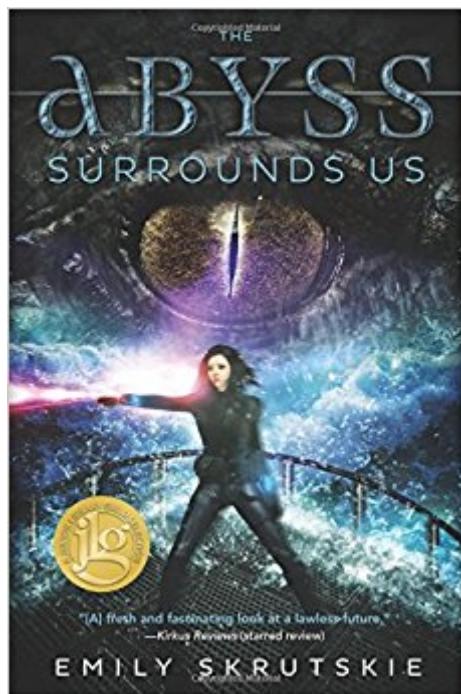


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# The Abyss Surrounds Us



## 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 Cas to raise the pup and teach him to fight for the pirates. If Cas 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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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up •Life on the sea is anything but relaxing and safe. Pirates will attack and pillage any unprotected ship they come across. Ships must be ever vigilant to protect their passengers and cargo. To ensure the safety of those traveling by the sea, genetically engineered sea monsters are trained and tasked with protecting the ships. Cassandra Leung is a Reckoner trainer, a trainer of these creatures. Her family has been in this business for years, and Cassandra cannot wait to take her beloved sea monster on their first solo mission. However, her dreams of success are dashed by Santa Elena, a pirate leader with her own agenda. Santa Elena has acquired her own creature and expects Cassandra to train it for evil instead of good. Her sea monster destroyed and Cassandra a captive, the girl must find a way to survive and protect her heritage. Choosing sides becomes more difficult as she becomes deeply engrossed in the pirate lifestyle and develops a kinship and interest in one of the pirates. On whose side will she end up? Skrutskie adeptly creates a fantastical world of ruthless pirates; lovable, deadly creatures; and dynamic characters. Readers will be constantly changing their opinions on which side they're rooting for. VERDICT Sci-fi and adventure fans will enjoy this quick read and escape into a new world. •Jessica Strefling, US Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit Library

"[A] fresh and fascinating look at a lawless future." --Kirkus Reviews (starred review)"This is a solid, well-crafted, new adventure story with an interesting, unusual hook." --Booklist"Skutskie creates an intriguing fantasy world full of floating cities, ruthless monsters, betrayals, and unlikely friendships." --Publishers Weekly"The Abyss Surrounds Us is highly original and addictive." --SLJTeen-[A] fresh and fascinating look at a lawless future.- --Kirkus Reviews (starred review)-This is a solid, well-crafted, new adventure story with an interesting, unusual hook.- --Booklist-Skutskie creates an intriguing fantasy world full of floating cities, ruthless monsters, betrayals, and unlikely friendships.- --Publishers Weekly-The Abyss Surrounds Us is highly original and addictive.- --SLJTeen

Pirates and sea monsters and adventures, this YA fantasy was everything I hoped for and more, and I can't believe I put off reading it. In this futuristic alternate universe, the world's seas are overrun with pirates and to protect the innocent ships, science has created Reckoners -- giant monsters trained to defend their charges during their voyages. Okay, let's stop there because GIANT. SEA. MONSTERS. Sold. Right there. But the story is so much more than that. This book felt

like a fantasy but had a lot of science scattered throughout. You're introduced to the story in the midst of a scene and given just enough to go on before the story progresses. The world-building was a delicate balance that fed all my fantasy-loving needs while also not bogging the story down too much. And this is probably one of my new favorite worlds. I thought the idea of the Reckoners was so original and the world both brand new but similar enough to make it seem like a plausible future for our world (which is both scary and cool). Plus, the biologist in me would love to be a Reckoner trainer. That would be SO AWESOME. Speaking of Reckoner trainers, I loved Cas. She's young but strong and has her flaws, yet doesn't let them stand in her way. She does what it takes to survive among the pirates and definitely isn't the same person she started out as upon her capture. The rest of the cast was distinct without being overwhelming. This ship has a decently large crew but the characters didn't overwhelm the story with their own subplots. I loved the captain. I need a prequel about her because that has got to be an amazing story in itself. And then there's Swift. Swift was great. She's gruff and standoffish but has a lot more beneath the surface that really brings her character to life. And Skrutskie knows exactly when to reveal each tidbit for maximum impact. Though I've seen some talk against the romance in this book, I really loved it and shipped Cas and Swift from their first meeting. Theirs is a relationship built on trust gained from aiding each other. It's a slow romance but blooms beautifully by the end. And wow, that ending was rough for these two. This book was a fast read. I finished it in roughly two hours and couldn't believe that it was over already. I'm thankful to have the sequel because the end of *The Abyss Surrounds Us* wasn't QUITE a cliffhanger but left enough of the story open to keep me wanting more. Now this book wasn't perfect. The writing was a bit rough at the beginning though I didn't notice much once the story really picked up. And, at times, the story felt a tad rushed. But overall, this is a great fantasy that I think everyone needs to get their hands on! Can't wait to see what Skrutskie does next in *The Edge of the Abyss*!

What drew me to the abyss was actually book two, then I read the synopsis. Sea monsters? Cool. Pirates? Really cool. The premise was certainly set up to be something cool, but the question is does it deliver? When I review stuff I like to go into what about the book I liked or disliked, so you can decide for yourself. Obviously our tastes will be different, so here is the *Abyss that Surrounds us*. The world in TASU (the title is too long) is very much like ours, technologically anyway, probably a bit ahead and frankly this book could be considered a sci-fi. Probably firmly in the YA genre and apparently some consider it a children's book, this isn't an identifier I would disagree with personally. A lot of it is rather juvenile, but that's okay. There is some violence and the teeniest bit of

romance, but mostly these are side to the main plot of the book. What Emily Skrutskie does very well is demonstrate the different motivations of different people as not revolving around our main character. This is particularly shown by the pirate captain, whom truly demonstrates herself as being all about her well being, her family and her ship above her crew. This aspect of the book I found refreshing because it was one of the more real depictions of how a pirate might feel, at least I thought so. A lot of what makes this book appealing to me was the atmosphere and the setting and how the world responded to the threats going on in it. The individual characters seemed to be rather hit or miss on their appeal. I cared about the main's story more than I cared about her, which was interesting and it was also here that the author shifted a little much from subtle to not so much. For instance, it is through the main's prospective that we get most of the romance in the story. It's vapor ware in that the interpretation could of been up in the air of attraction and so on, except the lead spells it out for you in her inner monologue. This is actually my least favorite thing, sort of like sending signals blatantly to the reader of what kind of story this is. Is it het norm, is it same sex? This is not left to your imagination in the least, it's basically told to you. The lead literally says she prefers women and herein lies my complaint. I would of preferred a lot more show rather than telling here. The opposite can be equally egregious, but I tend to have more forgiveness for same sex stories, since they're often in a sea of het-norm. Was it a female lead thinking internally that she doesn't like other women that way or telling someone so I would of given the world's biggest eye-roll before moving onto the next book. Unless someone is flirting with you and you need to convince them to leave you be, I can't imagine your own sexual preference is something that comes up very often. In this book it does once just to make sure the audience knows and I wish it didn't. As far as the actual romance story line I'll touch on it very briefly. It's fine, in a nutshell and not overbearing nor feeling forced. The only issue that got to me about it was that there was no real question who we were pairing with. That's because the story despite having a fairly large cast, fails pretty hard at filling most of them out. There are basically three characters given enough attention to really appear to have much of an impact on the story and it's really obvious who they are and their importance. This gave the story a bit of a ghost world feel which is common for YA or children's books and this is the main reason why I would designate it as such. It doesn't make it a bad story per-say and I did enjoy it immensely, it just makes it a childish one. In the end I found this book very enjoyable. There are very few parts where I feel that it didn't quite live up to itself, but mostly they're nit picking. I focused on the worst ones and even they were small potatoes compared to the joy it was to read this. I loved the pirate life, the sense of Stockholm syndrome and the setting. Some characters, like the captain really shone while the romantic lead also really had awesome moments. At any rate you

should have more than enough between my review and the others to decide if this book is right for you

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