

## **About the Author**

Elizabeth Quincey started writing many years ago but only decided to publish after she retired from a long and successful career as a business woman. She is a graduate of the University of Exeter and lives with her family in Surrey, England.

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*The  
Lyndhurst  
Affair*

*Elizabeth Quincey*



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## Dedication

*To all women who are trying to find themselves and  
to those men who are trying to help us.*

## Acknowledgments

To my husband and my two children. Thank you for putting up with the madness.

To all those friends in the Claygate Writers Club who encouraged me to write this book.

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# PART 1



JANUARY 1819,  
NORTHUMBERLAND





## CHAPTER 1

The duo stared in awe at the vivid glow on the horizon. The scarlet-streaked sky resembled gashes of blood, splattered against a vibrant blue canvas. Neither man had ever seen such a dramatic sunset and the picture laid out before them would burn into their memories forever. As they rode on, dark towers rose from amongst the trees in the near distance. Eventually, a narrow, snake-like path guided them onwards and the smell of cedar settling into the twilight was a warm invitation to come closer.

On inspection the vision was, at its heart, a Norman castle, richly ornamented and extended over the years. Stained glass windows twinkled in the dying light of the sun.

Count Nikolaus Andrassy whistled in appreciation. ‘I do believe, dear friend, that we have just ridden into a Mrs Radcliffe novel. *The Romance of the Forest*, perhaps.’

William Fitzalan, Earl of Lyndhurst, could not answer. His heart pounded in his eagerness to get closer. In his wildest dreams he had never imagined such a magnificent sight, and to think that this was now his. Despite the misdeeds that had led to this inheritance, its beauty overwhelmed him. The soft thud of hooves landing on velvet moss hardened as they rode across the

bridge that arched over the refracted lilac water of the moat. The clattering horses' shoes echoed loudly around the cobbled courtyard, announcing their arrival. Immediately, men came running from the stables to help them dismount. A man the size of a mountain stood in a doorway, filling the frame. Then he walked towards them, eyes darting between the two aristocrats, as if trying to work out who was the new lord of the manor. William read the signal and stepped forward.

'I am the Earl of Lyndhurst,' he declared.

'Lord Lyndhurst, I am Eric Sweyne, steward of the household. Welcome to Northumberland, and to Goldsborough Castle.'

William took stock of the man. Eric Sweyne looked like a latter-day Viking, he thought, with a vigorous titian beard and wayward blond hair that should have faded years ago, but had steadfastly refused to do so. This was definitely the sort of man he would want on his side in battle.

'Ah, yes, Mr Sweyne. Thank you for your letter. You clearly know everything there is to know about the estate.'

Eric Sweyne bowed his head respectfully, but without a hint of humility, William noted.

'My family has been part of the estate for generations, my lord. Nobody could know more except the Goldsboroughs themselves.'

William nodded approvingly before looking up at the magnificent towers. He turned on his heel to take in the splendid sight. The light was fading fast, but he could still make out some of the features of the stonework. Narrow lancet windows with no decoration signalled that this was the oldest part of the castle. As he turned full circle, he spied a candle in one of them and a face watching him, before whoever it was disappeared swiftly out of view. A servant, no doubt, he thought. Then, William caught the steward appraising the

heavy horizontal gold braid on the jacket of his travelling companion.

‘This is Count Nikolaus Andrassy,’ William said. ‘A Hungarian Hussar, if you’re wondering about the uniform.’

Sweyne looked none the wiser for the explanation, but swiftly ushered the two gentlemen into the castle. They walked through one room after another, all filled with ancient furniture. As they moved through to the more recent east wing the rooms became lighter and airier, and it became obvious to William that parts of the building had simply been added on over time, spreading the castle along either side of the courtyard. The place smelt old, not unpleasant, but of leather and wood smoke. Eventually, they came to a large drawing room at the end of the building. William tried to look out of the window, but it was too dark to see anything. He would have to wait until the morning.

‘Who managed the land for the Marquess of Goldsborough?’ he asked, ‘An agent?’

‘No, there is no agent,’ Sweyne replied, somewhat hesitantly, as if surprised by the question. ‘The marquess and his daughter have always taken a keen interest in the running of the estate.’

That was a pleasant surprise to William, gentlemen did not usually concern themselves with such things and it was something he had never understood. Land was a precious commodity to be nurtured and cherished, not just for future generations, but also for the people who worked it. *Noblesse oblige*, something most of his family would have scoffed at, was a notion that was very important to him. Then he registered what Sweyne had just said.

‘Daughter?’ William swung around to face him. ‘You never mentioned a daughter in your letter.’

‘Well, no, I did not, my lord, but that is because I assumed Mr Tobias, the solicitor, had informed you.’

‘Where is she now?’ demanded William.

‘Here,’ answered an assured female voice.

Sweyne stood aside to reveal a vision in powder-blue silk. The vision glided across the room and came face to face with William.

‘I am Lady Angeline Goldsborough, daughter of the late Marquess of Goldsborough.’

She was extraordinary: tall, elegant and swan-necked, she was blonde, with silver-grey eyes, and an ethereal quality that caused William to peer over her shoulder. It would not have surprised him to see gossamer wings.

His stare did not unnerve the lady. In fact, despite her obvious youth, he watched the aristocrat in her rise before his very eyes. William composed himself and bowed deeply.

‘I am the Earl of Lyndhurst. I am honoured to make your acquaintance.’ Why did he sound so pompous all of a sudden? ‘Lady Angeline, I am so,’ William searched for the right words, ‘so very sorry. I... I was unaware there was a daughter. Please may I pass on my sincere condolences to you and the marchioness.’

Lady Angeline swallowed hard. ‘My mother died over a year ago, sir.’

William felt Nikolaus’ quizzical gaze burn into him. Of course she had, he knew that. It was what had driven the marquess to excessive drinking and gaming, leading to the fateful night when he had met George, William’s elder brother, the 7th Earl of Lyndhurst. The appearance of this previously unknown daughter really had unsettled him. William cleared his throat.

‘Of course, please forgive my error.’

Lady Angeline inclined her head slightly, barely accepting the apology and William studied her closely. How much did she know about the circumstances surrounding her father’s death? She would surely know that his brother had been the

victor in that last disastrous game of cards. Did she know George's reputation as a libertine? Would she assume that he, William, was the same kind of man? Or did she think he was George? Perhaps she knew nothing except that the Earl of Lyndhurst was now the Lord of the Manor. He looked deeply into her eyes but she was giving nothing away. She was young and all alone in the world, but, he could see, she was brave. Glancing down, he caught sight of the black sash around her waist and realised that they were both in mourning for two people. Lady Angeline for her parents, and William for his brother and mother, for his mother had died soon after George, the favoured son, from the shock or from a broken heart. They shared a common bond in their grief because they were both now orphans, and although William was much older than the lady, even at the age of thirty, it was a terrible thing. He, too, was alone in the world. A wave of empathy for the young Lady Angeline washed over him, but there was nothing he could say or do to ease the pain.

'Please let me introduce to you my very good friend, Count Nikolaus Andrassy,' he said.

Nikolaus clicked his heels and bowed deeply. William observed Lady Angeline take in the visual feast. It was obvious she had never seen anyone quite like him, with his green and gold jacket, red trousers and long hair braids that hung down on either side of his face. Rather than being dazzled by Nikolaus, as most women were, she seemed to find him a curiosity. It entertained William to see the puzzled expression on Nikolaus' face. He was not used to being looked up and down in such a fashion, particularly by a woman.

Eventually, Lady Angeline managed to tear her eyes away and say, 'Gentlemen, you must be tired and hungry. We did not know when to expect you, so we have prepared a light supper only. I hope you will find this adequate. Please follow

me.’ Lady Angeline led them back through the rooms, giving gentle orders to scurrying servants as they went. ‘The footman will take your luggage up to your bedchambers.’

‘It’s obvious who is the chatelaine of this household,’ Nikolaus whispered to William with wry amusement. ‘You’re going to have trouble wresting control from that one. “Frosty” is the word that springs to mind.’ Mesmerised by their new surroundings, the two men found themselves falling behind as Lady Angeline and Mr Sweyne marched onwards. There was so much to look at: the paintings, the armoury, the mounted stag antlers.

‘Plenty of good hunting around here, by the look of things,’ Nikolaus said.

They just about managed to keep track of the forward party by catching sight of the powder-blue skirt as it swished around the corners. ‘She is rather imperious, don’t you think? Doesn’t she realise that if you were a different kind of man, William, this could certainly end like a scene from a novel?’

‘What do you mean, Nikolaus?’

‘The new lord, discovering an unwanted daughter, turns her out in the middle of the night, in the pouring rain, with nothing but the clothes she is standing in.’

William gave him a withering look.

‘It’s not as far-fetched as it sounds,’ Nikolaus said, laughing.

‘Perhaps not in the Carpathians,’ William replied, ‘but this is England. Even this far north, English sensibility prevails. Besides, it’s not raining.’

Although he would never admit it, William saw that Nikolaus had a point. The servants looked understandably fearful of their new lord. They had no idea what this new regime would bring. Mr Sweyne knew his place, but was

clearly the type of man who would only be deferential up to a point; to where his self-respect would allow. Lady Angeline, however, was either naïve in the extreme, or her confidence came from some source as yet unknown to him. She certainly intrigued him.

William and Nikolaus found Lady Angeline and Sweyne waiting for them in the small entrance hall that led to the dining room. As they came together, a door flew open from under the stairs and a thunderous explosion could be heard from the darkness within. Instinctively, William braced himself as eyes coloured by fire locked onto his. A huge, four-legged monster, covered in coarse, ash-hued fur, came bounding over to Lady Angeline and jumped up at her, demanding her full attention.

‘Down, Odin!’ she said with mock sternness. The monster obeyed immediately. ‘Gentlemen, let me introduce you to Odin, my Irish wolfhound.’

William held his hand out to the dog, who went willingly to sniff and become better acquainted, but the moment was broken by heavy laboured breathing, coming from the darkened doorway.

‘That dog will be the death of me!’ rasped an apparition wreathed in indeterminate layers of brown and grey taffeta covered in a film of cobwebbed lace. She hung onto the ancient door handle, catching her breath.

‘Nan, our guests have arrived,’ announced Lady Angeline. Then she coloured. ‘I mean, the new lord has arrived.’ She glanced at William through lowered eyelashes.

At last, the lady understands, he thought.

Warily, the old woman moved into the light, then curtsied badly. William observed someone who could only be described as a butterball: she was completely round. Dark grey hair that curled around the ruddy orb of a face, perched on top of a

rotund body with saucer-like eyes that looked as if they had seen too much.

‘So, the travellers have come then, just as I said they would a twelve-month ago.’ She had a thick local accent that William could barely understand. ‘I’ve glimpsed the future, yer ken. You’ve been called here for a reason, but there’s trouble ahead for all of us,’ she warned, her voice surprisingly strong as she delivered her premonition,

‘Nan, stop that immediately!’ demanded Lady Angeline.

‘But I tell yer, I ken the future. I’ve seen it,’ insisted the old woman.

‘What have you seen?’ Nikolaus asked nervously.

She did not answer but gingerly walked towards him placing her hand over his heart, her eyes peering into the distance.

‘Yer carry a heavy heart, sir. Yer time here will be hard. Summat in the dark chases yer. I cannot see it, but it will nae rest until it hunts yer down.’

The blood drained from Nikolaus’ face and his body, shivering, vibrated against her fingers. As if in accord, Odin released one long, mighty howl into the night.

Eric Sweyne tried to lead the hound away, but William stopped him.

‘Mr Sweyne,’ William raised his voice above the din, so that the servants could hear clearly, ‘please ensure that fresh horses are made ready for us. Count Nikolaus and I will be riding out early tomorrow morning to view the estate.’

Sweyne’s eyes flickered momentarily towards Lady Angeline, but he quickly corrected himself as she turned her head away and fiddled nervously with her black sash.

‘Aye, my lord. I will see to it immediately,’ he replied. Everyone knew that the new lord of the manor was staking his claim.