

Lyndon Holborn

Of Friendship Estate



FIFTY YEARS before its revolution in 1804, Haiti was the French colony of Saint-Domingue, the world's wealthiest, most profitable colony. Deemed France's most prized possession, it became the prime destination for Frenchmen seeking their fortune.

The man Lyndon Holborn traveled with was a Basque Prince from the Kingdom of Navarre, a small principality occupying lands on either side of the Western Pyrenees along the Atlantic Ocean between Spain and France.

As Lyndon journeyed across the island, evidence of decline was everywhere. The Haitian Revolution and the subsequent declaration of independence were the cause of the poverty he saw all around him.

"The Haitian Revolution destroyed our economy. The island lacks diplomatic and trade relations with other nations, so foreign and domestic investment has dried up," the prince explained to Lyndon as they traveled.

"Haiti has moved toward subsistence farming and away from plantation agriculture. The reparation payments France forced us to pay for our freedom have left the country deeply indebted."

"Yet, you seem to be doing well, Your Highness," Lyndon commented, taking in the man's elegant attire and handsome coach carriage.

Lyndon was forced to make an unscheduled stop in Haiti when his ship from London to Jamaica encountered bad weather. He met the

prince at the docks, who graciously offered to help Lyndon find lodging.

After a dinner that extended late into the night and involved several bottles of fine liquor, the prince invited Lyndon to stay with him at his plantation.

Lyndon was intrigued by the colorful character and accepted without hesitation.

The prince carefully considered Lyndon's comment before he responded. "There is a secret to my success."

"Then I should like to know that secret, my friend," Lyndon laughed.

"You'll meet her soon enough," The Prince replied with a twinkle in his eye.

Turning into the gates of the prince's estate was like entering another world. Unlike the field workers they passed on the road, who were sullen and angry. The people here were happy and smiling. With voices raised in song, the sugar cane seemed to respond to the beautiful chorus joined in glorious harmony.

As they pulled up to the steps of the Greathouse, Lyndon could only stare at the beautiful creature standing as still as a statue at the top of the grand stairs. The prince followed his gaze.

"Ah, my wife Chedeline," the prince said, smiling.

Chedeline's eyes were fixed on her husband. The smile that crossed her lips as her husband stepped down from the carriage was almost feral, and Lyndon was suddenly jealous of his friend. Suddenly, Lyndon was distracted by the even more beautiful woman who ran to stand next to Chedeline, her head down demurely.

"And this is my daughter, Anne," the prince added.

As Anne raised her eyes to meet Lyndon's, he forgot to breathe.

Chedeline took Lyndon's arm and led him through the doors, but Lyndon couldn't tear his eyes away from Anne.

As much as he looked for her, Lyndon didn't see Anne again until they were seated across from each other at dinner that evening.

"I'm amazed at how productive your slaves are," Lyndon began awkwardly. "Your cane houses are full to bursting, and you're only half-way through your harvest."

"There are no enslaved people on this estate, sir!" Anne responded, her eyes flashing with anger.

"Then who did I see working your fields?" Lyndon stammered.

"This estate is a freehold," Anne said, her voice bristling with disdain.

"Anne," Chedeline admonished her daughter. "Master Holborn is not familiar with how things are done in Haiti. Slavery still exists in other Caribbean islands. He is from Jamaica. Be patient with him, my dear."

Lyndon was sure that was the politest putdown he had ever received.

"I apologize, Madam," Lyndon said, properly chastised. "I've never heard of such an arrangement."

But Anne was not so forgiving. "Then you don't know your history, sir."

"My history?" Lyndon asked.

"You are not gentry? You have no title, no lands in England, Scotland, or Wales?" Anne asked.

"No," Lyndon answered. "I made my fortune in agriculture. First in Barbados and then in Jamaica."

"So, your family were serfs in England?" Anne asked.

"Serfs?" Lyndon looked confused.

"In Europe, the feudal system of Serfdom began in the tenth century. Serfs were forced to labor in the fields of landowners and were considered the lowest social class in feudal society. But, in time, they were allowed to buy their way out of poverty through hard work and determination."

Lyndon put his fork down and looked at Anne. His anger matched hers.

"Serfdom ended in England in the 1600s," Lyndon said.

"Precisely, sir! And I am willing to wager that is when your ancestors started to progress," Anne rejoined.

Lyndon sat back in his chair and stared at Anne. Her mocha skin glistened in the candlelight, and her dark eyes flashed, captivating Lyndon.

"Mademoiselle, you have piqued my curiosity. Would you mind showing me around the freehold state you have created here?" Lyndon asked.

Chedeline's musical laughter broke the tension. "Don't be so hard on him, Anne. It takes time for men to understand the ways of change."

Lyndon stayed on the plantation for a month. During his talks with the prince, he learned how he and Chedeline came to be married.

Chedeline was a slave on the plantation when the prince bought it, but he married her the day after he laid eyes on her.

He could have taken her without marrying her, as was his right as Master, but he was so madly in love with her that only the marriage bond would satisfy him and be acceptable to her.

"She makes me want to be a better man," the prince explained. "She is love, in its purest form."

As Lyndon spent more time with Anne riding through the estate, Lyndon saw only strength in Anne's beauty and goodness in her force of will.

One day, while riding, they stopped at a stream to drink the cool, crisp water. Lyndon picked a flower by the stream and handed it to Anne. Without thinking, he leaned in and kissed her.

"Forgive me! I had no right to do that. I'm so sorry," Lyndon exclaimed, mortified.

"You're a married man," Anne responded softly.

"I am," Lyndon answered miserably. "It's not a happy or loving marriage. It hasn't been for years. I have no right...." Lyndon looked like he wanted to cry.

"No right to what?" Anne asked.

"To feel the way I do about you," Lyndon replied, looking at her.

They rode back to the Greathouse in silence. Anne found her mother sorting herbs in the

solarium at the back of the house. Chedeline listened as Anne related what had happened between her and Lyndon.

"What would you say if I told you that man is your future husband?" Chedeline asked, turning to look at her daughter.

"Mother, you can't be serious! He's already married with a family."

"Not for long," Chedeline replied. "Lyndon Holborn is your destiny, and the child you have with him will build a society the likes of which the world will only witness for the first time."

Anne stared at her mother, who smiled and continued sorting herbs.

The next day, Lyndon announced he was leaving. Anne sought him out as he waited for the carriage.

"You are an honorable man, Lyndon. I admire that about you. If we are to be together, I believe you will find a way because you hold both our hearts in your hands."

Anne left a stunned Lyndon in her wake.

Lyndon's return to Jamaica was hopeful, at least for him. After a brief stop at his solicitor's office in Black River, Lyndon returned to Friendship Estate, where he announced his intention to divorce his wife and send his children back to England.

"You will have all the holdings in England, the townhouse in London, and the estate in Tunbridge. I've set up dowries for the girls, and I promise, Madge. You will want for nothing if you agree to this divorce," Lyndon stated.

After the initial shock, Madge Holborn saw Lyndon's proposal as a way out of a miserable

existence on the disease-infested island she hated, surrounded by people she feared, and with no prospects for her daughters. She agreed to sign the divorce decree Lyndon's solicitor had drafted without delay.

Lyndon's only son was not so forgiving. "Know that with this action, you are dead to me. Dead to my mother and dead to my sisters!"

"I expect and deserve nothing less," Lyndon agreed.

As they were about to leave Friendship Estate for good, Madge turned to Lyndon. "I never want to see you again."

"I promise you, you never will," Lyndon responded firmly.

When Lyndon returned to Jamaica from Haiti with Anne Holborn on his arm, the gossip drove Jamaica's plantocracy into a frenzy.

"Can you imagine it? He puts aside his white family to marry a darkie!" Lady Ingle said indignantly.

"I hear she's a witch! And she practices magic deep from the heart of Africa," Lady Nusome responded, dismayed.

"Dear me! What if she sets her sights on our husbands?" Lady Ingle whispered.

The women looked at their husbands, portly, white, pasty-looking men, sweating profusely in the humidity. Lord Ingle squeezed the breast of a passing serving girl, and Lady Ingle looked away quickly, embarrassed by her husband's actions. Lady Nusome pretended not to notice her husband ogling the same serving girl.

"It's one thing to bed them, quite another to marry them," Lord Nusome commented, dragging his eyes away from the serving girl's retreating backside.

"The girl is a Princess of Navarre. Her father is the wealthiest landowner in Haiti, possibly in the New World," Lord Ingle replied.

"Be that as it may, I don't like the precedent it sets here in the English colonies," Lord Nusome responded solemnly.

"You have to admit, though," Lord Harrington Dunbarton said as he joined the two men. "He's one lucky bastard to bed such a beautiful young woman."

Lords Ingle and Nusome turned to look at their frumpy wives, mottled pink from the heat.

"We should all be so fortunate in life," Harrington said, pointing to the entrance. The two men looked at him in shock.

Lyndon and Anne stood at the entrance of the ballroom. All eyes were trained on the couple as they waited awkwardly before entering. Not one word of welcome was forthcoming.

Lady Margaret Dunbarton had listened to the exchange between the Ladies and Lords, disgusted by their words.

As Lyndon turned to leave, Margaret strode purposely forward. "Master Holborn! How lovely to see you!" Margaret exclaimed, taking Lyndon's free arm and leading him into the room. Turning to Anne, she said loudly enough for the room to hear her words. "You must be Anne. It's a delight to meet you, my dear. I am quite sure we will be fast friends."

Lyndon smiled gratefully at Margaret as the other guests greeted them, following Margaret's lead.

Anne smiled shyly at Margaret, who grabbed the shawl on her shoulder as it began to fall. Anne noticed the bruises before Margaret could replace them. Anne's eyes followed Margaret's as she looked at her husband, who was barely controlling his anger.

Margaret's smile faded. She realized she would pay for her boldness at her husband's hands.

As the crop-over celebration on Friendship Estate got underway, Anne turned lovingly to Lyndon. "Today is a happy day!"

"Friendship Estate is a freehold, Anne. I can't free everyone legally yet, but here, they will be free, and as soon as I figure out how to do it by law, I promise you, it will be done," Lyndon said, kissing her.

Later that night, Lyndon held his wife, who sobbed as she lost their first child.

"I don't understand!" Anne said as the Obeah woman gently cleaned her. "My mother said my child was destined. How could I lose my son?"

"Maybe this was not the child you were meant to have," the Obeah woman responded.

Anne looked at the woman questioningly as she handed her a cup. "Drink dis, it will mek yu milk come in."

"Why do I need my milk to flow? I lost my baby." Anne asked as tears flowed anew.

"Yu loss a baby! Another one will come, and until den, a nex babe will drink from yu breast," the Obeah woman said, putting the cup to Anne's lips and forcing her to drink its contents.

Planter's Punch

This recipe I give to thee,
Dear brother, in the heat.

Lynda R. Edwards

Take two of sour (lime, let it be)
To one and a half of sweet,
Of Old Jamaica pour three strong,
And add four parts of weak.
Then mix and drink. I do no wrong – I know
whereof I speak.

August 09, 1908, edition of the New York Times.

What Readers are saying about *Friendship Estate*.

Page Turner

The premise is relevant and timely. So engaging I couldn't put the book down and read it in one sitting. So many universal themes that many characters are relatable and all too familiar to Jamaican people. These stories have been passed down and told by our mothers and fathers that were passed to them.

But never has this story been told or one with such vivid candor and with the spirit that runs through all people of Jamaica regardless of class, creed, or color. Out of many, one people indeed.
Highly captivating and recommended.

Join me at the Beach House by
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Lynda R Edwards-Author

Read Friendship Estate for the full story!