



## The Abyss Surrounds Us

**Emily Skrutskie**

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17-year-old Cassandra Leung has worked her entire life to become a Reckoner trainer, one of those entrusted with managing the “ruthless killing machines” used in her world to protect boats as they navigate pirate-infested waters. The Reckoners are genetically engineered beasts, or sea monsters, whose care and maintenance have become something of a family business for the Leungs. But, just as Cas takes on her first solo mission, the pirate queen Santa Elena captures her, spiriting her back to her boat. For the pirate queen has other plans for Cas—namely, fighting Reckoners with Reckoners. She wants Cas to help raise a genetically engineered “pup” and teach the monster to fight for the pirates, threatening that Cas’s blood will be spilled next if she refuses.

*The Abyss Surrounds Us* is richly drawn, a science-fiction universe with its own set of laws and customs. A strong and fierce narrator, Cas struggles to find her own identity even as she battles for survival. Emily Skrutskie’s work asks how one young woman might redefine herself when new challenges push her to her limits.

STEPHANIE BUCKLIN (Spring 2016)

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