



The Widow Wager

Jess Michaels

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Crispin Flynn has been on a downward spiral ever since he lost the woman he loved and watched his brother forced into a life he never would have chosen. His response has been drinking and gambling his way to utter ruin. One night, deep in his cups, he places a dangerous bet that results in him being forced to marry Gemma, the widow of the Earl of Laurelcross.

Gemma once had a passionate side, but has been hiding it ever since her much older husband died during the act of making love. Now she finds herself the much unwanted wife of one of the biggest libertines in London and the subject of even more gossip than ever.

Once they determine they cannot escape the marriage, the two begin a slow circling of each other. Passion is easy, but can they overcome mistrust and secrets in order to make the worst night of their lives one of their best? Or are they bound to lose each other before their love can take root?

The Widow Wager Details

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From Reader Review The Widow Wager for online ebook

Wendy Tavenner says

A great read! Crispin has been deep in his cups for months losing his money. In a bet he doesn't think he can lose he bets he will win versus someone's hand in marriage. He loses and is immediately brought to meet his intended the Widow Gemma. She is appalled what her father has done but has no choice since he is threatening her younger sister. When Crispin wakes the next morning with a tremendous hangover he realizes he's done something he can't take back. This is a good read where two people have been hurting for awhile and it takes themselves to be able to heal and move on!

Diane says

I was lucky enough to be able to review this title before publication. I had never read any of Jess Michaels novels before, but I think I will be reading plenty now. In this 3rd installment of the Notorious Flynns we are introduced to Crispin and Gemma.

Crispin has been drinking and gambling his way through life for over a year. Till one night while deep in his cups he loses a hand of cards and ends up with a wife. Now he must figure out whether to keep her or find a way to rid himself of her.

Gemma is not surprised when her father gambles her away in a card match. She is surprised to find that she is attracted to her new husband. But what will he think of her when he finds out about her past? And if he rids himself of her as an unwanted wife what will happen to her this time.

As the two decide that they will make the best of the hand that life has dealt them, they must learn to trust in one another in order for their love to grow. Great novel. After reading this one I immediately went back and read the first two and I am eagerly looking forward to the 4th in the series.

Jessica Alcazar says

oh my!, the Flynns are at it again!

OK, so Crispin Flynn is a drinker ... HEAVY drinker. And one morning, he wakes up to ... wait for it a wife in his bed! No recollection. Nothing. Nada. Zip. I love a good historical humor with a side of sexy fun and Jess Michaels delivers EVERY time! By far, this is the sexiest Flynn story. You see, Gemma, Crispin's now wife, has a bit of a kinky~kink side! So yes, when they DO finally come together, it's HooooooOOOOOt! LOL

OK, so the story goes like this. Crispin is drinking and playing cards with guess who? Yup, Gemma's daddy. And he does not win (or does he? lol) The wager he's got to marry his daughter, THAT NIGHT. He's 10 sheets to the wind, so Gemma has to repeat this entire story to the man the next morning. WELL, Crispin isn't having any of this so he decides that going to his brother for help is the only solution. Well, THAT didn't work because they LOVED Gemma!Hmmmmmm, so I guess Crispin is just gonna have to make lemonade out of these lemons he's bought for himself! (lol) And he does, and it's a sweet and tart lemonade. They both have secrets and pasts they must share to overcome and move past. Gemma is a little more

forthcoming than Crispin is but in the end, he comes around!

There's a whole lot of HOTNESS in-between that I refuse to tell you because it is THE BEST PART OF THE BOOK!

#TRUESTORY kids, The Notorious Flynns did not get that name for nothing! Go forth and enjoy yourself a little kinky historical!

ARC provided by Victory Editing via NetGalley for an honest review!

Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says

Oh Crispin, trouble follows you everywhere.

After yet another drunken night out on the town, Crispin Flynn of the notorious Flynn family, awakens with the mother of all hangovers to find a woman in his bed. When the frightened woman confronts Crispin, the rogue finds himself in quite the predicament called marriage to the quite attractive, yet stranger named Gemma.

Gemma fiend of a father wagered his daughter in a card game with Crispin, who was so inebriated, he had no clue what was going on. After an unforgettable wedding, the morning after is a shock to both Gemma and Crispin, who after much contemplation, decide to make a go of the cards dealt them both, but Gemma has a troubled past that could change everything once Crispin and his family discover it.

Crispin hasn't been himself since his brother became Duke. His downward spiral of drinking, whoring and gambling has made the duke try a bit of hard love on his younger brother. When Crispin appears at the ducal seat with a new wife in tow the household is in shock. Will it be a good thing that Crispin has the responsibility of a wife? Gemma immediately notices her new husband's drinking problem and tries to address it but Crispin doesn't think he has a problem. Like many newly married couples of the era, Crispin and Gemma have their issues, but passion isn't one of them. The desire they share is sizzling and erotic. Now if they can only overcome the other problems threatening to tear them apart before they even have a chance to shine.

The Widow Wager (The Notorious Flynns #3) by Jess Michaels was a much coveted read for me. I adored the complexity and depth of Crispin Flynn from the very first and knew his book would move me. I was not disappointed, as a matter of fact, I was elated at how the machinations of Jess Michaels make this one of my favorites in the series. Crispin has met his match in Gemma, who is no shrinking violet. These two are well-matched intellectually as well as physically and watching them fall in love is just awesome. The Widow Wager (The Notorious Flynns #3) by Jess Michaels is a wonderfully intense tale.

Adria (Musings and Reviews) says

Originally posted on Adria's Romance Reviews

* I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Rafe, Crispin, Annabelle and their mother were the poor, scandalous Flynns until the death of their distant cousin, the Duke of Hartholm. The lack of male heirs made Rafe the new Duke and opened up a world that

none of them wanted. Since then, their lives have taken a drastic turn and each sibling has had to adjust to their new station in life. Crispin however, has had the hardest time. Ever since he lost the woman he loved and watched his brother be forced to inherit a title, Crispin has fallen into a world of gambling and drinking, which lands him into a situation like his brother: Forced to marry a woman he's never met, but in Crispin's case, the marriage is his price to pay for a bet lost. Worse yet, his new wife is a scandalous widow with secrets of her own and a personality that tempts Crispin in the best way possible.

The widow in question, Gemma, may seem like a quiet, typical historical romance heroine but in fact, she was a breath of fresh air. Brazen and passionate, she wasn't the usual blushing, stammering woman in need of "tutoring" in the bedroom. She enjoyed physical intimacy and knew what she wanted. In that way she was a contemporary woman and that eliminated what might have been endless pages of her worrying, blushing and fearing Crispin. Instead Gemma matched Crispin's desire and for me it made Gemma a better character and them a better couple. I think I would have been bored to tears with one of those "innocent" ladies in this case. Crispin needed someone that he didn't have to take so much care of, given that when the book began, he couldn't even take care of himself. Gemma had to be the one to save him and she needed to understand him on a very basic, human level. I really liked Gemma's subtle strength, she knew how to survive difficult situations from a young age and that gave her an outlook on life that eventually helped her reach Crispin and save him.

Crispin could be the most notorious Flynn, I'm not sure as I haven't read Annabelle's story yet but he's certainly my favorite. There are so many hidden layers to this character whom others have brushed off as just another drunk gambler with money. Crispin is quite an emotional man but he keeps it all inside of him and it manifests into self destructive behavior. He was his own worst enemy and I just wanted this guy to cut himself some slack and learn that he did deserve to move on and be happy. While his moods could give a girl whiplash, it would only make a woman like Gemma determined to get to the bottom of what caused those mood swings. Crispin was the type of character that needed to be pushed until he broke because he was one stubborn male!

The Widow Wager kind of threw me for a loop though with the introduction of a character named Lord Woodley. I won't reveal his role in the story but I will say that he wasn't what I expected him to be. And there was a slight case of love at first sight for me when it came to him. Don't judge, I can have as many book crushes and boyfriends as I want and I defy anyone who doesn't at least become curious about this man *sticks tongue out* Another character that stood out for me? Gemma's younger sister Mary. For having such small scenes in the book she sure made the most of them with her feisty personality and honest way of speaking.

I was kind of sad to see the end of this series even though I've only read two of the three books. The Flynn's were an addictive and loyal family. I loved their devotion to one another as well as their bantering. They didn't have a whole lot of scenes together as a family but what scenes they did have were fun. Each sibling was different, with Crispin being the most troubled, which to be honest, is the type of character I gravitate to. Gemma was refreshing with her earthy desires and compassionate nature. I think she may have been the true hero of the story. I don't think author Jess Michaels could have picked a better woman for Crispin, nor could she have picked anyone one other than Crispin to close out the series.

Final Verdict: So sad to say goodbye to the Flynn's, rowdy, unconventional bunch that they are, but there were some secondary characters that have some promise. I can't wait for the next book by this author!

Tracy Emro says

** I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley - in exchange for a honest review**

I think this book is the best of the three Notorious Flynn books.

I LOVED it - seriously, loved it.

Gemma and Crispin are wonderful leads. They both have scars from the past clouding their future. Especially Crispin.

If you have read the other books in this series, you have seen Crispin's decline and have probably wondered (like I did) what could cause such a huge change in a person. Well, this book explains it all.

I don't usually care for books where one of the leads has been in love before - but this book is so well done and so emotionally gripping, that I could overlook the fact of a previous love.

If I had one complaint - which I am not sure I do - it would be that Crispin never verbalized his misinterpretation of his feelings for Alice to the reader. I wanted him to admit that it was not a love like he felt for Gemma - that his love for Gemma was deeper and truer.

Other than that, this book is sensational - the leads are likable, the villain/villainess is vile, the sex is HOT and the plot progressed at a perfect pace.

I am really looking forward to more books in the series and can't recommend this book highly enough.

Lynde Shaw says

Another great addition to the Notorious Flynn series as we finally see what demons have been driving Crispin. And we meet Gemma, the scandalous lady for whom Crispin falls. Both characters have secrets and throughout the book the secrets are slowly exposed. I love how the whole Flynn clan bands together to support each other. This book had great romance, conflict that wasn't overdone, and of course a fantastic HEA. We also have a sympathetic secondary character whose HEA I'm looking forward to reading about. This one gets a recommendation from me!

Shauni says

Originally Reviewed For: Bodice Rippers, Femme Fatales and Fantasy

In book 3 of her Notorious Flynn Series, Jess Michaels shows that love can blossom from anywhere.. The Widow Wager is a lovely, sensual book where two people discover that they need each other then that they want each other and finally? That they love each other.. Wonderfully done.

Considered good for only one thing Gemma was married off to a man who only wanted her for her breeding services. The longer she went without an heir, the crueler he became. When he died before she conceived she was tossed out by his horrid children and left once again to her father's devices.. The father that sold her in the first place. Now he's done it again. Only this time it's worse.. Poor Gemma was the price the looser in a game of cards had to pay. Marry her..

Crispen Flynn was destroying himself with guilt, grieving for the loss of a woman he couldn't have and watched her marry another only to see her die.. His grief has lead him to total destruction. Turning away from his family and friends, drinking, wagering and whoring.. so when he wakes up with a woman in his bed he assumes she just needs to be paid for the night before.. Only to discover that she's his wife.. HIS WIFE!!

Oh man.. Ms. Michaels must have had fun writing this one. While it's not a comedy of errors and she addresses a rather horrid aspect of the Regency world.. it did have it's moments.. It also had it's triumphs..

As Cris and Gemma decide to figure out a way to work together instead of fighting to be apart, both of them become less of a caricature and more of a person. These two have been wounded by the world. Gemma by the men who were supposed to love her and Cris? Well his scars go just as deep and for reasons we don't expect..

Betrayal seems to be the name of the game for these two. But Cris knows, in his heart that his family will be there for him. His family will stand by his side. Even when he turned away from them. Now the goal is to help Gemma shore up her family while trying their hardest to NOT deal with her father..

I have really enjoyed the two books of this series that I have read. Ms. Michaels writes about circumstances that we can't really understand in today's western world but she tells it so well, we know it must be true.

Can't wait to see what's next for her!

Shauni

This review is based on the ARC of The Widow Wager, provided by netgalley and is scheduled to be released on April 21, 2015

Melania Ramona says

4.5 stars

Caz says

I've given this a C+ at AAR, so 3.5 stars.

This is the third book in Ms. Michaels' *Notorious Flynn*s series, and focuses on Crispin, the younger brother of the new Duke of Hartholm, and a young man who has, for the past few months, been bent on self-destruction. It's a fairly quick read, with possibly more sex scenes than one might normally find in a book of this length – not that I'm complaining! Jess Michaels writes them very well indeed, as one would expect of

an author with fifty or so romances to her name. But the downside to that is that while Ms. Michaels has provided both hero and heroine with a fair amount of emotional baggage as a way of adding depth to their characterisation, the amount of time spent in the bedroom combined with the short-ish page-count means that their issues are resolved too quickly, especially considering the fact that Crispin is pretty much an alcoholic at the beginning of the story.

Crispin Flynn has always had a reputation as a hell-raiser, but ever since his brother Rafe suddenly found himself in possession of a title and a wife he didn't want, his downward spiral has accelerated. Waking up one morning to find himself married to a woman he has never met sobers him abruptly - albeit temporarily. He is determined to find a way out of the union - he was in his cups and appears to have won her in a game of cards, so it surely can't be legal. His brother is a duke, and even though they have been somewhat estranged for a while, surely someone with his power and influence will be able to find Crispin a way out.

His new wife, Gemma, formerly the Countess of Laurelcross, is no happier at finding herself married to a notorious rake, but given the dreadful rumours that are already circulating throughout society about her, will be utterly and completely ruined should her new husband be able to cast her off. Society will care nothing for the fact that she was humiliated and all but sold by her avaricious father - but if it were only her own reputation at stake, Gemma would brave the censure in order to gain her freedom. Unfortunately, however, she has a younger sister who is still dependent on their father, and any further stain on Gemma's name will attach itself to Mary as well.

Realising that there is no good way out of the marriage, Crispin and Gemma decide to make the best of things, although both of them are keeping secrets that they are reluctant to divulge. Gemma comes clean first, telling the story of her miserable first marriage to a man who just wanted a brood-mare and then became cruel when she didn't fall pregnant, and then telling Crispin of the rumours circulating that she killed him. But she is disappointed when Crispin doesn't return the favour. He's been drinking himself into oblivion day after day, and has managed to lose more than half his fortune at the gaming tables - and he won't tell her why.

There were a number of things I really liked about this story. The familial relationships between Crispin, Rafe and their sister (and their respective spouses) are very well written and show clearly that the Flynn's are a close-knit, loving family who look out for each other no matter what. They welcome Gemma unconditionally, giving her the sort of affection and support she's never previously experienced. Gemma herself is a great heroine - even though life has battered her about a fair bit, she's not going to give in without a fight and will do whatever she must to prevent her sister from treading the same path. She regains her confidence and owns her own sexuality - which naturally delights her new husband - even though she'd been made to feel ashamed of her own desires in her previous marriage. She's intuitive and sensitive, hoping that her love and acceptance will help him to climb out of the pit he's been so industriously digging for himself. Crispin is an attractive hero, in spite of his drinking, and the author does a good job in showing how close to the edge he is all the time in his continual cravings for a drink. He does manage to resist for a time, but he slips eventually, despite his good intentions. The most attractive thing about him, though, is the way he asks for and respects Gemma's opinion - which is something that takes her completely by surprise. They make a good couple, both having unpleasantness in their pasts but who have the potential to heal with the help of the other.

The problem with the book is that when Crispin's motivations for his headlong rush into self-destruction are finally revealed, they're really weak and make rather a nonsense of the whole thing. He's been labouring under a massive misapprehension as to the true nature of the woman he'd loved and lost, but even so, his reaction - given the nature of their relationship - is extreme, and stretched my credulity too far. And the

other problem is that he is able to get over his craving for alcohol without too much trouble; that's an issue I've found in other books I've read where one of the protagonists has an addiction of some kind, so this one isn't alone in that.

Those two things apart, **The Widow Wager** is a well written and enjoyable story that uses one of my favourite tropes – the forced marriage – and does it with aplomb. The characterisation is strong all around, the sex scenes are hot and we definitely get the sense of a strong emotional connection forming between Crispin and Gemma. Had Crispin's motivations been rather more plausible, this would have been a very strong B grade book. As it is, I'm going with a C+ – it's worth reading, but the big reveal was a disappointment.

Eva says

I got this ARC via Netgalley from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

“The Widow Wager” by Jess Michaels is the 3rd one in the “Notorious Flynn” series and by god, it’s the hottest so far, so steamy that it is hard to describe.

One morning Crispin wakes up in the sitee in his bedroom and has a bad hangover. The only thing he notices is that somebody is asleep in his bed. When the redhead moves, he is happy that she is dressed but also wonders about it. Within seconds she tells him that she’s Gemma – his wife. The only problem is that Crispin has no clue how it happened, the night before he wasn’t married at all nor did he ever wanted to get married.

Gemma, young and beautiful, doesn’t mind telling him about the card game he had with his dad and that her father actually won, that’s the reason why he had to marry her. Gemma, a very young widow with a scandalous death on her hands, had lived with her father and sister Mary and the first wanted to get rid of her. Now he had only his younger daughter Mary in his possession. Gemma’s father had dragged her towards a priest and they had to marry within the same night – Crispin doesn’t remember a single minute of it.

The only possibility he sees to get rid of her and end this marriage is the help of his brother, Rafe, the Earl of Hartholm. When they arrive there in the morning, Crispin hadn’t visited his family in months and couldn’t know that his sister in law, Seraphina, only gave birth to their first son the night before. A boy who is also named after him. Plus he has to admit to himself that he maybe has an alcohol problem Gemma doesn’t tolerate.

The Flynn’s welcome Gemma to their family, even their mother is very friendly to her and when Rafe and Crispin talk, Rafe asks him what he thinks that Gemma wants. But what does she want? He cannot tell it because he never had given it a thought. But his older brother also lets him know that there is a scandal about her later husband’s death and that people say that she may has killed him.

Over the next couple of days they share a lot of intimacies. Gemma welcomes him to her bed, is very open and never refuses him. They are connected in a sexual way. But he has his secrets. When Crispin asks her about her past and the death of her husband, she tells him but he doesn’t tell her his secrets. He withdraws more and more the closer they get.

But they also have to think about Mary and Crispin offers his brother’s help to chaperone her and give her a season. Gemma is insecure if Rafe is really willing to do so but the Flynn’s know about her father, the way he threatened his daughters over the years because she didn’t keep any secrets.

No marriage can work, not even in name, when there are secrets and rumors involved, not in society. Not in London. Not even in the Flynn family.

Oh my god, when I read this book I blushed. Those sex scenes were pretty explicit from the beginning and it

was so hot. When I arrived in Milano I had to three books with me. I finished both Nicola Cornick books and this one and I really told myself that I will finish the other ones before I give myself time to read it – I wasn't able to finish it in Milan but back at home in Vienna – which isn't that bad either. Anyway ... this book was hot.

You have to love Gemma and Crispin, though I have to say that my favorite character is Seraphina to be honest. I love her. She is the best of all the females so far. Gemma is different but also shares similarities with her because they share the kind of marriage – an arranged marriage. Annabelle married out of love but Gemma and Seraphina were pushed into situations they had to learn to deal with. Those two together could be the base for a great story in my opinion because of Seraphina's influence in society and Gemma's love for sex. I can imagine kinky things.

All those Flynn men must be quite handsome. I mean those rakes ... and finally one of those has a passionate, seductive wife, who cannot get enough of her husband, who is brave, self-confident and self-secure. When her husband hurts her, she doesn't give in. When he only tells her parts of his secret, she doesn't push him but tries to find out herself even risking to make everything worse.

I loved it, really loved it. I read the second half of the book in the tub after driving 900km because I had to know how it ends. And I cannot imagine that somebody would think differently about this book because it's the hottest of the series so far. I cannot wait for more! Maybe we will get even "kinkier" stuff next time. With Gemma and Crispin I could even imagine bondage, I can imagine visits in "the club" such a lot of things.

Rating: 5*****

Kimberley says

This family tale keeps getting better...Love Crispin and Gemma...tragic and sweet road to happily ever after..

eyes.2c says

'...hell bent on...well, utter self-destruction'

This is Crispin's story, the out-of-control brother who has been heavily alluded to and the cause of heartache and more for his entire family in the first two books of the series.

One minute Crispin Flynn is rashly gambling and destructively drinking, the next he's lost the hand and finds himself married to Gemma, the widow of the Earl of Laurelcross.

Ok I have to say I just loved this beginning! Crispin's night after tare-on-the-town condition, and Gemma, totally dominated by her circumstances, but not broken in spirit.

Gemma's capitulation is a tad unexpected but then with all the tortuous happenings and confessions of a night and day, perhaps it's no wonder. After all won on the toss of the cards or given away in marriage to answer a father's pretentious designs, both are as heartless as each other.

Michael's once more points to the fate of wives, daughters and sisters at an historical time where women have no rights. Gemma is completely overwhelmed when Crispin gives her choices. That respect has never been awarded her. I loved Crispin just for that.

As they both struggle to build a foundation for their relationship, the past hurts and torments are laid to rest. Their very decidedly explicit intimate relationship, presented over many pages, seems to go a long way with the healing process. Crispin's acceptance of Gemma's sensuality is a balm to her troubled beliefs. The

challenge is will passion become love?

Crispin has deeply guarded secrets that Gemma very courageously breaks through.

Rescue becomes a two way street.

A NetGalley ARC

Duchess Nicole says

That cover!! It's one thing I miss about reading print books...being able to let the cover art sweep me into the story before I ever start reading.

Jess Michaels wrote one of my all time favorite reads, Everything Forbidden. For some reason I haven't read any more of hers but I saw this on Net Galley and snatched it up. So happy I did. This book was perhaps not as naughty as Everything Forbidden...definitely tame enough for the mainstream market. But she's still got plenty of sizzle along with her story!

Crispin was an interesting hero...I appreciate those more and more with every cliche romance I read. Crispin lost the woman he loved, had some family problems, and turned to alcohol to wallow in his own misery. He gambles and drinks and sleeps his way through the town until the night he drunkenly gambles his way into sleeping with the same woman for the rest of his life. Forced to marry Gemma after losing his card game to her father, Crispin surprises Gemma and myself by turning out to be a stand up guy. I loved his character. He wasn't a villain, he wasn't a rake. He was just at a low point in his life and inadvertently forced himself into waking up.

Gemma and her sister are initially objects of pity, but of course they don't stay that way. Gemma may not be all that thrilled about her father forcing her to marry a man she doesn't know...again...but she quickly sees that Crispin is a vastly different man than her emotionally unstable and abusive first husband. Not to mention that their nighttime...and daytime...activities are no longer times of hidden shame, but times for her sexuality to be enjoyed. Crispin loves her sensuality and fervor for their sex life, and Gemma opens up in ways she never thought she could.

I'd love to get some more of the two brother's background and stories and I'm assuming that their books have already been written. I'm thrilled to say that I enjoyed this very much. Michaels writes sweet and sexy and has officially won me over :D:D

Advance copy provided for review

Marilyn J. McGee says

Very enjoyable

Love all the characters in this series. I like the way they are interwoven into each story.

The only negative is the poor editing. Incorrect pronouns and the wrong characters in places can be annoying.

