

Publisher's Weekly July 20, 2010 Pirate Talk or Mermalade

Told entirely through dialogue, this quirky tale of period pirate wannabes makes a jeu d'esprit of the privateer life even as it baldly de-romanticizes it. Its protagonists, two unnamed brothers (one of whom might not be male), put out to sea from their Nantucket home in 1718 bedazzled by fantasies of gold doubloons and buccaneer booty. Over the next decade, capture by pirates, shipboard slaughter, maiming and dismemberment, slavery, sodomy, shipwreck on a desert island, and getting stranded in the Arctic all follow in due course. Svoboda (The Ask) plays these travails mostly for laughs, presenting them as ongoing pratfalls in the brothers' klutzy comedy of errors. Periodic visits from a mermaid (perhaps their half-sister) and a parrot who steals the scene every time he croaks "Hanged!" add to the fun. (Sept.)