



The Man Who Lost His Head

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[George Hunt](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The first page of this picture book consists of a single line, 'Once upon a time there was a Man who lost his head?', above McCloskey's bold, realistic, black and white drawing of the Man sitting up in bed desperately groping for the missing appendage. It's a startling opening to a bizarre story in which the Man fashions himself a series of heads so that he can seek the real object at the village fair. After several demoralising encounters, he meets a wise urchin whose systematic interrogation of the problem leads to a suitably strange resolution.

This is a wonderfully odd book. First published in 1942, and reissued in the fascinating NYRCC series of classic children's books, the vivid words and drawings here depict several layers of strangeness: a vanished rural America; the carnival chaos of the fairground; the nonchalant way in which the headless Man's dreadful plight is responded to until he meets the mysterious waif. There is, perhaps, an unparaphrasable allegory about self-knowledge hovering here, but children will enjoy the story for its mixture of nightmare, laughter and wordplay.

Running Order:

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