



## The Dagger Quick (The Dagger Chronicles)

By Brian Eames

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A stirring tale of rousing old-fashioned adventure, THE DAGGER QUICK is the story of twelve-year-old Christopher, a boy with a clubfoot seemingly doomed to follow in the boring footsteps of his father as a cooper in 17th century England. That is, until he meets his uncle- William Quick, infamous pirate, and the only man ever crazy enough to steal from the infamous Governor of Jamaica. With his mother kidnapped, his father murdered, and Christopher unjustly blamed for the crime, he has no choice but to set off on a dangerous seafaring adventure with bounty hunters on his trail and his only ally an uncle he hardly knows.

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### Editorial Review

Review

#### The Dagger Quick

Brian Eames. *S&S/Wiseman*, \$15.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-4424-2311-4

Eames makes his debut with an exciting and richly detailed historical swashbuckler, set in 1678. Christopher "Kitto" Quick is the 12-year-old son of an English barrel maker, bullied for his clubfoot and yearning for a better life. When his previously unknown privateer uncle, Capt. William Quick, comes to visit, trouble and tragedy follow. Before Kitto knows it, his father is dead, and his stepmother and brother have been kidnapped by the ruthless John Morris, who's hunting William to recover a long-hidden treasure. Joining William's crew, Kitto must adapt quickly in order to rescue his family, avenge his father, and survive life at sea. Along the way, he discovers his family's hidden past as it ties into the pirates of Jamaica, while safeguarding the mysterious dagger left to him by his father. Readers are likely to relate to Kitto's drive for adventure, sense of loyalty to his family, and desire to do the right thing. Thoroughly researched, fast-paced, and tense, this coming-of-age adventure doesn't sugarcoat the dangers of the era, even as it embraces the mythical glamour of a pirate's life. Ages 8–12.

--*Publishers Weekly*, April 4, 2011

"An exciting and richly detailed historical swashbuckler...Readers are likely to relate to Kitto's drive for adventure, sense of loyalty to his family, and desire to do the right thing. Thoroughly researched, fast-paced, and tense, this coming-of-age adventure doesn't sugarcoat the dangers of the era, even as it embraces the mythical glamour of a pirate's life"-- *Publishers Weekly*

"Pirates! Bullies! Murder and mayhem! Family secrets! Seventeenth-century England to Cape Verde and the Caribbean! ... Kitto, 12 years old, clubfooted, about to discover that his last name is different from what he thought, that his deceased mother had a dark and complicated past and that his uncle is a pirate. Kitto's father, a cooper, is murdered, and Kitto kills his attacker, then is off to sail with his uncle after his stepmother and adored little brother are kidnapped."-- *KIRKUS*

"Readers will undoubtedly identify strongly with the scrappy Kitto, and this will heighten the tension built around his inevitable struggles and ultimate hard-won successes. The story is accurate enough to grab historical fiction fans and sharp and quick enough to keep adventure fans enthralled"--*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

Eames's swashbuckling adventure on the high seas begins in 1678 England. Christopher "Kitto" Quick, 12-year-old apprentice barrel maker to his father, Frederick, has always been ridiculed for his clubfoot and longs for excitement and new experiences. He gets more than he bargained for when a pirate, Captain William Quick, appears with trouble on his heels, claiming to be Kitto's uncle and bringing to light a score of hidden family secrets. Soon, Frederick is dead, and the ruthless privateer John Morris, who is hunting William Quick and a long-lost treasure, has kidnapped Kitto's stepmother and stepbrother. The youngster joins Captain Quick's crew, equipped with nothing but the dagger Frederick left him and the resolve to rescue his family and avenge his father's death. Fast-paced, well-developed, and historically accurate, the lively narrative grabs readers from the get-go and keeps them sailing through the pages. Kitto must determine whom he can trust if he is to save his life and those of his loved ones. Not for the lily-livered, this coming-of-age quest is perfect for landlubbers and pirate aficionados alike. Eames has left readers yearning for the sequel with a true cliff-hanger.--*Michele Shaw, Quail Run Elementary School, San Ramon, CA*

School Library Journal, August 2011

Eames, Brian

### The Dagger Quick

2011. 336pp. \$15.99 hc. Paula Wiseman Books (Simon & Schuster). 978-1-4424-2311-4. Grades 5-8

All 12-year-old Christopher “Kitto” Wheale wants to do is sail the seas instead of learning barrel making, but that is not an option for a 17th century boy born with a club foot. All appears hopeless until his long-lost uncle, the infamous Captain Quick, appears. Agreeing to rejoin his brother for one last high seas adventure, Mr. Wheale grudgingly gives in and promises to take Kitto along to make the barrels needed to smuggle priceless spices. All goes horribly wrong when, in a struggle with a rival captain, Kitto accidentally shoots his father. With a bounty on his head, Kitto goes on his uncle’s ship. What follows is a high-seas adventure worthy of any swashbuckler. Although the characters are not terribly well-developed and rather cliché, the adventures are non-stop, page-turning fun. With an ending that begs for a sequel, there’s no doubt this book will become a new hit.

--*Library Media Connection*, November/December 2011

Kitto is used to a hard life of ostracism and tedious labor—as a child with a clubfoot in seventeenth-century England, he can only hope to remain his father’s apprentice, even though being a cooper is a long way from the seafaring adventures for which he yearns. Everything changes in an instant, however, when his dad’s long-missing piratical brother returns, bringing untold danger and excitement in his wake. Unfortunately, too much of both await Kitto, who soon loses his father and finds himself embroiled in an elaborate scheme that may bring him riches and definitely nets him dangerous enemies; at the same time, he’s frantically plotting ways to retrieve his kidnapped mother and little brother. Kitto possesses the perfect personality traits for just these sorts of life-and-death situations: he is unflinchingly bold, he has a clear moral compass, and he is adept at shelving otherwise overwhelming emotions until he has a more opportune moment to process them. Rather than simply sending a perfect protagonist into a grand (and horrifying) adventure, Eames is also careful to show how Kitto evolves and how subtle familial and cultural influences shaped him. Readers will undoubtedly identify strongly with the scrappy Kitto, and this will heighten the tension built around his inevitable struggles and ultimate hard-won successes. The story is accurate enough to grab historical fiction fans and sharp and quick enough to keep adventure fans enthralled; though both groups will likely be startled by the abruptness of the ending, they’ll enjoy imagining how the subsequent events might play out in Kitto’s able hands. AS

--*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, July/August 2011

#### About the Author

**Brian Eames** has taught for fifteen years at the Paideia School, a K–12 independent school in Atlanta. He read his first novel, *The Dagger Quick*, out loud to his class as he wrote it. *Publishers Weekly* called *The Dagger Quick* “thoroughly researched, fast-paced, and tense...embraces the mythical glamour of a pirate’s life.” He lives with his wife and children in Atlanta. Visit him at [TheDaggerQuick.com](http://TheDaggerQuick.com).

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The Dagger Quick



Simon Sneed flared thin lips, revealing a disgraceful mishmash of teeth.

“I was nice to you last time, wasn’t I, cripple?” he said. “This time I’ll not be so generous.” Around Simon hovered a small tribe of dim-witted, large boys.

“You don’t own the docks, Simon,” came the answer. His name was Kitto Wheale—or so he thought—and unlike Simon, Kitto did not attract a circle of admirers. Kitto had been born with a clubfoot, a sure sign of God’s disapproval.

“Not yet I don’t own them,” Simon said. There were six boys in all arrayed against Kitto. Simon and three others stood in front and blocked one end of the deserted alley; two boys behind Kitto blocked the other.

Six to one—poor odds. Next to Kitto stood his little brother, Elias, known to all as Duck. Duck glared the most menacing look a six-year-old could muster.

“Leave us be, Simon Sneed!” Duck said. “We wasn’t bothering you.”

Simon leaned to the boy beside him. “Nick that little ankle biter.” Two stout fellows stepped forward and took Duck by the arms.

“Let go of me! Let go or I’ll show you what!”

“Shut it, Duck,” Kitto told him. “You’re just giving him what he wants.” Kitto swept a hand across his dark curls. “Let him go, Simon. You’ve got me closed in, haven’t you?”

“I’ll do as I like.” Simon looked down at the wet thing balanced in his gloved hand: a turd, freshly deposited in the alley only a few minutes before by a horse sweating beneath a load of coal.

“We get lots of visitors here in Falmouth this time of year. From all parts.” With his empty hand Simon pointed at Kitto’s clubfoot. “You come around here with that thing, and people get the wrong idea. You’re a smudge on our good name, you are, and it’s my job to see you cleaned out.”

Duck stomped on the toe of one of the boys holding him. “Stop squeezing me!” The larger boy let out a howl. He and his mate hurled Duck to the ground, and the wounded one pinned him to the cobblestones with a knee to the back.

“If I was any bigger!”

Simon snickered. “He is a feisty one, that brother of yours,” Simon said. “He doesn’t get that from you, though, does he? But I guess he’s got a different mum, eh?” It was true. The woman Kitto called “Mother” was so only by marriage, making Duck his half brother.

“Yes, he’s got a feisty mum, doesn’t he, that brother of yours? That Sarah Wheale is a *feisty* one, ain’t she, boys?” Simon’s eyebrows jounced.

Kitto knew just then he would not try to run. There were some insults that should not be borne.

“Your lesson will be a little different this time, cripple.” Simon gestured with the gloved hand. “You smear this horse apple all over your face so all Falmouth knows exactly what you are. Do that, and we let you go.”

Kitto stared back. “Better to keep it yourself, Simon. Holding that makes you look less ugly.”

Simon’s sneer vanished. “Take it.”

“I ain’t touching that.”

“One way or the other you are.”

Kitto shrugged. “I rub it about and you let us go? Both of us? And no beating?” He eyed the glistening stool warily.

“I am a man of my word, ain’t I, lads?” Simon turned to his cronies.

Kitto leaped forward, chopped one hand at the crook of Simon’s elbow, and with the other he swept up, hitting the back of Simon’s gloved hand. Simon’s arm bent. He struck himself in the face, mashing manure across his nose and cheek.

There was an instant of shocked delay, and then mayhem erupted. Simon shrieked. The boy kneeling atop Duck stood, and in a trice the six boys threw Kitto to the cobblestones. They beat him and kicked him and stomped him.

“I’ll kill you! You crazy cripple! I’ll kill you!”

“Kitto! Kitto! Get up, Kitto!”

Kitto curled tight and buried his head in his arms. He squeezed his eyes shut.

The boys kicked and punched, spurred on by Simon’s fury.

“Get him! Get him and don’t let up!”

An adjacent door to the alleyway opened, alerted by Duck’s pounding. A huge man stepped through it. His name was Pickett, and he was a blacksmith. He held a long bar of iron that glowed red at one end. Pickett took a few steps forward. The boys scattered like cockroaches before a lantern, Simon at their lead. Halfway down the alley, he turned.

“You’ll get yours, Kitto Wheale! Just you wait and see!” he shouted, then ran on.

A woman emerged from the smithy behind Pickett. She stared first at the retreating boys, then at Kitto. The look of concern on her face melted into disdain.

“You know that lad was Simon Sneed, don’t you? You know who his father is?” she demanded of her husband.

The blacksmith looked at Kitto with sad eyes. Kitto turned away, unable to bear his pity.

“Do you think we can afford to anger Preston Sneed? The most powerful man in this town?” She glared at Kitto. “For the likes of *you!*”

The man guided the woman by the elbow. The door closed behind them, leaving Kitto and Duck alone.

Kitto uncurled his body. He could feel the bruises forming on his back, on his head. He'd protected his face, at least. Maybe Father would not know he had been fighting.

"I got the blacksmith, Kitto! I did what I could to help!" Duck said cheerfully.

"Is it a help, Duck, when a six-year-old rescues his brother?" Kitto shoved at Duck, and the little boy fell away bewildered. His blue eyes filled.

"But what was I supposed to do, Kitto? What could I have done?" Tears rolled down his rosy cheeks.

Kitto knew Duck could never understand.

"Just leave me alone, Duck. Get on home and leave me be!" Kitto pushed through the pain to his feet, and as best he could he set off at a run. Down the alleyway toward the main lane he went, his head bobbing as he limped.

Kitto cut past a crowd of sailors and made his way to the seawall. He threw himself to the ground at the wall, disgusted and miserable. He hated Simon Sneed, who was cruel, and he hated Pickett and his wife, who saw only his bent foot. He hated his father, who would not listen, and his brother, whose body was whole. But mostly Kitto just hated himself and the twisted leg he hid beneath him.

He sat there a long time, staring and hating. After a while, the sea began to work its magic. He watched the ships swing on their anchors, and a few others round the head at Pendennis Castle. And while he sat, Kitto imagined he had found a spot where the world might leave him be for just a short while.

He was wrong.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Lauren Marine:**

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or read a book eligible The Dagger Quick (The Dagger Chronicles)? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have some other opinion?

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