



The Moby-Dick Blues

Michael Strelow

Roundfire Books (Mar 30, 2018)

Softcover \$14.95 (192pp)

978-1-78535-701-5

The Moby-Dick Blues is Michael Strelow's outstanding fictional tale of a developmentally disabled boy, a scholar, and an original Herman Melville manuscript.

The Kraft family of Massachusetts, consisting of Mother, daughter Salome, and three boys, Ben, Carl, and Arvin, can trace its lineage back generations. When Arvin, who is younger and mentally slower than the others, discovers the original manuscript of *Moby-Dick* hidden away in their house, he decides not to tell his family.

But Salome uncovers his secret, and soon negotiations begin for the sale of the pages, a transaction that could rescue the family's struggling construction company. Professor Thorne, a Melville expert, becomes involved in the process and is quickly caught up in intrigue and violence. The manuscript's final fate deals significant consequences to all involved.

The book features a compelling interplay between two alternating points of view. Arvin calls himself "not a fast thinker, but an all-the-way thinker"; Thorne is a man nearly lost to his own thoughts. Through the manuscript, Thorne is dragged from the safety of academia into the real world, while Arvin seeks to use the papers as his ticket to freedom from a family that undervalues him.

Strelow's characterization of Arvin is masterful, casting everyday experiences and decisions in a newly important light. Arvin uses unique and inventive terms. He learns to read the Melville papers "slow, slow, like a spider goes up" while wishing he could read "like a spider comes down."

Thorne, handled in a more traditional though detached way, describes himself as "a man of some subtlety in my world of scholarship but a blunt instrument as soon as I wandered outside my expertise." Together, theirs is a story with a grand but personal sweep.

Lyrical, poignant, intellectual, and visceral, *The Moby-Dick Blues* is a well-crafted tale likely to resonate with Melville fans and beyond.

PETER DABBENE (March/April 2018)

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