

Captain No Beard: An Imaginary Tale of a Pirate's Life

Carole P. Roman

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What kid doesn't love pretending to be a pirate? Certainly not Captain No Beard (also known as Alexander), the hero of Carole P. Roman's simple and delightful children's book, *Captain No Beard*.

The tale is Roman's first entry into the world of children's literature, but as a savvy grandmother, former teacher, and businesswoman, she is certainly up to the task. She foregoes the often-used technique of rhyming text in favor of a more natural, conversational tone that effectively captures the spirit of a child's imagination and daily play.

In the story, young Alexander and his cousin, Hallie, cast themselves as the captain and first mate of a pirate ship, crewed by a monkey, a lion, and a frog. They battle through shipboard duties, a storm, and the intricacies of pirate language: "Captain No Beard pulled out his handy Pirate Dictionary and scanned the pages ... 'aha! It says right here that "shiver me timbers" means "oh my goodness!" in Pirate.' 'Argh! Argh!' the crew shouted in approval. 'Shiver me timbers!'"

The book begins without a hint as to the imaginary nature of the story. The conclusion reveals a twist that is well disguised and satisfying; not too obvious on a first read-through, but perfectly clear and logical in retrospect.

The main fault of *Captain No Beard* lies not with its writing, but with its illustrations. The pictures themselves are charming, but several are repeated, either exactly or with a zoomed-in view of a particular section from a previous full-page illustration. Kids pay attention to the pictures in picture books, and the repetition definitely proves distracting.

Even with this flaw, the book is a wonderful celebration of a child's ability to pretend. Recommended for all children—except the as-yet-undiscovered ones who *don't* like to imagine life as a beardless pirate.

PETER DABBENE (September 24, 2012)

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