



Mad Kestrel

Misty Massey

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A rip-roaring pirate romance and mystery

In a world where infants with magical powers are torn from their parents to be raised by the mysterious and powerful Danisoba, who have a monopoly on magic, Kestrel has managed to keep her abilities concealed—and herself free. First hiding in back alleys as a street urchin, she hid when they killed her parents, and then served as a young tavern maid before escaping to sea, where magic is cancelled by water.

Now an adult, as the quartermaster of a pirate ship, Kestrel loves the freedom of living on the seas. But her way of life could end if anyone on board learns her closely guarded secret—that she has magical control over the wind.

One day a black ship appears, and her life changes. Its captain is a handsome rogue of whom Kestrel is strangely, constantly aware.

When Kestrel's captain is led into a trap and is arrested, she gathers her crew and sets sail in relentless pursuit. . . .

Mad Kestrel Details

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Author : Misty Massey

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From Reader Review Mad Kestrel for online ebook

Angie says

I ran across Misty Massey's debut novel somewhere over three years ago on the shelves of my local bookshop and the cover pulled me in right away. It's wonderful, isn't it? So many possibilities in it . You don't know whether it's historical fiction or steampunk or fantasy or a combination of all two or more of those. I love it when a cover allows you to avoid genre stereotyping like that for a little while at least. And then there was a lovely blurb from Sharon Shinn to give me that little extra push. So I grabbed it off the shelf and took it home with me. And I was very glad I did. I almost never hear people talking about MAD KESTREL, and yet I really think it deserves a wider audience. I mean, as Tom Stoppard said, "Pirates could happen to anyone."

Kestrel is a pirate. After years fighting to prove her worth, she's now the quartermaster on the pirate ship *Wolfshead*. She has become invaluable to her captain and mentor Binns, and the crew respect her and follow her lead. The story opens in the midst of a sea battle between Kestrel's crew and a mysterious vessel that seems to disappear and reappear out of the mist like some sort of phantom ship. Later, while on shore, Kestrel and Binns run into the captain of the mysterious ship, one Philip McAvery who is both dashing and maddening and who seems to have his sights set on Kestrel and her captain. Unfortunately, all hell breaks loose at this point. Binns is captured and imprisoned under false pretenses. McAvery makes off with the *Wolfshead*, and Kestrel is on the run from a pair of assassins and a bounty hunter.

No one is what they appear to be in this book. Even Kestrel. Gifted with the power to whistle up the wind, she has spent her life determined to hide her ability and thereby avoid the Danisoban Brethren--an order of mages who routinely round up all magically inclined children in order to use them for their own purposes. Interestingly enough, water is supposed to dampen magical ability. But our Kestrel is an exception. And she would prefer her unusual status remain safely anonymous. But Binns' capture and the continual interference of the inimitable McAvery gang up on her, making it difficult for Kestrel to maintain her grasp on the life she so carefully crafted for herself. What I like about Kestrel is how comfortable she is in her skin. Her qualms about her magical ability aside, she straddles the gap between women and pirates with panache. She is endearingly unselfconscious in her admittedly unusual role. And though she despises skirts and does not actively seek men out, she doesn't avoid them either. Misty Massey doesn't spend much time laying out back story on her characters. The reader is plunged into the middle of the action and comes to know the characters slowly as the story progresses. It wasn't until the end that I felt like I was getting a handle on who Kestrel, McAvery, and Binns really were. But it was a fun ride, packed with characters full of secrets and escapades on the high seas. I look forward to checking out Kestrel's (and McAvery's....grin) further adventures. It's been my understanding that Ms. Massey has been working on the second volume for awhile now, but I have heard very little about it. This distresses me. I'm crossing my fingers that it finds its way into print (and my hands) very soon.

Danny says

I have always been fond of pirate novels, and this was no different. Pirates! Magic! Adventure! All sorts of things I love and enjoy. I think, on the whole, it was an enjoyable read, and a book I'd recommend to someone who likes a twist on your typical 'fantasy' story.

I was a bit worried, I think is the right word, about how Kestrel would deal with her crew, how she ended up on the ship. Would it be the same old? I appreciated that the information was introduced as it was relevant, and I feel like Misty did a good job avoiding the 'info dump'. While some have complained the magic needed more 'world building', I'd have to argue that the author provided enough information to keep the story moving without turning a chapter into an encyclopedia. Could we have used more? Probably, but I don't think the book lacks, particularly. The magic is interesting, and part of Kestrel's development, but it's not the main plot point.

All in all, a satisfying read. I feel like the major questions were answered by the end. Kestrel morphed through the story, and several of the supporting characters provided interesting view points or catalysts for change. I appreciate the fact that the story closes in its entirety - sure, there's plenty of room for a sequel or something, but I'm not left feeling like something is awry, or left hanging.

Caitlín (Ink Mage) says

I'm wavering between two and three stars on this. I guess it'll be two. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't a new favorite, either. And I'd like to know how Kestrel's crew automatically learned how to fire the ship's guns; it took a lot of practice and choreography to fire them without injury and any kind of speed.

Faith Hunter says

It's a different kind of fantasy -- not your usual quest (Lord of the Rings) or Urban Fantasy (Skinwalker) and because of that it's ... well, not boring! Not predictable. And I admit that I know Misty, so I may be biased, but I think it's like Captain Jack Sparrow's Little Sister -- if she could do magic. An award nominated book worthy of both young adult and adult readers alike. Read it to your kids! That good of a book.

But different -- and maybe hard to pigeonhole. Imaginative, beautiful language, kickass heroine. I want installment number two! Hey, TOR? Where's number two in the series?

amanda says

I really hope there's a sequel to this because there's a few things that kept me from giving it five stars. I like Kestrel. I like the crew. I like the location and I love that it's centered around pirates and magic. Despite all these things that are going for the story, I felt as though I was given information too late in the game about certain things and things could have been set up in a more thorough way. This left the plot a bit weak and the entire situation a little contrived. That's really the main complaint I have with the story—I'd definitely love to read more about Mad Kestrel; she's a fun character.

Kelsey says

The idea was better than its execution. A female swashbuckler, magical objects, government plots, and ear ship chases? I'm in!

Unfortunately, I found the story dull. The plot moved slowly (no wind in the sails?), such that what should have been a rollicking tale of high stakes on the high seas became a gradual figuring out how to pass through tricky situations. A strong female lead and her band of ~~merry~~ surly men accomplish a challenging deed. These characters were not very complex, and the secrets Kestrel uncovers were interesting but not astonishing. Also, the magic was different from what I'm used to seeing, but it didn't go far enough. Massey could have made it more elaborate and multidimensional.

This is more of a quest novel than a thriller or adventure. I'd recommend it to people who like a methodical pace. I'm reminded not of Pirates of the Caribbean but of Treasure Island or Robinson Crusoe (although from reading the description Moll Flanders might be more comparable with its determined heroine). If you enjoyed those two classics, give Mad Kestrel a chance.

Jessica says

Rollicking good time is right! Some may say that the pirate craze is dying down, but what does it matter; Misty Massey's Mad Kestrel doesn't need a trend to make it excellent.

To being with, her characters are excellent, intriguing, even. Big plus number one. No matter how exciting a book might otherwise be, I can't stand weakly fleshed out, limp characters. Not a problem here. Kestrel is a strongly conceived character without being obnoxiously "perfect." The secondary and even tertiary characters are strong enough in their own right that their presence can be felt, even when they're not directly involved in the scene. The plot is sufficiently convoluted to keep you guessing and on your toes and the resolutions of the minor sub-plots are all tied up deftly, though not in a contrived manner. Misty Massey has also built a fabulous world. You can feel the depth of detail and history, that is not told, affecting her characters.

The only flaw I found with the tale was how exposition "everyone knows" was handled. Established characters always conveniently brought up tidbits of knowledge at the exact time it was pertinent for the reader to know it. It felt less like a part of the world these characters live in and more like...exposition. There were enough street and tavern scenes that a quick sentence could have established the lore of the world that would later become important; a mother telling her child to "behave or X will come get you" or a man telling a story about Y in the background of a tavern scene would have more than covered it.

With that small exception everything else was shown instead of told, and it was a grand story. I can only hope another book following Kestrel's adventures will be forthcoming soon!

Bonnie_blu says

This is an average, nothing special fantasy tale. It has the requisite young, female protagonist who is hiding her power and is hunted by fanatical bad guys. Of course, there is the stereotypical handsome rogue as well. The only difference between this tale and so many others, is that the female protagonist is a pirate.

Donna says

Kestrel has a small magical talent that she's been forced to hide to avoid the attention of an organization of magic users. Most magic doesn't work in close proximity to water, so Kestrel's position as Quartermaster on a pirate ship keeps her fairly safe. When her captain is arrested shortly after an encounter with a stranger,

Kestrel is determined to rescue him and get revenge on the man whose arrival seems so closely linked with their danger.

"Fantasy pirates" is, as a concept, exactly my kind of thing. The book sets up this premise fairly well. But after the initial excitement of getting into the world, things get a bit murky.

The characterization feels light at times, and the pirates aren't often all that pirate-ish. When danger threatens, Kestrel doesn't come off as officer material. She's kind of a complainer, and she manages to accomplish things as much from stubbornness and circumstance as from skill or good judgment. She persists in an unreasonable distrust of one character because he annoys her, even after seeing some evidence of his good intentions. One of the subplots adds an unnecessary level of confusion, mostly because it didn't seem all that well connected with the rest of the story.

I enjoyed the book and would read another about these characters, but I hope that Kestrel grows into a more reasonable magic pirate captain.

Mark says

This started with an interesting premise: Kestrel is the quartermaster of a pirate ship and also a Promise: one who has the ability to perform acts of magic. But a group called the Danisoban have a monopoly on magic and when Kes was four years old, they tried to take her away. Her parents sacrificed their lives to give her a chance to escape, which she did. She became a street urchin. Danisobans notably can't go anywhere near seawater or they lose their powers, but she didn't choose life at sea for that reason; a serendipitous encounter with a pirate captain named Binns in which she saved him from gambling his ship away to hucksters is how that happened.

After a mysterious encounter at sea with a ship that simply disappears (spooking the crew), Binns and crew head to port to refit because of a storm. While ashore Kess meets the captain of the disappearing ship and runs away from him, fearing he's a Danisoban that has power at sea. A bounty hunter captures her (she escapes), and some tramp gives her a mysterious message for Binns.

Binns and the captain of the disappearing ship, MacAvery, meet unexpectedly and start bargaining over the price of MacAvery's ship, which he wishes to sell. The next morning Binns is arrested, tells Kess to get hold of his log, and off she goes to rescue him, MacAvery thrown into the mix.

At this point the book was a page turner. But it went downhill from there. Massey's prose is hardly award-winning in the first place--it's uninspired at best--but it suddenly went from OK to bad. Her character dialog began decent but soon fell into clichés; her characters, who has so much promise, went from borderline three dimensional to two to one dimensional. By the end, the book falls into mindless predictability. Worse, it's too "perfect," as if a genie has granted every character his or her wish.

An even bigger problem with the book is believability. To use an old story among editors: if an Martian writes a book on the true history of Mars, it will still fail if its readers fail to believe it. Moreover, Massey clearly knows nothing about pirates, ships, or life at the sea, let alone an even basic grasp of seaman's jargon. For example: the pirates act like the crew of a privateer, not a pirate ship; historically, pirates were extremely lazy and uncooperative, not to mention constantly drunk; Massey's pirates had none of these characteristics. Moreover, while females really did serve as pirates from time to time, none did so as a quartermaster (at least

no historical records exist to tell us this). This isn't necessarily a problem; writer Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian, once had a female pirate queen, but her position came about because her crew worshipped her as a goddess, and she was quite ruthless (unlike Kess); she was believable.

The only reason I gave this book two stars was that I actually managed to get to the end, but I did so because I wanted to write a review and felt it wouldn't be fair if I didn't finish it. This book is clearly the start of a new series, one I don't recommend anyone bother with.

Gina says

Meh.

Pros—Some interesting ideas with the world, and politics with regard to magic.

Cons—No detail about any of it, and the amount of times I had to read the word, "wench" with my own two eyes.

Bookfanatic says

A pirate story with a female pirate who has magical abilities. How could I resist that? I was hooked from the moment I read the blurb for this book. This is set in a different world where children who have magical abilities are raised in a secret order to become feared magi. The heroine has the abilities the order seeks but has kept herself hidden from them by going to sea. Water negates magic. This is the type of heroine I like to read about. She's strong, independent, wily yet able to show vulnerability when needed. The plot was intricate but not too hard to follow. The attempt at romance wasn't necessary but it didn't bother me either although much too much was said about the rogue's looks and body. We get it. He's a finely made and dashing Han Solo of this world. I wish the author expanded on the mysterious Danisoban order of magi. What happens when a child is finished with the training? What kinds of magic does the order do? Who governs them? All we know is that they are feared and Kestrel has a mortal fear of anyone in the order discovering her abilities yet her abilities go beyond those of the average Danisoban, so what is she?

I don't know the first thing about pirates but the pirates in this story weren't as cutthroat and drunk as those in other stories. Unlike some other reviewers, I didn't find this a flaw either because it takes place in some other world where magic exists. So presumably their pirates aren't exactly like pirates in our history.

This book didn't have any sex (shucks!) so it would be a good selection for a young teen or old grandma type. I plan to read the second book in the series.

Fatbaldguy60 says

This book is a mix of pirate adventure and Robert Ludlum spy novel, with a bit of Harlequin romance and magic thrown in for good measure. The story moves quickly since Kestrel never seems to have any time to waste in tracking down her captured captain. There are a number of good fight scenes spread across the entire book. Massey does a good job evoking her scenes in town and at sea.

I think the weakness in the book was the magic. For one, it is never explained to my satisfaction what the Danisobans do with all these magical kids they round up once they turn them into whatever it is they become. Are they hired out to the highest bidder? Do they go solo? Also, it is never explained why it might be that Kestrel does not need to follow the same rules concerning magic and water that other magic users must. Finally, if I were the king and the plant was that important, why not just go to where the plant is and wait for it to fruit? No worries then about it being stolen or used by someone else. It is a lot of temptation after all.

I could have done without the romance angle since it does not do much for me. And in this case the romance never quite comes to be.

However, I did enjoy the book a lot. It was a pretty quick read, lots of action, and likeable characters.

Kaion says

Kestrel, the only woman on the ship *Wolfshead*, has hard won the grudging respect of her fellow pirates. But when her captain is arrested under mysterious circumstances, she's going to have to lead the crew to save her mentor, while continuing to hide her magic from the shadowy Danisoba.

I wasn't looking for much more than some light entertainment going into this: Pirates! Magic! Nefarious plots! Unfortunately, it didn't really seem like it was thought-out all that thoroughly and the disparate elements never really knit together into a compelling conflict. There were lots of character relationships we were told to invest in, without any evidence to back up supposed deep emotional connections- which does take the sting out of any loyalties or betrayals.

I also never really got a sense of how their world shaped up enough to care about the "politics" of the whole deal (and certainly for pirates, they participate in an astounding lack of pirating). Nor did I understand the purpose of the whole magic subplot which was very poorly integrated and ultimately seemed rather unnecessary, except to excuse the story from the real world. Overall, it all seemed like an uncommitted prequel- for a novel I probably not going to read. Rating: 2 stars

Sabrina says

Falkin ist Maatin des Schiffes Vogelfrei. Sie ist eine sehr starke und selbstbewusste Frau, die sich einen Platz unter den Männern erkämpfen musste.

Kapitän Artemus Binns ist ein guter Freund und Verbündeter von Falkin, deshalb weiß nur er von ihrem Geheimnis, nämlich das sie einer Magiergilde entkommen ist. Falkin ist eine „Verheißung“, sie kann Magie wirken. Problem an der Sache ist, dass Magie begabte Kinder eingefangen werden (von den sogenannten Danisobern), da sie unterrichtet werden müssen, bevor die Magie unkontrollierbar wird.

Nach dem Anlegen am Hafen von Eldraga wird Kapitän Binns entführt und Falkin glaubt, dieser Entführer ist Philip McAvery der zuvor einen Handel mit ihrem Kapitän abgeschlossen hat. Sie vermutet, dass er zu den Danisobern gehört, da auch er außergewöhnliche Fähigkeiten besitzt.

Sie ist wild entschlossen McAvery aufzuhalten, aber muss feststellen, dass auch Kapitän Binns nicht mit offenen Karten spielt und Falkin in Unwissenheit gelassen wurde.

Unsicherheit, Misstrauen und Verzweiflung plagt sie, da nichts so ist, wie sie zu glauben scheint...

Das Buch spielt sich zum größten Teil auf der See ab. Meiner Meinung nach meint man das nicht gleich, wenn man den Klappentext des Buches liest, da ich erst glaubte es drehe sich mehr um die Magie, als um Seeräuber; dem ist nicht so.

Das Buch führt uns in das Leben der Piraten ein.

Falkin schwebt ständig das Bild vor Augen, dass sie von den Danisobern eingefangen wird, deshalb benutzt sie ihre Magie so gut wie garnicht oder eher unauffällig in gefährlichen Situationen.

Auf ihrem Weg McAvery zu schnappen und den Kapitän zu befreien wird sie auch noch von Kopfgeldjägern gejagt, was ihr ständig Angst bereitet.

Es geht zwar vermehrt um Piraterie, dennoch ist die Gefahr der Danisobern immer greifbar und wird nicht ausser Acht gelassen.

Leider gab es ein paar wenige Stellen, die mich gestört haben.

Falkin ist das Misstrauen in Person. Ich kann verstehen, dass sie jedem misstraurisch gegenüber ist, wenn man befürchtet gefangen genommen zu werden und sich auf niemanden verlassen kann.

Ich möchte nicht zu viel verraten, aber selbst nach vielen guten Taten vertraut sie niemanden.

An manchen Stellen wollte ich mir die Haare raufen.

Massey beschreibt wunderbar die Umgebung und Atmosphäre... ich konnte mir richtig vorstellen, wie es ist auf einem Piraten Schiff zu leben, in der Kapitäns Kajüte zu tüfteln, im tobenden Sturm zu kämpfen oder in einer Taverne zu sitzen um ein Mahl zu genießen. Mir ist mehr als einmal das Wasser im Munde zusammen gelaufen, so außergewöhnlich lebendig schreibt Misty Massey.

Es wäre schön, wenn Frau Massey einen weiteren Teil heraus bringen würde. Ich liebe die Geschichte um Falkin und McAvery (der einfach VIEL ZU KURZ kam !).

Ich empfehle das Buch jedem Leser, der gerne Abenteuer liest und sich für das Leben der Piraten interessiert.

Jenn Wells says

Super cute, fun story. Loved the main character, the world and the intrigue. The only thing I didn't care for was the love interest. After all her, "I'll marry the first man who doesn't treat me like a sex object" she still goes for one who does.

Kim says

I love pirate stories and always have, but there are two factors which sometimes get in the way of this love. First off, although I love to read about pirates, I'm not a sailor myself, and too much nautical terminology, while lending a hint of authenticity, can also seriously drag a story down. Secondly, there's the fact that, as fun as they are to read about, real life pirates are not the nicest people, and while life among them may offer a taste of freedom, it is also full of risk. *Mad Kestrel* succeeds at portraying the precarious lifestyle of a career pirate, a precariousness that is only increased by the protagonist's sex, all the while creating believable

pirates who are not too cruel to relate to. At the same time, it tells the story of a girl growing up in the company of men, a girl who has magical secrets of her own.

Kestrel is the quartermaster (yeah, I had to look that up) on the pirate ship *Wolfhead*, a young woman in her early twenties who has worked hard to gain her colleagues' respect. She looks at her captain, Artemus Binns, as a father figure, and he has kept Kestrel's abilities secret from the rest of the crew. Kestrel was a Promise, that is, a child with magical powers who should have been taken by the Danisoban Magi, to be raised at their school. Kestrel fears the Danisobans, and keeps her magic hidden, using it rarely to stir up a breeze or two.

Everything changes, however, when Kestrel sees a black ship, whose captain flirts shamelessly with her before it suddenly disappears. Soon Captain Binns is led into a trap and arrested for piracy, telling Kestrel his logbook must be kept hidden and safe. To save him, Kestrel must take command of her own ship, all the while battling the prejudice of her crew, keeping her magic secret, and resisting the charms of one Philip McAvery, who seems to have started the whole mess.

Mad Kestrel is a fun read, especially if you like a little romance thrown in with your adventure stories. I particularly enjoyed the loving relationship between Kestrel and her captain, and the almost fraternal attitude shown to her by the rest of the crew. And McAvery was not only mysterious and sexy, but downright coquettish at times, leading me to wonder if Massey was attempting a subtle reversal of gender expectations. Kestrel herself is a sympathetic protagonist dealing with issues many young women face---such as gender expression and new romance---as well as some unique problems of her own. In fact, when I first started reading the book, I was uncertain how old Kestrel was supposed to be. Although she has been with the *Wolfhead* long enough to earn the respect of its crew, Kestrel had the impatience of the very young at times, and sometimes behaved in a rather tentative manner. In part, I think that this is a book that feels like it's set several centuries in **our> past, people would come of age sooner, like they did back then. For Kestrel, that's not necessarily the case.**

Another quibble I had with the book vanishes if *Mad Kestrel* turns out to be the first in the series: I really wanted to know more about how the magic worked. In fact, I really wouldn't mind having a chance to read something from a Danisoban perspective, since Kestrel's view of them was so uniformly fearful and grim. There is the suggestion, mostly brought about through devices used by McAvery, that the rules of magic may be different than Kestrel was always taught, and I really wanted to know more.

In sum, if you like tales of magic and pirates, girls who kick butt and characters who are more than they seem, give *Mad Kestrel* a try!

Rose says

A decent, not great, first novel that needed richer world-building and more original 'magic' to keep from coming off as a romance novel disguised as a nautical/piratical fantasy. Kestrel was intriguing in her independence and history, but I always felt something was missing to keep her from becoming a truly _great_ character. Binns was fun, but I wanted to punch McAvery in the face, a feeling that only grew worse as the book went on. An acceptable read given the surprising dearth of piratical fantasy novels out there -- and I'll probably read the sequel when it comes out -- but Robin Hobb's *Liveship* trilogy was far more worth my time.

Carolyn says

A straight up middle of the road fantasy.

Starts strongly, but just didn't have enough strength to keep it going.

The premise had a lot going for it - a female pirate, with forbidden magic (and wind magic to boot!) off to save her captain with some swashbuckling derring-do.

Unfortunately, the distractions and tangents detracted from that premise, as well as the fact that every problem that the main character [Kestrel:] has is solved in a page or two. Now, I don't mind reading over 300 pages to get to the resolution of Kestrel's problem, but I do mind reading all those pages of build-up to the problem and then about 5 pages of all solution all the time. Quite unsatisfying.

I understand they are in a time crunch to get where they're going, but everything gets solved in a page or two or less. Captured by a bounty hunter to sell to the magicians, her most loyal subordinate stabbed in the gut, mutiny on the high seas, a rival guild wants her because her magic is so different, etc - all are solved with only a page or two - its just a little too handy for my tastes.

I also found the crazy all-consuming desire that Kestrel has anytime she is near to or even thinking of McAvery to be a distraction that should just have been edited out of the book. It adds absolutely nothing to the storyline. The author dwells *excessively* on how the lust/desire Kestrel feels is so stratospheric, so different, so absolute, that it seems she is trying to insert some 'romance novel' into the book. Not needed. Not interesting, at least not with how it is just a tangent that never actually meets up with the plot.

I was also taken aback at the end of the book to realize that she had only spent 2 1/2 years with her captain - the one that she risks everything to rescue - who thinks of her as a daughter (and she treats him very fatherly.) She is 18 years away from the tragedy that orphaned her and had her living on the run in the streets, but we get only dribs and drabs of that story. I would have liked to see a lot more of her backstory growing up, serving on her first ships, etc. to flesh out her as a person.

But I enjoyed the world that Kestrel is in, and really, there isn't much to not-like in a book about a swashbuckling woman pirate captain out on a rescue mission. I like that tough young woman of dubious morals with her own inner compass of right and wrong.

Such is the reason for a middle of the road 3 star rating. If a second book is written (which I expect) I'll be giving it a chance, but I won't be actively looking for it.

Yvette says

3.5 stars.

"Sailor, are you?" Jaeger wrinkled his forehead. "But you're a woman." "Aye," she said. "How's that for a peculiar story to take home with you?"

Peculiar story, indeed. This is a narrative about a young woman pirate, born with the magical ability to control air when she whistles. A handy talent for a sailor who needs to set sail when there is no wind. Except, she hardly ever uses her magic.

Kestrel works harder than most to prove herself to the crew and is promoted to quartermaster by Captain Artemus Binns. Binns is a father figure for Kestrel whose own parents were killed by the mysterious Danisobans. A group of magi who collect children called promises who are wanted because they have magical powers that need to be curtailed and trained. The children are taken either willingly or by force. In Kestrel's case, she escapes their clutches at the cost of losing both parents. Scarred by the traumatic experience, Kestrel fears magic.

Unlike some stories that will have the girl pretend to be a boy until her secret is discovered, Kestrel never pretends to be anything but what she is. While her gender may not have been top secret, her talent for magic is not something she advertises. The politics of her gender comes up several times as she explains that becoming a pirate was an option supremely preferable to that of barmaid or prostitute. Another of the repetitive themes is her extremely suspicious nature, and her ability to survive dangerous predicaments by following her instincts.

Binns has a secret, too, that he keeps from Kestrel and the crew. Before he can confide in Kestrel, he is arrested by His Majesty's Navy for the crime of "piracy on the high seas" and transported to await the usual sentence of death by hanging. This jumpstarts the plot into a rescue mission in more ways than one that will challenge the young pirate to the best of her abilities, magical and otherwise.

The moniker "Mad Kestrel" does not come up in the novel until the very end when a character tells her that she needs a good nickname to "strike fear into the hearts of her enemies" and offers up that one. But, I digress.

There was something familiar about the plot that made me think of *Mutiny on the Bounty* rather than *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Like Captain Bligh of the *HMS Bounty*, Kestrel, who has made herself captain in the absence of Binns, is blindsided by a mutiny led by Dreson - a disgruntled crew member - who resents Kestrel for taking the position that he thinks belonged to him. Using half the crew to take her hostage, Dreson seizes temporary control of the vessel at the cost of forfeiting the rescue mission. Unlike Bligh, Kestrel is forced to use a little magic to gain the upper hand.

While breadfruit was the aim for Bligh's journey to Tahiti in 1789, Kestrel finds herself protecting a green plant called the sanguina. A rare fruit that "[...] grows only on the back side of Cre'esh, near the top of the mountain. Fruits once every fifty years, give or take a few days. And the fruit only stays on the branch a few hours." Kestrel questions McAvery, the king's privateer about the importance of the fruit. He says, "Because eating the fruit while it's still on the branch grants health and life for the next fifty years, Perpetual life." In short, the king needs to consume the fruit to live another fifty years because he can't stand his weak, power hungry son.

The romance brewing between McAvery and Kestrel is minor. She spends the majority of the book hating him. Even when she is presented with proof that he is not the enemy, she keeps him at arms length.

This was a fantasy novel with very little magic in it. The Danisobans hardly ever made their presence known. There is a sword fight and some fleeting examples of tricks used by those pretending to have magic. The novel has the characters speaking the way you would imagine pirates to talk without sounding too cheesy. Over all, I enjoyed the ending and the way the story is left open to a sequel.

