



A Very Merry Chase

An Original Regency Romance Novel

By

Teresa Thomas Bohannon

This Complimentary Sample Chapter

Provided By

Teresa Thomas Bohannon

Author Of

The Original Regency Romance

A Very Merry Chase

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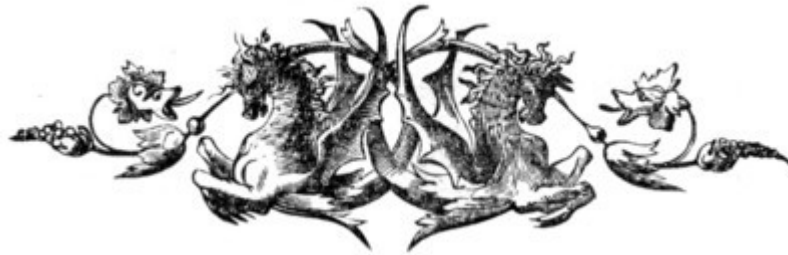
# A Very Merry Chase



**An Old-Fashioned Regency Romance  
by  
Teresa Thomas Bohannon**

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## A Very Merry Chase

### CHAPTER ONE



Two days of hard traveling and a world of difference separated the quiet elegance of Saint's Haven, ancestral seat of the Duke of Sanction from the teeming metropolis of London. The huge traveling coach emblazoned with the St. Clair family crest hastened through the dying hours of that second day.

The Right Honorable, Lady Sabrina St. Clair and her *dame de compagnie* Lady Bethany Danvers rode within the luxuriously well-sprung coach. After more than a year in private mourning for her noble sire, Lord Damian St. Clair, Fifth Duke of Sanction, Lady Sabrina returned to London for another in a long line of spring seasons.

“Sabrina, you simply cannot. It's near midnight.” Lady Danvers protested half-heartedly, stifling a yawn even as she spoke.

“Nonsense, Lady D, I already have. Now don't be silly goose. Truth be told, you know you want nothing more than a good long sleep in your own sweet bed.”

“But your brother would never allow....”

“Pffft. If Devlin were here, we'd already be warm and snug in our beds at St. Clair house. He'd have long since tossed these two hired slowtops to the roadside and be driving us himself. Now please, darling, don't worry your pretty head.” she said, leaning forward to pat the lady fondly on her warmly gloved hand. “In another hour we'll be in London with this whole nightmare journey safely behind us. Now rest your eyes and do try to get some rest. Trust me, sweetness, I assure you, I have it all well in hand.”

Sabrina spoke with an air of confidence unrivaled by most other young women of her age and station. Reared in a household full of adoring men, she was unaccustomed to having her desires much thwarted, and was, therefore, quite comfortable with being in charge in every aspect of her life. And the world at large, she found as an adult, had treated her little differently, generally sweeping before her steadfastly charming will like feathers in the wind.


Attractive, wealthy, titled, uniquely independent, generous of heart, and laughingly good natured, Lady Bria, as she was affectionately known, had been proclaimed an *Incomparable* upon making her debut some eight years before at the tender age of seventeen. It was a crown she still retained—much to the chagrin of many the aristocratic matron with daughters of their own to launch upon the crowded Marriage Mart.

Which as it happened—was precisely why her coach moved swiftly towards London at this most improper hour.

The journey had been ill-fated from the beginning. A matter of estate business had delayed the start of her own journey by several hours, thereby placing her baggage coach and most of her personal entourage nearly a day ahead of her on the road. If that were not aggravating enough, a bad joint of mutton at their first evening's lodgings had misfortunately bed-ridden her personal coachman, groom and outriders. The journey should have ended then, and would have done so had not Sabrina insisted—despite the heartfelt entreaties of both Lady Danvers and her elderly coachman—on continuing her journey with naught but a lowly pair of hired men on the box. A broken wheel on the second day, requiring as it did, several hours further delay, only increased her determination to have the accursed journey finished.

Strictures against young ladies of wealth and breeding traveling unescorted—and most particularly not at night—was one of those inconvenient facts of life which Sabrina, at the moment, was casually, choosing to ignore. Patently fearless and eminently practical, she was completely unperturbed by the fact that she, with only a hired coachman, groom, and a flutteringly feminine companion for company, would soon be crossing the infamous Finchley Common at midnight....

When, at the last change of horses, the hired coachman questioned the wisdom of her actions, Sabrina had



unhesitatingly informed him that highwaymen were nothing more than ghosts from a bygone era, and that the spectre of such would not be allowed to delay her journey. She had, however, casually checked her matched set of ivory mounted pistols—doing so with a most unladylike ease of handling that denoted extreme familiarity.

Glancing over at her companion, Sabrina smiled in fond amusement...then bit her lip in a momentary twinge of dismay. Lady Bethany Danvers had been her mother's dearest friend. Widowed and herself childless, Lady Bethany had nursed Sabrina's mother through her final days and at her behest, remained at her daughter's side after that noble lady's demise. The two had been together now, almost as mother and daughter, for more than fourteen years. Sabrina dearly loved the older woman, and while she generally would deny her nothing...sometimes she simply could not help but disappoint.

True to form, Lady Bethany had protested Sabrina's headstrong determination with half-hearted vigor and then quietly drifted off to sleep—secure in the knowledge that she had executed her duty, and that Sabrina would continue to do exactly as Sabrina pleased. Long experience had taught her that none but Sabrina's brother Devlin, now Sixth Duke of Sanction, could have dissuaded the young lady from any chosen course of action. Fortunately, for her own peace of mind, Lady Bethany held no real fears for the evening's journey. Knowing Sabrina as she did, she could not conceive of any brigand—living or dead—with the courage to stand tall in the face of the younger woman's anger.

Unfortunately, she was mistaken!

Sabrina, thinking ahead to the rigors of the London season, was in the midst of stifling a yawn when the blast of a single pistol shot rang out, shattering her reverie and sending her grasping in the dark for her pistols.

The coach jerked violently as it plunged to a halt and the startled horses strained wild-eyed at the leads. Lady Bethany, caught sleeping, was tossed to the floor to land in a jumbled, rose-pink pile of gown, cloak and cushions.

The sound of "Stand and deliver!" rang out in a cultured voice obviously young and slurred with drink. Expecting confidently to hear the sound of an answering shot from her hired men, Sabrina was thereby amazed—and no small bit angered—to hear the rider approaching unchallenged.

The highwayman ordered the coachman and groom to drop their weapons. Again Sabrina awaited a show of defiance only to be rewarded mere instants later by the dismaying sound of weapons thudding uselessly onto the dusty road. Inwardly cursing their cowardice, she thought—and acted—quickly. As the drunken marauder drew abreast of the coach itself, she threw open her window, whipped up her pistol, took brief aim and fired.

The burning sensation in his upper arm told the highwayman he had been shot at precisely the same instant his ears registered the close-quarters explosion of her pistol. His mount—a fine, high-spirited bit of horse flesh—reared and bolted, tossing him, in the process, to the rocky ground.

"Lor' she's gone an' killed 'im!" exclaimed the groom, looking nervously over his shoulder at the moonlit road.

Sabrina, seeing his white face by the still wildly swaying light of the coach lantern, feared at first that she had missed her aim and killed rather than wounded, but then the moonlight broke fully from behind the clouds, and she noted the blood on his sleeve and the granite pillow beneath his head.

"Don't be a fool. I barely scratched him. He's merely unconscious from the fall, and most likely too far into his cups to have taken any real harm from even that." she replied harshly, almost angrier with herself than with the men, and momentarily afraid that they were correct. "Now find something to bind his wound and secure his arms. I want him well trussed before he awakens." she said—with just the merest hint of indecision—even as she put aside the discharged pistol and firmly grasped its mate. Their only reply was to continue shivering in the moonlight with their eyes casting fearfully over the tree line.

"Do as I say!" she commanded, sounding very much like her father on a bad day. "So help me.... If I am forced to remove from this coach and tie our marauding young drunkard myself, you will rue the day of your birthing!"

"But yer ladyship," replied the hired groom. "Wot if 'e weren't alone?"

The coachman chimed in. "'e's right milady, 'twould be best, if we 'urried on our way."

"And leave him to die like a dog in the road, I think not," she declared through clenched teeth as she mentally reviled the lack of patience which led her to leave her own trusted retainers behind and use hired men instead. "Do as I've ordered or it will instead be the two of you, left here to rot! And do not, I beg of you, waste time in thinking I will not. I can drive this coach myself if I must, and since the pair of you have proven to be no protection at all, I've already half a mind to do so! Now, for pity's sake—do not try my patience any further!"

At this well placed threat the driver shoved the frightened groom from his perch on the bench to the ground below. The groom moved hesitantly towards the young highwayman, but froze in his tracks as a voice from the far side of the coach—this one deep with confidence, and definitely sober—commanded him to halt.

Sabrina turned with a start of dismay to find her worst fears realized. A rather large and decidedly formidable masked man was leaning in the far door of the carriage. He was holding a pistol to the temple of one very terrified Lady Bethany.

"Sabrina, I'm sorry. There was no time to warn you." she shuddered, her soft blue eyes wide with fear.

"Remove that pistol at once!" demanded Sabrina in a rage. "The Lady is not well and you frighten her nigh onto death!"

He merely smiled in reply, and shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Very well then, what is it, you desire? Money," she snapped, flinging her reticule in his face. "Jewels," she demanded, giving her large jewel case a shove with her foot. "Whatever it is...speak up! I will not be terrorized by some ill-mannered rogue!"

The highwayman was tall, so much so that he had to stoop to see his worthy opponent...even through the coach's open door. He wore a dark cloak topped off with a wide brimmed hat and a black mask, off-setting large gray eyes, which glittered like steel in the moonlight. A sardonic smile played over his generous, well formed lips and highlighted the strength of his jaw.

He studied her with quiet insolence. After what seemed an eternity, he laughed aloud and replied in a cultured drawl. "Mayhap, my fiery young beauty...mayhap, if you would lower your own pistol—which in case you have not noticed, is pointed directly at my heart—mayhap...just mayhap, mind you, I could find it in my heart to oblige. I assure you I have no desire to harm anyone—unless of course, you choose to make it necessary."


Everything within Sabrina's heart and soul rebelled at the thought of giving him the satisfaction of complying with his request; but the look of absolute terror on Lady Bethany's face decided the matter. Sabrina, flashing the man a look of pure hatred, lowered her pistol, demanding, rather to his amusement. "Now...lower your own."

"But of course, my lovely, I would be most delighted to do so—that is just as soon as you hand over your own weapon. By the barrel, if you please. I have never fully trusted a pistol in the hands of a woman. They do not seem to comprehend the fact that the damned things go off quite easily," he finished, his tone deliberately mocking.

Sabrina, angry and insulted, replied, "I will have you know, I can handle a pistol as well as any man. A fact, for which I might add, your fool of a partner should be grateful. I winged the young idiot, but I could just have easily killed him. I fancy his gun arm will be useless for a few weeks...perhaps by the time it has healed he will have seen the folly of his ways! His next victim may not be so generous!"

He snorted derisively. "You expect me to believe it was marksmanship.... Accident, more like. No, my fine lady, I am afraid that doesn't quite wash."

"Believe what you will. I assure you it makes no odds to me." Then noting the direction of his glance, she handed him her pistol, grip-first as requested.



With her gun safely in his grasp, he lowered his own pistol and smiled with a devilish hint of laughter in his eyes. "Would I be correct in assuming you to be the famous—or shall we say, infamous—Lady Sabrina St. Clair? She, who dazzles the male population of the ton with her beauty only to break their hearts, and who causes the ladies to bristle with envy as dark and as green as her own lovely eyes?"

"My identity Sir, is none of your concern. Now if you will permit us to proceed...." replied Sabrina through tightly clenched teeth. Then as she glanced at Lady Bethany's drawn features she finished quietly, "For my companion's sake, I would be grateful."

"Permit you to proceed...." he replied, lowering his pistol, and gallantly helping the older Lady to her seat with his free hand. Surely, dear one, you jest. My young partner and I have yet to receive any recompense for our evening's labors—not to mention his injuries."

Sabrina's voice dripped sarcasm. "Indeed, I can see with my own eyes your great concern for his well-being."

The tall highwayman casually shrugged. "He seems well enough, for a man who's been shot."

Sabrina glanced over her shoulder at where the younger highwayman was moaning loudly, obviously alive. "Mayhap he will choose his target more carefully next time,

"As will you, I presume, cease traveling The Great North Road unescorted through the dead hours of the night."

Sabrina ignored both the admonition, and the way the slight growl in his voice touched something deep within. "Is it not, sir, the custom among your kind to allow unescorted ladies to pass unmolested? After all...your companion received mercy, rather than death. That would seem to be sufficient recompense to me. Now, pray, do not press me further, for I am neither stupid, nor blind! I notice far more than you would credit and the longer this charade continues, the more I will be inclined to recall!" Thus saying, she turned from him in disdain, and called out her window, ordering, with little patience, the hired groom to mount the box.

"But milady, 'e'll shoot me," the man whimpered.

"Mount that box immediately, or I'll shoot you myself!" she threatened.

The hired groom, realizing that fine ladies generally do not go about shooting their servants—even hired ones—and that any future he might have enjoyed with the St. Clair family was already lost, was therefore, more concerned at this point with saving his own skin. He looked to the tall highwayman for directions.

"Cowardly fool," muttered Sabrina under her breath before turning to see if the highwayman overheard her.

Her look of disgust elicited a full throated laugh that only made her angrier—a state of affairs not in the least mitigated by his calm order for to the groom to gather up the guns and resume his seat on the box. She sat quietly enough; but her fury was unconcealed. He returned her pistol with a smiling flourish; but as he had carefully emptied it beforehand that also did naught to appease. She favored him with a look meant to freeze blood.

She was vibrant in her anger. The devil took hold of him, and he could not resist further goading her. "Before you so rudely interrupted me, My Lady, I do believe we were discussing compensation."

Sabrina grabbed up her reticule which she flung once more into his smirking face. "Take this and be done with it! Aye, and the jewels as well," she said, kicking the heavy case nearer to the door. "Take them all and be done with it. 'tis a small enough price to pay to be rid of you."

"You offer your jewels most freely, my pet. Could it be that you do not cherish them overmuch—or could it be that you have other jewels upon which you set a higher value?"

"I am most certainly *not* your pet! And I am indeed most assuredly apologetic, sir, if you are disappointed in my meager supply of jewels." Her carefully articulated words slowly dripped with near deadly venom.

"When next we meet, I will contrive to bring a better selection for your procurement."

"Ah, but you mistake my simple words, my p... my lovely Firebrand. Cold hard stones cannot hold a candle

to the living, breathing prize I see before me. No...my love, I think I would prefer that which mere coin cannot purchase...a closer look at the emerald of your eyes, the warm luster of your pearly skin, and the touch of your ruby lips—that...that my dear lady would be prize plunder indeed."

He expected genteel fireworks; but received instead a heartfelt shock. His reward was neither ladylike blushes nor even a delicate swoon. Sabrina retaliated with a stinging slap and a veritable tirade of angry rants and furious imprecations.

When her angry diatribe finally wound to a breathless close, he laughed out loud before slowly, exaggeratedly applauding her most unladylike display of temper. "Well done. Well done, indeed, little Firebrand. Why I doubt not that the blowsiest fishwife on the streets of London could have performed better?"

Insulted and outraged, she started to speak, but he stopped her with a finger to his well-formed lips and a shake of his head. "Seriously, my dear. Tsk. Tsk. And here I believed myself in the company of a fine lady—showing you all the courtesy due to one of your supposedly elevated station."

"Bloody hell, you did." she replied, attempting to land another stinging slap.

At this point, Lady Bethany, shocked absolutely to the core of her gentle soul, could take no more and swooned dead away.

He pointed this out with no little enjoyment. "Now, my fine lady, look what you've done. You should be ashamed?"

Sabrina, not in the least contrite, began to call down curses on not only the man himself; but on all of his ancestors past and his descendants yet to be born.

"My dear, that really is quite enough. If you persist in acting like a strumpet, then, I fear, as a strumpet you shall be treated."

She gasped aloud and jerked away; but he was lighting fast and inside the coach with one foot even before he finished speaking. He laughed as he swept her firmly into his arms and out into the moonlit night.

"Unhand me, you arrogant cretin!" she raged, pounding at his massive chest with ineffectual blows.

He laughed and gripped her all the more tightly. "First, my love, settle down."

Instantly, she ceased her struggles. "Very well. I've done as you asked. Now, please put me down. You're..." she hesitated weakly. "You're hurting me."

"But of course, my little...Firebrand." He smirked, tightening his grip on her tiny waist before setting her on her dainty feet. For a brief moment, he towered over her in triumph; but it was for a brief moment only, for he had miscalculated in trusting her suddenly docility. Sabrina had not survived growing up in the same household with two rough and tumble older boys without learning a few tricks.

As if in fear, she swooned, and the tall highwayman—caught completely off balance—loosened his grip. Sabrina, having forced opportunity to knock, was not found wanting. She swept into action before he found time to recover.

Stomping hard on his instep caused him to jerk forward thereby lowering his chin. Clasping her hands together she jerked down, and swung straight up, connecting squarely with his jaw, snapping his head back painfully, cracking his teeth together and very nearly felling him. Then, before he could rebound from her first attack, she kicked him fiercely in the shins and leapt to drive her shoulder into his stomach.

The tall highwayman, however, was no fool, and not about to be caught out twice by what he quickly realized was a diminutive, but no less formidable opponent. Despite the exploding pain in his jaw, he remained alert and dodged what surely would have been a winding—perhaps even leveling blow. Giving her no time to attack again, he swept her once more from the ground, holding her tightly in his arms with both of her tiny wrists caught firmly in an inordinately strong, single handed grip, far beyond her power to break.

"You are a regular little termagant, are you not, my love? Well let me tell you, it makes no odds to me. I will

have my compensation, and you may consider yourself lucky that your little declaration of war did not force the price higher."

She ignored his threats. "Return me to the coach immediately, or I swear, I'll see you hanging from the Tyburn Tree for this night's work."

"Hush brat, so far I have done an admirable job of holding my temper in check, but if you persist in behaving like a child, I will treat you as one...." He chuckled. "Ah, and would that not be an admirable idea? I have yet to see the brat that a sound spanking would not tame. And do not," he continued, ominously. "Tell me that I would not dare, because then, I assure you, I would be honour bound to prove you wrong."

"Honour bound," she sputtered.

"Shush." He replied, before lowering his head and effectively silencing any further protests. He kissed her, gently at first, touching her soft lips with a warm questing tenderness, which set her pulses racing, forcing her—for the barest of moments—to respond in kind. Passion swelled swiftly, shockingly, robbing them both of breath and sense; before driving them apart in mutual dismay. Thrusting her from him, the highwayman gave a false-hearted laugh and set her none too gently back into the coach.

Slamming the door, he roared at the two men on the box. "Reload your weapons and guard your ladies well, knaves, or I will have your heads on a platter. Mistake me not in this—if you stop for anyone or anything before you reach London, there will not be a corner of this world small or far enough to hide you from my wrath!"

He met her eyes, and honored her with an elaborate sweeping bow, speaking as he arose in educated Latin. "*Veni. Vidi. Vici.*" He translated in perhaps a final attempt to goad her. "I came, I saw, I conquered."

In this however, he failed, for Sabrina had been educated every bit as well as a gentleman. She replied without hesitation. "*Pro tempore....*" For the time being.

"It would seem that the lady has not only beauty, and spirit to recommend her." he said aloud with no little surprise, as he signaled the Coachman to proceed.

"That, and more, cretin. That, and more."

"*Esto perpetua...*" he whispered as the coach set forth, thereby allowing him the last word. He watched her disappear into the night with the strong suspicion that he had met his match, and that she would indeed *endure forever*, at least in his heart.

As the coach faded into the distance he strode over to the lad that had lain dazed and in pain throughout the evening's little tableau and was only now truly regaining consciousness. When the youth caught sight of the tall man, he suddenly had an overwhelming desire to crawl into the nearest hole and pull it in after him.

In dire silence, the huge highwayman checked the younger man's wounds. A short, sharp smile of relief passed over his lips as he noted the apparent lack of permanent damage. He would have a headache and some pain; but that was about the extent of it. The crumpled brim of his hat had apparently cushioned his skull's contact with the rock, and the gunshot wound did more to ruin his coat than his arm. All in all, the older man's only real concession to the lad's injuries was to unwind a perfectly good cravat from around his own neck and tear it into strips to stem the remaining trickles of blood. Then with a melodious whistle he summoned the horse which stood quietly at the edge of the wood awaiting his master's signal. A single swoop of his arm saw the lad tossed—none too gently—onto the stallion's back.

"My Lord," ventured the lad somewhat hesitantly, "have you nothing at all to say to me?"

The tall man continued leading the horse, proceeding in silence, as if he had not even heard the boy.

"Very well, sir," he said, ignoring the large man's thunderous glance back at him. "If you will not speak, then at least listen. I expect you are waiting for an explanation of this dastardly affair. Needless to say, I was in my cups, or it would never have happened; but then, of course, I know that is no excuse."

"It was a wager, you see. We, meaning Lord Northrup and myself, were drinking at the Rose and Crown. There was an old man who claimed to have been a famous highwayman in his time—of course, he was

drinking also.... And well...well it ended, you see, with Northrup wagering me one hundred pounds that I had not the nerve to rob a coach."

"Now...I could not very well cry sheep, could I?"

The tall man continued to ignore the lad, making him even more nervous, and even further disposed to babble. "I understand fully...now that I am sober, you understand, and I assure you, I am presently quite sober—I've found that being shot is more than enough to instantly sober one. But now, you must believe me, I well realize that I was not only damned foolish, but also very wrong. I could have been killed—or worse yet, I could have caused the death of someone else with my foolishness. I want you to know, sir, that I am truly sorry. I know that I have greatly disappointed you. I promise you, I truly wish nothing more to be a bang-up top of the trees Corinthian such as yourself, sir; but somehow I always manage to fall woefully short of the mark."

The tall man stopped mid-stride, and turned to face the boy. "What you did was wrong, there's no denying it, 'twas also damned foolish, but then the fault, I fear, is not entirely your own. Had I not selfishly inflicted my solitary lifestyle upon you...." he began before continuing on a different tact. "The quiet life is unsuitable for a young blood straining to be free. You would not so likely have become involved with a scoundrel such as Northrup, had you proper friends and entertainments to fill your nights. I *had* hoped that you would see for yourself that the man was merely at *point non plus* and rustivating in the country because he dared not return to town. It was to your misfortune, that I'd forgotten how it is to be young." If I ever knew, he finished silently to himself.

"Do not blame yourself, My Lord, I could not bear it if you did."

"Nonsense! I'm not letting you entirely off the hook—at the very least, you should have had been more cognizant of your position—but Northrup was in search of a lamb for the fleecing, and had I taken my position as your guardian to heart, he would never have become a trusted companion."

"That's the very devil of it, My Lord, I did see.... How do I explain it? Lord Northrup drew me like a moth to a flame with his worldly airs and talk of the Beau Monde. There was something about him, I found exciting, even invigorating and try as I might, even though deep inside, I indeed distrusted him, still I could not keep my distance."

"Well, we will be home soon, and I'll send for the doctor. Tomorrow, we'll discuss both your shortcomings as a gentleman and a ward—and mine as a guardian."

Lady Sabrina, after locating her companion's vinaigrette, reviving the lady and then fussing comfortingly over her, sat seething in fury. Damn him! Damn him and his unmitigated impudence! "I swear he'll pay for this night's work!"

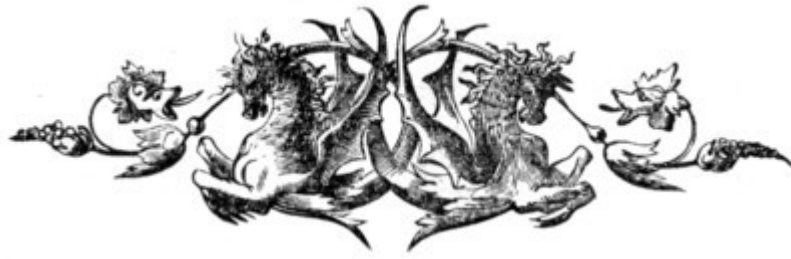
"Yes my dear," comforted, Lady Bethany. "He will most certainly pay when your brother hears of this outrage. My Lord, Devlin will post a reward for his capture."

Sabrina, not realizing that she had spoken aloud, consequently, chose not to reply. At this moment in time, she had absolutely no desire to encourage conversation, preferring instead to be alone with her thoughts. No common reward would ever bring this particular highwayman to justice, of that she was certain.

Lady Bethany would surely have been too distraught to notice; but Sabrina certainly knew a gentleman when she saw one, regardless of how adept he might be at playing the barbarian. Both men's coats had obviously been custom tailored from the finest fabrics, and the young man's horse was purebred Arabian—hardly the equipment of common brigands, no matter how successful they might be. She had recognized his type almost instinctively from the start *a newly fledged blood of the ton with too much money and time on his hands*.

As for the elder man—heavens, but he was a veritable mountain of a man, she thought, momentarily sidetracked by the memory of his magnificent physique, his laughing eyes, and the surprisingly gentle touch of his lips.... She shook her head with a start as she suddenly realized that her fingertips had actually wandered to her mouth. She was willing to wager that he was no true highwayman, nor anything less than a peer of the realm—down on his luck, mayhap—but a peer nonetheless.

However, peer or no, she was, nevertheless, determined that he would not only pay dearly for this night's sparring match; but that neither hanging tree, nor reward would bring about his downfall! With eyes flashing in anticipation of the coming battle, Sabrina knew that she would search until she found this impudent gentleman and then she, and she alone, would bring him to his knees!





**Meet The Author**  
**Teresa Thomas Bohannon**  
**Behind The Scenes**  
**The Long Night's Journey Behind This Book**

***Hello. Welcome.*** And ***Thank You*** so much for reading this introduction to my first novel. I sincerely hope that you enjoyed it, because I have a very special secret to share with you. This really is—in the absolute truest sense of the word—a genuine, old-fashioned Regency Romance. Why? Because, believe it or not, you've just been on an adventure that took me approximately 35 years—and lots of mileage—to complete.

My name is Teresa Thomas Bohannon, I am the author, and this is my story.

Young, slender, long and limber, I perched cross-legged on the foot of my bed. These days, I couldn't pretzel up like that if I tried, and even if I could I would probably be fancier about it and call it a lotus position. Back then I could do it easily enough, but it was just plain old sittin' cross-legged, and I was damned lucky I could do it, because if I hadn't been able to, I'd never written my first novel.

There was no place for my feet on the floor. The room was barely larger than the bed itself. A voracious reader, words were the love of my life. I desperately wanted nothing more than to read, write and be read. So there I sat for scraped out bits of days and nights, weeks and months, hunched over an electric typewriter placed on an impossibly low, makeshift desk made from a chair borrowed 'tween meals from the kitchen and crammed into a narrow gap meant for the closet door to fold open. The walls were thin and the television in the next room blared most hours of the day and half the night, so peace, privacy and the romance of my beloved Regency England were hard to come by; but somehow I managed to follow my heart and journey there in my head and get the story told.

That was thirty-five years ago. With thousands of eagerly devoured books behind me, and nothing but a high school diploma to recommend me, I dared to send out that first query letter to an address I got from the library's copy of *Writer's Digest*. I couldn't believe it when the editor, impressed by my obvious love for the genre, replied immediately to say that *she looked forward to reading my book*. Unfortunately, it was just fate's cruel joke on either me or her; because by the time my carefully—and expensively—packed manuscript arrived in New York City a few weeks later, she had left the agency and my book was returned unread with a cursory note.

I never queried again. I convinced myself that it was for the best, and meant to be, that I wasn't ready. And besides...we were quite poor and sending off that carefully packed-up manuscript was something of an expensive luxury. So instead of writing, I began editing and revising, and editing and revising. Until finally I convinced myself that I just wasn't good enough. Eventually, I moved onto writing other things, looking for the confidence that I had lost somewhere along the way. Fantasy, science fiction, horror novels, screenplays and short stories followed, and along came kids and computers and writer's workshops and a special room just for writing and then credentials both BA and MA.

Still, I never queried again. I wrote for the love of writing with an idea that someday, maybe I would officially publish something. Oh, a few things were published along the way, but more by accident than contrivance—a master's thesis, a couple of short stories in an international journal for storytellers, promotional writing for businesses and websites and a few other special projects that were dear to my heart.

So what happened along the way, other than young children and college? Well to begin with, I was now thirty thousand dollars in debt for student loans and somehow I had to pay for my fancy new education. That was fifteen years ago....

With diploma in hand, I was a divorced mother of two who managed to support herself and her two young sons by working at a low-rent, two-camera, home shopping cable TV station, selling gemstones and jewelry. In those days I was known as the Queen of the Gemstone Dungeon because when I wasn't on the air, I spent

my time locked up in a Vault room filled—wall to wall—with huge bank style safes crammed full of gemstones, rare coins and fine jewelry. It was my off-air job to make sure that our customers received the exact item they purchased and also to make equally certain that any returns were not lesser quality substitutes. Then one day they declared bankruptcy, and I—along with everyone else who worked there and made over minimum wage—suddenly lost my job.

I had been a dedicated computer nerd since 1985 when my mom presented me with the birthday gift of a Tandy 1000 computer to replace the old electric typewriter I used for writing my stories. Therefore, when the Internet came along, making the transition from the old computer bulletin boards to the new-fangled web was pretty-much a snap for me. So, when I lost my job, I knew exactly what to do. The very next day, I started my online web design business (November of 1995) with a little help from an HTML for Dummies book as an out of work, divorced mom with two young sons and no child support. Although that business remained a valuable sideline until recently, back in those days it was a brand new medium and although the money it brought in was a lifesaver, it didn't really go too far towards paying anything over the bare minimum needed to survive...so, I added a full-time job in Human Resources to my repertoire—a job which I still hold.

So, what does any of this have to do with why am I here today? Because ironically enough, a few years ago I was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis and my workaholic, supermom, can-do strength eventually—although not without a struggle—fell by the wayside. Something had to give and, as much I sincerely loved working online, I couldn't possibly give up the full time day job that actually paid the bills and provided the health insurance, etc. etc. etc.... And so—albeit reluctantly—I gave up spending my nights and weekends working online trying to meet other people's deadlines. All of which brought me full circle. Once again, I spend all of my spare time reading and writing—the only difference now is that the bedroom is a lot bigger and nicer and there is a laptop computer for curling up comfortably and my wonderful Internet is readily available for instant research—which, of course, makes the process a thousand times easier.

So there you have it—mystery solved. Now you know why you are reading A Very Merry Chase some thirty-five years after it was first written. After all this time and all the mileage, my old friend the Internet came to the rescue once again. This time, by allowing me the luxury of being able to self-publish my books, beginning—naturally—with the first one I ever wrote.

So, allow me to say it again, and please know that it is said with all sincerity...Thank You for purchasing my book. You've helped make a long time dream come true.

Smiles & Good Fortune,

Teresa

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It is not wealth one asks for, but just enough to preserve one's dignity, to work unhampered, to be generous, frank and independent.

– W. Somerset Maugham (1874 - 1965) Of Human Bondage, 1915



# About A Very Merry Chase

Brenton, Lord Branderly, Ninth Duke of Brensted--tall, broad-shouldered, larger than life--a giant of a man with a dark past and a brighter vision for the future. Tragically orphaned at a young age--abandoned by fate to the jealous rage of a drunken guardian--he endured years of verbal and physical abuse before confronting his tormentor and setting out alone--hardly more than a lad--determined to conquer the world on his own terms.

Twenty years later he returns--world traveled, wildly successful and in possession of a immense fortune whose origins are subject to hushed whispers and backroom speculation. Now, the last of his noble line--ancestral estates restored to their former glory--only one true desire remains....

The Right Honorable Lady Sabrina St. Clair, an incomparable--eight years the toast of London--fiercely independent, uniquely beautiful, uncommonly wealthy, titled in her own right...the fabulous Lady Bria is all this and more; but very soon something new will take precedence and all will be changed--at least in the unforgiving eyes of the haut ton. "It is of no great importance." she laughingly proclaims to any so genuinely concerned--or curiously vulgar--as to broach the subject; but still the inescapable fact remains that she is but a few weeks shy of becoming an object of pity and subject to such unflattering appellations as spinster, antidote, old maid and ape-leader.

Suddenly, she faces an uncertain future, complicated by the mysterious disappearance of her beloved brother, the unwanted attentions of a gazetted fortune hunter, the tragic loss of her first love, and....

Determined Lord and Reluctant Lady--each proud and indomitable, each haunted by demons past and present--a match made in heaven or hell? They clash one fateful night at the stroke of midnight, on the infamous Finchley Common, against a devilish backdrop of barking irons, highway robbery and a single stolen kiss.... Would their lives ever again, be the same?

Set in early 19th century Regency England, A Very Merry Chase is a comedy of both manners and errors that boasts empire fashions, dashing

characters, verbal sparring matches and witty repartee mingled with just a hint of mystery, danger and intrigue. Harking back in style to the heyday of Georgette Heyer and Barbara Cartland, this simple tale has neither marauding zombies, nor bloodsucking vampires to recommend it--featuring instead, old-fashioned romantic charm blended with the merest hint of modern day spice.

Amusing and lively--the perfect evening's entertainment for the wistful, workaholic baby boomer who lusts after the simple luxury of a few peaceful hours to indulge in the quiet pleasure of a traditional Regency Romance.

## A Very Merry Chase



A Regency Romance  
- BY -  
TERESA THOMAS BOHANNON



This Complimentary Sample Chapter

Provided By

Teresa Thomas Bohannon

Author Of  
The Original Regency Romance

A Very Merry Chase

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