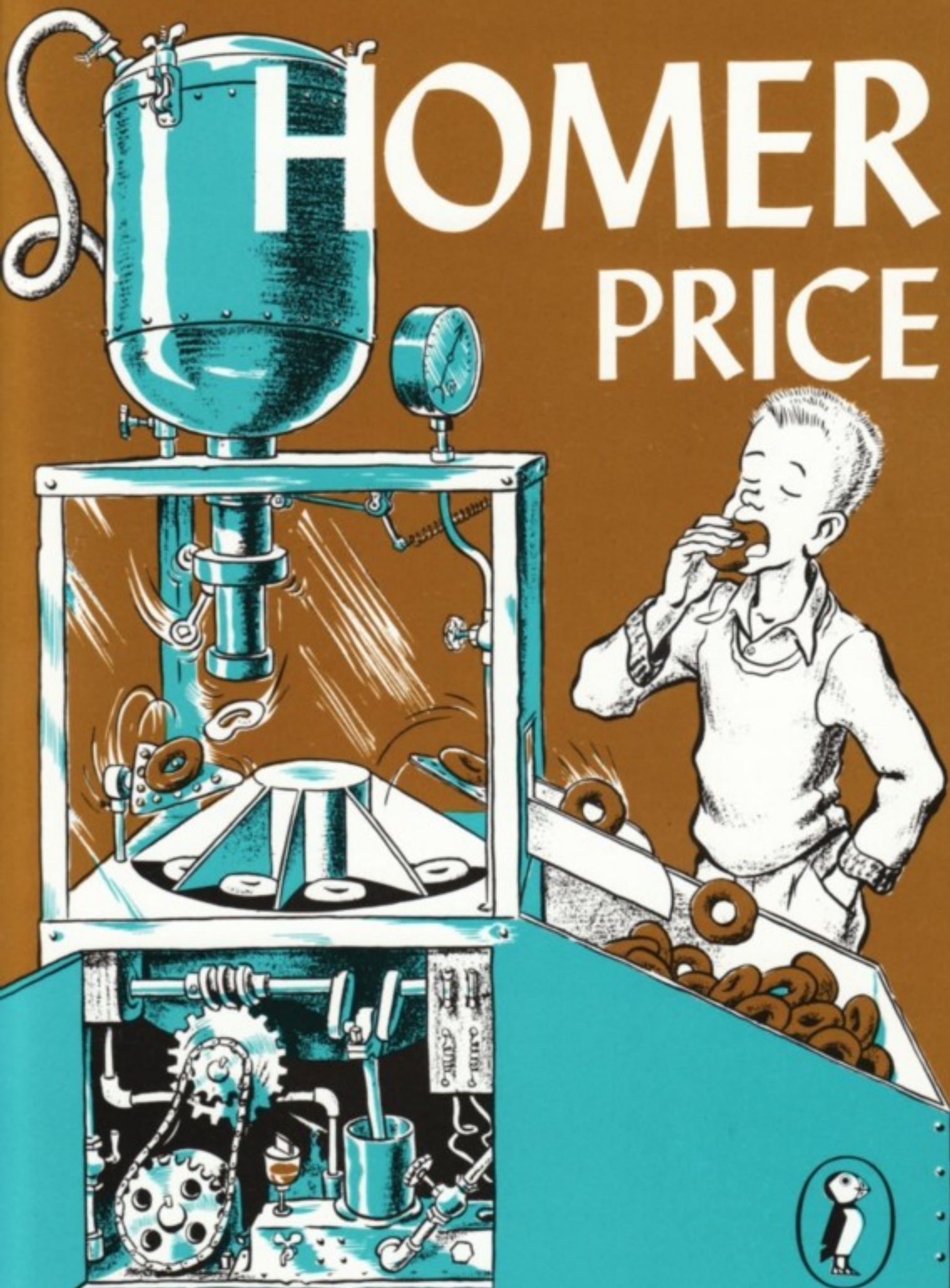


HOMER PRICE



BY ROBERT McCLOSKEY

THE CASE OF THE SENSATIONAL SCENT

ABOUT two miles outside of Centerburg where route 56 meets route 56A there lives a boy named Homer. Homer's father owns a tourist camp. Homer's mother cooks fried chicken and hamburgers in the lunch room and takes care of the tourist cabins while his father takes care of the filling station. Homer does odd jobs about the place. Sometimes he washes windshields of cars to help his father, and sometimes he sweeps out cabins or takes care of the lunch room to help his mother.

When Homer isn't going to school, or doing odd jobs, or playing with other boys, he works on his hobby which is building radios. He has a workshop in one corner of his room where he works in the evenings.

Before going to bed at night he usually goes down to the kitchen to have a glass of milk and cookies because working on radios makes him hungry. Tabby, the family cat, usually comes around for something to eat too.

One night Homer came down and opened the ice box door, and poured a saucer of milk for Tabby and a glass of milk for himself. He put the bottle back and looked to see if there was anything interesting on the other shelves. He heard footsteps and felt something soft brush his leg so he reached down to pet

Tabby. When he looked down the animal drinking the milk certainly wasn't a cat! It was a skunk! Homer was startled just a little but he didn't make any sudden motions, because he remembered what he had read about skunks. They can make a very strong smell that people and other animals don't like. But the smell is only for protection, and if you don't frighten them, or hurt them, they are very friendly.

While the skunk finished drinking the saucer of milk, Homer decided to keep it for a pet because he had read somewhere that skunks become excellent pets if you treat them kindly. He decided to name the skunk Aroma. Then he poured out some more milk for Aroma, and had some more himself. Aroma finished the second saucer of milk, licked his mouth, and calmly started to walk away. Homer followed and found that Aroma's home was under the house right beneath his window.

During the next few days Homer did a lot of thinking about what would be the best way to tame Aroma. He didn't know what his mother would think of a pet skunk around the house but he said to himself Aroma has been living under the house all this time and nobody knew about it, so I guess it will be all right for it to keep on being a secret.

He took a saucer of milk out to Aroma every evening when nobody was looking and in a few weeks Aroma was just as tame as a puppy.

Homer thought it would be nice if he could bring Aroma up to his room because it would be good to have company while he

worked building radios. So he got an old basket and tied a rope to the handle to make an elevator. He let the basket down from his window and trained Aroma to climb in when he gave a low whistle. Then he would pull the rope and up came the basket and up came Aroma to pay a social call. Aroma spent most of his visit sleeping, while Homer worked on a new radio. Aroma's favorite place to sleep was in Homer's suitcase.

One evening Homer said, "There, that's the last wire soldered and my new radio is finished. I'll put the new tubes in it then we can try it out!" Aroma opened one eye and didn't look interested, even when the radio worked perfectly and an announcer's voice said, "N. W. Blott of Centerburg won the grand prize of two thousand dollars for writing the best slogan about 'Dreggs After Shaving Lotion.' "

"Why I know him, and he's from my town!" said Homer.

Aroma still looked uninterested while the announcer said that next week they would broadcast the Dreggs program from Centerburg and that Mr. Dreggs himself would give Mr. N. W. Blott the two thousand dollars cash and one dozen bottles of Dreggs Lotion for thinking up the best advertising slogan. "Just think, Aroma, a real radio broadcast from Centerburg! I'll have to see that!"

The day of the broadcast arrived and Homer rode to Centerburg on his bicycle to watch. He was there early and he got a good place right next to the man who worked the controls so he could see everything that happened.

HOMER PRICE

Written and illustrated by Robert McCloskey

"This is a real boy, thinking out loud and living out these rich and hilarious dilemmas with solemn and devastating humor. . . . The American comic genius in its top form."

—JAMES DAUGHERTY

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