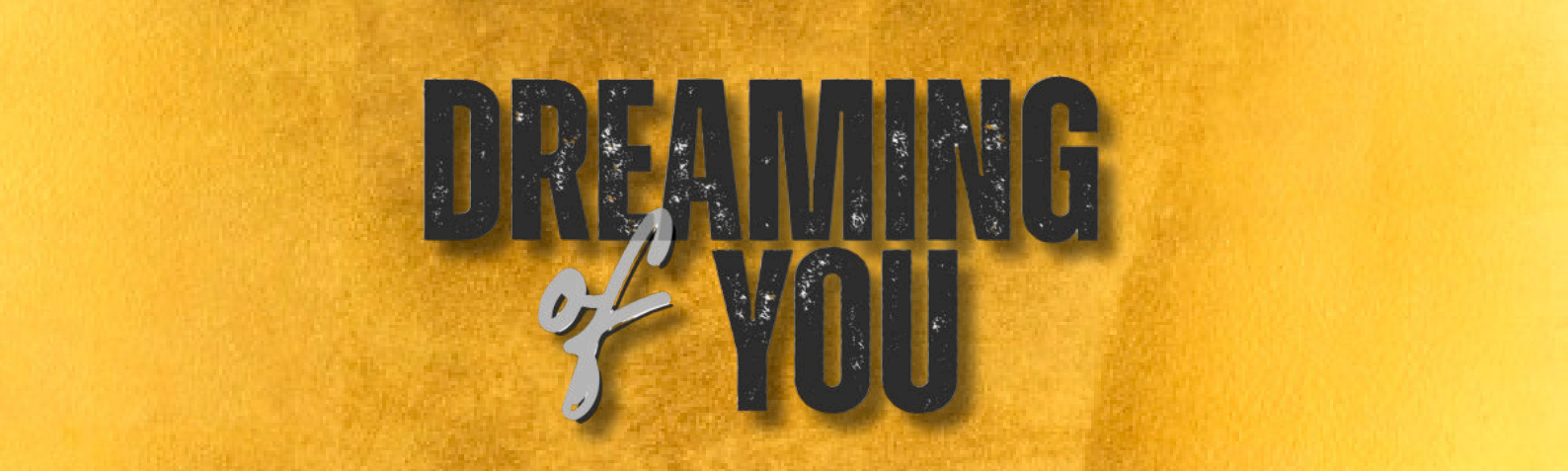

A Historical Romance Novelette

by Meghan March

Chapter 1

"Flynn, it's not fucking happening." Q threw his arm out in front of her and blocked her from going down the stairs to the club.

"What?" She turned to look at him.

"You're banned from the club until further notice."

Flynn's gaze narrowed on him. "Why?"

Marcus was done pretending. He'd had enough.

"Because I'm tired of watching you shake your ass out there on the damn dance floor with every sleazy dude in this place, trying to make me jealous. It's not fucking happening tonight."

She pursed her lips.

"You're not even going to deny it, are you?"

She shook her head.

"At least you're honest about it."

Flynn crossed her arms over her chest. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm taking you home."

Her face fell, and Flynn's shoulders rolled inward in defeat.

"To my place. Come on."

Her gaze shot up to his, and shock—maybe a little bit of terror—flashed across her features.

"What?"

"Change your mind that fast?"

"Are you serious?" She appeared frozen, as if she was waiting for him to say it was all a joke.

"Do I look serious?" He held out his hand. "Scarlett might kill me, but I'm done pretending. You and me. Let's do this."

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Marcus Quinterro woke up with a gasp. Fuck. No way. His head whipped from side to side as he heaved a sigh of relief.

He was alone. In bed.

Thank God.

He laced his fingers together and covered his face with his hands.

Fuck.

It had felt so damn real.

And she had looked terrified to finally get what she "wanted."

She just thought she wanted him. She wasn't for him. Flynn was a kid. Barely an adult.

Okay, so she's twenty-four, but what does a thirty-three-year-old have in common with a twenty-four-year-old?

Not shit.

Flynn was out of college, jobless, and spent at least three nights per week at the club. He was sick of seeing her leave with other guys after she spent all night staring up at the mirrored glass she knew he was watching her through.

His dream wasn't wrong. He'd had enough.

But there was no way it would ever work between them. She was a rich girl who always got everything she wanted, and he was certain that was where his appeal lay for her. He was the one thing she couldn't have.

I'm going to tell Gabe that Scarlett needs to rein her in, or I'll ban her from the club. For good.

He was sick and tired of it.

Now, how could he explain this to his best friend and business partner without letting him know that Flynn and her antics had well and truly gotten to him?

***

Ten hours later, he had his chance.

"What's up, Q? Something wrong?" Gabe asked.

He decided to just fucking go for it. "I have something to discuss with you."

"What's that?" Gabe dropped into the chair in front of Marcus's desk.

"Flynn."

"What about her?"

"She's gotta go."

Gabe looked confused. "Go where?"

"Anywhere but here. Tell Scarlett to sort her out."

"Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. You want me to tell my wife to sort out her former stepsister and keep her out of the club because …"

"I was going to ask the same question," Scarlett—the leggy blonde his friend had met through serendipity in the office next door—said as she walked in. "Good evening, Q."

"Scarlett."

"What's wrong with Flynn being here? We can keep tabs on her. She's safe here. I don't see the problem."

Gabe leaned back in his chair, laced his fingers, and locked them behind his head. "I do. But I want to hear him say it. Out loud. In front of you and God and everybody."

Marcus briefly considered throwing the stapler at him. “You’re a real prick sometimes—you know that?”

“We all have our flaws,” Gabe said with a grin.

“What am I missing?” Scarlett asked.

“She’s out of control,” Marcus replied.

Scarlett’s gaze pinned him. “How? She doesn’t even drink. She just comes in and dances. She says it’s great cardio.”

Marcus gritted his teeth. “Shouldn’t she get a job or something? Not dance until two in the morning almost every day?”

“It’s not every day. She has a trust fund, and she races cars.”

“That doesn’t count.”

“Why not? She’s good at it. She wins a lot.”

“She’s gotta go, Scarlett.”

Scarlett lowered herself gracefully into the chair beside her husband. “Not unless you give me a valid reason, Marcus.”

“I can’t—”

“I didn’t think so,” she interrupted with a smile.

“No. I mean, I can’t fucking take it anymore.”

Gabe burst out laughing, and Marcus glared at him. “I knew it!”

Scarlett’s blonde hair bounced around her shoulders as her chin swung from him to her husband and back again. “Can’t take what? What am I missing here? Did something finally happen between the two of you?”

“Gabe, if you have ever been my friend or given a damn about me, please fucking help me.”

The closest thing he’d ever had to a brother leaned forward with his elbows on his knees. “You never ask for help.”

“I can’t fucking take it anymore. She’s gotta go. I’m serious.”

“But why? All you do is ignore her. Right?” Scarlett asked.

Gabe turned to his wife. “How do I put this politely?” He steepled his fingers. “Fuck it. Flynn’s been trying to get Q’s attention for years, and he’s hit his breaking point. And since he’s the best damn club manager in the city and a fifty percent partner, if he doesn’t want her here …”

Scarlett’s gaze cut from her husband to him. “Wait. You’re into Flynn? I thought that was never going to happen.”

“I’m not. She’s a fucking child. I can’t be. I just need her gone.”

“She’s almost twenty-five and quite mature for her age. Actually, she’s been at least thirty emotionally since I met her.”

“You’re not helping, babe,” Gabe said.

Scarlett smiled. “That’s all this is about? You can’t stand watching her anymore because you’re afraid of giving in? Everyone knows she’s had a major crush on you forever.”

“Out of respect, Scarlett, he would never touch your little sister,” Gabe chimed in, and Marcus loved him for it.

“She’s not my little sister. Our parents were married for a minute, and, yes, I love her. But she’s a grown woman who can make her own choices. And for what it’s worth, I approve. I just never thought it would happen.” Scarlett studied him. “As long as you don’t intend to break her heart, you have my blessing.”

Marcus slammed his hands on the desk. “That’s not what I want to hear!” He stood up and spun to face the wall and was thankful he’d grown up enough not to punch it because he was pissed.

“Well, too bad. You’re a great guy, Q. Way better than the losers she’s picked in the past. Why not let her see what a real man is like?”

He jammed his hands in his hair as Gabe’s laughter filled the room. “This can’t be fucking happening. Just keep her away from me.”

“And tell her she can’t come here anymore? Nope,” said Scarlett. “Sorry. Either you find some way to keep ignoring her or just give in and see what happens.”

“I can’t,” he practically yelled at the ceiling.

“Why not? She’s cool as shit. You guys would probably be great together,” Gabe said.

“You both suck,” he said, spinning around. “I need a new job. I’ll sell my half of the club.”

“Wait, wait, wait. Don’t start threatening crazy stuff,” Scarlett said quickly. “Fine, I’ll talk to her tonight.”

“And tell her what exactly?” Marcus asked.

“That she broke you and she won, and your self-control can’t handle her being here, so you threatened to sell your half of the club if we didn’t ban her.”

Gabe burst into a new choking fit of laughter, and Marcus shot a killing gaze his way.

“What? It’s the truth,” Scarlett said.

“She’s got you there, man.”

Marcus spun and stomped out of the room.

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