

SCENE NINE

JUDAH rows the boat through the water as ABIGAIL looks around in wonder.

*'The Harbour was an inhabited place. Barges with rust-brown sails, busy little river ferries with smoke whuffing from tall stacks, fishing boats and pleasure boats with finned paddle-wheels, sixty-milers, colliers, towering-masted barquetines with sails tied in neat parcels—every type of vessel imaginable.'*

ABIGAIL: The boats! The ships! Hundreds ... thousands of ships!

BEATIE: What did you expect? Noah's bloomin' ark?

ABIGAIL: What are they carrying?

BEATIE: Coal from Newcastle, cedar from the northern rivers, whale oil from Eden and wool from ... sheep. I've been studying Geography as well, can ye tell?

JUDAH: And people. People from all walks of life, coming and going. Rich and poor. Hope-struck and hope-stricken. The free and the condemned. That's Sydney Harbour.

ABIGAIL: I never thought it could look like this ... No Bridge to look up at. Luna Park is a just few cottages. Taronga Zoo is a forest. Kirribilli House is ... Kirribilli House. Bennelong Point is a farm?

JUDAH: Those are oyster middens left by the First People. Now it's used for stock. Not goin' so well. I don't think cows are supposed to graze on molluscs. Here we are! Drop anchor!

*They reach shore. BEATIE leaps out excitedly.*

BEATIE: We got the whole place to ourselves! Them cockles will be shakin' in their shells!

*JUDAH hands her a bucket.*

JUDAH: Tuck your skirts up, Beatie! I dunna want ye drippin' all over me on the way home.

*She does, then runs on.*

Have ye ever cockled before, Abby?

ABIGAIL: No.

*She tucks her own skirts up. JUDAH averts his eyes.*

JUDAH: Sometimes the cockle will leave a wee track of itself in the sand. Look for that. Then look for the breathing hole. See? And then you dig.

*He digs up a cockle and shows it to her.*

Oh ... she's a beauty.

Later, when we heat it up, this cockle will open wide like a butterfly. But the two shells always hold onto one another, no matter how hot the fire.

Isn't it a marvel? Have a go.

ABIGAIL: I think I'd rather leave them where they are.

*He smiles. They sit together and take in the view.*

JUDAH: What is it like? This place. In your time.

ABIGAIL: Where do I even start?... Walsh Bay there—all that rotten rope and rusted iron and dumped cargo—in my time, those are finger wharves where people come from all over to play and sing and dance and tell stories.

And over the water there, where you've got gum trees and campfires, in my time we've got tigers and elephants and giraffes with the best view in Sydney.

JUDAH: *[laughing]* No!

ABIGAIL: But some things haven't changed. When I come from, The Rocks is still a jumble of voices and languages and sights and smells. People still flock to The Rocks, they still work there and get drunk there and dance and sing and fight and sleep there ... But none of us live in The Rocks. None of us even live *on* The Rocks. We all arrived here, somehow,

and The Rocks has taken us in, taken us on, despite everything. Even when most of us have no right to it. Even while we're still working out who we are. Who we could be. Who we *should* be. What stories we'll leave echoing across time.

*Beat. She gazes around the sky, around Sydney.*

Take *my* time away and there's this—wool stores and tea houses and cobblestones and rat traps.

Take *this* time away, and there's invaders and convicts and massacres and shackles.

Take *that* time away and there's oyster middens and ancient language and the world's very first footprints.

And right across all that time there's still this glittering water. That big sky. Those blue mountains.

Ancient. Timeless. Eternal. I hope.

*Beat.*

Judah ... how did it get so late so soon when all I want to do is just sit here a bit longer?

JUDAH *stares back at her wide-eyed. Then ... she kisses him. He hesitates, then returns it.*

JUDAH: Oh, Abby. It were wrong for me to kiss you in such a way. I'm sorry.

ABIGAIL: I love you.

JUDAH: God's pardon?

ABIGAIL: And I know about Dovey. That you feel like you need to marry her because of the accident with the fire. But ... maybe *that's* why I'm here. Maybe it's nothing to do with any Prophecy or Gift. Maybe time has broken all of its laws simply because Judah Bow and Abigail Kirk were always supposed to be together. Maybe.

JUDAH: Maybe.

JUDAH *kisses her again. Deep and passionate, on the sand of a Sydney cove ... until ...*

*A bucket of water lands all over them. It's BEATIE.*

BEATIE: Ye filthy harlots! I'll punch yer both yellor and green!

JUDAH: Cocklin's over. Get in the dory.

BEATIE: I'm not goin' anywhere wi' you two dirty bunters! How do I know ye won't row me straight to hell wi' yer sinful ways?!

JUDAH *picks BEATIE up and she screams blue murder. They pile into the boat and start rowing. BEATIE admonishes them all the way.*

That ye could be such a Jezebel, slinging slobber with my own brother! Poor Dovey's expecting to be wed by January, with her bridal chest full and her ring chosen and the down payment made and yer rollin' around the cockles with this hedge-creepin' dolly-mop! We should have left you in the Suez Canal, Abigail Kirk, for it seems that's exactly where you belong. There's a word in Latin for wagtails like you but I'm too refined to say it. And dunna tell me it was a *brotherly* kiss for I were watching the whole time from amidst the pigface on the peninsula. Don't speak to me, either of you! I'm fair sick to the belly with disgust. And we didn't even get any *cockles*!

*They have landed back at Walsh Bay.*

JUDAH: I have to tie off the dory. Go on without me.

ABIGAIL: I'll stay and help.

JUDAH: No, Abigail. I'd prefer to be alone. Go home with Beatie.

BEATIE: I'm not walkin' alongside a scarlet woman!

JUDAH: Harken now, Beatie. No more of this nonsense. It meant nothin', ye hear? Go on now, off with the pair of you.

*He walks away, leaving ABIGAIL and BEATIE alone on the beach. BEATIE turns to ABIGAIL.*

BEATIE: Ye've done nothin' but no good since ye arrived here, Abigail Kirk. Things we held tight to just seem to disappear from our very hands when ye're around. Ye're as confounding as a sixth finger and just as bloomin' suspicious. I'm gonna tell Dovey what I saw and Granny will use her power to send ye back today, Prophecy or no'. And good riddance, I say, ye pythoness. Hssssssss ...

ABIGAIL: Beatie. Please don't say anything. I know it's weird but I don't think I'm ready to go back just—

*She stops suddenly and looks over BEATIE's shoulder.*

Where's that smoke coming from?

BEATIE: Blimey, Abigail! It's the confectionary shop! Our house is on fire!

*Smoke billows above The Rocks. MR BOW's voice rings out ...*

MR BOW: *The Rooshins is coming! Charge the heathen devils!*

*ABIGAIL and BEATIE run for The Rocks.*