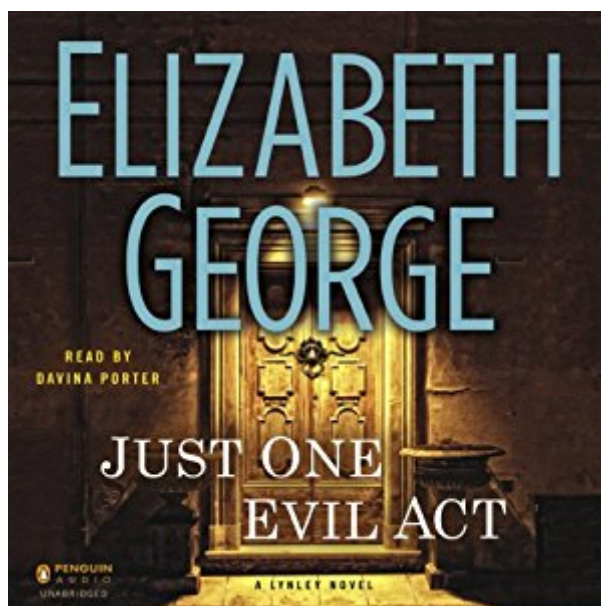


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# Just One Evil Act: A Lynley Novel, Book 18



## Synopsis

#1 New York Times bestselling author Elizabeth George offers the latest in her Inspector Lynley series: a gripping child-in-danger story featuring fan favorite Barbara Havers. Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers is at a loss: The daughter of her friend Taymullah Azhar has been taken by her mother, and Barbara can't really help - Azhar had never married Angelina, and his name isn't on Hadiyyah's, their daughter's, birth certificate. He has no legal claim. Azhar and Barbara hire a private detective, but the trail goes cold. Azhar is just beginning to accept his soul-crushing loss when Angelina reappears with shocking news: Hadiyyah is missing, kidnapped from an Italian marketplace. The Italian police are investigating, and the Yard won't get involved, until Barbara takes matters into her own hands. As she attempts to navigate the complicated waters of doing anything for the case against her superior's orders, her partner, Inspector Thomas Lynley, is dispatched to Italy as the liaison between the Italian police and Hadiyyah's distraught parents. In time, both Barbara and Lynley discover that the case is far more complex than just a kidnapping, revealing secrets about Angelina; her new lover, Lorenzo; and even Azhar - secrets Barbara may not be willing to accept. With both her job and the life of a little girl on the line, Barbara must decide what matters most and how far she's willing to go to protect it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I really wanted to like this book. I tried to like this book, but I had a hard time liking it as well as all the others. It was tedious reading. Too many times, I slapped the book shut with an audible, "Oh,

good grief!" I've been a huge fan of Elizabeth George for a good 20 years, and have LOVED all the previous Inspector Lynley books, along with the PBS dramas of the books. I don't know why the character of Det. Havers took such a terrible digression. It was almost as if the author had to take every one of Havers little foibles and character flaws and magnified them so as to be ridiculous. Havers, always a bit odd for a Detective, became, in this book, an idiotic parody. Lynley, on the other hand, became a kind of a wimp. Because I have had family in law enforcement, I know there is no way any reputable law enforcement agency would put up with Havers outrageous, and frankly, downright stupid behavior in this story. She would have been put on paid medical leave and sent to the Dept. Psychiatrist, as she appeared to be bordering on a mental breakdown. Lynley, as her superior officer, would have been called on the carpet for not reining her in. Too much Havers, not enough Lynley. I slogged through to the end, and came to the conclusion the book was a couple hundred pages too long. The story could have been told much better without depicting Havers as a borderline mental case, and giving Lynley something other to do than hang out with a Roller Derby Queen. I mean, really! Here's hoping that Ms. George had only a momentary lapse of judgement, and the next Lynley / Havers adventure will be back on track.

I've been an avid reader of Elizabeth George's mysteries since the aristocratic police investigator, Inspector Thomas Lynley, and his unkempt, authority adverse partner, Barbara Havers, were first introduced in *A Great Deliverance* in 1988. Although American, Ms. George has for the most part of 25 years been my favorite author of British mysteries after P.D. James. This affection for the Lynley mysteries has been quelled since the publication of *What Came Before He Shot Her*, George's attempt at arguing the poverty excuse for the poorer do well who killed the beloved character, Helen Lynley. That book was nearly unreadable and the beginning of the end for me. Out of habit, eternal hope or stubbornness, I've continued to give each new installment a try. I've read all 18. *Just One Evil Act* may be the death knell for my continued readership. The Lynley novels have, for me, been about the character development and in *Just One Evil Act*, none of the long beloved characters act true to the personas that have been developed over 25 years and 18 books. Not in one's most wild imagination would Thomas attend a roller derby match (at least not more than once on a lark); Barbara Havers would not aid & abet malfeasance; and the other major players would never proceed as described in this book. If *Just One Evil Act* were one's first Lynley book, these critiques would not matter. My issues with the story arise from my lengthy relationship with these characters and the careful characterizations that have

been developed over the years. While I can understand that Ms. George may have felt the need to shuffle things up a bit, the series began its slide when Helen was murdered a mere six months after finally marrying Tommy and has not been able to recover. While the overly long book is readable, it was not enjoyable for me.

I can't figure out how to review this without some spoilers. I will warn you ahead of time when they are coming. Don't rush out to buy this. I pre-ordered it because I was desperate to know what happened to Hadiyyah, but the cost wasn't worth the answer. This book is way too long and very repetitive. We get not only the "you told me that already" kind of repetition, but you also get one of the characters making the same mistake over and over again kind of repetition. The particular character I have in mind must be getting to around 40 years old and should have learned something by this time. But no, the same teenager type mistake over and over. By the end (and the mistakes happen right to the end) I thought "whatever" every single time. I think I was supposed to be worried about the character but instead I just wanted the book to end and thought the character deserved whatever was in store. The main problem with this book is that it could provide real insight into Barbara Havers and fails to do so. At one point she says to herself "that he, [Lynley] should see her like this. Reduced in this way to the disintegrating substance of what comprised her: Loneliness that he had never known, misery that he had seldom felt, a future stretching out in front of her that contained her job and nothing else." That is the heart of the book, but that's that for it. Yeah, there's a lot of talk about whether or not Barbara is in love with Azhar, and I think she is a little. But I also think what she treasures from both Azhar and Hadiyyah is friendship. Honestly who has she got for a friend? Helen, could, I think have been her friend, but she died. Lynley will always be more interested in himself than anything else. All long time readers of the series should remember how he thought Barbara should allow Hadiyyah to be thrown off that boat rather than take unauthorized action to stop it. The whole business about him not calling Barbara back, after all she had done for him in the last book was just the final straw. No, Lynley will never be her true friend. Who does she have? She is totally alone in the world and needs someone. Even a ten year old is someone when you're all alone. I think the book would have been worthwhile if it had concentrated on Barbara's loneliness and how she would deal with it in the future. But at the end it's just the same old thing. Spoiler: Would this have been charged as kidnapping in the US? I felt that the whole "Facing years in prison" thing was over blown. I kept thinking that it's just custodial interference and these things are usually handled in the Family Courts and usually with a formal child custody agreement. But I don't know. Also that brings up the question so often raised in this book and never answered:

Who is Hadiyyah's father? Until the question was raised over and over again, I had no doubt, but now I think it will pop up in the next book. And if it does, the answer has to be not Azhar because otherwise, what's the point of carrying on about it?

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