

LINDSEY'S STORY

BY VICTORIA HILTON



In Conversation with Lindsey

"You're finished!" shouted Lindsey's mother in response to her daughter's diagnosis of Marfan syndrome. Lindsey was anything but, defying her mother's doom-laden words to live a life less ordinary. Whilst navigating through the physical pain of Marfan, she has found love and fulfilment in art, and recently wrote a racy novel about royalists. I visited Lindsey in her beautiful, ephemera-filled home in The Cotswolds to discuss her unusual life and work.

An elegant woman offering a glass of wine was the most welcome sight on an unusually cold spring day following a long coach journey from Victoria. Lindsey greeted me warmly into her gorgeous home, its walls covered with memories and art. Her father was the photographer, John Erith, and snapped the English actor Dennis Price whose portrait hangs amongst others in her decorative home. Over a delicious lunch we chatted, and Lindsey

talked about her fascinating life.

Lindsey survived a girls' public school, and a complete and unexpected collapse in health at the age of 16 that left her bedridden. She had grown terribly tall but remained very thin. Trapped in a world of pain for months on end, unable to even sit upright, Lindsey let her imagination roam free and took solace in stories and secret scribbles. Unbeknownst to her, she had been diagnosed with Marfan syndrome (by Arthur Holman in University College Hospital). Her mother would not be seen with her, and refused to have her told. Lindsey had to learn to walk, and, after eventually learning of her medical condition, recalls laughing in her parents' face: "I'll show you". And so, she did.

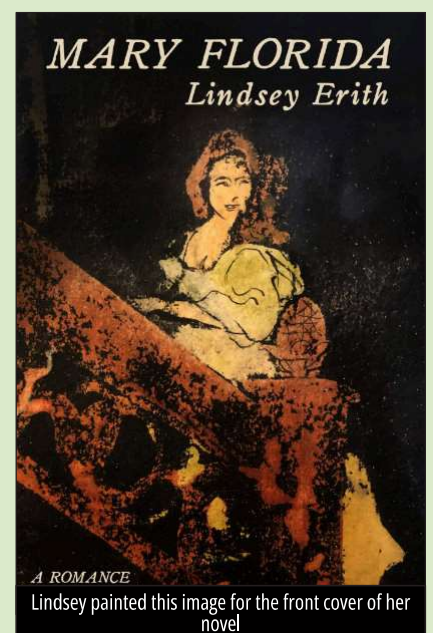


Lindsey's father facilitated her escape to Art School where she lived in the appropriate 'artist's attic'. Her time there was punctuated by three hospital admissions as she realised that Marfan syndrome – the attendant pain, chronic fatigue and other untold features - was for life. But she nevertheless completed her Graphics diploma, then promptly fell in love and had a youthful romance with an Irish racehorse trainer. This led to her expert niche in equine and human portraiture, consolidating her interest in character and likeness. To the left is Lindsey's portrait of the fine steeplechaser who was the Queen Mother's 100th winner. It hangs in her late husband's 'office', a haven of sheet music and artworks.

Music filled the air as we continued the conversation into Lindsey's living area, a long, beamed room festooned with pictures including an arrestingly beautiful portrait of Lindsey. In the background plays Verdi's Requiem, produced by John Boyden, who was the love of Lindsey's life. Their Valentine's Day marriage was short but so sweet. He sadly died in 2021. A musicologist and record producer, John was the first managing director of the London Symphony Orchestra, and went on to manage the New Queen's Hall Orchestra. He emboldened Lindsey to take the next step in her career – that of novelist. Progressively weak wrists meant Lindsey no longer had the control for delicate artwork, and so she turned to capturing man's likeness in words on the page.

On her typewriter, Lindsey quietly conjured a character, whose adventures inform a racy novel about royalists. Set at the close of the English Civil War, *Mary Florida*, reinvents what it means to be a hero and the siren song for a lost cause. Its titular character, Mary Florida, is the alluring motivation for the protagonist's actions and their romance unfolds lavishly chapter by chapter. Lindsey tentatively gave her husband the manuscript of her historical romance, and upon reading it, he encouraged her to immediately seek a publisher. It was released by Cranthorpe Millner, the first publisher Lindsey (tentatively) approached, in July 2022 and is a true page turner. (It's now available on audible and is read by Clive Heyward, an award-winning British actor, and the lute music was specially recorded for by Sam Brown). She's now working on her second novel, *Wanton Troopers*.

Woven throughout Lindsey's life has been much Marfan-induced physical misery - circulatory pain, sinus trouble (thank heaven for Doxycycline), hip problems (eventually resolved by Orthopaedic Surgeon Sarah Muirhead Allwood) amongst many other complications. But the golden thread of music, art and romance has provided Lindsey with personal and professional fulfilment, and as I said goodbye to the exquisitely beautiful figure framed in the doorway I felt giddy with the conversation.



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