

Thomasina: You did not like my discovery? You are churlish with me because mama is paying attention to your friend. Well, let them elope, they cannot turn back the advancement of knowledge. I think it is an excellent discovery. Each week I plot your equations dot for dot, x s against y s in all manner of algebraical relation, and every week they draw themselves as commonplace geometry, as if the world of forms were nothing but arcs and angles. God's truth, Septimus, if there is an equation for a curve like a bell, there must be an equation for one like a bluebell, and if a bluebell, why not a rose? Do we believe nature is written in numbers?

(pause)

What a faint heart! We must work outward from the middle of the maze. We will start with something simple *(She picks up the apple leaf.)* I will plot this leaf and deduce its equation. You will be famous for being my tutor when Lord Byron is dead and forgotten.

(Picks up a lesson book, reads a short passage.)

Is it Cleopatra? – I hate Cleopatra! Everything is turned to love with her. New love, absent love, lost love – I never knew a heroine that makes such a noodle of our sex. It only needs a Roman general to drop anchor outside the window and away goes the empire like a christening mug into a pawn shop. If Queen Elizabeth had been a Ptolemy history would have been quite different – we would be admiring the pyramids of Rome and the great Sphinx of Verona. But instead, the Egyptian noodle made carnal embrace with the enemy who burned the great library of Alexandria without so much as a fine for all that is overdue. Oh, Septimus! – can you bear it? All the lost plays of the Athenians! Two hundred at least by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripedes – thousands of poems – Aristotle's own library brought to Egypt by the noodle's ancestors! How can we sleep for grief?

(longer pause)

Septimus, do you think that I will marry Lord Byron? He is the author of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage', the most poetical and pathetic and bravest hero of any book I ever read before, and the most modern and the handsomest, for Harold is Lord Byron himself to those who know him, like myself and Septimus. Well, Septimus?

Why not? We exchanged many significant glances when he was at Sidley Park. I do wonder that he has been home almost a year from his adventures and has not written to me once.