

The Sea Captain's Wife

by Beth Powning



About the Book

Growing up in the seafaring town of Whelan's Cove, Azuba Bradstock dreamed of sailing the open seas. But even after she marries captain Nathaniel Bradstock, Azuba and her daughter Carrie remain on land, occupied with the busy yet disenchanting life of a sea captain's wife. But Azuba's imagination never lets go of the idea of life abroad: exotic ports, tropical climates, and unknown adventure.

In the wake of personal tragedy, Azuba befriends Reverend Walton. He is new to Whelan's Cove and, like Azuba, he is fascinated by the sea. After a misunderstood accident calls Azuba's relationship with Walton into question, Nathaniel finally relents and agrees to let Azuba join him aboard his ship. Although under much different circumstances than she'd ever imagined, and with her family's happiness and husband's trust in jeopardy, Azuba strives to adjust to the rhythms of their voyage.

The Sea Captain's Wife is the story of a woman driven by determination and strength to hold together a family she dearly loves amid the dangers and hardships of an often harsh and frightening world. The life Azuba once desperately longed introduces her not only the pleasure of adventure but brings her and her family to the brink of death, to face impossible decisions, and challenge the very foundation of her marriage in order to survive.

Discussion Guide

1. When Azuba loses her baby at the beginning of the book, Nathaniel is at sea. What effect does Nathaniel's absence have on this situation and how does it inform Azuba's actions after her loss?

2. The idea of fate arises several times throughout the book. How does Azuba see her fate while growing up on the Bay of Fundy? How do Reverend Walton or Nathaniel Bradstock see theirs? How do each of these characters fight for or against their fate, and are they successful? Do you believe in fate?
3. Nathaniel Bradstock takes on a different persona when aboard Traveller. What conflicts arise between his roles as husband and father and as captain? How do they inform his decisions? How would you have handled the same situation?
4. Azuba's relationship with Reverend Walton undergoes intense scrutiny from both her family and Nathaniel. What is your opinion of their relationship? If it were Nathaniel who had a close friendship with another woman, how would it be seen? How would the situation have changed if Nathaniel were at home?
5. Azuba compares the way Nathaniel appears in person versus his daguerreotype. How does the distance between them change the way they see each other? What impact does that distance have on their relationship throughout the story?
6. What personal sacrifices does Azuba make in going to sea with Nathaniel? Would you have made the same sacrifices? What other alternatives did you see for Azuba?
7. Azuba's onboard pregnancy heightens the stakes in this novel. How do you feel about her decision? Considering the jeopardy that befalls Traveller later in the book, would you have taken the same risk and why?
8. Azuba notices that other captains' wives had, like Mrs. Marshall, "become somewhat like men themselves." How do you think the other wives see Azuba? How do the sailors aboard Traveller see her? How does Azuba feel about the gender roles aboard the ship and how does it affect her?
9. Azuba observes that Nathaniel "thinks of Traveller as his home." What is "home" to Azuba? What is "home" to Nathaniel after he returns from sea unable to captain his ship again?
10. Considering all Carrie witnesses during the voyage, what impact does the decision to bring Carrie along have on the relationship between she and Azuba? How does the decision affect Carrie's relationship with Nathaniel? How will the events of this book inform Carrie's future?
11. What does Simon Walton mean to Carrie? How does this differ from what Nathaniel means to her? How does the way she feel about both men change by the end of the book?
12. Azuba laments to herself that "the only women she would be fit to visit would be the other captains' wives, who also knew the true size of the world." Knowing what she knows and having the experiences she had, what do you see in the future of Azuba Bradstock and her family?

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