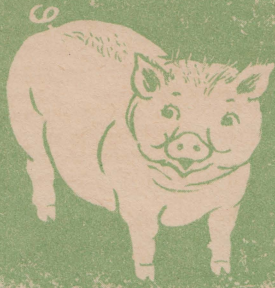
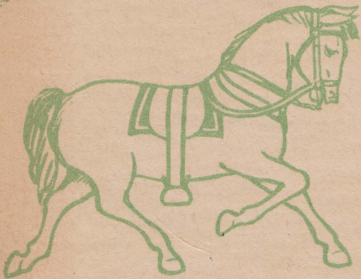


A HORSE for HENRY





39

A Horse for Henry



By

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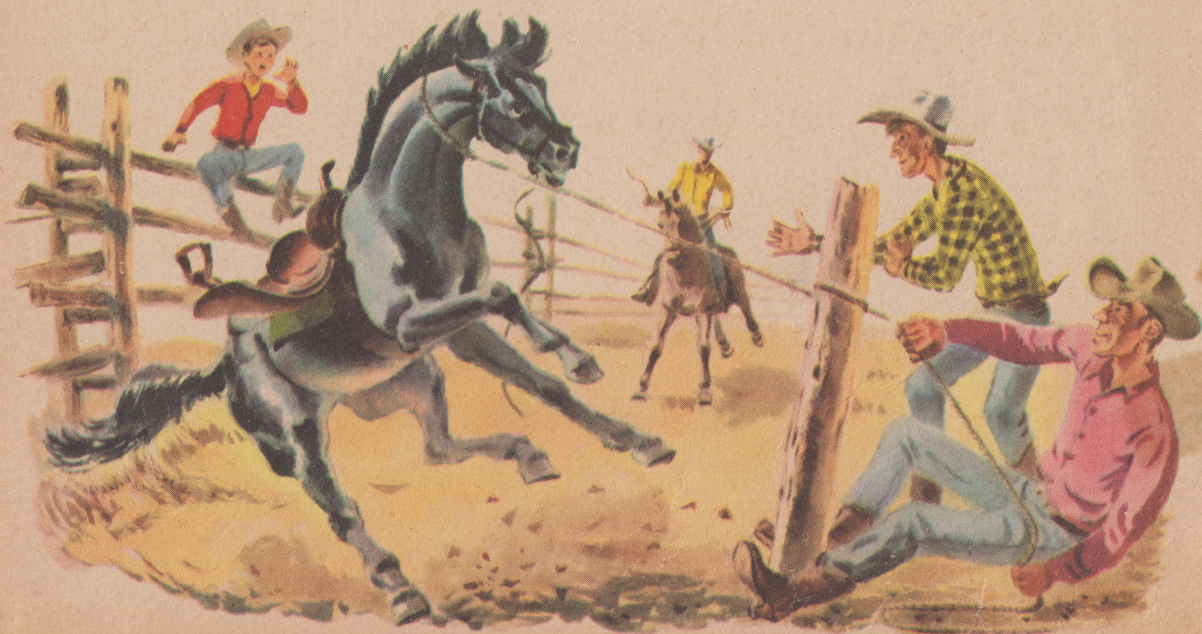
Henry sat on the top rail of the corral watching the men break a black colt. He never missed this part of the day's work. Sometimes the men let him ride one of the horses around the corral.

"Someday I'll ride Shine," he mused as he watched the black colt rear and plunge. He called him Shine because his black coat seemed to catch and reflect the sunlight.

Henry's father rode up as one of the cowhands caught the colt in his lariat and pulled him close to the snubbing post.

"Likely piece of horseflesh, ain't he?" he called to the cowboy.

"Sure is, Boss," answered the man. "If we can gentle the spunky critter down a mite he'll be a good lead horse someday."





Henry had never had a horse of his own. When he was tiny his father used to pull him up behind him and say, "Hang onto my suspenders, son, and we'll burn the breeze." But they never rode as fast as Henry thought they should.

When he was old enough to ride alone, he was given Millie.

“Here’s your horse, Henry,” his father had said. “Millie will take you where you want to go.”

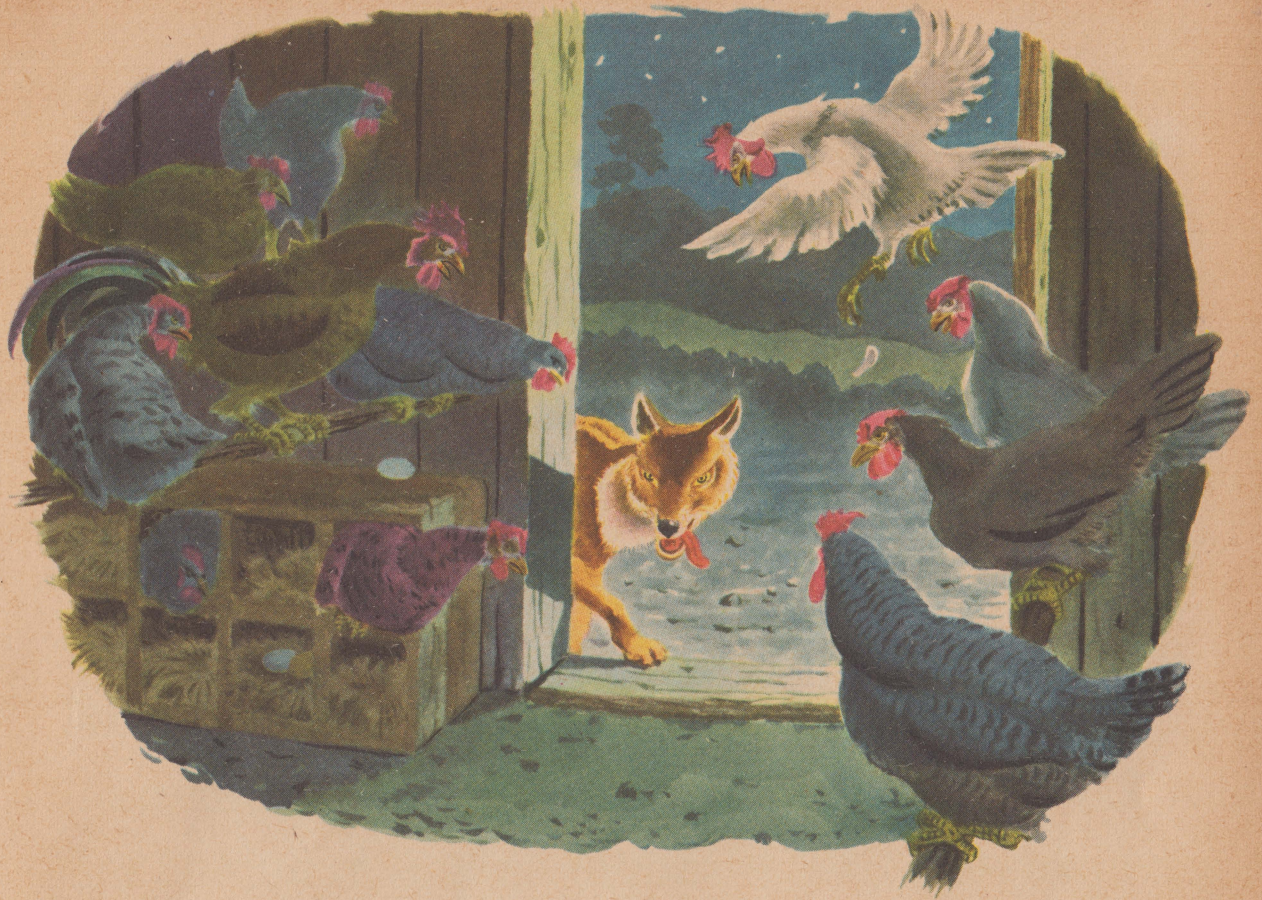
“But Millie’s a *mule*,” protested Henry, fighting back the tears.

“She’s safe,” said his father. Then winking at the men he added, “All you have to do is get her started. She’s got a hankerin’ for stayin’ where she is. Sometimes I think Millie’s a mite lazy.”

“But, Dad,” pleaded Henry. “When can I have a *horse*?”

“When you’re a *man*,” replied his father as he walked away.

Henry tried to be a man. He tried to help but things never turned out right.



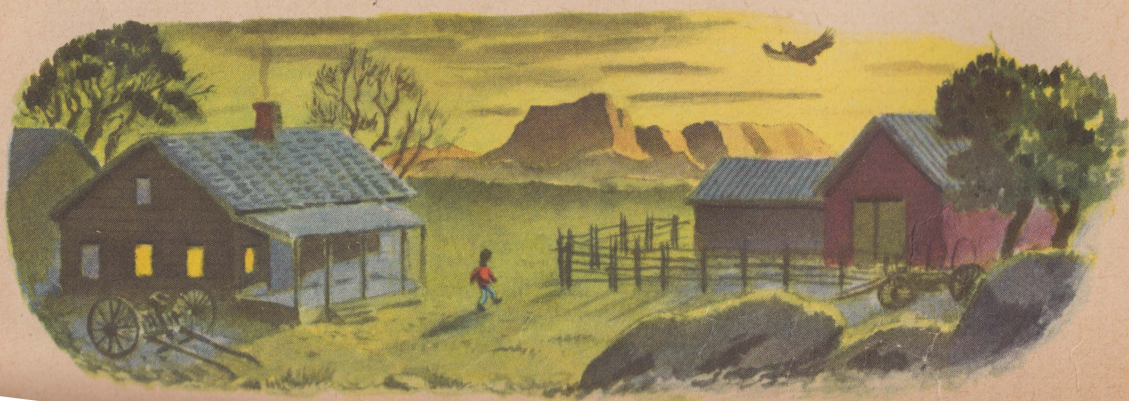
There was the night he hadn't fastened the hen-house door. An animal got in and killed all the young chickens. He had been reminded of his failure every time there was stew or beans for Sunday dinner.

And there was the time his father had come home tired from riding fence all day. Henry had offered to take care of his horse.

“Careful, son,” his father had teased. “That hungry cougar might be lurkin’ around. He’s been gettin’ at our calves lately.”

Henry had replied, “I’m not afraid. It wouldn’t come near the corral.”

He’d gone out in the dark to feed and put the horse away. He hadn’t seen the big cat, but he’d left the saddle on the ground and it rained hard during the night.





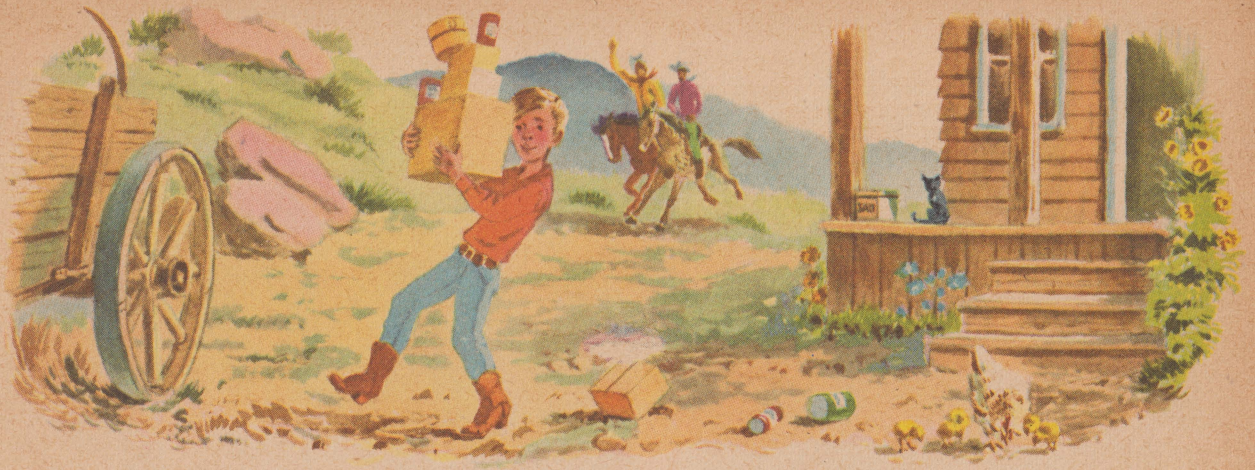
When his father found it water-soaked the next morning, he said, "A man wouldn't have done that." Henry would rather have had a whaling.

The men left the corral. But Henry was still sitting on the top rail, thinking, when his little brother, Butch, called, "*Henry*, let's play something."

Henry shook his head and Butch went for a run with the dog.

There were things Henry had to think about. He slid off the rail and sat in the shade. His glance fell on the corral gate. That reminded him of the time he had forgotten to shut it and all the horses had got out and headed for the plateau. Catching them and putting them back had caused the men a lot of trouble. They still teased him about it.





But the worst thing had happened this very year when the men were getting ready for spring roundup. Wishing he might go with them, Henry had done everything he could to help.

“Is everything on the chuck wagon?” his mother had asked.

“Yes, I packed all the things you told me to,” replied Henry, proudly.

But the next morning they found a big box of salt on the porch.



"Henry!" wailed his mother. "Those men will have to eat their meals without salt!"

Weeks later, when the men returned, Henry overheard his mother telling the men about it. His father grumbled, "That kid'd trip over his own spurs."

Now, whenever his father saw him look longingly at the black colt, he said, "Son, when you can do a man's work and do it right, you can have a horse."

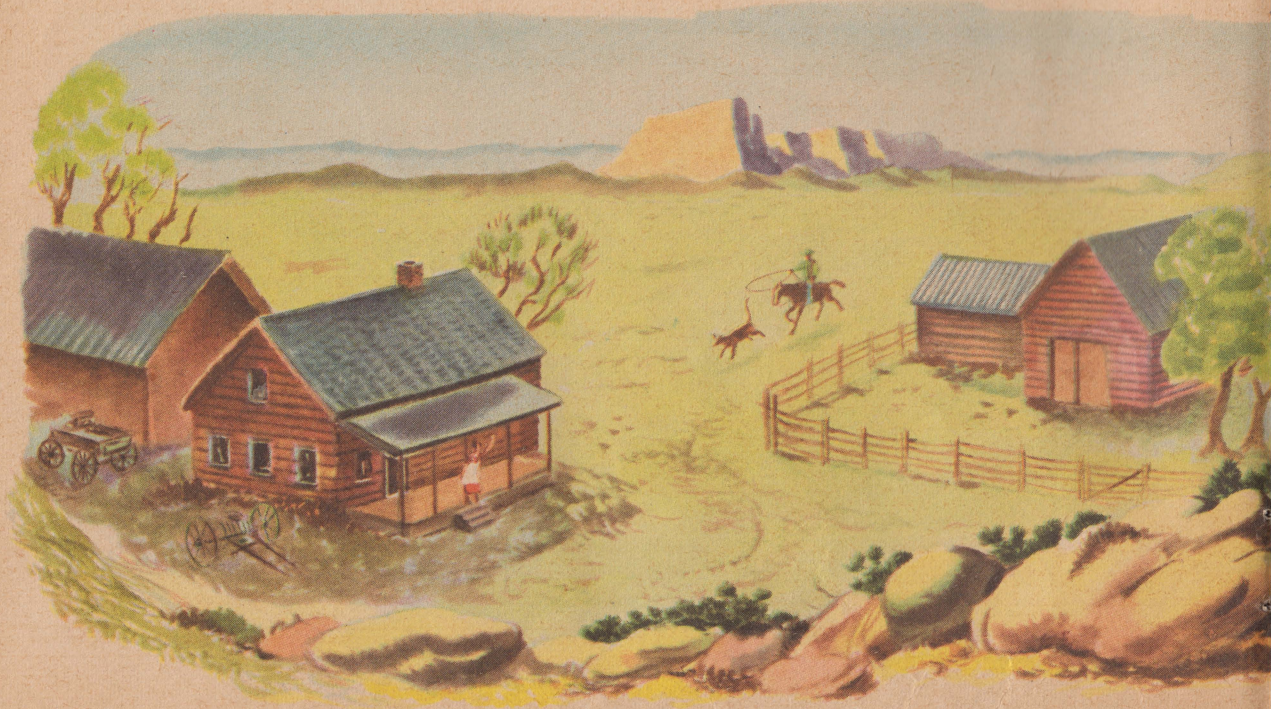
One morning, a couple of weeks later, Henry was coming from the corral where, for the first time, he had been given a chance to ride Shine. He was feeling happy when he heard Butch call, "Hey, *Henry!* Let's take some grub and go fishing."

"Okay!" Henry called back. "I'll get Millie."



With fish poles and lunch fastened to the saddle, Henry mounted Millie and pulled Butch up behind him. They were ready to go.

Their mother waved good-bye and called, "Have a good time and bring back a nice mess of trout."



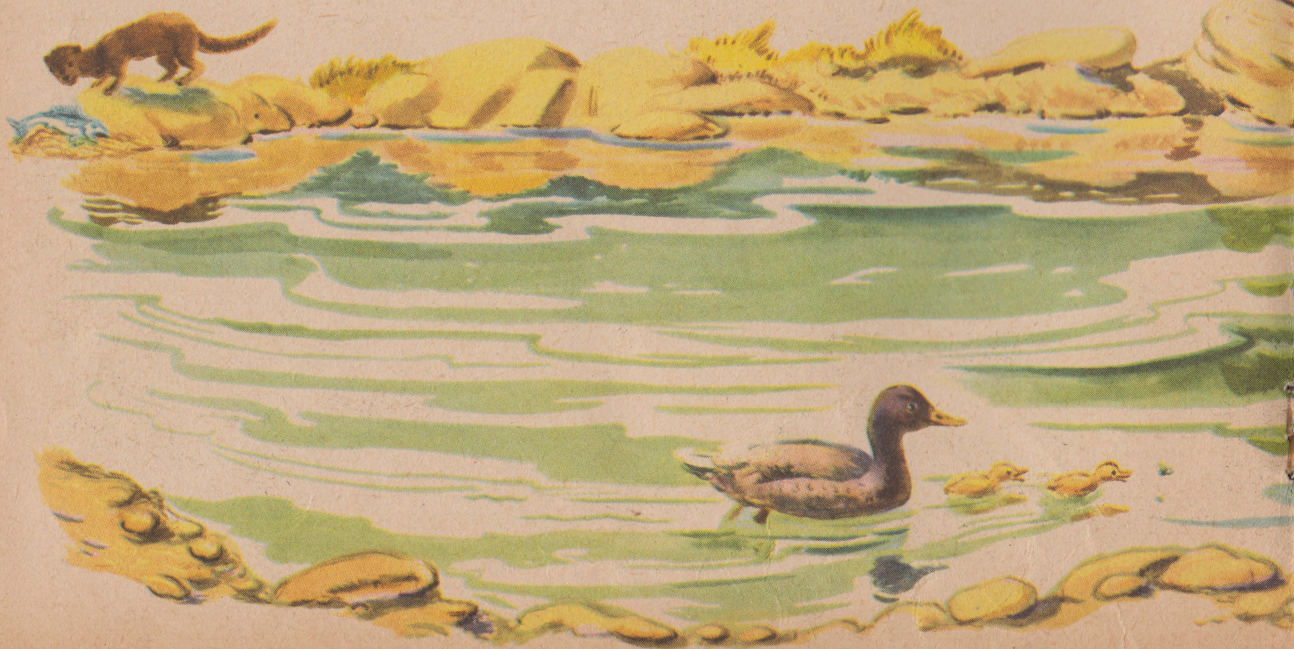
The boys sang as they jogged along—
songs they had heard the cowboys sing
and songs they made up.

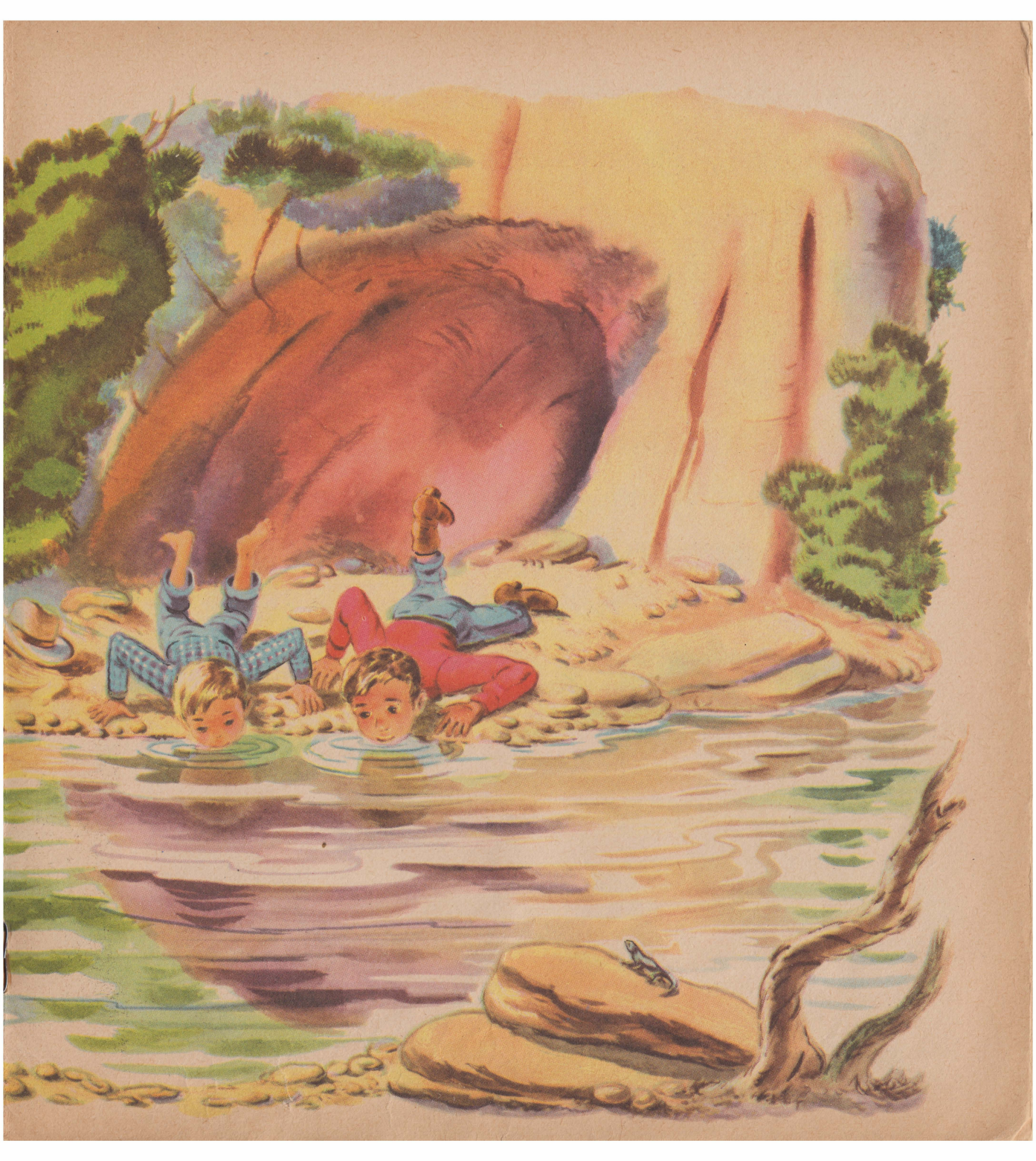


They talked together like old cowhands on an important job. When they reached the stream in the canyon they were warm and thirsty. So they lay on their stomachs and lapped the cool, clear water.

“Cowboys drink this way, don’t they?” asked Butch.

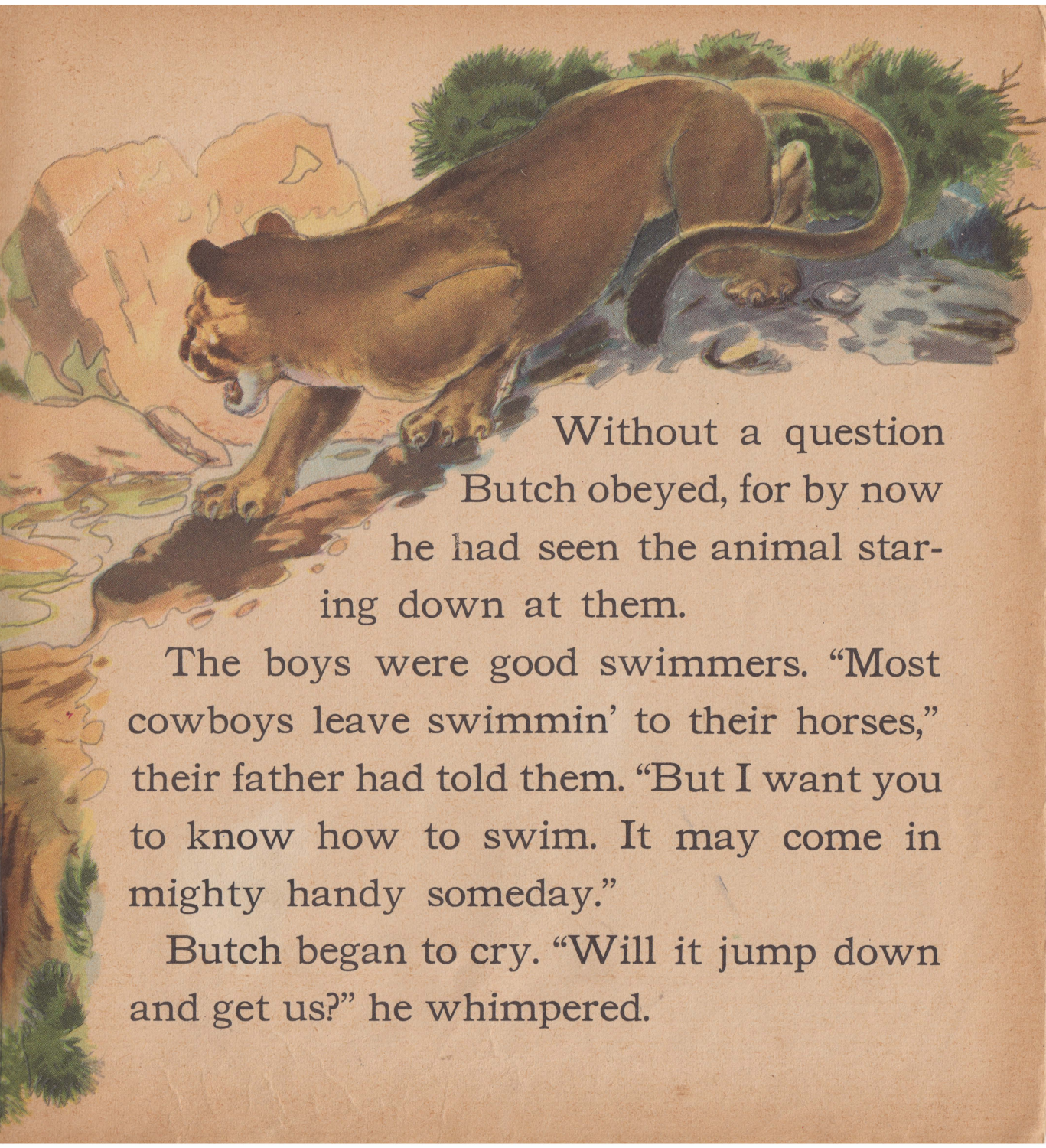
“Sure,” answered Henry, “unless they drink out of their hats.”





Suddenly Henry saw something reflected in the water that turned him cold with fear. Clutching Butch he looked up and saw a cougar crouched on a rock high above them. Before Butch knew what had frightened his brother, he was being pushed into the water. Then he heard Henry whisper in a strange, dry voice, "Swim, Butch. Keep swimming and don't go near the bank."



A brown bear is walking through a stream, its body partially submerged in the water. The bear is looking down at the water. The background shows a rocky bank with some green foliage. The water is depicted with blue and white splashes.

Without a question
Butch obeyed, for by now
he had seen the animal star-
ing down at them.

The boys were good swimmers. "Most cowboys leave swimmin' to their horses," their father had told them. "But I want you to know how to swim. It may come in mighty handy someday."

Butch began to cry. "Will it jump down and get us?" he whimpered.

While he swam Henry was doing some thinking. "Cats hate water," he whispered to Butch. "And that animal's a cat—a *wildcat*."

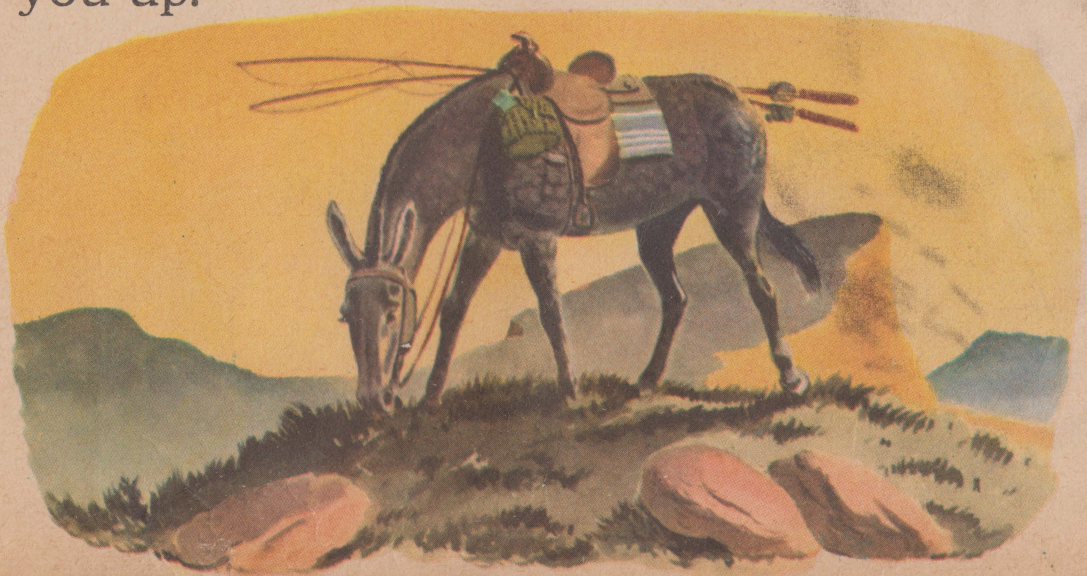
"Can't we swim across and go home the other way?" asked Butch.

"No," said Henry. "That cat could jump across this narrow stream like nothing. Then we'd be goners for sure. We *must* stay in the water. When you get tired hang on to me."

Sometimes they floated on their backs and watched the big cat. Once Henry thought he'd cheer Butch by singing one of their songs. But the words stuck in his throat.

Millie was nibbling grass and slowly heading for home. She always went home when she wasn't tied. When she arrived at her snail's pace, with the fish poles and lunch tied to the saddle, the folks would know there was trouble and come to get them.

"It won't be long, fella," crooned Henry. "Put your arms around my neck. I'll hold you up."



By and by the animal strolled away, but Henry knew they must not get out of the water until help came.

Then, as the sun was beginning to sink, they heard the sound of hoofs and finally voices—familiar voices that meant safety. Henry yelled with as much voice as he could muster, “We’re *here!* In the *water.*”

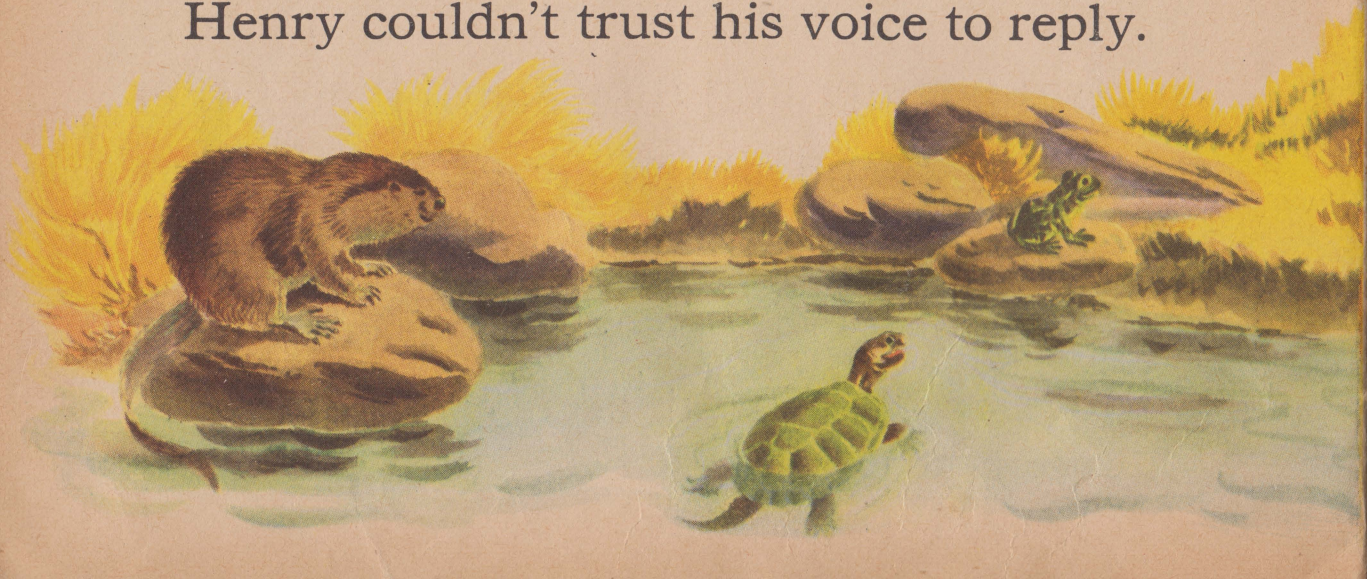


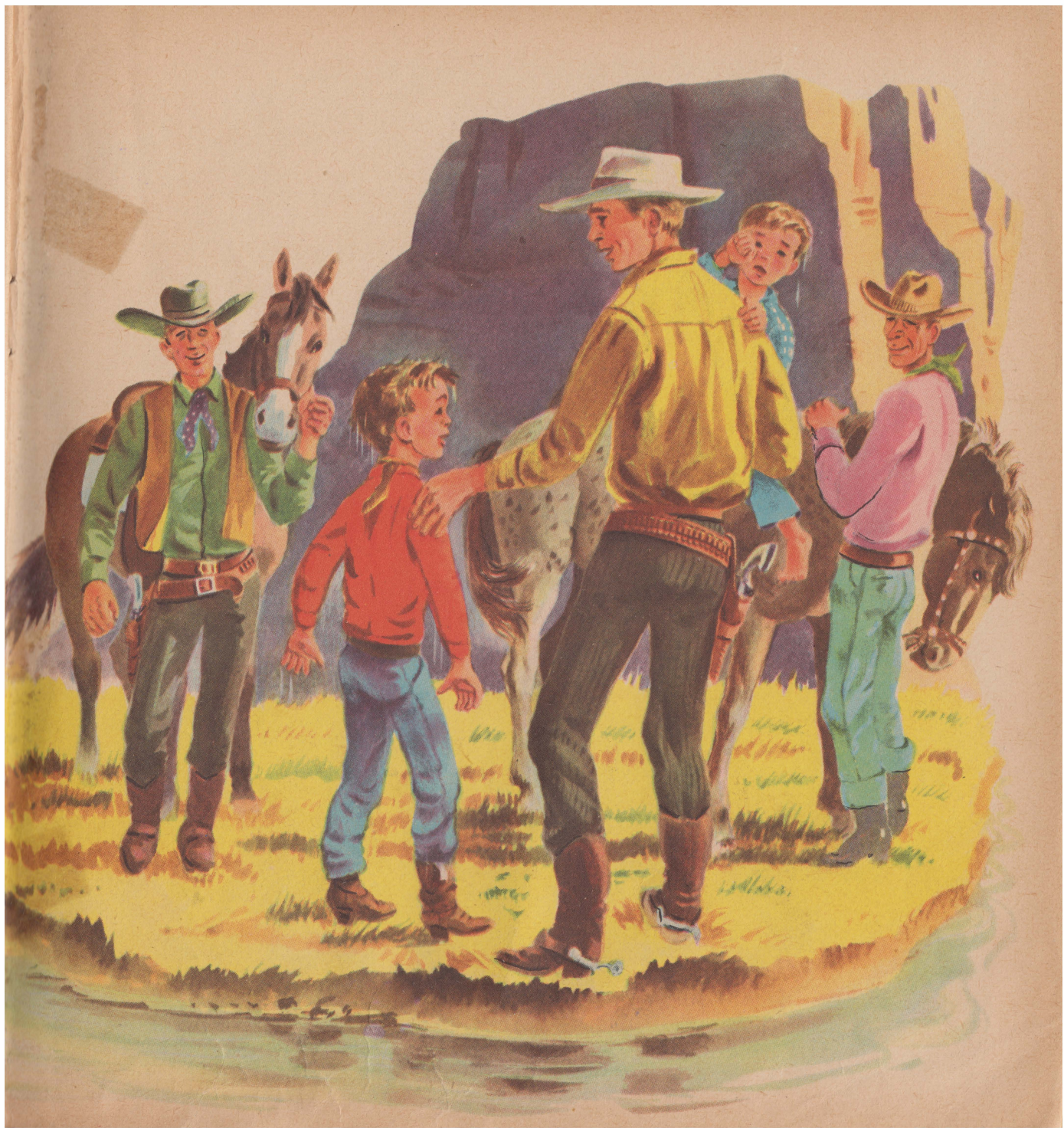


Soon strong hands lifted the weary boys from the water and they heard their father say, "We would a-been here earlier but we stopped to shoot a cat over yonder a piece. We were mighty fearful you'd met up with it and had trouble."

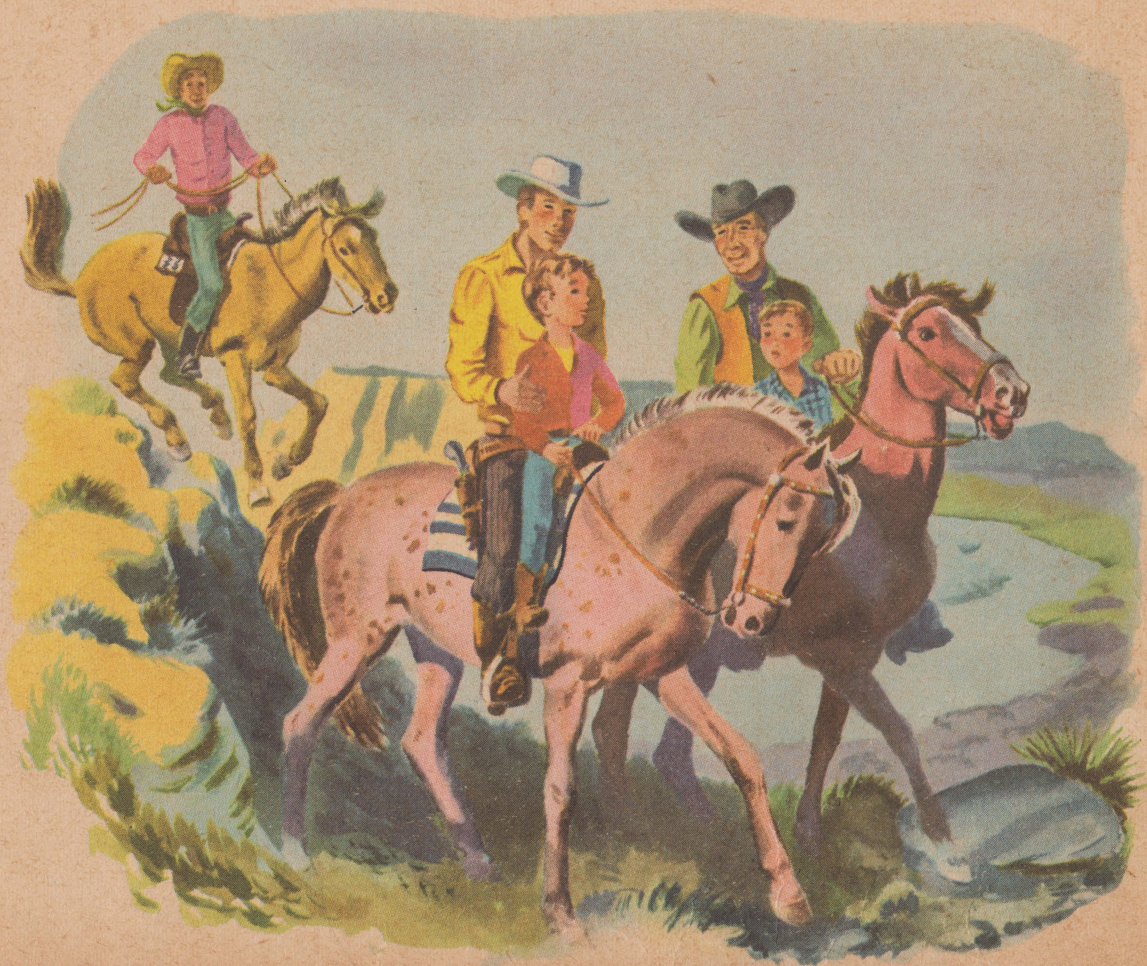
His father looked at Henry's white face and tight lips while he held the whimpering Butch in his arms. Father knew what had happened. Henry didn't need to tell him anything. He felt his father's hand on his shoulder and heard him say, "Guess I don't need to tell you that you saved the life of your brother and helped catch the thief that's been stealin' our calves. I'm proud of you, son."

Henry couldn't trust his voice to reply.





On the way home one of the men said,
“We’ll come back and get that critter’s skin
after supper. You can collect the bounty,
Henry. All we did was shoot it.”





At home Father told Mother all about it while she held Butch on her lap and fed him. Henry wasn't very hungry and said good night right after supper. But he could not sleep. He kept seeing the cold, blue water all around him. But when he remembered his father's words, "I'm proud of you, son," he felt better and went to sleep.

Next morning Henry was awakened by the sound of a horse near his window. "A horse has gotten out," he said to himself, "I'll put it in the corral." He looked out and saw, of all things, Shine *tied* to the window frame. "Well, of all the—" he began. He pulled on his clothes and ran to find his father.







His mother and father were at breakfast when Henry burst in shouting, "Dad, Shine's tied to my window."

"Yep, son, reckon he is," said his father biting into a doughnut.

Henry waited for his father to say more. His father finished the doughnut and took a long drink of coffee. Then he said, "You're a *man*, Henry, and you'll be needin' a horse."

"Oh, Dad!" shrieked Henry and he was about to burst with joy.



His father stood up, put his hand on Henry's shoulder, and said, "We'll be needin' an extra hand at fall roundup. How'd you like to go?"







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