

SWEPT TO SEA

BY HEATHER MANNING

Eden's mind stubbornly dragged itself back into the unwanted reality of consciousness.

She would much prefer to remain asleep, where she would not have to worry about Lord Clive Rutger or about having been discovered by a nefarious crew of pirates. A nefarious crew of pirates ...

A young voice shouted, "Father, Father! The lady—she is waking up!"

A cool cloth glided over her forehead, and a small, warm hand grasped hers tightly.

"Milady."

Strong, large hands gripped her shoulders and shook them gently. Eden rolled onto her side and groaned, swatting at the hands. She had no intention of opening her eyes and facing that she had been discovered after such a short portion of the voyage. Bitter disappointment made her cringe. She had failed to survive even one short day at sea on her own.

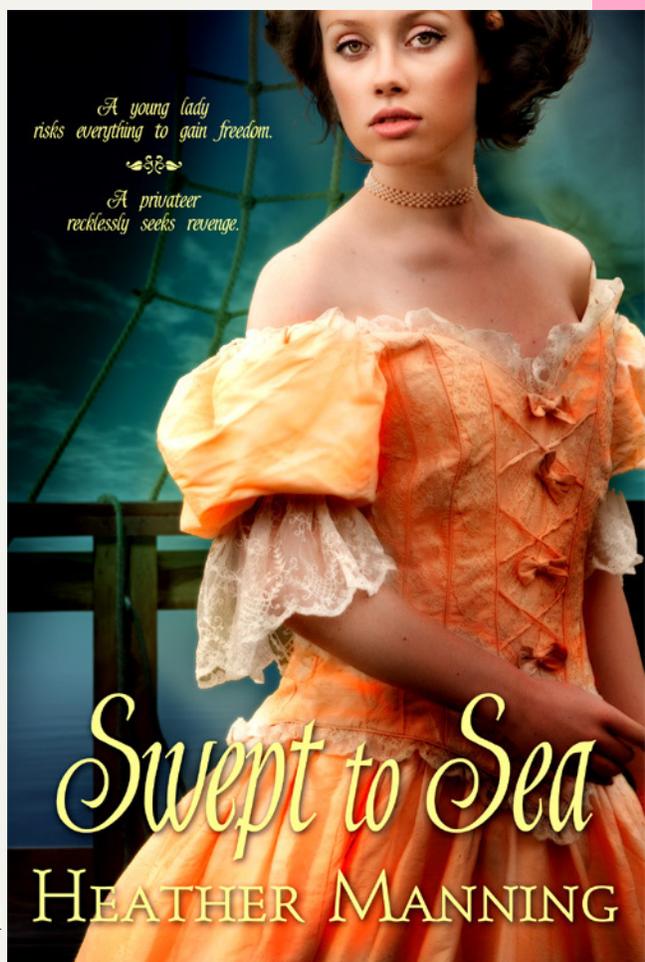
"Milady."

The deep voice grew agitated. The calloused hands shook her again, a little more roughly this time.

"What is it?" Eden moaned and managed to open her eyes a crack, however slight it was.

Lamplight pierced her eyes, and she snapped fully awake and flew up into a sitting position upon a rather narrow four-poster bed. She glanced at her surroundings.

A large mahogany desk propped against one wall of the cabin. Perpendicular to it, a huge window allowed a view of the endless sea.



Two overstuffed leather chairs huddled in a corner.

But what mainly commanded her attention was the man who loomed before her, the most handsome one she had ever seen. His fists were balled at his waist, and he wore a waistcoat of dark sapphire over a puffy white shirt from which a blizzard of lace burst out at the cuffs and collar. She noticed a silver chain around his neck that held some sort of a gold ring or band. A leather tie restrained his dark chocolate curls, cavalier-style, revealing a strong, lightly-stubbed jaw.

Crystal blue eyes roved over her from head to toe. Altogether, he appeared quite intimidating.

A young child with a mop of golden curls upon his head stood beside the man, wearing a miniature version of his grin. The boy stared at her in awe as if she was some foreign object.

The man's face looked...familiar to Eden. Had she met him before? Oh, yes. She had. In the hold.

Terror washed over her when she remembered the words they had shared.



About the Author

Bestselling author Heather Manning is a young lady who loves to read--and write. Her first two novels, *Swept to Sea* and *Carried Home*, quickly became bestsellers. She recently graduated from Stephens College with a degree in theatre arts. Now, she lives in Orlando, Florida, working for a certain famous mouse, and obsesses over food, Disney, and time travel. Find Heather on her website: <http://heathermanningofficial.com/>

CARRIED HOME

BY HEATHER MANNING

“Wherever did you learn to care for a baby, Captain Thompson? Do you have children of your own?”

“Oh, no, miss, I’m afraid I do not have any children to call my own. I suppose I have simply always enjoyed spending time with young ones, and they tend to enjoy the time they spend with me.” He winked at her.

“I see. I love my brother like he is my own child. I’ve practically been a mother to him starting a couple of weeks after he was born and my mother got sick.” She wrung her hands in her lap.

“Sorry to hear about your mother’s misfortune, Lady Shaw.” Captain Thompson kissed Emma on the forehead. The child was snoring quietly, her little head resting in the crook of the man’s arm. Her short copper ringlets hung in disarray, some strands randomly sticking out. When Ivy glanced at the captain, she noticed his hair stuck out in much the same manner. She stifled a giggle.

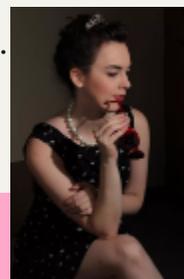
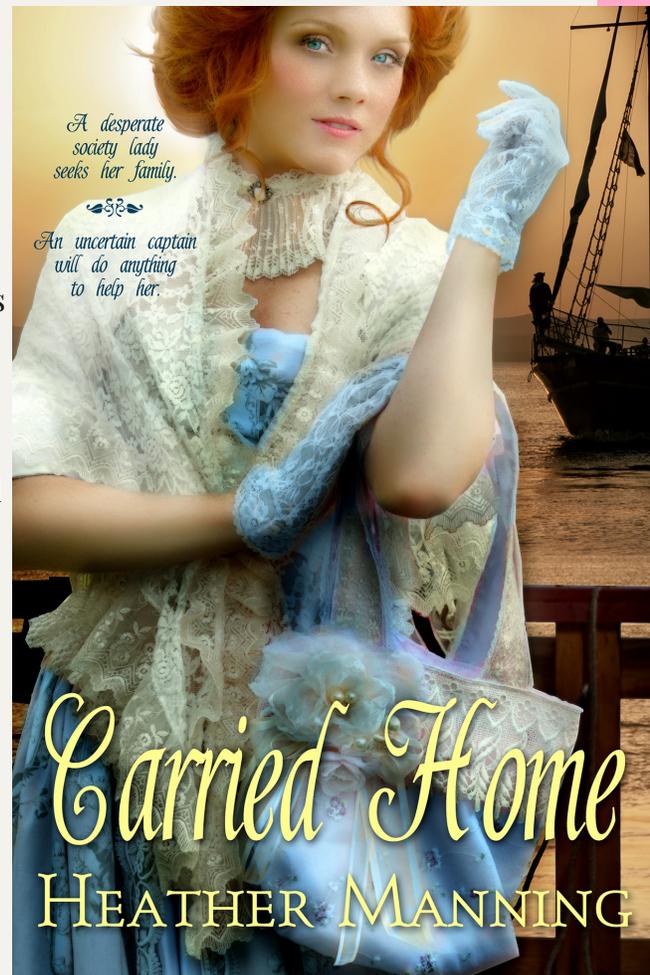
The man gazed at her with somber eyes for a moment before she remembered his statement.

“Oh, my mother is all right. She just...retires to bed most of the time, and, well ...”

“I understand, milady.” He gazed down at Emma and a sweet smile quirked his lips.

“Well, I believe our little one is fast asleep. I suppose I shall leave and let the both of you get some rest.” Captain Thompson stood and gently transferred the baby to her arms. His arms brushed against hers for a moment and Ivy felt heat creep up her neck to her face. Finally, she settled Emma in her arms.

Captain Thompson offered her another breath-taking grin. Was the charming captain ever without a smile or wink?



**Actor and Author | Kansas City
| Heather Manning**

Heather Manning is a young author and actress from Kansas City, and a...

heathermanningofficial.com

TOSSED TOGETHER

BY HEATHER MANNING

Aimee exited the tavern twenty minutes later, arm in arm with her husband. *Her husband!*

"Blast!" She muttered under her breath, but immediately covered her mouth with a hand when Captain Emery cast her a harsh look.

She had never quite envisioned her wedding day playing out as it had. For heaven's sake, she had never allowed the thought of marrying the man next to her cross her mind! She could only hope he would agree to forget about this farce the second they escaped the town. Suddenly, Emery stopped and tugged on her hand, which was deep into her hair, fretting with her hairpins.

"What?"

He nodded his head to the side. Aimee had to stop herself from gasping in shock. The men were pouring out of the tavern like rats and spewing obscenities that brought heat to her cheeks.

"They want me to kiss the bride."

"Oh."

Panic laced his eyes.

Bile rose in Aimee's throat. "Kiss me then."

His face scrunched up as he leaned forward and braced his hands on her shoulders. The man's features were grim and stiff. He lowered his mouth to hers.

Aimee had kissed a many suitors in her life. She had never kissed a man she hated. A man who was her husband. After a quick brush of his lips, he pulled back. It almost looked like he was going to be sick. Aimee bristled. He may hate her,



but that was no reason for him to feel sick after a single kiss. Was she that undesirable?

The men around them roared in displeasure. “That’s all ya got!”

Emery groaned, snagged Aimee by the waist, and drew her tight against himself. She barely had a chance to catch her breath before he slammed his lips onto hers and didn’t relent for what seemed like hours. He tugged her closer still, deepening the kiss.

The crowd erupted into a tangled mess of catcalls and whistles, cheers and angry shouts. Only after all of the raucous had died down did Emery pull away. After offering a wink—which looked unnatural on his stoic face—to the hungry crowd, he tucked her arm against his elbow and walked away at a breakneck pace.

Aimee nearly fell over herself trying to catch up with the man, but after a few blocks, they had escaped the rough and tumble crowd.

She fanned her burning face in an attempt to cool down. “What was that, Emery?” A wave of nausea swept over her.



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