



## Gina and Rose

*April 1998*

**N**O-ONE DESERVES TO DIE LIKE Lang Hancock died. Put aside the cystic kidneys and renal failure, his near-gangrenous legs, and the heart disease and pulmonary congestion that eventually caused him to drown in his own fluids on the morning of March 27, 1992. It was the psychological anguish more than the physical disintegration that so tormented the old man in his last days; the knowledge that whatever control he might have exercised over people and minerals during a 'rogue bull's' lifetime was about to be extinguished in the most perverse of ways.

This was Lang Hancock's worst nightmare: a fight for the spoils between the two women in his life; in this case, his only daughter, Gina Rinehart, and his third wife, Rose Hancock. They had been limbering up for battle almost from the day Gina hired Rose as the family housekeeper.

Now, in his death throes, the fog was lifting and old Lang could see the grotesque outlines of war. He could also see the lawyers dancing on his grave. That's why—according to Rose—he let out a scream that reverberated through the guesthouse of his Perth mansion in the seconds before his heart stopped. He realised he'd been betrayed by his daughter into depriving his estate of any assets, and that Rose, his love object, his china doll, his youth drug for nine-and-a-half years, had been disinherited, along with the other beneficiaries of his last will and testament.

On the other hand, if you listen to Gina, Lang Hancock might have experienced a different epiphany. If he screamed at all—which she seriously doubts—it would have been because he'd finally twigged to the fact that his wife never loved him. It had been a confidence trick from day one. The animal cry from the bedroom was, therefore, the howl of a man who'd taken out a restraining order against his wife too late.

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Gina has long wanted us to believe that, far from being Lang Hancock's dutiful, loving spouse, Rose helped kill him—she harangued him for money, concealed his respirator, gave him fatty foods when she shouldn't have, changed his medicines and generally hastened his demise in a furious attempt to secure her share of his fortune. Gina also insists that Rose effectively took millions from his company, the company Gina now rules.

And if you don't believe this, wait for the coroner's inquest still being demanded by Gina, the fraud-squad investigation, the bankruptcy hearing and the 13 Supreme Court actions that will attempt to resolve what is probably the most poisonous personal feud this country has seen.

Without doubt, this is the grimmest of fairytales—the lonely rich girl in mortal combat with the scheming stepmother for control of the treasure, parading before a disbelieving public the seven deadly sins of pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger and sloth.

But who, if either, is really the wicked witch? According to the Gina camp, there can be no doubt it is Rose, and any article seeking to be vaguely even-handed would be fatally flawed. 'My worry is you will treat these people [Gina and Rose] as moral equals,' one of Rinehart's advisers told me. 'If you did that you'd be wrong. Rose fucked him, then she killed him.' To Rose and her supporters, the allegations are not only preposterous and unfounded, they are startling proof of the all-consuming nature of Gina's greed, hatred and lust for revenge. As a former Gina ally said: 'She [Gina] wants a public execution [of Rose] and she won't stop until she gets one.'

The awful irony is that were it not for Lang Hancock's shrewd gambit over iron-ore royalties in the early 1960s, there'd be no money to pay for such a tawdry spectacle in the first place.

**L**ANG HANCOCK WAS A LAW unto himself. All he ever wanted was his own way. To his countless enemies he was an insufferable reactionary; a swashbuckling right-winger who believed people and governments should bow to his will. To his supporters and friends, he was the brightest of visionaries, a giant who changed the face of the nation.

Hancock grew up in a place never meant for white skins or the faint of heart. In summer, the Pilbara, in Western Australia's north-west, is just about hot enough to fry your brains and, during the monsoon season, prone to the kind of flash flooding that disfigures the earth. Apart from a few white settler families like the Hancocks, who'd arrived in the 1860s, there was little there except red rocks and a haunting emptiness.

In the shadow of the Hamersley Range, Lang Hancock learnt to be a

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pastoralist, bush pilot and prospector, discovering, through his early career, deposits of manganese, copper, blue asbestos and gold. It wasn't until 1952, at the age of 43, however, that he stumbled upon the most important discovery of his life.

It is now part of West Australian folklore that while flying with his second wife, Hope, Hancock attempted to beat the first storm of the monsoon season by diverting his plane through a gorge. When he looked down he saw the 70-metre walls shimmering red. It was an exposed rock layer containing at least a billion tonnes of high-grade iron ore, three times Australia's official estimated iron-ore reserves and the world's greatest iron field. Only Hancock believed it at the time.

In 1962, after a decade of battling government obstruction and corporate indifference, he finally persuaded the British firm Rio Tinto to come and inspect his findings. The result was the formation of Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia (CRA) and Hamersley Iron, a company that was to end up producing 55 million tonnes of iron ore a year.

It was Hamersley Iron that paved the way for the development of the West Australian iron-ore industry. It also transformed Lang Hancock into one of Australia's most prominent figures, the so-called King of the Pilbara. Together with his later partner, Peter Wright, he cut a deal that was to provide him with incalculable wealth based on royalties of 2.5 per cent of the value of each tonne of ore exported. This came to be his—and his daughter Gina's—river of gold, worth about \$15 million to \$20 million a year.

The one enduring problem for Hancock, though, was his inability to ever start his own mine. His personal feud with WA's then Liberal Premier Charles Court ensured that he was stymied at every turn. Court regarded him as a robber-baron in the making.

But Lang Hancock was always destined to be an outsider, with or without the favour of government. Stories about his unorthodox deals and schemes are legion: he wanted to secede from Australia; he wanted to buy the National Party; he wanted mixed-race Aborigines sterilised; he wanted to detonate nuclear bombs to mine iron ore. He was one of the toughest, roughest diamonds around, a bushie who ate bully beef and drank his coffee with whitener from a dirty plastic mug.

That was, until he met Rose.

**R**OSE LACSON, A FLASHY, GARRULOUS Filipino, entered Lang Hancock's life the day she reported for duty as his housekeeper in

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April 1983, 19 days after his wife Hope finally lost her long battle with breast cancer.

Rose, then 34, had been hired by Gina to look after her newly-widowed father in his sprawling whitewashed mansion in Dalkeith, one of Perth's famous riverside suburbs. Gina was to be living in the house behind, with her husband of four months, Frank Rinehart, and her two children from her first marriage, John and Bianca.

Almost from day one, the women clashed. Rose regarded herself as a woman of breeding, seconded to housekeeping by accident, hailing from a prominent anti-Marcos family, fluent in three languages and trained for jobs more important than cooking and cleaning. Gina, on the other hand, regarded her as, initially, a servant, and then as something far worse.

In the endless media interviews Rose has given over the years, her story has often changed with the telling. It was only in 1992, when journalist Robert Wainwright travelled to Manila to investigate her background, that some of the more unpalatable aspects of her life emerged. Rose reacted furiously to the story's publication: what seemed to incense her most were assertions about her 'humble beginnings' rather than her more dramatic escapades.

These included being kidnapped by her first (Filipino) husband, a political warlord; marrying a second (Malaysian) husband who got involved in a credit-card swindle; giving birth to twin boys who died three days later, and working as a hostess in Manila's red-light district. It was this last period that always encouraged rumours that Rose had been a prostitute before arriving in Australia, rumours Gina is trying to substantiate through private detectives.

'Nobody can ever say that I worked as a prostitute,' says Rose. 'If I did, they [certain Filipinos] would have already blackmailed me when I married Lang.'

As for the devastating allegations in 1992 by her daughter, Johanna, from her first (shotgun) marriage, that from the time Johanna was five years old her mother had brought men into the bedroom and forced her to face the wall while she had sex with them, Rose dismisses these assertions, too. Johanna, she claims, was on drugs at the time she made the allegations and under Gina's malevolent influence.

In the decade following her separation from her first husband, Rose says she worked variously as a part-time schoolteacher, interior decorator, accounts executive, marketing manager, insurance broker and pantyhose model.

In April 1983, Rose landed in Perth. Far from being a mail-order bride, as has also been alleged by the Rinehart camp, Rose says she was on a

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business-class round-trip from Manila to New Zealand (via Perth and Sydney) to look into a new product for the family's food and beverages business. Only after the New Zealand leg fell through did she decide, at a friend's urging, to answer the housekeeping advertisement.

Gina's team of lawyers and private investigators claim, on the contrary, that Rose was desperately seeking an old, rich man to marry, and found him in Lang Hancock.

Whichever is the case, Perth has never been the same since Rose donned her servant's apron.

**T**ODAY, ROSE HANCOCK PORTEOUS WILL not say exactly when or how she came to slip between the sheets of her employer's bed, only that her feelings began to change about a month after she arrived, around the end of May 1983. When Gina found out, she was enraged. By September of that year, she had banished Rose from the house and was threatening to evict her father as well. (She was able to do this because the two Dalkeith properties were, for taxation reasons, in Gina's company's name.)

'I could hear her voice on the phone,' says Rose. 'She told her father, "If you don't kick that Filipino whore out then you better get out as well, Dad, because it's not healthy for our children."'

'And Lang said, "I can't just tell her to get out in the street," and Gina said, "This is my home, this is my mother's home." And Lang said, "Now you remember mother. Where were you when mother needed you?"'

Rose moved into a small apartment where Lang visited her regularly. By early 1984, he'd been given his marching orders, too. (Gina denies she evicted her father.) 'She told him to get out of his house,' says Rose. 'She practically drove him straight into my arms.'

Rose claims that in the beginning she was 'mentally fixated' on Lang, but not physically attracted. She felt sorry for him because he was 'very, very lonely' and very much in love with her. Far from wanting his money, she had no desire to remain in Perth, nor to drive a wedge between father and daughter. Lang, however, beseeched her to stay. 'He said, "If you leave me I'll just die,"' says Rose.

A close friend of Rose's, Despene Sattler, told me: 'Before Rose came along, Lang shuffled around in Reeboks and wore safari suits and, despite his money, had no will for living. All of a sudden he's had his hair dyed, he's throwing parties, dressed to the nines, cracking jokes, and on the dance floor . . . she added years to his life. She gave a sexual dimension to his life that rejuvenated him.' (Three times a day!)

In September 1984, Lang applied to the Department of Immigration

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for Rose to be given permanent residency status. Gina and Frank Rinehart then tried to have the residency cancelled. Lang flew into a rage and fired off this letter:

*'Dear Gina, [Because of] your unwarranted interference in Canberra . . . I now have to redouble my efforts to obtain permanent residence for [Rose], otherwise the money which I have lent her to get established in business, so as to be independent of me, will be lost.*

*'The fact that you told me that you had arranged to borrow \$5 million and asked me to increase your salary to an unjustified \$130,000 makes me wonder if you are not using Rose as an excuse to set some devious premeditated plan in motion to deny the children the benefit of their homeland and settle them in America. [Frank and Gina by now had homes in both Australia and the US.]*

*'As for the children being ashamed of me, I think they are more likely to feel more embarrassed by being picked up from school by a young mother who has let herself go to the point where she is grossly overweight, so instead of listening to gossip and in fact adding to gossip whilst interfering in my affairs, you would be better off to put your own house in order.*

*'If you won't consider my well-being, at least allow me to remember you as the neat, trim, capable and attractive young lady of the Wake Up Australia tour, rather than the slothful, vindictive and devious baby elephant that you have become. I am glad your mother cannot see you now.*

*'You have accused me of misusing company funds. To this end please do not use any of the company credit cards.'*

LANG HANCOCK WOULD HAVE BEEN perfectly happy if he'd never had children. His second preference would have been to sire a son. As it was, he got Georgina in 1954, and he eventually grew into the role of gruff but loving father. Gina was, for many years, the repository of all his parental ambitions.

In a documentary made in the late 1950s called *Man of Iron*, Lang explained the reasons for sending his daughter to St Hilda's boarding school in Perth rather than letting her grow up entirely on the family's sheep and cattle station. 'The only companions she had were kangaroos and lizards, so to speak. So we put her in boarding school to conform with the other children. As she gets older she'll have a lot of responsibilities . . . So it's most necessary to give her a balanced education, balanced outlook, so that she can learn to live with and handle other people.'

In many ways, Gina Hancock was a chip off the old block. Asked

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once what beauty was, she replied: 'An iron mine.' In the early 1970s, she quit her economics degree because her associate professor was too left-wing.

In 1971, she married an Englishman, Greg Milton, but not before asking him to change his name to something more compatible with Hancock. His name was changed by deed poll to Hayward. After five years, their first child, John, was born and, a year later, Bianca. By 1979, the marriage was over.

During the next two years before the divorce went through, Milton was permitted to see his children once a week—in the garage of his former home. Under the terms of the divorce settlement he was prevented from ever discussing his wife or children publicly.

In 1984, Gina moved with the children to live in the US with her new husband, Frank Rinehart, a New York lawyer almost 30 years her senior. Lang Hancock loathed Rinehart. He refused to attend their wedding and came to believe they were trying to wrest control of the company away from him.

**T**HE HARDEST PART ABOUT INTERVIEWING Rose Porteous and Gina Rinehart is trying not to appear too goggle-eyed at the contrast between these two mortal enemies, each holding court in her own bizarre citadel.

Visiting Rose means entering the 'conjugal home' of Prix d'Amour (that's right, the Prize of Love—but also the Price of Love), a fantastic pile overlooking the Swan River where she now lives with her fourth husband, the debonair and personable real-estate agent, Willie Porteous. Calling on Gina means being ushered through an elaborate security system of number codes and fingerprint scanners into an austere office in west Perth.

Both women insisted on their lawyers being present. Acting for Rose was Nick Styant-Browne from Slater & Gordon (said to be on a success fee running into millions of dollars). Gina's lawyer is Liberal Party power-broker Michael Kroger.

The interview with Rose was a seven-hour roller-coaster of wild mood swings, inexhaustible chatter, disarming honesty, disingenuousness, coquetry and histrionics.

At one point during dinner, with an audience that included me, her lawyer, her husband and a handyman by the name of Jerry, Rose suddenly leapt to her feet, and with tears and mascara streaming down her face and her nose running, began slamming her fists on the table, shouting:

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‘HE SAID TO ME: “I HAVE NEVER [fist] LOVED A WOMAN AS MUCH AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. YOU HAVE [fist] KEPT ME GOING. I WANT YOU TO HAVE [double fist] ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD.” I WAS HIS NURSEMAID [fist]. I WAS HIS HOUSEMAID [fist]. I BATHED HIM EVERY AFTERNOON [sniffle]. I CLOTHED HIM. I TOOK OFF HIS SHOES. I WAS HIS LOVER [fist]. HIS FRIEND [fist and sniffle]. THE ONLY CONFIDANTE HE TRUSTED [double fist].’

And then in a hushed voice, ‘He knew I would never do anything to hurt him because I even said to him—because they were telling him I was going to kill him—“Put in your [1987] will that if I am responsible for your death I will not inherit anything.” I said [voice rising], “I AM NOT A MURDERESS.”’

Only an hour before, Rose had taken me on a private excursion of her replica southern plantation home, the place that Lang called his Camelot, with its sweeping stairwell and columns of imitation marble; its Versailles ballroom, Louis XV furniture and million-dollar Waterford chandeliers. ‘I designed everything,’ she said, ‘and the structure of the house was built to suit Lang. It was carved around Lang. You drive into the garage, you go up the lift, bang, to his study, bang, to his bedroom for his evening bath.’

And then we were inspecting Rose’s hats—hundreds of them stacked in rows—and dyed furs by the dozen (and the shoes, where are the shoes?) and ball gowns (Lagerfeld); and the special quarters reserved only for Lang’s old mate Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen; and endless rooms painted mango, strawberry and jade, the colour of Rose’s lipsticks and eye shadows.

Throughout our tour, Rose’s runaway tongue is trying to give voice to the insane emotions that swept through this house and are now the subject of so much incredulity and legal dispute. ‘I never forget one time he was standing by the window and he said: “I have created a monster. These people [Gina and Frank] really want me dead . . . Without you I am dead.” I could not desert him [even though] I was [towards the end] virtually a kept prisoner. I was not allowed to go out. I was not allowed to mix with people without his permission.’

Did you hide his respirator in the fridge? ‘No way . . . at night when he slept I was awake watching his breathing. I always had oxygen ready.’

What about giving him fatty food, as the Rinehart camp alleges? ‘My God, I was the one giving him the cholesterol-free diet and lots of fruit. If anyone was concerned about his diet it was me.’

Rose Lacson Hancock Porteous looks at me with burning eyes and begins to quote from *Macbeth*: ‘Is this a dagger which I see before me, the



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handle toward my hand?' Only she is not casting herself as Lady Macbeth. She reserves that role for her former stepdaughter.

**G**INA RINEHART DRIVES A JAGUAR with bulletproof windows and keeps a retinue of former army and SAS officers in her private employ. She has hired a former senior NSW policeman to run her personal security operations, which include having her two younger children escorted to school each day and security guards posted around-the-clock in apartments next door to where she lives.

Gina says she is scared of Rose. Those who have worked for Gina, either past or present, say she is conspiratorial and verging on paranoid, and that her life is a litany of shattered relationships.

Among those she has fallen out with are her father (until just before his death), former managing directors of the company, former security officers and bodyguards, her former political adviser Michael Yabsley, her former family legal adviser Alan Camp, and a procession of legal firms attempting to represent her in her six-year battle with Rose.

'She has sacked law firm after law firm,' says one person who requested anonymity. 'She loves to be surrounded by lap-dogs and, as soon as you stand up to her or give her advice she doesn't want to hear, you do yourself irreparable damage. People go from being allies to foes overnight.'

This view was reinforced by one of her advisers who pleaded with me to get the facts right when presenting Gina's story. 'Otherwise, it's my cock on the block,' he said. Another employee, when trying to describe the atmosphere of dread generated by his boss's style, said: 'I'd rather be killed by Rose than sacked by Gina.'

Morale in the company her father founded is appalling. Employees despair at Gina's stubborn, churlish and often whimsical behaviour, and her propensity for belittling others, including her son, John, who works there part-time.

Her bullying is often disguised by an unnerving little girl's voice which calcifies the moment she is crossed. Were it not for the high sums with which she is able to attract good advisers, her company's woes would be more readily apparent. (Michael Kroger, also vice-president of Hancock Prospecting as well as Gina's senior legal and PR troubleshooter, is said to be on \$1 million a year.)

Gina's fixation on Rose is seen by many as an impediment to her company's success. The mining industry generally doesn't take her seriously and government ministers find her alienating.

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A few months ago, it was reported that Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd had signed a major joint venture agreement with a South African partner. That may represent a new departure for the company, which, according to one insider, has concentrated in the past on collecting royalties from iron ore and waging litigation against Rose: 'It's a company that has been revolving around one obsession: Gina's desire to crush Rose.'

**G**INA USHERS ME INTO HER office for what is to be a one-hour off-the-record conference with one of her lawyers. They want to know whether I am an admirer of the late Lang Hancock, and whether I can be trusted to write this article in Gina's favour. I can only smile and hedge.

Three days later, I am back in the boardroom of Hancock Prospecting with my tape-recorder running. The room is charged with a chilly uncertainty.

Gina is wary, wooden and her voice is as deathly quiet as a stage whisper.

I ask about her father, and crane my head to hear her polished St Hilda's boarding-school reply. 'He was an extraordinarily devoted father and I was terribly, terribly lucky.' What about your mother? 'My mother was somebody who was a saint. As far as ladies were concerned, I've never known anyone finer.'

Is it true you never liked her to travel in the Rolls-Royce with you, that it was reserved for you and your father? 'I don't think my mother would have thought that for a second.'

What about your second husband, Frank Rinehart? 'The finest gentleman I've ever known.' What year did he die? 'Approximately 1990.' Approximately? 'I don't celebrate the anniversary of his passing.' Can you explain that? 'Oh no, no, I can't . . . I know the dates but I just don't think . . . hmm.'

For the next hour-and-a-half we discuss—if that is the word—everything from her admiration for nuclear physicist Edward Teller to the magnificent spirits her father was in the night before he died, to the parlous state in which he left his company.

I ask her if she ever liked Rose and she replies (sighing loudly): 'She was an employee who worked as a housemaid who I hardly ever saw in my life.'

Is it because you hate her with such passion that you are pursuing this litigation? Kroger steps in: 'The issue is this. Do we believe that Rose Porteous has tens of millions of dollars to which she is not entitled, and

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the answer is definitely yes. Do we intend to pursue the litigation to recover every last cent? Yes we do.'

**A**ND NOW WE COME TO the heart of the matter. Money. Gina Rinehart's burning hatred for Rose Porteous—and the legal position she has adopted—is predicated on the conviction that her former stepmother hounded her father to the grave in pursuit of the loot. After nine-and-a-half years of unrelenting emotional and psychological pressure, her father, she believes, finally buckled. In August 1991, he executed a will bequeathing half of the future income of his companies to Rose, and the other half to Gina.

Lang Hancock called this 'the big money', potentially hundreds of millions of dollars over a lifetime, enough to guarantee that Rose and Gina would become probably the two richest women in Australia. As Lang saw it, the money was to come primarily from two sources.

The first was the profit from the exploitation of future reserves held by the company. The second was the royalties on these reserves. These included royalties payable on the McCamey's Monster iron-ore tenement located near the West Australian mining town of Newman.

That will was the second-last of 24 wills that Lang Hancock drew up in a six-year period. It was a crucial document. According to Gina, it departed from the long-held family plan that she would inherit Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd upon her parents' deaths.

It also allegedly contravened an agreement, reached in June 1988 between Lang and his daughter, that Gina, the other major shareholder in the company, would eventually come to own and control the Hancock legacy.

Then, in December 1991, Lang amended his will for the last time to include numerous beneficiaries, the establishment of a variety of foundations and a codicil that sought to deny inheritance to any beneficiary who challenged the will. More importantly, though, the will apparently directed substantial royalty payments to his estate. And this is the crux of the legal war: was Lang entitled to treat royalty payments as his personal assets and, therefore, his to will as he wished? Or were they owned by the company?

Gina's argument was that the royalties from McCamey's Monster couldn't be paid to her father because he never owned the asset in the first place. The company did.

But if that was so, then why, asks Rose, was it necessary for Gina's lawyer to have a deed drawn up less than two weeks before Lang's death, directing the McCamey's royalties back to the company?

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Without the royalties going to the estate, there would be no money to meet Lang's bequests; no money to meet the enormous debts Gina claimed he'd accumulated over the years through profligate accounting and spending practices. His estate would be bankrupt.

Throughout most of the 1980s, Gina and her father had engaged in a brutal cold war, during which time Lang had removed her as a director of the company, and threatened to extradite her from the US for what he regarded as her interferences in the running of the company.

Gina was as stubborn as her father had taught her to be. She was appalled by his personal and professional conduct, and told him so in no uncertain fashion. In a letter sent to him in October 1987, she reminded him that he'd become 'the subject of dirty old man jokes from one side of Australia to the next . . . You've been wiped out financially by a manipulating Filipino. You've [taken] money out of our company in excess of your share and . . . [hidden] the personal till taking in the company books, which is nothing short of a conspiracy against the shareholders. You stoop to lies, blackmail and distortion against your own family.

'Will you let Price Waterhouse examine the books covering these last three years? You know I have sufficient grounds to get them to examine the books with a court order, but I would prefer you agree voluntarily.'

Gina said that her major concerns centred on, firstly, her father's quixotic 1987 deal with former Romanian dictator Nicolai Ceausescu to supply iron ore from the McCamey's Monster tenement to Romania. It was to prove a hugely costly (for Hancock) barter arrangement which foundered after Ceausescu's execution in 1989.

Secondly, she says her father tried to appease Rose by giving her as much as \$70 million over nine years. This had enabled her allegedly to get cashed up for life and own five properties, including Prix d'Amour, a mansion in Florida and a four-storey building in Sydney's exclusive Double Bay.

But again, says Gina, it wasn't Lang's money to give. It was the company's and he had breached his fiduciary duties.

Rose, on the other hand, says it is ludicrous to suggest the private company was anything other than her husband's, to do with as he saw fit. He'd started it, developed it, and through sheer force of personality, not to mention his life governing share, controlled all its assets.

What's more, millions had also gone directly out of the company's coffers over the years to pay for Gina's and her children's schooling, medical expenses, overseas trips, allowances to her late husband, Frank Rinehart, and expensive holidays such as the three weeks spent at the Paris Ritz costing \$180,000. These amounts had been entered in the books as loans and were repaid usually by Lang adjusting his own loan account.

Why should it be any different when money was going to his wife?

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This was Lang's way of showing his love. 'Everything that was given to me by Lang was delivered from his briefcase,' Rose says. 'At noontime he would come home and say, "Sweetheart, there's a surprise for you," and there'd be a cheque for \$200,000 or \$1 million.'

Well, that was lovely, but now Gina wants it all back. She also wants the nearly half-a-million dollars that she claims Rose owes the company for jewellery Lang gave her but which, in fact, was not his to give.

Rose completely denies this, claiming, among other things, that the jewellery was returned to the company on a temporary basis at the request of her late husband, and that the company agreed to this. She is likely to take the stand to defend the allegations in court later this year.

**B**UT THAT'S NOT THE END of it, of course. Rose continues to accuse Gina of plotting to deprive her of her entitlements under the will. She alleges Lang's will was stolen from his office shortly before he died with the express purpose of having the deed concerning the McCamey's royalties drawn up to disinherit her. (Gina denies this.) The deed was signed by Lang Hancock on March 14, 1992, 13 days before he died, and seemed to recognise that any royalties flowing to him were actually not his assets to bequeath. It meant that Rose would receive virtually nothing from her husband's will.

Rose claims that Lang was 'cuckoo' when he signed the deed and was virtually railroaded into it. Gina says he was totally lucid and that Rose effectively killed him by accelerating his death through stress.

For six years, Gina has been seeking a coronial inquest. She believes that Rose, in a frenzied attempt to have Lang overturn the deed, transformed his last three days into a living hell. On March 24, 1992, for example, her father had been discharged from hospital and into the care of private nurses in the guesthouse attached to Prix d'Amour.

Late that night, Gina claims, Rose entered the guesthouse and virtually threw herself at Lang, declaring in a loud voice that she loved him, before kissing him firmly on his ulcerated mouth. In the next breath, she then informed him that he hadn't known what he was doing when he signed the documents and that he should cancel them immediately.

Lang is alleged to have replied: 'I know what I was doing. I will not change the documents. I can't understand what you want. You are my wife. You are my next of kin. I am increasing your housekeeping allowance from \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million [a one-off payment] and the entire property is yours. You are already very wealthy.'

Lang was apparently devastated by the exchange because when Gina

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arrived the next morning she found him slumped in bed, his forehead contorted and his face ashen. He allegedly said to her: 'Rose nearly killed me last night.'

Over the next two days, tension mounted until, on March 26, Lang Hancock obtained a restraining order against his wife. At his bedside hearing he told the magistrate his wife was a pethidine addict and had been screaming at him for days, berating him about money and threatening him with divorce.

The restraining order was granted in the late afternoon of March 26 but was never formally served upon Rose because by about 9.30 the next morning Lang Hancock, at the age of 82, was dead.

**R**OSE PORTEOUS'S LAWYER, NICK STYANT-BROWNE, says the scenario outlined by Gina is filled with 'wild, unsubstantiated allegations', part of Gina's 'highly orchestrated, well-resourced plan' to destroy Rose.

Since 1992, he says, Gina has been telling everyone that Rose killed her father. Yet the results of a lengthy police investigation into his death concluded at the time that her allegation appeared to have been 'generated by the dislike between the women'. (Gina claims this investigation was seriously flawed.)

Last month, the West Australian coroner rejected a second application to hold an inquest, saying that no evidence had been produced to realistically support a charge of manslaughter. He said verbal arguments between a husband and wife were not, of themselves, unlawful and, in this case, had ceased 24 hours before Lang's death. The real cause of his death was a 'very serious pre-existing medical condition'.

Gina and her legal adviser, Michael Kroger, were excoriated by Styant-Browne for having run 'a dirty tricks and sleazebag campaign' against his client for six years. Gina, however, remains convinced of her cause. She has sought political intervention by asking the WA Attorney-General to allow her to make an application to the Supreme Court to hold an inquest.

Rose herself has conceded that there were arguments with her husband just before his death. 'I kept saying to him, "Langley, don't you realise what you've done?" "What did I do, dear?" he replied. I said, "You've bankrupted your estate." "What?" I said, "Langley, don't you understand?" He said, "Who did this?" I said, "Yooooou. You signed the deed saying everything was going to go to Gina's company. There's nothing

### **The Whites of their Eyes**

for me, nothing for the Heart Foundation, nothing for [the other bequests]. Nothing, nothing.”

‘Then he opened his eyes and said, “Two days. Give me two days [to change it].” I wanted to divorce him and that is what upset him. That was the only time I got through to him. He kept saying, “I don’t understand dear, I don’t understand.”’

Enter Willie Porteous, the man who married Rose six months after the death of his friend Lang Hancock. In Porteous’s first substantive media interview, he told me that contrary to rumours, he took up with Rose only after Lang had died.

He rejects the ‘bullshit’ allegation that because \$500,000 was transferred into a jointly (with Rose) controlled Manila bank account nine days before Lang’s death, he was involved romantically with her.

He says the money was in a joint account because Rose was considering buying a Manila property and he was playing the role of adviser. ‘I ran all over the world for Lang,’ he says, ‘checking out the property market.’ The sicker Lang became, the more he asked Porteous to help Rose. In fact, in August 1991, when Lang had been in hospital in Alabama, he’d purportedly said to Porteous: ‘If I die, I would like you to be there to look after Rose because there could be a lot of problems.’

Porteous says that when Gina placed caveats on Rose’s properties after Lang died, thereby effectively freezing her assets, he realised what he’d been told was true. ‘In the same way that Gina drove Lang and Rose together [by her furious opposition to Rose], she also drove Rose and I together,’ Porteous says.

‘I would say that if Gina hadn’t caused all these problems for Rose, we would never have got married.’

On the night before Lang Hancock died, Porteous says he was called to Lang’s bedside and told that both the deed and the restraining order had been terrible mistakes. On the morning of his death, Lang reiterated this by telephone and beseeched Porteous to bring Rose to him. By the time they got to the house he was dead.

Within two hours, Prix d’Amour was crawling with detectives and sniffer dogs. They spent the entire day searching for drugs. Their arrival followed weeks of rumours that Rose was planning to kill her husband with narcotics. Their search revealed syringes and medication, but no prohibited drugs. Gina believes Rose was tipped off. Rose says this is nonsense.

Two days after Lang’s death, Rose’s then lawyer Martin Bennett told journalists his client was the victim of ‘malicious gutter rumours’. He confirmed Rose’s pethidine addiction but said she’d overcome her dependence the previous year.

## Gina and Rose

Rose also made a brief and subdued appearance. 'I would very much like to speak to you but I'm in no condition. The pain is unbearable.'

Four months later, Rose's daughter Johanna told Channel Nine's *A Current Affair* that her mother had returned to the house after this and said: 'Are the public buying my sympathetic act? Do I look sad enough?' She said the most salient characteristic about her mother was that she was 'first and foremost' an actress. Rose later denounced her daughter as a 'congenital liar'.

**L**ANG HANCOCK'S BODY WAS TAKEN to the State mortuary on March 27, where an examination found he'd died of natural causes. His body was due to be cremated a few days later in a private ceremony organised by Rose. The coroner, however, refused to release the body after two funeral companies, one representing Rose, the other representing Gina, arrived at the morgue to collect it. 'My husband's body was kept in a freezer like a criminal,' Rose says now.

On Thursday, April 2, after lawyers had wrangled over who should have custody of the corpse, Lang was given a joint funeral with neither party conducting the service. Rose had attempted to dress Lang's body in a Givenchy suit, the one she married him in, but was prevented from doing so. She sat throughout the funeral in a Rolls-Royce, flanked by two housemaids.

Gina arrived two minutes after Rose in a Mercedes with her two elder children. The following day there were two separate public farewells. The first was a commemorative mass held by Rose at St Mary's Cathedral. The second, about an hour later, was a wake at Gina's Dalkeith home attended by some of Perth's business and political elite. Former Queensland Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen delivered the eulogy, saying, 'There will never be another Lang Hancock.'

He was right about that.

## Postscript

*By early 1999 both Rose Porteous and Gina Reinhart had scored victories of sorts. Gina's avenues for seeking a coronial inquest into Lang's death had been exhausted, while Rose had been forced to hand back the jewellery, along with a considerable amount of cash. No judgment had yet been handed down on the bankruptcy hearing but as this book was going to print, the Perth Supreme Court delivered a stunning finding in favour of Rose.*



## The Whites of their Eyes

*On what would have been Lang Hancock's 90th birthday, Justice Robert Anderson dismissed a challenge by Gina for \$20 million in assets, including Prix D'Amour, the Florida mansion and the two properties in Double Bay. He said he had found no evidence to support Gina's claim that Lang had improperly used company funds to buy the properties for Rose. Rose was described as being hysterical after learning of the decision.*

*Gina appears certain to appeal, but after sacking the country's most eminent QC, Tom Hughes, it was unclear whom she might appoint as her legal representative. Her relationship with her advisers had also come under renewed strain. She'd parted ways with Geoff Newing, her manager of legal and commercial affairs, as well as her principal adviser, Michael Kroger.*

*Most of Lang Hancock was cremated in 1992, except for his heart, liver and kidneys. In 1999, these organs were still at the Perth morgue, with Gina still hoping for further toxicology tests.*

*Meanwhile, the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia had also made an application for a DNA test to be carried out. This followed an Aboriginal woman's claim that she was the daughter of the late iron-ore magnate.*

*Gina Rinehart denied that she had an Aboriginal half-sister but Rose Porteous insisted this was the case. Rose claimed the mother of this woman was actually half Filipino and half Aboriginal and that she'd fallen pregnant to Lang after making love to him in the bushes when Lang was 14. Rose remembered the time this daughter of Lang's came to stay at Prix d'Amour and how Rose helped make up her face with powder and lipstick. Rose said she was the spitting image of Gina, only prettier.*