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Review of A Brave Vessel: The True Tale of the Castaways Who Rescued Jamestown and Inspired Shakespeare's The Tempest

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LJ Review Cover Sheet and Survey

Your name: Michael F. Russo

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Title of the book: *A Brave Vessel: The True Tale of the Castaways who Rescued Jamestown and Inspired Shakespeare's The Tempest*

Author or editor of the book: Hobson Woodward

This book is recommended for: public & academic libraries

Comments for your editor:

Review

Author: Hobson Woodward

Title: *A Brave Vessel: The True Tale of the Castaways who Rescued Jamestown and Inspired Shakespeare's The Tempest*

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The 1609 wreck of the *Sea Venture*, bound for Jamestown, is a well-known tale of disappointment and triumph. Blown off course by a hurricane, and nearly sunk, the ship managed a fortuitous landing on the island of Bermuda.

Using the account kept by William Strachey, a gentleman of letters with pretensions of being a poet, historian Woodward tells of challenges met and overcome by the accidental islanders. The would-be colonists muster every scrap of resourcefulness to make a rudimentary civilization on a deserted island paradise, to survive and press on to their original destination, and to cling tenaciously to their commitment to their colony.

The young Jamestown clutches at life, starved and besieged by hostile natives. It is by the merest coincidence England's first colony in the New World is not abandoned by the desperate settlers.

Woodward devotes the second half of his book to a detailed explication of the parallels between *The Tempest* and the *Sea Venture*. Imagined scenes of William Strachey watching the play, knowing the drama is based in large part on his narrative, serve to make of Strachey a pitiable figure, craving success, yet knowing his efforts only bolster the career of a rival author.

In Woodward's re-telling, characters long lost to the past return to life. Woodward has extracted from the desiccated texts of the seventeenth century a vivid and all-too-human drama of courage in the face of adversity and treachery in the face of dire necessity.

Recommended for public and academic libraries.

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