

SIR THOMAS'S BRIDE

MASTERFUL HUSBANDS, BOOK ONE



VANESSA BROOKS



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CHAPTER 1



Lady Margaret shifted uncomfortably. Not for the first time did she wonder how she came to be in this awkward predicament. She mournfully supposed that fate had dealt her a cruel hand when it coupled her with Sir Thomas Wiggington. How unfair the world could be, she mused with sorrowful self-pity.

A soft swishing noise caught her attention and then the stinging whap of a cane slashed her across the tender skin of her virgin buttocks. Lady Margaret was both a virgin to spanking and, as yet, to the touch of a man. She laid face down, silent with shock, as a searing line of pain bit into both her bottom cheeks. Before she could suck any air into her lungs to yell, another strike fell. However, this time she did manage to scream and rather vocally.

Sadly, no one came to her aid—no one cared enough for her person to rush to her side. The only other person in this entire world who might have cared was her mother, Lady Amelia Beauchamp. However, she was many miles away, ensconced in the Dowager House at Longetlestone in the county of Sussex, banished from London by the King at the request of Margaret's

bridegroom, the very man who was presently setting fire to her buttocks.

Lady Margaret was all alone and, in her view, at the mercy of a madman, a brute of a man, a man whom she now called husband.

Sir Thomas Wiggington admired his handiwork; he was as skilled with a cane as he was with a rapier in his hand. A row of tidy livid red stripes lay neatly across his bride's pearlescent skin; the next punishing stripe would land on the crease at the top of her legs, 'twixt her bottom and her thighs. Thomas knew that it would be the most stinging blow of them all. He raised the cane high and flicked his wrist with a practiced hand, the strike coming down with a satisfying whoosh; the ear splitting shriek that his wife gave was most gratifying to the much beleaguered bridegroom.

"Arise now, Margaret, but leave your skirts tucked up to your waist and go and stand in that far corner of the room. Perhaps, madam, the next time you chose to spit in my eye you will understand the consequences of taking such heinous action."

Thomas watched, amused, as his peevish, vinegar tongued wife scuttled over to the far corner of his study without as much as a glance in his direction. She put her face into her hands and wept self piteously.

Thomas took his seat behind the large yew desk and studied her. Thomas knew when he ensnared Lady Margaret that she would take some sweetening. He also knew that she needed to be strongly taken in hand by a man, a man such as himself in fact. A man who had experience of dealing with ill-humoured and badly behaved women. Hoydens and hellions had become his study of preference. Thomas had not found one such woman yet who had not responded to his method of a cane as deterrent and his loving attention as reward; carrot and stick in fact.

However, Margaret was made in a mould all of her own; this woman, now his wife, was a veritable viper! Thomas crossed a leg over his knee and sat back enjoying the view of his wife's naked and punished rear end. It was a nicely shaped bottom, round and well-padded and scarlet in hue, just as Thomas preferred a woman's arse to be. He grinned; he knew he would turn his peevish Margaret about eventually. Thomas loved teaching nasty, spiteful women of the *haute ton* to change their ways and a cane was indeed a great deterrent and ultimately a sweetener of such sour natured creatures.

Now he had a permanent project—a wife and one that Thomas hoped would eventually come to love him and would produce a family with him. He should have realised that it was too soon to show any romantic gesture toward his bride but it was tradition to carry one's bride over the threshold and Thomas had not expected the gob of saliva that had hit him rather painfully in his eye. He had quite honestly not expected to be spat at by his gently born wife, Lady Margaret Wiggington, nee Beauchamp.

Lady Margaret was unaware of her husband's perusal of her pert rear-end. She was truly shocked by the sudden turn of events that had led to this painful eye opener. One minute Thomas was the mild mannered, stuttering nincompoop whom she had previously mocked and derided, and the next, he was this overbearing tyrant who reacted to her mocking remarks by taking the severe punitive measure of caning her. To top it all, this was her wedding day, the only day in her life that she felt she should be treated like a queen!

The startling fact that he had spanked her with a cane even before he had consummated their marriage meant that there was absolutely no question of her accepting him into her boudoir this night. Certainly not after this brutal attack on her poor derriere.

After building herself up into an indignant and self-right-

eous fit of pique, Margaret tossed her head and prepared to shake down her skirts. She would leave this room and this very house. He could not force her to stay. She would leave before he was in truth and before God, her husband. What she wasn't prepared for was the knowledge and experience that Sir Thomas had of churlish ladies such as herself.

As Margaret spun around ready to run, she was met by the wall of Sir Thomas's chest. He placed a hand behind her head to hold her steady and brought his mouth down upon hers. Margaret had never been kissed upon her lips before now, nor anywhere other than upon her hand and so she was unprepared and caught completely by surprise.

The kiss was surprisingly enjoyable and she forgot her temper tantrum and her painful stinging bottom. That was until Sir Thomas chose to remind her of it, by squeezing her seared buttock cheeks. Margaret broke away and lifted her hand to strike Thomas's hateful face but she found her wrist caught fast in his. She was spun about as Sir Thomas walked from the room, towing his venomous and spitting bride along with him. Margaret, furious, had no choice but to follow her new husband. She realised that he was a much stronger man than she had given him credit for and she could not shake his inexorable grip on her wrist.

Thomas dragged Margaret into the withdrawing room and lowered her onto the scroll ended settee, designed in the Greek style that Thomas so admired. He stalked over to the Tantalus and unlocked it with a key, one which he kept safely hidden away from the staff, tucked into his waistcoat pocket at all times. He poured himself a much needed brandy. He did not offer his wife a drink for he knew that she would refuse it. He downed his brandy and left the room, standing behind the door to observe Lady Margaret's actions after his departure.

Sir Thomas watched as his new wife first glanced at the door and then rose, nimbly making her way over to the open

decanter holder. She looked tentatively over her shoulder and then picked up the heavy crystal sherry decanter and poured herself a generous measure.

Thomas grinned, jolly good show, he wanted her to have a drink—it would steady her nerves for what was yet to come. He wandered back to his study and tugged on the bell pull and within moments, Gates, his butler, appeared.

"Sir?"

"Gates, please see to it that the cold collation supper that I requested is laid out in the dining room, ready for Lady Margaret and myself to partake of as we wish."

"Certainly sir... I wondered if the staff might take the opportunity to greet their new mistress before supper this evening, sir?"

"No, Gates, not this evening. Lady Wigginton is somewhat overwrought tonight. I think perhaps tomorrow before luncheon might be a better time for that. She will be calmer and more subdued by then."

The butler bowed his head. "Certainly, sir, will there be anything else, sir?"

"No, Gates, not tonight. Tell Grisson that I shall not require his valet services this evening. I shall manage perfectly well on my own. Please inform Lady Margaret's lady's maid, er..."

"Hockley, sir."

"Ah yes, Hockley. Her services will not be required by my wife this evening either."

"Certainly, sir. Might I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your marriage, sir?"

Thomas beamed at Gates, "How very good of you, Gates, thank you. I think that eventually we shall deal very nicely together, the Lady Margaret and I."

The butler bowed and left the room. He and the household were very familiar with their master's choice in the type of lady he chose to call 'friend'. The previous lady that their master had

been involved with, a widow, had visited the house on occasion. She had been of unpleasant disposition at the beginning of their association, but by the time she and Sir Thomas had ended their affair, she was both polite and pleasant to all the staff that she came in contact with above stairs.

Their master's choice of bride did not surprise the household but they did speculate, wondering if, on this occasion, he might have 'bitten off more than he could chew'. Gates shook his head, as once again he wondered that very thing as he returned below stairs.

Thomas thought that Margaret should have had ample time to down at least three sherries, surely making her more than a little squiffy by now. It was time to return to the withdrawing room and assess her mood.