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The Very Nearly Honorable League of Pirates #1: Magic Marks the Spot

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Hillary Westfield is the daughter of the Admiral of the Royal Navy, but that doesn’t stop her from dreaming of being a pirate. When she writes to the Very Nearly Honorable League of Pirates (VNHLP), they turn her down because she is a girl and then forward her information to Miss Pimm’s Finishing School for Delicate Ladies. She and her friend, the gargoyle, run away from finishing school to sail the high seas. She joins Jasper Fletcher (“Terror of the Southlands”), Jasper’s ward Charlie, a boy named Oliver who she suspects is up to no good, and (to her dismay) her former governess, Miss Greyson, in a quest to find the largest treasure trove of magic in the kingdom.

Carlson’s writing is clever, witty, and sometimes hilarious. The gem of the book is the dynamic characters with unique voices. The pirates are based on fictional pirates, so the emphasis is on finding treasure rather than the activities of historical pirates. There are some pirate battles and talking about running people through, but the book has little violence. Sailors who lose sword duels simply jump into the ocean and swim back to their ship. The interaction between pirate and high society girls adds humor and uniqueness to this fun book. With plenty of scoundrels and adventure to enjoy, a reader will likely wish to join the Very Nearly Honorable League of Pirates themselves.