



Burt Dow: Deep-Water Man

Robert McCloskey

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Burt Dow, Deep Water-man (1963) was the last book written by children's author and illustrator Robert McCloskey. Burt Dow is a retired fisherman living with his sister and his pet, the Giggling Gull, on the Maine coast. In the story, loosely based on the encounter of the whale in the Book of Jonah, Burt and the Giggling Gull, are fishing in Burt's only working boat, the Tidely-Idley, when a storm blows up. Burt shelters from the storm in the belly of a whale he has recently befriended, along with the Tidely-Idley and the Giggling Gull. Once the storm is over, he is faced with the problem of how to extricate himself from the whale. Burt, ever resourceful, splashes left over boat paint and sediment sludge on the walls of the whale's stomach, provoking cetacean indigestion and a rapid expulsion from the whale. The book is illustrated in vivid water color. The inside of the whale's belly is a brilliant, strawberry pink. In addition, the scene with the paint splashes is reminiscent of paintings by Jackson Pollock. Many of the characters in this book are based on real people who lived in the community of Deer Isle, Maine, where McCloskey wrote many of his books. The real Bert Dow is buried in a Deer Isle cemetery. His tombstone, which McCloskey helped to fund, reads "Bert Dow, Deep Water Man, 1882-1964".

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