

A Dragon of Turicum: Heirs of Regula 1

C. R. Bracher

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A Dragon of Turicum is a fantastical coming-of-age story in which a prince contends with deception, bravery, sacrifice, and unfounded prejudices.

In C. R. Bracher's fantasy novel *A Dragon of Turicum*, a prince works to save imperiled people from a vicious beast.

Eldred is a Deiran prince who's under tutelage at an academy. As a pupil, he has one aim: to develop his magical connection with the other warriors, a bond that enables them to fit together as one. He's also the eldest squire at the academy, and his time is running out: he must develop the connection before his day of ascension, or he will be forced to leave the academy, select a new vocation, and lose his place in line to be the Deiran king.

Eldred is thus feeling desperate when his father sends him on a mission to kill a dragon who's plaguing a northern city, Turicum. This city is the home of an ancient group of people who were banished there by conquerors. Through peril, feats of strength, and uncomfortable discoveries, Eldred learns much about these people—as well as about prejudices that run both ways. He stands by his honor, helping them overcome their challenges, while also confronting his own.

Much about Eldred's world is captured in its conversations: adversaries degrade one another, friends jostle in good fun, and those from different lands deliver forced platitudes and pleasantries. Their body language, behaviors, and motivations are described and alluded to well. There are exceptions: the Deiran king and queen are under developed, particularly in comparison to characters like Sammanus, the Turicum resident who first requests Deiran aid, who is timid when not at home, but self-possessed once he's back in his element. And Eldred's development is ably established: his initial belief in his own immortality leads to outward arrogance, but he proves to be naïve of the world at large.

The narrative builds from Eldred's early struggles and frustrations toward its rising action. It takes the time to build expectations and interest around each of Eldred's challenges, from his attempt to trick the trial, to an ambush during his travels north, to his eventual discoveries and experiences at Turicum and the battle with the dragon. In contrast to these fleshed-out scenes, though, the book's ending is abrupt, abandoning much of what built up to it in deference to an eventual sequel.

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ALEX DAILEY (February 4, 2022)

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