



Sweet Madness

Heather Snow

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There's a fine line between love and insanity.

An Untamed Mind

Ever since her husband's sudden and tragic death, Lady Penelope Bridgeman has committed herself to studying the maladies of the mind, particularly treating traumatized soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars. It is this expertise that brings the Marquess of Bromwich's family to her door.

Gabriel Devereaux's unexpected and unpredictable episodes are unlike any Penelope has studied. The once proud soldier has been left shaken and withdrawn, but she manages to build a fragile trust between them. Strangely, Gabriel seems completely lucid when not in the grips of his mania, and in the calm between bouts, she is surprised by how much she is drawn to him.

Despite his own growing feelings, Gabriel knows that he is fit for no one, and is determined to keep Penelope away from his descent into madness. But even though she knows firsthand the folly of loving a broken man, Penelope cannot stop herself from trying to save him, no matter the cost.

Sweet Madness Details

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From Reader Review Sweet Madness for online ebook

Mei says

I admit I haven't read the other books in this series, so I can't compare the heroines, but I liked Penelope and her willingness to help the soldiers affected by PTSD.

I also liked her view on the treatments and abhorred how they treated mental illnesses then!!

The slight problem here was the romance... At least for me... It seemed more like a situation when the doctor falls in love with a patient... But then I think how they were friends before and I get doubtful... Still their relationship didn't convince me...

What I found very strange is that nobody suspected poisoning as the reason of his sudden madness.

Anyhow, a solid and interesting book.

Lady Wesley says

Sweet Madness is the third in Heather Snow's Veiled Seduction series and for my money the best. The heroines are the true stars in each of these stories. In *Sweet Enemy*, she's a bluestocking chemist who has no interest in marriage. In *Sweet Deception*, she's a mathematical savant trying to use her skills to solve a series of murders.

In this book, Lady Penelope is neither a bluestocking nor a genius. Rather, she's a society miss (whom we met in the first book as the heroine's cousin) whose husband died six months after their wedding. With our 21st century knowledge, we quickly can see that he was bipolar, but in 1817 that disease was unknown. All that society saw was a handsome, charming, vibrant, energetic young man enjoying life, but Pen saw him during the dark times and blames herself for his suicide.

For two years she has been withdrawn from society and is still dressing in deep mourning attire. During that time, however, she has come to know several veterans of the Napoleonic wars who suffered from what then was called "battle fatigue." At the hospital set up by her cousin's husband, she has worked to help these men and has met with some success. Her therapy is based on a combination of her common sense, her deeply empathetic personality, and her study of the British "associationist" school of thinking (an early, simplistic version of today's cognitive behavioral therapy).

Gabriel Devereaux, her late husband's cousin, is confined in a luxurious but nonetheless brutal asylum for the insane. His mother asks Pen to discover whether she can help him, but most of Pen's efforts are stymied by the asylum's starchy director. When Pen gets him away from the asylum to her cousin's country estate, her patient and dedicated work begins to help him deal with some of his traumatic war experiences. Moreover, he has no more of the sudden, violent episodes that put him in the asylum in the first place.

During their weeks together, Pen and Gabriel's relationship becomes one of deep trust and genuine affection. Actually, for several years Gabriel has been carrying a torch for Pen, and she begins to wonder if she can perhaps love again, even though this man clearly has psychological problems. Gabriel realizes that Pen needs rescuing from her past as much as he does, so he tries to help her as she is helping him. It's lovely to watch

this story slowly unfold on the page, but the good times cannot last.

Gabriel's younger brother and his grasping wife take steps to officially have Gabriel declared *non compos mentis*, and he and Pen must travel to London for the dramatic showdown. At this point the ending seemed rushed to me, but perhaps that's because I had begun to suspect what could be behind Gabriel's episodes. I didn't understand it all, though, and to me the last chapter felt like the closing scene in *Murder She Wrote* where Jessica explains how she solved the crime.

Heather Snow always includes plenty of well-researched history in her stories, and here we learn about the horrible plight of war veterans, their widows, and their children, who were utterly without any support system after the Napoleonic wars ended.

But ultimately, this is a romantic, sometimes sad, but ultimately joyful story of two people working together to overcome obstacles – both external and those of their own making. I highly recommend *Sweet Madness* as well as its two predecessors. Although there is some overlap in characters among these three books, they need not be read in order.

Melanie says

Ms. Heather Snow gives us a third installment to her Seduction Series [*Sweet Enemy* was the first one, followed by *Sweet Deception*, and ending with this one, *Sweet Madness*] in which she gives us the romance of a widowed Lady Morton and Gabriel Devereaux, Marquess of Bromwich.

I must tell you that I am a sucker for a flawed and broken hero, and this novel just over exceeded all my expectations of one such hero. I truly adored this book.

Gabriel Devereaux, Marquess of Bromwich, along with other members in his family, thinks that he's mad and that's why they commit him to Vickerings Place, an institution catering to the aristocratic members who have family members that need to be monitored and taken care of 'in style' which they've been accustomed to.

Lady Penelope Bridgeman, now a widowed Lady Morton, has been taking care of wounded soldiers ever since the death of her husband and she finds contentment and reward as she watches their healing and reentrance back into society.

She is humbled by the request of Gabriel's mother to visit him and evaluate his condition.

Gabriel's attraction to her is long standing, since he first laid eyes on her at her wedding to his cousin, and it is highly humiliating to him to be laid literally and figuratively, bare to her.

I must say that the scenes in of this duo's first meeting are gut wrenching, soul searing and just plain painful to witness. They are one of the best in this story and will stay with me a very, very long time.

This is one of those well told tales that will pull you in from the first page and keep you reading until you've reached the end, and I must credit Ms. Snow for her plotting as the 'mystery' of who the villain is quiet surprised me.

Here is yet another heroine of Ms. Stone that knows what she's about and engages a reader in rooting for her

happily ever after. Even when she doubts herself, she shows pluck and determination in accomplishing her goals.

If I as a reader fell in love with her, then Gabriel had no chance what so ever but to love this woman that was nothing like what he recalls. She was even more than he remembers.

Ms. Heather Snow is quickly becoming a must read author and her books are keeper shelf worthy.

If there is a book not to be missed this summer, this is it! It fulfills every category required for a romance reading: its love story is sweet, tender and romantic; its hero and heroine are two strong characters who are struggling with their own and each others demons, but knowing that together they will beat the enemy; its plot is well developed, smart and mystery is surprising; its pace perfectly pitched, allowing the reader to enjoy the development of characters, and the romance of the couple.

With all this going for it, I have no choice but give it all my five quills, and tell you that I really, really enjoyed it and highly recommend you pick it up.

Melanie for Romantic Crush Junkies eZine Reviews.

Book provided by the publisher through NetGalley.

Francesca the Fierce (Under the Covers Book Blog) says

4.5 stars

Heather Snow is one of those historical romance authors that you may have not heard much about but you should be taking a closer look NOW. Her stories are tightly written, very original, full of romance and some intrigue. Her characters are always complex, multi-dimensional and very smart. She writes some of the smartest and most awesome heroines ever!

Now that I can stop gushing...let me tell you about the story. Gabriel thinks he's going mad. He's come back from war a bit touchy and his condition just seems to worsen to the point that his family locks him in an institution. And during all that time, the girl he'd crushed on and fantasized about is married to his cousin.

Penelope was a sweet society girl who married the dashing artist, Michael. But Michael wasn't right and she soon found herself in a marriage with a madman. After his death she took it upon herself to research the maladies of the mind, and has tried to help soldiers who have come back from the war with problems.

Gabriel's family asks her to intervene and see if there's any hope for Gabriel to get better and she soon finds herself in that institution with a version of Gabriel she doesn't recognize. And one that is not scared to tell her how much he's always wanted her.

Their romance was almost perfect. While Penelope finds a way to help Gabriel with his issues, they also slowly realize how good they fit together in almost every level. I liked Gabriel even when he had a fit. He's a genuine hero, good at heart, a true gentleman, selfless sometimes. Even amongst his "madness".

Penelope, on the other hand, is strong willed and she's lived through enough that she's both tough but also knows what she likes and wants and can find that soft side in herself. I love seeing a strong heroine and sometimes they don't have to kick ass to show that strength. That was Penelope.

SWEET MADNESS was another unexpected and absolute favorite. It had a little bit of everything, a good romance, a sizzling couple, a story full of intrigue and twists and turns. I can't wait to read more from this author!

*ARC provided by publisher

Huseina says

I don't have words to say.. I just started reading the books by Heather as they were shown in recommendations... Little did I know, I would fall in love with her writings.. The way she has told all her stories have been marvellous...

Penelope is really that strong, kind, courageous lady one aspires to be.. Gabriel on the other hand, though is strong, and brave, is also one who has a lot to give this world.. They do compliment each other really well with them being kind hearted souls.. It really is a beautiful story.. I also really liked the way this one is written.. The previous two novels in the book were a lot about mystery and suspense to it.. Here the story being all about a madman and the lady healer, there still was a twist of mystery and suspense...

I really enjoyed reading this book.. Heather Snow has really become my more frequented author though I do not find any more books written by her... I hope she does write one soon though.. I surely am waiting.. I hope you all would too...

Miranda Davis says

3.5 stars for me. Liked it, didn't love it. Similar premise as Flowers from the Storm (heroine saves 'mad' noble hero from vile 'treatment' after being institutionalized by his family and may have his freedom and title stripped from him forever). But this didn't compare to it IMO. And it had a who-done-it as well as a how-do-they-fall-in-love, which I kind of hate generally. (I almost never enjoy Amanda Quick-type mystery-romances.)

The hero is beset by 'manic episodes' and suffers from the effects of battle fatigue after horrific injury and experiences at Waterloo. The heroine is his cousin's widow, for whom he's had yearnings. She's dedicated herself to work with and study how to help soldiers overcome their terrors and resume life. And her unorthodox approach has proven effective. She's been asked to help him by his mother, which the asylum director resents from the get-go.

What I liked: both hero and heroine have bottled-up toxic secrets about their pasts that have robbed them of their freedom. For him, his freedom is quite literally taken away; for her, life has been blighted by the weight of guilt over her husband's mania and death. She still wears black long after propriety requires. Yet, each helps the other struggle through the pain and the guilt and the horrors they've buried deep inside. That was very touching. And it made their blossoming love real and well-deserved. The jeopardy in the situation was

serious, with a Dickensian slimeball director of the asylum trying to foil her every effort to help him. She finally takes decisive action and I admired her for it. Still, Flowers/Storm somehow got to me more and made me feel more exhilarated when he was at last free.

What I didn't love: a great deal of time is spent inside the H/h's minds thinking through ad infinitum every little thing. There's a lot of "If I do X, then she/he will feel Y and do Z about it and I just cannot live with that." Each is constantly trying to gauge outcomes for every little decision and action. Granted, she was walking on eggshells, hoping to help a man she'd witnessed in a very crazy state at the outset, and he is torn between sending her away for her own sake and clinging to her as his only hope. I got that but still it got tiresome to read all the if-thening.

Ultimately, the resolution here involves her doing something rash that reveals a plot hinted at vaguely so he is saved from a sanity inquest by another person's intervention on his behalf. (In Flowers/Storm, the lord/hero devised an ingenious winner-take-all scheme to take back his rights and privileges that had me rooting for him and on the edge of my seat reading to see how it turned out. I guess I felt 1) the solution here was a bit pat; 2) the drama of the madness plot was sufficient in itself; 3) there was something more affecting about a man overcoming in real terms a problem for which there was no easy solution (a stroke) rather than the outcome here, where he changes his diet and all is well.

Hasnamezied says

This book is a must read. Gabriel had fallen in love with Penelope in her wedding day with his cousin .After two years, Pen had became a widow and Gabriel well ,he had became MADMAN. Yes, A madman,so Pen decided to help him. So many events happened and I am gonna say that this book was Awesome.

steph says

FAVORITE. FAVORITE. FAVORITE.

Ok so yes, Penelope is my favorite of Snow's heroine's so far. She is just normal and lovely and she doesn't think highly of herself like compared to her cousin, but as Gabriel points out, her compassion and the way she takes cares of those around her and the way she UNDERSTANDS is what makes her extraordinary.

Great job with PTSD in this story and all the traumatic issues both Pen and Gabriel overcame. Also glad that the ending was relatively uneventful (and that the author could have taken the easy way out regarding a relative as the culprit but she didn't). I liked that and it was quite refreshing from the norm of historical romance novels regarding climatic endings. Are there more of this series coming out? 'Cuz I'd read them.

Nicole Laverdure says

I received an ARC from Heather Snow, but it did not influence me for my review!

I just finished reading "SWEET MADNESS" by Heather Snow! OMG! I have to give it 7/5 stars. It's a breathtaking! This book has moved me so that I am overwhelmed with emotions! When I started to read SWEET MADNESS, I wasn't to sure what to expect! To my surprise, this one is my favorite of her three

novels! It's a high drama, with characters filled with rich and strong emotions!

I loved her two main characters, Gabriel Devereaux and Penelope Bridgeman. Gabriel, once a proud soldier, returns back from war, shaken and a broken man. Penelope is a counselor and deals with soldiers suffering from PTSD. The story starts in June 1817, when Gabriel attends his cousin's marriage to Penelope, a young woman whom he was secretly in love with. Then in 1820, Penelope, who was not a naïve young lady anymore, since her husband had passed away and had decided to move on with her life. She started to study the maladies of the mind to help soldiers suffering from battle fatigue. She, soon learns that her dear friend Gabriel is interned as a patient in a sanatorium. Penelope, who was a gentle and understanding woman, will try to help Gabriel get rid of his mental problems and return him to a normal life. A trust will bond them together and soon sparks will flare! You have to read this beautiful novel! Heather Snow is an exceptional high quality writer. I simply could not put it down. It is so well written that the words flow...Heather Snow's heroines are smart women who had to fight against what society expected of them. It's a breathtaking suspense! You will feel high emotions and the chemistry between Gabriel and Penelope. I loved Ms. Snow's notes and I have to agree with her, that "art therapy" can make a person feel better. She has well researched and documented the symptoms of the battle fatigue. If you are a Fan of Heather Snow, you will live a great suspense and will not be disappointed by this book. She is a new writer to watch! A breath of fresh air, something different from the usual Regency stories. SWEET MADNESS will be released on April 2, 2013. I can't wait to read her next books! Ms. Snow you are truly an exceptional writer!

Cruth says

Author: Heather Snow

First published: 2013

Length: 4466 locations

Setting: West Midlands, 1820

Sex: Not frequent. Explicit and heated.

Series: Book 3 of 3

Hero: Soldier with PTSD. Placed in asylum due to violent manic episodes.

Heroine: Widow (was only married six months). Loved her husband but he suffered from a bipolar disorder and eventually committed suicide.

Includes: Author discussion of historical references and character development. Excerpt from Sweet Enemy by Heather Snow.

I wasn't expecting to like this book. Something about the excerpt and description was failing to resonate.

But I did.

A Lot.

Appealing characters in a novel situation with a good, solid resolution. This isn't an easy HEA but it is an intelligent one.

Different from the first two books, but worth a read all the same.

Veiled Seduction:

Book 1 Sweet Enemy - Miss Liliana Claremont (the chemist) and Lord Geoffrey Wentworth

Book 2 Sweet Deception - Miss Emma Wallingford (the criminologist) and Lord Derick Aveline

References:

Author's website: <http://www.heathersnowbooks.com/>

(ISBN 978-1-101-61460-0)

-CR-

Lover of Romance says

Review-Sweet Madness Summary

Penelope Bridgeman, thought that when she married her husband, life couldn't get any better. Then he died from madness, only six months after they married. Penelope devoted herself to educating on the workings of the mind, and working with those that suffered from mental disabilities due to effects from the war. When she hears that her husband's cousin, Gabriel, has been put in a mad house, she is determined to save him. Gabriel, feels like he is losing a part of himself, every time the madness overtakes him. He is haunted by memories of the war and battles, with no hope of escaping where his life has led. During a fierce moment of madness, the only person that brings back his sanity, makes him feel safe, is seeing Penelope again, a woman of courage and life and strength. They begin to work together, to discover why he is suffering the madness, but it will unlock secrets...secrets that Penelope will have to uncover if she wants to save Gabriel and set him free...

The Hero

Gabriel, is a soldier, and it has become a part of him. He dedicated himself to serving in the military during the war, but it haunts him and its a dark place he seeks to hide from. The memories give him nightmares, and he is devoted to protecting those that suffered in the war. Gabriel is titled, and has much in his future...but all he sees is the darkness and the horrible memories. While at his cousins wedding...he is drawn into the light with his cousin's wife, who senses the darkness and they dance a jovial dance, that brings him a measure of peace. Now his life has taken a turn for the worse, its been almost two years later, and he is put in a mad house in the countryside. Gabriel, was a hero that just broke my heart...he is honest and good to the core, he has this strength, and is overwhelmed by memories of his past, but we see his determination to not give up, to keep fighting despite the odds against him.

The Heroine

Penelope, was very young when she got married, and had no idea what her husband was suffering from until it was too late and she had lost him for good. Penelope blamed herself, for her inability to see the early signs and get help for her husband. She has dedicated her life to the study of the mind, and helps with her cousin, in the aid of those ex military officers that suffer from traumatic disorders from the war. Penelope was a heroine I just loved from the beginning. She has this zest and passion for learning about the mind, all that she can. She is quite sassy and smart and I loved her. Snow does create the best characters, most especially her heroines. What I found most endearing about Penelope, was how she never gives up on Gabriel...no matter what. She keeps fighting for him and she is quite sneaky at times that made me want to cheer "bravo". She is intelligent and quick-witted, she is sweet and caring, but suffers from her own demons.

Plot and Story Line

What was most admirable Sweet Madness was seeing Gabriel and Penelope working together and helping each other from their pasts. This story is the third book in the trilogy, and I really loved the first two books, but there was something "more" to my liking that made me fall in love with this one even more than the other books, probably due to the emotional war that is played out in it. From the beginning, we see a

connection between Gabriel and Penelope, but it's very platonic, but it isn't until Penelope is a widow, and Gabriel in a mad house....that their connected blossoms into something more than just "friends". They are both attracted to each other, and even though they try to keep it professional, sparks fly and desire becomes too hard to resist. I was entranced by this story, and what a ride this one turned out to be...near impossible to put down. What made this story fantastic was the characters. We have a great plot, endearing supporting characters...a villain to uncover and much more. We learn quite a bit about how our minds protect us even when we don't see it. I love having the opportunity to learn a bit more, and seeing this love story develop in the unique way it does. This series is very different from any other historical romance I have ever read, in a way that consumer and enthralls....a story to delight and crave.

The Cover

This is such a beautiful cover, I love the way it captures your attention, with her vivid colored dress, and the night around her...makes you want to grab it up.

Overall View

Sweet Madness is a story that is unpredictable, sweet and spicy, a love story that is much more than simple regency romance...its a tale that worms its way into your heart. With some sexual tension, a smart heroine, tortured hero, a plot to keep you guessing, and a romance to endear you!! COMPLETELY CAPTIVATING!!

Stella says

I am a huge fan of Heather Snow's Veiled Seduction series (Sweet Enemy was one of my favourite reads of 2012), so I was awaiting April and the release of the 3rd book Sweet Madness impatiently. It is finally here and with this final instalment of the series Heather Snow brings us another unique, intelligent and remarkable heroine.

We have first met Penelope as the airhead but kind socialite cousin of Liliana in Sweet Enemy, but since then many things have happened to her: she fell in love, got married and became a grieving, devastated widow within 6 months of her wedding, and despite her sunny disposition and youth has experienced the darker side of life. Since her loss she has dedicated herself to treating soldiers suffering from battle fatigue (= historical term for PTSD) and other mental problems. That's how she comes to meet again the hero, Gabriel, the cousin of her deceased husband. Gabriel a war veteran has been suffering from episodes and has been locked away in a remote asylum, and Penelope visits him to try to find a cure, a treatment for his bouts of madness and help him recover.

Gabriel was a heartbreakingly tortured hero, his struggles brought tears to my eyes, Heather Snow really put him through a lot. Penelope was much more likeable than I remembered her from Sweet Enemy and her mission to treat emotionally scarred soldiers was truly remarkable (especially how she educated herself in the matter), but despite my admiration and respect for her there was something that hindered my connecting with her, from all three Heather Snow heroines she was my least favourite. I didn't dislike her, I just felt rather indifferent towards her.

I reckon that it is quite brave and challenging to have a mad hero and keep the reader in suspense biting their nails, not knowing whether it is an illness that can be cured or something that he and the heroine will have to live with. In Sweet Madness I suspected the reason behind Gabriel's madness quite from the beginning but when it was confirmed in the end, I found the ending rushed and the resolution of the mystery and the conclusion of the story happening too swiftly.

Once again Heather Snow's writing flew smoothly and was just as captivating and poetic as in her previous

books:

"“After Michael died, I was . . .” She looked off for a moment, as if searching for the right word. “Devastated,” she finally chose. The way she uttered the word sent a shiver through Gabriel. The inflection in her tone and the desolation that flashed briefly in her eyes rumbled through his heart like thunder after a streak of lightning.”

And the enormous amount of research and historical references were amazing. I found the descriptions of the illnesses, their symptoms and their historical treatments fascinating.

Verdict: With Sweet Madness Heather Snow concludes her amazing Veiled Seduction series in style. With another modern and independent heroine who doesn't let the constraints of the period and society limit her, an irresistible and heartbreakingly tortured hero and their sweet and compelling love story Heather Snow captures the reader's attention, interest and heart irrevocably. Due to her captivating and beautifully poetic writing style, Sweet Madness has everything one could want from a great historical romance: depth, suspense, heart and emotional substance.

I give Sweet Madness 4 stars!

Plot: 8/10

Characters 9/10

Writing: 9/10

Ending: 7/10

Cover: 8/10

Crystal says

I have been in a historical romance mood the last couple of days and let me tell you Sweet Madness fit my bill for a great historical romance. This is the first opportunity I have had to read a book by Heather Snow and it most certainly will not be my last. She has a great writing flow that kept me completely interested in her historical romance. I know I can't wait to see what other wonderful stories Heather Snow has.

I found the characters in this book so charming and entertaining. Lady Penelope Bridgeman is a sweet, kind, caring, and intelligent lady that captured my interest right away. She has suffered so much loss and tried so hard to help her husband. When she was unable to help her husband she went through a deep mourning period. She is finally able to find her relief in helping others who have suffered battle fatigue. Penelope has such a unique way of helping these soldiers and it is very interesting to see how they treated the soldiers of the early 1800's.

Poor Gabriel Devereaux has an extreme case of battle fatigue. He has periods of complete madness and he does not remember anything during these times. This gentleman is in dire need of help, a caring source of help. He finds that in Penelope. When she is ask by his family to see if she is able to help Gabriel she is quite glad to be of assistance. Gabriel is reluctant to accept her help however he does decide to give her a chance to help. He has always had a fondness for Penelope and doesn't want her to see him this way. However Penelope convinces Gabriel to let her have a chance, this is something that she needs.

These two are exactly what each other needs. I really liked Gabriel and Penelope and thoroughly enjoyed

reading their story. I was kept completely enthralled all the way through this story. There is a lot of drama and twist that Gabriel and Penelope have to overcome in order to be together.

I think if you enjoy historical romance you will enjoy Sweet Madness, I know I honestly enjoyed this story.

Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says

Brilliant!

I can't believe I never posted this here.... Correcting that huge mistake now....

In 1817, Gabriel Devereaux, Lord Bromwich, danced at his cousin Micheal's wedding to the young and beautiful Penelope. He was a bit jealous of his cousin's good fortune for was attracted to the bride himself. She was like a breath of fresh air and at the time she gave him hope that one day he could possibly have happiness as it seemed Michael and Penelope had. The strains of returning home from war affect some more than others and in different ways as well. Gabriel was one of those soldiers who returned from war changed forever.

Happiness did not remain with Lady Penelope Manton as her beloved husband Michael dies before they are even married a year and Penelope falls into a deep depression that only her cousin Liliana helps her to rise from. For the next two years, Penelope dedicates herself to helping soldiers with maladies of the mind, in particular those men who have returned from the Napoleonic wars hanging from sanity's thread due to the trauma of what they have witnessed and fought.

When Penelope is asked by Gabriel's mother to try to help her son, who is now been committed to Vickers Place, an estate converted into a sanitarium, she immediately agrees. Gabriel has been suffering from psychotic episodes and is feared by his family to be insane. Penelope arrives at Vickers Place as an unwanted interloper by the staff during one of Gabriel's particularly bad episodes. Gabriel cannot believe that Penelope is there for it has been since Michael's death that he has not seen her. Gabriel is resistant for Penelope to help him, but when she tells him that his brother and sister-in-law are going to have him declared non-compos, which would have him stripped of everything he holds dear, including any thread of sanity he has left. Worst still, the director of Vickers Place has no respect for Penelope and will stop at nothing to have her tossed out to keep Gabriel under wraps. So Penelope absconds with Lord Bromwich to his utter confusion and they make way to her cousin Liliana and husband Geoffrey Wentworth's estate while she works with Gabriel to unearth the pain behind the madness.

Something aside from healing is going on under this roof, and as much denial as Penelope and Gabriel can try to paint over the awakening feelings they both have for each other doesn't cover what's going on. Gabriel feels he can never have a relationship if he is in fact insane and the illness runs in his bloodline, and Penelope fears that her position as his caretaker makes it unethical for her to take advantage of the situation. From their desperation comes fulfillment like neither party has ever been acquainted with before and from this hope springs until Gabriel's family, tainted with misinformation, try to take away all he has accomplished.

The brilliance of Sweet Madness shines strongly and completely. Heather Snow is cutting edge when it comes to subject matter. She's not afraid to delve into the darkness and she always from the bright spot. The journey is manic one that keeps the reader guessing. Gabriel and Penelope are two of the strongest characters I have ever come across and such a joy to get to know only in the way Heather Snow knows best. Each one of the tales in this series is completely different but equally intriguing and I find Heather Snow to be a master

storyteller. Sweet Madness is a magnificent story.

~KIMBERLY~

Caz says

I gave this an A at AAR.

Sweet Madness is the third book in Heather Snow's *Veiled Seduction series*, and while I haven't yet read the other two, I certainly intend to on the strength of this one.

Lady Penelope Bridgeman, the heroine of this story, had already appeared as a secondary character in one of the other books, but unlike her brilliant cousin, Liliana, she is more of a "traditional" debutante in her love of parties, balls, and general frivolity. At the beginning of this third novel, we meet her at the ball thrown to celebrate her wedding, at which she meets her new husband's cousin, Gabriel Devereux, Marquis of Bromwich. She senses that Gabriel is not completely comfortable in his surroundings and does her best to put him at ease – something which he never forgets.

The action then skips ahead two-and-a-half years, and we meet a very different Penelope. Gone is the fun-loving, optimistic young bride, and in her place is a dour widow, a young woman still, but one very changed by her marriage and the death of her husband.

Following that tragic event, Penelope had shut herself away from society, shunning even her closest friends – of which Gabriel had become one – as she wrestled with her guilt at what she perceived as her own failings and the part she played in Michael's death. Some months after this, Liliana asks Penelope to help at the hospital that she and her husband have set up for soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars. It's there that she discovers a talent for helping men who are suffering from what was then called "battle fatigue." Where Liliana is scientifically brilliant, Penelope is intuitive and sensitive to others. She listens, encourages, learns when to push people to talk and when to leave them alone, and has even begun to use art as part of her healing therapies.

As a result of her success, she is asked by Gabriel's mother to go to see him at Vickerings Place – not his ancestral home, but an asylum where he has been sent as a result of the onset of increasingly violent 'episodes.'

When she arrives, Penelope meets with resistance from everyone. The director of the institution, Mr Allen, is clearly not happy about her ideas for Gabriel's treatment and the scene that greets her on arrival is truly horrifying. Gabriel, whom she recalls as a gentle, handsome man, has turned into a wild animal, prone to violent outbursts, and subject to restraint and horrific treatments.

Penelope has doubts at first, about whether there is anything she can do to help Gabriel, but the more time she spends in his company, the more convinced she becomes that his mania – the like of which she has never seen before – and his symptoms of battle fatigue are not related.

Gabriel himself greets Penelope's theories with skepticism, and is reluctant to accept her help – not through any misplaced sense of male pride, but rather because he is almost convinced of his own insanity and doesn't want to do her harm. But she overcomes his objections with a mixture of compassion and good, old-

fashioned common sense; she very sensibly explains to him what she proposes by way of treatment, encouraging him to talk to her about his thoughts and experiences.

But Gabriel has his share of intuition as well, and Penelope soon discovers that this is going to be a two-way healing process. She has spent the last two years working with men suffering from mental illness, partly as a way to try to atone for her failure to help her husband who suffered from what we would today call Bi-Polar Disorder, and who committed suicide a mere six months into their marriage.

This may be a romance, but Heather Snow has chosen to deal with some dark themes and she does so very successfully. Gabriel and Penelope are strong, likeable characters who (for the most part) behave in a realistic manner. Penelope is intelligent and intuitive; she knows she doesn't have all the answers and that it's possible Gabriel will never be cured. He's a very appealing hero – honorable but broken, and his PTSD is presented in a credible manner. With Penelope's help, he begins to take small steps on the road to recovery and I found it really heart-warming to read of the delight he takes in each small success and of his gradually building confidence. But he and Penelope know there's no miracle cure, realizing instead that it's a long process that may involve backward as well as forward steps.

I really enjoyed the way their relationship developed into one full of genuine affection and mutual understanding. Gabriel has been carrying a torch for Penelope ever since they first met, and some of the tenderest moments in the book were those in which he told her how she'd acted as his light in the darkness and been his talisman in times of despair. I liked that Penelope was honest with herself about her physical attraction to Gabriel. She's been married and isn't afraid to admit to sexual desire – although I'll admit that perhaps her treatment for his claustrophobia was rather unorthodox.

One of the things I thought came across really well was just how powerless Gabriel was. This is a man's world, and in the majority of historical novels one reads, the men hold all the power and the women have none. But here is one of the rare instances when a man could be as helpless to dictate his own fate as a woman. Because Gabriel was suspected of insanity, it would have been a fairly simple matter to strip him of his wealth, his lands and his title – his very identity – and he could do nothing to prevent it. Penelope was similarly helpless in the face of male authority, which really ratcheted up the tension as she realized she was racing against time to get Gabriel away to prevent his being locked up forever.

Woven through the love story is a plot strand which shows us of what life was often like for the rank-and-file soldiers returning from the battlefield; how hard it was for them to get work and medical treatment if needed and how it could be even worse for their wives and families. The scenes which tell of the fates of dozens of the women and children left behind are quite horrifying – and Heather Snow pulls no punches when it comes to Gabriel's final revelation about his last battle.

For those interested in the historical accuracy of stories like this, there's some interesting background information about the different theories and treatments of mental illness prevalent at this time in the author's note – she's obviously done her homework!

Sweet Madness is a very-well written, well-developed story, which tackles a difficult subject without sugar-coating it or dismissing it as soon as the perfect happy ending appears on the horizon. The characterization is strong and consistent, and while I think the dénouement came a little out of left-field, I can't deny that the author had set it up earlier in the book, so maybe it was just my being dense that meant I didn't see it coming.

In any case, I am giving this book a wholehearted thumbs up. It's tragic, romantic and ultimately uplifting,

and I'm definitely looking forward to reading more by this author.
