

Silver Bounty

Victoria McCombs

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Victoria McCombs's fantasy novel *Silver Bounty* is a pirating adventure featuring impending doom and the allure of the sea.

After losing many of their crew, Emme and Arn hand over the *Royal Rose* to Arn's first mate, Ontario—much to Arn's chagrin. Arn and Ontario defy each other at every turn, torn between their desires to captain the ship and to help Emme escape her life-sapping curse, which requires killing a king.

Elsewhere, Emme's brother Emric washes up on the shore of a mysterious island that keeps its inhabitants as prisoners. Their mother, Arabella the Ruthless, is trapped there as well. Arabella's disregard for their father incenses Emric, and he resolves to carve out his own path in spite of Arabella's contrarian confidence. Tales of Arabella's brutality influence Emme, too: she is driven by her loves for Arn and the sea, even as she pursues longer life and freedom.

Former crewmates and chance encounters dredge up past traumas and incite portents of death. Arn shares fault in the death of the king's daughter, who was sacrificed to end a war. His passivity and helplessness haunts him, including in his relationship with Emme, who's unsure of whether she will choose to live a life on land or at sea with him. Meanwhile, Emme struggles with her destiny of bloodshed, which was given to her by a fortune teller. Terrified of being like their mother, Arabella's and Emric's concomitant endeavors evince the danger and beauty of society and of creatures of the sea. Destinies of unseen magic lead people to striking environments, deceptive plays, and seafaring adventures drenched in love of many shades—tender, thrilling, and arcane.

In the fantasy novel *Silver Bounty*, siblings and pirates struggle with their predestined fates of family and misfortune.

ALI ORTIZ (January / February 2023)

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