

# Katø's Conquøst

or

## Therø's Many a Slip

a play by Dulciø McCartney

As performed by Loosely Woven as part  
of their 'Balance' concert, Christmas 2010

## Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

NARRATOR	Jill	
MRS ABERNATHY	Barbara	
KATE	Aiyana	Mrs Abernathy's daughter
MARGARET	Noni	Her friend
ELSIE	Kristy	An attractive girl
GERALD	No part	Kate's ex boyfriend
ALBERT	Eric	Village lad
DONALD	David Wilson	Childhood friend

## Props/Costumes

KATE	Tin of chocolate biscuits.
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# Kate's Conquest

Dulcie McCartney – 2010

## Scene 1

NARRATOR Scene 1. It is almost noon and the township of Burragong, nestling in the foothills of the mountains on the outskirts of Sydney, is bustling about its business. The year is 1935 and with the dark days of the depression past, the towns folk are looking forward to a brighter future.

Kate and her mother are sitting in their pleasant garden discussing the coming ball, a big event for the town and surrounding villages.

Kate is nibbling on some chocolate biscuits from the tin on the table before her.

KATE Oh Mother, I am so looking forward to the dance. I know it's not as grand as being a debutante at a 'Coming Out' ball but it is the biggest thing we've had in years, with all the dreary Depression. I shall look grand and Gerald will love me. Well, he does anyway.

MRS ABERNATHY I wish you wouldn't talk like that dear.

KATE But he does love me, Mother.

MRS ABERNATHY Please don't be impetuous. You really don't know him well.

KATE Oh Mother, we were at high school together. And now he is in the bank and doing very nicely. I know you always wanted me to marry Donald, your friend's son, but he's a real 'stick in the mud'.

MRS ABERNATHY Kate, you haven't seen Donald for years. He has finished his university course now . . . some form of science I think.

KATE Probably studying bugs. He was always peering into ponds and reeds and things.

Look! Here is my friend Margaret. She likes Gerald too. In fact I think she is jealous that he is my boyfriend. All the girls love Gerald!  
(*Margaret enters.*)

Hello, Margaret. Have a biscuit. You should see the beautiful taffeta gown Mother has bought me for the dance.

MARGARET Good morning Mrs Abernathy.

No thanks Kate. And don't you eat too many or you won't fit into your frock.

KATE Mother and Father are on the committee you know and Mother wants me to ask Donald. He's the son of a friend of theirs. But that would have been so dreary!

MRS ABERNATHY You used to like him dear.

KATE Oh, when I was ten, we sang 'Save your love for me' in a concert together - he had a good voice. But then we went on a picnic and all he wanted to do was go and study some bugs in the creek. So dreary! I crept up and snatched his collecting jar and ran away across the stepping stones. He tried to catch me but he slipped on the mossy stones and fell into the creek. I laughed and laughed - he looked so silly!

I haven't seen him since. That was years ago.

MRS ABERNATHY You are not very kind.

KATE He was so stuffy, Mother. Not like Gerald.

Margaret, have you got a beau at all? If not, I'll let you dance a few dances with my Gerald. But not the waltz. I must do the waltz with him myself so everyone can see my beautiful shot taffeta frock with the skirt swirling out.

MARGARET I don't really have a beau but I hope some of the boys will dance with me. Gerald is going with you isn't he? It's just that I saw him with Elsie.

KATE What do you mean?

MARGARET Well, it's just that he and Elsie were having sodas together.

KATE Elsie? You mean little Elsie who helps the dressmaker?

MARGARET Yes, they were in the café.

KATE Well I'm sure he just took pity on her. Actually, here she comes now with Mother's dress. Mother wouldn't buy herself a new dress because of this silly Depression we are just getting over so she asked the dressmaker to alter her last season's gown.

*Enter Elsie. She takes a parcel to Mrs Abernathy.*

ELSIE Good morning, Mrs Abernathy. Madam says she hopes you will be happy with the gown.

MRS ABERNATHY Thank you Elsie dear. I'm sure I will be satisfied. You're looking very attractive.

ELSIE Thank you. Oh Kate, Gerald has asked me to keep all the waltzes for him at the ball. But I'm sure he'll have some dances with you because you've always been friends, haven't you? Good morning, Mrs Abernathy.

*(exit Elsie)*

KATE Always been friends! The little bitch! She's stolen my Gerald. Been flaunting herself in front of him no doubt.

MARGARET She is very attractive.

KATE I'll show them. I'll go out and ask the first man I see to be my beau. That will show him!

MRS ABERNATHY Don't be ridiculous Kate. It's lunch time. Come on in.

KATE How could you talk about lunch at a time like this? I'm going out and when I come back I'll have a new boyfriend and we'll get married and then Gerald will be sorry.

## Scene 2

NARRATOR Scene 2. On the outskirts of the town, the bush thickens. A clump of gumtrees provides a sheltered, leafy arbour. The creek here widens into a pond with access to the other side provided by the rough stepping stones, some of which are mossy and slippery.

*(Enter Kate, looking forlorn and worn. She flops down on a fallen tree trunk.)*

KATE *(With tears rolling down her cheek)* I can't believe Gerald has done this to me. I know Elsie must have made a play for him but if he had really loved me he wouldn't have let her lure him away. I don't know that he ever actually said he loved me but I certainly thought he did. *(She mops her face)*

What am I to do now? It's all very well to say you'll marry the first man you meet but that isn't easy. Even that grotty old man just leered at me when I spoke to him. And though his wife came along and said I could have him with a pound of tea, I just ran away. What a mess I've made of things. I'll probably end up being an old maid.

*(She starts to sob again but is distracted by rustling in the bushes nearby.)*

Why, there's someone coming. A young man. Shall I try again?  
*(She stands and takes a step forward, then stops.)*

What is he doing? Why he's got a gun. There's a koala up in the tree. He's going to shoot it! Stop! Stop! Don't you dare shoot that little koala.

VILLAGE LAD *(turning angrily)* And why not? Who's going to stop me? I can sell his fur for a bob or two. Or maybe you would buy his life for a kiss or two. *(He comes up to Kate and roughly seizes her arm.)*

How about it? What's he worth to you? A few kisses?

*(He pulls her into his arms.)*

KATE Let me go! How dare you? I've got a few shillings. You can have them. But stop it. Let me go!

VILLAGE LAD A few shillings isn't enough. Not without a few cuddles as well.

*Donald appears, running towards them.*

DONALD *(grabbing the Village Lad roughly by the scruff of his neck)*  
You let her go at once, or I'll march you off to the police station.  
Go on . . . get out of here! *(Village Lad shambles off.)*

KATE Thank you Sir! I am eternally grateful to you. *(The stranger helps Kate to her feet.)*

DONALD Are you hurt? Just shaken I hope.

KATE Oh yes, just shaken. Thank you Sir.

DONALD It was quite heroic of you to try to save the little koala.

KATE Yes. The Beast! He was going to shoot him, the poor little koala, and to think I was going to ask him to marry me.

DONALD To marry you? Do you know him?

KATE Oh indeed not. But Gerald has abandoned me and is going to take that dreadful Elsie to the ball. I thought Gerald loved me. Well, we weren't officially engaged but I thought we were. And he's abandoned me without even a word. So he didn't love me. So I vowed I would marry the first man I met. But it isn't so easy. I suppose ...you... wouldn't want to marry me?

DONALD I'm flattered of course but I think you had better marry someone you know, well at least a little.

KATE You are laughing at me. I suppose I deserve it. *(She begins to cry.)*  
I know I shall be an old maid.

DONALD I had better take you home. You are shaken and distressed.

KATE No thank you. I shall go alone. I know I have made a fool of myself but I thank you Sir.

DONALD Straight home then. *(he turns & skips lightly across the stepping stones)*

KATE Why, look how strong and active he is. And there's something familiar . . .  
Well, it's growing late. I don't want to worry Mother anymore.  
*(gathering her skirts she runs off)*

Scenę 3

NARRATOR Scene 3. It is the evening of the ball. Mrs Abernathy is suitably dressed in a long gown. She is standing by the fireplace but turns as Kate enters.

MRS ABERNATHY Kate dear, you look so beautiful. I'm glad you decided to come to the ball. As usual I am waiting for your father.  
That is really a very becoming gown.

KATE Yes, but no-one will care how I look. No-one of importance, that is. I was going to stay in my room and just fade away but I thought it would take too long. Then I thought I might go into the convent but I remembered that they always have healthy, nourishing food. I couldn't stand that!

MRS ABERNATHY Your options do seem to be somewhat limited.

KATE Yes, so here I am. I shall go to the ball and be a wallflower. And Elsie will smirk at me as she and Gerald waltz pass and I shall die of humiliation . . .  
But if they dance too close I shall trip them as they pass!

MRS ABERNATHY I don't think you shall be a wallflower because the son of a friend of ours is coming.

KATE Who? Don't humiliate me any further, Mother.

MRS ABERNATHY I think you will like him dear. Even though you didn't when you were children. Here he is now I believe.

*(Enter Donald)*

DONALD Ladies. *(he bows to them and then approaches Kate)*

KATE Of course, it was you!

DONALD Did you notice how I crossed the stepping stones? I practised for a long time after I fell and you laughed at me.

KATE And today you rescued me from that idiot.



DONALD And now I have come to ask you to marry me and I shall sue you for breach of promise if you don't, because you proposed to me this very afternoon.

KATE I think I should like that very much.

*(They grasp hands and sing "Save Your Love for Me" by Rene and Renata.)*

*The End*