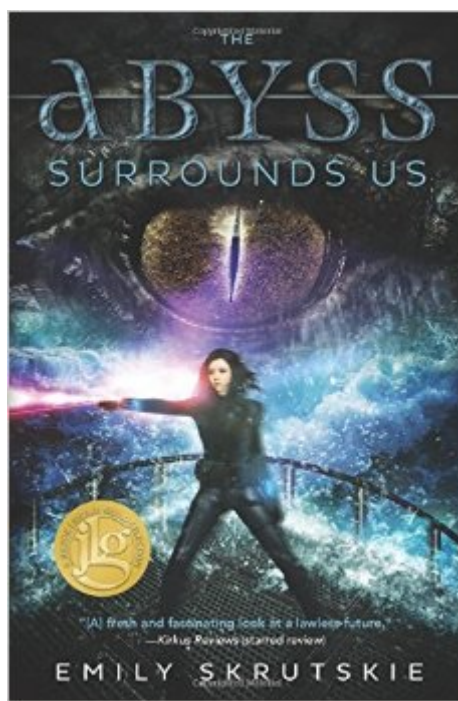


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# The Abyss Surrounds Us



## Synopsis

For Cassandra Leung, bossing around sea monsters is just the family business. She's been a Reckoner trainer-in-training ever since she could walk, raising the giant, genetically engineered beasts to defend ships as they cross the pirate-infested NeoPacific. But when the pirate queen Santa Elena swoops in on Cass' first solo mission and snatches her from the bloodstained decks, Cass' dream of being a full-time trainer seems dead in the water. Waiting for her on the pirate ship is an unhatched Reckoner pup. Santa Elena wants to take back the seas with a monster of her own, and she needs a proper trainer to do it. She orders Cass to raise the pup and teach him to fight for the pirates. If Cass fails, her blood will be the next to paint the sea. Praise: "[A] fresh and fascinating look at a lawless future." Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "Skrutskie adeptly creates a fantastical world of ruthless pirates; lovable, deadly creatures; and dynamic characters." School Library Journal "This is a solid, well-crafted, new adventure story with an interesting, unusual hook." Booklist "Skrutskie creates an intriguing fantasy world full of floating cities, ruthless monsters, betrayals, and unlikely friendships." Publishers Weekly "The Abyss Surrounds Us is richly drawn, a science-fiction universe with its own set of laws and customs." ForeWord Reviews "This futuristic novel is a true pleasure to read." VOYA "The Abyss Surrounds Us is highly original and addictive." SLJTeen

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

THE ABYSS SURROUNDS US by Emily Skrutskie was described to me as "YA Pacific Rim meets pirates with lesbians," and if you know anything at all about me, you know that was

guaranteed to get me to read. And guys, this book was really, really good. There were some flaws (which I'll mention below) but overall, I seriously enjoyed this. For one, the world building was so well done! Near-ish future world where most of the major countries have split into smaller ones and pirates have essentially taken over the Pacific from their floating cities called *œflotillas*. And the governments' answers to that pirate scourge are giant genetically engineered Reckoners, massive monsters tasked with protecting civilian vessels from the pirates with the help of their human trainers. Yes, yes, it is as cool a concept as it sounds. And yes, yes I do want a Reckoner all my own. My fave character in this book was without a doubt the Reckoner pup Cas is forced to raise. Bao is unabashedly the giant baby murder turtle of my heart. I want one. I want one so so bad, guys! The action when these massive creatures battled was fantastically written. Having scuba-dived before, I was so clearly able to picture everything that happened. My main wish was that we had more of the romance. It was definitely on the problematic side, considering Cas is being held prisoner by the pirates, so falling for one is a definite power imbalance, but much to my surprise and respect, the fact that it was problematic was actually addressed. Out loud explicitly on the page. By both Cas and Swift even! I mean, seriously, that so rarely happens in a book "it was refreshing as hell. But like I said, I felt like we needed more of these two on screen not hating each other sooner in the book for me to buy the romance.

Pirates, bio-engineered sea monsters, a lawless future on the ocean... Oh yeah. *The Abyss Surrounds Us* is such a cool book, and I'm really happy that I checked it out. :) Cassandra Leung is a young Reckoner trainer, raising genetically engineered sea monsters (a.k.a. Reckoners) to protect sea vessels from pirates. When disaster strikes during Cas's first solo mission and she's captured by the infamous Santa Elena, she's given an ultimatum: Train a Reckoner pup for Santa Elena's crew, or be killed. As a result, Cas dives head-first into the rough-and-tumble pirate world, and Skrutskie doesn't blunt its edges. The violence is bloody at times, and some readers might be turned off by the vulgar language - but hey, we be talkin' about pirates, matey! Their gritty lifestyle makes Skrutskie's world more authentic and Cas's dilemma more harrowing. What else did I love about *The Abyss Surrounds Us*? The Reckoners, of course. Bred from animal DNA including snapping turtles, snakes, and lizards, they're massive, destructive, and oddly lovable. especially Bao. Ethnic and sexual diversity are also well-represented. Cas is Chinese American, and her relationship with female pirate Swift is believable and complex. There's a hint of Stockholm Syndrome, since Swift is basically Cas's captor, but we get to see Swift's human side via secrets and vulnerabilities as well. She also prompts Cas to look at Reckoners from a new perspective and

question the morality behind her training, which was really interesting. At 268 pages, *The Abyss Surrounds Us* is fast-paced and action-packed, but doesn't elaborate enough on certain aspects that would have strengthened the story.

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