

Unknown Book

Robert D'Elia

Forest Fox Press

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Given their popularity these days, pirates are a sure way to increase the awesomeness quotient of any book, so Robert D'Elia's *Pirates of Marauda Book 1: Circles in Time* looks promising, based on its title alone. But besides pirates, D'Elia's series kick-off also contains dinosaurs, shipwrecks, flying saucers, time travel, and Atlantis. The result is a heady mix that provides constant excitement.

While hunting for sunken treasure, our narrator Eli, his younger brother Zoe, and his father are caught in a storm and blown off course into the Bermuda Triangle. There they discover an uncharted island, covered with shipwrecks from various eras and inhabited by voracious dinosaurs and immortal buccaneers. Fighting to keep hungry beasts off their tails, Eli and family struggle to win over the pirates and seize command of an abandoned vessel in their desperate bid to escape the hellish island.

Pirates *and* dinosaurs might seem to be a silly combination at first, but D'Elia clearly has a lot of fun with his material. His level-headed characters take everything in stride so that the reader never has time to reflect on the incongruity of plot elements. Instead, racing along with the heroes from one precarious situation to another, the reader is more concerned about how the main characters will survive and what might attack them next. D'Elia maintains a furious level of high energy for the duration of the book that engages the reader to the abrupt, dangling end.

A seasoned sportsman and paintballer, D'Elia debuts as a novelist with *Circles in Time*, and his inexperience is apparent. The writing style needs some work. At its best, it is competent and swiftly moving, comparing favorably to that of John Crichton. Fights with raptors, during which the characters "pump hot lead" into dinosaurs and exclaim, "Jee-zus!" in dismay, become repetitious, however. D'Elia uses his favorite phrases a little too frequently, but keeps the pace quick and the adventure constant.

More problematic are the unnecessary first thirty-five pages of the book. The short prologue essentially gives away the secrets of the characters' strange adventures so that the tension is much reduced. Meanwhile, the first chapter provides interesting, but ultimately irrelevant, background about the family's treasure hunting, which could have been dealt with much more expediently in a page or two.

Despite a useless first chapter, *Circles in Time* makes a promising beginning, rife with ebullience and originality, to a series that should improve with succeeding volumes.

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