Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Captain No Beard: An Imaginary Tale of a Pirate's Life
Carole P. Roman
CreateSpace
978-1-4781-5170-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

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