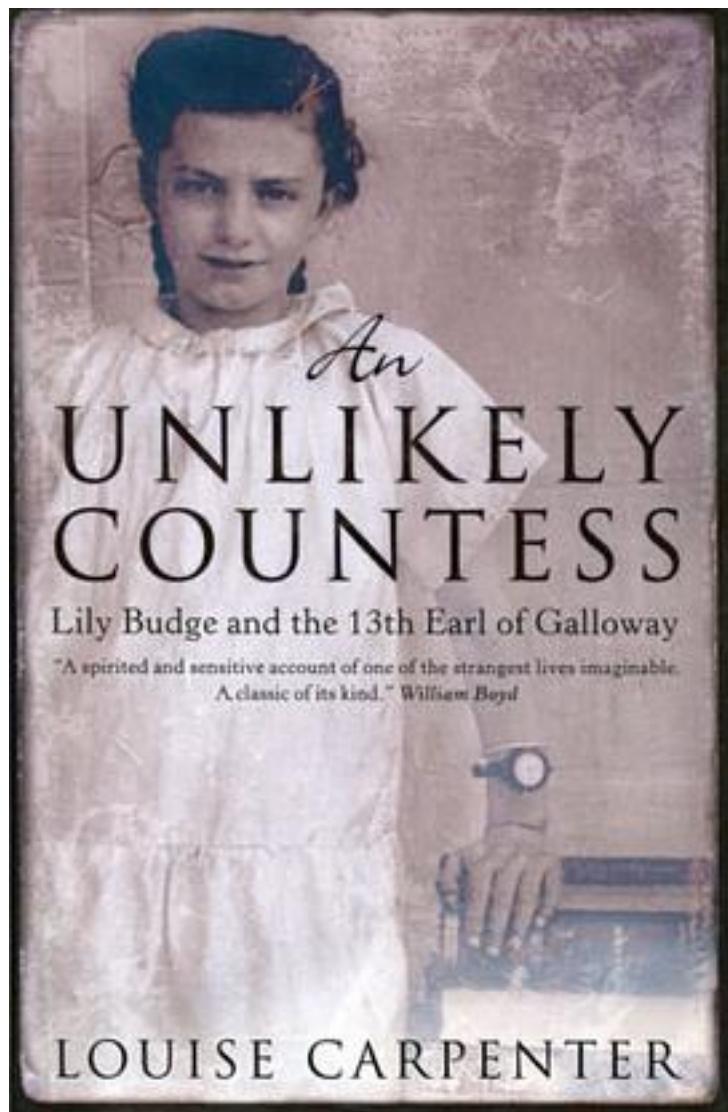


An Unlikely Countess



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A vivid and moving portrait of the inimitable Lily Budge, who overcame poverty and class divide to become the 13th Countess of Galloway, and one of Scotland's most colourful eccentrics. In 1916, Lily Miller was born into a working class family in Duns, in the Borders region of Scotland. She became determined to escape, both from the small town gossip and from her terrifying mother, who thought Lily was born only to serve. Lily could not have predicted that her flight would eventually lead her to the heart of the Scottish establishment. Her spirited, eccentric and at times self-destructive nature shaped every decision she made, and her life became increasingly racy. In 1975, living in Edinburgh as a self-styled dealer in porcelain dolls, with two failed marriages and four sons (one adopted) to her name, not to mention posts as a housekeeper and a boarding house owner, she met Randolph Stewart, the future 13th Earl of Galloway. On the surface, Randolph's aristocratic childhood could not have seemed more different. His was a world of great privilege, emotional restraint and overwhelming expectation. As an adolescent he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and, as a young man, lobotomised. Much of the rest of his life had been spent hidden away, either in a mental institution or with a religious order of monks. But a curious bond formed between Lily and Randolph, and marriage followed, beginning a deep family feud that was played out in newspaper headlines. Was such a union doomed to failure? An Unlikely Countess is a masterpiece of storytelling and biography, teeming with historical detail and famous names. Louise Carpenter has brought to life not only two extraordinary characters in Lily and Randolph, but also the worlds in which they moved, with sensitivity, humour and expert observation. Her affection for her subjects is matched by a wry awareness of their idiosyncrasies, and the rich backdrop she paints serves as a vibrant portrait of twentieth-century Scotland.

作者介绍:

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