

# *Hell Hath No Fury*

## *Chapter 1*

**C**HANGE AT MARYBOROUGH, change at Ballybrophy, change at Roscrea. The only thing that didn't change, Daisy reflected, was the quality of the second-class carriages; on main line, minor line, branch line, and whatever-this-was line, the seats were uniformly hard, the windows evenly smeared, and the decor an unvarying sea of brown, from pale dun to the darkest chocolate. Still, you had to see it from the coachbuilder's point of view. If they made it more comfortable, a lot of first-class folk would drop to second; and if they made it less, a lot of seconds would drop to third.

Dropping in class was very much on Daisy O'Lindon's mind that day.

She glanced across the narrow carriage at her companion for this journey. Fellow traveller, anyway. Mary Rourke. Now there was one who wouldn't grumble too much that only an inch of kapok distinguished a second-class bench from a third, not with those great blind-cheeks behind her. Poor little Mary – nature hadn't given her much, and where it had, it had gone too far. She hadn't a hope of getting this place, of course – nor of much else in life, either. The mouth on her could have been cut out of her face with an axe. You'd find better teeth on broken cogwheels. And whichever eye was right, the other wasn't; they couldn't even agree on which way to look. The left one caught Daisy at her survey. The gash below her squashed-potato nose broke into a gappy grin. "Soon be there," she said. Daisy forced a smile, nodded, and turned again to the window.

'Clare to God, it wasn't the prettiest part of Ireland, either. She thought of the Dublin Mountains, which rose behind her own home in Monkstown, and the Wicklow Mountains beyond, which she had seen on the parish excursion to the holy places at Glendalough. The contrast with this flat, boggy landscape could not have been greater. As far as the eye could see, through that grimy pane and the driving rain beyond it, there was nothing but bog, barley, and booreens. Hadn't Uncle Thomas warned her? "What doesn't drown a man will break him." He was one of the O'Lindons who had remained in these parts, so he should know.

Now and then there was a glimpse of a landlord house or a hint of something even grander. You wouldn't see the big house itself, of course, but the woodlands where the pheasants and foxes were preserved; they dawdled by every few miles. She wondered what Coolderg Castle would be like. When Aunt Kathleen, her uncle's sister, had written to say there might be a place for a good Protestant girl as lady's maid at Coolderg, it had sounded very romantic: a castle, the Lord alone knew how old, in wooded parkland, by a river, near a lough on the Shannon, with a mountain behind it. But she hadn't pictured it on a day like this, with the showers on each other's heels and a wind that could take you from any quarter at its whim.

A lady's maid – Daisy O'Lindon a lady's maid! And to the Lyndon-Furys of all people! Who'd ever have thought it? Her mother would be telling everyone she'd gone down to visit her relations in County Keelity, or "O'Lindon Country," as she affected to call it. That was going to be the worst – keeping up appearances whenever she went back home. For, although although her transition from the middle to the servants class was, on the face of it, a step down in the world, it would, in fact, be a liberation of a kind. She'd have money of her own for the first time in her life, and not be forever having to endure her parents' lectures on the state of trade and her thoughtless extravagances and why couldn't she be more like her sister? And she'd be free at long last of having to be chaperoned everywhere – which, in practice, meant she couldn't put her nose out of doors without her mother at her side. Other girls, even if they didn't have their own maid, could always borrow the tweeny or the general for an hour or two; but Daisy's parents had no tweeny and they kept the one general at it from dawn till suppertime. So, all in all, Daisy was rather looking forward to her "come-down" in the world.

The rain passed over and there was a sudden glory of sunshine. It revealed a few smudges of grey on the horizon, grey that was not cloud. Now she knew they must be drawing near the end of this brief but tedious journey. The smudges in the south were ... whatever those mountains in Tipperary were called – the ones they had seen when they changed trains at Roscrea. But those pale blue humps away to the west, now, they were her native land. Or her father's native land: the Slieve Derg, the Beautiful Mountains, the ancient stronghold of the O'Laughlins until the O'Lindons drove them out in the ... sixteenth century, was it? Not too long ago, anyway.

Daisy wondered what Madeleine Lyndon-Fury would be like. Never mind the romantic castle and the Beautiful Mountains, a mistress could turn hell to heaven on her maid, and heaven to hell. Miss Lyndon-Fury had just emerged from an academy for young ladies in Brighton, just outside London or somewhere. Susan Warner said those places could

soak every last drop of the milk of human kindness out of a girl. Still, anything would be better than taking in sewing by the kitchen door after dark and seeing every penny vanish into the bottomless pit of her parents' pretensions; and hadn't her father promised that if the japanning business picked up soon, the first call on his purse would be to get her and her sister back out of service – only he hadn't said *if*, he'd said *when*.

And Uncle Thomas had said never mind what Miss Madeleine would be like; the one to watch out for was Herself, Lady Lyndon-Fury.