Bent as for his son. Certainly, there was no doubt that Mr Ellis Bent would be sadly missed. He had been generally admired for his discernment, his civility and his dutiful conduct. His passing would deprive the colony of one of its greatest men.

But it would also deprive a sensitive boy of his father—and that, to Dorothea's mind, would be infinitely worse. Ellis Henry would not recover quickly from such a blow. He was of an age to be greatly affected. He was his father's eldest and dearest. What torments might the poor boy endure over the coming weeks? As she lay there, tossing and turning, Dorothea's heart went out to Ellis Henry.

In the morning, she awaited news of Mr Bent's fate. Breakfast was a gloomy occasion, during which Ellis Henry's absence was much felt by Dorothea, and much remarked upon by Peg Whiting. Peg, who was forever comparing Ellis Henry to her own grandchildren, observed that he would undoubtedly 'take it 'ard', being a 'delicate crayture' who had a dainty appetite at the best of times. A child like that, she remarked breezily, would stop eating, and hide in corners, and be troubled by nightmares at the death of his father.



'Will 'e be stopping 'ere for dinner?' she wanted to know. 'Maybe you'll be wanting mutton broth now, Madam, in place of the white soup. I know as 'ow the master's not so partial to white soup.'

After a good deal of hesitation, Dorothea ruled in favour of the white soup. If, by some stroke of good fortune, Ellis Henry should be returned to her care (it was not, after all, out of the question; what if Mrs Bent should have been prostrated by grief?), then the child must be presented with a nourishing meal that suited his childish tastes. And it was not as if Charles *utterly rejected* white soup. He had simply had rather too much of it over the past week or so—white soup being Ellis Henry's favourite dish.

'White soup hit is,' Peg declared, upon receiving her orders. 'And would you fancy a little hot tea, Madam? You're looking sadly peaked.' With a warm and sympathetic smile, she added: 'You'll miss 'im, I know. We all will, dear little crayture. Sad to see a child pulled so low.'

Dorothea could only agree. In fact she realised, to her consternation, that Peg's somewhat disrespectful (though kindly meant) remarks had brought a lump to her throat. Resisting the urge to rest her brow on the housemaid's plump shoulder, she went to wait by the drawing-room window, thankful that Charles, being at last restored to full health, had returned to his duties. He had been a great deal too lively and demanding at breakfast. Unless Dorothea was mistaken, it almost seemed as if he was relieved that Ellis Henry had departed.

Dorothea was not relieved. She was miserable. And when Mrs Molle appeared on her doorstep early in the afternoon, her misery was increased. Mrs Molle came to inform her that Mr Bent had, indeed, expired. He had died in his wife's arms. The Reverend Mr Cowper had also been present; Mrs Cowper had sent Mrs Molle a message to that effect, requesting that she retain the Bents' youngest child until poor Mrs Bent was capable of dealing with it.

'Oh!' said Dorothea. 'Does that mean I should be

expecting Ellis Henry back again?' Her spirits lifted at the thought.

But Mrs Molle shook her head.

'I think not,' she replied. 'I went to the house to offer my assistance, and was informed that Mrs Bent derives some small degree of comfort from her son's presence. He is so like his father, you know.'

'I see.' Dorothea strove to conceal her disappointment. 'You spoke to Mrs Bent?'

'No. I would not have expected to. I spoke to Mr Jeffery Bent—he was quite distracted with grief, poor man.' Carefully, Mrs Molle set down her cup of tea. 'He blamed his brother's death on overwork,' she continued, 'and he blamed the overwork on Governor Macquarie. But I believe that he was not himself—he had a great affection for his brother.'

Dorothea agreed. Mr Ellis and Mr Jeffery Bent *had* been very close. Their mutual affection had not been so great, however, that the loss of its support had utterly unmanned the unfortunate survivor. Late that afternoon, two men arrived to dismantle Ellis Henry's bed and to collect his belongings—for despite all the confusion attendant upon his brother's death, Mr Jeffery Bent had not forgotten this mundane detail.

The boy, he wrote to Dorothea, in a letter accompanying the two men, was needed at his mother's side. Together, mother and son would assuage each other's sorrows. He, Jeffery Bent, would watch over them both, grateful that he was there to serve as their staff and guide during such a tragedy. On their behalf, he wished to offer Dorothea his most grateful thanks for services rendered, &c, &c.

Dorothea spent a good deal of time composing her reply. Thinking of Ellis Henry's no doubt distraught condition, she expressed herself with great feeling when she offered her condolences. She assured Mr Jeffery Bent that she would happily receive the boy into her house whenever her succour was required, for he was an angel and a blessing, and her heart went out to the poor, fatherless child. His loss was the colony's

loss. His plight, and the plight of his poor mother, was difficult to contemplate. The entire family would remain forever in her prayers.

Dorothea scribbled this message to the resounding noise of grunts and thuds issuing from Ellis Henry's former bedroom. Then, as the two men responsible for the din loaded young Ellis's possessions into their handcarts, she scurried about the house, gathering up gifts.

'But Madam,' Peg protested, upon Dorothea's rolling the roast beef in a linen cloth, 'what about yer dinner?'

'You have mutton, have you not? You mentioned mutton broth.'

'There's mutton enough for broth, but not for 'ash—'

'Then make a stew of it!'

'Too late for that, Madam,' Peg said reproachfully.

'Very well. Give us pickled meat or eggs. I care not. These cakes must go, as well.' They were added to Dorothea's basket. 'We have, I think, some stewed apples—they will serve to accompany the custard. Where is Daniel?'

'Fetching water.'

'I must speak to him.'

There were spring flowers blooming in the garden—not daffodils or hyacinths, certainly, which were long gone, but roses and geraniums—and Dorothea wanted to cut some of them for a bouquet. On reflection, she decided that geraniums were probably too bold a flower to include in such an arrangement. Lilies would have been more correct, but in the absence of lilies, she would have to denude her garden of white roses and forget-me-nots. If only she had possessed a laurel tree—or even a camellia! Something, at any rate, with dark, shiny, funereal leaves.

When Daniel came to her, at last, she was sawing at a fragile young plant with a kitchen knife. Upon seeing him, she jumped up and surrendered the knife. She wanted, she said, this bloom, that bloom, and the blooms over there—the pale ones.

He frowned.

'If ye take that one, Ma'am,' he pointed out, 'ye'll be takin' the whole plant.'

'If needs must.'

'It'll not recover quick, if it does at all.'

'Daniel, Mr Bent is *dead*,' Dorothea declared. 'If there must be a sacrifice, in this, then no one is more deserving of it.'

'But should ye not be waitin' for the funeral?'

'Now, Daniel, if you please.'

The flowers were duly collected, and Dorothea's offerings delivered. She received a rather curt note of thanks the following day; clearly, Mr Jeffery Bent was still managing his sister's affairs, and found them perhaps a little overwhelming. The same day, the pages of the *Gazette* were set within black borders. The entire colony was declared to be in mourning for Mr Ellis Bent.

Dorothea, for her part, was mourning the departure of his son. Ellis Henry's absence was acutely painful to her. While she and Peg baked cakes and prepared joints for the funeral, her thoughts dwelt continuously on the void that he had left behind him. How was it ever to be filled, unless she herself was blessed by God? While funerals normally left her in a highly disturbed and nervous state, she approached this one almost with eagerness, because it would give her the opportunity to speak to Ellis Henry, and to judge his state of mind. She even made him some gingerbread, which she concealed in her reticule. Though a little ashamed, she told herself that funerals could be long and draining affairs, and that a child of Ellis Henry's sensibility might need sustenance to prevent him from fainting away. (One could not expect Mrs Bent to guard against such an eventuality, on a day like this.)

The funeral service was held at St Philip's church, and the body buried in a piece of ground, just south of the marketplace, which was reserved for such interments. Mr Cowper presided. During the proceedings (which were also attended by the Governor), Ellis Henry stood like a little ghost in his mourning suit and did not utter a sound. Though he shed a few tears, they were only a few; he wiped them away with a furtive

movement when he was under the impression that no one was watching. Upon his father being finally laid to rest, he clenched his fists and stared at the ground. He did not even look up as his mother groaned, and swayed, and fell wailing into the arms of her brother-in-law.

Under the circumstances, Dorothea wondered if the unfortunate woman was in a fit state to care for her children. Should she be permitted to grieve in peace, for a time? But there was no immediate opportunity to discuss the matter, for the crowd rapidly dispersed, and Dorothea was soon accompanying the Molles to Mrs Bent's house. Here she refreshed herself with slices of her own sponge cake, which jostled for space on a table groaning with goodly viands. Here she offered her condolences to the widow, who received the Brandes in a darkened room, with all her family gathered around her. Dorothea was able to speak very briefly to young Ellis at this point, complimenting him on his bravery without receiving more than a mumble in reply. The gingerbread, however, remained in her reticule. She realised that it was an inappropriate gift. The last thing Ellis required was food.

She remained at the Bents' house, swilling down tea and talking in a low voice, for as long as Captain Brande could stomach it. Then she returned home with him. She was very downcast. Her limbs felt as if they were weighed down with chains. And her mood was not lightened by events that unfolded upon her reaching the haven of her little house. Charles, once he had ascertained that she had no further need of him ('All right, my dear? Very good'), escaped to his barracks with a palpable air of relief—with almost, in fact, a spring in his stride. Dorothea retreated into the drawing room, where she settled down with her shawl, her tea caddy and her hartshorn. It was a muggy day, with a threatening, overcast sky. The warmth and humidity were wearing, and the wrenching emotion of the funeral had left Dorothea in a nervous state. So she rang for Peg, and requested, when the housemaid finally appeared, a hot cup of tea.

'I should like it very *strong*,' she added, handing over the requisite weight of leaves. (At Mrs Molle's suggestion, Dorothea retained sole custody of the tea caddy, and would surrender its keys to no one.) 'Strong and hot, with lemon. Oh—and a slice of bread and butter. Cut very thin.' As the housemaid made no move to comply with this request, she said plaintively: 'What is it, Peg? I am not well. What do you want?'

Peg seemed to hesitate—an action so unusual that Dorothea became alarmed. She sat up straight.

'What is it?' she demanded. 'Is it the master? Is it Daniel? What?'

'Oh, no,' Peg replied, in soothing tones. 'I ham sorry, Madam, I know as 'ow them funerals take it out of a body. I'd not be coming to you, at such a time, only my daughter's at 'er wit's end, see, and ... well ...' She heaved a great sigh. 'You're a good mistress, and you've used me 'andsome, but the long and the short of hit is—I want to 'and in me notice.'

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



PEG WHITING'S DAUGHTER HAD acquired a beer licence. According to Peg, this meant that her own expertise would be in great demand, for her daughter would not be capable of minding the children and running a public house alone. Peg had therefore negotiated a satisfactory settlement, by which she would henceforth be excused from paying even the smallest sum for fire and lodging. She was to be a partner in the enterprise, which would repair the family fortune as her son-in-law's efforts never would. Her son-in-law, Roger, was on the Government boats, and would never rise above his present position.

'Nobody likes 'im—no, nor minds 'im,' Peg revealed. 'Thinks 'isself the Lord Muck Almighty, but 'is brains are in 'is boots.' She offered up the opinion that her daughter would soon be rid of this tiresome spouse, who would undoubtedly cheek the district constable once too often, leaving the way open for a better man. 'A gang would be the best place for 'im. Knock some sense into 'is thick 'ead,' she remarked.

When Dorothea pointed out that, even on a chain gang, he would still be married to Peg's daughter, Peg replied that they had never been *married*, in the strictest sense. Though husband and wife, they were not shackled together by law, nor by the articles of the Church of England. She did not seem to understand that a marriage had to be performed by a clergyman if it was to be a marriage at all.

'They've bin sharing a bed these ten years,' she said, 'and spawned five brats together. Though I'd 'ave it otherwise, Madam, they're married, no question.'

Dorothea, while recognising it as her bounden duty to correct the vicious and perverted notions of the underclasses, had not the energy to do so. Peg's decision had come as a terrible blow. Dorothea had barely recovered from Ellis Henry's departure—and now she would have to countenance Peg's as well! Though the housemaid promised not to leave until she had found a new servant to replace her, Dorothea was utterly dismayed. Who could ever replace Peg? Who would ever attain the perfection of Peg's roasts or puddings? Dorothea wrung her hands at the thought of Peg's talents being wasted on a crew of beer-swilling felons, and on the inferior meats which would no doubt be judged adequate to their requirements. When questioned, Peg observed vaguely that 'vittles, in a public 'ouse, was generally bread, cheese and a bit o' cold meat', with perhaps a pot of boiling beef, potatoes and cabbage in addition. 'They don't come fer the food,' she laughed. 'If they do, well, they're soon disappointed!'

It was enough to break Dorothea's heart. And her spirits were not improved when, during Peg's final month of employment, Mrs Bent gave birth. Naturally, this event had long been expected. Mrs Bent had quite disappeared from sight since the funeral, and it had more than once been rumoured that she had suffered another 'sad loss', on account of the strain of her bereavement and the overpowering heat. These rumours, however, proved false. Mrs Bent was delivered of a fine, healthy baby on an exceptionally sultry morning, and was well enough to receive visitors within two days of the delivery. Her constitution was so vigorous that there was no need to banish her other children from the house for any great length of time. A long walk in Hyde Park and a visit to the Molles were judged sufficient for the purpose of removing them from the vicinity of certain, rather unpleasant scenes.

Dorothea was therefore denied even the comfort of



welcoming young Ellis back for a night. She had to go to the Bents' house, and smile, and coo, and offer up her gifts, when she was almost faint with envy and despair. Mrs Bent already had Ellis Henry, as well as his three siblings; now she had been blessed again! Whereas Dorothea's arms were empty, Mrs Bent was positively burdened with riches.

It seemed a cruel dispensation.

'Good God,' Charles exclaimed crossly, when he came upon his wife weeping in the bedroom, 'are you still fretting over that squawling brat? I tell you, it was as ugly as sin. The Lord preserve me from such a monstrous addition.'

'How can you say that?' Dorothea sobbed. 'How *can* you ...?'

'I say it because it bears repeating. You should be grateful—'

*'Grateful?'*

'—that you have not whelped such a blight. Anything would be preferable, in my opinion.' He was striving, in his clumsy way, to comfort Dorothea—but as she continued to shed tears he became offended. 'Upon my word, Madam, I wonder at you. Mrs Bent may have five children, but she has lost her husband. Do you really compare your own plight unfavourably? A pretty compliment, I must say!'

'I—I—I—'

'You are behaving with unwarranted self-indulgence. You have your health, unlike Mrs Vale; you have your husband, unlike Mrs Bent; and you have your youth, unlike Mrs Molle. I fail to see why you should feel so ill used, in the circumstances.'

'I have lost my children!'

'But you will have more. What is to prevent you? Come now—this moping serves no purpose. Look alive, and bustle about. Hard work is the only solution to sorrow, or so my uncle is always telling me.' Charles uttered a little bark of mirth. 'Of course, he has not seen a colonial roadgang.'

'I gave her my caps,' Dorothea croaked.

'What?'

'My little caps. The ones I made—the ones I was keeping for—for—'

'Oh Lord,' said Charles, as Dorothea burst into fresh sobs. He was always unnerved by what he called her 'vapours', for he had little notion of how to deal with them. He complained that she had exhibited no such hysterical symptoms at Bideham, and wondered if she should refrain from reading Mrs Bent's overwrought novels. When Dorothea pointed out that Bideham had offered green pastures, healthful summers, cultivated society, good servants, plentiful produce of every description and a merciful absence of convict gangs, marauding blacks and vulgar company, he tossed her observation aside. Mrs Molle, he said, had weathered far worse without succumbing to any nervous disorders. And Mrs Molle read nothing but house-keeping manuals and the *Gazette*.

'I should like to examine any books that you might acquire from Mrs Bent, henceforth,' he suggested. 'I have been speaking to Forster about your general health, and Forster says that there are certain women of delicate habit, whose nervous systems are extremely sensible, and whose internal workings are very relaxed. He says that you may be such a one.'

'I?' Dorothea exclaimed. 'But—'

'He says that women of this description are prone to all kinds of extreme temperamental exhibitions: swoons, convulsions, chills, depressions, laughing and crying fits. They are susceptible to illness, and to the influence of inflammatory reading. What are you reading at present, Mrs Brande?'

Dorothea produced *The Nocturnal Minstrel*, by Eleanor Sleath. This tale centred on the beautiful widow Baroness Gertrude Fitzwalter, sole possessor of an ancient, gloomy castle situated among the wilds and mountains of her estate. Living with only her servants and vassals for company, she was being tantalised, at the novel's commencement, by the enchanting—perhaps even supernatural—melody of a lute being played in the surrounding woods. Dorothea had only just

discovered that the Baroness's chief lady-in-waiting was of an untrustworthy character. She had also recently been informed that no one dared investigate the source of the eerie music, because reports of spectral visitants were accumulating.

Charles shook his head over this 'arrant nonsense'.

'My word, Mrs Brande, how can a woman of your breeding even countenance such rubbish?' he queried. 'I am surprised at you. No wonder you skulk in this house all the time, fancying yourself beset. No wonder you are forever prostrate with headaches, and moaning about the lack of good society. You *keep* no society, Madam! You spend your time reading and moping, instead of bustling about! You model yourself on the castle-bound heroines with whom you stuff your head!'

Dorothea tried to ask him how he thought that the house might have been managed—the meals ordered (and cooked), the mending done, the laundry supervised and the correspondence written—if she had not been on hand to attend to these things. But he seemed oblivious to the fact that her domestic duties kept her occupied for a good portion of each day. She tried to point out that she had been keeping indoors a lot, lately, simply to avoid the heat—but again, he would not listen.

'It does a man no good,' he said, 'to see his wife mooning about in corners with a face as long as the voyage to England. It does him no good, and it does him no credit. You would oblige me, my dear, if you bestir yourself, and stop dwelling on your woes, and start counting your blessings. Because I'm one of 'em, in case you've forgot, and I should like to regard you in the same light—which I shan't, if you continue so maudlin.'

Dorothea resented the injustice of Charles's views, but not with any heat. She knew herself to be cheerless company, for the most part, and regretted it. Certainly, Charles was entitled to a happy wife. But if that was what he wanted above all else, why had he not married a woman of less sensibility? There had been a time when he had admired her literary tastes, the delicacy of

her needlework and the tenderness of her feelings. Was it fair that he should now deplore what he had once admired? He was more apt to praise her darning than her embroidery, these days. When she responded to unforeseen and distressing circumstances with squeaks and flutters, he was more likely to snap at her than to comfort her. It seemed to her that he wanted her to become like Mrs Molle, while all the time condemning Mrs Molle for her 'mannish' and 'domineering' qualities.

Nevertheless, she could see nothing for it but to follow his instructions. She would abandon overwrought novels, dutifully attend the evening promenade in Hyde Park (which she had been wont to avoid, on account of the gawking mob that customarily gathered to watch the 'quality' parading about) and stop fretting—at least in her husband's vicinity—about the problem of securing a new housemaid.

This last resolution was made easier by the fact that Peg, after much activity, at last found a woman to take her place. Rose Taylor was the seventeen-year-old, free-born daughter of one of Peg's dearest friends. Rose had been working for a schoolmaster, and preferred to work for an officer. She had no outstanding domestic talents, but could sew, clean and cook with a respectable degree of efficiency. Because she was being courted, she wished to sleep under her parents' roof, where the visits of an ardent stonemason would be accepted without remark. (She knew better than to pursue a romance on the premises of any employer.) It was her intention to marry, once the five-guinea fee had been saved, for she did not hold with the half-measures prevalent among so many of her family and acquaintances. She would have a proper husband, a proper house, a family of six children and a horse and cart.

'I'll not say how long I may be stayin',' she informed Dorothea, 'but it will be six months, at least, and maybe longer, for I'll not marry in a factory fashion, with neither plate nor beddin' to me name.' She lifted her chin. 'But while I'm here, Missus, I'll do good work—none better—for in this town I'm the busiest lass born free.'

Dorothea did not know quite what to make of Rose. She was pretty enough, though rather tall and very brown; she looked strong, and was certainly active, never once appearing to pause (let alone sit) when she was engaged in her duties. Her cooking was adequate, and under Dorothea's tutelage, it improved. She was always punctual. Though she had learned some lazy habits in the area of dusting and polishing, Dorothea soon cured her of those, and while she had not the knack of appearing neatly groomed—her clothes generally looking as if they had been donned in the dark—she kept herself clean. She was not addicted to gossip. Nor was she morose. She was brisk, bright, capable, vigorous and perfectly adapted to colonial life, which was the only one she had ever known.

But she was also extraordinarily opinionated. She did not shrink from airing her views, on any subject, as if they were worthy of attention. Moreover, she seemed utterly unaware that her services were required only under certain conditions, for she appeared to have no proper notion of humility or obedience. If Dorothea asked her to do something, she would do it (and do it well) only if she could be convinced that it was worth doing. Dorothea was constantly having to argue with her. Rose was very proud, for example, of having discovered a clever method of removing wax from the silver candlesticks, by melting the aforesaid wax in front of the fire. She saw this technique as preferable to using a knife (which it certainly was), and did not strive to conceal her annoyance when Dorothea took exception to it. Only when her mistress had explained to her that the hollow part of the candlesticks were filled with a composition that would melt if made too hot, did Rose finally concede the point, thenceforth employing boiling water and an old cloth whenever wax had to be removed.

She thought nothing of passing comments in the presence of guests. Once, without being invited to do so, she apologised to Mrs Molle for the condition of her teacakes, which were a little dry. (This in the middle of a conversation about Princess Charlotte.) Once, upon opening the door to Mrs Bent, she did

not attempt to suppress her cries of admiration at the sight of the infant lying in the arms of Mrs Bent's nursemaid. Mrs Bent later remarked that, although gratifying, Rose's remarks would have been 'rather unexpected' coming from an old family retainer, let alone a sprig of a housemaid.

'But they are odd creatures, these Currency girls,' Mrs Bent sighed. 'More virtuous than their parents, I am sure (could they be less so?), and far less given to drink, I am told, but so *familiar*. As if they had something to be proud of, which of course they do not.'

'Rose is not *intentionally* impertinent,' Dorothea replied. 'In many ways she is quite unexceptionable. It is simply this tendency she has to speak without thinking—and to argue.'

'You must be firm with her, my dear.'

'I try to be. Indeed I do.'

'You must not allow yourself to be drawn into a *debate*. Such weakness is fatal. If she starts to object, simply ignore her. Or fetch Captain Brande. Certainly fetch Captain Brande, if she disobeys you.'

'She does not disobey me. She questions me.'

'Then fetch Captain Brande.'

Dorothea, however, would not have contemplated turning to her husband for help. He was already dissatisfied with Rose's cooking (having been spoiled by Peg's), and once or twice had snapped at the housemaid in a manner that Rose—to judge from her mantling flush—had found difficult to tolerate. Dorothea sensed that, should Charles be exposed to the full force of Rose's irrepressible self-conceit, he would probably give her a good dressing down. Whereupon Rose, being stiff-necked, would be lost to them forever.

So Dorothea made every effort to keep the two apart. She acted as intermediary when her husband complained about the cooking ('For a full wage, I expect my meat to be properly seasoned!') and on one occasion even lied to him on Rose's behalf. This lie was the unfortunate but inevitable consequence of Charles's unreliable temper, and the circumstances of the case

were as follows. Upon emptying the bedroom chamberpot one morning, Rose dropped and smashed it. To her credit, she did not attempt to offer any kind of excuse. Instead she promised to pay for a replacement out of her own wages—before Dorothea could even make the same suggestion. Happily, Charles was out at the time, but there could be no question that the mishap would soon be discovered. For he employed this particular vessel at least twice a day.

Dorothea soon found herself with Rose and Daniel, contemplating the shards of flowery china that lay on the back steps. She was upset because the shattered article had come from Bideham, and anything from Bideham was precious to her, no matter what its purpose. She remarked that the steps would have to be cleaned with soda and vinegar, and perhaps some chloride of lime. She wondered aloud where she would find a replacement. In Pitt Street, perhaps?

‘It is too bad,’ she said. ‘Indeed it is. I have seen none as pretty, here—certainly not for sale.’

‘I’m very sorry.’ Rose was genuinely crestfallen. No doubt, having such a high opinion of herself, she could not bear to be found wanting. ‘I’m so very sorry, Missus.’

‘Captain Brande will find out about this. It cannot be prevented,’ Dorothea continued. ‘Oh dear. Oh dear. He will *not* be pleased.’

‘Could it be that I dropped grease on the stairs?’ Daniel said softly, and the two women looked at him, dumbfounded. ‘That being the case, Ma’am, ’twould be more my fault than Rose’s,’ he went on. ‘Though not terrible remiss of either, since I was goin’ to fetch a cloth when she fell.’

Dorothea was shocked. By rights, she should have snubbed Daniel with a very sharp word indeed. But she could appreciate the sense of his proposal, which had been—when she considered it—very carefully phrased. She stared at him. She stared at Rose, who had reddened. She asked herself if she really wanted to lie to her husband for the sake of her servants—she had done it once before, with disastrous

results—and then decided wearily that if he persisted in causing an uproar every time his staff displeased him, then he must endure the consequences. It never seemed to occur to him that Dorothea might find his violent and noisy reprimands almost as distressing as the servants did. It never seemed to occur to him that she might be tired of his outbursts.

He says that *my* behaviour can be excessive, she thought, but his own is no less so. And his temper gets worse by the month.

'Very well,' she said. 'I shall inform Captain Brande that the article was destroyed owing to an unfortunate—er—series of events which could not have been foreseen. No doubt, with that in mind, Captain Brande will be satisfied with your offer to reimburse us, Rose.' She was correct in her assumption. Captain Brande was indeed satisfied, though he did allow himself the luxury of a brief rant about clumsy convicts (which caused Dorothea some apprehension) before he abruptly subsided—his eye having been caught by an item in the *Gazette*. Subsequently, he made no further reference to the incident. It was Dorothea who pondered it, and fretted over it, and asked herself if she had behaved unwisely. Would Rose take advantage of her lenient conduct? Would she answer back more? And Daniel—what had Daniel's motive been? Could he possibly be nursing a *tendresse* for the young housemaid? The possibility irritated her. She had been warned repeatedly that dire consequences will always follow, when servants in the same house develop a particular liking for each other. She had no wish to see it happen in her house.

At last she was driven to make some careful inquiries of Daniel, one summer afternoon when they were surveying the garden together. She asked him how he thought Rose was settling in. He replied that she seemed busy enough. She asked him if he found Rose an amiable companion. He replied that she worked well, and spoke pleasantly. She asked him why he had shouldered part of the blame for the shattered ... er ... crock.

'It might have been called a generous act,' she remarked, studying him closely. 'That is to say, you might not have



mentioned your ... um ... mistake. What prompted you to speak, Daniel?’

He turned his impassive gaze on her, looking down from his great height. It occurred to her that he was a good deal less gaunt than he had been.

‘Why,’ he said, ‘I was hopin’ to save ye from losin’ yeer housemaid, Ma’am.’

And that, despite Dorothea’s further promptings, was all he would confess to.

*New South Wales  
December 21st, 1815*

*My dearest Margaret,*

*I am sending you this quick note because I have wonderful news! (You must guess what it is.) As a consequence, I have resolved to complete my receiving cloth, for all that I have become quite superstitious about touching it. I wish the weather were not so warm. Heat of this sort can be debilitating at the best of times, and for someone in a delicate state it must be avoided at all costs. For the moment, however, I am quite well. So is Charles. He is pleased, of course, but not as pleased as I.*

*I have told no one but you, dear Margaret. It is to be hoped that, when next I write, the news will continue good. I pray every morning and every night, and remain*  
*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER NINETEEN



ON THURSDAY, JANUARY THE SEVENTEENTH, 1816, news reached Sydney of the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the battle of Waterloo.

Though victory had been won six months previously, the colonists were overjoyed. Bells rang. Criers drew large crowds. The military barracks became the scene of the most frenzied activity, as dispatches were pored over, toasts were drunk, and preparations for a celebratory ball were undertaken. The ball was to be held that very evening, at the hospital. The Governor was to preside, and the regimental band was to play. Every artist in the colony (of which there were pitifully few) had to be pressed into service, so that the room selected might be suitably adorned with insignia and mottoes. A supper was to be served, much of it supplied by the regimental wives, who spent the day frantically glazing hams or baking cakes under Mrs Molle's direction.

Dorothea had been enjoined to provide sandwiches. She did so with the utmost goodwill, happily boiling eggs, slicing cheese and mixing mustard. Rose worked beside her in very high spirits, chattering about the wicked frogs, and the noble Duke of Wellington, and how proud she was to be English this day. Dorothea, while not as loquacious, was equally as excited. She laughed occasionally, and hummed to herself—rousing, patriotic songs—and was not in the least offended when

Daniel failed to exhibit any particular symptoms of delight. He acknowledged that the world was well rid of Bonaparte, but remained otherwise unmoved. And although Dorothea felt it a pity that he should be so Irish, her feelings were too elevated to allow for petty resentments. She simply decreed that two fowls should be bought for dinner—one to feed the Brandes, one to feed Rose and Daniel. Whereupon Daniel smiled, and Rose clapped her hands, and everyone was well satisfied.

As it happened, Dorothea ate her dinner alone that evening, because Charles was detained at the barracks. She was somewhat downcast at this development; she felt very strongly the pathos of her situation, dining alone while the colony was *en fête*. But she soon recovered when Charles returned home to dress, in a state of high excitement. He talked and talked. He seemed unable to stop talking. He talked of Ligny, and Quatre Bas, and thirty thousand French casualties, and double quick time, and artillery, and the Duke of Wellington. (He talked a great deal about the Duke of Wellington.) Then he danced Dorothea around the bedroom, complimented her on her appearance, glanced into the looking glass, tossed Jack Lynch a golden guinea, and went off to the barracks, with Dorothea on his arm and Jack trailing behind.

From the barracks, Dorothea travelled to the hospital with Mrs Molle and the Vales in Mrs Molle's chaise. Captain Brande rode beside them, with some of the other officers; their progress was often interrupted by large groups of vulgar persons celebrating in the streets. There were scattered cheers as the officers proceeded, for were they not brothers-in-arms to the sacred dead at Waterloo? One excruciatingly common-looking trollop even threw a flower at Captain Brande (the most handsome of the assembled officers), who seemed startled, then embarrassed, then irritated. He smiled, but did not know what to do with the flower until at last Captain Miller relieved him of it, tucking it into his crossbelt. It was the only offering received during the journey, which would have been a triumphal progress on any other piece of English soil.

But while the mood was festive, it was not feverish. Sydney Cove was frequented by a great many criminals and Irishmen, who were not renowned as fervent admirers of His Majesty's loyal troops. Consequently, there were no patriotic choruses or ranks of weeping women to salute the redcoats as they passed.

At the hospital, however, a spectacle worthy of the occasion had been achieved. Pillars were wound about with greenery, arches crowned with stars and shields. Banks of candles flickered, though the sky was still light. Red carpets had been unrolled. Tables were piled high with food. The regimental band was already playing, and at the upper end of the room, the royal arms appeared through an elegant transparency. On the floor were painted emblems of martial glory, surrounding a figure of fame who was depicted sounding her trumpet, and bearing in her right hand a scroll on which were inscribed the words 'Waterloo', 'Wellington' and 'Victory'.

It was all most impressive.

'To give credit where it is due,' Mrs Molle declared, upon receiving Dorothea's compliments, 'Mr Campbell was responsible for a great deal of what you see.'

'It is magnificent.'

'Not as magnificent as the victory we are celebrating.'

'No, indeed.'

'Or the sacrifice of those who laid down their lives. The Colonel says that thirteen thousand British troops were killed or wounded.'

'Oh dear! That many?'

'I have never seen him so profoundly moved.'

The sight of so much scarlet and white and gold, so much satin and lace, so many nodding feathers and glittering jewels, was very fine. Mrs Molle was majestic in green silk, with a short train. Mrs Vale was quite lively in mauve. Dorothea's cream satin gown had first been worn while she was still a maid, and it was now a little tight. But she looked well in it, and was loudly complimented by many of the officers, including Colonel Molle.

It happened that she was speaking to Colonel Molle when the Governor approached, and addressed each of the party in turn. He greeted the Colonel with a few remarks about the excellence of the regimental band, praised Mrs Molle for her arrangements, and observed to Captain Gill that a proud day such as this must bring back memories of the capture of Guadeloupe. Upon turning his benign gaze on Dorothea, he smiled, and asked if the three white roses that she wore in her hair had been plucked from her own garden.

'Yes indeed, Your Excellency,' Dorothea replied, with a blush. 'And I must thank Mrs Macquarie for them, because the bush was transplanted from her own garden, on the occasion — that is, when I was ill.' The white rose, in fact, had been given to her after she had lost her baby. 'I shall always be grateful for her kindness.'

The Governor inclined his head. 'I know that Mrs Macquarie displays a keen interest in your garden, Mrs Brande,' he responded. 'Whenever I visit the barracks, she always inquires of me: "Did ye pass Mrs Brande's garden? Did ye notice any improvements?" I believe her interest to be almost of the *proprietary* kind.'

'She was generous enough to lend me a book about garden design,' Dorothea explained, still blushing. 'I have been following its advice very carefully.'

'Ah,' said the Governor, in grave tones. 'That will account for her curiosity, then.'

'I have been very remiss,' Dorothea continued, 'but I have not yet returned the book. Of course I shall do so as soon as possible —'

But the Governor lifted his hand. 'If Mrs Macquarie should need it, she will send for it,' he declared. 'Until then, Mrs Brande, I know that she will be delighted to have ye make use of it so resourcefully, and to such good purpose.'

With a dignified bow, the Governor then moved away to address another cluster of guests, leaving Dorothea curiously gratified. She rarely spoke to the Governor. Although she saw

him nearly every Sunday at church, Charles did not encourage her to take part in what he sourly described as 'the Inspection', which took place on the porch after the service. It was Governor Macquarie's habit, at this time, to exchange a few words with those among the colony's worthies who cared to approach him. Since many of the aforesaid worthies were not gentlefolk—since many, indeed, were emancipists—Charles was anxious that Dorothea should not rub shoulders with them, in the crush. To do so, he said, would be to court contagion.

Dorothea was therefore accustomed to seeing the Governor only at a distance. Studying him at close range, she decided that he was not looking well. His colour was poor, yellowish in some spots and livid in others. The lines on his face were deeply drawn, and his eyes were tired. He was a little hoarse, she thought, with the result that his accent seemed thicker than ever. But he had not lost his ramrod bearing or his paternal manner, which held for Dorothea a great deal of charm. No doubt the Governor was misguided in his opinions. Charles had often accused him of being 'soft'. But softness was almost pleasing in someone otherwise so stiff and formal, who was frequently curt and gruff, and who could not (if popular reports were correct) abide any form of opposition. Furthermore, His Excellency was a doting father. Not a soul could gainsay it. The man might have poisoned Mr Ellis Bent's final months on earth—for such was Mrs Bent's opinion—but no one so devoted to his little boy could be all bad. That, at least, was Dorothea's secretly held view.

She was beginning to doubt that Charles nursed within his bosom many fatherly instincts, and she was therefore inclined to look with increased favour on those who did.

Charles did not remain at Dorothea's side throughout the ball. Perhaps, had she danced, he would have been more attentive—for he dearly loved to dance. But Dorothea was concerned about the health of her unborn child. She felt that dancing might have a deleterious effect on it. So Charles was unable to persuade her to stand up with him, and became quite put

out as a consequence. He grumbled, and frowned, and wandered away, at last, to address Captain Miller. But the music was gay and full of spirit, the air rang with laughter, and tripping footsteps marked time in an irresistible rhythm. When Dorothea next saw Charles, he was dancing with Captain Piper's daughter, Mrs Thrupp. Dorothea was much surprised. Mrs Thrupp had been born out of wedlock, and her grandparents on her mother's side had both been convicts. Had Charles forgotten his prejudices to such an extent that he was willing to dance with the bastard granddaughter of emancipists? Evidently he had.

It appeared that social niceties were fast giving way to dizzy jubilation in the ballroom.

Dorothea sat out every dance beside Mrs Vale. She was content to watch the performance of her husband and his fellow officers as the lines formed and reformed. Though fond of quadrilles, she was not so fond of them as to put her unborn baby at risk. The thought of her precious, secret burden made her happy enough. Without the slightest pang she was able to decline invitation after invitation to stand up with some of the most important gentlemen in the colony (for the supply of genteel ladies was limited), explaining modestly that she was in a state of health not admitting of any undue exertion.

Most of the applicants accepted her excuse with a bow and a murmur. Captain Gill was characteristically polite, expressing his sorrow and regret that she should be so sadly circumstanced. Captain Wallis observed that her absence from the floor had 'left it without one of its brightest ornaments'. (She suspected that he might have been overindulging in spiritous liquors.) Dr Harris, surprising her very much with his request, hoped—in answer to her refusal—that her 'roses would soon be blooming again'. Only Captain Sanderson offended her. He approached her in a rather alarming state, his face brick-red and his clothes somewhat dishevelled, to request that she 'take a turn' with an old friend. When she replied that her health did not permit her to dance, he nodded, and winked, and remarked that he must blame her husband for it, he supposed.



'What do you mean?' she said, much startled. But he only winked again, and offered her his best hopes for the future, leaving her in no doubt—as he walked away—that he was aware of her condition.

Clearly, Charles must have told him about it.

'What an odd sort of man Captain Sanderson is,' said Mrs Vale, in accents of displeasure—for he had roundly ignored her during his exchange with her companion. 'I must confess that I cannot like his manner. No doubt he is a valuable addition to the corps, but I cannot like his manner. It is not to my taste.'

'Nor to mine,' Dorothea agreed. She was shocked and offended, not to say astonished. That Charles should have revealed her carefully guarded secret to another was bad enough—but that Captain Sanderson should have been so favoured was intolerable. Why, she had *warned* Charles not to speak of her good fortune, at least until the evidence was impossible to overlook! Soon everyone would know. Her condition would be discussed. There would be vulgar speculation.

No doubt Dorothea, with her unfortunate history, would be a prime subject for such impertinence. And Charles had left her utterly exposed to it. Had he *no* consideration for her feelings? Was he so lacking in regard for her that he would break his word without a qualm? Dorothea looked about, but could not see him. He had disappeared into the throng. For a while she waited, her heart quickening at the approach of every scarlet uniform. Then at last she asked Mrs Vale if they might take 'a refreshing turn around the room'.

'In this sad crush?' Mrs Vale said doubtfully, raising her voice a little so as to be heard against the rising clamour. 'You must excuse me, Mrs Brande, but I cannot see that there would be any refreshment in so doing.'

'Perhaps you would like me to fetch you a little ratafia, Mrs Brande?' inquired the Reverend Mr Vale, who had joined his wife. 'Or a piece of fruit?'

'No. Thank you.'

'This ball was mismanaged,' said Mrs Vale fretfully. 'There

are too many people for the size of the room. Why ever was the committee prevailed upon to invite such a crowd, when only half of it comprises anyone of the least gentility?’

‘It is very stuffy,’ Dorothea conceded. The night, in fact, was exceedingly warm, and innumerable candles made the ballroom even hotter. Dorothea realised that she was perspiring inside her cream satin. She could smell tobacco smoke, but could not trace the smell to its source. Her head was beginning to ache, and her eyes to smart. She felt a flutter of anxiety deep within her.

‘I must find my husband,’ she suddenly declared. ‘I must find Captain Brande.’

‘Is he not dancing?’ inquired Mrs Vale. ‘I was sure that I saw him dancing.’ She blinked as Dorothea rose, abruptly. ‘Pray, Mrs Brande, do not attempt to cross the room alone. You are pale—I am sure you are ill. You must be accompanied.’

‘Of course you must,’ said the Reverend, extending his arm. But Mrs Vale had already called to Lieutenant Watts.

‘Lieutenant! Will you kindly attend Mrs Brande? She is ill, and wants to find her husband.’

‘With pleasure,’ the lieutenant replied. So it was that Dorothea suddenly found herself on the arm of the Governor’s aide-de-camp, without the least wanting to be there. Not that she could see anything objectionable about Lieutenant Watts, who was the mildest of men. But she knew that he was a source of irritation to Charles, and it was Charles whom she was seeking.

‘Would you like to remain here, Mrs Brande,’ the lieutenant queried, ‘while I fetch your husband?’

‘No. Thank you, I—’ Dorothea felt almost faint. ‘I should like to step outside. I should like some air.’

‘Of course.’ He conducted her out of the room with some difficulty, for the close press of bodies impeded progress. At last, however, they emerged onto the verandah, where lanterns illuminated a far less frantic scene. There were people taking the air out here, but far fewer than were crowded into the ballroom.

Dorothea saw Charles at once. He was one of a number of officers gathered around a post, and he was laughing. To her chagrin, she realised that he was standing beside Captain Sanderson.

'What the deuce—?' said Captain Sanderson, upon sighting Lieutenant Watts. 'Oh! Mrs Brande.' He bowed with a flourish.

'Mrs Brande is unwell, Sir,' Lieutenant Watts remarked, addressing Captain Brande. But Captain Sanderson interjected, asking the lieutenant if it was true that he had designed a dove and pigeon house for the Governor's wife, at Parramatta. Lieutenant Watts turned his placid face towards Captain Sanderson, and replied that it was.

'A good one?' Captain Sanderson wanted to know.

'I believe it has met with Mrs Macquarie's satisfaction, Sir.'

'Excellent! Well done!' A suggestive leer spread across Captain Sanderson's sweating visage. 'So would you design me a little cock and hen house for my own use, Lieutenant?'

The entire gathering laughed, with the exception of Dorothea and Lieutenant Watts. Dorothea had no idea what the Captain was talking about, though it was clearly a distasteful reference, since Charles and one or two of the others remonstrated with him, even as they laughed. There was no shift of expression in the lieutenant's wide-set eyes. With a mild look, and in a pleasant tone, he replied: 'I had thought that the establishment on Harrington Street, near the Three Jolly Sailors, served you well enough in that capacity, Sir.'

There was another roar of laughter.

'Charles—' Dorothea began, putting her hand to her head, and apologies broke out on all sides. Lieutenant Watts surrendered her arm to Captain Brande, who excused himself before leading her to a less populated stretch of the verandah. He asked her what the matter was. Her—um—condition, perhaps? He had begged her to stay at home, if she was feeling at all seedy. He had warned her that the ball would be trying to her nerves ...

'You told him,' Dorothea interrupted.

'What?'

'You told Captain Sanderson. You *told* him. About my condition. When I expressly asked you not to tell *anyone*.'

Charles had the grace to look guilty. It had slipped out, he said. His pride was such that he had been bursting with the news, and it had slipped out. But he hastened to assure Dorothea that Captain Sanderson would not betray a confidence.

'Perhaps *he* would not—but *you* did!' Dorothea exclaimed. She was becoming increasingly upset. 'How could you? Did you not give me your word?'

'No, in fact. I don't believe I—'

'But I *asked* you, Charles! I specifically *requested* that you not tell anyone!'

'Thea.' He glanced over his shoulder. 'This is hardly the time or the place.'

'Very well, then. Take me home.' She was on the verge of tears. 'It is too warm. I feel ill.'

'If you feel ill,' he replied, 'I cannot take you home. How can you ride, if you feel ill? You must have a carriage.'

'But I want to go now!'

'Let me arrange something.'

'Charles—'

'Come. We shall consult Mrs Molle.'

The tone of the evening was already beginning to trouble those of a genteel character. It was becoming rather too noisy, and liquor was being rather too freely imbibed. The Governor was making preparations to depart. The band was no longer playing. Mrs Molle was therefore quite content to take her leave, and accompany Dorothea home; a party was organised for Mrs Molle's carriage, consisting of the Vales, Mrs Molle and Dorothea. Colonel Molle was to ride alongside, but Captain Brande said that he would 'follow along shortly'. Certain officers had been detailed to see to it that the regimental colours be removed from the ballroom in a respectful manner, and that the celebration generally be concluded—'rolled up', as he put

it—in a fashion that did not insult the memory of those glorious dead who had fallen in England's defence. Charles was among the officers so detailed.

'If I should be unaccountably delayed,' he told Dorothea, 'do not wait up for me, I implore you. Not that I *shall* be delayed, at least for more than half an hour. Just a word or two, here and there, and I shall be away. Be easy, my dear. I shall soon be with you.'

Dorothea could smell brandy on his breath, and was suspicious of his earnest assurances. Sure enough, he failed to return home before she fell asleep—a circumstance that did not wholly surprise her.

But she did not in the least expect him to be absent the entire night.

## CHAPTER TWENTY



DOROTHEA SLEPT BADLY, WAKING at regular intervals. By four o'clock she was so anxious that she was unable to doze off again; the candle was guttering, in any case, and she had to light another. After rising to accomplish this task, she dressed as best she could. Then she sat in the drawing room to think.

It seemed probable that Charles was still carousing with his friends. They were soldiers, after all, and they were celebrating a singular victory. If Dorothea should rouse Daniel, alert the barracks, and seek out the District Constable, how mortified she would feel in the event of Charles staggering home safely thereafter! How angry he would be, too. Unreasonably, he would blame her for bringing their private affairs to public notice.

But what if he should have been assaulted, and left for dead? What if some horrid accident should have befallen him—so horrid that his fellow officers had not, at present, the courage to apprise his widow of the terrible facts? Dorothea wrung her hands, wondering what she should do. If she were to do anything—anything at all—she must begin by rousing Daniel. And if she roused Daniel, he would know that Charles had not come home.

Rising, she began to pace the floor. Dawn had already trimmed the heavy drawing-room curtains with light. I shall wait until the sun is risen, she decided, and then I shall send

Daniel to the barracks, with a message for Charles. A written message. I shall say only: take this note to Captain Brande at the barracks—as if I have been informed of his whereabouts. And if he is *not* there ...

If he is not there, at least the alarm will have been raised.

She wrote the note, which was merely an inquiry. (Would her beloved spouse be home for breakfast?) Then she folded it, sealed it, and awaited the sunrise. It occurred to her that the day was going to be a hot one; she could feel the heat even now. With dismay, she remembered that mention had been made, at the ball, of certain military manoeuvres scheduled to take place in Hyde Park that morning. As an officer's wife, she would be expected to attend these proceedings, which were to be held in honour of a signal and glorious victory. She would be expected to stand for an hour in the pitiless heat, flinching at the noise of gunfire and shading her eyes from the glare of sunlight on gold braid.

If she shirked her duty, Charles would be most put out. Moreover, any rumours abroad that she was increasing would be given further impetus.

She must make an appearance, despite her misgivings.

With the note in her hand, she went at last to find Daniel. He was lighting the kitchen fire, and looked surprised to see her. Standing well away from the heat of the flames, she gave him her instructions without meeting his eye. But as she left the kitchen, the sound of her name—spoken sharply—brought her up short. Jack Lynch was standing on the other side of the garden fence.

'Mrs Brande!' he repeated. 'The Cap'n sent me, Ma'am. Wants a clean shirt an' his brushes.'

'Oh!' Dorothea almost staggered where she stood. 'Jack! But—'

'Says he'll see you at the *feu de joie*,' Jack continued. 'Says you should join Mrs Molle's party.' There was a pause, as Dorothea tried to collect her scattered wits. So Charles *was* alive! But where? And—and how could he be so unfeeling?

'Ma'am,' Jack went on, 'I need that shirt, if you please. And them brushes.'

'Yes, I ... wait.' In a daze, Dorothea turned—to find Daniel standing in the doorway behind her. She gave a little start. 'Oh! Daniel. Do not ... that is to say, give me the note, if you please. I shall not be sending it.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'And—yes. Carry on. Thank you.'

Captain Brande, it transpired, was attending to his morning toilet in the quarters of Captain Sanderson. This much Jack would vouchsafe without prompting, and Dorothea could not bring herself to ask more. She was not about to lower herself by making inquiries of a common servant—not when those inquiries concerned her husband's activities and whereabouts. Now that she had recovered her composure, to some degree, she was able to stand by, icily aloof, as Jack Lynch collected his master's shirt, stockings, brushes and hair oil.

She gave him not one word of greeting for her husband, because anger prevented her from speaking calmly. In silence she received Jack's grateful thanks and jaunty salute. In silence she met his speculative gaze, and shut the front door upon his retreating back. Then she went and sat in the drawing room, where she remained unoccupied—staring out the window—until Rose appeared, to ask if her mistress would be requiring a full breakfast.

'No,' Dorothea replied. 'But I shall drink a cup of tea.'

'Just that?'

'Just that. Let me unlock the caddy for you.'

'Will you be goin' to look at the sojers today, Missus? Only I 'eard the crier, on me way 'ere—'

'Yes. I shall be attending the manoeuvres this morning.'

'Then you should eat a proper breakfast. An egg would serve.'

'No, thank you,' said Dorothea firmly. 'I shall need you to help me dress, though.'



Her anger had subsided—the flames had burned down—leaving an empty, blackened space in one corner of her heart. The fatigue of the night had begun to affect her; even Rose's cup of tea (being far too weak) was not enspiriting. She sipped it quietly, as Rose busied herself in the bedroom, attacking mattresses with a vigour that her mistress would normally have found commendable. Now she just stared blankly, her mind on other matters.

The crimson spencer jacket, she decided, over her white muslin skirt. A morning gown would not be suitable to the occasion. It would be too informal. But how would she bear the heat in a spencer jacket? Even with a parasol, she might very well be overcome. And if she *did* succumb, what then? Acute discomfort. Public humiliation. So far from home, she would doubtless have to seek refuge in some neighbouring house, with all the disagreeableness that must necessarily attend such an expedient.

She thought: I shall not go.

Why risk the safety of her unborn child? Why suffer to please a husband who was not intent on pleasing her? If *he* could be absent, then so could she. With a grunt, she bestirred herself, and penned another note—this time addressing herself to Mrs Molle. She begged Mrs Molle's pardon, but confessed that she was too indisposed to accompany her to the *feu de joie* that day, in light of the weather. Then she called to Rose.

'Rose,' she said, 'please take this note to Daniel. Tell him that it is to go at once to Mrs Molle.'

Rose, in her distressingly disrespectful way, nodded instead of curtsying—but Dorothea was too fatigued to scold her for it.

'I shall *not* be going out today, after all,' she continued. 'It is far too hot. No doubt I shall hear the guns, and that will be enough for me.'

She did hear the guns—at least, she heard the grand salute fired by the battery at Dawes Point, which was to precede the *feu de joie*. Lifting her gaze from her tambour—feeling the floor shudder slightly beneath her feet—she offered up a silent

prayer for the souls of those slain in battle. Then she returned to her broderie perse. She was adding a rose bed to her receiving cloth by stitching together pieces of flowered chintz. The effect, she thought, was very pretty.

She had completed the rose bed, as well as part of a hedgerow, when Charles returned home at two o'clock. He marched through the front door, wheeled about, and saw her sitting on the sofa.

Their eyes locked.

'So,' he said. He looked a trifle dusty, and his face was gleaming with perspiration. As she remained silent, he made for the tantalus with a heavy, jingling tread.

'Am I to understand it that you did not, in fact, turn out for the salute?' he inquired.

'I could not,' Dorothea replied coolly.

'You *could* not?'

'I could not feel justified in exposing my child to the risk of such an excursion.'

Having delivered herself of this remark, she began to stitch, industriously, while Charles busied himself with the tantalus. He had taken to examining it carefully, at regular intervals, since Martha had interfered with it.

'You feel that there would have been a risk,' he said, 'associated with sitting in a covered chaise—'

'—in a stuffy covered chaise in the heat of the day? Unquestionably,' Dorothea interrupted. She kept her gaze fixed on her work. 'You know how anxious I am about the health of this child,' she stated. 'I intend to run no risks whatsoever. I do not intend to exert myself unless absolutely necessary, and I intend to avoid even stepping outside on hot days such as this one.'

'I see.' There was a hint of a sneer in Charles's voice. 'So if tomorrow's weather is as fair as today's, nothing will persuade you to attend divine worship?'

He believed that he had called her bluff. She knew it. And she took great delight in startling him with a quiet, 'Nothing.'

'You will not go to church?' he exclaimed.

'No.'

'There will be psalms of praise and thanksgiving. I heard Cowper say so.'

'Then there will also be a great crush, and I shall be better off here,' she replied, snipping at a thread. 'My absence,' she added, with emphasis, 'is hardly likely to excite much comment.'

In the silence that followed, Dorothea could hear Charles breathing. She wondered if he was going to make any reference to his own recent absence—to his own whereabouts during the night. No doubt their thoughts were running in the same direction. But he refrained, whether from arrogance or cowardice she did not know.

'Nothing too heavy for dinner, I trust?' he asked, sauntering over to the window. His sword dangled at his side.

'Cold boiled chicken and salad. Vegetable soup.'

'That was deuced hot work, you know. Tiring, too. Went off well, however—pity you missed it.'

Dorothea did not reply.

'I think I might lay my head down, for an hour,' he went on, yawning. 'I'm fairly wrung out, after all these festivities. Too much pace for a fellow like me.'

Still Dorothea said nothing.

'Where is Jack? I told him to meet me here.' Charles swung around to face his wife. 'Is he out in the kitchen, do you know? Have you seen him?'

Dorothea paused, her needle suspended. She looked up. 'Not since this morning,' she rejoined—and that was enough to drive Charles from the room. Was he ashamed, perhaps? Even if he was, he clearly had no intention of apologising for his conduct, although he was unusually pleasant at dinner. He did not even complain about the overabundance of salt in the soup. After dinner, moreover, he offered to read aloud from Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, though he fell asleep while so engaged.

And the next morning, not one word of reproach passed his lips concerning Dorothea's decision to remain at home during the Sunday service.

Dorothea, for her part, felt bereft. She could hardly speak, for fear of blurting out bitter recriminations and inciting a quarrel; she and her husband indulged in spasmodic exchanges of idle chat, while they avoided each other's eyes. The awkwardness of her situation was terrible. She wanted to demand an explanation, an apology, a promise of reform, yet she feared to make such a demand in case it sparked some unprecedented outburst. She knew that he was waiting for her to reproach him. She knew that he would defend himself with an impassioned tirade—prepared, no doubt, with Captain Sanderson's assistance. She knew, moreover, that his position was not indefensible, and that her own sense of humiliation was perhaps not entirely just.

So she was relieved when he went off to St Philip's, with Jack and Rose Taylor in tow. For an hour, at least, she would be able to breathe more freely—to seek the Lord's guidance on bended knee—without breaking the fragile and wordless *entente* that existed between herself and her husband. But this state of affairs could not endure. It was poisonous. It was insupportable. Her nerves would never stand it.

She wondered if she was being unreasonable in believing herself badly used. Her husband was an officer. England had won a great battle. He had been detained—no more—and if he had neglected to warn her of his intentions, well, was that not a minor trespass? Perhaps he was right. Perhaps she was, indeed, of an hysterical disposition, inclined to imagine slights and magnify trivialities.

In desperation she opened her Bible, and began to read: '*And the sons of Pharez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites.*' No—this was not what she sought. Perhaps the Psalms would offer comfort, or the Epistles.

Then something occurred to her.

Picking up her Bible, she went to the kitchen, where Daniel was sitting alone and unoccupied. He appeared to be listening to the church bells, but rose as Dorothea entered, wiping his sweaty hands on his shirt. Already the kitchen was stifling.

'Oh dear,' said Dorothea. 'This cannot be healthy.'

'Ma'am?'

'The heat. Must the fire be lit? What is boiling on the hob, there?'

'The puddin', Ma'am.'

'Ah.'

'Tis of no consequence. I am well enough.'

Dorothea was doubtful, but could offer no solution—except that which had brought her to him.

'I am unable to attend church today, Daniel, because my health is ... um ... a little delicate, at present, and I wondered if you would care to join me in a scripture reading?' Dorothea felt herself growing a little flustered as Daniel regarded her. Surely there could be no objection? 'That is to say, I would read aloud from the Bible,' she went on, 'and you would listen, and by this means we would worship together, and occupy ourselves in a decent and proper manner while prevented from attending church.' She cleared her throat, feeling very warm. 'Would you like that, Daniel?'

He nodded. 'That I would, Ma'am.'

'Good.' It occurred to her that she should have turned her attention to his spiritual predicament long ago. How pleasing it would be if, by her example, she persuaded him to abandon his popish practices and set him on the right path. 'We shall not stay here,' she added. 'It is far too hot. You may join me in the drawing room as soon as ever you like.'

'Should I comb my hair, Ma'am?'

'Yes. I think that would be ... respectful.'

'Then I'll be along with ye presently.'

Dorothea, in fact, had barely settled onto the sofa—and selected a suitable extract—when he appeared carrying a stool, which he positioned some distance away from her. He had

washed his face and hands, combed his hair, and donned his jacket. Upon being invited to sit down, he did so, his gaze modestly fixed on the floor.

'Is there—is there anything in particular that you would like to hear?' Dorothea inquired hesitantly. 'I had thought perhaps a Psalm, followed by one of the Epistles, and an extract from the Gospels, but if you have a preference ...'

'No, Ma'am, that I have not,' he said. So Dorothea commenced with Psalm 113 (*He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children*'), proceeded to the General Epistle of St James, and then, in a flash of inspiration, began to read from the Book of Daniel. Not being familiar with this portion of the Old Testament—knowing only that his name was 'out o' the Bible' and that his namesake had spent time in a lion's den—Daniel was highly gratified by Dorothea's choice. He listened intently as she narrated the prophet's adventures: the escape from Nebuchadnezzar's slaughter, the interpretation of Belshazzar's vision, the imprisonment in the lion's den. She had reached the point at which the prophet emerges unscathed (*My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me*) when the bells of St Philip's began to peal, signalling the end of the Sunday morning service.

'Oh dear,' she said, breaking off. 'I believe that we must finish, now, for Captain Brande will be home soon.'

Daniel looked bewildered. 'But—is that all?' he asked. 'Is there no more?'

'There is more, yes. A great deal more. Too much to finish today.'

'Aye, but—'tis a grand tale, Ma'am, and with the finest words—*he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him*. Sure, and that's like music ...'

Seeing the disappointment on his face, Dorothea was tempted to comfort him with an assurance that they would, indeed, finish the Book of Daniel upon the following Sunday. But she held back. To make any such promise would alert him

to the fact that she was not expecting an improvement in her health—and that, in turn, might cause him to wonder.

‘If you were to attend church, Daniel,’ she said gently, ‘you would hear the Scriptures read, and by a better reader than I.’

‘Ah, no.’ He shook his head. ‘Ye have the way of’t, Ma’am.’

‘Indeed I have not. Not as the Reverend Cowper has.’

‘I had rather it read to me, sweetly and softly, than bellowed at me in rough company,’ said Daniel, whereupon Dorothea blushed. Though his tone was not familiar, his choice of words was unnerving. It reminded her of the difference in their respective stations, and the fact that he was a very large convict, alone with her in the house.

‘So you would receive God’s Word only on your own terms?’ she said sharply. ‘I find that disappointing, Daniel. I had thought better of you.’ As he paled, she went on. ‘I think you should go to church. What harm do you fear? That you might hear the truth, and be saved?’

He turned his eyes to the floor, and remained silent. Every limb had tensed. It suddenly occurred to Dorothea that he *was* afraid—or at least anxious—and she was torn. She both deplored his fear and pitied him for it; though offended, she was also troubled. On the one hand, she thought: fear an avenging God, not me. What cause have I given you to fear me? On the other hand, she thought it an intolerable thing, to see so big and strong a man reduced to such a state of alarm. It argued a weak character.

‘I am disturbed that you should turn away from Christ,’ she continued, in a more sympathetic voice. ‘I wonder what comfort you can derive from your situation, without Him? Do you pray, Daniel? Are you not concerned about your immortal soul?’

He glanced up, at that. ‘Aye,’ he growled. ‘All the time.’ And he fixed Dorothea with a most curious look—intent and watchful. ‘I have seen men lose their souls,’ he said quietly. ‘To keep my own is all that I can wish for, here.’

Dorothea swallowed. She sensed dark shadows encroaching upon the conversation, and they filled her with dread. The

Stain, she thought. I shall not regard it. I *shall* not. There is a child in my womb.

'If you seek God's help, you will not be abandoned,' she said quickly. 'God loves us all. Even sinners may turn to Him, if they are truly penitent, and He will save their souls.'

'With assistance,' said Daniel, and rose to his feet. Startled, Dorothea looked up at him. She may even have flinched, for he apologised—'Yeer pardon, Ma'am'—before addressing her in a manner that, while grim and full of feeling, offered her no threat. 'God may save my soul, but not without yeer assistance,' he said. 'I am safe, in this house—as safe as I can be. I know't. I know what I owe ye, none better. If I could go to the church there, for yeer own sake, I would. Aye, just to please ye. But I cannot. Though I want to with all my heart, I cannot. Forgive me.' His lips positively trembled. 'Please,' he said, 'do not condemn me for't. I'll do anythin' else. Anythin' you ask o' me, Ma'am.'

Shocked, dismayed and moved despite herself, Dorothea searched for a suitable reply. At last she said: 'I would not persecute a man because of his beliefs, Daniel.'

'I know't.'

'I think that you are in error, but—but that you are also in earnest, and may come to realise how wrong you have been.' She was upset, and angry about it. The confusion of her feelings was such that she seized passionately upon the one source of comfort in her life. I am with child, she thought. I am with child. I can be tranquil—I *must* be tranquil. For the child's sake, I must turn away from the troubles threatening me, and embrace the peace that I shall make for myself.

No more reading to convicts, she decided. No more quarrelling with Charles. The consequences are too unsettling. The child may suffer. I am not strong, and must husband my resources.

'Thank you, Daniel. That will be all,' she said.

And, though heartsick at the prospect, she then occupied herself with the question of how best she might apologise to Captain Brande for her undutiful conduct.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE



DOROTHEA DID NOT READ to Daniel the following Sunday, nor on the Sunday after that. She pleaded ill health with a self-conscious flush; by this time, however, her condition was common knowledge (Captain Sanderson, it appeared, had been unable to contain himself), and Daniel accepted her excuse without comment. Not that he would have rebuked her. Not that he *could* have, with justification. But for some reason she felt guilty, and more than once took to her bed of a Sunday morning, lest Daniel should think that she acted out of prejudice, or disapproval, or some obscure form of resentment. She did not want him to think ill of her. He troubled her, but not through any fault of his own. She strove to be pleasant, admiring his efforts in the garden and speaking courteously whenever she addressed him. The last thing she needed was a sullen or discontented manservant. She wanted a tranquil household, full of satisfied people. So she always approached him with a timid smile, and resolved not to think about him when he was not present—for dark imaginings seemed to accompany thoughts of Daniel Callaghan. A moment's idle reflection on the extent of his religious schooling would lead inevitably to speculation about his childhood, his apprenticeship, his crime, his sentence, his scars, the *General Hewitt*, the burials at sea, the floggings, the haunted look in his eye and the lines on his face ...

Feeling her heart trip and her brow become damp, Dorothea would banish such musings. She told herself that they would profit no one. Certainly not her child, whom she felt to be obscurely threatened by them. As the weeks went by, she became more and more fiercely—almost fearfully—engaged in the protection of her unborn infant. She worked only in the morning and evening, taking care to rest during the heat of the day. She dosed herself with tonic, and walked carefully, always lowering herself into a chair rather than throwing herself upon it. She rarely set foot outside; having decided against attending church, she could not in good conscience pay any calls, and had to be satisfied with news gathered from those who visited her—Mrs Molle being the chief among them. Mrs Molle was sympathetic to Dorothea's caution, and could find no fault with her decision to stay out of the sun. She agreed with Surgeon Forster's diagnosis of Dorothea as a lady of 'delicate habit', whose constitution was not well adapted to childbirth. Dorothea, she said, must be careful not to over-exert herself, indulge in rich foods, or expose herself to the more trying conditions of a colonial existence.

'Better safe than sorry,' she declared one day, upon stopping by with a request concerning the Waterloo Subscription Fund. 'Caution is to be commended in these circumstances. If you were to spend the next six months in bed, Mrs Brande, I would be the last to condemn you—though I do believe that you may benefit from the cooler weather, when it falls upon us. A brisk autumn day might invigorate you, as these languid summer ones never shall.'

Dorothea agreed. She was a little discomposed by Mrs Molle's visit, because Charles had only recently relayed to her a certain piece of gossip regarding Colonel Molle. It appeared that a doggerel verse, or pipe, had been discovered in the barracks yard, and that this pipe impugned the virtue, honour, wit and courage of Charles's commanding officer. It accused him of being mercenary and faithless, feigning 'with friendship's warmth to glow' while he plotted against the Governor.

It dismissed his Egyptian medals as dross, sneered at 'the feats he did, the enemies he slew', laughed at his self-important mien and his graceless dancing, and attacked his bon mots as having been derived from the pages of carefully studied books—save for the occasional 'quaint, lifeless pun/ Of all the mongrels, that to wit lay claim,/ The basest bred, that e'er profan'd the name!'

It had finished by bidding the 'dirty, grovelling Molle' to burrow in his hole, like his namesake.

Surprised that Charles had committed so much of the verse to memory—suspicious, in fact, that he appeared to derive some enjoyment from it—Dorothea had condemned the malicious production in decided terms. She had felt very strongly for Mrs Molle, knowing how the verse would be discussed avidly and exhaustively throughout New South Wales. She thought it a cowardly attack, and could not see how the Colonel had aroused such hatred in some quarters.

But now, in Mrs Molle's presence, she was not sure how to proceed. Should she blurt out her expressions of sympathy and support? Or should she ignore the entire subject, as being beneath the notice of a lady? Certainly Mrs Molle had not mentioned the pipe. Was she hoping, perhaps, that Dorothea was unaware of it, confined as she was to her house?

Dorothea decided to follow Mrs Molle's lead, and refrain from any reference to the unfortunate affair unless her friend should mention it.

'How very *draining* the weather has been, lately,' she therefore observed, in deference to Mrs Molle's remark about languid summer days. 'I find it so difficult to sleep on hot nights. There can be no relief. No refreshment. And the mosquitoes are abominable!'

'The mosquitoes—and the flies,' said Mrs Molle.

'Oh! The flies. Do not *speak* to me about them! Can you wonder that I never go out?'

She was interrupted by a knock at the front door. Rose, who was setting out the teacups, put down her tray and went to answer it; she returned a moment later with the news that

Captain Sanderson was inquiring after Captain Brande. Of course, Captain Sanderson's inquiry had been perfectly audible to Dorothea and her guest. Rose's announcement had been a mere nod to the proprieties of a civilised existence. But then Captain Sanderson poked his head into the room, uninvited, and all pretence at respectable formality was at an end.

'Mrs Brande,' he said, with a bow so low and flourishing as to be almost ironic. 'Mrs Molle! A very good afternoon to you both. In good health, I trust?'

'Thank you,' Dorothea replied coldly. Rising, she gave a stiff little bob. 'I am well.'

'A little fatigued by the heat, perhaps,' Mrs Molle added, in more genial tones.

'My word, yes! Shocking weather. Can it be that our gallant captain has been overcome?' Seeing the ladies stare in bewilderment, Captain Sanderson spoke more plainly. 'I come in search of Captain Brande, with a pretty piece of news. Have you heard? Our chaplain has seized the *Traveller*.'

Mrs Molle gasped. Dorothea said, 'Captain Brande is at the barracks. He went this morning.'

'What on earth do you mean, Captain?' Mrs Molle exclaimed. 'Mr Vale has seized the *Traveller*? What nonsense!'

'I assure you,' he replied. 'I had it from Higgins, who had it from Gill, who had it from one of the Government boatmen.' Captain Sanderson was sweating profusely in his scarlet wool. He seemed to fill the room. 'Mr Vale has seized the *Traveller* as a lawful prize under the Navigation Laws. Because it is an American vessel.'

'Captain Sanderson,' Dorothea interrupted, 'did you come from the barracks? Was my husband not there?'

'Oh—ah—well, I thought him *here*, you see.'

'But Captain,' said Mrs Molle, 'how can such an action be justified, now that the American war is over?'

'Ask Mr Moore,' Captain Sanderson replied. 'I hear that he is advising our reverend friend.'

There was a pause, and Dorothea realised that she had

neglected to invite the captain to sit down. She did so, of course (she could hardly do otherwise, now that he was in the room) and Mrs Molle sank gratefully back into her own chair. But Captain Sanderson replied that he could not stay, for all that he would have wished to. Captain Brande had to be found, and now that he thought about it, the good captain was almost certainly at the hospital, undertaking a mission of mercy. He had mentioned something to that effect, earlier in the day. Captain Sanderson was a blockhead to have forgotten it.

'He has a sergeant laid up there with some frightful ailment—it's done for him, as far as I can see,' Captain Sanderson declared, 'and of course Brande has taken it to heart, like the good fellow he is.'

'Indeed?' said Mrs Molle. 'Which sergeant would that be, Captain? I cannot recollect—'

'Sergeant Pyke, Ma'am. Capital soldier.'

'Sergeant Pyke? How unfortunate. Is he married?'

'Aye. But his wife is in England.'

'Then I shall undertake to visit him with comforts,' said Mrs Molle briskly. 'I should have been informed of his condition—I wonder that Surgeon Forster did not tell me.'

Captain Sanderson gave a crooked smile, and backed up a step. 'Well, now,' he said, 'I'll not speak for Forster, but I'll warrant he had his reasons. At your service, Ma'am. Mrs Brande.' He bowed, and all but winked at Dorothea. 'I rejoice to have found you in such glowing health. My apologies for interrupting your tea. Good day to you, ladies.'

'Well!' said Mrs Molle, after he had withdrawn. 'What an extraordinary thing. The Reverend Mr Vale! A man of such delicate health—I would not have expected it.'

'No,' said Dorothea.

'I spoke to Mrs Vale, yesterday, and she never once mentioned such a possibility. I wonder if she knew?' Mrs Molle pondered, her cup in her hand. 'I would be very surprised if she did, though it occurs to me that Mr Jeffery Bent expressed his doubts, not long ago, about the legality

of allowing an American ship to discharge its cargo here. I wonder—could Mr Moore have shared those doubts?’

‘It is possible, I suppose,’ said Dorothea.

‘But what could have prompted Mr Vale, of all people, to have acted on such advice? Can he be hoping to retain a portion of the cargo? I daresay that *would* provide a motive, for he makes no secret of his, er, straitened circumstances.’ Finishing her tea, Mrs Molle set her cup down. ‘I do wonder, though, if His Excellency will allow such an action to be taken,’ she continued. ‘You will notice, Mrs Brande, that the seizure was accomplished during the Governor’s absence. I fear that, when he returns from the interior, he will *not* be pleased. The question is: who is legally in the right?’

Dorothea could not express an opinion. She was probably not expected to. But she did ask Mrs Molle if she was correct in her understanding of one important fact.

‘If the seizure is legal,’ she inquired, ‘will Mr Vale gain possession of the ship and its cargo?’

‘I have no idea. One would assume something of the kind, or why even make the attempt?’ Mrs Molle rose to take her leave. ‘It occurs to me,’ she added, ‘that the Colonel may be applied to in His Excellency’s absence. I had best be on hand, for that reason. Who knows what might transpire?’ She bade Dorothea goodbye in a somewhat abrupt manner, and positively scampered from the house in her eagerness to become better acquainted with the facts of the case.

Dorothea, for her part, sat alone for a while, musing. It seemed incredible to her that the Vales might become rich. In one stroke, Mr Vale might well have set his family forever beyond the reach of vulgar want. And it was not by means of an inheritance, or talent, or even good fortune that he had done so. He had simply seized an opportunity that had been open to every free man in New South Wales.

Dorothea considered her own situation, and how greatly she was in need of a nursery, a nursemaid and countless other little luxuries that many people in England would have

regarded as necessities. She wondered why it had not occurred to Charles that the American ship might be taken. He was an officer—surely he was sufficiently educated in military matters? If he had acted swiftly enough, it might have been Dorothea facing the prospect of a life of ease.

But when he returned home, that evening, it soon became apparent that Mr Vale's undertaking was by no means assured of success.

'The ship has been arrested,' Charles revealed, as they dined off a rather dubious ragout. 'Vale and Moore went to Bent's house with all the correct papers, and he issued a warrant. But the Old Man refuses to convene an Admiralty Court, to see the thing through.'

'Why?' asked Dorothea.

'Why? Because he is a coward, and knows that the Governor will have his hide if he does so.' Charles, on his own admission, had been scouring Sydney for information all afternoon, and spoke with authority. 'It was a brave attempt,' he said, 'but I doubt its success. Not without official support.'

'Surely, though, if the ship is here illegally ...?'

'That I cannot judge. They tell me she carries goods consigned to a Sydney merchant, and that she was cleared in Canton by the East India Company.' Charles shrugged, then laughed. 'To think of little Vale, carrying out such a piece of impudence! But then a man might risk a great deal for a schooner-load of tea and sugar.'

'You think Mr Vale is running a risk?' Dorothea inquired, whereupon her husband exclaimed: 'Lord, yes! Wait until the Governor returns—*then* you will see some action. Vale is a military chaplain, remember. I doubt not that he will be court-martialled for this, and that Moore will lose his appointment. Ah, well ...' Charles pushed his plate away with a grimace. 'I cannot pretend that Vale would be any great loss to the Regiment. He turns my stomach, that fellow.'

With a sigh, Dorothea conceded that Mr Vale could indeed be a little trying. At the same time, she relinquished any

lingering resentment that she may have nursed against Charles, for failing to act decisively in regards to the *Traveller*. It was clear that such an attempt would not have been in their best interests.

'I thought that Sanderson was spinning one of his tales when first he told me,' Charles admitted, declining with one raised hand a proffered dish of blancmange. 'He likes to catch a fellow out, with his absurdities. Imagine my surprise, when I discovered it to be true! Miller was the same. We were both chaffing Sanderson for coming it a little too strong.'

'Oh!' said Dorothea. 'Was Captain Miller at the hospital?'  
'Eh?'

'At the hospital. When Captain Sanderson found you.' Looking at her husband's blank face, Dorothea swallowed a tiny misgiving. 'He said that you were at the hospital, visiting Sergeant Pyke—'

'Oh! Yes.' Charles wiped his mouth, and pushed back his chair as he flourished his napkin. 'Trust Sanderson to get it wrong. Pyke was in hospital with a fever, some time ago, but he is on his feet, now. No, I was in the stables all along.'

'Then why did Captain Sanderson—?'

'Scatter-brained fellow. He was thinking of Schaw, no doubt. Schaw spends half his time at the military hospital, prosing over the men there. Wages of sin, you know, since half of 'em are in for—' He stopped suddenly, and coloured. 'Well, gout, and so forth,' he continued quickly. 'Over-indulgence. Thank you, Private, just one more glass, if you please.'

'But Charles, will you have nothing more?' said Dorothea, as Jack obliged. 'This blancmange is really excellent. I believe that Rose has the knack of it, now.'

'Sorry, my dear, but her last attempt put me off the filthy stuff for life. In any event, I only have time for a quick tippie, and then I must be on my way. Lodge meeting, you know.'

'Lodge meeting?' Dorothea protested. 'Charles, must you go out again?'

'Our Right Worshipful will flay me if I do not, my dear.'



'But it is only the Lodge. You have not been home these three evenings past. I am not *comfortable* here alone.' Dorothea was haunted by the fear that she might lose her child during one of her husband's many absences. 'Why should you go? Can you not offer your excuses? Say that I am ill, if you must.'

'And miss my chance to hear what Bent has to tell us? If anyone knows the full story of this *Traveller* business, it is our brave Mr Bent. I shall have it all out of him in a trice, and then you will profit from my pertinacity.'

'But—'

'Thea, I *dare* not linger too long in your company, just now.' He laid a hand on hers, stooping to look into her eyes. His own were glinting, for he was in a somewhat wayward and boisterous mood. 'You know our situation, my dear. It is trying enough to sleep beside you—to lie so close, without being able to exchange as much as a caress—I might as well be on a rack! Would you torment me further, with one of our quiet evenings? You would not be so cruel.'

'But—but I thought that you had letters to write,' Dorothea stammered, all confusion.

'And I shall write them, when you are not present to tempt me with your beguiling airs.' He kissed her hand with blatantly simulated fervour. 'You know me, my dear—I am a weak fellow. Take pity on me for my weakness, and do not press your company on me, or I am bound to harm the child.'

'Oh!' Dorothea exclaimed. She coloured and pulled back, as his meaning finally became clear to her. 'Oh Charles, how absurd.'

'Not at all, I assure you. Men have passionate natures. If we cannot indulge them, we must take care to stay out of harm's way. Adieu, my dear.' He blew her a jaunty kiss from the threshold. 'I shall return before ten. Do not wait up for me, or all my resolutions will come to nothing. Private Lynch!' he yelled. '*Private Lynch!* Attend me, if you please—the girl will clear the table.'

And with that, he was gone. His footsteps receded. The front door banged. Dorothea found herself alone with the blanc-mange, rudely abandoned. She had thought that her condition would place upon her husband an obligation to treat her with greater attentiveness; instead, it had driven him away. He had gone, he said, to resist temptation.

Well—it was a compliment, of sorts. And it might even be true. But it made her very uneasy, and cast an unflattering light on his own strength of character.

The fact of the matter is, she thought glumly, that if we cannot be intimate, he would rather not be with me at all.

A fine state of affairs.

New South Wales  
March 7th, 1816

*My dearest Margaret,*

*I continue well, thanks to careful habits and a moderate diet. The sickness so often attendant upon my state has not yet troubled me, perhaps because I do not customarily overload my stomach, nor indulge in the vulgar notion of 'cravings' for absurd and unhealthy foods. I restrict myself to nourishing and digestible dishes, and rest often, going no farther than the garden when I do exert myself. Mrs Bent called the other day, and commended my caution. She insisted that, when the long-awaited arrival does occur, I should not commit the fatal error of rising before nine days have elapsed. Nor should I burden my strained digestive system with anything more than weak tea and bread, or gruel, during the first three days of after-repose. She remarked that the strength and health of my entire life will depend upon judicious treatment immediately after my confinement.*

*Her understanding of this delicate subject is very thorough, I have found. She also spoke at length about the care of infants, assuring me that the safest remedy for a pain in the stomach is a few drops of peppermint in water and sugar, and a hot flannel laid upon the stomach or across the back. Is it true, Margaret, that a little oatmeal gruel, very thin and smooth, is the most satisfactory substitute for mother's milk during the first two days of life? Mrs Bent maintains that it is very seldom the case that a mother will have the strength to nurse her infant within the first thirty-six hours, and that something suitable must therefore be offered in place of milk. I was under the impression that you yourself employed only sugared water, and was nursing within the day. (She also recommended syrup of violets for costiveness, and gave me a very good receipt.)*

*I should tell you that she brought her own darling infant with her,*

*and complained constantly about the poor child's colic, which is very severe and resistant to every form of gripe-water. She seems, I think, much changed. I had never previously thought her bitter, but she is bitter now, and has little to say in anyone's favour—though she was most sympathetic to Mrs Molle's predicament. Did I tell you that another pipe has been found, attacking Colonel Molle? I declare, it is too bad. Mrs Bent was of the opinion that the Governor himself is behind these offensive productions, and I did not try to dissuade her. She is too nervous and fretful to be challenged on any subject. She talked and talked of Mr Vale, who is facing a court martial for the 'Traveller' incident, and became quite upset. I therefore attempted to avoid all discussion of local affairs, conversing instead on domestic topics.*

*Needless to say, Rose provided an excellent starting point. For when the subject of the Waterloo Subscription Fund arose, she was serving tea, and remarked, without encouragement, that she herself intended to subscribe. She has not abandoned her distressing habit of offering up comments that would be better left unheard. Fortunately, Mrs Bent is now accustomed to Rose, and was not greatly offended. She simply began to complain about her own reduced staff (she had to dismiss her cook in December) and I listened sympathetically—though perhaps not as sympathetically as she would have wished. Her establishment, after all, is not inferior to mine, and she is assured of receiving a pension of at least two hundred pounds a year. Furthermore, she has five children to comfort her. Dear Ellis Henry accompanied her on her visit, and I cannot conceive of ever meeting with a more touching or sweet-natured little boy. I only wish that you were acquainted with him, Margaret. He was so attentive of his mama, so gentle with the baby, so polite in his expressions of thanks. I was troubled by his appearance, for he had dark circles under his eyes, and is clearly not sleeping well—but then a child of his delicate constitution cannot be expected to flourish so soon after the death of a parent.*

*In any event, it seemed to me that Mrs Bent was not counting her blessings, but occupying herself with her grievances. She may have lost her husband, and the greater part of her income, but she is more fortunate than many in her position; she has an energetic brother-in-law to take charge of her affairs, and five of the healthiest, most appealing*

*children that one could ever hope to possess. Of course she is still grieving, and recovering from her recent confinement, and much can be forgiven. I only hope, however, that dear little Ellis is receiving the intelligent and loving tendance to which so rare a spirit must be entitled.*

*He went out to converse with Daniel while he was here, and Mrs Bent never once remarked on his absence, nor questioned him about it when he returned. I made inquiries of Daniel myself, later, and was told that Ellis had somehow contrived to acquaint himself with a certain Irish myth concerning the 'faerie race' of that country. He had asked Daniel about one Aoibheal, the faerie queen of Craiglea, whose magic harp is said to herald the death of anyone hearing it. Daniel had confessed to knowing nothing of Aoibheal, but only of the Ban-Sidhe, a woman of the faerie race, whose cry also portends death.*

*It seemed a most unsuitable topic of interest for a young child, and I am guiltily aware that Daniel is probably to blame for any morbid fascination displayed by Ellis Henry. There can be no remedy, however; undoubtedly Daniel's intentions were innocent, and even sensitive boys like Ellis can exhibit macabre tendencies (as you yourself know too well). Therefore I did not chide Daniel, but warned him not to encourage Ellis's curiosity henceforth. It would not do to have the poor child brooding over such dark legends.*

*I must add, by the by, that Daniel was first told of the Ban-Sidhe when he himself was a boy, for the dread apparition was used to scare him into compliance. Do you wonder at the superstition and ignorance of the Irish people, when you consider the lies that they inflict upon their children? Any child of mine will be raised in the Light of Truth, not in the shadows of barbarous Error. I truly believe that without the ignorant usage of those in whose care he was placed, Daniel would not have strayed so grievously from the path of righteousness. He seems a gentle enough soul, modest in his bearing and occasionally even poetic in his speech. We are all sinners, of course, but I am convinced that Daniel's ruination came about through poor education, and not through any innate viciousness.*

*But here I am, indulging in that dreary colonial vice of endlessly discussing my servants. Forgive me, dearest Margaret. The fact is, I am so very confined these days that I can find little else to talk about.*

*Charles is well. The weather improves. The prices are increasing. That is all I can say.*

*Except that I think of you always, and pray for your health and happiness, and remain,*

*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



DESPITE ALL HER CARE, Dorothea miscarried in March—just one day after she had completed her receiving cloth.

The first pangs assailed her while she was entertaining Mrs Molle. This good lady had called with several fine articles of baby linen, which she proposed that Dorothea should borrow as models, or patterns. There was a quilted day flannel, a cross-stitched chemise, and a cambric muslin frock with three rows of insertion embroidery edged each side by narrow pointed work. While Dorothea admired these elegant garments, she was visited by a superstitious misgiving. It seemed to her that she would be tempting providence to proceed merrily with her preparations at so early a date. She felt that she was not yet out of danger.

And her instincts, it transpired, were correct. For within minutes of examining the boxpleats on the flannel, Dorothea experienced a peculiar, painless cramping of her internal regions that caused her to catch her breath and widen her eyes. Fortunately, Mrs Molle was at that moment admiring the muslin frock, and did not observe Dorothea's reaction. She continued to talk of caps and stomachers as Dorothea strove to conceal her anxiety. Then another hidden convulsion followed the first, and another, at intervals of six or seven minutes. Dorothea broke into a sweat.

'... Bad thread makes bad work,' Mrs Molle was saying.

'I learned that at my mother's knee, though I was not taught my stitching with the proper degree of application. It has never been one of my foremost accomplishments, I fear. These, as I told you, are my mother's work ...'

If Mrs Molle had any particular fault, it was her tendency to discourse, without encouragement, for extended periods of time. This she did now, as Dorothea grunted her responses, attentive only to the workings of her own interior. The cramps had begun to burn a little.

'... I have no patience with the showy superfluities that render a garment such as this more prone to wear,' Mrs Molle continued. 'What purpose does a piece of fine lace serve on a baby's chemise, except to provide unnecessary display—and unnecessary trouble? It will disintegrate after only a few washes, if the white articles are to be boiled—which they certainly should be, in the case of baby linen. Unless, of course, the lace is to be removed with each wash, and that, as far as I am concerned, comprises a deal of extra work for little return ...'

Within half an hour of the first cramp, Dorothea was suffering from a fair degree of bodily discomfort. Her mental discomfort was even more acute. She was unable to speak, and could not believe the evidence of her own senses. At last her uneven breathing, her pale cheek and her fixed gaze caught the attention of Mrs Molle, who looked at her sharply and said: 'Are you unwell, my dear?'

Dorothea put her hands across her belly. She stared at her friend.

'What is it?' said Mrs Molle, and then she gasped, and covered her mouth. 'Not ...? Oh no. Are you in pain?'

'It cannot be,' Dorothea whimpered. 'It *cannot* be ...!'

'Are there pains, Mrs Brande? Are they regular pains?'

'The doctor ...'

'Into bed, if you please.' Mrs Molle rose abruptly. 'And try to remain calm, or you will make a bad situation worse. For all we know, it may be just a touch of colic.'

'It must be. It cannot be the other. I have been *so careful*.'



‘Into bed, Mrs Brande.’

So Dorothea retired to bed, and Mrs Molle took charge. She had tea made, and a warm poultice, and she elevated Dorothea’s legs. Then she sent Daniel with a summons for Captain Brande and Surgeon Forster, instructing Rose (in a whisper that Dorothea nevertheless overheard) to heat up a pot of water, and hunt down every piece of spare linen in the house. Rose, naturally, was inclined to question Mrs Molle as to the nature of her mistress’s complaint—anxiety having loosened her already loose tongue—and Mrs Molle condemned her for it in no uncertain terms. Subsequently, there was bad feeling between them, which was made even worse by Mrs Molle’s decision to send for Anne Ezzey once Daniel had returned. But Dorothea paid no mind to the heated exchanges that flared up around her. She was concerned with only one thing.

‘It is a punishment,’ she croaked, as Mrs Molle sat holding her hand, awaiting Surgeon Forster’s arrival. ‘I am being punished.’

‘Nonsense.’

‘What else can it be? I took every care. *Every care!* I ate no rich food. I hardly moved from the house. I was not ill, or foolish—’

‘You are being foolish now,’ Mrs Molle replied, as Rose bathed her mistress’s fevered brow. ‘To begin with, you must not yet lose hope—be careful of the sheets, girl, do not slop it everywhere!—and if hope *is* to be extinguished (which I am not persuaded of, let me assure you), then you must remember that you are of a delicate disposition, and must therefore expect three times as many losses as successes.’

‘But what have I *done?*’ Dorothea wailed, and Mrs Molle patted her hand furiously.

‘Hush, now. Hush,’ she said, with a meaning glance at Rose—who immediately withdrew. ‘You have done nothing wrong. Nothing at all.’

‘Is it because I did not go to church? I was afraid to go to

church. It was so hot. There were so many people. It would have been so close—'

'Put such a notion from your mind,' Mrs Molle said firmly. 'You were wise to avoid the Sunday service. In the heat of summer, with a congregation full of noxious-smelling Government men, it was no place for a lady in your condition.'

'But Mrs Bent used to go.'

'Mrs Bent, I think you will agree, is a good deal stronger than you are. You will recall that she was accustomed to *riding* while in a similar state. Now stop upsetting yourself, Mrs Brande, or I shall go—I do not intend to sit here listening to such nonsense.'

Obediently, Dorothea let the subject drop, but she resolved nevertheless to speak to the Reverend Mr Cowper. Between pains (each of which struck her with increasing force, and which drove all other preoccupations from her mind) she was filled, not so much with fear or despair, but with a shocked sense of outraged disbelief. The injustice of her situation was impossible to accept. She had spent all of three months on her back, she had shut herself off from the world, she had prayed regularly and fervently, and for what? What had she done that merited so unfair a punishment?

She wept tears of mingled grief and fury, which Mrs Molle gently wiped away.

'Captain Brande is coming. Surgeon Forster is coming,' Mrs Molle said. 'They will make you comfortable.'

Surgeon Forster arrived soon afterwards, accompanied by the regimental widwife. He was himself indisposed, and sported a streaming nose and puffy eyes; his voice, as he proceeded through his customary catechism, was hoarse, and his manner distracted. He shook his head over Dorothea's unhappy state. He laid a hand on her forehead, and palpated her abdomen. But he could do nothing more than offer her laudanum, and scoff at the midwife's suggestion of boiled cabbage leaves applied to the nether parts.

'Poppycock,' he said. 'I'll have none of those cottage

concoctions attempted here, Mrs Thornton, if you please. Shall I make up a laudanum solution, Mrs Brande? You may take it or not, as you wish.'

'Not yet,' gasped Dorothea. She was barely aware of his ministrations, so intent was she upon the tumult in her belly. She thought that the cramps were not as painful as those which she had previously experienced, and clung to this suspicion as a source of hope until the bleeding started.

Then she surrendered herself to abject misery, and to the disgusting requirements of every lying-in, which cannot be accomplished without a great deal of discomfort, filth and distress.

'Th'art a brave lass,' Mrs Thornton informed Dorothea, after the worst had been endured. 'Ah've not seen braver. Wilt tha drink a little beef tea?'

'No,' Dorothea gasped.

'Oop and over. That's it. All done now.'

'Where is my husband?' Dorothea felt extraordinarily tired. She was not sure how much time had passed, but knew that afternoon must have succeeded morning, and that preparations for dinner should have been underway. Her belly still burned. 'Where is Mrs Molle? Did she not fetch my husband?'

'Captain Brande was here,' Mrs Molle remarked, appearing suddenly at the midwife's elbow. 'He arrived when you were, um, in the greatest distress, and found it very tormenting. He went for a walk.'

'A *walk*?'

'There's nowt any man can do,' Mrs Thornton interrupted, 'and that fair destroys 'em. Ah've not seen one in twenty that can wait through't all, without falling to pieces.'

'He will return soon, my dear,' Mrs Molle said reassuringly. 'And if he has fortified himself in the meantime, we cannot hold him entirely to blame. It is a hard thing, indeed.'

'Very hard,' agreed Mrs Thornton.

'And you must not worry,' Mrs Molle added, 'because

Anne Ezzey has his dinner well in hand. It is all arranged, and you have nothing to do but rest, and recover your strength. I am so *very* sorry,' she concluded, with almost a catch in her voice. 'I shall pray for you, and for Captain Brande. You have my very deepest sympathy.'

Dorothea mumbled her thanks, overcome by a desperate sense of loss. It numbed her. She could not even cry. And when Charles finally appeared, she turned her face to the wall, unable to bear the sight of his crestfallen features.

'Thea,' he said softly. 'Poor Thea.' Approaching the bed, he laid a hand on her hip. 'My poor darling.'

If she were to reply, she knew, it would be with a howl—so she swallowed, and clenched her teeth, and shut her eyes.

'I am so very sorry,' he continued, sitting beside her. She felt him kiss her hair. 'What a terrible thing.' A pause. 'Do you need anything? Thea? What can I do for you?'

'I lost the baby!' she replied, and burst into tears. He gathered her up, and held her. He rocked her back and forth.

'You must not despair, dear. There will be others.'

'What did I *do*?'

'You were not to blame.'

'I must be! It was a punishment!'

'It was nothing of the sort.'

'I cannot *bear* this any more ...!'

'Hush.'

'Oh God, God help me ...'

Mrs Molle had been right; Charles's breath smelled of spirits. But he was very kind, and was soon able to calm her by standing firm, and refusing to acknowledge that there was the least bit of sense in anything she said.

'You are overwrought,' he insisted. 'You are not yourself.'

'I cannot think what offence I might have committed!'

'None against God.'

'Should I have gone to church?'

'Thea, stop fretting yourself over such trifles. It will do you no good.'

'Tell me, Charles. You must tell me.' She gazed up at him with frantic entreaty, her eyes wet. '*What have I done?*'

He replied that she had done nothing untoward, that she was clearly exhausted, that she must rest, and accept what had happened, and comfort herself with the thought that she was still a young woman, with many childbearing years ahead of her. 'You will have others,' he declared, too carelessly for his wife's taste. How could he speak of others, with this loss so fresh? His tone was troubling; she realised that he did not, perhaps, regard the dead child as a child, but more as an unformed hope, and a messy failure. Obviously he had not indulged his imagination, picturing what might have been: the bud-like hands, the milky breath, the first word, the nursery songs.

But she could hardly blame him for it. Such fond musings had brought her nothing but pain. Charles was undoubtedly wiser than she.

'That's better,' he said, seeing her fall back, with dull eyes, onto the pillow. He laid a hand on her brow, and declared that she did not seem feverish, but that she must be watched carefully, lest feverish symptoms appear. Surgeon Forster, he said, had been very insistent as regards the perils of a puerperal ague. Then he urged her to sleep, kissed her nose, and went to eat his dinner.

Dorothea, for her part, ate only a little tea and toast, fed to her by Anne Ezzey. She did sleep, but woke again when Charles joined her, wearing his gown and nightcap. When asked, he assured her that he had dined very well. He also told her that Anne had returned to Mrs Molle's house, and that Mrs Molle had promised to call.

'She asked me if you might want to speak to Vale,' Charles continued, 'and offered to arrange a visit. I told her that I was much obliged, but that a visit from Vale would probably do you more harm than good.' He snorted as Dorothea gasped. 'Contain yourself, my dear—of course I said no such thing,' he amended. 'I simply declined the offer with every appearance of goodwill. You have no wish to see Vale, I take it?'

'No,' Dorothea replied.

'No. I thought not.'

'But I should like to speak to Mr Cowper,' Dorothea said faintly, and her husband frowned.

'Of course, I have no objection to *that*,' he rejoined. 'But I should not like to think of you indulging yourself in fancies spawned by a febrile imagination. Recollect that your constitution is framed for hysteria, and that you are wont to be depressive at the best of times. You must not become *morbidly fixated* on this notion of divine punishment.'

Dorothea remained silent.

'Only remember,' Charles concluded, 'that while religion is necessary, it can be taken to extremes—and that if penitence is misguided, no amount of counsel will bring you any comfort.'

He was right, as it happened. When the Reverend Mr Cowper was summoned the next day, he was singularly unhelpful with regard to Dorothea's predicament. Naturally, he advised her to pray. Naturally, he urged her not to succumb to the sin of bitterness, for God was good, and His actions could not be judged by mere mortals. Perhaps, being a somewhat retiring man blessed with an overabundance of offspring, he could not regard Dorothea's situation as being entirely without its benefits, for he was decidedly vague when Dorothea made inquiries about the curse of barrenness in holy scripture. Had not Rachel, the wife of Jacob, been so cursed? And for what reason?

'Ah ... well ... you know, Mrs Brande, that was before Christ's coming,' Mr Cowper stammered, 'when men had many wives, and I believe that Jacob had several wives, Rachel being one and her sister—his cousin—being another ... what I mean to say is, there is no similarity in your situations. None at all.'

'What have I done, then, to merit such a punishment?'

Mr Cowper fluttered his hands, and knitted his brows, before his face brightened; he said, 'Perhaps you should ask yourself: what is it that I have *not* done?', and suggested that

she might think of knitting stockings for the Female Orphan School.

When he had gone, Dorothea considered his advice with a sinking heart. It was indeed probable that her sin, if she had committed one, had been a sin of omission. She had not, after all, been particularly busy in her habits, since arriving in New South Wales. But how could she therefore right the wrong? By knitting stockings? By reading more tracts? By observing Lent so strenuously as to earn her husband's undying resentment?

Fretfully, she turned her head on the pillow. She could see by her bed, on the washstand, the flowers that Daniel had cut for her. Unlike Rose, he had not yet been given the opportunity to express his sympathies to Dorothea in person. (If he had, he might have phrased them more delicately than Rose.) Instead, he had offered his mistress flowers gathered from her own garden, arranged with no great skill, and delivered by the housemaid—who had surveyed them critically after placing them in a glass bottle.

'Not too pertickler in 'is choice,' she had remarked, with a sniff. And it was true—the flowers were wizened and windblown, long past their best. There were three scorched-looking roses (their petals brown at the edges), two faded geraniums, and the very last of the forget-me-nots, more grey than blue. Dorothea would have wondered at such a pitiful collection, had she not remembered that rain had been infrequent, recently, and the weather unseasonably warm. Doubtless Daniel had endeavoured to keep the beds properly watered, but in a climate such as this, and with the nearest well at such a distance, his failure could not be entirely condemned.

Gazing at the sorry bouquet, Dorothea thought: this is no place for English roses. And suddenly it all became clear.

Of course she was not to blame. *New South Wales* was to blame. It was unfertile ground. It was parched and unyielding. It gave her no assistance, and sapped her dry.

She thought sombrely, as she looked up at the ceiling: I shall bear no children in this Godforsaken country. There is

no hope for me, here. I should have known. I should have *known*. It is not my fault at all.

Nevertheless, three days later, she took to her receiving cloth with a pair of fine embroidery scissors, and savagely sliced it to ribbons.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE



IN APRIL, GOVERNOR MACQUARIE at last lost patience with the native tribes. Despite his attempts to domesticate and civilise these wild, rude people, they persisted in burning sheds, stealing sheep and killing shepherds. Many settlers had entirely abandoned their farms, owing to native depredations. The Governor therefore ordered that an expedition be sent out against them, comprising two flank companies of the 46th Regiment. Captain Schaw took his force north-west, along the Nepean River. Lieutenant Dawe marched a battalion company down to the Cowpastures. And Captain Wallis led his grenadiers to the country known as Airds and Appin, where he distinguished himself in a raid on a native camp near Mr Broughton's farm. During this action, fourteen natives were killed, including two of the tribe's most ferocious and sanguinary leaders.

After twenty-three days, the weary campaigners returned home to an enthusiastic welcome, having driven the tribes back into the wilderness and destroyed all those who had attempted to resist. They brought with them several prisoners, whose subsequent punishment served as an example to their fellows.

Charles was furious at having been left out of the expedition.

'Schaw and Wallis—the Governor's toadies!' he raged. 'And Dawe is just the same! To distinguish yourself in this

damned country you must fawn, and flatter, and endure the society of felons, and generally say farewell to all honour! I despair, indeed I do.'

His disgust with the Governor's tendency to 'play favourites' was, in fact, so profound that he was tempted to sign his name to a petition then circulating. Drawn up by the Reverend Mr Vale and Mr Jeffery Bent, it was a petition addressed to the House of Commons, demanding relief from the oppressions of Governor Macquarie's rule. Among its signatories was Mr Moore—who had been dismissed from his post as Crown solicitor, owing to his part in the *Traveller* affair—and a publican called Rose, who had been denied a renewal of his licence to sell spiritous liquors. Having been ordered back to England on the first available ship, Mr Vale was intending to take the petition with him; he was keen in his pursuit of signatures, and had already trawled the mess. But Charles, after a good deal of thought, refrained from signing. Upon mentioning the matter to his wife, he declared that he did not like to 'keep company with publicans', and that in any case he would lose all hope of an appointment, if he were to put his name to such a document.

'God knows, I have every sympathy with Vale's predicament,' he said, 'but to some degree he brought it upon himself with his own foolishness. And I do not intend to make the same mistake.'

So he followed the prudent course, declaring that he would sign if his commanding officer did. Since Colonel Molle was far too cautious to put his name to something so vituperative in tone, Charles was able to avoid committing himself. But the need for discretion was very galling. Unable to vent his dissatisfaction with the Governor even in this small way, Charles took to venting it at Dorothea. And his temper was not improved by the fact that he and she were engaged in a battle that his ill humour only made worse.

For it happened that Dorothea, in the weeks after her miscarriage, had turned against the colony as never before.

Previously, she had refused to leave the house for fear of what might happen to her unborn child. Upon losing the child, she had sequestered herself in order that she might recover her health, and no one had thought the worse of her for doing so. Even Charles had acceded to her request for privacy, and had allowed her to remain at home, during the Sunday service, for two weeks running. His patience was somewhat tried when he discovered that Dorothea occupied herself, while he was in church, by reading aloud scriptural texts to that ‘damnable papist croppy’ on his staff. He growled something to the effect that Dorothea was casting pearls before swine, and demanded to know exactly what it was that she read to the ‘skulking rascal’—nothing too inflammatory, he hoped. When Dorothea replied that they had finished the Book of Daniel, and had begun the Book of Job, he observed that the Book of Daniel might give the convict ‘inflated ideas of his own importance’, and that the Book of Job might encourage him to feel ill used. ‘I will tell you what you should read to him,’ Charles declared, and spent several evenings leafing through the holy scriptures, compiling a list of suitable extracts.

He approved of the New Testament, especially the Book of Revelation, which he declared would ‘put the fear of God’ into even a papist villain like Daniel. For the same reason he recommended Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel and Ezekiel. The Song of Solomon he prohibited without explanation. He also proscribed the Second Book of the Kings (because it was not fit that his wife should read aloud to a convict the story of Jezebel), Psalm 10 (because in his view it sounded ‘too much like a damned Irish treason song’) and the Book of Judges (because he had never been able to abide Samson, the lovestruck fool). As to the rest, he cautioned Dorothea to ‘be careful’ with Ecclesiastes, to ensure that she did not omit the Book of Ruth, and to skip that portion of Genesis dealing with the Sodomites.

Having established to his satisfaction that Dorothea understood what she must (and must not) do, he freely allowed

her to remain at home on the second Sunday. But by the third week, he was becoming fretful. Dorothea, he said, should have recovered by now. Mr Cowper had been asking after her. Dorothea's place was at her husband's side, especially on the Sabbath—she was shirking her marital duty, and shaming him withall. Why was she not more active? She seemed well enough. Had she no sense of propriety? If she did not bestir herself very soon, he would begin to think that she favoured a scurvy bogtrotter over himself.

'You will grow fat, and lose the use of your limbs, if you persist in mooning about like this,' he said. 'You will make yourself *ill* with such behaviour. I cannot allow it.'

'I am busy enough,' Dorothea replied sullenly. 'If I were mooning about, you would have no dinner to eat, nor clothes to wear. And I often go into the garden.'

'But you never set foot outside it!'

'Because I have no wish to.'

'In God's name *why*?'

'Because there is no reason to do so.'

'Nonsense! What nonsense.' Charles began to pace the floor; they were in the drawing room, and he was becoming quite flustered. 'What better reason could there be than divine worship? Eh? Tell me that!'

Dorothea sat playing with the fringes of her shawl. 'I hate that church,' she said flatly. 'I hate the smell, and all those men ...'

'You think *I* like it?' Charles exploded. 'You think *I* enjoy rubbing shoulders with the scaff and raff of the London sewers? If it were up to me, they would be working the mines in Newcastle, not offending my wife with their stench! Mrs Brande.' He stopped in front of her. 'We *all* feel as you do. But we do our duty nonetheless.'

Dorothea stared up at him. She searched his face. At last, in desperation, she said: 'It poisons me.'

'What?'

'This country is poisonous. Everywhere I go, there is some

—some canker that makes my head ache, or my stomach revolt.’ In a small voice, she tried to explain the fear that was growing within her. ‘I am infected by it. I cannot bear a child, because of it. Out there ...’ She glanced at the window. ‘Do you not feel it?’ she whimpered. ‘There is a dark stain on everything.’

But Charles only blinked, and looked at her askance.

‘You are not talking sense,’ he replied.

‘Am I not?’ Dorothea almost wanted to be persuaded that this was, indeed, the case. She wanted reassurance. ‘What about this illness that plagues you?’ she pleaded. ‘This sore throat? This costiveness? I cannot help but wonder—are you being poisoned, too?’

Charles peered at her in consternation.

‘You cannot be in earnest,’ he protested. ‘Mrs Brande, you are raving.’

Dorothea flushed. ‘I am not!’ she cried.

‘You are. This is the most arrant twaddle. Good God, I warned you that you would make yourself ill, and I was right, you see!’ Charles put his hand on her brow. ‘Anyone would think you were feverish.’

‘Charles—’

‘I begin to wonder if you have recovered your strength after all. Perhaps you should consult Surgeon Forster. I shall speak to him this afternoon. Are you feeling weak, Thea? Tired or faint?’

‘No, not especially—’

‘I shall speak to Surgeon Forster.’

Surgeon Forster was therefore consulted, and came to visit Dorothea within the day. He conversed with her at length about the condition of her bowels (did she or did she not purge?), the frequency of her headaches, the duration of her nocturnal slumbers, her monthly cycles, her reading habits, her diet, and the amount of exercise she took. He then pronounced her a ‘pretty perfect case’ of someone with an hysterical predisposition.

'Your muscular fibre is not strong, and your nervous system is extremely sensible,' he said solemnly. 'Together, these are the characteristics of a female prone to syncope, dyspepsia, fatigue, convulsions, headaches, miscarriages, and a variable and capricious appetite—not to mention a tendency towards the romantic and fanciful.' He patted Dorothea's hand. 'A delicate flower, in other words.'

'But my digestion is perfectly good,' she said faintly, and he shook his head.

'It will not remain so, if you do not attempt to correct your habits,' he replied. 'Staying shut up in a close atmosphere is *the very worst thing*, Mrs Brande. Proper exercise in the open air is demonstrably useful to a person of your inclinations. Restricted studying times; good, plain, lean meat, with a little claret or weak sherry and water; no beer and not much bread; plentiful sleep at night. No rich pastries or overwrought literature, and a cold drink of water on rising.' He beamed at her. 'The only poisons that you are imbibing, Mrs Brande,' he added, 'are the tainted air of closed rooms and the foolish ramblings of popular novelists.'

Dorothea wondered if this were so. She had never fainted in her life before, and it was Charles, not she, who suffered from a faulty digestion. As for exercise in the open air, no doubt it was desirable—she had exercised regularly, at Bideham—but in New South Wales it was more likely to *give* her a headache than cure her of one.

She conceded, however, that her temper was becoming more irritable, and announced to Charles that she would take upon herself increased responsibility for the garden.

'I shall weed, and hoe, and dig over the beds,' she told him. 'That will be my concession to Surgeon Forster.'

'Stooping in the heat? Do you call that refreshing exercise?' was her husband's response. 'I am quite sure that he means you to walk, Mrs Brande.'

'In which direction? We are hemmed in by horrors, as well you know.'

'There can be no objection to an evening promenade in Hyde Park.'

'I loathe Hyde Park. To walk round and round, while the rowdies stare and make comments—what is the attraction in that?'

'You are being deliberately perverse. I shall not indulge you.'

Dorothea knew that she was, in fact, being perverse, but somehow she could not prevent herself. She felt horribly on edge, and took to dosing herself with a tonic. Towards the end of the third week, Mrs Molle came to visit, for the purpose of informing Dorothea that Charles had spoken to her about his concerns.

'Of course you must feel flat and languid after your experience,' she said briskly, 'and cannot be blamed for any imagined debility. But you must make an effort to invigorate yourself, Mrs Brande, or the debility will become actual and inescapable. Your health will truly begin to fail. Now, why not take a turn with me around the barracks square? There can be no objection to that, surely?'

'There can be if Captain Sanderson is there,' Dorothea rejoined. Only her awareness of the debt that she owed Mrs Molle prevented her from feeling resentful. What business did Charles have, discussing his wife's frailties with Mrs Molle? Dorothea had never once succumbed to the same temptation when irritated by *his* shortcomings.

'Why, whatever do you mean?' said Mrs Molle. 'Has Captain Sanderson offended you, in some way?'

'I do not like him,' Dorothea replied shortly.

'I see.'

'If I *can* avoid him, I would prefer to do so. But if you would care to take a turn around the garden, Mrs Molle, I would be delighted to join you.'

Politely, Mrs Molle accepted the invitation. She accompanied Dorothea into the garden, where she admired the flourishing state of the grass in the front ('not quite a lawn, but in the way of becoming one'), the condition of the soil in the

beds, and the arrangement of the borders. To Daniel she was overpoweringly gracious, and to Dorothea she gave a good deal of sound advice. But on taking her leave, Mrs Molle warned her friend, apologetically, that she was bound to comply with Captain Brande's request.

'He has asked me to stop visiting you, in the hope that you will visit me,' she said. 'And I can find no fault with that. How long is it since you paid me a call, Mrs Brande?' With a kind of heavy playfulness, she tapped Dorothea on the arm. 'Far too long, I think. When next we meet, it should be in my drawing room, where you will hear a great deal of news that you will not garner otherwise. Come, do me the honour. And set your poor husband's mind at rest.'

Annoyed as she was, Dorothea was tempted to comply. She did reflect on the matter, as she checked the laundry, and supervised the cooking, and transplanted bulbs. There was nothing to threaten her in Mrs Molle's drawing room, after all. It was a very pleasant place, with its English furniture, and its heavy draperies, and its airy size.

But then she thought of the barracks square, and Clarence Street, and the children who played at floggings by the barrack walls, and felt vaguely ill.

The next day, she refused once again to accompany Charles to St Philip's.

'I cannot,' she said. 'Not yet.'

'If not now, when?' he demanded. 'Next week? Next month? Next *year*?'

'When I am ready.'

'Ready for what, in God's name?'

'I don't know, Charles!' Her nerves felt like violin strings. 'When I am ready to breathe the air in that place! When I am ready to see a roadgang, and not faint away on the spot! When people stop talking about my *disappointment*!'

Charles regarded her for a moment. Then he shook his head in disgust.

'People are more likely to be talking about your lunatic



conduct,' he growled. 'By God, Madam, you would try the patience of a saint, with your megrims and affectations.'

And he promptly departed, muttering under his breath. Left alone, Dorothea sat staring at the wall. She was dismayed to find herself behaving so capriciously, but knew that she had no choice. There was nothing beyond the palings of her fence that would do her any good at all. What benefit could be derived from the heaving press of bodies in church, or the tedious gossip of a colonial drawing room, or the viper-infested wilderness surrounding Sydney Cove?

After a while she sighed, and rose, and summoned Daniel Callaghan.

'I thought that I might read from Jonah today,' she said brightly, when he had seated himself in his customary position. She was attempting to dispel the rancorous atmosphere that seemed to linger in the drawing room, but she was not entirely successful. He looked uneasy, and mumbled, and avoided her gaze—until she began to read. Then the psalms, as always, began to cast their spell, and he listened intently, his eyes fixed on her face.

After finishing her chosen psalms, Dorothea turned to that portion of the scriptures known merely as 'Jonah'. She had selected the tale of Jonah because it was a simple adventure, of the kind that generally appeals to children and common folk. She had thought that Daniel would find it interesting, as well as illuminating, and had favoured it also because it was not very long. So she read with determined energy of Jonah's flight from the Lord, his voyage to Tarshish, the mighty tempest, the crew's despair. She read of how Jonah bade the sailors throw him overboard, and how they did—whereupon a great fish swallowed him for three days and three nights. '*The waters compassed me about, even to the soul,*' she read, '*the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever; yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.*'

She then narrated the story of Jonah's preservation: how the fish vomited him onto dry land; how the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying '*arise, go to Nineveh*'; how Jonah went thereto, warning the wicked city that it would be overthrown in forty days; how Nineveh repented, and was saved, and Jonah was very angry that he had been made to look a fool. '*It is better for me to die than to live,*' he said, sitting upon the ground outside the city, in order that he might see what would become of it. Whereupon, by God's will, a gourd grew up to shade him, and to '*deliver him from his grief*'; Jonah's delight, however, was quickly extinguished when God sent a worm to wither the gourd, and Jonah was left fainting in the heat of the sun, wishing to die. At last God said to him, '*Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh ...?*'

Dorothea had always thought that Jonah's tale ended rather abruptly. She had often wondered what might have subsequently befallen him, and why nothing further had been written of his life. But she was surprised, when she raised her head, to see Daniel sitting pale and motionless, with his mouth ajar and his eyes staring.

'That is all,' she said—and blinked as he expelled a gulping sigh.

'Ah.' He covered his face with his hands. 'Ah, Jaysus.'

'Daniel!' She had never before heard him blaspheme. It alarmed her. She watched his hands fall away.

'Did ye choose that for me?' he asked hoarsely. 'Did ye?'

'What?' she quavered.

'*Out of the belly of hell cried I,*' he said, and his eyes were wide and shocked. 'What did ye mean by it? What does it mean?'

'Why ...' Dorothea groped for words. 'What does the *story* mean?'

'Aye.'

'I should think it means that you must accept God's plan, and not try to hide from it,' said Dorothea.

Then she stopped.

And caught her breath.

'Would ye read it again?' said Daniel, sounding thoroughly shaken. 'By a mercy, Ma'am, would ye read it again for me? Please?'

Dorothea stared down at the heavy volume open in her lap.

'Ma'am? I'm thinkin' it might be meant for me. For my ears.' A pause. 'Ma'am?'

Dorothea looked up. She saw Daniel's eyes. They were big and brown, heavy with the weight of some abiding sorrow.

She stood up, clasping the book to her breast.

'No more,' she croaked.

'Ma'am?'

'Not—not now. Later. I cannot ...' She felt almost winded. 'It was meant for me, too,' she stammered, as he rose to his feet. 'I—I must think. Please.'

'Ma'am—'

'Forgive me. Let me think.' And she hastened from his presence, shutting herself in the bedroom with her Bible.

Three days later, she paid a visit to Mrs Molle's house.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR



DOROTHEA DID NOT DISCUSS her curious response to Jonah with another living soul. She did not even refer to it when conversing again with Daniel (whose delicacy was such that he made no pointed remarks himself, but was content to cast one or two meditative glances in her direction). Though she refrained from speaking of it, however, she thought about it a good deal. She thought about little else. She would muse for hours, almost fearfully, on the subject of Jonah's sea voyage, and how it might be relevant to her own position. She would ponder the curious coincidence of the gourd, which grew up to shelter Jonah, and wonder if it bore any relationship to the garden that she cherished. Could Sydney Cove be seen as a second Nineveh? Could she herself be regarded as a Jonah, hiding from God's intentions by hiding from Nineveh's wickedness? There could be no doubt that her own predicament bore a certain similarity to Jonah's.

On the other hand, there was Nineveh's repentance—what did that mean? And how was she to understand the prophet's resentment of God's mercy, in the context of her own life? She would wrestle with these complex questions repeatedly, and exhaustively, to no avail. Though it seemed to her that God had almost certainly put the story of Jonah into her hands, there remained some doubts in her mind. What *exactly* had He been trying to tell her, in doing so? That she was hiding from His

plan? (No doubt.) That she had an obligation to warn the residents of New South Wales that they were in peril of God's wrath? (Surely not.) She fretted over certain phrases. What did God mean, when He said that the people of Nineveh could not 'discern between their right hand and their left'? She wanted to know if God had, in fact, persuaded Jonah to abandon his anger—for the text was not enlightening on this point. She was puzzled by the words 'I will pay that that I have vowed'.

She also thought about Daniel, and his response to Jonah. She was quite convinced that he saw a resemblance between the prophet's story and his own. On reflection, she was even willing to concede that in Daniel's case, the resemblances were quite profound. He had, after all, turned away from God by committing a crime—and had endured much ugliness at sea in consequence. He had then found a refuge in her own house (or so he had once told her). Like his mistress, he had been spiritually refreshed by the tender growth in her garden. If he were to be deprived of the garden, as Jonah had been deprived of his gourd, he would—like the prophet—be much distressed.

She would watch him surreptitiously, and wonder about any conclusions that he might have drawn from Jonah's story. Had he undertaken to reform himself, in some way? Was he conscious of any new responsibilities, to himself or to others?

She could not ask him. She was frightened to ask him, for it would have been an unsuitable topic of conversation. Already she was aware of a certain new level of restraint existing between them. Jonah seemed to be hovering over their every exchange, forcing her to be abrupt, lest the prophet become too intrusive. She regretted this necessity. She did not like to be abrupt. Nor did she like blushing all over her face every time she announced to Daniel that she was going to church, or whenever she encountered him lighting the drawing-room fire. She felt that her dignity was compromised, but could do nothing to prevent the hot blood from rising. She felt self-conscious. She felt guilty. Daniel had asked her to read him the story of Jonah again, and she had not done so.

She had taken to attending the Sunday service instead.

Charles approved of Dorothea's attempt to 'shake off her megrims'. He was pleased that she had decided to return to church and pay calls on her friends again. He even advanced a theory that the approach of cooler weather had effected this improvement in his wife's condition. Heat, it was evident, rendered her languid and febrile, whereas the restoration of a more English style of climate served to calm her jangled nerves.

His own mood, however, was not much lightened by this happy development. Any pleasure that he may have felt upon discovering that Dorothea had taken his advice to heart was soured by the realisation that he himself had been passed over, once more. For it happened that in June, Captain James Wallis was appointed Commandant of Newcastle—no doubt in recognition of his work during the expedition against the native tribes. As a consequence, his income rose by one hundred and eighty-two pounds and ten shillings a year.

Charles was furious.

'That posturing fop, with his journal and his watercolours and his flannel waistcoats!' Charles cried. 'What the deuce does *he* know about soldiering?'

'He did distinguish himself at Appin,' Dorothea pointed out, but her husband would have none of that.

'Oh, a brave action! Stumbling into a camp full of women and children, who went screaming off into the dark and perished when they tumbled over a precipice! Fine work, that. A real pitched battle.' Charles would not be comforted. He ground his teeth, and slammed his fists onto his knees. 'It is more devilry of the Governor's!' he exclaimed. 'More blatant partiality and prejudice! The moment will arrive, I tell you—the moment will arrive when he will answer for his tyrannous conduct.'

Governor Macquarie's tyrannous conduct was the subject of much discussion among genteel persons at the time. Indeed, it formed the chief topic of conversation during a dinner held at Mrs Bent's house, late in June. Here the subject of Governor Macquarie's offences was thoroughly aired over the

oxtail soup, sautéed kidneys, pickled mushrooms, salt tongue, wild duck, roast pork, jellies and custards. Aside from condemning His Excellency's treatment of the Vales, Mrs Bent's guests were also loud in their censure of the Governor's latest offences against Mr Jeffery Bent. There were many such offences, for Mr Bent frequently felt compelled to question the Governor's decisions, and was often chastised as a result. But the incident uppermost in everyone's mind, on this occasion, was that involving the Bent's former cook, John Harvey, and one of Mr Bent's fellow magistrates, Mr William Broughton.

Mr Horsley—a small pockmarked gentleman with a rather sly manner—was particularly keen to hear a thorough account of the infamous episode.

'Did you prevail?' Mr Horsley inquired. 'Is this excellent meal a product of your cook's skills? I am told that Mr Broughton was trying to take your cook away from you.'

Dorothea was surprised, for she had heard differently. She had heard that, upon the death of Mr Ellis Bent, Mrs Bent had decided she no longer needed a cook, and had dismissed John Harvey—who had thereafter sought employment with Mr William Broughton. When Mrs Bent had recently changed her mind, Mr Broughton had proven to be somewhat uncooperative, refusing to comply with Mrs Bent's request that John Harvey be returned to her.

Dorothea therefore listened with great interest to Mrs Bent's account of the affair.

'Apparently,' Mrs Bent complained, 'my sin was to send a constable to collect the wretched man. If I had *myself* expressed a wish to have him back, my wish would have been granted. Or so Mr Broughton says.'

'Utter poppycock,' was Mr Bent's muttered comment.

'It does not appear to have crossed Mr Broughton's mind that I may have been acting in accordance with the usages of this country,' Mrs Bent went on, 'where every matter concerning Government labour must pass through official channels.'

'So Broughton turned the constable away?' Mr Horsley wanted to know, and was informed that this was indeed the case.

'I was obliged to issue several warrants, but Broughton positively refused to surrender the man,' Mr Bent explained.

'He did ask John if he wanted to return here,' said Mrs Bent, in an unsteady voice, 'and John said no. I cannot imagine why. He was always treated very well in this house, though I daresay Mr Broughton is very lax and indulgent with his Government men.'

'Broughton had the gall to say that he considered my warrant inoperative,' Mr Bent added, 'and that he would give Harvey the protection of his house for as long as the wretch required it.'

Mrs Bent went on to describe how Jeffery had finally been forced to issue a writ of attachment against Mr Broughton, whereby Mr Broughton was required to appear before the judge at his chambers. But when Mr Broughton finally did appear, he challenged Mr Bent's authority.

'I told him that unless Harvey was given up, he would be sent to gaol,' Mr Bent declared. 'He replied that I could send him to prison if I pleased—so I deuced well did! I would not give him bail.' A grimace. 'But he was out of gaol within the hour. The *Governor* had issued a warrant for his release. Naturally.'

All the guests present made muted noises indicative of shock, or disappointment, or disapproval—with the exception of Colonel Molle and Dorothea. Colonel Molle toyed with his duck, his face inscrutable. Dorothea studied the arrangement of the silverware.

Then Major Mackenzie asked: 'What now?'

'Now?' Mr Bent retorted. 'Now we are without a cook, thanks to His Excellency's high-handed methods. Mrs Bent was forced to produce this meal herself—with the aid of a mere kitchenmaid. Such is the inevitable consequence of living under the rule of a man like Governor Macquarie.'

Dorothea thought about this comment as Colonel Molle—



with a well-timed remark about Mrs Bent's anticipated departure from New South Wales—turned the conversation. She watched Mr Jeffery Bent talk. She watched Mrs Molle smile, and Mrs Bent eat. She offered no opinion on anything whatsoever, and spoke only when asked if the wine, or the meat, or the temperature was to her liking. Even when the ladies withdrew she had nothing much to say, because they spoke almost exclusively of Mr Broughton's unforgiveable behaviour—and she was at odds with the prevailing view.

Later, upon returning home, she confessed as much to her husband.

'I do not think that Mrs Bent was justified in her treatment of John Harvey,' she said. 'I do not think that Mr Broughton acted in an indefensible manner at all.'

Charles was pulling on his nightcap. 'You know nothing about it,' he replied. But Dorothea continued stubbornly.

'Mrs Bent had dismissed John Harvey. He entered Mr Broughton's employ with her entire concurrence—she told me so herself. What right did she have to demand his return? I think that Mr Bent is mistaken in his opinions. I think that he is guilty of unfounded prejudice.'

'Do you, indeed?' Charles threw back the covers and climbed into bed. 'Is that why you sat like a log of wood throughout the entire evening?' he demanded. 'Is that why you behaved like a *dead weight*?'

Dorothea did not reply.

'Sometimes I despair,' he went on. 'What is the point of attending these affairs if you make no attempt whatsoever to enjoy them—or to increase the enjoyment of others? It is discourteous. There is no other word for it.'

'I was not discourteous,' Dorothea said stiffly. 'I was perfectly polite.'

'Oh yes. A perfectly polite *blancmange*.'

'Would you have *wished* me to inform Mr Bent that I disagreed with him?'

'You are being deliberately perverse.'

'You told me to go, so I went. What more do you want?'

'I want you to display a modicum of enthusiasm for the company of our friends! Before you become repellent to them!'

He turned his back on her, and slammed his head into his pillow. Dorothea lay still. She thought about the conversation that evening. She thought about the candlelit table, and how detached she had felt from it—almost as if she had been an unseen guest. She thought about John Harvey, and the meal that he had cooked for her so long ago. He had been a good, efficient servant. She had been impressed by his skill. And it occurred to her that Mrs Bent had spoken of him exactly as if he had been a piece of branded livestock.

She wondered how Daniel Callaghan might have felt, in Harvey's position.

New South Wales  
August 1st, 1816

My dearest Margaret,

Life here becomes increasingly tiresome. Charles has not been at his best, as you know, because he is repeatedly passed over, and regards each lost opportunity for advancement as an insult. I do not see his predicament quite in those terms. But I must concede that, within the last few weeks, he has been insulted, and that the insult was offered by his own commanding officer.

You may recall my mentioning certain pipes, of a defamatory nature, written against Colonel Molle. It seems that these malicious attacks have been preying on the Colonel's mind—far more so than I would have thought probable. Indeed, it would appear that his distress has somewhat undermined his good judgement, for he recently demanded the keys to all his officers' desks, that he might search them for evidence of complicity in the production of these scurrilous verses. Nothing, I assure you, could have been more ill conceived. To begin with, it so happens that one of the pipes—which was first circulated in March—attacked the officers as well as their commander (not to mention the Governor himself, who was referred to as 'poor Sandy'). Furthermore, several months ago the regimental mess offered a reward of two hundred pounds for the detection of the pipes' author. What more proof could be needed to demonstrate the loyalty of those gentlemen serving under the Colonel's command?

As you may imagine, Charles was very much hurt—as were his fellow officers. Nevertheless, their mess entered into another subscription, by means of which an even greater reward was offered for the name of the perpetrator. The only result, I fear, was yet another pipe. Since then, Colonel Molle's temper has become more and more irritated, to the detriment of Charles's own. Charles has it firmly fixed in his mind

*that Governor Macquarie is ultimately to blame—though the poor man has offered emancipation to any convict who might provide a solution to the mystery, and has himself been lampooned (though mildly, for the perceived weaknesses in his dealings with Colonel Molle). I cannot think why Charles should be so stubbornly prejudiced, unless it is owing to Captain Sanderson's influence. Captain Sanderson loathes the Governor. He has done so ever since the Governor admonished him for his conduct towards the Chief Magistrate of Police and the bench of the Police Court. Oh—and that is a tidbit worthy of mention. I only recently discovered, my dear sister, that Captain Sanderson appeared before the said bench charged with a misdemeanour (could anything be more distasteful?) and that his language on the same occasion was most unbecoming. No doubt this fact, which was brought to my attention by Mrs Molle, must have slipped Charles's mind. For he never once referred to it in my hearing, though he is perpetually entertaining me with stories of Captain Sanderson's other adventures.*

*Is it any wonder that I am concerned about the company my husband keeps?*

*Why, the very Regiment in which he serves is so tainted with petty and vindictive conduct that I begin to despair of human nature. Last month, for example, a caricature of Governor Macquarie was found on the wall of the barracks guardhouse, with a derogatory label underneath it. An inquiry is now underway, and the culprit will no doubt be court-martialled, but I cannot tell you how grieved I was at Charles's response. He simply laughed over the affair, and all but admitted to me that, while a humble ensign (Ensign Bullivant) was widely known to be responsible for the drawing, Captain Sanderson himself had affixed the label to it!*

*The caricature, I should tell you, remained on the wall of the guardhouse for several days, with the full knowledge of several senior officers, before Colonel Molle was finally informed, and ordered that it be expunged.*

*What am I to think of such behaviour? Is it that of mature men or spiteful boys? There is something in the very air of this colony that seems to undermine every noble tendency and encourage the growth of rancorous, uncharitable, petulant feelings. And yet I must confess that*

*while the tone of society here troubles me, its paltry disputes and miserable intrigues leave me cold. I can neither feel nor display any great interest in them. And this, of course, angers Charles.*

*Oh my dear, I am so sorry to inflict my worries on you. If the trifling concerns of New South Wales seem unimportant to me, how dull you must find them! I should not write to you when I am in low spirits. Yet I cannot help it. Once it was my custom to turn to you whenever I needed comfort, and now that you are so far away, I am forced to fill my letters with every detail of my domestic tribulations. I often think to myself: why has God put me here? For what purpose do I endure the strains of a colonial existence?*

*These are questions that have occupied me much over the past weeks. And I am still unable to find an answer to them.*

*With apologies from  
your loving sister,  
Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



AT LAST, IN SEPTEMBER, Charles was given the opportunity to distinguish himself.

A band of convicts seized the brig *Trial*, which was anchored in Port Jackson. Upon the alarm being raised, a party of the 46th Regiment was sent in pursuit, aboard the *Rosetta*. Charles was placed in command of this party.

But the *Trial* was not apprehended.

Dorothea heard very little about the expedition until after its conclusion. While awaiting her husband's return, she was provided with snippets of news that were on the whole unenlightening, and sometimes contradictory. Mrs Molle sent word that the two vessels were heading north. Rose returned from the markets with the latest gossip, which held that the *Rosetta* had run aground. Captains Thompson and Sanderson, who stopped in on their way to the dockyards, contradicted this claim most emphatically; no communications had been received indicating anything of the sort. They assured Dorothea that Charles would give the escaped convicts a 'good thrashing', and would return victorious with the *Trial* in tow.

They were wrong, however. The *Rosetta* failed to run down its quarry, and when Charles was finally restored to Dorothea, he was in a humour as black as a thundercloud. Before departing, he had attributed his 'good fortune' to the fact that Governor Macquarie was very ill (his life had almost been

despaired of, at one point) and was therefore unable to exert his usual influence over the command of the expedition. Upon returning, defeated, Charles changed his tune slightly. He instead sought to blame the Governor for a system that allowed convicts enough freedom to seize a ship in the first place. He also blamed the captain of the *Rosetta* for his stupidity and insubordination; the crew of the *Rosetta* for their lackadaisical attitude; and his own health, which, because it was beginning to fail, had affected his judgement.

Hearing this last complaint again and again, in the days following her husband's disappointment, Dorothea began to wonder if it was, in fact, true. At first she had thought it an excuse, employed not only to mitigate the extent of his failure, but to give him a legitimate reason for subsequently staying at home—for he was too ashamed to dine at the mess. Then she began to wonder. He had been very restless at night for several weeks past, and his bowels were more troublesome than usual. His colour, she thought, was not good. And when at last he confessed that he been suffering from a mild sore throat, which he had striven to conceal lest he lose command of the *Rosetta* party, she realised that he was once again afflicted with his mysterious ailment.

Naturally, Surgeon Forster was summoned. He made his usual recommendations, approving Dorothea's prune tisane and providing her with a two-week supply of mercurial pills. When she pressed him for a decided opinion, however, he would not satisfy her.

'It is a recurring complaint, of a putrid nature,' he declared. 'I can tell you nothing more.'

'Could it be occasioned by something in the atmosphere?' Dorothea asked. 'Could some antipodean substance—some poison, or exhalation—be causing it?'

'I doubt it,' Surgeon Forster replied.

'Have you seen any other cases like my husband's, hereabouts?'

At this Surgeon Forster looked slightly uncomfortable. He

glanced away, and cleared his throat. 'I am not at liberty to discuss my other patients with you, Mrs Brande,' he said. 'Forgive me. I have a duty to them.'

'But I do not require *names*, sir. Just an indication as to whether an illness of this kind can be found elsewhere in the colony. Or indeed, in England.'

'Many strange fevers incubate aboard convict vessels,' was Surgeon Forster's vague response. He was so unhelpful, so evasive, so pompous, that Dorothea quite lost patience with him. It occurred to her that he had failed to preserve two of her unborn infants, and that he had been unable either to identify or to cure Charles's strange affliction. Perhaps, she suggested to Charles, it would be wise to consult another doctor.

'Dr Harris, perhaps? Or ...' She hardly dared say it. '... or Dr Redfern?'

'Redfern!' Charles snorted. He was sitting half-dressed in the drawing room, sullen and dishevelled. The prospect of ingesting another course of mercurial pills clearly did not appeal to him. 'If I were half-dead, and Redfern the only physician in reach, I would not consult him.'

'But he has an excellent reputation, Charles. He attends the Governor's family—'

'Hah!'

'And Mrs Macarthur cannot praise him too highly.'

'Mrs Macarthur may do what she likes. I will not be treated by a damned convict.'

'Dr Harris, then. Why not seek an opinion from Dr Harris?'

'Because it will be the same as Forster's.'

'How do you know? Surgeon Forster cannot even *identify* your complaint—'

'Good God, woman, will you kindly *desist*! I have made my decision! I will not be *argued* with!' In a sudden burst of bad temper, brought about by his irritated nerves, he added: 'No wonder my health is in decline, when I must put up with so much faulty behaviour from you!'



Charles's own behaviour, in the weeks that followed, was enough to try the patience of even the happiest soul—and Dorothea was not in a particularly cheerful frame of mind. While the mercurial pills seemed to improve his throat, he quickly succumbed to mouth ulcers and stomach pains. These symptoms, in turn, made him morose. So did his costiveness, which also left him with a sallow and greasy complexion, a poor appetite, and a lack of vigour. Upon consulting *Buchan's Domestic Medicine*, Dorothea learned that the want of secretion in the intestines was almost certainly caused by a languid or weak circulation—that a cure might be facilitated by imbibing more water and less wine, by eschewing Indian and Chinese tea, by substituting whey or beef tea for too-solid dinners, by exercising more in the open air, and by avoiding excessive use of the brain. When she conveyed this advice to Charles, however, he scoffed at it. He pointed out that he was forever drilling in the barrack square, that he would perish on a diet of beef tea, and that the problem lay not with his own habits, but with the disease that afflicted him. He demanded syrup of violets, and rhubarb pills. Then he complained because they seemed to make his stomach cramps even worse.

He also brooded over his failure to capture the *Trial*. The ignominy of his position weighed on him. He retired into a cloud of gloom, and abandoned himself to an invalid's existence almost thankfully, declaring himself unable to perform his duties even before the effects of the mercurial pills disabled him. Dorothea thought that he was hiding. When his friends came to visit, he anxiously sought reassurance from them, returning time and time again to the subject of the *Trial*, so that they might confirm its superiority to the *Rosetta* and deplore the unassailable lead that it had enjoyed when the *Rosetta* had finally set off in pursuit. No one, as far as Dorothea could tell, particularly blamed Charles for the debacle. He had not, after all, been responsible for sailing the *Rosetta*; he was a soldier, not a seaman. Nevertheless, he felt acutely that he had been disgraced, and had not the nobility of character—

or perhaps the healthful vigour—to acknowledge this humbly, gracefully and serenely, as befits a gentleman.

Instead he skulked indoors. For two weeks he avoided the barracks, as Surgeon Forster's mercurial pills gradually took effect. He did nothing but read the *Gazette*, complain about his food, and curse his ill fortune. At first Dorothea was obliged to serve him with the kind of nourishment that would encourage his bowels to function freely (brown bread and stewed fruit, for example). Then, as the condition of his mouth worsened, she had to resort to broths, soups, hashes and custards. Charles was satisfied with neither the rough nor the smooth diet. He preferred white bread to brown; he said that he would starve to death on soups and custards; he felt it a great hardship that a man of his age was prevented from indulging in good English fare such as roast beef and dumplings. When one of his teeth fell out, quite suddenly, he was cast into despair, and retired to bed for a whole day.

Dorothea endured this trying period to the best of her ability. She spent a great deal of time in the kitchen, helping Rose to plan and execute meals suitable for an invalid. She entertained Captains Sanderson, Miller and Thompson repeatedly, pouring their tea, answering their questions and accepting their impudent advice ('The poor fellow needs more air, Mrs Brande—why do you not place a chair for him in the garden?') without uttering so much as a word of protest. She pored over *Buchan's Domestic Medicine*, and agreed to sleep at her husband's side—despite the fact that his restlessness disturbed her—because he refused to be left alone. She mixed up medicines and tonics, repelled harmful draughts, read aloud, fetched and carried, turned down invitations, and worked hard to keep the servants out of her husband's way.

But she did none of this cheerfully, or with particular zest. She did it because it was her duty. Although she often felt deeply sorry for Charles, and knew that much should be forgiven a suffering invalid, she found his captiousness hard to bear. He was so testy. So *unreasonable*. What could be more

unreasonable than his stubbornness in refusing to consult another doctor? Dorothea could not understand him. She could not understand why he clung so tenaciously to the regimental surgeon. As the days passed, and Charles became more difficult, Dorothea began to hold him responsible for his own infirmity. She felt sure that, had he sought the advice of another physician, he would in all probability have been spared the torments of a mercury cure.

She said as much to him, not once, but several times. They argued about it. They argued about Surgeon Forster's treatment, Dr Redfern's qualifications, the efficacy of aloes, the detrimental effects of spiritous liquors, and a great many other things. The entire house was made disagreeable by an abiding air of discontent and disputation. As a result, Dorothea found herself spending more and more time outdoors. While Charles sat sulking in a darkened room, drinking too much wine and flicking through *The Regimental Companion*, Dorothea would escape into the garden, which by now had taken on a definite and pleasing shape.

Thanks to her own inspiration, and Daniel's hard work, the foundations of a very fine prospect had been properly established. A low, incipient box hedge flanked the gravel path that bisected the front garden. On either side of it lay a neat, round bed of forget-me-nots, geraniums, daffodils and hyacinths, each bed sporting in its centre a spindly young fruit tree—one a glossy-leaved lemon, the other a cherry just beginning to flower. Rose bushes were planted along the fence on either side of the gate; where the palings turned a corner, to the north and south, these bushes gave way to slightly sturdier plants, mostly young fir, laburnum and privet trees, all arranged in an undulating pattern and penned in by borders of a dwarfish native shrub (whose appearance was not irretrievably harsh to the eye). The lawn dividing all these features was well grown, though somewhat dry and dusty in its appearance. The plants themselves, though still small, gave fair promise of a flourishing maturity. To the rear of the house, the kitchen garden had been

extended, and was now ringed by a gravel path, trimmed by an incomplete border of alternating lavender and rosemary bushes. A small shrubbery lay behind it. Still little more than a hopeful dream, this shrubbery was nevertheless traversed by two narrow gravel paths which met to form a cross. At the centre of this cross, Dorothea was determined to place an artistic object—a sundial, perhaps? A lilac struggled gamely near the dining-room window. A passionfruit vine had been trained over the kitchen wall.

Dorothea's jangled nerves were always calmed when she surveyed this beautifully ordered growth. She was proud of having achieved it, and grateful to Daniel for his contribution. Pottering about, pulling up weeds, she gradually began to talk to him again, without embarrassment, as she had before the incident of the scriptural reading. They talked of manure, and lime, and caterpillars. They talked of irrigation and garden tools. The spring weather was quite invigorating, as was the breeze off the harbour. The flies were not overly persistent. Dorothea discovered that she enjoyed picking aphids off the rosebuds far more than she enjoyed mixing up a saline wash for her husband's mouth.

She realised that the house, with Charles in it, was a source of gloom to her, whereas the garden offered relief. And she had the grace to feel guilty.

Nevertheless, she avoided the house wherever possible, until Charles began to complain about the freckles on her nose. He grumbled about her absences. He accused her of neglecting him. When she replied, caustically, that he had been urging her to get out of the house for months, he narrowed his eyes and snapped at her. A wife's duty, he said, was at her husband's side. She pointed out that when *she* had been expecting, and unable to exert herself, he had been quite happy to neglect *her*, and there followed a very loud and abrupt exchange. It concluded with Charles hurling his cup of mutton broth onto the floor—whereupon Dorothea withdrew, once again, into the garden.

She was so weary of his moods. Only by recalling those

halcyon days at Bideham, when she had walked with him under the golden elms, could she contemplate him with any love or sympathy. I must remember that he is ill, she told herself, over and over again. I must remember that this colony has a poisonous effect on all who come here, and that he is unable to escape the company of rowdy men. I *must* have patience. I *must* be calm.

Nevertheless, she was so keen to escape Charles that she took to attending the Sunday service without him, accompanying the Molles instead. Charles was made almost frantic by this decision. He insisted that her place was at his side. He railed at her, as if fearful that she was about to challenge his authority. But she reminded him that he had seen nothing wrong in leaving *her* at home on a Sunday morning, and that if he felt in need of scriptural solace he was perfectly capable of reading the Bible. Unlike Daniel, he did not need Dorothea to read it to him.

She did not suggest that he follow her example, and acquaint Daniel with further portions of the Holy Scripture. She knew that such ill-conceived kindness would have been a punishment to them both. Indeed, she rarely ever raised the subject of Daniel in Charles's hearing. Daniel was a source of unending irritation to Charles, for no discernible reason; whenever the convict hove into sight, Charles would abuse him for his clumsiness, his noisiness, his stupidity ('Must you be so wasteful? Do you mean to pauper me, using all that kindling simply to start a fire?'). Dorothea wondered if the sight of Daniel, so large and fit and strong, aroused in her ailing husband a rancorous envy. Whatever the cause of his unpleasantness, however, it was best avoided. And Daniel strove to avoid it by keeping out of Charles's way.

As for Dorothea, she went to great lengths to ensure that she now made all the decisions that affected Daniel's wellbeing. When he needed a new pair of shoes, she quietly abstracted the price of them from her housekeeping money. When he fell ill with a bad cold, she gave him extra milk and meat without seeking her husband's permission. And when he asked her, one

day, if he might visit a friend on a Sunday morning, she never thought of consulting Charles.

'A friend?' she exclaimed, in astonishment. 'What friend?'

Daniel poked at the ground with his shovel. They were standing outside, near the gate. They had been lamenting the damage done to one of her roses.

'A friend from the *General Hewitt*,' Daniel responded quietly. 'When ye sent me to buy milk, once, I came upon him. Sure, and he was good to me.' Daniel paused. Prod, prod went the shovel. 'He saved my life,' the convict murmured.

'Oh,' said Dorothea. She was at a loss. 'Well, I—would he not be at church on a Sunday morning?'

'No, Ma'am.'

'Why not? Is he like yourself? A Catholic?'

'No, Ma'am.' Prod, prod. Daniel's eyes were downcast. His face was expressionless.

Dorothea frowned. 'He does not seem to be a very *worthy* friend, Daniel,' she said. 'Are you sure that you should be keeping company with him?'

Daniel looked up. For a moment he studied Dorothea, his gaze dark and melancholy. Then he said: 'I thought not, once. He saved my life, but I was afeared when I saw him again. I was afeared to talk. I was afeared o' the burden we shared.' His voice softened. 'Then ye read to me, Ma'am, and ye gave me courage.' Another pause. 'I cannot hide any longer.'

Dorothea flushed. She blinked, and looked away. She said: 'I see.'

'I'd not be goin',' Daniel continued, hesitantly, 'until the master is well. No, and not if ye rule against me. I'd not defy ye, Ma'am, not ever.'

'I know,' she said.

'But I was short with my friend, and it rankles with me. He saved my life.'

'How?' Dorothea asked abruptly, her gaze fixed resolutely on a clump of violets. 'How did he do that?'

'Ah. Well ...' Daniel shifted. 'Ye'll not want to know't.'

'I do want to know it.'

'Ma'am, 'tis not a pleasant tale.'

'You might as well tell me,' said Dorothea, 'or you will not have my permission to leave these grounds.'

So Daniel told her. He told her that, while the *General Hewitt* was anchored in Rio, he had succumbed to the fever then prevalent among its passengers. That the reduced water ration, of three pints per man per day, had been inadequate to his needs. That his friend Tom had ... had ...

'He shared his crib with a man called Clyde, who perished from the fever,' Daniel explained hoarsely. 'But Tom told no one for a day and a half that Clyde was dead. He lay beside the corpse, and took Clyde's ration. He gave the ration to me.' Daniel's brow was suddenly damp. 'I'd not have survived, else,' he concluded.

Dorothea stared at him. She remembered Rio. She remembered the heat. The smells. She remembered the white-wrapped corpses being carried ashore.

She dropped her gaze, shaken by a sudden pang of pity and horror.

'Very well,' she gasped. 'You may go.'

'Ma'am?'

'You may go to your friend. You may visit him. Where is he?'

'He—he lives in the Rocks.'

'How unfortunate.' She took a deep breath. 'Well ... you may go, but you must not linger. The Rocks is an unwholesome place. And I do not approve of Sunday travelling, as a rule.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

Dorothea hesitated. 'I need hardly add,' she said at last, slowly, 'that you must take care to return before we do—before the master and I do. From church.'

'Aye.' Their gazes met, for one brief and expressive moment, before they looked away from each other. 'Aye,' Daniel repeated. 'Have no fear o' that.'

'If you should disappoint me in this particular, Daniel, I shall be—I shall be *very* displeased.'

'Aye, Ma'am. Ye've naught to fear.'

'Good. Well ... I should go inside.' Though she had no wish to rejoin Charles, she felt uncomfortable in her present position. She could think of nothing else to say.

As she walked up the front path, however, something occurred to her.

'Daniel,' she said, turning back to face him, 'have you a gift to take with you?'

'Ma'am?'

'For your friend. As a token.' Seeing him stare in perplexity, she added: 'Surely your life must be worth a twist of tobacco, or a little tea?'

He blinked. Then one side of his mouth lifted. In a flat voice, he said: 'Some might not think so.'

Dorothea stared. Daniel flushed. 'Aye,' he amended. '"Twould be a gift of friendship.'

'You must do as you wish. But it *is* customary, when paying such a call.'

Dorothea withdrew. Before entering the house, however, she did glance back.

Daniel was still gazing after her.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX



THE *ELIZABETH* ARRIVED IN Sydney on October the fifth. Among her passengers were the new Judge Advocate Mr John Wylde and his family. When Mr Wylde was sworn in, the Acting Judge Advocate, Mr Garling, was able to resume his practice as a solicitor. Consequently, it was widely assumed that, with two respectable attornies now available to him, Mr Jeffery Bent would be able to open the Supreme Court of Civil Judicature once again.

He was never to be given that opportunity, however. For the *Elizabeth* had also brought a dispatch from Lord Bathurst, which declared that Mr Jeffery Bent had been recalled. His successor had been chosen, but had not yet arrived. Governor Macquarie therefore decided to suspend Mr Bent's salary; if Mr Bent chose to preside over the Supreme Court, now that circumstances permitted him to do so in good conscience, he would have to perform his duties without receiving a penny of recompense.

Naturally, the injustice of His Excellency's action formed the chief part of Mr Bent's discourse over the ensuing month. As for Mrs Bent, she spoke of nothing but the Governor's cruel attempts to evict her from her house—the house that her husband had built, the house in which so many of her children had been born.

'It was Mr Wylde who made the first approach,' she

revealed, 'but I know that the Governor is simply using him. Why should Mr Wylde feel the need to live in *my* house? Why is he not content to live in another, or to demand that his own be constructed? Because the Governor is intent on casting us all into the street, *that* is why. He has conceived for my family such an insuperable dislike that he has ceased to act rationally when he concerns himself with us. It is enough to make one despair.'

She was holding forth over the Brande's dining table. In November, Captain Brande had decided that it behoved him to imitate the hospitality of some of his friends, and invite a small group of them to dine before the weather became too hot. He had therefore decreed that Dorothea arrange and prepare a small dinner party. His intention was that he might ingratiate himself with his commanding officer, while at the same time perform an expected social duty, enjoy the company of his intimates and compel Dorothea to make amends for her recent apathy in the field of convivial exchange. He had recovered, to a great degree, from his illness. He was no longer plagued by a sore throat, and his bowels were functioning efficiently. Only a tendency to flare up at the slightest hindrance betrayed the fact that his general health had been very much affected. Indeed, Dorothea had begun to suspect that his uncertain temper could be almost wholly attributed to his sickly constitution. His nerves, for example, seemed to have been weakened, and he had begun to concern himself more with his health: with his diet, his colour, the regularity of his internal motions, and the appearance of his teeth. He had taken to gargling a concoction that Surgeon Forster brewed for him. He would pause to examine the contents of his chamberpot each morning, and wear socks to bed at night. He had become far more conscious of draughts, and their ill effects.

In fact it soon became apparent to Dorothea that he was concerned—for good reason—that he might be losing his looks. Certainly he was beginning to lose his luxuriant black hair, though not in noticeable quantities. (There was merely a little thinning around the crown.) Dorothea also thought that his

complexion might be growing dull, the lines of his jaw blurring, and the intense blue of his eyes fading a little, but she could not be sure. The fact was that she had long ago ceased to regard her husband's face with the kind of wondering amazement that it had first aroused in her. She had become so accustomed to it that it was now almost as commonplace, in her view, as the drawing-room tongs. Only the approving comments of an envious newcomer—like Mrs Wylde, for instance—could rouse her to contemplate the beauty of Charles's face as she might have contemplated the beauty of a jewel, or a picture. Then she had to concede that, despite the ravages of illness, he was still an extraordinarily handsome man.

Less so, of course, when his fine features were arranged in a black scowl or sullen pout (as was so often the case these days). And he had lost flesh, too—a circumstance that did not suit him. Not that an overabundance of fat would have improved his appearance. But there could be no doubt that, being rather slight in build, he needed the addition of some weight for a convincingly military effect. And this weight was not easily regained now that he displayed such caution in his choice and consumption of food. Always appreciative of a well-cooked dish, he had become positively fussy, insisting on lean meat, rejecting dry or fat meat, refusing pastry, requiring three or four types of vegetable at every meal, and utterly turning his nose up at any type of fish or crustacean. Should the butter have turned in the heat, his anger was excessive. Should the bread not have been sufficiently freshened, he would accuse Dorothea of trying to poison him.

The planning of their November entertainment was therefore something of a challenge to his wife. It was not a good season for fresh fruit, such as Charles would have preferred for the pudding course. He had taken to avoiding the more buttery and indigestible sweet dishes, choosing instead to eat stewed fruits, sweet rice milk, saffron cakes and other items popularly supposed to aid digestion and stimulate appetite. She finally persuaded him (with the aid of one of Mrs Molle's

receipt books) that suet was generally regarded as a very wholesome and digestible means of obtaining the necessary amount of fat to support life. As a result, he agreed that his guests should conclude their meal with a suet pudding, sliced, toasted and sauced with brandy.

The remainder of the meal consisted of mutton kidneys in wine; a fricandeau of veal with purée of sorrel; breast of beef stewed with onions, turnips and cabbage hearts; broiled fowl with mushroom sauce; boiled haricots with parsley; fried celery and seasoned (not buttered) carrots. Once again, Mrs Molle lent Dorothea extra chairs, and the services of her cook. No additional servants, however, were required to wait at table. The evening went off very well; Rose did not attempt to offer up her opinions while serving, the food met with everyone's approval, and Captain Brande was roundly complimented on his cellar. Not one item of crockery was smashed, nor drop of gravy spilled. The guests arrived on time, and even Captain Sanderson had the grace to depart before too late an hour.

Only the conversation failed to satisfy—at least, it failed to satisfy Dorothea. By the end of the evening, she was heartily sick of Mrs Bent's complaints about the Governor and his written undertaking to 'be accountable for any suitable house or lodgings for her and her family'. The subject of Mr John Wylde was also aired much too thoroughly, everyone at the table (except Dorothea) repeating at least twice his or her opinion of the new Judge Advocate's appearance, speech, manners, qualifications and wife—whose characteristics were exhaustively reviewed as well. Like her guests, Dorothea had met Mr Wylde at the Molles' house. She had thought him a remarkably reassuring figure, with his dry, measured voice, shrewd gaze and firm tread. His presence had struck her as weighty—as invested with the kind of authority that need not continually impose itself on others to be effective—and she had not been surprised to learn that he was a brother of Lord Chancellor Truro, and an uncle of Lord Penzance.

In short, she had been impressed. It had occurred to her that Mr Wylde represented quite a different class of person to that customarily found in New South Wales. And this fact was perhaps confirmed by a tendency among her guests to find fault with him on trifling matters. Captain Sanderson pronounced him to be 'as dry as dust'. Colonel Molle declared him 'rather too fond of his own voice'. Mr Jeffery Bent—who was stubbornly fending off Mr Wylde's attempts to occupy the Judge Advocate's chambers—attacked him savagely for ruling that emancipated 'agents' or 'attornies' be admitted to his court to complete suits that were already in progress.

Dorothea, for her part, said nothing. When the talk turned to Captain Piper's new villa, and how its owner desired its foundation stone to be laid in the masonic tradition, she was equally mute. Indeed, she was given little opportunity to speak, since all of the gentlemen present belonged to moveable Irish Lodge number 227. Even Mrs Molle was forced to listen in silence as the menfolk complained bitterly about the dire shortage of masonic scarves and aprons in the colony, and about Francis Greenway, the Acting Government Architect, who had undertaken to supply them with the requisite articles.

Apparently, he had not done so quickly enough. There had been delays. And Greenway himself, though a mere convict, was also a positive 'monster of vanity'. Captain Sanderson had been particularly insulted by this 'impudent felon'; after interminable delays, he had threatened to pass his commission to the artist Mr Lewin, as others had. But Greenway had had the 'damnable cheek—excuse me, Mrs Brande' to reprove him. The convict had written to Captain Sanderson, declaring himself very hurt and charging Captain Sanderson with wanting 'goodness of heart and manliness of conduct'. A convicted *forger*—a deuced *convict*—had had the unutterable *impudence* to address Captain Sanderson in such a way!

'I shall give him such a thrashing as he will never forget,' Captain Sanderson growled, his colour much heightened, his eyes ablaze. The veins in his neck stood out in the most

alarming fashion. 'By my faith, I shall teach him a thing or two, that scoundrel.'

'But did he not present you with some form of apology, Sanderson?' Charles queried, and his friend snorted.

'Apology? I'll give him an apology,' Sanderson replied, before knocking back half a glass of claret. Dorothea, offended at the tone of this discussion, turned it slightly by making a general inquiry about Mr Lewin's work. Had he been able to invest the landscape, hereabouts, with any kind of beauty? If so, he must have genius.

The subject of Captain Piper's villa was not raised again that evening.

But Dorothea had not heard the last of this proposed edifice, nor the pomp that was to accompany its commencement. For within two days, an informal gathering of Lodge brethren took place in the Brandes' drawing room. Charles invited Worshipful Master Captain Sanderson and Secretary Lieutenant Cox to dine (without consulting Dorothea), in order that they might further discuss the approaching ceremony. Dorothea was consequently forced to rush about transforming a modest veal broth into a lavish ragout soup, and stretching the few kidneys she had on hand by dicing and adding them to a very large omelette, instead of stewing them.

Needless to say, she was not at all pleased by this improvised entertainment.

Nor did the behaviour of her guests do much to improve her spirits. The men demolished her dinner without ceremony, practically ignoring her. Their conversation concerned itself entirely with preparations for the coming festivities. The Battery would fire a seven-gun salute. The regimental band would play 'God Save the King'. The Lodge would be constituted in a glade near Captain Piper's house, and would then march in solemn procession to the scene of foundation laying, where corn would be scattered, wine poured, oil dispensed.

'And the Governor,' Captain Sanderson concluded, 'will *not* be present.'

'He is a brother,' Lieutenant Cox demurred. 'Bombay Lodge number one.'

'If he was a founding member of *London* Lodge number one, he would not be welcome,' Captain Sanderson retorted. 'I refuse to associate with that fellow, or his low-born minions. I will no longer set foot in his house.' Then, having gobbled up more than his share of the dinner, Captain Sanderson demanded that he and his companions retire to the mess, where they might partake of a particularly good port lately acquired, and acquaint brothers Grant and Miller with their decisions regarding the ceremony.

No one but Dorothea had any fault to find with this plan. As a result, she was left to drink her coffee alone; she was already abed, and long asleep, when Charles finally returned. The next morning, she remonstrated with him. It had been neither kind nor thoughtful, she said, to impose on her in such a fashion. This was not an eating-house—she required time to prepare even for small gatherings. But Charles replied that she had only her want of enthusiasm to blame. Their formal dinner, three nights before, had been preceded by so much sighing and fretting and moaning that it had been a punishment to set foot in the door. Consequently, he had decided to test her resources—and assure his own peace of mind—by shocking her into a demonstration of hospitality.

'And I was right, you see,' he said. 'The dinner last night was admirable. There was no cause for complaint. You are far more capable than you give yourself credit for, Mrs Brande—with a little prompting, you could run a house as social as Mrs Molle's.'

'Mrs Molle has a *staff*!' Dorothea replied. 'Mrs Molle has *money*! I used a week's worth of eggs last night in that wretched omelette!'

'If you were not constantly allowing the servants to consume our leftovers, we would be better placed.'

'But—'

'It will not be a weekly event, Mrs Brande. But we must

take our proper place in the society of New South Wales. And this can only be done with a little more effort on our part.'

Dorothea was left to seethe over this declaration, for Charles—as always—withdraw to the barracks before any difficulties could properly be discussed. A little more effort? On our part? Dorothea racked her brain for any contribution that Charles might have made to their recent soirées. Impossible man! He had no appreciation of her careful budgets, her painstakingly planned bills of fare, her ceaseless monitoring of fuel consumption, her struggles with inferior colonial ingredients. With mounting anger, she considered her position. Would she have to feed Captain Sanderson once a fortnight until they left the colony? Would she have to torture herself regularly with the task of serving different dishes to the same guests, while at the same time bowing to her husband's selective dietary requirements?

She had little choice, of course. She was an officer's wife, after all, and it was a requirement of her position that she should throw open her house to his regiment. But she resented the necessity. She resented it so much, in light of the degree of enjoyment that she expected to derive from it, that she felt almost compelled to withdraw her cooperation in other matters. She borrowed some gothic novels from Mrs Bent. She decided that, henceforth, Charles would simply have to endure whatever she served up to him, indigestible or not. And she refused to attend the ceremony that was scheduled to take place, with masonic flourishes, on the site of Captain Piper's proposed villa.

'I cannot,' she declared, on the very morning of the celebration.

'I beg your pardon?' Her husband turned on her, astonished.

'I cannot,' she repeated. 'I have a headache.'

There was a brief silence. Then, 'Nonsense,' said Charles.

'Excuse me, but I am quite in earnest.'

'As am I. You will kindly attend me, Mrs Brande.'

'I cannot.'



'You can and you will.'

'I told you, I have a headache.'

'I do not believe you.'

Dorothea rose from the breakfast table. 'That is your misfortune,' she said coolly, and moved towards the door. Charles caught her wrist, however, as she passed him.

'Do not turn your back on me!' he gasped. 'How dare you speak in this way?'

'How dare I speak in this way?' Dorothea exclaimed shrilly. 'You call me a liar, and you accuse *me* of misconduct! A *proper* husband would have shown concern for my plight!'

'I call you a liar because you *are* a liar! You no more have a headache than I do!'

'Let go!'

'You are determined to defy me! You mope and sulk and glare, and expect me to endure it!'

'Because *you* come home at all hours, and expect *me* to endure it!'

'Why should I come home to face your sullen fits, may I ask? By *God*, I'll have no more of this! Come here.' He began to drag her out of the room, and up the hallway. 'Come on, damn you!'

'What—what are you—? Unhand me!'

'You are going to get dressed, you are going to arrange your hair, and you are going to accompany Mrs Molle to Eliza Point.'

'I will not!'

'Oh, but you will. By my *oath*, you will!' Hauling at her wrist, clutching her arm in a painful grip, he pulled her slowly towards the bedroom—while she fought him with every ounce of weight at her disposal.

Then suddenly a slight noise, or perhaps a shift in the light, informed them that they were not alone. Charles stiffened, and grimaced. Dorothea looked around.

Daniel loomed, large and shadowy, at the end of the passage. Dorothea was reminded of how forbidding his appearance actually was. Not that he had adopted a menacing stance or

expression. But he was so big. So big and so still.

With such dark, unreadable eyes.

'What is it?' Charles said sharply—imperiously. Then he seemed to come to his senses. Aware, perhaps, that he was cutting a very undignified figure in front of a common Irish manservant, he released his wife. Breathing heavily, he surveyed her for a moment, before his gaze returned to Daniel.

'Well?' he blazed. 'What do you think you're doing?! Get out of here! Go on!'

Daniel looked at Dorothea, who was nursing her wrist.

'Get out before I run you through, you Irish pig!' Charles roared, enraged to such a degree by Daniel's defiance that he actually put his hand to his sword—before remembering he did not have it on him. Dorothea, seeing this, was alarmed.

'Th-thank you, Daniel,' she stammered. 'That will be all.'

The convict swallowed. He retreated a step, with obvious reluctance. He seemed suddenly uncertain.

Charles muttered something, and stormed into the bedroom. Fearing the worst, Dorothea ordered Daniel to go.

'Go!' she yelled. 'Get out!'

But Charles, when he emerged from the bedroom with his sword, did not attempt to pursue Daniel. Without affording his wife so much as a glance, he left the house—by way of the front door. Dorothea saw him march through the gate and set off in the direction of the barracks, not once looking back. He did not even summon Jack, who (as far as Dorothea knew) was still in the kitchen. No doubt he, too, had heard the shameful sounds of marital discord. How could any of the servants have missed them? Shutting the front door, Dorothea turned around. Daniel was no longer present. He had withdrawn from her sight. Nevertheless, conscious of his undoubted propinquity, Dorothea took care to bury herself under her bedcovers before her mute shock finally gave way to noisy despair.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



DURING THE WEEKS THAT followed, Dorothea often had cause to remember one of her sister's comments regarding marriage. This remark had been made not long before Dorothea's own wedding, when Margaret had taken her aside and raised certain matters that she had felt duty bound to address, in light of the coming nuptials. 'As the only surviving member of your immediate family,' she had said, 'I feel that I must speak to you of matrimony, its duties and pleasures, in the absence of our parents—who would more properly have assayed the subject, had they not been deceased.'

She had gone on to point out that two persons should marry only when of an age sufficient to be stable, not stubborn; when their circumstances are easy, and have a reasonable hope of increase; when they meet with one whose tastes, religion, morals and habits of thinking are to be admired; when their love is firm and ardent, but at the same time reasonable; when they themselves are capable of making many little sacrifices, in return for much comfort and enjoyment; and lastly, when they are perfectly sure that their love is built upon reason, not upon caprice. 'A face, for example,' Margaret had said obliquely (the only doubt she came close to expressing with regard to the haste of her sister's decision), 'is too slight a foundation for happiness. Beauty fades, as you know, and is only skin deep.'

Sound principles and an amiable temper are far more productive of domestic felicity.'

Upon being assured that Dorothea was convinced of the correctness of her choice, Margaret had gone on to speak in more general terms about the state of matrimony. She had referred, rather vaguely, to the more trying 'intimacies' involved. She had touched on children, and how the arrival of the first heralds the end of one marriage, and the beginning of another. She had quoted Boswell's epigram, which concludes with the words:

*But now my kitten's grown a cat,  
And cross like other wives.  
Alas, alas, my honest Mat,  
I fear she has nine lives.*

'It should not be forgotten,' she had concluded, with reference to this verse, 'that when you do marry, you should not expect more from life than life will afford. Married bliss is only as constant as the human heart. You may often find yourself out of humour, and wondering at your situation, but recall, in these circumstances, the wisdom of Ecclesiastes: *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven ...* My dearest Thea, marriage has its seasons, like everything else. Only remember that, and you will be blessed.'

Dorothea remembered it. She remembered it as the days passed, and her communication with her husband dwindled to a series of sharp exchanges—usually on the subject of burned meat, social invitations or evenings with Captain Sanderson. Though somewhat liverish, Charles was often away from home at this time, for he seemed determined that no one should doubt his commitment to his fellow officers. Every second or third night he would arrive back very late, somewhat the worse for liquor, and expose Dorothea to the kind of indignities that will always be the fate of a wife who would prefer not to grant her husband his conjugal rights. They never spoke of these

nocturnal skirmishes. Dorothea was under the impression that Charles might not have any recollection of them. But they added to her discomfort, and drove her from the house more often than had been her custom up to this point.

For Charles's presence seemed to linger within the house even when he himself was absent—and Dorothea was alarmed at her own response to that presence. Even thinking about him, in certain contexts, was enough to ignite within her a sudden, flaring anger that left her shaken, dazed and sick. She could not understand it. She was concerned lest she might, indeed, be succumbing to hysterical symptoms. Surely such a response was unjustified? Surely a husband who was admittedly boorish, insensitive and perhaps a trifle prejudiced did not merit the kind of fury that should more properly have been bestowed on a wife-beating, moral bankrupt? After all, Charles was sickly. To a good wife, her husband's poor health should always merit a sympathetic response.

Dorothea sought comfort in the Scriptures. She strove to do her duty, attending to each meal and garment and dusty corner with meticulous efficiency. She avoided Daniel, whose role as a witness she found particularly hard to deal with; she could no longer meet his eye, and was certainly unable to speak to him in anything but the most stilted and awkward of tones.

She also took to frequenting Mrs Molle's house, where she hoped to discover some hint of the means by which Mrs Molle conducted her marital affairs. To Dorothea, the Molles had always presented an admirably united appearance, despite Mrs Molle's autocratic tendencies and the Colonel's ponderous, somewhat sly demeanour. How had they effected such a perfect understanding, and a bond so durable that it had survived the stresses of Egypt and New South Wales? How was an officer's wife expected to conduct herself, within the confines of her marriage? Dorothea attempted to elicit advice from Mrs Molle on several occasions, always phrasing her queries in a vague and general manner. The answers that she received led her to conclude that the responsibility for wedded

happiness lay almost entirely at the wife's door. Her self-sufficiency, her good health and her enthusiasm for the Regiment seemed to be at the core of Mrs Molle's harmonious marital relations.

She had been formed by Nature to play the part of an officer's wife.

'Too much altogether is made of the inimitable blessings of home and hearth,' she advised Dorothea. 'Too many people equate domestic happiness with a fixed and permanent abode. They deplore the necessity of moving from place to place—they need to call one spot their own. Myself, I agree with Oliver Goldsmith: *Still to ourselves in every place consign'd our own felicity we make or find*. With proper strength of purpose, it is possible to create a home in any savage land.'

'But surely not in this country?' Dorothea objected. She raised the possibility that New South Wales had a detrimental effect on character, and that the colony itself, therefore, could in part be blamed for the examples of misconduct that abounded among its population. Mrs Molle, however, demurred. She herself found the colony's climate quite bearable, its society tolerable and its vistas remarkable. What exactly did Mrs Brande mean?

'Well ...' Dorothea tried to explain herself. 'The violence,' she said. 'The felony. The unreasonable vindictiveness ...'

Mrs Molle smiled.

'My dear,' she retorted, 'if it is violence and felony that offends you, you must never set foot in Egypt. *Every* Egyptian is a thief. And the atrocities to which they subject each other do not bear thinking of.'

'But —'

'You are a sensitive soul,' Mrs Molle continued kindly, 'and it does you credit. But you must not allow the world's transgressions to destroy your comfort. Domestic felicity is easily achieved, Mrs Brande, if you are not forever pining for England's glories.'

With this recommendation Dorothea had to be satisfied,

for Mrs Molle then turned the conversation to other matters — most particularly the latest gossip regarding Mr Jeffery Bent. Mr Bent was stubbornly determined to retain his seat in the Supreme Court, despite being recalled to England. His intransigence in this particular was such that the Governor had finally taken it upon himself to issue an order declaring Mr Jeffery Bent to be ‘positively and absolutely’ removed from his appointment as Judge of the Supreme Court—and absolving every person in the colony from any regard for, or obedience to, any orders that he might presume to issue.

‘Mr Bent informed me that when the General Order was delivered to him,’ Mrs Molle announced, ‘he returned it unopened. In contempt.’

‘Goodness,’ said Dorothea, faintly.

‘No doubt Mr Bent’s pride has caused him to behave rather unwisely, in the face of Lord Bathurst’s latest dispatch,’ Mrs Molle added, and sighed. ‘But one cannot approve of the Governor’s high-handed ways.’

Dorothea said nothing. Her own opinion of Mr Bent had long ago ceased to be sympathetic. She thought him altogether too volatile, and sometimes worried about the effect that his mettlesome temper might be having on Ellis Henry. But she refrained from expressing her views, and soon left Mrs Molle’s house. She had to return home, to satisfy herself that Rose was dealing sensibly with the beef tongue. It had been boiling for nearly two hours, and Dorothea was anxious that Rose should not forget to add the vegetables.

So she crossed the barracks yard at a brisk pace, not even stopping to admire the progress that had been made on the new mess house. It was a very bright day, and the blanched earth of the yard threw back a terrible glare. Walking with her head bowed, and her eyes screwed up against the headache-inducing brightness, Dorothea was not at first aware of events taking place on the steps of the barracks. It was not her custom to linger on the parade ground, in any case. She lived in fear of encountering Captain Sanderson, or becoming an object of

scrutiny to the common soldiers—who were all, to a man, from the very meanest orders of society. On this occasion, however, she was forced to halt, lest she be knocked down by the person who suddenly stumbled across her path.

He was a respectable looking man in a blue coat, and he was bleeding from the nose. With one hand he was attempting to staunch the flow of blood. With the other he sought to shield his head from the blows that were raining down upon his stooped back, as he staggered, and fell, and lurched unsteadily to his feet again. A few incoherent protests escaped his swollen lips, but were effectively drowned by the roars of the officer pursuing him.

This officer was Captain Edward Sanderson. While Dorothea watched in horrified consternation, Captain Sanderson drove his foot into his victim's back, knocked him to his knees, and leaped on him. The captain then pounded him about the head once or twice and kicked him in the ribs, before delivering his final imprecation.

'Y'damned scoundrel!' he bellowed. 'Let *that* be a lesson to you!'

The injured man groaned, and began to struggle to his feet. Captain Sanderson turned away. He saw Dorothea, and for an instant seemed at a loss. But he soon recovered himself.

'Mrs Brande,' he said, with a half-hearted smile and a very correct bow. 'Your servant, Ma'am.' Then, sweating and glowing and breathing heavily, he marched back into the barracks.

Dorothea stood as if rooted to the spot. She saw a convict tradesman—no doubt one of those who had been working on the roof of the new mess house—approach the man in blue. She saw the latter brusquely reject the convict's offer of assistance, and stumble away. She felt a hand on her arm, and looked around to see young Ensign McIntosh hovering behind her.

'Mrs Brande,' he murmured hesitantly. 'Are you all right, Ma'am?'

Dorothea was speechless.



'It is very hot,' Ensign McIntosh continued. 'Would you — would you care to sit down? Inside?'

'No!' cried Dorothea. She wrenched her arm from his grasp. 'Who—who was that man? The man who ... the injured one. Who was he?'

'That I cannot tell you. I am not acquainted with him.'

'Oh!' Dorothea saw dark spots of blood on the ground in front of her. They were almost black. Somewhere nearby, someone was hammering.

With her hand to her mouth, she hurried out of the barracks square and into Clarence Street. She was aware that Ensign McIntosh followed her for a short distance, but he was nowhere to be seen when she reached her house. Upon gaining the bedroom, she went straight to her hartshorn, and inhaled a reviving sniff before even thinking to remove her bonnet. Then she sat down.

She was appalled. She was distraught. She could not have conceived of a more horrifying, a more distressing, a more unspeakable circumstance. The beating of a respectable man! By an officer of the 46th Regiment! In broad daylight, with not a single attempt made to help the unfortunate victim! There had been soldiers in the square—Dorothea was sure of it. Ensign McIntosh had been present, presumably. And yet ... and yet ...

It was some time before she was able to ring for assistance. Daniel came, and she gave him tea leaves from the drawing room, requesting that Rose should stew them for her.

'Tell her that, if you please,' said Dorothea. 'I cannot face the heat in the kitchen, just now.'

Daniel studied her.

'Are ye ill, Ma'am?' he finally asked.

'I—no.'

'Ye look pale,' he said.

'It is the heat. It is very hot.'

'Aye,' he said slowly. "'Tis that.' Then he withdrew, with a pensive backward glance. When the tea was made, he brought

it to her with a plate of buttered teacakes, but Dorothea could not eat them. She could not eat anything. She did not move from the drawing room until Charles came home.

He did so within the hour, appearing suddenly at the door with his hat under his arm, looking slightly disgruntled. Dorothea rose, white-faced, to greet him.

'I heard that you were taken ill on the parade ground,' he muttered. 'Are you all right, now?'

'Charles. Who was that man?'

'Eh?'

'Captain Sanderson beat a man. He *beat* him. With his *fists*. On the parade ground.'

'Oh.' Charles smiled wryly. 'That,' he said.

'Who was it? Why—why—?'

'Who was it?' Charles echoed. 'It was Greenway, of course. Who else would it be?'

'Greenway?' Dorothea gasped. She sat down, abruptly.

'You did not think him a gentleman? Really, Thea, Greenway is nothing but a convict. As ever, you do Sanderson a disservice.'

'But he *beat* him!'

'Did he? I was not present.'

'It was awful!'

'You should not have been there. It was very bad luck.'

Dorothea covered her eyes.

'Is that tea hot?' Charles inquired, coming over to test the warmth of the teapot. 'No? Then I shall ring for some more. I could do with a cup of tea. Deuced warm, out there.'

'What happened?' Dorothea demanded, looking up again. 'How—why—what could have caused such a terrible altercation?'

'What do you think? Sanderson took a horsewhip to Greenway. He has been threatening to do so for weeks—you know that. It just happened that Greenway was at the barracks, overseeing the work on the mess house.'

'But—'

'Sanderson invited him into his quarters, and laid on the whip with a vengeance. I cannot think why Greenway went in. What a fool!' Charles laughed suddenly. 'I wish I had been there,' he added, tugging at the bellrope. 'McDonald was, and he says that you never saw such a spectacle. Sanderson throwing punches like a madman, screaming his head off, and Greenway trying to *argue* his way out. "Mr Sanderson, Sir, recollect!"' Charles attempted to imitate Mr Greenway's pleas by employing a shrill, piping tone, like that of a frightened female. "Consider my situation, Sir!"' he squealed. "I dare not run the risk of resisting, were I able! You know how I am circumstanced!"' Another laugh. 'What was he hoping to achieve, I wonder?'

Dorothea stared at Charles. He seemed genuinely amused, and oblivious to the horror of those frantic entreaties. '*You know how I am circumstanced!*' Suddenly Daniel entered the room, and Charles ordered more tea. As the convict collected the teapot, Dorothea noticed his broad shoulders straining against the stuff of his shirt, and remembered how he had stood that morning in November, at the end of the hallway, like a threat. Like a reprimand.

What if Charles had taken exception to the implied warning in Daniel's shadowy gaze? What if he had attacked his servant? How could Daniel have defended himself?

*You know how I am circumstanced.* If Daniel had offered any physical resistance, he would have been flogged for it.

With a lurch of her stomach, Dorothea thought: He must never do it again. Never. It doesn't matter what happens, he must never, *never* intervene.

But how can I possibly tell him so?

'Take the dirty cup, you fool, what is wrong with you?' Charles rasped. He was addressing Daniel. 'I presume there is still tea on the hob? In the kettle?'

'I—I think so, Sir.'

'Well go and find out! I despair, indeed I do,' Charles said, as Daniel retreated. 'These Irish are as stupid as sheep.'

Sanderson says that the rod is the only thing that will supply them with any intelligence. Perhaps I should follow his advice.' For the third time, he laughed. 'At least Daniel will not feel constrained to argue the point. "Consider my situation, Sir! You know how I am circumstanced!" Dear, dear. What a farce.'

It was at this point, gazing into her husband's beautiful face, that Dorothea was rendered speechless by a terrible realisation.

Suddenly, she understood that she did not love him any more.

New South Wales  
January 23rd, 1817

My dearest Margaret,

You may recall the brig that was seized by convicts, last September—the one that eluded Charles. It was called the 'Trial'. Word has now reached us that the wreck of this ill-fated vessel has been found by natives, with no trace of the crew aboard. They are all presumed drowned. The 'Lady Nelson', under Captain Whyte, has been sent to investigate, but Charles was not chosen to lead the accompanying troops. Naturally, Charles was much displeased by this 'snub' (or so he calls it)—but then he is of a temper, these days, to be displeased by everything. His illness, I fear, has irretrievably soured him, though the summer has brought no recurrence of the complaint. I fancy that if he had the gout, he could not be more petulant.

Mrs Bent has been forced to leave her house. The Governor insisted that if she did not vacate it by December twenty-third, an officer of the Crown would take possession of it, and all its contents. She is currently arguing with Mr Campbell over the value of her fixtures and fittings, which the Government intends to buy. She wants forty-seven pounds for her grates and fire irons! She will not get it, of course. (Forty-seven pounds!) She is being very foolish.

The latest scandal here also involves Mr Campbell, who is the Governor's secretary, and rather hot-tempered. (I hear that he once fought a duel.) Early this month, a letter appeared in the 'Gazette' signed by one 'Philo Free', which appears to be a pseudonym. In it, the correspondent attacked Mr Samuel Marsden and his Philanthropic Society, which was formed in 1813 to assist any poor South Sea Islanders who might visit the colony. It appears that the money collected for that purpose has not been thus employed, or so Philo Free claimed. He also accused Mr Marsden of pursuing profitable trade in the guise of

*a missionary (for he has sent a mission to the Pacific Islands), plying the islanders with spirits in return for trade goods such as wood and flax.*

*As you may imagine, Mr Marsden was very angry. He demanded that the Judge Advocate, Mr Wylde, indict the editor of the 'Gazette' for criminal libel. The Collector of the Philanthropic Society, one Mr Jenkins, hastened to declare that he still had custody of all the society's funds—because nobody had ever asked for them—and Mr Wylde told the Governor to repudiate the letter. This was done. The Governor publicly expressed his regret that the document should have gained admission to the 'Gazette', owing, he said, to the great pressure of Government business in the Secretary's Office.*

*Now Mr Marsden has decided to indict the Secretary for criminal libel.*

*It is really quite extraordinary, how passionately combative the people are, hereabouts. Mr Marsden and Mr Campbell are at each other's throats; Mrs Bent and Mr Campbell are at loggerheads over the cost of her corn bin; Colonel Molle is still much exercised over the identity of the author of the pipes written against him, and is demanding an inquiry; and as for the rift between the Governor and the Regiment, it has become quite impossible. At least half of the officers—Charles among them—will no longer accept invitations to Government House. And the result? All the most stimulating entertainments are now closed to us. Only the other day, to celebrate the marriage of Princess Charlotte to the Prince of Saxe-Coburg, a levee and ball were held at Government House in Parramatta. I am told that a Temple of Hymen was erected on the front lawn, with transparent lights that were ignited after dark. But of course we had no opportunity to view this wonder (had we decided to brave the road to Parramatta at all, which is doubtful). Owing to the fact that Charles and his cronies are so very nice, we are restricted to the usual dinners, with the usual faces and the usual talk.*

*I wonder if you can be at all interested in any of this? It seems so very dull and petty—and you seem so far away. So remote. Is it only three and a half years since last we embraced? I feel as if I have grown old since then. But the weather continues hot, of course, and I am never at my best in hot weather. Nothing pleases me. I am so tired of this place. I am so tired of this life. Matters have arisen which are so distasteful, so*

*very troubling, that I cannot even bear to commit an account of them to paper. I cannot—no, I really cannot speak of them. Everything is too dreadful.*

*Forgive me. I should not trouble you in this way.*

*I love you all, and remain*

*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT



DOROTHEA THOUGHT TO HERSELF: it cannot last.

Mindful of her sister's counsel, she pored over Ecclesiastes. She derived some small comfort from the proposition that to every thing there is a season; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.

Perhaps, she speculated despairingly as she sought the peace of the garden (which she was apt to pace, in moments of distress), this was merely a time to refrain from embracing. Perhaps the time for embraces would return.

But she was not sanguine. She was, in fact, quite dazed, unable to reason with any coherence, let alone formulate a plan or strategy. And events were conspiring to keep her thoroughly shaken—too shaken to attempt any kind of rational introspection whatsoever.

Firstly, there had been Captain Sanderson's trial. Much to the dismay of the 46th Regiment, Mr Francis Greenway had laid a criminal charge of assault against Captain Sanderson, necessitating the latter's appearance in court. Upon being informed by Judge Advocate Wylde of Mr Greenway's charges, Captain Sanderson had naturally been much offended. He had promised to horsewhip Mr Greenway again, whenever and wherever they should meet—whereupon Mr Greenway had had him bound over.



Happily for the feelings of the Regiment, the bench assembled to try Captain Sanderson had been composed of one civilian (Judge Advocate Wylde) and six brother officers of the accused, two of whom had gone bail for Captain Sanderson, and one of whom served as a witness for the defence. As a result, Captain Sanderson was fined only five pounds for his attack on Mr Greenway. Moreover, the court added a majority rider in which the Judge Advocate was condemned for acting with unnecessary and ungentlemanly harshness in allowing the prosecutor's solicitor, Mr Garling, to pursue the course that he had taken. The behaviour of Mr Garling, it was generally agreed, had been exceedingly improper. The officers on the bench had been bound, in the strictness of the law, to find Captain Sanderson guilty—yet they had been fully conscious of the fact that, as an officer and a gentleman, he had been justified in his conduct. Mr Garling did not appear to share that view. His attacks on the accused in court had led to a riotous scene, in which certain officers had threatened the attorney with bodily harm.

Dorothea learned of all this from Charles, who had attended the trial. She herself was not required to do so; her presence at the scene of the 'unfortunate incident' was not referred to during court proceedings. It had been agreed that she should be spared the distress and indignity of serving as a witness. Her delicacy was therefore respected, and her feelings were shielded, by the 46th Regiment as a whole. Several sharp words had been spoken to those few witnesses not attached to the Regiment: to Wharton the carpenter, for example, and to other convicts who had been engaged upon the construction of the mess-house roof. As a result, Dorothea's name was not mentioned to Judge Advocate Wylde.

For this, of course, she was grateful. But the fearful prospect of having to appear threatened her like a hovering stormcloud, especially after Mr Greenway decided to take his suit to a civil court. At *this* trial, Captain Sanderson flagrantly insulted the bench, and Mr Greenway was subsequently

awarded damages of twenty pounds. Dorothea, however, remained undisturbed. She was obliged to endure only the rage of her husband, who was deeply offended on Captain Sanderson's behalf.

He was particularly put out by the Governor's decision to admonish his friend, privately, for being rude to certain magistrates. In Charles's opinion, the aforesaid magistrates had merited every curse that Captain Sanderson had seen fit to direct at them. Moreover, Charles was angered at Colonel Molle's professed indignation at the general behaviour of the mess. Though the Colonel had previously made no strenuous attempt to check the bold licence that many of his officers gave their tongues, he now felt constrained, by his position as Lieutenant Governor, to serve Captain Sanderson and his friends with a formal lecture concerning the evils of libellous talk. Charles had been very much insulted by this homily.

'He is a coward,' Charles declared. 'He had not the courage to support Vale, and now he has failed Sanderson. He is chicken-hearted. Do you wonder that he is the subject of so much scurrilous verse?'

Dorothea, of course, was not expected to comment. The question had been a rhetorical one, delivered as part of a lengthy discourse on Colonel Molle's poor leadership. Though Charles and Dorothea still spoke to each other, they rarely conversed in the true sense of the word. Charles would unburden himself to Dorothea on regimental matters, expecting only dutiful support, and Dorothea would ask him questions relating to domestic affairs—whether he wanted a shirt cleaned, for instance, or whether he would be dining in. She was too numb to engage in a proper, feeling dialogue. And he, if he noticed her air of distraction, did not remark upon it.

He seemed quite happy to accept her tendance without having to endure any of the emotional exhibitions that had so often accompanied it in the past.

For Dorothea, life was now full of shadows. All her efforts were directed at attempting to conceal the repugnance that she

now felt for Charles, and for her own position. She was helpless with bewilderment. In desperation, she prayed for guidance. She feigned headaches, and started many letters to Margaret that she never finished. She could not comprehend the enormity of her loss. She could not believe that such a dreadful fate should have overtaken her. Love was the mortar of marriage. Without it, how was she to endure her life? Again and again she contemplated the possibility of consulting the Reverend Mr Cowper, but again and again her courage failed her. She was too ashamed to reveal her secret to anyone. She clung to the hope that this was, indeed, a season that would pass.

Then an event occurred that left her even more confused and irresolute—even more incapable of coming to any kind of decision.

It happened one morning late in February. That morning, when Dorothea went to order breakfast, she discovered that Rose had not yet arrived. Daniel was therefore obliged to cook eggs and slice ham, under his mistress's supervision, while Jack was sent to make inquiries. Charles, of course, was very put out. He complained about the burned kidneys and was furious when Jack did not return in time to accompany his master to the barracks. For Charles, a properly ordered breakfast was vital to the successful commencement of any day. It had to be well cooked, it had to be efficiently served, and it had to be consumed in an atmosphere of domestic tranquillity. Such tranquillity could not be assured when Dorothea was always jumping up to assist Daniel, who conveyed the dishes into the dining room with a slightly flustered air, his hair plastered to his brow with sweat and his shirt spattered with food.

Charles would make no concessions. He abused Daniel roundly. He directed Dorothea to dismiss Rose—or, if she were ill, to censure her parents for neglecting to inform him of this fact. Then he left, in a high dudgeon.

An hour later, Jack returned from Rose's house. Dorothea was in her bedroom at the time. She was tying up pillows, and

contemplating the possibility of making the bed. (Would Daniel attend to the mattresses, perhaps, while she herself took charge in the kitchen?) Hearing footsteps in the hallway, she looked up.

The footsteps slowed.

She went to the door, pillow in hand, and saw Jack with Daniel. They seemed to be hesitating within a few steps of the bedroom's threshold. Daniel's face was white.

Dorothea noticed its pallor immediately.

'What is it?' she asked.

'Ma'am,' Jack replied, and hesitated. He glanced at Daniel.

'*What?*' Dorothea exclaimed. 'Tell me!'

'That girl—that Rose,' said Jack, in his flat, nasal drawl.

'Well? What of her?'

'She's bin killed.'

Dorothea gasped.

'Murdered,' Jack continued. 'By the feller she was promised to.'

'Oh ...' Dorothea reached for the wall.

'Last night, in the street. Laid open her head. They've taken him, though—or so her ma tol' me.'

Dorothea was speechless. Shock had deprived her of her wits. She allowed herself to be conducted into the drawing room by Daniel, who urged her, hoarsely, to sit down. She sat. She stared.

'I'll inform Captain Brande, shall I, Ma'am?' Jack asked her. He seemed utterly unmoved—a soldier faced with yet another unwelcome duty. 'He'll be wantin' me at the barracks, I should think.'

Dorothea nodded. 'Yes,' she said, in a voice so faint that she could hardly hear it herself. But as he turned, she detained him. 'Why?' she croaked. 'Why—why did this happen?'

Jack shrugged. 'The two of 'em fell out, Ma'am, far as I can tell.'

'Over what?'

Another shrug. 'Beggin' yer pardon, Ma'am, but he was a

ticket-o'-leave man. There's never any tellin' what them bast—er—scoundrels is goin' to do.'

Dorothea gazed at him, mutely. Jack waited. When no more questions were forthcoming, he took his leave. Daniel then asked Dorothea if she required a glass of brandy.

'No. Thank you,' she replied.

'Tea?'

'Yes.' She spoke almost without thinking. 'I should like a cup of tea.'

He went to fetch some from the kitchen, where the kettle was still on the hob. Dorothea sat for while, trying to comprehend the meaning of this terrible event. Murder. A murderous attack—so close to home! And upon Rose, of all people. Rose, who was only seventeen years old ...

With a little start, Dorothea recollected her duty. She had a duty to Rose's mother. Formalities had to be observed. Responsibilities could not be neglected.

She followed Daniel to the kitchen, where she found him slowly—clumsily—arranging a tray. He looked stricken. He had to stop, and reflect, before retrieving every article of crockery and piece of silver. It was as if his memory had been affected.

'I must send a token to Mrs Taylor,' Dorothea told him. 'A sponge cake. A note.'

'Aye.'

'Flowers?' Dorothea tried to think. Her own mind was not clear. 'Money.'

Daniel was silent.

'How many eggs have we? Daniel? I must have seven eggs at the very least. And lump sugar equal to the weight of four eggs. Where is the flour?'

As it happened, there were sufficient quantities of all the ingredients required for a sponge cake of reasonable size. There was also enough strawberry jam with which to fill it, and a starched white cloth to wrap it in. While the cake was baking, Dorothea sent Daniel out to buy cheese and more sugar. She

herself sat down to compose a brief letter, in which she strove to express her profound sympathy to Rose's family.

*I cannot convey to you, she wrote, the grief that I felt upon being informed of Rose's tragic death. I am so very, very sorry. Your suffering must be made infinitely worse by the horrid circumstances of this loss. If there is anything that I might do to ease your burden, please do not hesitate to communicate with me. Rose was a very good servant. She worked hard, and was clever and willing. It is difficult to comprehend how an offence of this kind could be visited upon so upright and good-hearted a girl ...*

When Daniel returned to the house, and reported to Dorothea, he found her weeping over her portable writing desk.

'Ah, no,' he murmured. Hearing him, she raised her head. He had come to a halt in the doorway; he seemed not to know what he should do with his hands.

She wiped away tears, and they gazed at each other.

'I am—I am writing to Mrs Taylor,' she announced, with a hiccough.

He nodded.

'This is a terrible place,' she went on, and her voice broke. 'A terrible place. I cannot bear it here.' Her sobs redoubled, whereupon she covered her mouth with her handkerchief. Daniel took a step forward.

He said: 'What can I do?'

She shook her head. 'Nothing,' she quavered. Then, with a great effort of will, she blew her nose. 'You can take this to Mrs Taylor,' she said, correcting herself. 'When the cake is ready, you may go.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'You must present her with my compliments and my deepest sympathy. You must ask her if there is anything that I might do to assist her. Anything at all.' With a faltering hand, Dorothea signed her name to the slip of paper on her writing desk. 'Take this with you,' she instructed, folding the letter and passing it to Daniel. 'I cannot say more than I have said here. Tell her that I am at her service.'

'Aye, Ma'am.' But he seemed to hesitate. Dabbing at a fresh flow of tears, Dorothea asked him if there was anything more.

'Aye,' he said. Raising his eyes from the letter, he fixed them on Dorothea's face. 'Will ye not—will ye kindly read it to me, Ma'am?'

'Read you what? This letter?'

He nodded.

'Why?' she asked, before something occurred to her. 'Would you like me to add a few words?' she inquired gently, and was surprised when he declined her offer.

'I'll pay me own compliments,' he said. 'Sure, and there's no words can help the pain to go. But I'd be grateful if ye could read me yeer letter, Ma'am. In case no one in Rose's family is a scholar.'

So Dorothea read her stumbling missive aloud, in a small voice. And Daniel listened, and thanked her at its conclusion. 'Twas a fine thing to hear,' he said.

Then he went to do his chores, while Dorothea attended to the cake. She spread it with jam, and wrapped it in a white cloth. When it was ready, she sent Daniel with it to Mrs Taylor's house.

Upon his return, an hour later, she was sitting at the kitchen table as white as salt.

'Are ye not well, Ma'am?' he asked.

'You were a long time gone.'

'Yeer pardon—'

'It does not matter. What happened? Did you talk to Mrs Taylor?'

'Aye.' He looked down at the floor, and grimaced. Dorothea pressed him.

'Was it very bad?'

'Aye.'

'Does she need my help?'

'No, Ma'am, but she thanks ye for yeer kind offer.'

'Is there *nothing* I can do?'

He hesitated. 'Only,' he said at last, 'that ye will ask the

master to see to't that Bill Hawkins is hung. Beggin' yeer pardon, Ma'am.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea. She stared at the tabletop, which was marked with many stains and burns. She was too weary to rise. She was almost too weary to think. And she had dinner to prepare, on top of everything else.

What could she possibly undertake, without Rose's assistance? Cold meat? A salad?

'Ma'am?'

'What?' It was an effort to speak. 'What is it, Daniel?'

'There's soup from last night, Ma'am. And salt tongue, and half a plum puddin'. Ye'll need no more'n beans and potatoes cooked, for dinner. Beggin' yeer pardon, Ma'am.'

Dorothea looked up, shocked at this evidence of Daniel's perspicacity.

'Well, I—thank you,' she stammered. 'Yes. Yes, you are quite right.' He was standing with his fingers spread, each fingertip resting lightly on the tabletop. His hands were large and rough, but shapely. His figure was imposing. Since coming to work at the house he had put on more flesh, and it suited him; he no longer possessed such a cadaverous, haunted appearance. Indeed, although he was not what Dorothea would have called a handsome man, he did possess certain striking features that might have elicited admiration from people unacquainted with his circumstances. His nose was large, but delicately made. His face, though long, was constructed with perfect symmetry, boasting high cheekbones and a strong, smooth jawline. As for his eyes, they were extraordinarily fine for a man of his condition.

He said: 'Will ye read from the Scriptures, Ma'am?'

Dorothea blinked. Her mind had been far away. She had been contemplating the unlikely possibility of dressing Daniel in proper footman's livery. How fine he would look, she had decided, in a dress coat and epaulettes!

'W-what?' she said.

'Will ye read from the Scriptures?' he repeated. "'Twould be a comfort, if it please ye, Ma'am.'



'Well, I ...' She considered the suggestion. 'I suppose I could,' she said at last. 'Yes, it would be proper, I think. But only for a little while. You have a great deal of work to do, Daniel—as have I.'

Because she was feeling disinclined to move, Daniel fetched the Bible from the drawing room. Then Dorothea opened it to the first epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, and read from chapter fifteen. She read of the Apostles, and Christ's resurrection. She read of evil communication corrupting good manners, and of awakening to righteousness. She read: '*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*' And she read: '*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible ...*'

Finally, she read: '*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*' At which point tears filled her eyes, and she could no longer read.

'We should say a prayer,' she muttered, overcome by a great, black wave of grief that seemed to come from a source far more deep and ancient than Rose's untimely death. 'You—you say it, Daniel.'

'Aye,' he responded. And he began to formulate a simple prayer, simply put, requesting for Rose Taylor eternal peace in the arms of Jesus. In a careful but straightforward fashion, he catalogued her many virtues, and described his own gratitude at having been favoured with her acquaintance. He spoke of her 'bright, clear tongue' and the purity of her soul's desire. She had been 'as fair and clean as the sea wind', he said.

Then he crossed himself.

'Well,' Dorothea said wearily, after a long silence, 'I must wash my face now, and attend to matters. The kitchen will be my domain today. You must sweep out the house, Daniel, and make the bed. You know what has to be done.'

'Aye, Ma'am.'

'I am not sure—it seems callous to raise the subject, but I

am not sure how soon we may expect to engage a new housemaid. Until we do ... well, you know how it is.'

Daniel nodded.

'I shall consult Captain Brande this evening,' Dorothea concluded. She did so, and discovered that he had already applied to Captain Gill for assistance. He had nothing much else to say on the subject of Rose's murder, which he seemed to regard more as a source of irritation than anything else. It was bothersome that, having acquired a housemaid who had proven to be suitable, they must now endure all over again the tedious process of locating, training and becoming acquainted with another.

He did observe, however, that the fatal assault had been a particularly grisly one. 'It was done with an axe,' he informed Dorothea, with a certain, almost undetectable, relish, 'and the head was left in several pieces.' Rose's parents, he added, had been forced to identify the corpse from the clothes that it was wearing (or so he had heard). He delivered himself of the opinion that the hanging of Bill Hawkins would be a very, very popular event.

'The mob will be paying for their places on Gallows Hill,' he declared and, having laughed a little at his own wit, attacked his cold beef with a hearty appetite.

Dorothea would be pleased to know, he said, that his digestion had been much improved lately.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE



ROSE'S MURDERER WAS TRIED and punished with great expedition. As Charles had predicted, the hanging of this scoundrel was well attended; though it took place in the gaol, and was therefore, in one sense, not a public event, the gaolyard was overlooked by high ground (popularly known as Gallows Hill) upon which a great crowd assembled to watch Bill Hawkins meet his Maker. The following day, the *Gazette* published a brief account of the execution, which Charles read aloud to Dorothea, commenting as he did so on the satisfaction that every civilised man must feel upon seeing justice carried out so swiftly and efficiently.

A large crowd also gathered to watch Rose interred, though it was not as large as the one on Gallows Hill. Dorothea herself was present. Despite the objections of her husband, who refused to abandon his duties out of respect for a humble housemaid, she had felt that it behoved her, as Rose's mistress, to attend. She brought flowers and smelling salts. Daniel accompanied her. The funeral was not much to her taste, since it attracted many idle and intrusive gawkers, who imposed on the bereaved family in a fashion that Dorothea would have found unbearable, shouting crudely encouraging comments and groaning with sympathy at every tear shed. But she endured it all staunchly, for Rose's sake. With Daniel, large and grim, at her side, she was not much jostled. Nor was she required to stand for an extended

period, because the service was not long. It was, indeed, such a noisy and confusing affair, with its crowd of curious onlookers, its mumbled Committal (Mr Cowper had a very bad cold), and its continual disruption by Rose's youngest siblings, that Dorothea was left quite unmoved by it. She was not obliged to uncork her salts, or ply her handkerchief. When she approached Mrs Taylor, to express her condolences, she was able to do so in a firm and gentle voice, as befitted a lady.

Mrs Taylor received her good wishes with the utmost gratitude. This unfortunate woman, her face besmeared and her eyes brimming, was able to blurt out a few halting words ('honoured' and 'loss' were among them) before her feelings overcame her completely. Peg Whiting, who stood at her side, thereafter spoke for her—and Dorothea was impressed by Peg's bearing, which was kindly, and protective, and grave. It was Peg who thanked Dorothea on Mrs Taylor's behalf. It was Peg who acknowledged that Rose had found Dorothea a fair mistress, always ready to help and teach her staff—'a lady through and through', as Peg put it. Dorothea was quite struck by the manner in which Peg addressed her. They might almost have been of equal station, so quiet and calm was Peg's tone.

Looking at her former housemaid, stately in respectable garments, her thriving family gathered about her, Dorothea was almost—irrationally—envious. How well established Peg seemed to be! How easily she seemed to have made her way on this benighted shore!

No doubt she was made of coarser stuff than Dorothea. A refined person could not be expected to flourish in such a climate. Nevertheless, Dorothea felt that her own predicament in many ways did not compare favourably with Peg Whiting's, and she left abruptly, pleading fatigue.

She *was* tired; her excuse was not without foundation. Still reeling from the shock of Rose's untimely death, she had been forced to cope with her husband's delicate appetite unassisted, and was finding it a toilsome chore—even more so, now that she could not view him with any great sympathy. His

proximity, at nights, filled her with despair. Only the fact that she was still somewhat dazed and disoriented allowed her to be civil when he complained about the food, or gloated over one of the many insults offered to the Governor by Captain Sanderson. How *mean-spirited* he was! Had he *always* been so? She could not believe it. She was sure that he must have changed, and that this change must have been effected by his sojourn in New South Wales.

She wondered if a return to England might repair the damage. She wept (alone, in her room) when reports reached her that the Regiment would almost certainly be dispatched to India once it had left the colony. Rumours of its imminent departure were rampant. Even Colonel Molle conceded that the 48th was being sent to relieve his force. Bets were being placed that the South Devonshires would be on the high seas again before the year was out. Many maintained that Governor Macquarie had insisted on their recall.

To Dorothea, the thought of enduring yet another terrible ocean voyage was only mildly intimidating, for she had more pressing concerns. The foundations of her marriage appeared to be crumbling. She was alone—utterly alone—in her appreciation of this fact. She was surrounded by sin and misery, she was afflicted by punishing headaches, and, for six days after Rose's death, she was obliged to spend most of her time in a hot and stuffy kitchen, toiling over saucepans and dripping pans and bushell measures.

Moreover, when she was finally relieved of this duty, her situation became even worse. For it transpired that the new housemaid was utterly and immeasurably unsuitable.

Her name was Jane Steel. She was about Dorothea's age, and she was a Londoner, convicted of theft. Though she professed to have been a laundress before ill fortune had overtaken her, she displayed no fondness for clean linen. Indeed, her appearance was entirely unprepossessing; she had stiff, rather wild black hair, a creased and sallow face, and a baleful eye. Her voice was harsh, and her speech vulgar. When asked

about her crimes, she confessed, in sullen tones, to having 'napped seven penn'orth' for 'canting the dobbin' from a haberdashery. (Captain Brande, upon sharply requesting that she employ the King's English, was able to extract from her that she had in fact stolen a roll of ribbon, valued at two shillings.) Her bearing was more insolent than otherwise, comprising a discontented slouch, a sidelong glance and folded arms. Nevertheless, Captain Brande—who was proud of having secured her so rapidly—insisted that Dorothea put her to work.

'I have told her what she will endure, if she fails to satisfy,' he declared. 'You heard me address her. She knows that she can expect no quarter from *me*. Now you have only to stand firm, and not allow her to take advantage, as you have done with others in the past. Be strict, and you will have nothing to fear.'

But Captain Brande was wrong. Jane Steel spent just two days in the Brandes' service, and by the end of the first day it was already glaringly obvious that she possessed not one redeeming feature. She was sulky. She was slow. She allowed the pudding to boil dry, and made no apology for doing so. She tracked muddy footprints through the house, burned a hole in a dishcloth, had to be reminded *three times* to empty the chamberpots, and employed foul language against Daniel Callaghan. Dorothea herself happened to overhear this incident. It occurred after dinner on the first day, as Dorothea was approaching the kitchen, and it involved the use of the words 'whoreson croppy bastard'.

Dorothea was entering the room just as this imprecation was uttered. She therefore had no opportunity to withdraw before she was seen. Flushing, she realised that she had stumbled upon a dispute, for Jane was wielding a rolling pin in a very threatening manner, while Daniel stood, hands on hips, against a wall.

He seemed more wary than enraged, until his gaze met Dorothea's. Then he coloured, and frowned.

Jane turned her back on her mistress in the most discourteous way imaginable.

'I hope nothing is wrong,' Dorothea remarked, her voice sounding thin even to her own ears. Jane did not reply. She began to move pots about, noisily. Daniel said: 'Pay't no mind, Ma'am.' He spoke formally, almost stiffly, as he would have spoken to Captain Brande. It seemed to Dorothea that he did not want her there—that neither of them wanted her there (though perhaps for different reasons).

'I do not like to hear such language in my kitchen,' she remarked. 'Jane? Look at me when I am speaking to you, please.'

Jane turned. The expression on her face would have curdled milk.

'I realise that you are not familiar with the ways of this house, Jane,' Dorothea continued, attempting to assume a tranquil demeanour. 'Mistakes can be forgiven, in the circumstances. But profanity cannot. Do you hear? I will not have this house defiled by such language. Daniel has never once offended me, in this regard, and I do not intend that you should. Is that clear?'

Jane glowered.

'Jane? Kindly answer me, when I speak to you.'

'I 'eard,' said Jane.

'Good. Now, why have you fallen out? What reason could there be for such a display?' Seeing Jane lower her eyes and scowl, Dorothea turned to Daniel. But he was no more helpful than the housemaid.

'Pay't no mind, Ma'am,' he repeated, grimly.

'Will you not tell me? Perhaps I can be of assistance.'

'Not in this,' he said. 'Sure, and 'tis not a fit thing for yeer notice.'

Helplessly, Dorothea looked from face to face. They were shuttered and forbidding. Had she and Daniel been alone, she might have made more peremptory demands. As it was, she could only say: 'Please recall that Jane is new, Daniel. She requires our help and guidance.'

'Aye,' he drawled flatly, avoiding Dorothea's eye.

'And Jane—you must listen to Daniel. I place all my trust in him where this house is concerned. He knows what must be done. He gives good counsel.' Observing the sneer that was forming on her housemaid's face, Dorothea added, in a sudden burst of temper: 'If you speak to him like that again, my girl, I shall have you punished. Do you understand?'

Jane muttered something in reply.

'What? What did you say?'

'I *said*, I never tuk no orders from no damn *croppy*, afore. No, and won't neither.'

Jane's tone was insupportable. Dorothea felt her face grow hot.

'You will do exactly what I tell you to do, whether you like it or not!' she snapped. 'And I am telling you that you must pay heed to everything Daniel says!' Then, realising that she might very well become embroiled in a vulgar argument if she stayed any longer, she left the room, her heart pounding furiously.

Of course she went straight to her husband, and expressed the gravest doubts about their new housemaid. Charles responded promptly. He gave both servants a good dressing down, at the top of his voice. But he later expressed to Dorothea his opinion that crude language, where it was not directed at a master or mistress, could be tolerated providing that there were no other grounds for taking offence. 'It is an unpromising start,' he said, 'but I have truly put the fear of God into her, now. Give her a few more days, and see if you are still dissatisfied.'

Dorothea had no choice but to obey. She insisted on one thing, however: that Daniel, not Jane, sleep in the little room next to their own that night. She would feel safer, she told Charles, if Jane was to occupy the kitchen. Naturally, her husband scoffed at this. He assured her that an Irishman was ten times more dangerous than any underfed, bow-legged female. Nevertheless, he acquiesced (albeit grumpily), and Dorothea's misgivings were laid to rest—at least in this particular.



Daniel did not object to his change of quarters. He did not demand an explanation; perhaps he needed none. He simply gathered up his linen and followed Dorothea into the house, where he unrolled Martha's old hammock and tethered it to hooks that adorned the wall of his assigned room. Dorothea watched him for a while without speaking. Finally she asked, in a low voice: 'What happened after dinner? Will you tell me, now?'

He stopped, and sighed, before glancing at her.

'Twas of no consequence,' he said. 'Such a silly thing, Ma'am. I'd not have ye trouble yeerself.'

'But will she serve, Daniel? What do you think? She seems so ...' Dorothea floundered, searching for a suitable description.

Daniel turned back to the knot he was tying, and tugged at it, hard.

'That I cannot tell ye,' he replied, without expression.

'I doubt that she will stay here. If it were up to me ...' Dorothea paused, catching herself on the verge of a disloyal remark, and saw Daniel's hands hesitate before recommencing their busy work. He kept his eyes fixed on them.

'I hope that you will not be too inconvenienced,' she said at last, hopelessly. Whereupon he sighed again.

'Please, Ma'am, will ye not trouble yeerself? Sure, and I'd not have ye frettin' over this—I would not, indeed.'

Then Charles called to her, and she had to leave the room. Her intention was to spend the next day supervising Jane very closely, so as to gain a better understanding of her true character and abilities. But this opportunity was denied to her. For news had reached the colony of the death of Princess Charlotte, and by morning plans for an official memorial service were well underway.

Though the royal death had occurred six months previously, the distress of the colonists was immediate and heartfelt. People wept in the streets. Shops were closed, and flags flown at half mast. A slow and solemn procession of mourners marched from Government House to the church of St Philip, where a sermon

was delivered by the Reverend Mr Cowper. Every gentleman in Sydney—every civil and military officer—was expected to join this procession, dressed in the deepest mourning. Captain Brande, of course, was among them.

As for Dorothea, her presence was also required. She attended the service clad in the sombre garments that she had first donned after the loss of her second baby. She sat beside Mrs Bent (whose wardrobe was well furnished with mourning clothes), and together they lamented the death of such a young and lovely princess, so soon after her wedding day. Wielding a black-trimmed handkerchief, Mrs Bent confessed to having shed many tears. She pointed out that Mrs Antill was wearing only black ribbons. And she launched into an account of her struggles with Mr Campbell, who had *finally* agreed to pay twenty-eight pounds for her green doors and sixty pounds for her exterior blinds. The total bill had come to two hundred and thirty-five pounds, though she was wondering if she should stand firm and enforce a government purchase of her morticed doorlocks.

'I told Mr Campbell,' she declared, 'that he had displayed, in the course of our correspondence, a pettishness which would hardly be excusable in one of my own sex. So I had the last scratch, you see.'

Happily, Mrs Bent's monologue (of which Dorothea could not entirely approve) was cut short by Mr Cowper's sermon. It was an impressive and dignified oration. It moved many of the congregation to tears. Dorothea saw Mrs Macquarie dabbing at her eyes, and heard the Governor sniff. He sniffed twice, though his posture remained ramrod straight. Dorothea herself did not cry, but she was horribly depressed. The gloom attendant upon Princess Charlotte's passing had cast even darker shadows over her own existence, for it seemed almost like an omen. It frightened her. If Princess Charlotte's marriage could end in tragedy, what of her own? Would there never be an end to these blows of fate? She was filled with misgivings. And she prayed, not for the princess, but for an improvement in her own prospects.

The service was rather long. When it was over, Charles had to report to the barracks, so Dorothea left the church in Mrs Molle's company. Together they went to Mrs Molle's house, where they partook of a nourishing meal. Over cutlets and cake, they discussed the sermon, and Mrs Molle's offspring, and Dorothea's new maid—concerning whom Mrs Molle nursed the very gravest doubts. (The vulgar language, she thought, was particularly ominous.) After promising not to allow the girl any liberties, Dorothea returned home, where she found Daniel in the garden.

He was bleeding from an ugly wound under one eye.

'Daniel!' she exclaimed. 'What have you done to yourself?' He had been weeding with one hand; the other was employed in pressing a folded rag against his left cheekbone. When Dorothea insisted on examining the damage concealed by this rag, she discovered swelling, and bruising, and a great deal of dried blood. 'You need a corn plaster and muslin gauze,' she declared. 'What happened? Did you fall?'

'Aye,' he mumbled, not looking at her. But she knew him rather well by now.

'*Did* you fall, or was it something else?' she inquired sharply. 'Daniel?'

'Please,' he said, with almost an edge of desperation in his voice, 'I'd not have ye trouble yeerself.'

'It was Jane, was it not?'

'Ma'am—'

'What did she do? Did she hit you? Where is she?'

'Wait.' He put out his hand as she turned. 'Wait. Do not go near her.'

'But—'

'She should not be in this house, Ma'am. What she says—'tis not fit for yeer ears.'

'Why? What did she say? What did she *do*?'

'I'm thinkin' she's a little mad.'

They stared at each other. But before Dorothea could comment, she heard a noise from the kitchen.

It was the crash of crockery breaking.

'No,' said Daniel, as Dorothea began to move. 'Let me go.'

'I must *see*, Daniel—I am the mistress of this house.'

'Let me go first. Please.'

When they reached the kitchen, Daniel insisted on entering it ahead of his mistress. As a result, Jane immediately began to shout at him. She cried that he could go to hell—he was a lousy rascal—him and his cackle tub be damned, and he might go and fuck dogs like the rest of his race.

Then the housemaid saw Dorothea, and her surprise rendered her speechless.

Dorothea did not know what to say. She had never in her life before heard such language employed. She blushed, and swallowed, and averted her gaze from Daniel. There was a tense moment as she and the housemaid regarded each other. Finally, she said: 'I believe that I have already spoken to you on the subject of your language, Jane.'

Jane turned red. Abruptly she swung around, and began to ply her broom with some violence. Dorothea heard clinking sounds.

'Did you break something?' she inquired.

No response.

'Answer me, please! Did you break something?'

'What do *you* think?' Jane said rudely.

'Do not speak to me like that. If you speak to me like that, I shall have you dismissed.' Still no reply, as Jane banged her broom about. 'Jane? Answer me. What have you done now? *Jane*. You insolent girl, how dare you defy me!'

'Kiss my cunt.'

Dorothea blinked. In genuine ignorance, she gasped: 'What did you say?'

'I said kiss my *cunt*, you *whore*! You slut, you baggage, I'll chive yer buff for you, and damn yer bloody eyes! You're no better'n me, you sneaksman's bunter!'

Screaming insults of this sort, wild-eyed and open-mouthed, Jane came at Dorothea with her broomstick raised. She simply

exploded, like a gun; as Dorothea shrank back, Daniel leaped forward. He grabbed the broom. He wrenched it from the housemaid's grasp. He tossed it aside, and yelled a warning, and there followed a dreadful set-to, wherein Jane attacked him with her nails and teeth, and Daniel overcame her with all the strength at his disposal, slowly pinning her to the floor.

Even so she writhed, and bucked, and screeched, and used such appalling language that Dorothea had to cover her ears.

'Get the constable!' Daniel gasped.

'What? Oh no!' Go to a watchhouse? Unattended? It was out of the question. '*You must go.*'

'Ma'am —'

'Wait!' Dorothea remembered the key. The key to the little room — Daniel's room. 'Bring her. Bring her inside.'

'Eh?'

'*Bring her inside!*'

Somehow it was accomplished. Daniel dragged Jane into the house, while she kicked and spat and screamed at the top of her lungs. Then Dorothea locked her into the small room where the soap and preserves were kept, and stepped back to listen as preserving jars crashed to the floor.

'Go to the watchhouse,' she quavered. 'Fetch a constable.'

'Come with me,' he urged. 'Don't stay here.'

'No. I shall stay. You go — quickly!'

'Ma'am, 'tis not safe —'

'*Hurry!*'

So Daniel went, and returned in fifteen minutes with a pair of constables. Dorothea, who had been watching a solid wooden door shake under the force of Jane's heel, was greatly relieved. She withdrew to the drawing room while the constables performed their duty. She heard them address the housemaid in loud voices, to no avail, before they unlocked the door that imprisoned her. There followed a mighty crash (as Jane threw a wooden box at their heads), and a series of cries, thumps and curses. Finally, the din subsided. Someone was panting, and someone else — Jane — was groaning.

A constable appeared at the drawing-room door, breathing heavily, to inform Dorothea that the matter had been 'taken care of'. Jane, he said, would be dispatched to the watchhouse.

'We 'ad to give 'er a bit of a thump—to quiet 'er, like,' he announced cheerfully, his raddled face gleaming with perspiration. 'But she won't feel it fer long. Will you be layin' charges, Mum?'

'I—I—' Dorothea could hardly speak. 'My husband will tell you,' she said at last, faintly. 'I shall send my husband.'

'Orright. Thank'ee, Mum.'

He touched his forelock, and vanished. Dorothea waited. There was a shuffling, and a grunting, and the sound of heavy boots. Jane groaned, and was told to 'shut it'. A door slammed. A board creaked. Laughing voices were raised outside.

Dorothea did not even realise that she was chewing her thumb until Daniel approached her, all bloody and dishevelled. There were scratches on his face and forearms.

'They've gone, Ma'am,' he said.

She nodded.

'Can—can I get ye a cup o' tea?'

'No.' With a start she noticed what she was doing, and pulled her thumb from her mouth. 'No, I ... you must fetch Captain Brande. Wait. I shall write a note.' But she found that she could not move.

'Ma'am?'

'Wait.' Her throat tightened. She put her hands over her eyes.

'She's gone,' he said gently. 'She's gone, now. She'll not trouble ye further.'

'Oh, Daniel,' she whimpered. 'Oh, Daniel. Thank heavens you were here.'

'Aye. God be thanked.'

'Oh dear,' she moaned. But when he stepped forward she rose, abruptly, with one hand raised. 'No,' she mumbled, and cleared her throat. 'No, I—I am quite all right. Really. I must not—I must fetch you a corn plaster.'

‘Ma’am —’

‘You cannot leave the house in that condition. Wait. Please.’

She found the plaster, and some vinegar, and a looking glass. Then, while Daniel attended to his wounds, she wrote a letter to her husband.

*Dear Charles,* she wrote, *I have some very disturbing news.* There followed three paragraphs, in a shaky hand. She concluded with the words: *I am so grateful that Daniel was here.*

And she did not sign her name.

## CHAPTER THIRTY



‘NO,’ SAID CHARLES.

Dorothea had anticipated this reply. Nevertheless, she strove to explain herself.

‘Daniel deserves his ticket-of-leave,’ she insisted. ‘He came to my defence when Jane attacked me, and now he has agreed to testify against her on my behalf. If it were not for Daniel, I would be obliged to stand up in court, and repeat what she said to me.’

‘Nonsense. A lady in your position? You could not bring yourself to utter such filth.’

‘True. And therefore Jane would not be punished as you would have her punished.’ Seeing the stubbornly petulant expression on her husband’s face, Dorothea struggled to remain pleasant and reasonable. ‘Charles, Daniel would prefer not to bear witness against Jane Steel,’ she said. ‘But he will do it from a sense of duty. Is that not deserving of some consideration?’

Charles, however, refused to concede the point. ‘I fail to see why he should be so reluctant. The woman assaulted him. Why should he receive any special favours simply because he has agreed to assist us in having her thrown in gaol?’

‘Because he is an assigned servant,’ Dorothea sighed (not wishing to employ the term ‘convict’). ‘Naturally, he feels some reluctance —’

‘To see a criminal punished?’ Charles interjected. ‘If that is



so, Mrs Brande, I would question his moral readiness for freedom, would not you?’

‘Of course he understands that Jane must be punished.’ Dorothea chose her words carefully. ‘But he is not happy to be the agent of her condemnation. Neither am I. It is dreadful to think that one might be directly responsible for having a person ironed, or gaoled, or put in the stocks, no matter how wicked that person might be. It is distasteful.’

‘My dear, I hardly think that you should compare your own feelings with that of an Irish felon,’ said Charles. ‘The fact of the matter is this: if Daniel were given his ticket-of-leave owing to our intervention, he would have to find other employment. I cannot afford to pay him full wages. Now, if you wish to look for another Government man, by all means do so. But your experience of assigned maids does not encourage me to believe that you would easily find a satisfactory replacement for Daniel.’

Dorothea could see the justice of this remark. It would be impossible to replace Daniel. She shuddered to think of what her domestic arrangements would be like without him.

But would she necessarily lose him, if he were given his ticket-of-leave? She suggested to Charles that he might agree to remain in the Brandes’ service for less than a full wage.

‘Nonsense,’ said Charles. ‘Why should he do that?’

‘Because ...’ Dorothea hesitated. She could not begin to explain her curious understanding of Daniel, of his fears and his loyalties. She knew that he felt safe in her house, yet she knew also that Charles would not comprehend Daniel’s need for safety. ‘Because he loves my garden,’ she replied at last. ‘He loves it, and he does not wish to leave it.’

‘Nonsense,’ Charles repeated.

‘I assure you, Charles.’ They were eating breakfast, and Dorothea clenched her fists under the table, reminding herself that she had a duty to her husband. ‘Perhaps,’ she suggested, ‘if I were to make it a provision of his ticket-of-leave that he continue in our employment, receiving the wages of an assigned servant—would that be acceptable to you?’

Charles snorted. He wiped his mouth with his napkin. 'Mrs Brande, you are very naive,' he said. 'Of course he would agree to such a proposition. And then, having gained his ticket-of-leave, he would depart.'

'But —'

'What would prevent him from doing so? He would no longer be assigned. He would be on his own hands, and free to seek employment wherever he wished.'

'But would there not be some *legal* means of ensuring that he kept his word?'

Charles gazed at his wife in disbelief. Then he shook his head, as if in despair at her vacuity. 'My dear,' he remarked, his tone one of strained patience, 'if I had the funds to pay a lawyer to draw up an agreement of that sort, I would have the funds to employ Daniel on full wages.' Rising, he adjusted his uniform. 'I fail to see why you are so preoccupied with this matter. The man was given a seven-year sentence, was he not?'

'Yes.'

'And he has been with us now for more than three years?'

Dorothea nodded.

'Then he will receive his ticket-of-leave soon in any case. I believe most Government men serving a seven-year sentence are eligible for a ticket-of-leave after four years of good conduct. Why should we lower ourselves to petition the Governor, or Hutchison, or whichever dubious official is responsible for issuing tickets-of-leave, when Daniel will receive his own, without our intervention, within the year? A waste of effort, I call it.'

Silenced, Dorothea submitted to her husband's farewell kiss. She did not look up as he left the room, nor follow him to the door as he left the house. She was disappointed, but not surprised. It had never seemed likely that Charles would agree to put himself out on Daniel's behalf. Why should he? Dorothea's inclinations appeared to count very little with him—and he had always regarded Daniel with barely concealed hostility.

Yet Dorothea had felt compelled to make an effort, if only to ease her own conscience. She felt that Daniel deserved some reward for his actions in defending her. Moreover, she was grateful that he had taken upon himself the entire responsibility of bearing witness against Jane Steel in court. Daniel's recollections would be enough to convict the madwoman; no magistrate, in such distasteful circumstances, would insist that Dorothea stand up and corroborate Daniel's story. Therefore she would be spared the distressing spectacle of the court proceedings. She would not have to set eyes on Jane Steel ever again.

It was Daniel who would have to suffer Jane's presence as he testified against her. It was he who would have to endure her threatening, lunatic glare. And for this was he to receive *no* compensation?

Clearly not.

She toyed with the notion of telling him about her efforts on his behalf, but dismissed the idea. To do so would be to admit that she and Charles had disagreed—and she could not be so disloyal. If only they had been able to find another convict housemaid! If an assigned servant had been found to replace Jane Steel, Dorothea might have argued against her husband's decision. She might have pointed out that, previously, Rose and Peg had been employed on full wages, while Daniel's services had come cheap. She might have indicated that, with an assigned housemaid on staff, a full-wage manservant would not have placed too great a burden on the household budget.

Alas, however—Jane's replacement was not a convict. She was a freeborn, fifteen-year-old girl called Emily Galvin. And she had come to the Brandes, via Mrs Bent, from the Female Orphan School.

Emily had served Mrs Bent for almost a year. She was a shy little thing, very thin and fair, with buck teeth and freckles. Though not quick-witted, she was surprisingly strong, and had enough sense to undertake the duties of a cook and housemaid

in a thorough, workmanlike fashion. No fault could be found with her dusting or sweeping. She made beds neatly, and was merciless when beating mattresses. Though her cookery was not inspiring, she could turn out an edible meal, and was proficient with a needle and thread. Furthermore, she was biddable. Mrs Bent, in recommending her, had laid great stress on the importance of this favourable attribute.

'Emily has been properly trained,' she had said. 'She puts on no airs. She does not answer back, and you will never see her dressed unsuitably. She *knows her place*, Mrs Brande—no higher compliment can be paid, in this colony.' With a tremulous smile, Mrs Bent had laid her hand on Dorothea's. 'It would give me *so* much satisfaction if you were to engage her. By engaging her, you would not only relieve my mind of any anxiety that I might feel as regards her future placement, but you would be securing your own future against impertinence of any kind. I assure you, Mrs Brande, Emily has never given me a moment's misgiving with respect to her conduct. You will find, as I have, that she is perfectly unexceptionable.' With a little laugh, Mrs Bent had added: 'She is a good maid, deserving of a genteel mistress—and I know what difficulties *you* have suffered, lately. Indeed, I am only glad that I can be of assistance. At least *some* benefit may be derived from our sudden departure.'

She had dabbed at her eyes upon making this last observation, not being entirely happy at the prospect of leaving New South Wales. In her opinion, she and her brother-in-law had been dismissed rather abruptly and ungenerously; she had often declared herself insulted at the manner in which arrangements had been made. Nevertheless, she had also been forced to concede that life in the colony was becoming more and more difficult under Governor Macquarie's erratic rule. And of course it would be delightful to see England again. And the children, in particular, were thrilled at the prospect.

'Ellis is very anxious to see the Tower of London,' she had confessed fondly. 'He talks of nothing else.'

'I shall miss him,' Dorothea had replied. She was, in fact, most distressed at losing Ellis Henry. Upon embracing him, on the day of his departure, she had blinked back tears, and bestowed on him her very own edition of William Cowper's collected works. Ellis, in response, had mumbled his thanks, looking a little embarrassed. He had asked her to bid farewell to Daniel Callaghan for him.

Mrs Bent's final message, before the entire family set sail, had concerned her former housemaid's sweet tooth. 'Do not allow her anywhere near the sugar,' Mrs Bent had warned. 'She will not steal it, but has such a taste for it herself that she will employ it far too liberally in her cooking. I believe that she would sweeten mutton if she could. Only give her as much sugar as a receipt may require, or you will find that your puddings are too sickly to eat.'

Dorothea neglected this advice, at first—with the result that Emily's maiden custard, in the Brande household, was consumed only by Emily. (After that, her mistress was very careful to specify quantities when ordering dinner.) But the girl was, in every other respect, quite acceptable—neat, trustworthy and quiet. *Very* quiet. Indeed, she was a most retiring girl, who cleaned rooms without appearing to occupy them. It was almost like having a ghost or faerie about the place; her tread was so light as to be practically inaudible. Dorothea grew fond of her for this very reason, and did not chastise her as harshly as she might have for using too much jam, or overcooking meat. She gave her a good deal of sound advice, gently phrased, and took care to admire her work when it was well done.

As a result, Emily's work quickly became better. She grew more confident, though not *very* confident. At first she was afraid of Daniel, because he was so large. She would avoid his eye, and jump when he spoke to her. But not even a nervous child like Emily could remain unaware of Daniel's true character for very long. Soon his quiet voice and unobtrusive ways reassured her. Dorothea was well satisfied when she

entered the kitchen one day to find both servants peacefully employed, one polishing silver and one kneading dough. Emily, she noticed, was humming a little tune under her breath.

Of course, Dorothea was anxious that they not become *too* comfortable with each other. Emily, in her opinion, was much too young to make Daniel a suitable wife. But after careful scrutiny, she decided that he seemed to regard the housemaid almost as a little sister. And that, she thought, was as it should be.

She could find satisfaction in very little else. Only two days after Emily's arrival, Jane Steel was convicted of behaving in a riotous and disorderly manner. Her long-delayed trial lasted barely twenty minutes. After the charges were read, Daniel testified, and a sentence was passed. Charles, who had accompanied his manservant to court (determined that justice should be done), was quite satisfied with this sentence, which amounted to three months in gaol and sixteen hours in the stocks. He was particularly pleased that Jane would be required to wear an iron collar during her sixteen hours of public humiliation.

'That, I think, will prove to be the most salutary lesson of all,' he said. 'I do not, as you know, have much respect for Wentworth, but in this matter I believe he has acted wisely and judiciously.'

Daniel expressed no such opinion. Upon returning from the performance of his public duty, he volunteered nothing and retreated into the garden, where he weeded energetically in a light drizzle. Later, he proved to be uncharacteristically slow in the performance of his duties, and would not eat his dinner.

When Emily reported this to her mistress, in anxious tones, she raised the possibility that Daniel might be ill. Dorothea thought it unlikely. But she went to him in any case, and inquired as to the state of his health.

He replied that he was well enough.

'Well enough to eat?' said Dorothea, as he stared at the floor. 'You must eat, Daniel. You *will* become ill, if you do not.'

'Aye,' he mumbled.

Dorothea knew exactly what was troubling him. Charles had described to her the scene in court, dwelling on the obscenities that Jane had hurled at Daniel after sentence was passed. She had cursed him with all the venom of insanity.

So Dorothea said, very quietly: 'She brought it upon herself, Daniel.'

He looked up—a quick, penetrating glance—before dropping his gaze again.

'Aye,' he said.

'She was mad. You said it yourself. You must put the whole matter out of your mind.'

'She was perilous company. A woman like that—you'd not want her roamin' about.'

'No.'

He sighed, and once more retrieved his dishcloth. Dorothea felt that she had not set his mind entirely at rest, but could think of nothing else to offer him, since her own conscience was far from easy. Of course Jane had deserved to be punished. Of course she had been a danger to those around her. Nevertheless, Dorothea was (perhaps unreasonably) troubled by the part that she herself had played in having her former housemaid pilloried. The iron collar, in particular, was a source of profound disturbance. She dreamed about wearing one herself, and woke in a state of panic. She felt that Jane, by her conduct, had somehow introduced the iron collar and the stocks into her mistress's house. They seemed to haunt the place, just as Jane's ugly words now seemed to haunt the kitchen.

Until Jane's arrival, Dorothea had kept the colony's violence at bay. Even the attack on Mr Greenway had taken place outside her own domestic sphere—as had Rose's murder. But Jane had carried the infection into Dorothea's home; Dorothea was burdened by a strange sense of foreboding as she went about her duties, and found herself continually reflecting on subjects that should not have occupied her—floggings, gaol fees, roadgangs, the Female Factory, Daniel's

experiences on board the *General Hewitt*. Horrible subjects, unfit for a lady. When she was not struggling to resolve the terrible problems that afflicted her marriage, Dorothea was fretting about Rose's murder, and bushrangers, and women with shaven heads. She could not seem to banish such unpleasant thoughts from her mind.

And then, to add to her sense of profound unease, she discovered that she was with child again.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE



DOROTHEA INFORMED NO ONE that she was expecting. She kept silent on the subject, simply because she did not believe that the child would live.

Her state of mind was unenviable. She was almost bereft of hope regarding the outcome of her condition. Sometimes a small ray of light would penetrate the clouds that seemed to envelope her, and she would dare to envision a successful lying-in, with all its attendant joys. But the light would soon fade, and her fears and forebodings would take precedence once more. She was filled with the most dreadful anxiety— anxiety of the most debilitating kind, which left her incapable of sound or vigorous reasoning. She became forgetful, short-tempered, and morose. Disinclined to pay social calls, she would spend a good deal of time in bed, or on the sofa, staring into space. She lived with a gnawing fear, as would a man condemned to die. She counted the days and feared the worst.

On occasion she would attempt to argue herself out of her melancholy, but deep in her heart she knew that there would be no happy conclusion. How could there be, in such a place? Her own thoughts were poisoned; her head was full of horrid pictures and speculations, of horsewhips and bloody axes, of clanking chains and flayed backs. She grieved for the child that she carried in her womb. She knew that it would not, could not, survive. Yet she was unable to suppress the occasional,

flickering hope, and that hope was devastating. It meant that she also lived in constant, grinding wretchedness, anticipating an event that could only bring her unrelieved sorrow.

Charles did not appear to notice her distress. He did not even chastise her for falling victim, once again, to the 'megrimms'; perhaps he was too caught up in his regiment's dispute with the Governor to pay her any mind. On July the fifth, Charles and his fellow officers assembled to hear Colonel Molle read aloud the long-awaited *Charges Intended to be Preferred by Major General Macquarie against the Officers of the 46th Regiment*. After apprising his subordinates of these charges, Colonel Molle pointed out that no particular officer seemed to be exempt from them. Consequently, he requested that they each take a copy (from his reading) for the purpose of making a reply to their Commanding Officer, either in extenuation or refutation of the said charges.

Within an hour of the Colonel's address, Dorothea received a long and rambling note from her husband. It informed her that, contrary to his previous instructions, he would not be home for dinner. He would be dining in the mess, so that he might discuss the Governor's charges with his fellow officers, and consult them as to how a suitable response might best be phrased. The charges, he said, were utterly laughable. Officers were admonished for declining to dine with the Governor at Government House; for conniving at and sanctioning Ensign Bullivant's caricature of the Governor; for censuring the public measures of Major General Macquarie at their mess table. They were accused of highly insubordinate and disrespectful conduct in arrogating to themselves the right of resolving 'that the Mess Table of the 46th Regiment was regarded as the Standard of Society in this Colony'.

*Such charges barely merit a reply, Charles wrote, but since the Old Man has requested the same, I suppose that I must undertake one. What nonsense it all is! Please leave a candle burning, and see to it that my nightgown, cap and socks are laid out, for I shall not be late.*

As it transpired, however, Charles was late. He did not return home until the early hours of the following morning

—by which time Dorothea had suffered her fourth miscarriage.

The pains began to afflict her that afternoon, not long after she had received her husband's message. She was darning stockings at the time, and continued to do so until discomfort prevented her from working. Then she quietly retired to her bedroom, where she lay down and waited. She had no wish to send for Surgeon Forster. She could not bear the thought of his discovering her condition. She wanted to hide away, and never emerge again. She wanted to endure her despair all alone, without being distracted by the need to express gratitude or regret.

She did not want the world to know that, once again, she had lost a baby.

As a consequence, she did not send for help. When Emily knocked at the door, and informed her that dinner was ready, she replied that she would not be dining. The housemaid seemed to accept this. Dorothea heard the pad of her footsteps receding down the hallway. Presently, however, a heavier tread announced Daniel's approach. He too knocked, and asked if Dorothea required anything.

'No,' she answered.

'A cup o' tea?'

'No.'

After a pause, he said: 'Are ye not well, Ma'am?'

Dorothea stifled an urge to sob. She managed to croak out a brusque 'I am perfectly well', and was relieved when a shuffling noise seemed to suggest that he had departed. For a while she lay anxiously, listening for evidence of another person in the house. But after a time, such trifling matters ceased to concern her. The pain began to take its toll. She forgot about the need for concealment. She forgot to muffle her groans. She withdrew into herself, for an immeasurable period, and was surprised when she opened her eyes to discover Daniel standing by the bed.

I did not give you leave to enter, she thought. But she had not the energy to translate the thought into speech.

'Ma'am,' he said, 'shall I fetch the master?'

'No,' she gasped.

'Shall I send for Surgeon Forster, then?'

'No.'

'Ma'am, ye're ill. Ye're very ill. I heard ye ...'

Dorothea turned her face to the wall. She was on the verge of tears, and she did not want to disgrace herself. 'Go away,' she whispered.

There was a long silence. At last he said: 'Yeer pardon, Ma'am—but is it a baby ye're losin'?''

At this, Dorothea began to cry in earnest. She could not prevent herself. 'Go away!' she wailed, then moaned as the cramp in her belly became more fierce.

'Ye need the doctor. Ma'am, please.' He sounded scared. 'Ye need help.'

'No ...'

'I'll send for him.'

'No!' Dorothea surprised herself. She rolled over, and raised her voice. 'I do not need a doctor!'

'But Ma'am, if somethin' should happen—'

'I know what will happen! Do you think I don't know, by now?'

'If somethin' befalls ye, I'll be blamed!'

Panting, Dorothea fell back onto her pillow. She stared at Daniel.

'Please,' he entreated, 'I'd not want to see ye hurt.'

'If you go to Surgeon Forster,' she croaked, 'you need not come back.'

'Ma'am?'

'You heard me.' She covered her eyes with one arm. 'Why should I keep a disobedient servant?'

The pain was ebbing now, and Dorothea lay still, gathering her strength for the next. After a time, she realised that Daniel had left the room. The door had creaked. The silence was hollow.

One glance confirmed his disappearance. But where had he gone? Dorothea peered up at the bellrope, wondering if she

had the strength to lift herself and pull it. Then she heard muffled noises issuing from the room next door. 'Daniel?' she cried. 'Daniel!'

The noises ceased. There was a short interval. At last Emily appeared, carrying a pile of linen.

'Ma'am?' she said, blinking nervously.

'Where is Daniel?'

'In the kitchen. Boilin' up water.'

'Oh.' Dorothea felt a sense of relief so profound that her tears welled up again.

'He said you was about to need these sheets, and these dishcloths,' Emily continued.

'Yes.' Dorothea sighed. 'Put them—put them here. Just here.'

Emily did so, and stood helplessly as her mistress once again succumbed to a gripping pain. By the time it had receded, leaving Dorothea as limp as someone drowned and cast ashore, the housemaid was wringing her hands.

'Oh, Ma'am,' she whimpered. 'Oh Ma'am, you need a doctor.'

'No. I do not.'

'A midwife, then. Mrs Peel is a midwife—'

'Emily,' Dorothea groaned, 'please—please understand, dear. This has happened before, many times. It will pass. If ...' She took a deep breath. 'If you help me, I shan't need anyone else. I shan't want anyone else. This is my concern. You must not speak of it, do you hear?'

'Yes, Ma'am.'

'Now go away, like a good girl. I can staunch the bleeding myself.'

'Yes, Ma'am.'

Emily went, and Dorothea was left alone. With trembling hands she arranged the linen, before her next pain overtook her. It was very much worse than the last. When it had ebbed, she noticed that the bleeding had begun, but she barely had time to catch her breath before the cramps struck again.

How much time passed, she could not tell. Soon there was nothing but pain and despair. The bedclothes were wet; the room was dark. Then it brightened—there was a candle—and she heard Daniel's voice.

'No,' she cried, in horror. 'No, go away.'

'In a trice, Ma'am,' he said gently. 'We'll jest be gettin' yeer dirty sheets off ye.'

'You should not be here!'

'I know. I know't. But Emily cannot lift ye, alone.'

There was a confused moment of dragging, and tumbling, and pressure under her back. Whispers. Footsteps. A hand on her forehead.

She was offered tea, and drank it down greedily.

Daniel was holding the cup.

'Will ye have anythin' more, Ma'am?' he inquired.

She shook her head. The pains were subsiding. Her ordeal, she knew, was nearly over. The child was gone—too small to be missed by anyone but herself. A clot. A speck. Washed out of a linen sheet.

Never known. A secret absence.

She covered her mouth and wept.

'What can I do?' It was Daniel. 'Tell me.'

There was nothing that anyone could do. Dorothea gulped and sniffed and wiped her eyes, clearing a path for fresh tears. She was drowning in tears. In anguish. Lying in her own rank blood, she was too weak and weary to feel ashamed. Yet she was aware, in some remote corner of her mind, that the shame would come.

Go away, she thought. What are you doing here? But she was unable to utter the words.

'My aunt lost six children,' Daniel remarked softly, 'before she came to bear a livin' child.'

Dorothea grunted. The pain came and went—no longer reaching a sharp peak, or point, but dragging at her like an undertow. Grimacing, she rolled over. The pillow tasted of salt, but it was not bloody. It was wet from her tears.

Lying with her back to Daniel, she wondered if he would go. But he continued to talk.

'Ye may think that God is hard to ye,' he said, 'but think on this, Ma'am. When ye're old, very old, and the Lord takes ye, and ye must leave all yeer fine children behind to grieve—well, ye'll not be so unhappy. Because there will be more fine children in heaven, waitin' for ye.' He paused. 'Ye can only be parted from them once,' he finished. 'Only once, and never again. That's a small comfort. 'Tis all the comfort there is.'

Dorothea opened her eyes. She found herself staring at the chair upon which her husband's clothes were customarily laid out. His nightgown was draped over it. His cap. His socks. All glowing white in the dimness.

'You have children,' she said, with utter certainty.

'A son,' Daniel replied. 'But he perished. His mother and him.'

'Why?'

'They were sick.'

His voice was calm, but Dorothea had to blink, and swallow. 'I am sorry,' she whispered.

'Aye.'

He moved, then. She could hear his joints crack. Was he going to leave? Suddenly, she could not bear to drive him away. She said urgently, 'Did you steal for them?', and held her breath until the answer came.

'They were sick,' he repeated, speaking in a slow and hesitant manner. 'I was fair mad. Desperate to feed 'em—the meat and the milk, aye, and the medicines, too. But I wasn't in work. I was sick meself, and wasn't in work.' A sigh. 'They perished for my sins, while I was in fetters. And no kin to attend them. Our kin were in Ireland, long away.'

Dorothea had grief to spare—she was a bottomless well of it. So she had no difficulty in finding tears for Daniel's child. They flowed freely, because the world's misery seemed to lie on her heart. She sobbed for all the dead children, and he came around the bed, and hovered over her.

'Ah no,' he muttered. 'Ah no—please—I'm sorry.'

He is not a bad man, she thought: He is not. And she remembered, with dismay, the threat that she had offered him earlier.

'You—you are not disobedient,' she stammered.

'Shh. Be easy.'

'I would never dismiss you, Daniel, never ...'

Even as he knelt, Emily reappeared. She had taken the dirty linen, and rinsed it as best she could. Now she was ready to wash her mistress. With Daniel's assistance, she placed her basin of warm water on the washstand. Then she went to fetch towels.

Dorothea sat up. A sense of urgency was growing within her.

'This room must be aired,' she said, peering through swollen eyelids.

'Aye. Later.'

'No. No, immediately!'

'After yeer wash.'

'What hour is it?' Dorothea knew that it must be late. 'Has the sun set?'

'The watch has cried ten,' Daniel replied. 'Did ye not hear it?'

'Ten! Oh dear ...' She cast about her, weakly. 'This room must be aired. This bed must be tidied.'

'Ma'am, 'tis a chilly night. Should ye be openin' yeer windows to it?'

'I must, or Charles will know. He will know, I ...' Realising what she had just said, she gazed at Daniel, almost fearfully, her hand creeping up to her mouth.

But he simply waited, without comment, and she was reassured.

'Please do not tell Captain Brande,' she continued. It was not a command; it was a request. 'I—I do not want him troubled. He would worry himself. Needlessly.' In fact, he would be angry that Dorothea had not summoned him. But she



was not going to admit to that. 'It will be best for us all, I think. Emily, too.'

'Aye,' said Daniel, bleakly. At which point Emily returned with the towels, and Daniel withdrew. There followed a lengthy toilet. With soap and oil and dusting powder, Emily was able to remove from her mistress all traces of her recent discomfort. Dorothea shed her clothes, and put on her nightgown. With Emily's help, she rose from her bed. Then she went to the drawing room (where Daniel had built a roaring fire) and lay on the sofa while her bedchamber was exposed to chilling draughts.

She was very anxious lest Charles appear, and inquire as to the reason for all this unusual activity. But he did not.

He did not join Dorothea until well after three, when she was safely abed, scoured and sweet-smelling, and suffering only a small flow of blood—which was easily concealed. Seeing her awake, he read to her the letter that he had composed, at Colonel Molle's request. He was very proud of it. Captain Sanderson's, he said, was almost identical.

Then he went to sleep, leaving Dorothea to mourn alone, silently, staring into the darkness as he snored beside her.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO



THOUGH CAPTAIN BRANDE KNEW nothing of his wife's loss, it gradually became apparent to him that she was not well.

The possibility might have occurred to him sooner, had he not been very much occupied with matters arising from his regiment's campaign against Governor Macquarie. Almost every day, it seemed, he would regale Dorothea with a detailed account of some new development in this war of words. One evening he informed her that Captain Sanderson had determined to establish his innocence in the matter of certain scurrilous labels attached to the infamous caricature of Governor Macquarie. Ensign Bullivant, the man responsible for the caricature, had been prevailed upon to sign a letter, in which he attested that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, Captain Sanderson was not the author of these labels. But Ensign Bullivant was a broken reed. He soon accused his superior officer of taking him by surprise, and demanded that Captain Sanderson erase from his letter any expression of his beliefs regarding the captain's innocence.

'The little worm has written to His Excellency,' Charles lamented, 'and I shudder to think what he has said, for he went to John Wylde, to swear out a deposition.'

There were other incidents too, of a most petty nature, but Charles continued to relate the cut and thrust of his regiment's campaign against Governor Macquarie in the most tedious and

interminable detail, boring his wife almost to tears. She listened dully as he talked, picking at her dinner and offering no sympathetic observations. At last he broke off, and fixed her with an impatient look.

'Are you not *well*, Mrs Brande?' he inquired.

'No,' was her rejoinder.

'Indeed? What ails you?'

'I do not know.' She was determined not to mention her miscarriage. 'I wish I did.'

'Perhaps you should consult Surgeon Forster,' he advised, returning his attention to the pickled cabbage. 'No doubt you are sickening for a cold.'

'Even if I were, Surgeon Forster could not help me. He is never helpful. I have no faith in him.' Taking a deep breath, Dorothea added: 'I should like to consult Dr Redfern.'

Charles glanced up in surprise. He blinked. He frowned.

'Nonsense,' he said, dismissively.

But Dorothea would not be deterred.

'I should like to consult Dr Redfern,' she repeated.

'Then you are sicker than I had supposed,' said Charles, and chuckled at his own wit.

'Dr Redfern is highly respected.'

'By those lacking in self-respect.'

'He has almost never lost a baby, Charles. Even Mrs Molle concedes *that*.'

Her husband narrowed his eyes at her, his fork poised in front of his mouth.

'Are you expecting?' he asked.

'No.'

'Then why all this talk of Dr Redfern?'

'I want to see him.'

'Why?'

'Because he is a better doctor than Surgeon Forster!'

'You are misinformed,' said Charles coldly. 'Redfern was nothing but a naval surgeon before he was tried for mutiny. He possesses no qualifications that Forster does not also possess.'

'Nevertheless, I should like to consult him.'

'Not with *my* permission, Mrs Brande,' Charles replied, scowling, and Dorothea dropped her gaze. She was overcome by a sudden, almost irresistible urge to defy him. She thought him utterly unreasonable, though she understood his position. To accede to her request would be to lower himself in the regard of his closest comrades—a regard which, it now seemed to her, constituted the most important governing force in his life. After all his professed support of their exclusivity, would he turn around and allow his wife to consult an emancipated doctor? It was out of the question.

'No one need know,' she murmured.

'I would know,' he growled. 'Do you think that I would permit my own wife to submit herself to the attentions of a depraved *felon*?'

'But —'

'*No*, Mrs Brande!' He rose abruptly, his colour high. '*No*. I have given you my answer! It is final! Now kindly do not question my authority in this! Am I not the master in this house? Have you *no* respect for my judgement?'

Dorothea was silent. She felt guilty. She could not meet his eye.

'*Well?*' he demanded. 'Answer me!'

'You are very unfair,' she whimpered.

'Answer me, damn you!'

Dorothea looked up, indignant at being addressed thus.

'I shall certainly not answer when you speak to me like *that*!' she exclaimed. Whereupon Charles stormed from the room, slamming the door so hard that the entire house shook.

It was only one in a succession of painful disputes, but it marked a distinct change in their relations. Thereafter, Charles did not speak to his wife about the Regiment's battle with Governor Macquarie. Sarcastically, he delivered himself of the opinion that such matters 'clearly did not interest her'. And since he could think of little else but this sorry affair, he hardly spoke to her at all. For five evenings in succession, he would

dine at the mess; on the sixth, he might return to his own dining room, but would glance at the *Gazette*, or a piece of correspondence, while he ate.

As for Dorothea, she would look at him and think: you were not there. You were not there for me when I lost my child. It mattered little, somehow, that her own omission had caused him to be absent. After all, she had neglected to summon him. She had never even informed him of her loss. It was unreasonable to blame him, and she knew it, and felt guilty for doing it. Yet at the same time she was secretly resentful—even angry. Guilt and anger filled her heart. The estrangement between them was, she realised, largely a product of her own undutiful conduct. On the other hand, she could not help deploring her husband's quick temper, his boorishness, his lack of sensibility. Her despair was such that she was beyond tears. She had wept herself dry, and could do nothing but brood. Over and over again, she would review her situation. This was her marriage. She was bound to it, by sacramental authority. Could its dead embers be revived? She had begun to entertain grave doubts that such a thing was possible. She had begun to think that her marriage had entered into an endless and irrevocable winter.

It seemed to her that Charles now regarded her with something not unlike resentment. He exhibited no interest in her accomplishments or activities. He displayed a kind of weary impatience when she came to him for advice on domestic matters. He did nothing but snap, and sneer, and fix her with suspicious looks. The more she brooded, the more he sulked. Her lack of interest in regimental affairs seemed to have offended him profoundly.

Nevertheless, he continued to demand his conjugal rights. This was the circumstance that Dorothea found most puzzling (and most lacerating to her sensibilities). She could not understand how, after calling her 'Madam Mope', and leaving her alone after dinner, he could reach for her in the marital bed. Of course, he was generally somewhat intoxicated when this occurred—but even so, his feelings were difficult to

comprehend. Dorothea did not want to believe the worst. She did not want to believe that he forced his attentions upon her simply because they were not, at this time, very welcome.

She preferred to ignore the matter entirely, turning her thoughts away from each episode with grim determination. While she had the courage to reflect on his discourteous remarks, and her own culpability, and even the bleak prospect of their future together, she could not bear to dwell on those incidents that took place in their bedroom after dark.

Yet for all this, she continued to carry out her duties as expected. Guilt compelled her to do so. The more her husband repelled her, the more assiduously she attended to his wants. The house had never been so beautifully managed. The staff had never been so obliging or inoffensive. As for the garden, it flourished. Dorothea was always able to derive at least some satisfaction from contemplating *its* progress. Even in the depths of winter, it presented a pleasing appearance.

Daniel's tireless attention had, quite literally, begun to bear fruit.

Often Dorothea would wander from the garden to the kitchen to the drawing room, noting the peaceful sense of order that prevailed in each, and wonder why her domestic arrangements were now so much more healthy and tranquil than her marriage. Had she devoted too much time to her home, and not enough to her husband? Certainly she had come to prefer the company of her servants—a shameful circumstance that she could hardly bear to acknowledge. Yet it was so. While the contemplation of Charles aroused in her all kinds of turbulent emotions (none of them sympathetic), she was always calmed by the sight of Emily patiently shelling peas. Nor did Daniel disturb her quite as Charles did—though she could not help regarding him with dismay. The memory of her most recent loss was, to some degree, a mortifying one. Though Daniel had exhibited the most irreproachable behaviour throughout her ordeal, Dorothea was troubled when she remembered what he had seen, and what she had said. She had been stripped

of all dignity. He had witnessed her in that condition. She could not be easy when she thought of it, and in the days that followed her experience she would often blush when she spoke to him, frightened that he might attempt to impose on her in some way. Not that he would use his knowledge to his own advantage—she knew him too well to believe any such thing. He was a good man, she had decided. A man who, though he had fallen from grace, was not for this reason irredeemable.

But she was fearful, at first, that he might address her with an inappropriate degree of intimacy. Her night of blood and pain and shadows had forged a certain bond between them. She knew that, and regretted it. She was confused by it. How was she to conduct herself, in the circumstances? No doubt she ought to have adopted a very cold and haughty demeanour, so that Daniel might be taught that he could not presume. She had not the heart, however, to treat him with such contempt. He had behaved so well. He had earned her trust.

Nevertheless, she remained unsettled in his presence—she did not know why. And she became more *conscious* of that presence. She became more alert to his movements. She always knew where he was, at any time of the day or night.

Which was more than she could say about her husband.

It was towards the end of July that her misery finally drove her to address Charles on the subject of their estrangement. They were preparing for bed, and his consumption of alcoholic beverages had been moderate. Watching him drag on his woollen socks—socks that she had knitted for him—Dorothea was moved to voice her concerns. With a pounding heart, she remarked desperately: 'Do you think that our situation will improve, once we leave these shores?'

Charles cast her an impatient glance. 'What?' he said. 'What do you mean?'

Dorothea swallowed. 'I—I mean our relations with each other.' Seeing him look away, she blinked back tears. 'We are not comfortable,' she quavered. 'You know that. It is so ... hideous.'

'It would be less hideous, Madam, if you would put off your sullen airs and behave with proper consideration towards *me*,' Charles retorted.

'But —'

'No.' He held up his hand. 'I will not listen to a catalogue of unreasonable complaints. If you wish to apologise and make amends, very well. But I am not interested in your morbid fancies or your silly accusations. Frankly, Madam, I am tired of them. Until you are restored to a sensible frame of mind, I have nothing to say to you.'

Then he lay down, and turned his back on Dorothea.

She could not bring herself to speak to him again that night.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE



ON AUGUST THE EIGHTH, the *Matilda* arrived in Port Jackson, bearing with it a large portion of the 48th Northamptonshire Regiment.

This regiment, sent to relieve the 46th, was commanded by one Colonel James Erskine. Naturally, it was welcomed with a great deal of ceremony and enthusiasm, though Dorothea soon noted a spirit of competition entering into the exchanges that took place between the two sets of officers. Many of the 48th were heroes of the battle of Waterloo. They were better acquainted with recent military gossip and fashions than were the officers of the 46th. As a consequence, there was some friendly rivalry between the old garrison and the new, which was evident on the parade ground. Four days after disembarking from the *Matilda*, the headquarters division of the 48th joined the 46th for a parade in Hyde Park, to mark the fifty-third birthday of the Prince Regent. Each regiment strove mightily to outdo the other in the precise exercise of their drill and the neatness of their appearance. The result was very pleasing, and seemed to satisfy the Governor. He commended both regiments for an excellent turn-out.

But thereafter, until the arrival of the rest of the 48th, no officer of the 46th Regiment (with the exception of Captain Gill and Lieutenant Watts) was invited to attend either official or informal functions at Government House.

'He seeks to cow us,' was Captain Sanderson's opinion, offered during a private entertainment held in the Brandes' dining room. Once again, Charles had insisted that he and his wife extend a dinner invitation to certain members of his Lodge. The purpose of the gathering was twofold; it gave the guests an opportunity to discuss matters pertaining to Lodge business—which could not, perhaps, be so informally debated at a proper meeting—and it also allowed them to air their opinions of the 48th without fear of being overheard. In no other surroundings had they been afforded this chance. Every private entertainment, of recent date, had been attended by representatives of both regiments, and had given the officers of the 46th no means by which they might speak freely among themselves. The barracks were crowded to bursting point. Major George Druitt was, at present, being accommodated in Colonel Molle's house. As Captain Sanderson pointed out, it had been impossible to 'complete one's toilet in peace' since the arrival of the 48th.

Captain Brande had therefore felt it his duty to offer his comrades a place where they might converse together, in congenial surroundings, without giving offence.

By this time, of course, they had much to converse *about*. The 48th was a source of endless complaint and speculation. Preparations for the departure of the 46th were well underway. And the dispute with Governor Macquarie continued to occupy certain officers of the 46th, even in the face of the 48th Regiment's wary disinclination to become involved, or lend their brother officers any support.

'His Excellency tries to *snub* us, by extending his favours to the 48th,' Captain Sanderson declared. 'What kind of favour is the hospitality of the Governor, when it is offered to men like Redfern and Wentworth?'

'An insult, *I* would call it,' said Charles (who was already a little intoxicated). 'But perhaps Major Druitt does not think it so.'

'Major Druitt. Ah yes,' said Colonel Molle, pensively.

'I must confess, I am not entirely easy in my mind as to Major Druitt's *gentility*. I have heard certain rumours—'

'About Margaret Lynch? Aye. I have had it from their quartermaster.' Captain Sanderson's twinkling eye swept the table. 'One of their privates had the ill sense to bring his fancy piece on board, stowed with the luggage,' he related. 'When she was discovered, they were married—but since then, Druitt has lured her away.'

'And has spent a good deal of money setting her up,' Captain Miller added, with a leer. 'Paymaster Murray tells me that Druitt was so wanting for funds that he could not pay his mess bills on board ship—and now he intends to build himself a very fine house in which to display his strumpet! A *most* mysterious fellow.'

'We can only hope that Colonel Erskine is of a more respectable stamp,' Colonel Molle sighed, and Mr Horsley said, in his soft and rather insinuating way: 'Indeed, we shall miss the South Devons sorely, Colonel. Whatever the *Governor* might think—and I know that he has taken offence at certain officers expressing this view in writing—all *genteel* persons in this colony must agree that the mess table of the 46th has set the standard for good society during the past four years.'

A toast was drunk to this declaration, after which Dorothea retired from the company of her gentlemen guests. (In her opinion, the conversation had already touched on certain subjects with which no lady could have felt comfortable, but her presence in the dining room appeared to have been overlooked for some time.) She did not repair to the drawing room, however. Instead she went to the kitchen, where dishes were frantically being washed and uneaten morsels suitably disposed of.

Here she paid off Mrs Molle's cook, whose services had been required for so large a dinner. Here she also bestowed shilling tips on Daniel and Emily, to thank them for a job well done. Jack, who was still in the dining room pouring claret for the gentlemen, would doubtless receive some recognition from

Charles; Dorothea did not propose to trouble herself over him. She had never cared for Jack. Furthermore, he had made himself difficult by refusing to clean up some gravy that he had spilled on the kitchen floor. It was the housemaid's task, he had said, to do that.

'I am very pleased with both of you,' Dorothea informed Daniel and Emily, after Mrs Molle's cook had taken his leave. 'The dinner went off very well, I think. It is gratifying to see how well you work together. Emily, you will soon be as thoroughly trained as any servant I have ever known. Well done.'

'Thank 'ee, Ma'am,' Emily replied, with a bob, and Daniel nodded. He said: 'Will ye be wantin' yeer coffee now, Ma'am?'

'I think—perhaps some tea,' Dorothea decided. She was bone-weary. It was already in the region of nine o'clock. She wondered when she might expect to retire to bed, and was tempted to remain in the cosy kitchen, with its gleaming copper and rich smells. Certainly she viewed the prospect of the empty drawing room with some melancholy. As for her guests—she would have been quite happy not to lay eyes on them ever again.

'Ma'am?' said Daniel. 'Ma'am—if it please ye—'

'Yes, Daniel?' Dorothea saw that Emily was twisting her little hands in her apron, and looking at the floor. Daniel seemed unsure as to what he should be doing with his own hands.

'Ma'am, we've been hearin' that ye'll be away from here soon,' he remarked, after a pause. 'Is it true, by a mercy?'

Dorothea's heart sank within her. This was not a subject that she felt equipped to discuss at so late an hour. 'Well ... yes,' she sighed.

'When will it be, Ma'am?'

'I—I am not sure. The rest of the Northamptonshire Regiment must arrive first.' Dorothea swallowed. 'I was meaning to speak to you about this,' she went on, 'for there will be a great deal of work involved in purchasing stores and packing luggage.' Confronted by Daniel's downcast eyes and blank expression, Dorothea felt a queer sort of fluttering in her

throat. She swallowed again. 'You need not concern yourselves,' she added, 'because I shall make arrangements on your behalf. No servant of *your* calibre, Daniel, will ever want for respectable employment in this colony. As for you, Emily—well, I would have no objection to your joining me on the voyage to India. As my maidservant.'

Emily gasped. Her hands went up to her mouth, and her pale eyes widened.

'Oh, Ma'am,' she faltered. 'Oh, Ma'am I ... I ...'

'You need not give me an answer straight away.'

'It's me sister, y'see—'

'Yes, of course.'

'I dunno as 'ow—I mean—'

'Yes, yes. I *quite* understand.' Dorothea had not given much thought to the matter of who was to attend her on the voyage. Sarah, who had accompanied her to New South Wales, would doubtless be joining her husband, Private Smith, on the trip to India. But Sarah was now the mother of two children, with another expected any day. It was unlikely that she would be available to serve Dorothea.

'Ma'am?' said Daniel, and Dorothea started. Her thoughts had been far away. 'Ma'am, I was wonderin'—shall I be stayin' with the house? Only I remember you spoke of't—'

'I did, yes,' said Dorothea. Involuntarily, she glanced out the window. The garden, however, was lost in darkness. 'Again, I—I cannot say,' she replied. 'Not yet. I have discussed this house with Mrs Wilde, who is the wife of Colonel Erskine's aide-de-camp, and she has expressed some interest in it. At present, she is lodged in the barracks.' Rather uncomfortably, too—or so Dorothea had gathered. 'She is a very genteel and pleasant lady. If she were to become your mistress, you would have no cause for regret, I am sure.'

Daniel said nothing. Emily rubbed her nose. All at once Dorothea was overcome by acute feelings of guilt and unhappiness, which she strove to mask with a few, brisk words about tomorrow's breakfast.

'I intend to retire at eleven o'clock,' she concluded, 'whether or not our guests have departed. You may attend me at that time, Emily—and then you may go to bed. Daniel, I would have you wait on Captain Brande. He may need you to escort Mr Horsley. You should not go to bed until Captain Brande does.'

As it transpired, Captain Brande did not go to bed until after his guests had departed, at a quarter before one. Dorothea, of course, had long since made her apologies. Having endured an hour alone in the drawing room, and another hour in the gentlemen's company (listening to increasingly rowdy remarks about the Governor), she had been thankful to retreat into her bed chamber. Though immensely tired, however, she found that she could not sleep. Her mind was too much occupied with matters pertaining to the Regiment's approaching voyage. She tossed and turned, and could not be comfortable. She fretted about the disposition of luggage and the purchasing of supplies. She worried about Daniel and Emily. (How wretched Daniel would be, if deprived of his beloved garden!) And she brooded over the inescapable fact that she soon must endure the unendurable—for she had not forgotten the horrors of her last voyage.

Mercifully, the journey to India would be shorter than the last. And there would be no convicts on board—that, at least, was a source of comfort. But what lay at the end of the tedious passage? A country notorious for its unhealthy climate. Society of a questionable sort, though not as questionable as that to be found in New South Wales. Yet more bloodthirsty savages; continual campaigning at far-flung outposts; heat, dust, serpents, and another, interminable period away from Bideham.

Dorothea had only recently become acquainted with the fact that the colonial tour of duty *customarily* included a spell in India, as well as in New South Wales. Charles had not seen fit to inform her of this fact upon requesting her hand in marriage. Doubtless he had been concerned (with some justice) that the

prospect of such an extended absence from England would have caused her to quail.

She certainly quailed now. And the worst of it was that she could no longer turn to her husband for succour. She would be entering this new realm of uncertainty and deprivation without the kind of companionship that a marriage should surely provide. How was she to survive the voyage, if Charles snubbed her, and ignored her, and snapped at her, as had been his wont of late? How was she to endure another strange country, full of *native* servants (worse even than convicts, surely), without any sympathetic encouragement whatsoever? Not even Mrs Molle's benign presence would be enough to rescue her from the most profound misery—misery piled *upon* misery.

For a moment she considered the possibility of returning to England. Alone, without Charles. The thought of England made her sigh. She longed for Bideham with a passion that was truly desperate. But how could the voyage be accomplished without her husband? On the one hand, his absence would be welcome. On the other, it would expose her to a variety of wretchedness that did not bear contemplating. Such a long voyage, attempted by a lone female—a lone, *sickly* female—without even a maid of decent character to attend her ... the prospect was one that left her heartsick. What suffering it would entail! And that was without even taking into consideration the expense, or the calumny that would be heaped upon her for deserting her husband in such a way. For it would be desertion—nothing less. Charles, she was sure, would not even countenance it. For all his unfavourable views on her conduct, he would *never* have it said of him that his wife preferred a separation. And she hated to think of Margaret's expression when the truth became apparent to her. It had been Margaret, after all, who had warned Dorothea against too precipitate a union. It would be unbearably galling to have to admit that her sister had been right.

Unless she gave the excuse of her health, perhaps? India, after all, would very likely kill her. Certainly Charles would, if

he continued to treat her so badly. But it was possible—just possible—that the departure from New South Wales might work an improvement upon his temper. He might find that its air had disagreed with him, and that a change of habitation would cure him of his ills. Was it not her duty to embrace the opportunity that this removal gave them of making a fresh start? Was it not better to attempt to repair her marriage, rather than face an utterly dreadful voyage home, followed by the shock and distress of her family at the end of it?

Occupied with matters of this immensity, Dorothea could not sleep for some time. She was awake when Charles finally came to bed. She continued awake long after he was asleep and snoring. Much to her surprise, he had not behaved in an offensive fashion before dozing off. On the contrary, he had complimented his wife on her dinner arrangements, and had not reproved her for retiring early. Nor had he attempted anything of a more intimate nature. Heartened by this evidence of respect, or at least goodwill, she had come to the conclusion that all was not lost—that it behoved her, as a married woman of good breeding, to accompany her husband to India. Her position, if she did otherwise, would be insupportable.

Moreover, she could never even hope to bear a child unless she remained with Charles.

Away from this poisonous place, she decided, I may find that I am happier. I may find that Charles is happier. I may even find that our health improves, and that I am blessed in a way that will restore me to a state of unassailable contentment, no matter what my circumstances might otherwise be.

For the first time, she contemplated her sojourn in India with a gleam of hope. It might not be England, she thought, but surely—*surely*—it could not, in every facet of existence, be worse than New South Wales?



New South Wales  
September 10th, 1817

My dearest Margaret,

Perhaps this will be the last letter that I write to you from New South Wales. As far as I can gather, we are to sail on the 'Matilda' within a fortnight—and I am certain to be very busy as a result! There are so many things to settle. The horse must be sold, our boxes must be packed, our servants must be placed—for I am quite determined that Daniel and Emily should find respectable situations before we leave. I am only sorry that Emily cannot join us. She is native to this country, and has a sister still at the Female Orphan School; consequently, she will not be persuaded to leave. It is a pity, for she would make quite an acceptable lady's maid, I am sure. What I shall do without her, I cannot imagine. I am hoping that Mrs Molle might lend me Anne Ezzey's services. Otherwise I shall be most disadvantaged, there being (as you know) a terrible dearth of reliable maidservants in this part of the world.

It has to be said that while I shall not miss Sydney Cove, I regret having to leave the garden, which will be truly lovely in another five years. I am bequeathing a treasure to our wretched landlord, knowing full well that he has not the taste nor the discernment to appreciate what I have done. I can only hope that whoever succeeds us to the possession of this house will nurture my roses, and keep things in good order. Indeed, I have been anxious to secure a promise from Mrs Wilde that she will take up residence here, but she is maddeningly undecided. (I am given to understand that she and her husband must practise the very strictest economy, because her daughter is engaged to be married, and you know what an expensive business that can be.)

My dearest wish, I should tell you, is that Mrs Wilde will move into the house and engage Daniel as her servant. If that should happen, then my garden will be safe—and Daniel himself will be happily employed.

*Poor Daniel. He is such a good and gentle soul, despite his shameful history. I should not like to have him treated cruelly by a master or mistress who cannot appreciate his worth, simply because he is an assigned servant. Being free and female, Emily will have her choice of respectable situations, but Daniel is awkwardly placed. In three or four months he will be given his ticket-of-leave, and will be able to make his own way—until then, however, he must labour under the usual disadvantages of a Government man.*

*How I wish that we could take him with us!*

*As to other news, there is not much of it. Charles and I are in good health. We recently attended a very grand affair in the grounds of Captain Piper's new villa, which is the most lavish of constructions. One hundred and twenty officers and their ladies were taken from Farm Cove to Eliza Point in boats ornamented with flowers, ribbons and silk. The band of the 46th greeted us when we arrived, and a magnificent picnic lunch was provided for us. Then we were conducted through the house, which is built in the latest style, and boasts a ballroom and a grand salon. (You will be wondering at my willingness to be entertained by Captain Piper, but I must inform you that he is now married to the mother of his children—have I told you that, Margaret?—and so one is encouraged to overlook his past dissipation in the light of his current respectability.) I cannot say that the house, however sumptuous, was much to my taste. It was characterised by a lack of restraint, a kind of pretentious self-consequence, that I could not wholly admire. But I fear that I am alone in my opinion, for the rest of the colony is in raptures over it.*

*Indeed, perhaps the only other subject of discussion, hereabouts, is Colonel Molle's dispute with Dr D'Arcy Wentworth, which has become quite heated. Colonel Molle is determined that Dr Wentworth should be court-martialled for 'aiding and abetting' the production of the verses that so offended him (because there is some suspicion that one of Dr Wentworth's employees, Robert Murray, was responsible for them). Colonel Molle has been working towards that end for some time, and finally sent Governor Macquarie a copy of a letter dispatched to a certain Colonel Foveaux in 1799, from Ireland. In it, the writer—a Major Grose—warned Colonel Foveaux that if the Duke of York*

*should hear that any officer of the New South Wales Corps had disgraced himself by associating with 'a person named Wentworth', His Royal Highness would be sure to turn him out of the service.*

*According to Colonel Molle, this letter is proof that Dr Wentworth's claim to the character of an officer and a gentleman is not based on firm foundations. Dr Wentworth, in response, wrote a letter to Governor Macquarie, which the Governor sent on to Colonel Molle—it arrived yesterday. I saw it myself this morning, for Mrs Molle displayed it to me, and its tone was most irate. Dr Wentworth called the Foveaux letter a 'vile and infamous forgery'. He stated that Colonel Molle was himself a libeller, because he had published a libel against Dr Wentworth.*

*Colonel Molle now wants to have Dr Wentworth arrested until a general court martial can be assembled for his trial. I do not know that His Excellency will allow such a thing, however. He has always expressed the highest opinion of Dr Wentworth.*

*It seems as if this petty wrangling will continue until the very instant we embark—and beyond. I wonder if Madras will be as tiresome? I do hope not. You must be anxious about my spirits, as I confront another long voyage and foreign land. In truth, the prospect once filled me with horror, but I am now determined to be sanguine. Who knows what might await us? I am quite certain that New South Wales has affected my health, and deprived me of my dearest hopes; it is possible that India will prove to be a more congenial place altogether. Oh Margaret, I do hope so indeed! Life has been so dreadful here—I do not see how it could be any worse. Without doubt there must be better society in India, for I have been quite deprived of it here, lately, with Mrs Bent gone, and Mrs Vale gone, and Mrs Molle so very caught up in her husband's affairs. No wonder I speak of nothing but servants. They are almost the only people I see from day to day. But you would have grown fond of them yourself, I am sure. Daniel has quite changed my opinion of the Irish (though I would never say as much to Charles, of course). He is a treasure indeed.*

*I trust that my next letter will bring you happy news, and remain  
your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Brande*

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR



MRS MOLLE HAD ADVISED Dorothea that, when packing away all those garments not required on the voyage, she should make sure to place between them small linen bags filled with cloves, cinnamon bark, orris root, lavender flowers and dried rose petals. 'By this means,' Mrs Molle had declared, 'you will repel the musty odour which is so often the result of a long sea journey.'

Dorothea had therefore measured up, cut out and hemmed twenty-five linen pockets. She had then procured the necessary ingredients with which to fill them, and had stuffed each pocket, much as she would have stuffed a fowl, with scented herbs and spices. She was proceeding to sew up the open ends of these pockets one fine morning, when she happened to look through the drawing-room window and see Charles approaching the house, accompanied by two police constables.

She reached the front door just as they did, and welcomed her husband with an anxious inquiry. He should have been at the barracks. His return, at such an early hour, did not augur well.

'Charles?' she said. 'What is the matter?'

His face was as grim as she had ever seen it. His eyebrows were like a pair of thunderclouds. 'You had better stay here,' was his reply. Then he strode past her with a heavy tread, down the hallway and through the rear entrance. The two constables followed him.

So did Dorothea.

'There is your man,' Charles announced. He had stepped out into the sunlight, and was pointing across the garden. When his wife reached him, she saw that he was pointing at Daniel.

'What is it?' she asked in bewilderment. 'What are you doing?'

'He sleeps in here,' Charles continued, gesturing at the kitchen. One of the constables plunged through the kitchen door. The other made his way towards Daniel, who was working among the vegetables.

Upon being ordered to drop his hoe, the convict looked up, and straightened. His tool thudded to the ground.

'Charles!' Dorothea exclaimed. She was frightened. 'What is the meaning of this? Charles?'

He ignored her, disappearing into the kitchen as if deaf to her frantic entreaties. Once again, she pursued him. She found Emily cowering by the kitchen hearth, and the larger of the two constables searching through Daniel's possessions. These were pitifully few in number: his fustian jacket, a pair of woollen gloves, a pair of woollen stockings, a comb, a razor, a razor strop, a large cotton handkerchief and a pale-blue ribbon, very worn and stained. The constable unrolled Daniel's hammock and shook out his blanket. Dorothea caught her husband's arm.

'Charles!' she cried. 'Tell me at *once* what is happening here!'

Suddenly the constable uttered a cry of triumph. He had been searching the pockets of Daniel's jacket, from which he produced, with a flourish, one gold watch—with fob—and a silver snuffbox.

'There!' he crowed. He was a horrid-looking man, with a cast in his eye and a yellow, greasy complexion. 'Solid proof!'

'By *God*, I'll have him flayed alive!' Charles ground out. 'The filthy rascal!' Turning on his heel, he stormed from the room as if propelled by gunpowder, his hand clenched around his sword hilt. Dorothea flew after him. 'Charles! *Charles!*'

'You scoundrel!' he roared, upon emerging into the garden. 'You dirty, thieving *toad!*' He was addressing Daniel, who

flinched and stepped back. But the second constable was gripping his arm, and would not allow him to retreat any further. 'How *dare* you!' Charles bellowed. 'Prey on my guests, would you, you devil!' And he swung his hand.

'*No!*' Dorothea shrieked. But the blow never fell, for the constable at Daniel's side blocked it. 'Better not, sir, you could be up in front o' the bench yerself.'

'Do you know what this man has *done*?' Charles exclaimed, turning on Dorothea. 'He has robbed John Horsley!'

'Ah—well no, sir, not this 'un.' The cast-eyed constable spoke from behind Captain Brande. 'It was another feller done that. This feller's bin receivin' stolen goods, is all.'

'*Horsley's* stolen goods!' Charles cried. 'Taken the *very night* he last *dined* here!'

'I didn't know,' Daniel protested. His dark eyes were huge in a milk-white face. 'I swear, Sir—Ma'am—I didn't know they were stolen—'

'Tell it to the beak,' the cast-eyed constable remarked, in good-humoured tones, and attached himself to Daniel's other arm. Then he touched his brow. 'Yer pardon, Sir—Ma'am. Sorry for the inconvenience. Come on, me flash lad.'

'Wait!' said Dorothea. 'Where—where are you going?'

'To the gaol, of course,' Charles snapped. 'And *I* shall be going to Horsley's house to apologise in *person* for the sins of my staff!'

'But you cannot take Daniel to gaol!' Dorothea could hardly speak. She put her hand to her breast. 'He knew nothing about that watch! He said so!'

The constables exchanged a sly glance.

'Be quiet, Thea,' Charles growled.

'But Daniel is a good man!' Dorothea protested. 'He would not do such a thing!'

'He is a *thief*, Thea!'

'Not any more! Daniel, you would not lie to me, would you?' She appealed to the convict, who seemed overcome. He shook his head mutely, and his lips trembled. 'What

happened?' she demanded. 'How did you come by these objects? Who gave them to you?'

'Tom Hodges,' one of the constables supplied, and spat — just as if Dorothea were not present. She winced, and gazed up at Daniel in confusion.

'Tom Hodges?' she repeated.

'From the *General Hewitt*,' he said hoarsely. 'My friend ... he said they were his —'

'Oh!' She realised what it was that he was trying to tell her. 'Oh Constable, you must understand! This man owes Tom Hodges his life! *Naturally* he would think well of Tom Hodges!'

'Pardon me, Ma'am,' the younger constable rejoined, 'but that's not for the likes of us to judge.'

'We jest follow our orders,' his companion declared, pulling Daniel towards the house. Dorothea went after them, objecting vociferously. She trailed them inside, and down the hallway. But when they reached the front door, Charles prevented her from going any further.

'Stay here,' he barked.

'I will not! This is foolish! They are arresting an innocent man!' She tried to release herself from her husband's grip, but was as much a captive as Daniel. Charles pushed her into the drawing room. He joined her there as Daniel was escorted into the street.

'Have you *no* sense of decorum?' Charles hissed. 'Must you behave like a madwoman at every opportunity?'

'How can you do this? Daniel is innocent!'

'He is a *thief*, you fool! He had the watch in his pocket!'

'He didn't know it was stolen!'

'Oh in God's name, do you believe that?'

'Yes I do! He would not lie to me!'

Charles stepped back. He surveyed her through narrowed eyelids, his face blotched with red.

'How can you be so blind?' he gasped. 'The man is an *Irish felon*!'

'He is an honest soul!'

'You astonish me. I cannot—' He stopped, shaking his head. There was a strange and hostile look in his eye. 'I wonder if you are mad.'

'But you have lived with him, Charles! When has he ever given us a *single reason* to doubt his honesty?' Dorothea was almost weeping. 'You must help him! He cannot go to trial! It would be wrong! You must stop this!'

Charles stared at her. Then he moved towards the door. She grabbed at his coat-tails, but he shook her off. 'Promise me!' she cried. 'You must stop this, please!' When she caught up with him again, at the front entrance, he gave her a push that sent her sprawling—and the shock of it silenced her.

'*STAY HERE!*' he shouted. The door slammed on his retreating back.

It was some time before Dorothea could find the strength to stand. She burst into tears, and sat on the floor sobbing. At last Emily addressed her from the other end of the hallway.

'Ma'am?' the housemaid whispered. It was a dreadful moment. Dorothea scrambled to her feet, wiping her eyes and attempting to compose herself. She was shaking. Her legs felt weak.

'Please go to work.' She had to support herself against the wall as she moved back into the drawing room. 'I shall—I shall speak to you presently.'

'Yes, Ma'am.'

Even in her confusion, Dorothea knew that she must not allow her husband's unforgiveable conduct to cloud her reasoning. There were matters of far more importance to consider. She strove to regain a measure of self-control; she realised that she had to think, and think carefully. Daniel had to be freed. He did not belong in prison. How was she to effect his release? What means did she have at her disposal?

Collapsing onto the sofa, she took several deep breaths. The police had arrested Daniel. She must appeal, therefore, to the Chief Constable. Or—no, not to the Chief Constable. To the Superintendent of Police.



Dr D'Arcy Wentworth.

She rang for Emily, then arranged her portable writing desk across her knees. It was fortunate that she had recently had occasion to sharpen all her nibs, for her hands were so unsteady that she would not have trusted herself with a penknife.

'A cup of tea, if you please,' she declared, when the maid-servant entered. 'And I shall need you to deliver a letter, shortly.'

'Yes, Ma'am.' The girl curtsied, but did not move. Dorothea looked up, frowning, and met a frightened, watery gaze. 'Ma'am, what will they do to Daniel?' was the question Emily put to her. 'They'll not 'urt 'im?'

'Not if I have anything to do with it,' Dorothea rejoined.

'Did 'e steal them things, Ma'am?'

'Of course not!' Dorothea was offended. She waved the girl away. 'Off you go, please, I must think.'

It was difficult, however, to think coherently. She was barely acquainted with Dr Wentworth, who had cause to view the entire 46th Regiment with grave distrust. How was she to persuade him of her goodwill, and sound judgement? How was she to begin her letter? She made two aborted attempts before a hot cup of tea finally calmed her somewhat. With a firmer hand, and a more settled mind, she was able to compose a few paragraphs that did her no disservice.

*Dear Dr Wentworth, she wrote, you must pardon me for approaching you in this way, but I am quite at my wit's end. Not an hour ago, Captain Brande and I were deprived of our assigned servant, Daniel Callaghan, who was arrested for being in the possession of a pocket watch and snuffbox stolen from the residence of Mr John Horsley. Exactly how he came by these items I am not, at present, able to inform you, but I do know that he is innocent of any wrongdoing. He has told me as much. Had he known that the objects were purloined, he would not have been keeping them in his pocket.*

*Daniel has been in my employment for nearly four years, and not once, during that time, has he demonstrated anything but the most loyal, devoted, honest and willing service. I have found him utterly trustworthy. He is a man, I believe, of virtuous inclinations and high*

*moral character. If he has been accused, he has been accused falsely. My distress at his being placed in such a regrettable situation has therefore been acute, and I am anxious that this dreadful mistake should be remedied as soon as possible. Can you assist me in this particular, Sir? Will you see to it that Daniel is released from gaol, at the very least? His guilt has not yet been established, and he is an entirely honourable man—I give you my undertaking that he will not attempt to abscond, if given his freedom.*

*I would not be making this request of you if I did not believe you to be a fair and honourable man yourself. No doubt I have expressed myself badly—for I am ill acquainted with legal language—but I hope that I have made clear the strength of my feelings in this matter. To see an innocent man convicted of a crime would be unendurable. As an upright magistrate, you yourself would find such a prospect appalling, I am sure.*

*Once again, I must entreat your forgiveness for my effrontery, and assure you of my most profound gratitude if you should discover it to be within your power to help me in any way.*

Dorothea signed her name to this request in the knowledge that she could not, at present, produce anything of a more rational or elegant nature. She was not entirely happy with its tone. Her distracted state of mind, she thought, was too evident in its clumsy construction. Nevertheless, she sealed it, and gave it to Emily, with the direction that it should be taken to the house of Dr D'Arcy Wentworth for his urgent perusal.

She then sat down to wait.

Her anxiety, at this point, was of the most severe kind. Shock was yielding ground to apprehension. She was tormented by thoughts of Daniel's possible fate. Could a person be flogged for receiving stolen goods? Could a person be *hanged* for receiving stolen goods? She chastised herself for omitting to ask such questions of Dr Wentworth, when given the opportunity. She rose, and began to pace the floor.

She refused to contemplate the prospect of Daniel's enduring any form of corporal punishment. The notion was so horrible that she could not bring herself to give it any serious

consideration. I shall certainly prevent *that* from happening, she decided—though she could not imagine how she might do so. Her more immediate concern was his imprisonment, and the effect that it might be producing. A gentle soul like Daniel would suffer unimaginably, confined among the worst of the colony's criminals. Though large, he was not violent, and would naturally shrink from violent displays. She knew, now, that his abiding fearfulness was a product of past horrors. He was haunted by memories so black that they had cast a shadow over his entire life.

Dorothea was desperate to preserve him from any further distress of this sort.

Unable to busy herself with other matters while preoccupied with Daniel's distress, she did nothing but wring her hands until Emily returned. The letter had been delivered, and a reply would be forthcoming. Nothing more could be done, at present. So Dorothea, with great strength of mind, turned her thoughts to the evening meal. With Daniel gone, Emily's work would be doubled. She could not be expected to clean the house, fetch the water, deliver messages *and* take full responsibility for the preparation of her employers' dinner. Her mistress, therefore, assumed certain duties relating to the cleaning and boiling of vegetables, the mixing of pastry, the stewing of beef and the straining of gravy.

Not that she anticipated that she would be able to eat a thing until Daniel's release. She was cooking only for her husband's sake. She was afraid of him, now, because he had it in his power to use his influence against Daniel—though how exactly this might be accomplished, she was not certain. She understood very little about the law. She was ignorant of its forms and procedures. She had a notion that an accused man might be entitled to some form of legal representation, but did not know if this applied to convicts or not.

When at last she received a reply from Dr Wentworth, shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon, she was somewhat enlightened.

*Dear Mrs Brande*, the letter read, *I am very sorry indeed that you should have been inconvenienced in this way.* Nevertheless, it went on, little could be done to correct a situation that had been the cause of so much distress, owing to the fact that Dr Wentworth himself had ordered a warrant of apprehension to be issued against Daniel Callaghan. Certain information, it was pointed out, had been presented to Dr Wentworth by the Chief Constable. Apparently, Callaghan had been implicated in a burglary case by one Thomas Hodges. According to Hodges, it was Callaghan who had informed Hodges that Mr John Horsley would be absent from his place of residence at the time of the theft. Callaghan, in other words, had been accused of plotting the crime.

*Whether or not Hodges can be believed is debatable*, Dr Wentworth wrote. *But Callaghan is a convicted thief, has been seen on several occasions in the company of Tom Hodges (without your permission, I gather), and was in possession of Mr Horsley's gold watch. All this is evidence sufficient enough to warrant Callaghan's appearance before the Sydney Bench.*

As a magistrate serving on this bench (along with Mr John Wylde, Colonel Molle, Mr Alexander Riley, Mr Simeon Lord and Mr John T. Campbell), Dr Wentworth would of course examine the case with great care and attention. Callaghan would receive a fair hearing from Dr Wentworth—especially in view of Mrs Brande's testimony as to the excellence of his character. But in no other way, except in his capacity as a magistrate, could Dr Wentworth be of any assistance. He was desolated that he could not further oblige Mrs Brande, whose strength of feeling did her credit, and whose sensibility he had always admired. He had the honour to remain, &c, &c.

Upon reading the letter, Dorothea immediately sat down and scribbled a reply. She reiterated her belief in Daniel's innocence. She assured Dr Wentworth that she had been *fully aware* of Daniel's meetings with Hodges, which had come about in consequence of the debt of gratitude that Daniel owed his friend. *Daniel believes that Tom Hodges saved his life*, she wrote. *Why*

*Hodges should now be determined to ruin the same life, I cannot imagine—but it is certain that he has lied, perhaps to save himself. If Daniel ever told him that Mr Horsley was dining with us, it would have been with the most innocent of intentions, I assure you. Daniel is incapable of guile.*

Dorothea went on to declare that she would not rest until Daniel was released from prison. How, in Dr Wentworth's opinion, could this best be accomplished? By what means could his freedom be secured, at least until he should appear before the Sydney Bench? What course did Dr Wentworth recommend, with regard to attorneys, bail and matters of that description?

Emily was still delivering this communication to Dr Wentworth when Charles returned home, and discovered his wife making up a pie.

'Ah,' he said, from the kitchen door. Dorothea looked up. Having noted his presence, she looked down again.

The sight of his face was not one that gave her any pleasure.

'Forgive me,' he continued, clearing his throat. 'I should not—I was at fault, earlier. I should not have used you so roughly.'

Dorothea said nothing. She kept her gaze fixed on her busy, floury hands.

'Where is Emily?' her husband inquired, in tentative accents.

'Out. She will be back soon.'

'It is unfortunate that you should be so engaged.' He nodded at the pastry, whereupon Dorothea replied: 'Yes. If Daniel were here, there would be no need for it.'

'I shall make inquiries tomorrow about engaging a new manservant. As a temporary measure—until we leave.'

'I do not want a new manservant.' Dorothea spoke evenly, but pressed her pastry into the pie dish with unnecessary force. 'I want Daniel.'

There was a brief silence. When at last Charles spoke, his voice was muffled.

'That is out of the question, as you know.'

'As long as he is in *gaol*, it is out of the question. But he will not remain there for long. Daniel is innocent.'

Having made this declaration, Dorothea braced herself for a loud response. Glancing up, she saw Charles redden. But he remained surprisingly calm.

'Well—we shall soon see,' he replied, after a pause.

'You must tell Colonel Molle that Daniel has an excellent character, and that you do not believe him to be capable of wrongdoing.'

'Colonel Molle?' Charles frowned. 'Why? What has he to do with it?'

'He is a magistrate, is he not? On the Sydney Bench?' As her husband's eyes narrowed, Dorothea hastened to explain herself. (Should he ever learn that she had written to Dr D'Arcy Wentworth, her life would not be worth living.) 'Mrs Molle told me so,' she said—and it was not exactly a lie. Mrs Molle had spoken often, and with pride, of her husband's various appointments.

Charles grunted. 'The Old Man *was* a magistrate,' he conceded, 'but will not be a magistrate for very much longer. Erskine was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor, today. I believe that he is bound to take the Old Man's place on the Sydney Bench.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea.

'In any event, I have no intention of bringing this sordid matter to the Colonel's attention. Why should I?'

Dorothea stared at him. He was a little sunburned across the nose and cheeks. His hair was tousled, but fell naturally into sweeping, romantic shapes. His eyes were intensely blue.

She regarded him as she might have regarded a stranger.

'It is not a sordid matter,' she said quietly. 'It is a matter of the very gravest importance.'

Charles's colour flared again, but he gave an unconvincing little laugh.

'My dear,' he replied, 'if you had more with which to occupy yourself, you would not be so concerned about a common thief.'

'I am concerned about justice, Charles. Are not you?' She really wanted to know. She peered at him anxiously. She searched his face. 'Can you not—surely you must see the truth? In your heart? Surely, after all these years, you must have some appreciation of the man who has served you so faithfully?' As the muscles of his jaw worked, she added, with a catch in her voice: 'You must *know*, Charles. You must *know* that he merits our protection. Why do you withhold it? Why are you so *unreasonable*?'

No reply was forthcoming. Instead, Charles turned on his heel, and strode out the door.

Dorothea did not attempt to pursue him.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE



DOROTHEA SPENT A PERFECTLY wretched evening in her husband's company. She was terrified that Dr Wentworth's next communication would arrive, and cause Charles to lose his temper. Then, upon the hour growing too late to admit of such a possibility, her anxiety about Dr Wentworth's letter was displaced by her anxiety about Daniel. She was sick with worry. It was fortunate indeed that Charles seemed disinclined to talk, because Dorothea could not have conversed in a coherent manner. She was made almost frantic by the thought of Daniel enduring a night in gaol. She wanted to plead with her husband—to shout at him—to *insist* upon his cooperation. But breathing deeply, she reminded herself that she had determined to accompany this man to India. If their association was to continue, they must not have occasion to offer each other any unforgiveable insults.

She hardly slept that night. In the morning, she contained herself until her husband had taken his leave, grateful that their shortage of staff allowed her to escape into the kitchen at regular intervals during breakfast. Then, while Emily occupied herself with the broom and the bed linen, Dorothea sought distraction among the cooking pots. She derived a certain satisfaction from chopping carrots with a large, sharp knife. And as long as she refrained from glancing into the corner where Daniel's possessions still lay, she was able to keep her nerves steady.



They received a punishing blow, however, when Dr Wentworth's letter arrived.

The tone of this communication was waspish, to say the least. Dr Wentworth apologised to Mrs Brande for not replying sooner, but he was very much occupied, at present, with matters relating to a General Court Martial that was to be assembled that morning—was Mrs Brande, perhaps, unaware of these circumstances? Colonel Molle had brought certain charges against Dr Wentworth—had Mrs Brande not heard? Naturally, Dr Wentworth felt obliged to defend himself against these charges with due vigour, and could perhaps be excused for being so negligent a correspondent.

*As to freeing Callaghan from gaol, Dr Wentworth wrote, if he is innocent, as you say, then the most effective means by which this might be accomplished is a speedy trial. I shall therefore make arrangements that his case be heard with all expedition.*

Dr Wentworth added that, while convict defendants did not, as a rule, obtain legal representation for cases heard before an inferior Court of Criminal Jurisdiction, they were encouraged to speak in their own defence, and to carry out a close and careful cross-examination of witnesses.

*You need not fear, Dr Wentworth concluded, that Callaghan will be in any way disadvantaged when he appears before the Sydney Bench. I will ensure that my fellow magistrates are fully acquainted with your feelings on the matter. But you should remain open, Mrs Brande, to the possibility that your kind heart has led you astray. If your hopes are too high, your disappointment—if it comes—will be far more profound.*

Having delivered himself of this chilling piece of advice, Dr Wentworth had finished his letter with the usual salutations, and with a signature that, in its irregular appearance, bore testimony to his disturbed state of mind.

Dorothea stared at it blankly.

'Ma'am?' said Emily, who had been hovering at her side since the dismissal of Dr Wentworth's messenger. 'Pardon me—Ma'am?'

'What?' Dorothea spoke sharply. She put her hand to her brow. Was this grudging note the only assurance that was to be granted her? 'What is it?'

'Ma'am, d'you think—could we give Daniel 'is cloes?'

'His what?'

'Is jacket, Ma'am. 'Is—'is property, like.'

'Oh!' Dorothea looked at the girl with slowly dawning comprehension. Daniel's clothes—of course. The thought of restoring them to their owner had never even crossed her mind. 'Are you asking if they could be taken to the gaol?' she said.

'Yes, Ma'am. Could they?'

'I—I am not sure.' Dorothea contemplated the possibility of approaching the gaol herself, before shrinking from the prospect with a barely concealed shudder. No. It was out of the question.

But what if Daniel should require his jacket? His stockings?

'Take them,' she said impulsively. 'Take them yourself, and tell him—tell him—' Tell him what? Dorothea swallowed. 'Tell him that I shall not rest until he is out of there,' she quavered. 'Tell him that he will soon be freed.'

'Yes, Ma'am.'

'Wait. You should take money.' Dorothea hurried into her bed chamber, where she retrieved a little fifteen-pence coin—the dump from a Spanish silver dollar. She gave it to Emily. 'If you have to bribe your way in, do it,' she said.

'Yes, Ma'am.'

'Tell Daniel that he *must not* despair. Tell him to be of good courage, and all will be well. Ask him if he requires anything more. Hurry, now. Go. As quick as you can.'

Emily went. Dorothea, abandoning her beef tongue, repaired to the drawing room, where she sat down and wrote letters. She wrote letters to Mr Wylde, Mr Riley, Mr Lord, Mr Campbell, Colonel Molle and Colonel Erskine. She praised Daniel's character, and insisted on his blamelessness. She flattered the magistrates, and appealed to their sense of justice. She reminded them that God was all-seeing.

By the time she had written these letters, rewritten them, copied them out, sealed them and addressed them, Emily had returned.

'Well?' Dorothea demanded. Upon hearing her maid-servant's step outside, she had rushed to admit the girl into the house. 'Did you see him?'

'No, Ma'am.'

'No?'

'They took the cloes, and the money, and they turned me away.'

'But this is monstrous!'

'He was an ugly feller,' Emily conceded. 'The feller that took it all. I told 'im what you told me, Ma'am, and 'e came back with a message. From Daniel, like.'

'What message?'

Emily closed her eyes, as if searching her memory. Then she began to recite the brief communication that had been offered her.

'I was to tell you,' she said slowly, 'as 'ow Daniel would never 'ave betrayed your trust, not for no one or nothing, and 'ow you wasn't to concern yourself, God bless you, because 'e was well and 'ad no complaints.' Emily opened her eyes. 'That's all, Ma'am,' she finished.

Dorothea swallowed. It was some time before she could speak again.

'Did he—did he receive his clothes?'

'Yes, Ma'am.' The girl's tone was doubtful. 'Leastways, that's what yon feller said.'

'I have another errand for you, Emily.' Dorothea propelled her maidservant into the drawing room, where she filled the girl's hands with sheets of paper, folded and sealed. 'You must deliver these letters. This one is to go to Mr Wylde, this one to Mr Riley, this one to Mr Lord ...' She explained where each letter was directed, and sent Emily off with a pat and a word of praise. Then she sat down in the kitchen to collect herself.

Her hands began to shake. The message from Daniel had

upset her thoroughly; she had found it pitiable beyond expression. Would he ever receive his clothes? Was he being properly fed? *Why* had she allowed him to associate with his dubious friend, when she could have obeyed her instincts and forbidden him such low company?

I should have sent him my Bible, she thought, and cursed herself for not doing so. He would need every comfort, now. She wondered if he had been fettered, whether he had witnessed any hangings, since his incarceration. She remembered the scars on his ankles. It occurred to her that she did not know his age, or the place of his birth. He had worked in her house for nearly four years, yet she did not know if he had any siblings, whether his parents were alive, how long he had been married ...

She did not even know if he had ever been flogged. She had never seen his naked back, and they had never conversed on the subject. She had heard cries aboard the *General Hewitt*—had they been his cries? The possibility made her feel ill. Covering her eyes, she prayed to God that He might preserve Daniel from all harm. *All* harm. Then she realised that she might very well be forced to leave the colony before his fate was decided, and she groaned aloud.

No, she told herself. That will not happen. Dr Wentworth has promised me a speedy trial. I shall hold him to that promise.

Time passed. Dorothea sighed, and fretted, and sighed again. She was indescribably weary. When Emily failed to return, she began to grow restless and fearful. She paced about. She peeled the skin off the beef tongue, and put it back on the fire to boil. She peeled and chopped some onions.

By the time Emily finally appeared, Dorothea's eyes were as red as beets, and her complexion was sadly inflamed.

'Are you all right, Ma'am?' the housemaid wanted to know, whereupon her mistress replied, 'Onions', tersely. She wiped her hands, and inquired as to whether Emily had completed her task. The answer was not reassuring.

'Well ... I tried,' the girl said, with some hesitation. 'But ...'

'But what?'

'Colonel Molle and Colonel Erskine—they was ... busy like.'

'Oh.' The court martial. Dorothea had forgotten all about it. 'But you found them?'

'Yes, Ma'am.' Nervously, the housemaid explained what had happened. She had been forced to wait for a very long time at the barracks. Colonel Molle had been busy with important 'business', in a large room containing many people. Among them had been Captain Brande, who had recognised Emily, and demanded that she account for herself.

Upon being presented with the letter addressed to Colonel Molle, he had broken the seal, glanced over his wife's scribbled plea, and ripped it to pieces.

The same fate had befallen Dorothea's letters to Colonel Erskine, Mr Wylde, Mr Riley, Mr Lord and Mr Campbell, all of which Emily had been forced to surrender. Captain Brande had bade her return to the house. He had entrusted her with no verbal message for his wife.

Doubtless he had assumed that his actions would speak louder than any words.

'I—I'm sorry, Ma'am,' Emily stammered, as Dorothea sat down heavily on one of the kitchen stools. 'I 'ad to give 'em up.'

'I know.'

'I was afeared the master would box my ears, else.'

'I know. Shh. I know.'

Dorothea tried to think. She was frightened, not angry. She rose, and went into the drawing room. Upon reaching it, she was startled by the sound of gunfire. Artillery was being discharged at Dawes Point. Then she remembered one of her husband's observations from the night before, concerning Colonel Erskine's appointment as Lieutenant Governor. Owing to a regrettable oversight, Colonel Erskine had not been sworn in to the accompaniment of a thirteen-gun salute.

This omission, it appeared, had just been corrected.

I cannot rely on the magistrates, thought Dorothea, as she

pressed her hands to her temples. Dr Wentworth will be prejudiced against me because of the Regiment's treatment of him. Colonel Molle will be prejudiced against me because Charles will see to it that he is. Mr Wylde will be just, because he is a good man, but the others—how am I to convince the others? I do not know them.

Mr Lord. Mr Riley. Mr Campbell ...

Dorothea considered Mr John Campbell. He was the Governor's secretary, trim, dour and an implacable enemy of the Governor's opponents. Charles viewed him with the utmost contempt. Dorothea had met him only three times. He had struck her as rather a formidable gentleman, but surely he would share the Governor's more generous opinions on the reformation of convicts?

The Governor.

Dorothea stopped pacing the floor. She glanced out the window. It was perhaps two or three o'clock in the afternoon, somewhat grey and cloudy. The complexion of the sky promised rain, but not for an hour or two. The wind off Port Jackson was brisk, but imbued with a touch of spring. A laundress passed, laden with bags of dirty clothes.

Dorothea considered writing a letter, before dismissing the notion. A letter would first pass through Mr Campbell's hands. It would doubtless be classified as something unworthy of immediate attention. It might, perhaps, not reach the Governor at all. Mr Campbell might choose to summarise it briefly, in a few ill-chosen words, before offering to respond to it in 'the usual manner'.

No. If she was to approach the Governor, she must do it in person.

She fetched her good bonnet and shawl from the bedroom, anxiously examining her face in the glass as she did so. Alas, it presented a woeful appearance. Her cheeks were white, her eyelids still inflamed. She looked ill. But perhaps it was all to the good. Perhaps the strength of her feelings would be conveyed with more force if she was pale and red-eyed.

When she informed Emily that she was going out, the housemaid blinked nervously. But she said nothing as her mistress gave her instructions regarding the beef tongue and the suet pudding. 'I do not know when I shall be back,' Dorothea remarked, 'though it will not be very soon. Should Captain Brande return ...' She hesitated. She and her maidservant looked at each other. 'Should Captain Brande return,' she finished, with a raised chin, 'you may tell him that I have gone to consult His Excellency.'

She did not linger to watch Emily gasp and place a hand over her mouth. There was no point in putting off the awful necessity. With a pounding heart she walked straight out of the kitchen, through the house, and into the street, where she stood for a moment considering her options.

Government House lay on the opposite side of Sydney Cove. To reach it, she would have to cross the causeway on Hunter Street (which was always very damp and dirty), or follow Hunter only as far as George Street, then turn left and head for the bridge. This would be the drier route, though more crowded, and perilously close to the Rocks, the wharves and various other unhealthy destinations. In the end, however, she decided in favour of Bridge Street. The choice was made for her, because, after skirting the northern end of the Barrack Square, she glanced down Hunter Street and saw that a cart had lost its wheel—and half of its load—not far from the causeway. Firewood was scattered across the muddy ruts. Innumerable people were gathered about. Dorothea heard the noise and laughter, and immediately turned left. She had no wish to pass through a knot of hilarious, idle men in caps and neckerchiefs.

With her head lowered and her shawl pulled tightly about her, she proceeded down George Street, treading carefully around deposits of manure and gluey potholes. She was very anxious. Dogs nosed about at her feet. A child ran across her path, screaming, in pursuit of another child. The smell of beer assaulted her nostrils, and she knew, without raising her eyes,

that she was in the vicinity of a drinking house. She therefore quickened her pace, lifting her skirts as high as she decently could. Ahead, somewhere, was a guardhouse. She could not remember where, though she had a notion that it would not inconvenience her, being somewhat farther along George Street than the bridge. Beyond the guardhouse lay the Rocks, of course, and that was evident from all manner of things: raised voices, the smell of slaughter, the distant, ringing blows of smiths' hammers in the lumberyard. Her heartbeat quickened at the thought of the Rocks. Down there, somewhere, Daniel was languishing in gaol.

It was a troubling thought—more troubling even than the threat of stray pigs, or half-clad women, or being accosted by a drunken hospital attendant.

As she passed the large, brick shape of the Female Orphan School, and turned into Bridge Street, the sound of jingling irons caused Dorothea to look up. She saw a file of convicts shuffling along in white woollen Parramatta frocks and trousers, every item of clothing daubed over with arrows, letters and numbers in black, white and red. The convicts were unshaven and menacing. They wore leg-irons. Glancing away, lest one of them catch her eye, Dorothea hurried to overtake them; she crossed the bridge at a smart pace, narrowly avoiding a man who stopped in front of her without warning, apparently for the purpose of depositing his spittle on the road. The briny smell of mudflats filled the air. Industrious noises issued from the dockyards.

But Dorothea knew that she had almost left the perilous regions behind. Ahead, Bridge Street was lined with the houses of notables such as Mr Cowper and Mr John Campbell (to her right) and Mr Lord, across Macquarie Place, to her left. Dorothea had always envied Mr Campbell his house. It was a two-storeyed structure of classical proportions, with shutters and a portico. Mr Lord's house was even more impressive—boasting three storeys in front and four in the rear, together with verandahs and fanlights and all manner of exotic



contrivances—but because it was roundly condemned by the colony's gentfolk as being the boastful handiwork of an upstart emancipist, Dorothea had never openly expressed her admiration for its fine lines. Now she glanced at it quickly, for reassurance, but did not dare let her gaze linger. She was frightened to expose her face. This portion of Bridge Street was always well frequented by people known to her. She did not want to be stopped by Mrs Cowper, or Mrs Wylde, who would want to know what she was doing here, on foot and unattended. She did not want to be *waylaid*.

She had never entertained any fears as to whether she would be admitted into Government House. No inconvenient questions would be asked of an officer's wife, she felt sure—and her instincts, in this case, were correct. For as she approached the great gates in the high, stone walls, she happened to encounter Lieutenant Watts, emerging from the vice-regal grounds with a sheaf of papers under his arm.

He stopped abruptly when he saw her, and blinked.

'Mrs Brande,' he said, bowing as she curtsied. 'What an unexpected pleasure.'

'Lieutenant Watts. How very fortunate.'

'Are you well, Mrs Brande?' He peered at her, his expression of mild surprise shifting, somewhat. 'Do you require assistance?'

'Oh yes. Yes, I do. Will you help me, Lieutenant? I must speak to His Excellency.'

There was a brief silence. The Governor's aide-de-camp shifted his weight, and took a deep breath. 'Indeed,' he murmured.

Dorothea noticed a flicker of feeling in his tranquil, wide-set gaze.

'Is the Governor not at home?' she asked, knitting her brows, whereupon the Lieutenant offered her a pleasant smile.

'He is, Mrs Brande, though he is not well.'

'Oh.'

'I am sure, however, that he would not object to being

informed of your arrival. Are you ...' he scanned the immediate vicinity, '... alone?'

'Yes.'

'Then by all means follow me, and I shall convey your wishes to His Excellency.'

With some relief, though also with mounting disquiet, Dorothea obeyed the directions of Lieutenant Watts. She took his proffered arm, and accompanied him into the Governor's garden, trudging up the semicircular carriageway past mulberry trees and clipped hedges. A soldier of the 48th Regiment stood at attention by the front stairs. Some distance away, a gardener swung his scythe. No other human being was visible.

Lieutenant Watts allowed Dorothea to precede him into the house, which had always struck her as a rather awkward and conglomerate dwelling. In the wide entrance hallway (which was lined with cedar chairs), they were met by Sergeant Charles Whalan, of the Governor's guards. Together the two men conversed in low voices; Dorothea glanced around nervously as she untied her bonnet strings, noting how quiet and dim the house seemed to be. Were Mrs Macquarie and her son not in residence? She had not the courage to ask.

Then Sergeant Whalan retreated down the hall, and Lieutenant Watts turned back to Dorothea.

'I must away,' he said, smiling, 'but Sergeant Whalan has gone to inform His Excellency of your arrival. Would you care to wait in the parlour, Mrs Brande? It is a great deal more comfortable than this hallway. I only wish that Mrs Macquarie were here to welcome you.'

'Is she in Parramatta, now?'

'Unfortunately, yes. Mrs Macquarie prefers Parramatta.' Lieutenant Watts conducted Dorothea into a parlour, directly off the hallway, which she had never before seen. Its windows overlooked the verandah and the harbour beyond. It had pale green walls and a scrubbed-wood floor, and contained many large and dignified articles of furniture. Lieutenant Watts motioned Dorothea into the smallest of these—a very

comfortable armchair—and bowed again. ‘Sergeant Whalan will return directly,’ he said. ‘May I say, Mrs Brande, how delighted I always am to see you. I wish I could stay, but I have some pressing business—’

‘Yes, of course,’ Dorothea interrupted. The prospect of making sociable conversation with Lieutenant Watts, however courteous and sweet-tempered he might be, filled her with dismay. ‘*Please* do not let me detain you, Lieutenant. I am only sorry to have distracted you from your duties.’

‘A welcome distraction, Madam. None more so,’ Lieutenant Watts replied. Another smile, a final bow, and he departed, leaving Dorothea straight-backed and stiff in her armchair, her fingers knotted together and her heart jumping almost out of her chest. Now that she was in the Governor’s house, she was beginning to wonder if she had behaved unwisely. Outside, black clouds were rolling in from the east. Inside, the house was gloomy, formal, intimidating.

It is for Daniel’s sake, she thought, closing her eyes—and jumped as Sergeant Whalan addressed her from the door.

‘Mrs Brande?’ he said. ‘Please come this way.’

He was a large man, with a red face, a deep voice and an impressive bearing. His step was slow and stately. Dorothea followed him down the hall until they reached the Governor’s office, whereat he stopped, stepped back, and indicated that she should enter ahead of him.

Hesitantly, Dorothea obeyed his wordless instructions. She found herself in a large, dim room lit by one lamp, which had been positioned on an expansive writing table. To the left of this table she saw a chest of drawers. To the right could be found a mahogany washstand.

And behind the table stood the Governor, his gold braid gleaming.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX



THE GOVERNOR DID NOT look well. His skin was yellow, there were great pouches under his eyes, and he moved a little stiffly as he responded to his visitor's curtsy, inviting her to be seated. Dorothea did so, choosing one of the cane-bottomed armchairs opposite the writing table.

The Governor lowered himself into his own chair as if the action caused him considerable discomfort.

'This is an unexpected pleasure, Mrs Brande,' he said, his rolling Scottish cadences pitched low. Two weary but penetrating brown eyes surveyed her across the tabletop, and she blushed, and murmured something to the effect that it had been kind of him to receive her.

'Not at all,' he said politely.

'I am sorry to have missed Mrs Macquarie. I hope that she is well?'

'Never better.'

'And your son?'

'Thriving, I thank 'ee.' The Governor leaned back in his chair, regarding her from beneath heavy eyelids. 'What of yourself, Mrs Brande?'

'I—my health is good, Your Excellency,' Dorothea stammered, 'but I am very much distressed.'

'Indeed?'

'It is a matter—it concerns a man called Daniel Callaghan,

who was assigned to me—to us—four years ago, and had never given me a moment's trouble—even the slightest cause for alarm—'

'Until now,' said the Governor, shifting in his seat. With a sigh, he added: 'What has he done?'

'Nothing!' Dorothea exclaimed. She saw him raise his eyebrows, and strove to keep a check on her emotion. 'Nothing,' she repeated. 'He has been accused of receiving stolen goods, and planning a burglary, but I know that he is innocent.' She proceeded to relate the story of Daniel's association with Tom Hodges, and the circumstances of Daniel's conviction for theft. She attempted to describe her manservant's character, and the reasons upon which her belief in his moral reformation were founded. 'He sincerely regrets his past wrongdoing,' she declared earnestly. 'He is diligent, temperate and obedient. My husband would not have it so, because he is so very prejudiced against Government men—particularly those of Irish extraction—but he is not well acquainted with Daniel. I am. I know him well. And I know that he is not the irredeemable villain that Captain Brande, with no foundation, claims him to be.' Searching the Governor's somewhat ravaged face, Dorothea coloured and said: 'I—I believe that the principles upon which you have based your administration, Sir, regarding the—the association of free and emancipated colonists, are just, humane and benevolent. It seems to me that convicts *can* improve, and find redemption. The stain of their crime need not be ineluctable. Daniel has shown me that. Though once a thief, Sir, he is a thief no longer. He is an honest man. I would swear to it.'

The Governor gazed at her intently for a while, before remarking: 'Then why has he been arrested, Mrs Brande?'

'Because stolen goods were found in his possession,' Dorothea replied. 'They were stolen by Tom Hodges, and given to Daniel. Daniel did not know that they were stolen. He assured me of this. And if he *did* mention to Hodges that Mr Horsley would be dining at our house on the night of the

burglary—as Hodges claims—then it would have been done without malicious intent.’ Seeing that the Governor’s expression remained bland, Dorothea’s tone became more urgent. ‘I have not been given the opportunity to speak to Daniel at length on this subject, Your Excellency, but I know that his explanation must be a reasonable one. He would not have questioned his friend’s motives. The man saved his life.’ As the Governor refused even to blink, Dorothea cried out, in an agony of frustration: ‘I was aboard the *General Hewitt*! It was a dreadful ship! You yourself ordered an investigation into the deaths that took place among its passengers!’

‘I did,’ the Governor conceded. ‘And your feelings do ye credit, Mrs Brande. But what is it that ye want from me?’

For a moment Dorothea was at a loss. She cast around, her gaze sweeping the walls, the ceiling, the carpet, in a quest for inspiration. At last she said: ‘I want Daniel out of gaol.’

‘Has he been arrested? By the constabulary?’

‘Yes.’

‘On Dr Wentworth’s order?’

‘Yes. But Dr Wentworth is not being at all helpful.’

The Governor had been sitting very still. Upon Dorothea’s uttering this complaint, however, he moved, placing one elbow on the arm of his chair and putting a knuckle to his bottom lip.

‘Dr Wentworth,’ he rumbled, ‘is a canny gentleman, Mrs Brande. If he declines to help, there must be a good reason.’

‘Oh yes. It is because Colonel Molle is trying to have him court-martialled.’ Dorothea drooped in her chair. ‘Naturally he feels disinclined to help anyone associated with the Regiment.’

The corner of His Excellency’s mouth twitched.

‘Ye’ve no’ a very gude opinion of Dr Wentworth,’ he said.

‘Oh, but I have, Sir! I think him a most respectable and judicious person! It is only that Colonel Molle is being so *unreasonable*—and of course my husband supports Colonel Molle—’

‘Does he support your own position, Mrs Brande?’

Startled, Dorothea stared at the Governor for an instant,

before dropping her gaze. She began to smooth her skirts over her knees.

'My husband would not approve of my being here,' she mumbled, wondering if this confession might win her the sympathy that she desired. 'He is very exclusive.'

'So I have been led to believe,' the Governor said drily.

'It was his notion entirely to refuse your invitations, Sir!' Dorothea blurted out. 'I would have accepted them with gratitude—indeed I would!'

'I am not offended, Mrs Brande.'

'*Please* will you help Daniel? Can you not have him pardoned, or—or something of that sort? He is innocent, I swear to you!'

'Unfortunately, Mrs Brande, it is not as easy as that—for all ye might have heard to the contrary.' Again the Governor's chair creaked, as he shifted and sighed. 'But I shall luke into the matter.'

'You will? Oh, thank you! Thank you!' Dorothea's voice was unsteady. She felt extravagantly grateful. 'You are such a good man, Sir!'

'I cannae promise a happy result, mind. Dr Wentworth is as reliable a man as ever I knew.'

'Of course. But he is one of the magistrates who will judge Daniel. As is your secretary, Mr John Campbell, Sir. Perhaps, if you were to speak to them, they would know how ill founded are the charges against Daniel.'

At this, the Governor smiled, showing his very bad teeth.

'Mrs Brande,' he protested (though in amiable accents), 'I can see ye've been spending your time here in the company of Mr Jeffery Bent and his ilk. Clearly ye're of the opinion that the colonial magistracy has been deprived of its independence. I must assure you, Madam, that this is not the case.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea, a little lost.

'But I shall certainly convey your sentiments on the matter.' His Excellency rose, then, with a grunt and a grimace—obliging Dorothea to rise also. 'Ye must excuse me, Mrs

Brande,' he continued, 'but I am expecting another visitor. Is there any other way in which I might assist ye?'

'No, Sir,' Dorothea replied, softly.

'And the fellow's name is Callaghan?'

'Daniel Callaghan.'

'I shall make a note of it.' Much to Dorothea's surprise, the Governor conducted her, in person, to the door of his office, which he opened with a slightly awkward flourish. She curtsied, and prepared to take her leave. But before she could thank him again for his time, he looked down at her and said: 'Ye'll be leaving for Madras, soon, will ye not, Mrs Brande?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'And will ye be taking many pleasant memories with ye, may I ask?'

Dorothea hesitated. His expression was impenetrable. 'Not many, Sir,' she admitted. 'I have not been very happy here.'

'Ah.'

'It is a cruel place, you see. In—in many ways.'

'It is. I agree. But I have been endeavouring to make it less so.'

'Yes, Sir. That is why my—one of my more pleasant memories will be that of your own kindness. Your Excellency.'

He bowed.

'I just ...' she continued, and hesitated. 'Please, Sir,' she said, 'I do not want him flogged. That is all. Thank you, Sir.'

Another bow. Then she was delivered into the care of Sergeant Whalan, who had been sitting in the hall. He escorted her to the front entrance, and they emerged from the house just as a neat, blunt-featured, weathered-looking man was approaching it. He carried a leather bag, and was attired in sober colours.

He paused—with his foot on the lowest stair—when he saw Sergeant Whalan.

'Dr Redfern,' the sergeant observed. 'His Excellency is expecting you, Sir. In his office.'

A nod was the only response to this statement. Dr Redfern



tipped his hat as he edged past Dorothea, his eyes downcast. She watched him cross the verandah, and disappear into the house. Beside her, Sergeant Whalan was surveying the sky with the slightly detached interest that seemed to be characteristic of him.

'Looks to be a storm coming,' he remarked. 'You had best hurry home, Ma'am.'

But Dorothea's mind was on other matters.

'That was Dr Redfern,' she said.

'Aye.'

'Might I—might I have a word with Dr Redfern, Sergeant?'

He looked at her.

'That is to say—might I wait for him? In the parlour? Now?' she stammered. 'I would not be very long.'

The sergeant lifted his eyebrows. 'I shall have to inquire, Ma'am,' he responded.

'I should be very grateful.'

'Perhaps you would care to wait by the door, here?'

She did, while he went to make inquiries. She saw him disappear into the shadows (for the light, both outside and in, was very dim by now); she heard his receding footsteps, and the tap of his knuckles on wood. Then there was a long silence until he returned, his tread heavy on the geometrically patterned, black-and-white canvas carpet.

'If you would wait in the parlour, Mrs Brande,' he announced, 'Dr Redfern will be with you presently.'

Dorothea had seized the moment almost without thinking. Now she retired into the parlour nursing serious doubts. Perhaps she had been unwise. She carried not a single penny of currency or sterling—would Dr Redfern require payment? She was a guest in a strange house—would he insist on examining her, and take offence if she refused?

She had thought, upon seeing him, that this was an opportunity never to be repeated. She had felt that, having so blatantly flouted her husband by visiting the Governor, she might just as well commit a further outrage and consult an

emancipist physician. But had she perhaps been incautious—even foolhardy? Would she come to regret this impetuous decision?

Only the knowledge that she could not, now, escape with dignity kept her sitting in the parlour, nervously playing with the ribbons on her bonnet (which had not yet been restored to her head). Outside, the wind was freshening. Treetops swayed, and the gloom grew even more oppressive. Dorothea wondered, with dismay, how she was ever to reach home before the rain commenced. She considered the prospect of her return to that modest abode, and to her husband, and to her husband's dinner, and her heart sank.

She thought of Daniel, in a dark, damp cell. If only the Governor had met him! No one of the Governor's acuity, upon meeting Daniel, could fail to perceive his rectitude.

She was dwelling with a kind of dolorous affection on Daniel's many admirable qualities when there was a tap on the parlour door, and it opened to admit Dr Redfern.

'My word,' he said brusquely, 'it is as black as a dungeon in here.' Turning, he raised his voice. 'Sergeant! Could I trouble you for a light, man? Thank you.' Again he fixed Dorothea with a pale, piercing gaze. 'Mrs Brande, I believe?'

'Yes, Sir,' said Dorothea, rising.

'You wish to speak to me?'

'I do.'

'Concerning what, if you please?'

'Concerning my health, Doctor.'

'I might be approached at any time, Mrs Brande. At the hospital. At my house. At your own.' Although his manner of expression was without grace, it also possessed a vigour—an intensity—that spoke of a boundless and enduring interest in everything that passed before him. 'This is a curious time and a curious place to make inquiries of me.'

'Sir, it is the only time, and the only place, that I have,' said Dorothea. 'My husband, Captain Brande, labours under a very ill-judged prejudice.' She took a deep breath. 'You will

forgive my mentioning such a thing, but it prevents me from, from—'

'Inviting me into your home,' Dr Redfern finished grimly. Accepting a lighted candle from Sergeant Whalan, he entered the room and closed the door behind him. Then he dropped his bag and hat onto the floor, placed the candle on a small, square sideboard, and laid his folded arms along the back of a chair.

In dry, brisk, no-nonsense tones, he asked: 'What appears to be troubling you, Mrs Brande?'

Dorothea sat down. Her mouth was dry. She had to swallow and lick her lips before replying.

'I cannot carry a child to full term,' she croaked.

He waited.

'I have miscarried four times in as many years. Surgeon Forster is of the opinion that I am delicate, but I have wondered ...' She paused. 'I have wondered if this colony is to blame,' she continued falteringly. 'Perhaps poisonous vapours, or—or some form of abiding ague. My husband is often ill. I have headaches—'

'Begin at the beginning,' Dr Redfern interrupted, still leaning on the back of the chair. 'When did the first miscarriage occur?'

'On board the *General Hewitt*. I was married barely three months before. But I was ill at the time—during the voyage—so I attributed my loss to the illness, and the—the—'

'The conditions on board,' Dr Redfern finished. 'I am familiar with that particular voyage. What form did this illness take?'

'A fever. My husband was stricken first. I recovered well enough, and he did too, though ... well, he has been ill since. A recurring problem.'

'Of what nature?'

Dorothea put her hand to her brow. He fired questions at her as he might have fired shot, and she was a little overcome.

'Ah, a sore throat. Costiveness. Debility. But Surgeon

Forster has been treating him with mercury pills, and they seem to—'

'Mercury pills?' Dr Redfern interjected. Looking up, Dorothea saw him narrow his eyes.

'Why, yes ...' she stammered.

'Anything else? Nitric acid? Sarsaparilla? Mercurial ointment?'

'No.'

'Besides the sore throat and costiveness, have you noticed any other symptoms? Any rashes? Any irrational or unreasonable outbursts, or souring of the temper?'

'Why—why yes. He has become very *moody*—'

'Have you suffered a sore throat yourself, Mrs Brande?'

'Well ... no.'

'No illness of any sort?'

'Only a cold, now and then. And the headaches, of course, but they might very well be caused by the glare hereabouts.'

'Before your feverish spell aboard the *General Hewitt*, Mrs Brande, did you notice any other symptoms?' As she cast her mind back, rather dazedly, he pressed her. 'Did you notice a rash? A chancre or ulcerous lesion of some kind?'

Dorothea blinked. Then a faint memory surfaced, a memory that she had been eager to suppress. A memory of voluntary seclusion. 'The diet on board ship was very poor,' she replied, in flustered accents. 'I was not eating well, because of my seasickness and general debility. For that reason my skin was somewhat affected—'

'Where?'

'It was only one sore. Beside my mouth ...'

Dr Redfern uttered a short, explosive sigh. Abruptly he moved from behind the chair, and cast himself into it. Putting his hands together, he regarded her over them.

Seeing him at close quarters, Dorothea realised that he was not as old as she had reckoned. No more than forty—possibly younger than that. His worn appearance and receding hairline had misled her.

'Mrs Brande,' he said at last, 'if I were to examine you, I might be better placed to offer you a diagnosis. But from what you have told me ... well, Madam, I can hazard a guess.' As she looked at him blankly he cocked his head, and scratched his nose, and grimaced. 'Mercury pills,' he went on, 'are an accepted cure for a complaint known as *lues venerea*. Or, in more common usage, the pox.' He waited, but received no reply. Dorothea was knitting her brows. The pox? Which pox? Dr Redfern sighed again. 'Are you not familiar with this condition, Mrs Brande?' he asked.

'I—I think I have heard mention of it.' In connection with some vulgar and unlovely circumstance, she was sure.

'Perhaps you have encountered it in literature,' said Dr Redfern. 'An Italian fellow wrote a poem about it. Called it syphilis. No? Well, it has many names, and many manifestations.' He began to examine his fingernails. 'It is an unfortunate complaint, Mrs Brande, because often, I have noticed, those women afflicted with it experience some difficulty in carrying a child to full term.'

There was a long silence. While Dorothea attempted to collect her scattered wits, Dr Redfern studied her intently. After a while, he said: 'I can offer you no treatment for this particular problem, but I have known time to work a cure. More than one woman of my acquaintance, in your situation, has borne a healthy child after many failures. You should not lose hope.'

'But ...' Dorothea struggled to form a coherent sentence. 'Do you mean that I have contracted this ... this complaint?'

'It seems highly probable.'

'From what source?'

Dr Redfern lifted an eyebrow.

'Why—I would assume from your husband, Mrs Brande.'

'Then *he* is afflicted?'

'I would say without question.'

'Then why did he not tell me?'

At this, Dr Redfern averted his eyes. He made a pensive

face, and tugged at one ear. 'As to that, Madam, I cannot venture to speculate,' he rejoined, flatly.

'Would he know? Would Surgeon Forster have told him?'

'I have no idea.'

'The pox,' Dorothea muttered. 'I cannot ... I have had no pocks, Sir. No pockmarks. Will I be compelled to take a mercury cure?'

'Time will tell us that, Mrs Brande. At present, you have no symptoms to treat. Perhaps none will manifest themselves. Certainly not pocks, as such.'

'It was the ship,' Dorothea said bitterly. She was aware of a mounting sense of anger and despair. 'That ship—I knew it was unhealthy. No doubt my husband contracted his complaint from the convicts.'

'I think not, Madam.'

'Oh, but it must have been then. You cannot conceive of how wretched the conditions were! How unwholesome the air, and tainted the food!'

'On the contrary, Mrs Brande, I am very well aware of what you must have suffered.' Dr Redfern spoke almost roughly, as he folded his arms. 'You may not recall that I was asked by the Governor to hold a medical investigation into conditions aboard the *Surry*, *General Hewitt* and *Three Bees*. I assure you, my inquiries were very thorough.'

'Then how can you say that the mischief was not done then? By the convicts?' In the heat of her passion, Dorothea had forgotten that Dr Redfern himself had once been a convict. She was only reminded of this circumstance after he had sat for a while, observing her with a bright, hard gaze and tapping his chin with two fingers.

'Not—not that I am in any way accusing them,' she mumbled, her voice unsteady. 'Of course I am not unreasonable.'

'Mrs Brande,' Dr Redfern said abruptly, 'you are not my patient, but then neither is Captain Brande. You strike me as an intelligent woman. It has always astonished and troubled me that so many women of your age are ignorant about matters

that have a serious bearing on their health. So I shall tell you what I think, Mrs Brande, because you have asked me for my advice in good faith, and you may draw your own conclusions.' His fingers ceased to move. 'In my opinion,' he declared, watching her face, 'it is *highly unlikely* that the convicts aboard the *General Hewitt* were responsible for working the "mischief", as you call it—because none of those convicts was a woman.' A sharp look. 'I hope that you understand me, Mrs Brande.'

At first, Dorothea did not. Then she uttered a squeak, or bleat, which she stifled behind her hand.

'Forgive me, but it is not an uncommon predicament.' Dr Redfern suddenly shot to his feet. 'I think it very probable, from what you tell me, that the disease was contracted before your marriage, since the union took place only a couple of months before the voyage. And that is all I shall volunteer on the subject, Mrs Brande. If I were treating you both, I might be able to offer you more insight into your condition, but it hardly seems likely. As I said, I can provide you with no useful treatment, at present, and certainly not without an examination.' He retrieved his hat and his bag, before turning back to Dorothea. 'Is there anything more that I might help you with?' he concluded, curtly.

Dorothea was speechless. She could say nothing—do nothing. Her stomach revolted.

She stared at him, her hand still over her mouth.

'It is beginning to rain,' Dr Redfern observed, glancing out the window. Dorothea had not noticed. She barely understood what he was saying to her.

After a minute, he crossed the floor and lifted her wrist between his fingers.

'Stay here, Mrs Brande,' he finally requested, a reluctant trace of softness entering his tone. 'I shall inquire as to whether you might borrow the Governor's carriage. The weather is very wet, and ... you have had a shock, I fear.'

So it was that Dorothea returned home in the vice-regal carriage, through the teeming rain, with a hot brick under her feet and a fine rug around her shoulders.

## EXTRACT—MEMORANDUM FOR MR D'ARCY WENTWORTH

Government House, Sydney, September 13th, 1817

*... Further to your Duties on the Sydney Bench, I have lately been approached by Mrs Charles Brande with a Testimonial concerning one Daniel Callaghan, whose fate seems to be of Particular Concern to her. —I believe you have known me sufficiently long and well enough to require no proof of my abiding Approbation and Regard, and that you will therefore not take exception to my request that you enlighten me as to the circumstances of Callaghan's recent Arrest. —Mrs Brande's claims are no doubt exaggerated, but she merits some consideration at my hands if only on account of her sound Moral Principles and praiseworthy sentiments ...*

*... May I offer you, in addition, my earnest wish for a happy conclusion to your contest with Colonel Molle, whose Charges against you I regard as frivolous and ridiculous in the extreme.*

*I remain with esteem, my dear sir;*

*yours sincerely,*

*L. Macquarie*



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN



THE JOURNEY FROM GOVERNMENT House to Clarence Street, by coach, was not a long one. It was long enough, however, to allow Dorothea sufficient time in which to draw certain conclusions. When she descended from the equipage that had been so generously placed at her disposal, and entered the house wherein her husband awaited her, she had already been transformed.

Her look, beneath a misleading wash of tears, was steely — and her heart even more so.

‘Mrs Brande,’ said Charles, upon meeting her at the door. He spoke in tones of pompous gravity. Stepping back, he indicated that his wife should precede him into the drawing room. Dorothea could only conjecture, as she surveyed his rigid posture and icy expression, that he intended to present her with an exhaustive and formally worded list of her many failings.

Fortunately, however, she had the wit to prevent him from doing so.

‘You killed our children,’ she said, before he had the opportunity to draw breath.

He blinked, and his jaw sagged. ‘What?’

‘You killed our children,’ she repeated. ‘You contracted the pox, you gave it to me, and you killed our children.’

To her immense and abiding satisfaction, he turned white.

‘Do not attempt to deny it,’ she continued, from her

position of advantage. 'I have sought a medical opinion on the matter. It is indisputable.'

'You are mistaken—'

'No.'

'On the contrary—'

'Do you deny it?'

'Of course I deny it!' His face was now suffused with hot blood. 'This is—this is outrageous! Absurd! How *dare* you accuse me of such a thing, how *dare* you—you, of all people—'

'I?'

'*You*, Madam! You, with your filthy interest in that whoreson Irishman—'

'*What?*'

'I have eyes in my head, do you think me a fool?'

'I think you a *monster*!' Dorothea cried. 'You betray me with some diseased *whore*, and then you defame *my* virtue?'

'I have never betrayed you!'

'Then what am I to believe? That you married me *knowing* that you were so affected? Despite the disease? Or *because* of it?' She gasped, suddenly, and stared at him in horror. 'Of course. I remember—you were ill. You were ill before I met you. Is that why you married me? Is it? Because you were about to depart on a long tour of duty, and were frightened to expose yourself again to the dangers of pox-ridden *barlots*?'

He seized her, then, in a painful grip. He shook her, and she shrieked, and there was a most undignified scuffle. It ended when she scratched his face, by this means freeing herself from his bruising hold.

'If you touch me again,' she cried, 'the whole world will know! I'll tell the Molles what you did! I'll tell them your dirty secret!'

'Are you mad?' His eyes were anguished; he held his cheek, and his complexion was mottled, and his hair was on end. 'Do you care *nothing* for your reputation?'

'No, I do not! Why should I? You tell me that I have none as it is!'

'I will have you confined!'

'And I will have you examined! By an *honest* doctor! By Dr Redfern, who will not try to hide the truth from me! And I will publish a notice in the *Gazette*!'

'You *are* mad.'

'I am nothing of the sort! I am simply disgusted! You *disgust* me.' Her voice shook. She wanted to spit at his feet. 'You have done this to me, and you offer me not one word of regret—'

'You are mistaken. Someone has lied to you.'

'*You* have lied to me! Since the day we met, you have lied!'

'Who has been defaming me? Who? I demand to know!' He took a step towards her, his fists clenched, whereupon Dorothea screamed at the top of her voice.

'*Emileeee!*' she screeched.

He put his hands to his head. 'For God's sake ...!'

'*Emileeee!*'

'Shut your mouth, you fool!'

'I shall tell her.'

'What?' His expression was so appalled that it was almost laughable.

'I shall tell her the truth,' Dorothea panted, 'if you do not leave this house at once.'

'*What?*'

'Go to the barracks. Go where you will. You may return tomorrow, but I shall not sleep in your bed again.' Her speech became more rapid and more shrill. 'I will return to England. You may say that my health will not survive Madras. You may say what you like—I will not accompany you. I have no love for you. You are a boorish, ill-bred, unreasonable, insensitive man, and it is fortunate that we have been given this opportunity to part without incurring too much indelicate speculation.'

There was a knock on the door. Dorothea glared at Charles. Charles stared at her. His appearance was enough to warrant inquiries about his health. He looked pale, dishevelled and wild-eyed, like a man recently emerged from a bout of the most debilitating and painful illness.

'You—you want to return to England?' he stammered.

'I *shall* return to England.'

'Do you know how much that will cost?'

Another knock—louder, this time. 'Ma'am?' said Emily, from behind the door.

'One moment, Emily!' Dorothea replied, and fixed her husband with an eye devoid of reassurance or affection. He seemed to shrink before it.

'Very—very well,' he said huskily. 'I shall sleep at the barracks.'

'Good.' It occurred to Dorothea, as it had never occurred to her before, that her husband was not, perhaps, the most courageous of men. She noted the thought without much interest, as she bade Emily to return to the kitchen. The housemaid was not required, at present.

'But I suggest, Madam, that you are not well,' Charles continued, with a break in his voice after Emily had departed. 'I suggest that you are suffering from fever of the brain, and that you should consult a doctor.'

'I *have* consulted a doctor,' his wife retorted. 'That, Sir, is where your difficulties lie.'

He regarded her for a moment, narrow-eyed. 'Redfern,' he declared at last, in truly venomous accents. 'This is Redfern's work.'

'I warn you, Sir—if you set Captain Sanderson onto him, I shall be testifying against you in court.'

'You are ... good God, you are unspeakable. I am ashamed that you bear my name.'

'No more than *I* am.'

He appeared to be at a loss, for while his mouth flapped, no sound emerged. Then he turned on his heel—almost staggering—and made as if to depart. But when he reached the threshold, he paused. He swung around to face her.

'I hope you understand what people will think of you, if you proceed in this manner,' he hissed, and left the room.

Dorothea did not succumb to tears upon his departure.

Instead she felt triumphant, invigorated, and filled with a heady but quite unwholesome rage. She immediately went to her bedroom, where she began to make a collection of personal belongings. These included four silk handkerchiefs, a net handkerchief, a pair of fine leather gloves, two pairs of shoe roses, a pair of silk stockings, a pair of cotton stockings, a gauze muslin veil, a handworked reticule, five silk ribbons, three large white feathers (for evening wear), a bottle of Hungary water, a set of hardened and clarified quills, a set of darning needles, a roll of cotton tape, three pearl buttons, a pair of pearl earrings, a silver chain, a point-lace fichu, a saracen slip, one printed cotton morning gown, one plain Indian muslin skirt, and one embroidered muslin gown from Heading, Ashby, Allsop and Co., of Pall Mall.

Having gathered these items into a large, drugget bundle—which was placed under the bed—she went to the kitchen, where she requested from Emily a bit of tongue and pudding, washed down by several cups of tea. She informed the girl that Charles would not be dining in the house that evening. Though he would doubtless return on the morrow, she added breezily, he would not be requiring breakfast. Emily looked askance, but said nothing. Her manner had become very timid of late.

Daniel's arrest had shaken her a good deal.

'If you happen to hear Captain Brande knocking on the door, at any time during the night,' Dorothea added, with a kind of fierce enjoyment, 'kindly do not admit him. I shall deal with the matter myself.'

Emily rolled her eyes nervously. 'Yes, Ma'am.'

'If you will attend me now, Emily, I shall retire forthwith. Tomorrow is going to be a very taxing day.'

Despite these brave words, Dorothea did not expect that her night's rest would refresh her. Indeed, she scarcely expected to sleep at all. She was consequently very much surprised when, after burrowing into her bed at half-past nine, she woke the next morning at six o'clock, having slept the night through. She was excessively pleased with herself for this

accomplishment. It argued a strength of mind that she had not anticipated.

She made a good breakfast of cured ham and eggs before setting off, on the stroke of eight, for George Street, taking with her the drugget bundle and her housemaid (who was required to carry the bundle). It was a fine morning, sunny and fresh. The previous night's rain had washed much of the filth from the streets, and the obnoxious odours from the air. It had also left the footpaths very muddy. With a sigh for her padded hems, Dorothea resigned herself to a dirty walk, grateful that she would not be going to Government House again. Peg Whiting's public house was much closer—not far from Charlotte Place. By crossing the churchyard of St Philip's, Dorothea would be forced to endure very little in the way of discommoding traffic, for the Captain's Inn stood near the George Street guardhouse.

It was a mean little cottage of brick and shingle. A painted sign at the front of it showed a seaman in gold epaulettes and a cocked hat, hoisting a black bottle. The name 'Whiting' was inscribed on its walls in large, black letters. Its garden, behind a rickety paling fence, had a scrubby, sandy appearance. Its windows were shuttered.

When Dorothea stopped in front of it, Emily looked at her in astonishment.

'Ma'am?' she said.

'Wait here,' Dorothea replied. 'I must speak to someone.' Then, taking the bundle from her maidservant, she swallowed, and passed through the open door of the establishment.

She found herself in a large, low room containing a big open fireplace and two long tables. A knife was chained to each table, and two small, black oil lamps provided illumination. The air smelled of woodsmoke, tobacco smoke and beer. Hardwood benches lined the walls. Something was boiling in a pot over the fire.

A harassed-looking woman, of about Dorothea's age, shuffled across the beaten-earth floor to greet her new guest. Already the benches were partly occupied; two elderly men of

bedraggled appearance were conversing in low voices, as they ate bread and cheese and drank from thick-based tumblers. Another woman sat morosely in a corner, holding a half-empty wine glass.

Dorothea shrank back at the sight of these people.

'Can I 'elp you?' the harassed-looking woman inquired. Dorothea recognised her from Rose's funeral. She was Peg Whiting's daughter.

The woman frowned suddenly, and said: 'Ain't you Mrs Brande?'

'Yes. Yes, I am. May I speak to Peg, please?'

'To Ma? Yes'm—directly. *Ma!*' A piercing yelp. '*Come out 'ere, there's comp'ny!*' She offered up a watery, pitiable smile. 'She's in back—in the bedroom. Will you sit down, Mrs Brande?'

'I—thank you, no.' Dorothea had noted with a wince the greasy patina of the benches. 'I shall stand, if I may.'

'Cup o' tea?'

'No, thank you.'

'Ere she is.' Peg had emerged from a door near the fireplace. She was frowning, and wiping her hands on her apron. A small child clung to her skirts. 'Look, Ma—hit's Mrs Brande!' her daughter announced, unnecessarily.

By this time the room's other inhabitants were watching Dorothea with great interest, and had no doubt committed her name to memory. Seeing this, Peg shook off the small child, and approached Dorothea with a protective air. She said: 'You shouldn't be in 'ere, Madam—we'll take a turn outside, shall we?'

'Yes, but—'

'We'll talk outside.'

It was a great relief to Dorothea when they emerged from the house. She allowed herself to be led around the back of it, where a kitchen garden had been scratched out of the dry soil and wet washing had been draped over the fence. A dog tied to a post watched them narrowly. A black-and-white native bird ambled between scattered nut-shells.

'What brings you 'ere, Mrs Brande?' Peg wanted to know. 'You're looking right poorly, if I may say so.'

'I wish to sell a few things,' Dorothea said abruptly. With some effort, she lifted her bundle. 'Clothes and jewellery. Needles. Items of that sort.' Despite having resolved not to allow herself to feel embarrassed, Dorothea coloured as Peg Whiting blinked. 'I came to you for assistance because I have not the least idea how I might go about it. I thought you might help.'

'Well, and why not?' Peg declared, with ready sympathy. 'Would you be wanting currency, Mrs Brande, or rum in payment?'

'Oh!' Dorothea had not given the matter any consideration. 'I should think—well, I had hoped for sterling ...'

'Is that so?' Peg made a pensive face. 'Then I fear you'll be getting less of it, Madam—'

'Currency, then. Whatever I may. Do you know of anyone who might purchase these things?'

'I do. I do hindeed. Is it a pawnshop you're a-wanting, or a dealer?'

Dorothea recoiled from the very word pawnshop. Lowering her voice, she assured Peg that she did not intend to buy the articles back. 'I shall be leaving the colony, soon,' she explained, in flustered accents, 'and have an immediate need for money.'

'A dealer, then. I know one or two as would give you a fair price.'

'Indeed? Who are they?'

'Well, now ...' Peg pursed her lips, and wrinkled her nose, and rubbed her ear. 'When I say as 'ow they'd give *you* a fair price, Madam, they'd not give it directly. If they saw *you*, you'd lose a quarter the value. Best leave it to me.'

Dorothea stared in confusion.

'I'll not cheat you, Mrs Brande,' Peg continued soberly. 'I swear on me life. You ain't never done me a hill turn, and I'll never forget as 'ow you paid your respects to poor Rose. Give



'em to me, Ma'am, and I'll see it won't cost you a penny. You'll 'ave the money by tomorrow noon.'

Dorothea hesitated, but not for long. She realised that Peg was more worthy of her trust than a strange 'dealer', whose vulgar curiosity was bound to be mortifying—far more so than Peg's—and whose place of business might prove to lie somewhere in the very heart of the Rocks, among the most coarse and villainous of its inhabitants.

So she surrendered her bundle to Peg, extracting from her a promise that the sum raised by this proposed sale would be delivered by Peg herself, to the Brandes' house, as soon as it was paid over.

Then she and Emily went to the gaol, to visit Daniel.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT



THE GAOL WAS A large, stone structure surrounded by a high, stone wall. It lay between George and Harrington streets; to reach it, Dorothea was obliged to penetrate more deeply into the infamous region of the Rocks than she ever had before. She was therefore much relieved when she and Emily encountered no corpses, flying bottles or leering, drunken seamen. On the contrary, they passed a good many females engaged in domestic occupations (bearing baskets of food or clothes, for example), together with a number of stray beasts and hordes of children. They saw very few convicts dressed in Government slops, and no sailors at all.

When they reached the gaol, Dorothea was surprised at the ease with which they gained admittance.

Upon giving their names to the constable at the gate (a man of hideous appearance, who had lost most of his nose), Dorothea and Emily were immediately invited to enter. They were then required to wait in a kind of brick gatehouse, for approximately fifteen minutes, under the kindly eye of one Constable Chandler. While his noseless companion went off to consult the gaoler on Dorothea's behalf, the genial Constable Chandler entertained them with snippets of gossip concerning the gaol and its inmates. He informed them that a man was expected to hang that afternoon, and that Constable Phelan had had his nose chewed off by a pig, while lying drunk in his own garden.

Presently, Constable Phelan returned. He bade Dorothea follow him, and conducted her across the earthen gaolyard, which was empty except for the gallows (from which she averted her eyes) and an arrangement of three long shafts of wood which Dorothea recognised as a triangle. Though she could see, in passing, no evidence of the brutal punishment associated with this construction—no dried blood or fragments of flesh—she faltered, and felt ill, and wondered if she was going to faint.

She had not brought her smelling bottle with her.

'This way,' Constable Phelan grunted, upon perceiving her hesitation. He did not comment on her pallor, or her trembling lip.

He led her into a small, brick building which stood separate from the main gaol, and waited with her in a little room that contained nothing but hardwood benches and a pile of lumber. It had damp-stained, whitewashed walls and a barred window. It was very chilly, even on this sunny day.

Dorothea was invited to sit on one of the benches.

She was beginning to regret having left Emily in the gatehouse. On reflection, it had not been at all kind to Emily, who was only a young girl. What if she should become frightened? What if Constable Chandler should become disagreeably attentive? Dorothea told herself that she had hoped to spare Emily the distress of seeing Daniel confined, but wondered, even as she did so, if her motives had been entirely praiseworthy.

It had occurred to her that speaking freely with Daniel would prove to be difficult if Emily was present. Aware that the measures she had taken might, very possibly, be regarded as excessive by a great number of people, she did not want the girl to know what she was doing on Daniel's behalf.

'Ah,' said Constable Phelan, who was peering through the window. He had been waiting with obvious impatience. Now he went to the door, and hailed someone, and disappeared. Shortly afterwards, a man who might very well have been another constable (though he wore no stock or blue jacket) entered the room. He was escorting Daniel Callaghan.

Dorothea rose to greet them, unaware of what she was doing. Daniel, she saw, looked tired and dirty. His flesh was unmarked, but his legs were chained, so that he shuffled along in the most distressing manner. He still wore his own clothes. (That, at least, was reassuring.) He was unshaven. There were dark rings around his eyes. The defeated set of his broad shoulders was terrible to behold.

Clearly, the constable intended to remain with him. Daniel would not be left alone in Dorothea's company.

'Ma'am,' said Daniel, in a hoarse voice, and almost stumbled. He stared at her as he might have stared at an apparition. The shock of his physical presence had left her speechless; before she could even utter a greeting, he spoke again.

'Ye should not be here,' he stammered. 'This—this is no place for ye.'

'I had to come,' she replied, acutely conscious of the constable's dead-eyed regard. 'I wanted to tell you what I have been doing. I have been working to have you freed, Daniel.'

'Forgive me, Ma'am, but I never betrayed ye, never. As God is my witness.'

'I know.'

'I'd die before I'd do such a thing—'

'*I know.*' The anguish in his voice almost caused her to lose control of her feelings. She was more deeply affected than she had ever thought possible—doubtless the sight of the gallows had unsettled her. But with an enormous effort of will she contrived to swallow the lump that had been rising in her throat. 'I have spoken to Governor Macquarie on your behalf,' she quavered, whereupon the constable shifted, and Daniel's eyes widened. 'His Excellency has promised to look into your case. He was very kind. I told him that you were innocent of any wrongdoing, and that if you gave information to Tom Hodges regarding Mr Horsley, you did so with no malicious intent.' Feeling a little more confident, and a little less distraught, she went on in firmer tones. 'I intend to have you released from prison. You do not belong here—why, you have

not been convicted! It is monstrous that you should be so detained. I shall consult an attorney on the matter.'

'Ma'am ... ah, Jaysus.' His dark eyes were wet. 'I'm not deservin' o'this.'

'Of course you are.'

'No. I've done ye a terrible disservice. I went to Hodges, and I let him deceive me. I mistrusted him, but I favoured him—when 'tis yeerself I should have been mindful of, always. I was boastin' about the quality I served, at yeer table, and I spoke of Mr Horsley—God, God what a fool!' He moved convulsively, so that his chains clinked. 'I'd not have ye troubled, and look at this!'

'Why did he do it?' Dorothea wanted to know. 'Why did he save your life, and then betray you?'

Daniel shook his head. He had his hands tucked beneath his armpits, as if frightened of what they might do if not restrained. 'Maybe he has been spoiled, since landin',' he replied, 'but I think not. He's stunted in his growth, and might have needed me on board ship. I was one o' the largest among us there.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea.

'Ma'am, I'd not have ye trouble yeerself. Anythin' but that.'

'Nevertheless, I shall consult an attorney.'

'Ma'am—'

'You are an innocent man! I shall not stand by and see you condemned!'

Dorothea spoke with a good deal too much passion. She saw the colour flow into Daniel's cheeks. When it had drained away, it left him looking white and exhausted. He said, 'Captain Brande will not like it,' with a speaking glance, and Dorothea coloured in turn.

'Captain Brande's opinions,' she replied in muffled accents, 'are of no interest to me.'

Daniel closed his eyes, briefly.

'Please do not despair,' Dorothea continued. 'Be sanguine, for I shall do everything in my power to assist you.'

'Ma'am —'

'I must go now.' She had glanced down and seen the leather cuffs that he now wore around his ankles, beneath the dragging irons. She had remembered the scars that these cuffs concealed, and knew that, if she did not go immediately, her overwrought nerves would get the better of her. She would faint, or vomit, or burst into tears. 'I must go, but I shall return.'

'No. Please. 'Tis not fit for ye —'

'Goodbye,' she muttered. 'I'm sorry.' With a handkerchief pressed to her mouth, she hurried past Daniel and out of the room. Crossing the gaolyard unsteadily, she found Emily waiting by the gate.

Within minutes they were again on George Street, heading home.

The fact that Dorothea found herself able to complete this journey, however brief, without succumbing to any wild demonstrations of sorrow was entirely attributable to her well-developed sense of dignity. She walked with a steady gait and a calm expression. Upon reaching her house, she did not retire to bed, but went directly to the drawing room, where she penned a letter to Mr Frederick Garling; it was even more to her credit that this communication, which sought to engage Mr Garling's services, was simple and coherent, and written in a clear, flowing script. In it, she praised Mr Garling's spirited work on Mr Greenway's behalf. Then she inquired as to the attorney's scale of fees, and gave a brief account of Daniel Callaghan's predicament.

She finished by requesting an interview with Mr Garling at the earliest opportunity. Time, she wrote, was of the essence.

Emily was sent to deliver this letter directly to Mr Garling's house, though Dorothea knew that he might not be at home. She had no notion at all of what his movements might be; he might be in court, or visiting friends, or consulting the Judge Advocate. But she could not have Emily running all over town, searching for him. Eventually he would return to his house, at which point he would receive Dorothea's urgent request.

She was anxious about the cost of engaging him. She did

not know, yet, if the sale of her possessions would cover the expense of his hire. Fretting about money, however, was preferable to fretting about Daniel's shackled feet, or her own state of health. She was accustomed to fretting about money, whereas she could not even bear to reflect on what the future might hold for Daniel—or for herself, in fact. Would symptoms of her disease begin to manifest themselves? If so, when? And what might she expect?

She had been too shocked to make inquiries of Dr Redfern the previous night. Now, though she might easily have consulted him again, she did not know that she wanted to. She did not know that she wanted to hear what he might say. Not now. Not while she had so many other things to worry about.

Later, perhaps.

Her thoughts were so tormented that she was forced to keep herself occupied. She did this, firstly, by writing a letter to Governor Macquarie, thanking him for his kind consideration, reminding him of his promise, and relating to him Daniel's thoughts on the reason behind Tom Hodges' betrayal of him. This task kept her busy until half-past ten. Afterwards, she cast around the kitchen for something that she might prepare for dinner. The larder was not well stocked, but she found scraps enough for a ragout, and began to chop vegetables. Then Emily returned, with news that Mr Garling's letter had been delivered into the hands of his manservant. Mr Garling would reply as soon as was practicable.

Dorothea was anxiously awaiting this reply, and pulling carrots from the vegetable garden, when Peg Whiting addressed her from behind the paling fence. It was just after two o'clock. The sun was so bright that Dorothea had to shade her eyes before she could identify the source of the jovial 'Mrs Brande!' that had caused her to look up. She was greatly astonished when she recognised her former maidservant's generous form, not having expected to see it again so soon.

'Why—Peg!' she exclaimed.

'Now, will you look at this 'ere garden?' said Peg. 'What a

good job the croppy's done. All them pinks, there—lovely. And the turnip greens! I'll give 'im 'is due, 'e was always a fine 'and in the garden.'

'Yes,' said Dorothea. She could not bring herself to speak at length; the subject was too painful.

'I done what you asked of me, Mrs Brande,' Peg added, lowering her voice somewhat. 'Do you want to go inside?'

'Yes, I—certainly. Go around the front, if you please, and I shall meet you there.'

They parted, and came together again at the front door. Dorothea conducted Peg into the drawing room, where she learned that Peg had been vouchsafed a 'bit o' good luck'. A certain fellow had passed through the shop, that morning, not long after Mrs Brande's departure. When consulted as to the possible value of Mrs Brande's possessions, his eyes had very nearly 'popped outer 'is 'ead'.

'It's fine stuff, what you gave me,' Peg added, with a sidelong glance. 'As good as I hever saw. 'E ummed and aahed, but I could see 'e was keen, right enough, so I wouldn't let 'im gull me.' Fumbling around her neck, Peg drew out of her garments a purse on a string, which she emptied of its contents. Several notes—and numerous coins—fell into her lap. One of the coins bounced onto the floor, and rolled under the sofa. 'Fifty-two pound ten,' Peg declared triumphantly. 'Ten pound sterling, the rest currency. Most money I hever saw at the one time—and a right good price, Ma'am, if I may say so.'

Awestruck, Dorothea gazed at the glinting silver, the crumpled paper. She had not expected so substantial a sum. Fifty-two pounds! The price of her husband's affection.

Every one of the articles sold to realise this total had been bestowed on her by Charles.

'Th-thank you,' she stammered. 'Thank you very much indeed.'

''Twas the jewellery that made the difference,' Peg observed, dumping the money into Dorothea's lap. 'Well, and I trust it'll all prove 'elpful to you, Madam. Is the croppy



about? I'd like a quick word, if I may. Find out 'ow 'e's faring.'

'Daniel is not here, at present,' Dorothea replied. She said nothing about his unhappy circumstances, but allowed Peg to babble on for several minutes before expressing her gratitude once more, offering up a coin which was cheerfully accepted. She was feeling a little dazed. With fumbling hands she gathered the rest of the money into a handkerchief, while Peg delivered herself of various opinions concerning the harvest, the state of the road to Parramatta, and the latest accidental drowning of a small child off the Government wharf. Though obviously curious about the transaction that she had undertaken for Dorothea, Peg displayed an almost astonishing delicacy in the restraint with which she expressed herself on the subject. Having made a few gently inquisitive remarks about Dorothea's 'coming voyage' and the 'tiring preparations' associated with it, she seemed quite content with the vague replies that she received.

She departed at a quarter before three, leaving Dorothea to rummage about frantically in her workbasket and linen press. It seemed to her that the wisest course would be to sew the money into one of her old petticoats, in such a way as to prevent it from clinking together. No one would think to seek out fifty-two pounds and ten shillings in the hem of her petticoat.

She was still engaged in this painstaking and time-consuming task when Charles returned from the barracks. He walked straight in, without knocking. He left Jack Lynch in the front garden.

Dorothea glared at her husband as he entered the drawing room.

'You should knock,' she said, and caught him off guard.

'What?'

'You should knock before entering.' Fortunately, she had had time to bundle up her work, and conceal the glint of silver. Charles, moreover, was so profoundly uninterested in domestic chores that his eyes had not even strayed to the articles with which her hands were occupied.

Even so, being anxious to conceal from him her sudden possession of wealth, she was annoyed at his abrupt intrusion.

'I may not wish to admit you into my presence,' she declared, and he flushed, and lost his rigid posture.

'You are ridiculous,' he spluttered. 'Do you *still* intend to proceed with this absurd charade?'

'I do not understand you.'

'I have given you a night alone to reflect on your errors. Surely you must concede that you have been unjust?'

'Not at all.'

'For God's *sake*! I am your *husband*!'

'And I am your wife. And you betrayed me—'

'I did *not*!'

'I see no purpose in discussing this any further. I have told you my feelings. You disgust me. I have no love for you. It is better that we should live apart.'

Charles gasped. The hectic colour in his face deepened. 'This is *my house*, Madam! I pay the *rent*!' he cried, his eyes glittering in a most suspicious fashion. Surely, Dorothea thought, those cannot be tears? Then she realised: he is going all to pieces. But she could not summon up much sympathy. He had used up all the sympathy due to him long ago.

'I did not mean that we should live apart here,' she explained, in a more gentle manner. 'There is so little time before your ship sails—it will not be a *great* hardship if we occupy the same house until you leave. But not the same bed. If you wish, I shall sleep on the sofa.'

'What do you mean, until I leave?' Charles seemed bewildered. 'We shall both be sailing on the *Matilda*, surely?'

'No.'

'*No*? But—'

'I do not want to sail to England via Madras. I want to sail there directly. And the *Matilda* will not do that.'

'But—'

'I shall wait here until a ship arrives that will take me directly to England.'

Charles was shaking. In faltering accents he protested and complained, and finally pleaded. Why had she not changed her mind? What would everyone think? Why should she not accompany him to India? She might come to her senses, if given sufficient time to do so. She might choose to stay with him, rather than proceeding home.

Dorothea replied that her health would not permit such an arduous voyage. She was determined to return to England, and by the least taxing route. If Charles should take exception to this, she would tell Mrs Molle exactly why her health was so poor.

'I do not care that everyone should know,' she said passionately, 'because my life is ruined in any case. I will have no children. I am married to a man I do not respect. What matter that society should be aware that I am diseased, and very probably betrayed? I care nothing for that! Nothing! I want to go home! I want my sister! And you *will not stop me!*'

Her voice cracked, and Charles approached her with an outstretched hand. But when she threw her scissors at his face, he retreated. He called her insane. She called him reprehensible. Prevented from raising his hand to her—by the threat of exposure, if not his own want of courage—he was driven from the room, at last, though not from the house.

He went to the kitchen and demanded his dinner, which he toyed with alone, in the dining room, displaying a distinct want of appetite. Dorothea ate in the kitchen. Afterwards, they retired to separate quarters, Charles gaining possession of the bedroom while Dorothea occupied her maidservant's hammock. She pushed a travelling chest against the door of the room in which she slept, to discourage Charles from approaching her during the night.

The next morning, she waited behind this barrier until he had departed. Nothing would persuade her to emerge while he was in residence. Though he stormed and entreated and even kicked at the door, she remained unmoved. Her only concern was that Mr Garling's letter might arrive, and that Charles

might retain custody of it—might perhaps even use it to extract from her certain promises.

But the letter did not arrive until a quarter before noon. By then, Charles had left the house to attend to his duties, and Dorothea had fretted herself almost into a prostrate condition. Unfortunately, her state of mind did not suffer any improvement when she became acquainted with the letter's contents.

It was a wordy epistle, three pages long. In it, Mr Garling offered her his very sincere compliments, and professed himself gratified by her praise. Naturally, he had been eager to assist her in this particular, and had taken it upon himself, before answering her missive of the fourteenth instant, to acquaint himself with the facts of the case that so interested her. It had occurred to him, upon reading her account of it, that circumstances might be favourable to application being made for a writ of habeas corpus.

However, he was desolated to inform her that, upon inquiring into the matter, he had discovered that the said Daniel Callaghan had been tried and convicted on the afternoon of September the thirteenth—to wit, yesterday. It appeared that certain people of authority had been anxious that he receive a speedy trial. Mrs Brande's own testimonial regarding the character of the accused had undoubtedly worked very much in his favour, for the charge of conspiring to rob Mr Horsley had been dropped—and with it the possibility of any corporal punishment being inflicted upon Daniel Callaghan. The defendant Tom Hodges had been sentenced to a public whipping through the streets at a cart's tail, followed by twelve months' hard labour in Newcastle. Daniel Callaghan, convicted only of receiving stolen goods, had been treated well in comparison.

*Three months' Hard Labour on a roadgang, wrote Mr Garling, was the very best outcome that might have been expected, in the circumstances. Even if an Appeal were possible, Mrs Brande, it would almost certainly be unsuccessful, the defendant Callaghan having admitted, under oath, that he had nursed a suspicion regarding the true*

*ownership of the articles found in his possession, but had been reluctant to act on this suspicion, in the hope that it might be unfounded.*

Mr Garling expressed his disappointment in the fact that he could be of little use to Mrs Brande. It was *most* unfortunate that Callaghan had been tried with such expedition (owing to Dr Wentworth's intervention, he believed), but he was nevertheless of the opinion that, had Fate allowed him to act as Daniel Callaghan's agent, no more favourable an outcome could have been achieved. The stolen goods had, indisputably, been found in Daniel's possession. Even had Daniel been prevented from admitting that he was to some degree culpable, in not having alerted the police, it was doubtful that he would have been acquitted.

*I cannot flatter myself that I could have succeeded in convincing the Bench of Daniel Callaghan's innocence, Mr Garling concluded, when Callaghan himself seemed less than convinced.*

The matter, therefore, should probably be allowed to rest. Pursuing it further would undoubtedly result in a fruitless expenditure of money and effort, especially in light of the fact that Callaghan had been preserved from that form of punishment for which Mrs Brande had expressed such a reasonable and passionate abhorrence. But if Mr Garling could be of service to Mrs Brande in any other way, he would be delighted to put his professional experience at her disposal. For the present, he had the honour to remain, &c, &c, Frederick Garling, Attorney at Law.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE



IT WAS SOME TIME before Dorothea recovered from the shock occasioned by Mr Garling's letter.

Her sense of disbelief was paralysing. Her powers of reason were overthrown, and her limbs deprived of all strength. She could not think what to do. 'How could this happen?' was the phrase that fell from her lips, over and over again. It was inconceivable to her that the Governor could have failed her so grievously.

She lay on the sofa, with her smelling bottle under her nose, until feelings of anger and dismay began to supersede her initial numb astonishment. Daniel on a roadgang! It was impossible to contemplate. How could the Governor have *permitted* such a thing? She was furious with him. Furious with Dr Wentworth. Furious with Daniel, who had so stupidly admitted to doubts that, she was sure, he had not really entertained. And even if he had, were such doubts sufficient to condemn a man to hard labour for three months? It was absurd. It was unendurable.

She got up, and fetched her portable writing desk.

Then she changed her mind. What purpose would it serve to engage in a tedious—and probably fruitless—correspondence with a man who seemed so unresponsive to an appeal made in person? She would not write to the Governor. She would confront him again, and demand a pardon for

Daniel. There was such a thing as a Governor's pardon; she had heard mention of it. Why should it not be bestowed on Daniel, who would in any case have been eligible for his ticket-of-leave within months, had he not been so cruelly betrayed?

She went to the bedroom, where she donned her bonnet, gloves and pelisse. Having already once walked to Government House, she was not at all dismayed by the thought of having to walk there again. On the contrary, she welcomed the opportunity to relieve her feelings by indulging in a little brisk exercise. Perhaps, if she were tired enough, she would not be tempted to harangue the Governor like an angry shrew.

The weather was dull, but dry. Bridge Street was therefore less dirty than it had been on her previous excursion. She kept her head modestly lowered, and her gaze on the uneven surface of the road. Once more, she suffered no indignities more offensive to her sensibilities than the noisy expelling of spittle, and a leering, sidelong glance from a vulgar-looking man who tipped his hat in a very pointed manner as he passed her. No convict gangs caused her any peculiar distress. No offensive language was employed in her vicinity. With her destination only minutes away, she was beginning to congratulate herself on having accomplished her purpose when she reached the respectable end of Bridge Street, and almost collided with Mr John Thomas Campbell.

Mr Campbell, it seemed, was returning home from Government House. He was on foot and laden with papers—one folio of which he was examining as he strolled towards his front gate. Dorothea had been scurrying along with her head down (lest she be recognised by Mrs Wylde, or her ilk), and all but cannoned into Mr Campbell, stopping only as she caught sight of his highly polished boot.

Mr Campbell, for his part, dropped some of his papers. There was a flustered moment of gasps and apologies. Dorothea was mortified, and the Governor's secretary much startled. But he recovered quickly—being a man of enormous

self-possession—and insisted on retrieving the documents himself.

Then he bowed, and bade her a very good morning, and delivered himself of the opinion that she was undoubtedly paying a call. On Mrs Cowper, perhaps?

Dorothea blushed. She could not help herself. She had met Mr Campbell infrequently, and had never found him particularly amiable. Born in Ireland of Scotch descent, he possessed a dour manner, a hard eye and a derisive sense of humour. Now, wilting a little beneath his steady and searching regard, she wondered if he might prove useful to her.

She thought perhaps not.

'I am—I do not intend to call on Mrs Cowper,' she stammered. 'No, Sir.'

'On someone else?' he inquired, with an even more piercing look. Charles had always described him as the Governor's watchdog, and at last Dorothea understood why. He watched her carefully, like a hound pacing behind a fence. Did he know of her recent visit to the Governor?

It occurred to her that he probably did. He was the Governor's secretary, after all.

Drawing on every ounce of courage at her disposal, she replied that she was intending to call on His Excellency, if His Excellency would receive her. Perhaps Mr Campbell would have the kindness to assist her in some way? Her business was of the most urgent kind.

'Ah,' said Mr Campbell. He pursed his lips, glanced about (as if to ascertain whether anyone was close enough to overhear), and finally remarked, upon turning his gaze once more to Dorothea, 'This would be regarding your manservant, Mrs Brande? Forgive me, I cannot recollect his name.'

'Daniel,' said Dorothea. 'Daniel Callaghan.' Suddenly she gasped. She had remembered. 'You convicted him!' she exclaimed. 'You were on the Bench! Yesterday—you and Dr Wentworth, and Mr Lord—'



'Why not step into my house, Mrs Brande? We can discuss the matter in comfort, there.'

'How *could* you? Did you not read the letter that I sent to Dr Wentworth?'

'Please, Mrs Brande—if you would ...'

She was obliged to accept his invitation, since he did not seem inclined to answer her questions in the street. For the first time, she entered his stately home, which—though it did not in any way compare to Bideham Park—would have filled Charles with envy. Its ceilings were high, its furnishings sparse but tasteful. It had joinery of the most admirable finish, and a light, airy quality that was attributable to its large windows and excellent proportions. It was, in every sense, a gentleman's abode.

Mr Campbell conducted Dorothea into his office, which was extraordinarily crowded, but very neatly arranged. The sight of so much paper, in so many pigeonholes, awed Dorothea. Her fiery sense of outrage was somewhat dampened as she gazed around her at the banks of ledgers and piles of correspondence. My goodness, she thought, how *busy* he must be!

Without a single protest, she sank into the chair that Mr Campbell cleared for her use.

'Forgive the disarray,' he said, and dumped a load of papers onto his writing table. 'Now. Mrs Brande. I understand that you have already approached the Governor on your manservant's behalf, is that the case?'

'Yes,' Dorothea replied, in rather subdued accents.

'I know this,' he continued, 'because I myself was charged with having a copy made of the memorandum that His Excellency sent to Dr Wentworth, in response to your appeal.'

'Oh,' said Dorothea.

'You should understand, Mrs Brande, that a concerted effort was made to ensure that your manservant received a fair and speedy trial. That every magistrate on the Sydney Bench, though not exactly *prejudiced* in his favour, was certainly inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt.'

'Then why did you punish him?' Dorothea wailed. 'He is an innocent man!'

'Come now, Mrs Brande.' Seating himself, Mr Campbell folded his arms across his breast. 'If you were approached by a convict, who asked you to mind a gold watch and silver snuffbox, would you not query the origins of these articles?'

'Not if I owed him my life! Not if I *trusted* him!'

'Mrs Brande, your man did not trust him. This much was established in court.' He rubbed his nose, and grimaced. 'With all the goodwill in the world, Mrs Brande, we could not have ignored the facts. And I should tell you that receiving stolen goods is a crime that must be discouraged at all costs. Any number of excuses may be offered—indeed, they *are* offered, on countless occasions—but where would we be if we accepted them? We could not, in good conscience, exculpate your manservant. Not before the law. But we gave him the lightest possible sentence.'

'You think three months on a roadgang a *light sentence*?' Dorothea protested, and Mr Campbell's tone became less conciliatory.

'The customary sentence,' he rejoined drily, 'is twelve months.'

'But he is a good man!'

'So you have attested. Hence our leniency.'

'Mr Campbell, I do not think it justified. I do not, indeed.'

'Forgive me, Madam, but justified or not, it is the law.'

He was quite calm. Dorothea eyed him despairingly, recalling Mr Garling's opinion on her chances of appealing the sentence. She knew nothing of the law. Its representatives seemed to be ranged against her.

But did the Governor number among them?

'If I were to appeal to His Excellency,' she declared, dry-mouthed, 'he might issue Daniel with a pardon, is that not so?' Whereupon she had the pleasure of seeing Mr Campbell blink, and look surprised.

'A pardon?' he echoed.

'The Governor can issue a pardon, can he not?'

'Not in these circumstances.' Mr Campbell leaned forward. He had composed himself with his customary swiftness, and spoke gravely, and earnestly. 'Mrs Brande,' he said, 'only people such as Dr Redfern and Mr George Howe, the editor of the *Gazette*, receive free pardons. They are people, sentenced to transportation, whose records have subsequently been unblemished and whose contributions to the wellbeing and respectability of this colony merit such a high honour. Absolute pardons—or even conditional pardons—are not to be had for the asking. Especially not where a man has been twice convicted.'

Dorothea swallowed. 'But if the Governor were to pardon Daniel for this crime alone ...' she began, almost in a whisper, trailing off as Mr Campbell shook his head.

'His Excellency, Mrs Brande, would not be inclined to overthrow a sentence handed down by a bench composed of men such as Mr D'Arcy Wentworth, and Mr John Wylde. Not even if he were empowered to.'

Dorothea's eyes filled with tears. She could not speak. Presently, Mr Campbell remarked, in a surprisingly gentle voice, that it was a very light sentence—very light indeed. Within twelve weeks, her manservant would be restored to her. A word to the Superintendent of Convicts would ensure that he would not be harshly treated. Why, if she so wished it, he would speak to William Hutchison himself.

'But he will *not* be restored to me!' Dorothea groaned. 'I shall be leaving, soon!'

'Ah. Yes, of course.'

'And who will take him on? He will be branded an incorrigible thief! Mrs Mary Wilde will not want him, I feel sure—he will be assigned to some wretched, tyrannical settler, who will starve him and beat him ...'

'I hardly think so, Mrs Brande. Starving and beating convicts are neither of them permitted by law.'

'But they still happen!' Dorothea cried. 'Do not deny it! And

what if he is *not* assigned? What if they put him to work in some dreadful Government gang?' Her tears began to flow. 'He does not deserve such a thing ... he is so very good and loyal ... a man of noble instincts ... it was an error of judgement ... oh dear, I cannot bear it, I cannot, it is too dreadful ...'

The misery of Daniel's predicament had at last forced itself upon her in all its manifold horror, and she could not prevent herself from responding to it. She plied her handkerchief, and sobbed, and sniffed, and flushed as she struggled to regain her composure. Really, it was a shameful exhibition. She was ashamed of herself. 'Forgive me,' she gasped, 'but the last few days have been very trying ... events at home ... I am not in good health ... forgive me, Sir.'

'There is nothing to forgive,' Mr Campbell said gruffly. He cleared his throat. There was a long pause, during which Dorothea wiped her face, steadied her breathing, and regained control of her voice. Then, before she could apologise again, Mr Campbell said: 'If I might make a suggestion, Mrs Brande?'

Dorothea waited. Now that her eyes were no longer blinded by tears, she could see that he had risen, and was examining (without much interest) the contents of a bookshelf.

'What if you were to write a letter, recommending your manservant?' he continued. 'And what if I were to make a little notation on my calendar, so that in three months, when his sentence has expired, I could arrange to have him assigned to a comfortable situation? Would that improve your spirits, Mrs Brande?'

Dorothea gaped.

'If he is as you say, then I shall have no cause to regret recommending him—or perhaps even employing him. Is that not so, Mrs Brande?' Mr Campbell turned to face her, his hands clasped behind his back. 'Are you *quite certain* that he is honest? Honest and reliable?'

'Oh—oh yes. Yes, indeed!'

'Then you have no doubts as to the wisdom of pursuing such a course?'

'No. Sir, I—I am so very grateful. Oh dear, this is so kind ... so very kind ...'

'Not at all,' he said hastily, exhibiting certain symptoms of alarm. Doubtless he was afraid that she might begin to weep, again. 'Think nothing of it, Madam.'

'You would employ him yourself? On my recommendation?'

'*That* I cannot guarantee. But rest assured, something will be done for him.'

'I would rather he did not go to any regimental establishment,' Dorothea said hurriedly, sensing that her time in that crowded little room was growing short. 'I would prefer it that he went to someone like—like Dr Redfern. Or yourself. Officers can be so unkind to people in his situation.'

Mr Campbell raised his eyebrows. He studied her with a sudden access of interest. 'They can indeed,' he drawled. 'I have perceived it myself.'

'Oh—and Mr Campbell.' Dorothea was thinking rapidly. 'Are you not on the board of the new bank? The Bank of New South Wales?'

He inclined his head, almost with a flourish.

'I am,' he replied.

'Would you also, then, do me the favour of advising me as to how I might deposit some money in an account for Daniel? So that he will have the means by which he might better himself?'

At this, Mr Campbell looked positively rattled. He exclaimed: 'Madam, no *convict* is entitled to open an account with *any* bank!'

'Oh.'

He stared at her, a bemused and wary expression on his face. She was beginning to think that she might have been foolish in even raising the subject, when he suddenly remarked, in cautious accents: 'I suppose that an account might be opened on his behalf. In trust, as it were. Until he was free.'

'Oh?'

'I am not well acquainted with the minutiae of the bank's

regulations. I would have to consult the cashier, Mr Hall.' He hesitated. 'Are you ... ahem ... are you determined to proceed on such a course, Mrs Brande?'

'I should like to. Yes.' All at once, Dorothea saw how Daniel's future might be salvaged. And although she knew that the most vulgar suspicions would surely be aroused, if she was to put a large sum of money at Daniel's disposal, she did not care. Let the colony talk about her, if it chose to. She would not be here to suffer the gossip. 'Would you help me, Mr Campbell?' she said eagerly. 'If I were to give you the money, would you deposit it on my behalf?'

'Well of course, I—if you are *quite* certain—'

'I am. I am indeed. Thank you, Sir. Thank you, I am so *very* much obliged.'

In the end, it was resolved that Mr Campbell himself should open an account, into which Dorothea's money should be deposited. He would then be entrusted with the responsibility of seeing to it that the convict in question received that to which he was entitled. Dorothea placed her entire trust in Mr Campbell, simply because the Governor did. If Mr Campbell had not been an honourable man, she felt sure, he would not have worked in the Governor's employ.

Certainly he behaved like an honourable man. Before opening his new account, he insisted on signing a letter that testified to the fact that he was in possession of Dorothea's money. He did this after discovering that she intended to deposit thirty-two pounds, ten shillings and sixpence.

Clearly, he had not expected so generous a sum.

'You must not think me inquisitive,' he said, upon taking his leave of her in Macquarie Place, 'but may I ask you, Mrs Brande, why you feel it necessary to leave your man with a sufficiency in excess of thirty *pounds*? Half that would have been more than adequate, in my opinion.'

Dorothea looked up, and studied his face. It was not a kindly face, but it was strangely reassuring. The speculative glint in his eye, the stubborn set of his jaw and the subtle

expression of his mouth suggested a character that was at the same time both worldly and high-principled.

So she did not attempt to avoid answering him. Instead, after reflecting for a moment, she replied: 'Even thirty-two pounds, Mr Campbell, will not serve to make amends.'

Then she left him, and went to the gaol. She wished to inform Daniel of the arrangements that she had made on his behalf. Although these arrangements were not precisely what she would have wished, they might at least give him cause to hope, and reason to endure.

She was too late, however. Upon reaching the gaol, she discovered that Daniel had already been sent off, with a draft of men, to repair the lower reaches of the road over the mountains.

## EPILOGUE

*New South Wales  
October 30th, 1827*

*My dearest Margaret,*

*I have no expectation of your reading this letter with any sympathy. Perhaps you are no longer interested in my fate or my progress, now that I have deliberately and irretrievably 'lowered' myself in pursuing a purpose that you have described as absurd, distasteful and perilous. I cannot agree, but I do understand. Despite your disapproval, you remain my sister—even if I am no longer yours. Therefore I have put aside these few minutes to acquaint you with my recent experiences and immediate intentions, in the hope that by doing so, I may to some degree banish your doubts and concerns. I do not regret my actions. So far, nothing has occurred that merits regret.*

*When I left this country ten years ago, I had no intention of ever returning. I abhorred it mightily, believing that it had destroyed everything I held dear—save for yourself, my dearest Margaret, and all the other inhabitants of Bideham. I had lost my health. I had lost my children. I had lost my husband—for though he died some three years later in Madras (as you know), I believe I lost him long before that. I lost him as soon as I began to perceive that he was not the man I had married. You have long condemned me, I know, for the manner in which I abandoned him, allowing him to sail to India two months before I myself left the colony. Perhaps you believe that, had I*



*accompanied him, he would not have perished. But you do not know all the truth. Even had I been at his side, nursing and tending, he would certainly have succumbed to the illness which felled him—for it was not a tropical fever. It was a malady that had plagued him for many years, slowly destroying his reason and depriving him of every physical advantage. More than that I cannot say, for I have already done him a great disservice.*

*The fact is, I have spent the last six years pondering the failure of our marriage, and have come to the conclusion that Charles was not entirely at fault. Though his temper was not easy, his illness certainly inflamed it. Though he could often be boorish and ungenerous, the company he kept was often to blame—for he was easily influenced by it. I do not believe, on reflection, that he was a very strong man, either in his health or in his character. And I freely admit that I could not provide the unending assistance and devotion that a man of his uneasy temperament required. Perhaps another, rarer spirit could have done so, shouldering his weakness as her life's burden. I do not know. I know only that I could not, and in this I failed. Indeed, my 'betrayal' (for so he called it—and so, I suppose, it was) left him irretrievably shaken. When I last saw him, before he sailed to India, he wept even as he railed at me, displaying the attributes of man much set upon by ravaged nerves and unreasonable fears. I pitied him, then—a little. But my heart had hardened against him. It has only softened gradually, over the intervening years.*

*Perhaps I would have been more sympathetic had I not been quite distraught, at the time, over the fate of one Daniel Callaghan. You perhaps do not realise that I had no opportunity even to bid him farewell, though I made several attempts to do so, even visiting Parramatta with that purpose in mind. Alas—I discovered that a journey even as far as the Nepean River was far too expensive and arduous an undertaking for a woman of my breeding to attempt without assistance. I could only leave a letter for him with Mr John Campbell, who promised that it would be delivered to Daniel upon his return to Sydney. I know that you were once suspicious of Mr Campbell, Margaret, though you never expressed your suspicions openly. Let me assure you here that Mr Campbell, while he was of great service to me—arranging my passage home, finding a*

*respectable situation for Emily, and undertaking to keep me apprised of Daniel's fate—was never anything more than a good friend. If we seemed to correspond with unnerving regularity, it was because I wished to keep abreast of Daniel's progress.*

*Daniel is, and always has been, my chief concern. Mr Campbell has put himself at my disposal only as friend and agent.*

*I arrived here on the seventeenth of this month. It was a far more pleasant voyage than the last, if only because Dr Redfern's recommendations as to the treatment of convicts are to some degree being followed. Rebecca, too, was a cheerful and active companion. Upon disembarking from the 'Champion', I discovered that—as I always maintained—Daniel had not been lying to me. Margaret, he does indeed own a farm. It is called Clonmel, as he said, and comprises ninety-two acres of land near Cawdor, in the Cowpastures. He has forty-five head of cattle here, a horse, a plough, a dray, ten cherry, five peach and ten apple trees, four pigs, poultry, ducks, a hayfield and two assigned farm servants—I have seen them all. The farmhouse is not very elegant, comprising only four rooms (including the kitchen), but it is, at least, reasonably dry. Daniel has promised that the bark roof will soon be replaced by a shingle one; he made arrangements to that effect when he came to Sydney to meet me. He is very attentive to my comfort—far more so than Charles ever was, though I know you will not believe it. I was not mistaken in him. He is as I remember, though far more cheerful. A fine man, Margaret. A good, kind, upright, admirable man. Every evening, after the hard labour of the day, he exerts himself further by sitting down to learn his letters, with my assistance. His education is so far advanced that I believe he would no longer require the assistance of a literate person if he was writing to me now. And you must agree, Margaret, that his style of expression was always very beautiful. Though you scoffed at his clumsy signature when he was first able to affix it to someone else's script, you could not despise the manner in which he framed his thoughts, nor indeed the content of those thoughts. Even to you, the nobility of his character was evident.*

*I am as happy here, Margaret, as I will ever be. How can I make you understand? It was not that Bideham was spoiled for me, but that I was spoiled for Bideham. I could not live there, knowing what was*

*happening here. I could not be comfortable. It would be too much to say that I left a portion of my heart in this country, but there can be no doubt that I did leave my peace of mind here. I have retrieved it now, to some degree, though of course the condition in which Charles left me has meant that I am never truly at peace.*

*If I had been able to bear a child, Margaret, doubtless I would not have come—for what kind of home is this, for a child of good breeding? It is a home of fractured hopes and mismatched refugees. But perhaps we shall acquire an orphan, Daniel and I. A little boy to raise as an Elysian farmer, here at the outer limits of the world. I should like that. It would give me some occupation, aside from the remorseless demands of kitchen garden and hen-coop.*

*Society hereabouts is restricted, as you may imagine, and I am glad of it. Though Mrs Macarthur seems happy to receive me, and often calls in as she rides by, I know that she regards me with pity and concern. No doubt she is more generous than many of her friends, who would scorn me if I imposed my presence upon them. So it is as well, perhaps, that our visits to Sydney will be few. In any event, this countryside is far prettier, and more wholesome, than the town. I like it here. It is a quiet and spacious refuge, now that the blacks have ceased to give us any concern. It is a suitable habitation for one such as myself.*

*My life will not be easy, Margaret, and it may not even be long. But it will be useful, and interesting, and deeply, deeply appreciated—you cannot conceive of Daniel's gratitude, for all that it is ill deserved. Perhaps (who knows?) he will come to take me for granted. Perhaps I shall end my days milking cows, and binding sheafs of hay. But even if I do, I shall be grateful. I shall be grateful that God has bestowed on me Daniel's great heart and tender regard, with which he has repaid tenfold any small assistance that I might have rendered him, long ago.*

*And I shall always be grateful that you are my sister, dearest Margaret, for I know that your disapproval has only stemmed from your anxiety on my behalf. Do not be anxious. Do not be distressed. Though I have found a life away from you, I am quite content—and would be perfectly serene if only I were to remain, now and for eternity*

*your loving sister,*

*Dorothea Callaghan*

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