



The Sea Captain's Wife

Beth Powning

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Growing up on the Bay of Fundy, Azuba Galloway dreams of going to sea. She watches magnificent ships slowly making their way into Whelan's Cove, the sense of exoticism bursting from their holds along with foreign goods.

As a young woman, Azuba marries a seasoned merchant sea captain, Nathaniel Bradstock. Unwilling to have him away at sea for most of their married life, and anxious to see far shores, she extracts a promise that he will take her with him. But Azuba becomes pregnant soon after they marry and Nathaniel knows too well the perils of life on a ship. He reneges on his promise and refuses to allow Azuba to join him.

When Nathaniel leaves on his journey, Azuba desperately misses her husband. Days turn into weeks and months – voyages can take two, three years before the ship and crew return home. Despite her loneliness, Azuba becomes a strong, independent woman, caring for her child and her home. With her parents and beloved grandmother nearby, she settles into a life of quietude and predictability, all the while yearning to be by her husband's side aboard his ship.

Her loneliness eventually propels her into a friendship with the local vicar, Reverend Simon Walton. He is a quiet, kind and contemplative man, and Azuba takes comfort and enjoyment in their increasingly intimate friendship. One afternoon, despite her misgivings, Azuba goes on a picnic with the vicar and becomes trapped by the tide. When they return home the next morning, Azuba and Reverend Walton have become a topic of gossip.

When Nathaniel returns home he is enraged by her impropriety. Reluctantly he decides to take Azuba and their young daughter, Carrie, with him on his next voyage. Mother and child are loaded from a rowboat and hauled onto the weather deck along with barrels of coal and crates of chickens. Nathaniel has drawn a line across the deck. "You'll never again cross that line," he instructs Azuba.

It is October 1862. It will be three years before Azuba sees the shores of Whelan's Cove again. Aboard *Traveller*, the small family visits places Azuba dreamed she would one day see: London, San Francisco and exotic countries in Europe.

But she also experiences the terror that can come during a life at sea: a harrowing passage around Cape Horn, half-starvation while listlessly floating in the doldrums, and a stop at the Chincha Islands to pick up a load of guano, where she witnesses a mass suicide by slaves. She begins to question her decision to join her husband, particularly when she realizes there is "no way to erase horror from a child's memory."

Misery follows misfortune and Azuba feels alone in a male world, surrounded by the splendour and the terror of the open sea. The voyage tests not only her already precarious marriage, but everything Azuba believes in.

With a sure hand, Beth Powning captures life aboard a sailing ship – ferocious storms, the impossibly isolated ports of call, the gruelling daily routine – and shows how love evolves even in the most extreme circumstances.

The Sea Captain's Wife is an awe-inspiring tour that captures the vigour of life in the last days of the Age of Sail and gives us an unforgettable young heroine who shows compassion, courage and love while under incredible duress.

The Sea Captain's Wife Details

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From Reader Review The Sea Captain's Wife for online ebook

Courtney says

AH! I just finished this book and I still feel a little jumpy! Powning was a bit long winded and repetitive in parts, but on the whole, I enjoyed the book. It was pretty exciting. Not the same old "lady at sea" tale I've read before. Having a nursing infant myself at the moment, the ending had me that much more tense. I thought the ending was wrapping far differently, so I was surprised.

Good read!

Erin says

This book takes readers back to the "Golden Age" of sail in the British colony of New Brunswick Canada. Beth Powning shines a light on the little mentioned women who stood by their husbands side as they sailed the seas. Powning doesn't romance this journey either-death, sickness, pirates, and starvation are a part of the story too. A book that I just couldn't stop reading!

Kathleen Valentine says

"Apples, mermaids, pansies, seashells..." ...are woven into the rug that Azuba's Grammy makes for her to take on her first voyage aboard her husband's ship Traveller. She wants Azuba to remember her home overlooking the Bay of Fundy. Growing up in 1860s New Brunswick, Azuba, daughter of a shipwright, dreams of adventure and then one day it finds her - or does it? At a dance Azuba falls in love with tall, rugged, blue-eyed Nathaniel, captain of the sea-going vessel Traveller. When they marry Azuba believes she will go to sea with her husband but he has other ideas. He prefers that she stay safely at home to raise their children and await his return - every few years.

"The Sea Captain's Wife" by Beth Powling is one of the most purely gorgeous books I have ever read. The story, of Azabu, her longing for adventure, her struggle to understand her fierce sea captain husband, and to cope with his world once she is admitted to it, is a gripping story. What distinguishes it from any other tale of its kind is the seamless blending of the harsh realities of a life at sea with the timeless, homely rhythms of a woman's life. Through all the drama and challenge of rounding Cape Horn, being becalmed with supplies dwindling, and being attacked by pirates, Azuba's life - even lived in the saloon of her husband's ship - is still a woman's life. Quilting, sewing, making pies, teaching her children, tending the chickens, pregnancy, cooking preserves, struggling to understand this mysterious creature she is married to are daily parts of life for Azuba. Much as they were for many women of her time.

I have to say I loved this book and often found myself in tears at both the story and the beauty of the language. Although I would have liked a little more description of some of the more exotic ports they visited, this was more than compensated for by the passages about their life at sea. Some were harsh and painful, others were dreamy and evocative. The chapters while they were sailing from South Africa to Hong Kong were delicious.

But for me the most purely lovely part of the books were the last few chapters. The writing is just beautiful - tender, heart-breaking, exquisite. For all the drama of the years at sea returning home to gardens, sewing, gathering blackberries for jam, take care of babies, laying elders to rest. I couldn't stop crying and smiling at the same time. This is a beautiful, tender love story about an enigmatic man, challenging children, caring family, and the woman who loved them all. I highly recommend it.

Adele Jones says

When I first started this novel, I wondered if I was about to be dropped into an idealistic romance on the oceans. So wrong! This book is of much sterner stuff than that.

The novel is written through the eyes of Azuba, a young wife to sea captain, Nathaniel Bradstock. After the loss of their second child through a late miscarriage while Nathaniel is at sea, Azuba's desire to join her husband on the oceans seems perfectly reasonable - and his refusal, prideful, stubborn and harsh. It takes a matter of questionable virtue through a misadventure with the local reverend, for the lonely young woman to be finally spirited aboard Nathaniel's ship, along with the couple's young daughter, Carrie.

During that voyage reality hits as Azuba and young Carrie face the harsh realities of a life at sea. Nathaniel treats them like members of the crew, with gruff orders and brusque exchanges, making it obvious he has no desire to have them aboard. They're nearly shipwrecked, face freezing conditions, starvation, overbearing heat, loss of life, threats of mutiny and so many other difficulties, that by the end of the first voyage, Azuba entertains how easy it could be to leave her mulish husband and return home with Carrie to become the token shipmaster's wife she's expected to be, patiently awaiting her hardworking husband's return, whilst enjoying the spoils of his business exploits. Tempted, she ultimately recognises that her return would be the end of their marriage, as a marriage ought to be, and also their family. So she chooses her often foul-tempered husband, risking herself and their child, and determines they belong together, for better or for worse.

Over and again, Azuba chooses to grow up instead of opt out. Yes, men and women are different and bring these complementary opposites to marriage, but tested under such gruelling conditions, I fear in our modern world her 'right to happiness' would have overrun whatever promises had been made through their wedding vows. She refuses to be sat in a corner; chooses to question Nathaniel's methods and, to his annoyance, draw out his thoughts; determines to become educated in his craft; until finally he begins to recognise her strengths in problem solving and intelligence - the very things he loved about her from the start. Azuba, in turn, begins to understand that Nathaniel's gruffness is a cover for his fear of not being able to protect them, along with underlying doubts relating to her questionable interactions with the reverend.

In letting go of her once ignorant ideals of what a seafaring life ought to be and choosing to be with her husband, Azuba refuses to be a wallflower wife. This ultimately leads to a more intimate understanding of each other and a tougher love than either of them ever would have known had they settled for what seemed an easier option. It's not what she ever expected love and life to be, but it's strong, durable and more than she could have imagined. And then the cruellest blow is struck.

I won't ruin the ending, but Azuba's tenacity and strength of character is not flawless. She wrestles with herself and Nathaniel, and occasionally rails at her situation, but through this gains respect for her husband, and mutually from him. I liked that nothing was sugar coated. Even in the aftermath of the worst possible terror, the long process of healing (emotional and physical) wasn't rushed or 'quick-fixed' as it could have been. Because they had weathered the previous storms in their relationship, instead of blame laying they

owned their part in the situation, and understood more fully the wounds that had been dealt to each other's soul, allowing them to navigate a way forward, together. It was a wonderful picture of marriage, with all the challenges of self and togetherness, and the hard choices a husband and wife are forced to make to see that relationship grow.

Excellently written and packed with substance.

Steven Langdon says

Beth Powning wrote the excellent "Hatbox Letters" several years ago, a novel set in contemporary Atlantic Canada. This book, by contrast, is a historical novel from the 1860's, but I found it just as multi-layered and emotionally complex -- with much to say that is relevant to us in the twenty-first century. Powning writes with well-researched authority about the historical period in which this book is set -- discussing the intracacies of sailing vessels, of voyages around Cape Horn, or of the confining clothes that women then wore. But what brings this novel alive is its enduring themes.

Fundamentally, this is a study, from a young and vibrant wife's point of view, of the evolution of a marriage, away from superficial beginnings through difficult challenges together to a depth of love and understanding that neither partner originally expected. Azuba, the wife, and Nathaniel, the sea captain, are severely tested by the life they experience -- their initial periods of long separation as Nathaniel departs alone on two and three year voyages, then their tensions as Azuba and their young child sail with the husband under his command, and the dangers of starvation, storms and piracy attacks that assail their vessel. But somehow their relationship evolves, matures and deepens profoundly.

How this happens, and how it interconnects with changes in a world moving from the sailing era to the age of steam, is a hugely difficult process to analyse, in a way that is human and realistic. But Powning writes beautifully and well in completing that task with insight and compassion. Perhaps there is a bit too much melodrama now and then. But overall, this is a fine novel, and it was a great pleasure to read it.

Holly says

This book had some interesting and engaging themes. I had not read about wives of Sea Captain's who traveled with their husbands before and all the excitement, hardship and peril that went with it. Still I didn't really "see" or get a "feel" for the ship and the lifestyle and couldn't help comparing it to the much Superior (in my opinion) historical novels of Diana Gabaldon (The outlander series).

Jocelyn says

The Sea Captain's Wife is a story about Azuba, a sheltered sea captain's wife living in Whelan's Cove, Nova Scotia, who makes a mistake and goes on a voyage with her daughter and husband on his ship. Sounds like it will be full of fun adventure times, amirite? Except it's not and it's a little boring and some of the voyages get barely touched upon (i.e. Hong Kong -- it would have been nice to see them go from Antwerp to Hong Kong for more than just two chapters. After all, London to San Francisco and back was two sections of the book (or nine chapters)). There were some crazy happenings on the ship (Cape Horn storms, stuck in the

doldrums, almost mutiny), but because of the characters, I just couldn't really care.

Speaking of characters, let's look at Azuba. She started off feeling cloistered in her life on land away from her husband and wanting to get out and be free. So she makes a mistake, which everyone knows is a mistake that a woman shouldn't make and gets what she wants: her husband comes back to take her away with him on the ship. And then she gets indignant because her husband, Nathaniel, the captain, is all, "You should listen to what I say because I'm the motherfucking captain and I know shit you don't about sailing." And she gets even more so when she learns some stuff. Then she becomes all wah-wah about different situations and learns that hanging out on a ship isn't as glamourous as she thought it would be. Boo-fucking-hoo. Azuba didn't grow emotionally.

Her husband Nathaniel was the same too. You were meant to think that he grew from a cold man to a tender, loving husband and father, but it was pretty obvious from the beginning that he wasn't cold, he was just distant. I guess that maybe happens when he isn't around his family very much because he's busy making a living so Azuba and their kid can live in comfort.

And Carrie, their daughter, was basically there just to move the plot. All she did was go, "Oh, a ship! Ooh, look at the sky, Mama! I love you, Papa!" Nothing of import. She doesn't become a full character until the Hong Kong section and when she does she becomes the most interesting of them all. But that's not saying much.

The rest of the characters could die in a million fires and I wouldn't give a shit.

The writing was mediocre. There were moments when I was resisting the urge to roll my eyes. I don't mean to say that everything about the writing was bad, there were definitely moments of nice description, but a lot of the time it was meh.

Looking back, this review makes it seem like I absolutely hated everything about the book. I didn't hate it, but I didn't particularly enjoy it. I just don't care about it (even though this review makes it seem like I cared a great deal enough to get angry). I suppose I just wasn't in the right target group. Maybe this will appeal to lonely, middle-aged housewives more.

R K says

This book..... PUT ME IN SUCH A SLUMP!

I WAS SO DISAPPOINTED BY THIS BOOK. I thought I would love it but nooooooooooooooooooooo

First of all, the author kept telling what happened. You never experienced anything so when "major events" occurred, you're just like, "oh that was a crucial moment? Their lives were in danger? oh" This book takes place on a boat. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEA. I didn't feel immersed in the world at all. Pawning doesn't bother teaching the reader nautical terms. Doesn't bother explaining ship terminology. Doesn't bother to even mention that THERE WAS A GLOSSARY AT THE BACK OF THE BOOK!

Plot:

What plot? Was this supposed to be a character driven book?? Because if so, then Azuba (MC) needs revamping.

They're just sailing out at sea. Do you get to see that? Experience that? NOOOOOOOOOOOOO

You're seeing everything from Azuba's perspective which is just bland and boring.

There are events that do occur but the reader is so drawn away from the book that you don't even understand what is happening or why. Character's starve, die, get injuries and yet when these events occurred I was just wondering who this character was again. I was not impacted by all the events that occur and the whole time I was just thinking, "why is this happening? What's going on?".

Characters:

Ok, the relationship between Nathaniel and Azuba is relatively nice and expected for the time century for the most part. There was an incident that technically spurred the entire "plot" but Nathaniel never apologizes to Azuba for not trusting her.

Azuba, oh, Azuba. I wanted to like her but I couldn't. This women wanted to run away to sea with her husband. Understandable.

So when she gets her chance what does she do?

Spend most of her time sewing and taking care of her daughter.

and singing

Lots of singing

Sure she reads a book that talks about sailing. Does she mention this to her husband? Does she try to help out? No For most of the book she does nothing. Later she does take a firmer stand but by god who's going to stand around and read age after page of a mother taking care of her kid?

I also think she's too motherly. Like her kid is clearly able to entertain herself. Why can't Azuba DO SOMETHING.

And don't even get me started once she gets pregnant again.

OH MY GOD

She decides to not tell her husband until MUCH LATER

She also decides to not tell anyone else because what if one of them tells her husband?

And yet, at a dinner party, upon speaking with the lady of the house she decides to blab to this unknown women of her condition.

WOW

You won't tell your husband but you'll tell a complete stranger.

Oh god, I don't even understand what was the point of this book?

I can't with this book

bye

Sherri Keller says

There are a few mild spoilers in the following review, but nothing that will ruin the story.

The Sea Captain's Wife follows Azuba, a young woman who grew up on the Bay of Fundy in the mid 1800s. We first meet her as an adventurous girl who wants to marry a sea captain and travel the world with her husband at her side. She rails against the traditional expectations of the sea captain's wife: to be a good submissive mother, grow flowers, and spend her husband's money on carriages and dresses.

The main story opens in the 1860s with Azuba married to Nathaniel, who is—duh—a sea captain, and he

spends many months, sometimes years, at sea. He wasn't home when his daughter was born, and didn't meet her until she was almost three years old. He seemed open to the idea of taking Azuba with him until she had their daughter, and he saw the house that Azuba's father had built for them. The house was someplace safe to leave his family.

Azuba miscarries their second child. She befriends the local minister, and they visit each other often and take walks together. After a picnic one day, they both fall asleep and become trapped by the tide overnight. Even though nothing inappropriate happened, the local busybodies label her a whore. The minister is sent away, and when Nathaniel comes back, he takes Azuba and their daughter with him on his next voyage, which takes them to England, to San Francisco, to Callao, Peru, and back to Antwerp, Belgium.

Something I wasn't aware of before reading the book and doing some research, was that this story was set before the construction of the Panama Canal, which meant that in order to get to San Francisco to Europe, ships had to go all the way around South America, 'round the horn, which was a treacherous journey. It really made me thankful for all the conveniences we have today. Could you imagine a trip around the world and back taking *years*?

Back in Europe, Azuba and Nathaniel had a tough decision to make. Should Azuba continue to take her children on the high seas and experience the world, but they would have to deal with the threat of pirates, terrible storms, and possible starvation or drowning, or should she take her children home and let them grow up in a life of relative safety, but only knowing their father as that guy who shows up a couple times a year?

I found the book so-so. It was well written, and parts of the story were very engaging, especially the return from Callao, but the ending just sort of faded away. Come to think of it, I don't even remember exactly how it ended. It was entertaining enough to read at the time, but it's definitely not a favourite.

Jessica says

This was the first really slow read I've had in a long time. I don't mean it was slow because there was nothing happening in the book or slow to pick up because I didn't like it. It was slow because the words were so poetic and vivid, earnestly transporting me to a place I could see so clearly in my mind. Beautiful writing indeed.

It was an interesting take on the sea-faring husband, adventure-seeking wife combo that seems to be popular. The sharp contrast between Nathaniel's characters as family man versus Captain was hard to take at times, but proved even further why he hesitated to allow his family on the ship. I'm still not sure if I truly believe that Azuba's friendship with the Reverend was completely platonic (even though we know nothing happened between them). There were moments when it felt like their emotions were being described as two people starting to feel something more than friendship for the other. Love, no. Just something more.

All in all, a really nice read.

Jaymie says

I really enjoyed the adventure of this book. A life on a ship on the ocean sounds terrifying to me. I didn't

love any of the characters, though they were realistic. However I loved the story. It wasn't happy, it was full of trauma and bad choices but I loved the book for the way it sucked me into what was happening to the characters. The writing is descriptive and paints a perfect picture. I feel the author was trying to create a realistic life of a sea captain, his crew, his family and what it would be like to live on a ship for months or even years at a time. A very rough life. Not pretty or romantic in anyway. So for as much as I love romance the fact that this book was real and didn't sugar coat anything I respect the author for that even more.

ASVPjake says

There were some facets of *The Sea Captain's Wife* that I did truly enjoy. Powning did an excellent job at setting the novel in 1800's Canada. She clearly has done extensive research as to what life at that time would be like. From fashion, professions, economic classes, and culture to showing what everyday life might be like, down to details like daguerreotypy, she really hit the nail on the head. Furthermore, as the protagonist Azuba sailed around the world, Powning excellently showed the differences in cultures and territories everywhere she took us.

The characters she created were all multidimensional and the relationships between them were very interesting. One of my favorite parts was watching Azuba's daughter Carrie grow over the years.

Where the book fell short was in the writing style. It was boring and unclear. First off Azuba sometimes had flashbacks, or recalled certain events that had happened to her in the past. When this happened it wasn't always clear that she was having this type of recollection, or that the recollection was over, so I found myself having to go back and re-read paragraphs to try and figure out what was actually occurring and what was just a recollection.

At one point Azuba found herself in a French speaking country and learned a bit of the language to communicate with locals. This is all well, and could have added to the book, however in order to fully follow the story one must have had to know french or be forced to type full sentences in a language they don't know into a translator.

The real biggest downfall was how slow the book read. Lots of detail is wonderful sometimes, but every detail was explained in such detail that it took away from the story. Even parts of the book which were supposed to be exciting or scary were dampened and boring. When the ship sailed through a massive life threatening storm I could hardly take the event seriously because of the shades of blue of the waves. I often found myself falling asleep to this book, and it took me an inordinately long amount of time to read. The only exception to this was near the end of the novel (view spoiler) By this point however I was already mentally checked out of the book and there was no redeeming it from trashing it in a review.

I would really have loved if the book had read better because I really did enjoy everything about the story. Sailing around the world in the 1800's right at the time when America gained independence and all of the dangers associated with that had so much potential to be an excellent 5/5 novel, especially with the research and effort that clearly was put in to this work.

Kathleen Valentine says

"Apples, mermaids, pansies, seashells..." are woven into the rug that Azuba's Grammy makes for her to take

on her first voyage aboard her husband's ship Traveller. She wants Azuba to remember her home overlooking the Bay of Fundy. Growing up in 1860s New Brunswick, Azuba, daughter of a shipwright, dreams of adventure and then one day it finds her – or does it? At a dance Azuba falls in love with tall, rugged, blue-eyed Nathaniel, captain of the sea-going vessel Traveller. When they marry Azuba believes she will go to sea with her husband but he has other ideas. He prefers that she stay safely at home to raise their children and await his return – every few years.

“The Sea Captain's Wife” by Beth Powling is one of the most purely gorgeous books I have ever read. The story, of Azabu, her longing for adventure, her struggle to understand her fierce sea captain husband, and to cope with his world once she is admitted to it, is a gripping story. What distinguishes it from any other tale of its kind is the seamless blending of the harsh realities of a life at sea with the timeless, homely rhythms of a woman's life. Through all the drama and challenge of rounding Cape Horn, being becalmed with supplies dwindling, and being attacked by pirates, Azuba's life – even lived in the saloon of her husband's ship – is still a woman's life. Quilting, sewing, making pies, teaching her children, tending the chickens, pregnancy, cooking preserves, struggling to understand this mysterious creature she is married to are daily parts of life for Azuba. Much as they were for many women of her time.

I have to say I loved this book and often found myself in tears at both the story and the beauty of the language. Although I would have liked a little more description of some of the more exotic ports they visited, this was more than compensated for by the passages about their life at sea. Some were harsh and painful, others were dreamy and evocative. The chapters while they were sailing from South Africa to Hong Kong were delicious.

But for me the most purely lovely part of the books were the last few chapters. The writing is just beautiful – tender, heart-breaking, exquisite. For all the drama of the years at sea returning home to gardens, sewing, gathering blackberries for jam, take care of babies, laying elders to rest. I couldn't stop crying and smiling at the same time. This is a beautiful, tender love story about an enigmatic man, challenging children, caring family, and the woman who loved them all. I highly recommend it.

Marie says

In *The Sea Captain's Wife*, Azuba desperately wants to join her husband Nathaniel on his ship. However, he has other ideas and leaves her at home while he goes on a lengthy voyage. Upon his return, he learns of an unfortunate incident and realizes that he has little choice but to take Azuba with him on his next trip. Azuba has no idea what's in store for her. Rough waters, horrific storms, pirates, mutiny, starvation; all are featured in this harrowing tale of life on the high seas.

I loved this book. Written entirely from Azuba's point of view, the story really gives the reader a sense of what life was like as a sea captain's wife in the 1860s. From the loneliness of being left at home to travelling the dangerous waters on a ship, we see Azuba's life and know how she's feeling every step of the way.

I loved Azuba. She had this romantic notion of being a sea captain's wife and being on board the ship. It seemed that no matter where she was, she met some pretty tough challenges, yet she persevered. Even though it's very much Azuba's story, she wasn't the one that stuck with me long after the book. It was Nathaniel that I worried about. Azuba adapted to changes as they came; Nathaniel life was on the water. I wondered how he fared in the end.

All of the nautical details were extremely interesting: mizzenmast, gig, gamming chair, sails and so on. I also loved all of the descriptions of life at sea. I think I had the same misconceptions that Azuba had about living on a ship. I know better now. I'm sure Powning did massive amounts of research in order to get the details down. Well done.

I loved being reminded of a simpler time with regards to communication. Does anyone write letters and send them by snail mail anymore? I know I don't. I can't imagine writing a letter to someone with the knowledge that it's going to take months to arrive at its destination. The letters between Nathaniel and Azuba took months to arrive as did Azuba's letters to her parents. Nowadays if someone doesn't get our email within seconds, we know something is wrong.

A glossary has been included at the back of the book. Surprisingly I knew a few of the words listed: crazy quilt, guano, hardtack, phrenology, sextant, and a few others. I wish I had read this section before I had started reading, though. It could have been helpful with some of the nautical terms as I read the story. As it was, I didn't know it was there until I finished the book. Also, I know that glossaries don't usually include page numbers, but I wish they had been included here. That way I could go back and find the words within the story.

New words: The text contained lots of new-to-me words. Here's the list (I didn't bother including any of the words included in the glossary):

barque (page 39) - boat - also bark
erysipelas (page 70) - bacterial skin disease
portmanteaus (page 75) - large suitcase
gimballed (page 85) - ring for holding a compass steady
chivvied (page 93) - urge or harass
bowsprit (page 96) - that spear-type thingy on the front of the ship.
pestiferous (page 122) - annoying
torpor (page 177) - inactivity
ameliorated (page 194) - to make something better
slovenly (page 251) - sloppy
limned (page 256) - to draw or paint a picture, especially in profile
obeisance (page 307) - bow, genuflection
ephemera (page 348) - short-lived

Highly recommended. I have The Hatbox Letters sitting on my shelf waiting to be read. I can't wait to read it now. It should be really good.

For more information about this book, please visit the Random House website

There's also a mini-site for The Sea Captain's Wife that features lots of information regarding the book including a Bibliography, a section on nautical terms, as well as short articles on ports of call from the book and some interesting history.

For more information about this author and her other works, please visit Beth Powning's website.

I'd like to thank those nice people at Random House Canada for this review copy.

The Sea Captain's Wife: A Novel by Beth Powning, Alfred A. Knopf (Random House), ©2010 ISBN 9780307397102(Hardcover), 361p (plus Glossary).

Holly (The Grimdragon) says

I don't need you men to do my thinking for me.

Azuba loves Whelan's Cove but yearns for adventure. She has always been in love with the sea & has always wanted to travel. To see the world. This is her story about leaving the comfort & beauty of her home on the Bay of Fundy; about leaving behind her family & friends for an adventure -- for love.

Her loneliness while Nathaniel was away is heart-wrenching. She suffers personal tragedy while her husband is at sea, so when Simon (Reverend Walton) arrives in the small coastal town, he brought with him companionship for Azuba.

This was more than a simple friendship, and she had sensed, for some time, that it was bound to end.

The relationship between the Reverend & Azuba was lovely -- it seemed completely innocent, but may have led to something more than platonic had the incident not happened. Nathaniel then returns & the gossip is essentially what propels him to take Azuba & Carrie on the boat, away from the Bay of Fundy, becoming the seafaring family Azuba always wanted.

It was fascinating to read about a woman in the male dominated world on the sailing ship. Life on the sea. Nineteenth century. Women & children on merchant & whaling vessels. Grueling day to day, terrifying storms, homesickness. The subject matter was obviously well researched.

In New Brunswick, the pin cherries would be in bloom, their frail, pink-white blossoms rippling on a cool wind while dandelions made yellow blankets on the field.

Beth Powning's incredible descriptions made visualizing New Brunswick easy. It brought back feelings I have had while living there. I truly became homesick whilst reading this. There is so much I miss about New Brunswick -- but like Azuba, I had to go on my own adventure & leave much of what I knew, people I love, behind. Moving across the country was both the hardest & most rewarding thing for my partner & I. New Brunswick will always be our home; we are born & bred there. It is a beautiful place, with genuinely lovely people. Beth Powning does a great job at capturing this in the book.

Her writing is so poetic -- the language certainly puts you in the time period, without feeling forced. When the pirates attack in China? Wow. Violent, raw, emotional. I was absolutely shaking for the last 50 or so pages. What a tragic ordeal.

This is about trying to keep a family together amidst a time when men would be away from the home for months, even years. It is about the harsh realities on the sea; tragedy; loneliness; adventure.

Love, like hope, changed. It was buried in small moments and came most strongly when least expected.

(Popsugar Challenge: A book that takes place in your hometown)