



## Stormy Vows/Tempest at Sea (Loveswept)

By Iris Johansen

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It's twice the romance, double the sizzle in this special two-in-one edition from *New York Times* bestselling author Iris Johansen. Here are a pair of classic contemporary novels that prove once and for all that when it comes to love, you can't get too much of a good thing.

#### Stormy Vows

For a struggling actress, a private audition with a young Hollywood turk like Michael Donovan was the break of a lifetime. But Brenna Sloan refused to be intimidated by the temperamental and sensually overwhelming filmmaker, even if it did cost her the role of a lifetime. For Brenna was both far stronger—and far more vulnerable—than Michael could ever guess. And the secret that she was keeping from him would draw them more intimately together with each encounter...and threaten to drive them apart forever.

#### Tempest at Sea

An idealist and activist, Jane Smith stole aboard Jake Dominic's yacht one warm Miami night as part of an antinuke protest. But in her earnestness Jane hadn't fully considered the consequences if she got caught or that her act of principled vandalism would end with her serving as Dominic's part-time prisoner and cabinmate. For the next two months she would accompany this successful, sexy but darkly brooding man aboard the *Sea Breeze* as they sailed around the Gulf of Mexico from one exotic port of call to another. Danger, close escapes, and erotic adventure await, but nothing can be more unexpected than their romantic destination.



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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

**Iris Johansen** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of many novels, including *Killer Dreams*, *On the Run*, *Countdown*, *Firestorm*, *Fatal Tide*, *Dead Aim*, and *No One to Trust*. She lives near Atlanta, Georgia.

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*Chapter One*—from **Stormy Vows**

BRENNNA SLOAN TURNED SLOWLY IN FRONT of the mirror appraising her reflection with critical eyes. A frown creased her forehead and she chewed her lower lip. The simple black wool skirt and white silk blouse had seemed an understated yet chic ensemble when she had chosen it twenty minutes ago, but now she was having second thoughts. Was it perhaps too understated? She definitely wanted to make an impression in what might be the most important interview of her career.

She shrugged and turned away with a sigh. It would just have to do. Her wardrobe wasn't that extensive anyway. She quickly gathered her suede jacket and purse and hurried into the living room.

A chubby golden-haired two-year-old cherub looked up at her from the center of a fiberglass playpen and smiled amiably. He pulled himself up on sturdy legs, looking absurdly adorable in his blue corduroy pants and a T-shirt with LOS ANGELES DODGERS emblazoned across the front.

"We go, Mama?" he asked contentedly. Randy always wanted to go, Brenna thought wryly. For him, every trip was a pleasant adventure, and he certainly had enough of them.

She swung him out of the playpen, planting a kiss on his satin cheek and gathering him close for a quick hug.

"We go," she affirmed. She put him down on the floor while she folded the collapsible playpen, then picked up a canvas bag of toys that was always kept handy. He watched her serenely, familiar with the ritual that was repeated sometimes twice or three times a day.

Tucking the playpen under her arm, she gathered her jacket, purse, and the toy carryall and headed for the door. Randy toddled beside her happily as they left the apartment and crossed to the elevator.

"Mama carry?" he asked. That, too, was part of the ritual. He really didn't expect it, but he tried every time just the same, Brenna thought tenderly.

"No, Randy must walk," Brenna said firmly, as the door to the self-service elevator opened and they entered the small shabby cubicle. The apartment building was only two stories and an elevator was not really necessary, but she blessed it fervently each time she took Randy out. Loaded like a pack horse, as she usually was, she never would have made it without a major catastrophe if she had had to help Randy down the stairs. Besides, Randy loved elevators. It was another magic adventure for him--not as intriguing as the fascinating escalators in the department stores, but interesting all the same.

The elevator door opened, and she shepherded Randy out and down the hall to the manager's apartment. Randy knew the way well and nodded with satisfaction as they paused before the door.

"Auntie Viv," he said placidly, knowing that behind the door was another disciple who provided toys, cookies, and caresses.

"Yes, sweetheart," Brenna said. "She's going to watch you while mama goes out." She rang the bell.

"Come in, Brenna," Vivian Barlow called, and when Brenna and Randy entered, she waved a freshly manicured hand from where she was sitting on an early American couch, applying a coat of clear gloss to her nails. "Sorry, love," she said with an absent smile. "I know you're in a bit of a hurry, but would you mind getting Randy settled before you leave. I have a photography session later on this afternoon, and my polish isn't dry yet."

"Another dishwashing detergent commercial?" Brenna asked, as she unfolded the collapsible playpen and set it up swiftly.

Vivian Barlow nodded her sleekly coiffed gray head. "Yep," she drawled with eyebrows raised wryly. "One of those comparison jobs, where the granddaughter loses to grandma in the beautiful hands sweepstakes." She simpered coyly. "And all because I've washed my china all my born days with antiscum."

"Antiscum!" Brenna laughed.

"Well, it's something like that," Vivian said vaguely. She got briskly to her feet, strolled over to where Randy was sitting on the floor, and kissed him on the top of his head. "How are you, slugger?" she asked fondly. She was an ardent baseball fan, and it was she who had gifted Randy with the Dodger T-shirt. In her early sixties, Vivian Barlow was attractive, well dressed, and beautifully preserved.

She also had the warmest smile and the most humorous gray eyes Brenna had ever seen.

A short time after she had become friends with her ultramodern landlady, Brenna had learned that Vivian had been divorced twice and widowed once. In a moment of confidence Vivian had confessed wistfully, "I've always been afraid of missing something along the way, so I reach out and grab."

She'd made a face. "I've made some pretty dumb grabs in my time." Vivian had been an actress all her adult life, playing bit parts and walk-ons in hundreds of films and stage productions. When husband number three died and left her a small apartment complex and an adequate income, she had retired, only to find herself completely bored. It wasn't long before she discovered the perfect outlet for her energy in the world of television commercials. She was much in demand these days in the role of the modern older woman who was the antithesis of the crochety granny figures of the past.

"I still think you'd be perfect for shampoo and soap commercials," Vivian said critically. "You have a certain dryad look. It's as though you grew up in some forest glade."

She looked appraisingly at Brenna who was putting Randy's favorite toys in the playpen before lifting him into the center of the mat. Brenna straightened and a grin lit up her face with breathtaking poignancy.

"The John Harris Memorial Home was not precisely a sylvan glade," she said dryly. On the contrary, the orphanage where she had grown up had no time for such foolishness as nymphs and dryads, she thought wistfully.

Vivian looked up sharply, but made no comment.

"You're quite dressed up today," she said.

Brenna didn't look at her as she gathered up her jacket and purse. "I have an audition," she said, almost beneath her breath.

"An audition? Why didn't you tell me?" Vivian asked delightedly. "Where is it? Tell me all about it."

"There isn't much to tell," Brenna said with feigned casualness. "Charles arranged for me to try out for a part in a picture a former pupil of his is producing. It probably won't come to anything."

"I didn't know that Charles had any contacts in films," Vivian said speculatively. "Who is it?"

Brenna drew a deep breath and turned to look at her friend, revealing the tenseness in her face. "Michael Donovan."

Vivian's brows shot up, and she gave a low soundless whistle. "Michael Donovan! What a break for you."

Everyone in films knew of Michael Donovan. Only in his late thirties, he was already a legend. He had shot across the Hollywood firmament like a fiery comet. He was a writer-director without equal, and had recently turned to producing his own films with similar success. He had directed three of the biggest money-making films of all time, and as he had put up the money for two of them, he had become a multimillionaire from the proceeds. He had invested a portion of that wealth in his own film colony in southern Oregon, where he had gathered the best talents in film-making. His image had grown to such proportions that even his name gave off a Midas-like glitter.

Brenna shrugged. "It's only an audition. I'm to read for the casting director, Josh Hernandez." Her composure cracked, and she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Oh, Vivian, I'm so nervous."

Vivian patted her on the shoulder. "You'll do just fine," she said bracingly. "You're good, Brenna, really good."

"There are hundreds of talented actresses in this town," Brenna said gloomily. "And most of them are out of work."

Vivian nodded sympathetically. "It's a competitive business," she said. "I doubt you would even make it past the first receptionist at Donovan's casting office without a personal introduction. I had no idea Charles knew Michael Donovan."

"Neither did I," Brenna replied. "I don't think he wanted to trade on the association. That's why it's so important that I do well at the reading. I can't let him down after he went to the trouble of asking for a special favor from Mr. Donovan."

She moistened her lips nervously, and then straightened her shoulders. "Well, they can only turn me down," she said with bravado. She flashed a quick smile at the older woman. "Wish me luck?"

"Break a leg, Brenna," Vivian said.

Giving a quick kiss on the top of Randy's silky head, Brenna left.

It was only as she was maneuvering her ancient gray Honda out of the apartment complex parking lot that she allowed her thoughts to turn back to the interview ahead.

When Charles had told her what he had arranged for her and handed her the script for *Wild Heritage*, she had been stunned. Never in her wildest dreams had she imagined a chance to audition for Donovan. Charles had been almost childishly pleased at her surprise. He explained gruffly that Donovan had been a student of his quite some years before and they still kept in casual contact.

"When I read that Michael had bought the book *Wild Heritage*, I knew you'd be perfect for Angie," he said simply. He patted her on the shoulder awkwardly. "Do me proud, Brenna."

*Wild Heritage* centered around the character of Angie Linden, a complex young woman struggling to overcome her promiscuous past. It had everything: pathos, humor, and an underlying hint of tragedy. Any actress would give her eyeteeth for the role, and Brenna was frankly skeptical of such a plum being awarded to an unknown. If Charles Wilkes had not been so insistent, she wouldn't have even consented to go for the reading. But she could not disappoint him after all he had done for her.

The address Charles had given her was in downtown Los Angeles, and when she located it, she was surprised to find it was a modest two-story brick building with a discreet plaque reading DONOVAN ENTERPRISES LTD. Rather an unimposing establishment for a man of Donovan's reputed flamboyance, she thought, as she parked in front of the building. After putting coins in the meter, she entered the swinging glass doors. A smiling receptionist directed her to Studio B on the second floor.

Studio B was actually a small theater with a raised stage and several rows of padded velvet seats. Two seats near the door were occupied by a short, dark-haired man in his thirties and a casually dressed red-haired woman of about her own age. The man rose to his feet as she entered, picking up a clipboard from the seat next to him.

"Miss Sloan?" His smile was quick, charging his thin, clever face with warmth. "Josh Hernandez, and this is my assistant, Billie Perkins." The red-haired woman smiled in acknowledgment of Brenna's nod.

"It's a pleasure to meet you."

Brenna relaxed slightly, and drew a deep breath of relief. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad after all. Josh Hernandez was far from the cigar-smoking, beady-eyed executive of her nervous imagination.

A smile lit her face, and Josh Hernandez caught his breath involuntarily. God, he hadn't seen a smile like that since Audrey Hepburn.

"I'm very happy to meet you, Mr. Hernandez," she said shyly. Then looking around the tiny theater, "This isn't at all what I expected."

He grinned and shrugged. "If you get through this intact, you still have to take a screen test. But Mr. Donovan prefers that the first audition take place here. He thinks the stage highlights the actor, and lets us better appraise the body movements."

"Mr. Donovan appears to be a man of original ideas," Brenna said lightly.

"He is indeed, Miss Sloan," Josh Hernandez said ruefully. "He is indeed." He looked down at the clipboard

and detached a form. "If you will fill this out, we'll get on with the actual audition."

The audition form was quite short, and in a few minutes she had completed it and returned it to Hernandez.

He gestured to the stage casually. "When you're ready," he said easily.

Brenna mounted the four steps at the side of the stage, and moved to center stage. Drawing a deep breath to still the quivering butterflies, she asked quietly. "Where do you want me to begin?"

"Start with Angie's monologue on page three, scene two," Hernandez said. "Billie will read Joe."

Brenna began to read, and, as usual, once she became involved with the character, she forgot everything else. All nervous apprehension vanished in her absorption with Angie Linden. She actually began to enjoy herself, and was almost disappointed when Hernandez called a halt to the reading. She knew with a confident thrill that it had been a good audition. She had done well.

Hernandez came up the stairs two at a time, a broad grin on his dark face. "A really great job, Miss Sloan!"

She looked up at him hopefully, her face glowing. "You like it?" she asked breathlessly. Hernandez stared down into her face bemusedly. "Damn, if you photograph well, you'll be a natural." Then he added quickly, "The final decision isn't mine, of course. But if I have anything to say about it, you have the role."

"Hold it, Josh!"

They both looked with startled eyes toward the door.

The red-haired man leaning indolently against the doorjamb was dressed casually in faded jeans and a cream-colored shirt with sleeves rolled to the elbow. Despite the casualness of his dress, there was no mistaking his identity. Though Michael Donovan was militantly vigilant of his privacy, he was excellent copy, and newspaper photos of him appeared on occasion. Once seen, he couldn't be forgotten.

Brenna's breath caught in her throat at the explosive impact of the man. He was not at all handsome, she thought dazedly, and then was amazed that she had noticed because Michael Donovan made conventional observations unimportant. His blunt, rough-hewn features carried a power all their own, and the piercing blue of his eyes cut through what wasn't essential with the force of a lightning bolt. The air around him seemed to crackle with the strength and vitality of his personality. The mahogany hair and eyebrows, and the tall muscular body were dwarfed by the sheer overpowering virility that emanated from the man.

He moved with lithe swiftness past a dazzled Billie Perkins, to mount the steps and cross to stand before Brenna and Hernandez.

At close range, he was even more intimidating, and Brenna stepped back instinctively, a fact that Donovan noted with narrowed eyes. His mouth twisted cynically as he turned to Hernandez. "I believe you're slipping, Josh," he said smoothly. "It's not like you to make even a tentative commitment without consulting me. Isn't your usual policy, Don't call us, we'll call you?" His eyes traveled intimately from the top of Brenna's glossy head to the delicate bones of her ankles. "It would take something pretty world-shaking to budge you from your standard procedure."

Hernandez was looking at Donovan with dark, puzzled eyes. "There was no commitment, Mr. Donovan," he

said quietly. "I do plead guilty to enthusiasm. She gave a damn good reading."

Donovan nodded casually. "She was good, I caught the last half."

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