



Young Adult Fiction

The Pirate Queen - A Timewalker Journey

Christina Bauer

Jen Dubis, illustrator

Windstorm - Blue Works

978-1-59092-224-8

(July 31, 2005)

“What do you want from me? I’m nothing! I’m nobody!” screams thirteen-year-old Jessica Ross when confronted by the specter of Grace O’Malley, a true-life sixteenth-century pirate queen. Despite her protest, Jessica is indeed somebody: she is the “chosen one,” the only person who can help Grace regain the treasure wrongfully taken from her hundreds of years ago.

A quest for treasure is the last thing Jessica needs. Two years earlier, her mother died in a tragic plane crash. Grief-ridden, her father uprooted Jess and her brother Jake from their Illinois home, and moved them to Europe. They lived in six countries before landing in Ireland, where Jessica finds her life disturbed by a string of petrifying dreams. These are no ordinary nightmares. Selma, the owner of the local bookshop, explains that Jessica is “timewalking”—the girl possesses “the ability to visit different points in the past by sheer will.”

Selma is a member of the Time Walker society herself, and under her tutelage, Jessica grapples with her gift, struggling to accept it as she hones her magical skills. Selma helps Jess make sense of her journeys into the past—to a terrifying battle between Clan O’Malley and their rivals, to Grace’s secret wedding to a fierce pirate, and to Queen Elizabeth’s chambers. These excursions hold the key to recapturing the lost treasure.

The author’s descriptions of Jess’s timewalks are so vivid that readers will feel as if they are experiencing history first-hand; they will root for good to conquer evil as they witness Grace’s bravery and strength while leading her troops. Along the way, Bauer gently touches on the tender issues surrounding the death of a parent—helping younger siblings cope and dealing with the grief of the still-living parent—with a huge trove of sensitivity.

Previously a professional corporate writer, Bauer became interested in historical female leaders while she was founding her own company in 1999 and preparing for her role as a CEO. She collected tales for her private library before deciding to try her hand at chronicling them

through fiction. Some of the suspense conventions in this first book are clichéd, some of the time-travel elements are confusing, and some of the prose is amateurish (as when Bauer clumsily avoids exposition by having Jessica speak aloud to describe the action).

Bauer's mission, however, is admirable, and at its core *The Pirate Queen* is a story about strong, independent women, offering historical information and a valuable lesson encased within the story of a young girl finding herself. It's a thrilling tale guaranteed to thoroughly shiver the timbers.