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# THE COLONEL'S BRIDE

Masterful Husbands - Book Three

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.  
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## Chapter 1

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Claudia was practicing Handel's *Minuets I and II, Music for the Royal Fireworks* on the harpsichord. She played the first piece as her music master directed. He walked behind her, out of her line of sight, occasionally leaning forward so that his cheek was so close to hers that she could smell his spicy cologne and feel his breath ruffling the curls at the back of her neck. Thrillingly, she felt his fingers trace over her bare shoulders. He leaned in and flipped the music sheet over with his long, elegant fingers. Startlingly, those same fingers danced lightly over the exposed swell of her bosom; goose bumps rose across her skin and she shivered with delight. He strummed her décolletage back and forth.

“Like *thess*, Lady Wes-ton, with a light an’ ‘appy touch. You feel it now, ye-es?”

*Ooo yes*, she felt it. Small waves surged in ripples down from her breasts to her secret hidden place. She squirmed on the stool as her amazingly sensitive place filled with incredibly demanding sensations.

“Ooh, yes, Signor Gomballi, I understand perfectly now, *thank you*,” Claudia breathed. She tilted her face up to him and

fluttered her eyelashes. His warm chocolate coloured eyes regarded her steadily. These illicit moments of forbidden tryst between them were made so much more exciting by the risk and very public nature of their flirting. He removed his hands and she sighed with a mixture of relief and disappointment tinged with a guilty conscience.

“Verra well, now we move on to zee next section two, an’ so we try zee piece again with *zee* light-er touch.”

Claudia turned the music sheet and began to play. The signor’s hand suddenly pushed down into her dress front and tweaked one of her puckered nipples. Shocked, Claudia gasped aloud and nearly swooned with delight as an arrow of lust shot its way down to her, by now, very liquid core.

Then, just as suddenly, his hand was gone, wrenched roughly from her bodice. A bellow and a grunt, followed by a sudden thump had her leaping to her feet with shock. Spinning around, she was just in time to see her elegant music master dashed to the ground, landing upon his back on the polished wooden floor. His dark wig rolled off and Claudia gaped, astonished to see a very balding head glinting in the bright light of the music room.

Her brother Charles stood over him, red faced, both fists clenched, his right hand grazed from the punch he had landed upon the handsome Italian’s chin.

“Get out of my house, you lecherous snake, and don’t dare to show your face here ever again!” Charles roared furiously, spraying spittle over the cringing Italian.

Oh no, no, no, not her beautiful music master! He was so handsome even without his courtly wig. Claudia opened her mouth to defend the signor but noticed her brother’s ticking jaw and darkening scowl. She snapped her mouth shut again quickly. Charles spoke grimly before she had even uttered a single word.

“My. Study. Now!” he ground out between clenched teeth.

Claudia nodded obediently. She knew that his tone boded ill for her. She hopped up, lifted her dress skirts and scuttled off in

the direction of her father's old study, her brother Charles's domain since her father had passed away last year. As she skidded into the hallway, she ran straight into her pretty sister-in-law, Imogene.

"Whatever is wrong, Claudia?" she asked, catching her by her shoulders.

Claudia rolled her cinnamon coloured eyes, almost a replica of her brother's. "Charles caught me flirting with Signor Gomballi and ordered me directly to his study."

"Oh dear, did Charles ask you about my whereabouts?" Imogene asked, twisting her handkerchief anxiously. She was also supposed to be taking instruction whilst chaperoning the lessons but she hated the harpsichord and resented having to re-take lessons now that she was an adult and a married woman to boot.

"No, he punched the poor signor and ordered him out of the house before sending me to his study to await him." They both turned toward the music room as each heard the unmistakable tread of Charles's footsteps approaching. When Imogene glanced back, Claudia had already run off, no doubt to wait as commanded outside Charles's inner sanctum.

Sure enough, Charles arrived and, spotting his wife, moved straight toward her.

"And where were you?" he asked her sharply.

Imogene flushed and shifted uncomfortably, riddled with guilt. "Um, in the retiring room." It was a partial truth after all.

"I found that slimy cod fish with his hand thrust down Claudia's dress front. I cannot believe that she simply sat there and let him fondle her breast!" He shook his head, bewildered by his sister's conduct.

Imogene was shocked. She knew that Claudia flirted outrageously with the man, but to allow the music master to handle her thus, well it was scandalous behaviour. Her guilt at slipping

away from the lessons day after day had her now squirming with remorse. Wide eyed, she regarded her husband nervously.

“Why are you looking so guilty, Imogene my dear?” Charles’s astute gaze raked over his wife. She was hopeless at deception; in fact, her innocent guile was the very thing he most adored about her.

Imogene sighed. It was absolutely no good, she hated to feel guilty and knew the only way she would ever overcome the emotion was to confess and take whatever medicine her husband deemed necessary. She looked down at her toes and in a stuttering voice, confessed her crimes.

Charles was incensed; he had particularly asked his wife to chaperone the lessons specifically because his mother was too unwell for the task and Imogene had readily agreed. He had also thought it an admirable solution because Imogene’s music skills were quite frankly abysmal for a woman of her position. For one who had been playing since she was seven years old, her proficiency left an awful lot to be desired. He grasped her arm just above her elbow and towed her along beside him into his study. Imogene’s silken slippers skittered on the polished floor as she tried to keep up with his long strides.

Claudia sat upright on the uncomfortable carved mahogany hall chair that stood against the wall outside the study. Charles signalled for her to go in before him and his wife. Charles noticed a look of guilty complicity pass between the two young women. He frowned and decided to begin the lesson with his sister.

He went behind the desk and sat down, elbows on the top, fingers steepled. Both the young women stood side by side facing him across the dark green-tooled leather topped piece of mahogany furniture; he regarded each in turn. His sister Claudia with her bright titian hair and bold gaze stood in contrast to his wife Imogene, a serenely beautiful brunette whose soft brown eyes stared back at him, anxiously awaiting her fate.

“I do not wish to hear any excuses from either of you. You

are both going to be severely punished, and each of you knows why. Claudia, I am shocked and ashamed by your behaviour. As a young woman of sound moral upbringing and an innocent young girl of quality, you should know better than to allow such liberties from any gentleman. But to allow a servant to maul you in that undignified way is... well, I find myself quite beyond words! I intend to strap you most soundly. Turn about, bend over and place your hands upon the chair back. Imogene, I am extremely disappointed with you and shall deal with you privately, afterward. Go and lift Claudia's skirts and bare her, ready for punishment."

"But, Charles, if you would just let me..." Claudia pleaded. She had expected punishment, but not the strap! This time, the tiny goose bumps that peppered her skin felt unpleasant as a shiver of fear coursed through her. On this occasion, the goose bumps were chilling and not at all exciting.

Unfortunately, as was often the case whenever she was overly nervous, Claudia giggled. Imogene was shocked. "Claudia, this is not at all funny," she admonished.

"Oh, she ain't laughing, m'dear. My sister always giggles when she is punished. I suspect it to be a nervous tic. It annoyed our father. He thought she was being disrespectful and it enraged him no end."

"I am not at all nervous of *you*, Charles. I just think this over reaction on your part is highly entertaining and most amusing!" Claudia scoffed with a bravado she didn't actually feel.

"Well then, an extra ten strokes for that disrespectful remark; is that amusing enough for you, sister dear? Or perhaps you wish to add more to your count by insulting me or by arguing your case further?"

Claudia scowled at her brother. He raised an eyebrow and twirled his finger indicating that his sister should turn around. Claudia stamped her foot in frustration but, nevertheless, after harrumphing loudly, she turned, bending over the chair obedi-

ently. She decided she had pushed Charles far enough and had no wish to antagonise him any further, especially since he was about to hold a leather strap in his hand.

Awkwardly, Imogene lifted her sister-in-law's skirts up and over her back. She whispered to her as she leant forward, completing her task. "I am so sorry, Claudia. I feel that I have let you down."

Her stomach writhed and she felt quite nauseous, as she watched her husband extract the leather tawse from the drawer inside his desk. The strap was a thick snake of leather, deliberately split on the punishment end to cause the most amount of discomfort during a spanking.

"No, you have nothing to reproach yourself about," Claudia replied *sotto voce*.

"I beg to differ," Charles chided, having heard every whispered word. "Indeed, you both have much to reproach yourselves for and I intend to teach each of you the error of your ways. This lesson shall be one neither of you will forget in a hurry."

A nervous glance passed between the girls.

Charles had known on the very first meeting of these two young ladies that they would bond and become friends. He had feared they would lead one another astray and it seemed that he had been correct.

Imogene drew back and wrung her hands. This was going to be awful, to have to witness Claudia's pain and, all the while knowing that it would soon be her own turn, was an excruciating burden for her. He laid the object of her terror upon the desktop while he shrugged out of his pale grey frock coat. Less constricted in his loose white shirt and waistcoat, he then picked up the tawse, hefting it from hand to hand before, satisfied with his grip, he slapped the side of the desk. Claudia jumped at the loud crack and Imogene gave a low moan. Up until today, she had only ever been spanked by Charles's hand and that had been infrequent. There had not even been an occurrence of her



husband spanking her since they had lived at Herstmonceaux House.

Her husband walked over to stand beside his sister. "Point your toes inwards and do not reach back or I will have Imogene stand in front of you and hold fast your hands. If that happens, I shall add five more strokes to your chastisement. Are we clear?"

Claudia nodded her head. Charles immediately raised the strap and brought it down with a resounding thwack upon his sister's pale bottom cheeks. She shrieked with laughter.

"That one was for not answering me properly, Claudia, and shall not count towards the twenty-five strokes you have coming to you."

"Y-yes, sir," she giggled inexplicably while her eyes filled with tears.

Charles raised the strap and, as he did so, he noticed Imogene lift her hands to cover her eyes. "Imogene, uncover your eyes. Part of your own punishment is to witness Claudia's suffering. You could have easily prevented this if you had obediently done as I asked of you and chaperoned my sister effectively. While you are witnessing Claudia's spanking, you may reflect upon the fact you shall receive double her tally. Now we begin."

Imogene lowered her hands and stood shaking as the second stroke bit into Claudia's bottom cheeks and tears of sympathy welled up into her eyes.

Claudia wagged her cringing posterior up and down and, this time, she gave a wail of discomfort followed by a snorting giggle. Charles was relentless with the punishment, keeping up a steady barrage of blistering slaps that rained down upon his sister's now heated rump. Soon her giggles changed to strangled wails and Claudia's hands flew back when she could take no more. Charles barked at his wife to take Claudia's hands with her own and hold them fast. He informed them that five more strokes would be added to the count.

If Imogene thought it would be easier to stand at Claudia's

front, she was wrong. Seeing the girl's poor bottom turn livid scarlet, then striped raw, had been dreadful. Looking into Claudia's lovely cinnamon eyes as they turned red from crying and watching her face contort and flood with snot and brine was actually far worse. Yet strangely, the weeping girl still let out the odd shout of mirth.

Claudia's hands twisted and fought for release from Imogene's inexorable grip. Imogene held on, her forehead beaded with perspiration. She knew that to prevent Claudia receiving yet more punishment, she must hold fast to her young sister-in-law's hands. It was a horrible experience and one that filled Imogene with such utter remorse, she knew she would willingly take her own punishment when her own turn came.

When Claudia's chastisement finally ended, Charles ordered Claudia outside his study to sit on the uncomfortable carved wooden chair. Claudia already knew that it was painful sitting on that chair for any length of time, because her father had oft spanked her and made her sit there afterward in full view of the household, thus adding shame to her punishment.

Claudia had never been tawsed before today. Her behind hurt beyond anything she had experienced previously and, when she lowered herself onto the hated chair, she cried out with the discomfort then jumped upright before gingerly seating herself once again with a self-deprecating chortle.

Hughes, the butler, walked past without acknowledging her and Claudia knew he had deliberately ignored her as he always did when she was sat there after punishment. A particularly loud squeal emitted from inside Charles's study and Claudia grinned as Hughes started at the unexpected noise. Her head cocked, Claudia could hear Imogene begging her husband to end her chastisement and she wondered if she too had pleaded with Charles in that desperate way. She rather thought that she had. After a while, the cries and shrieks ended and Claudia looked about her, checking that she was alone before kneeling at the

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study keyhole and peeking through. The key was still in the lock and she could see nothing. Sighing, Claudia seated herself back upon the chair, hissing as her swollen nether flesh, flattened by her body weight, sank onto the ridged carvings on the ornate chair seat. It hurt. Tears sprung immediately to her eyes and, for the first time ever, she wept tears of actual remorse... if only she hadn't been caught.