

Oathbound: The Royal Rose Chronicles

Victoria McCombs

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Victoria McCombs's young adult novel *Oathbound* is filled with danger, romance, and a good dose of piracy.

Emme is running out of time. Sick with the same disease that killed her father, her only hope lies in retrieving the Elmer Nut from a cursed island, lilak. To do so, she joins a band of pirates, facing memories of her pirate mother, who abandoned Emme when she was a child.

Arn also needs to reach lilak, though for different reasons. He bound himself to notorious Admiral Bones, and if he fails to pay his debts, he'll die. With their lives—and love—at stake, Emme and Arn set sail together, confronting their pasts and deciding what future they'll build.

The narrative alternates between Emme and Arn's perspectives. Though headed to lilak for different reasons, their fears of inadequacy are similar. Emme is desperate not to become like her mother; she fears falling in love with the pirate life. Arn wants to prove that he is worthy of being a captain; he hopes his men won't learn of his debt.

The book's imagery is bold, but the violence of bloody battle scenes stops short of being gratuitous. Arn's ship, *The Royal Rose*, is a good backdrop for laughter and heartache alike; humor is generated as Emme dons a pirate's apparel. And future adventures are promised as Emme enters into her own oath, and as Arn deals with the fallout from his deceptions.

A girl learns to love seafaring while also learning from past mistakes in the fantasy novel *Oathbound*—a story that's sure to awaken readers' thirsts for adventure.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (March / April 2022)

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