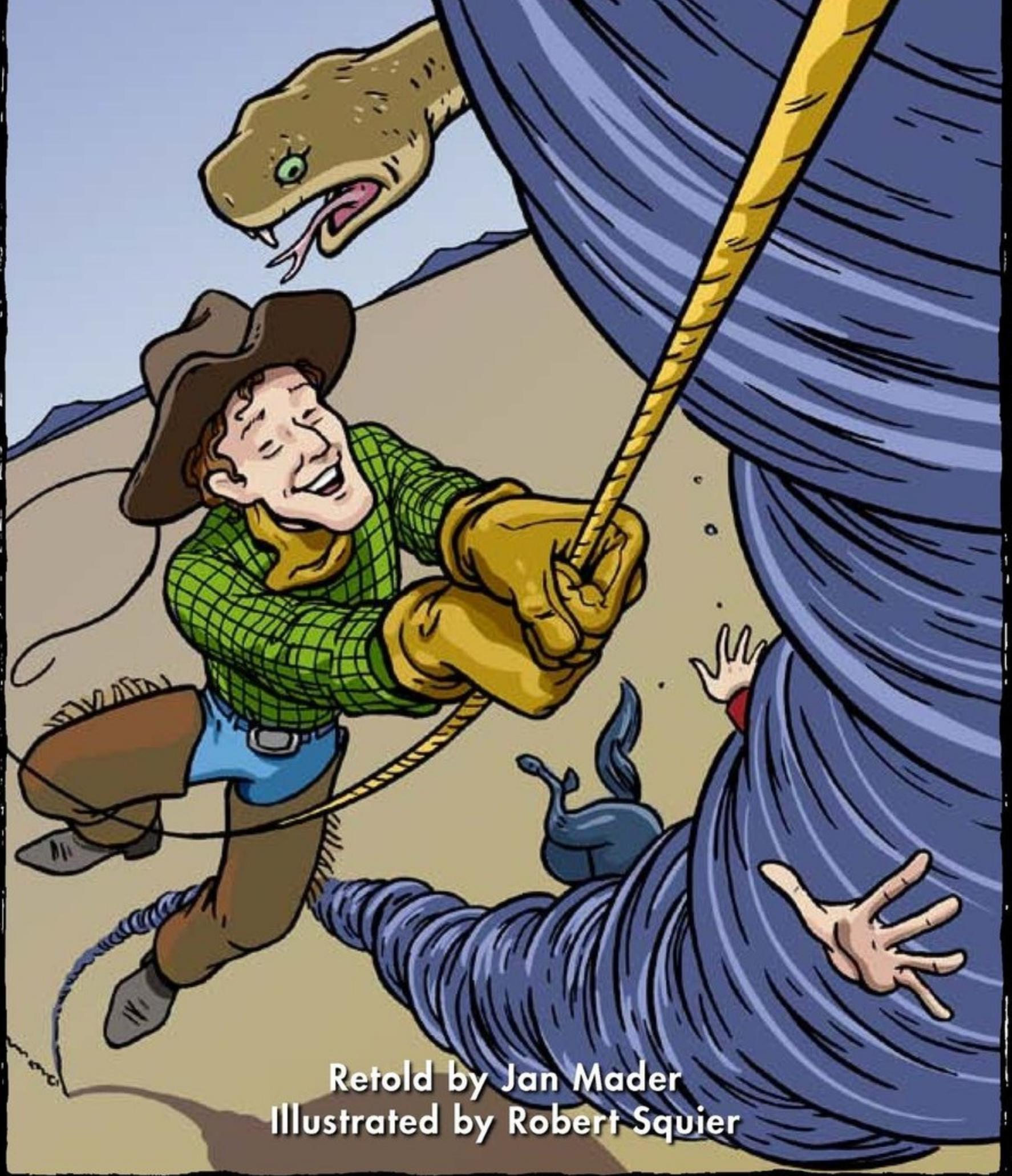


LEVELED Book • O

Pecos Bill Rides a Tornado



Retold by Jan Mader
Illustrated by Robert Squier

Pecos Bill Rides a Tornado

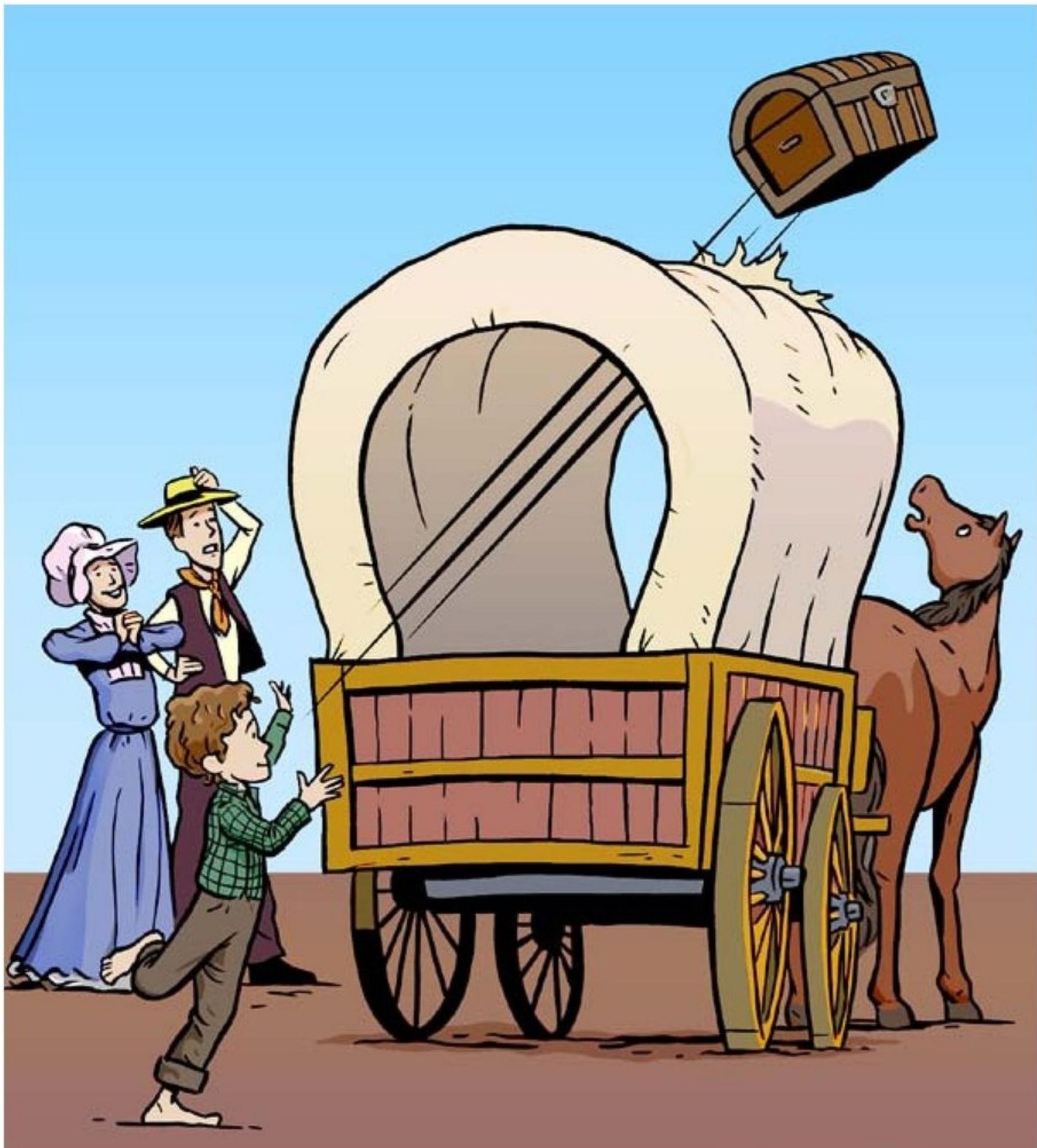


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Pecos Bill was the greatest cowboy who ever lived. He was as wild as a tumbleweed in a whirlwind. But how did he get that way?

Bill was a mighty **tyke** who was only four years old when his family decided to move out West. Some boys would have **dreaded** such a long trip, but not Bill. “Yee-haw!” he shouted when he heard the news. Though he was young, Bill was as tough as any **pioneer**.



Bill helped his family get ready for their journey by tossing heavy furniture into the wagon.

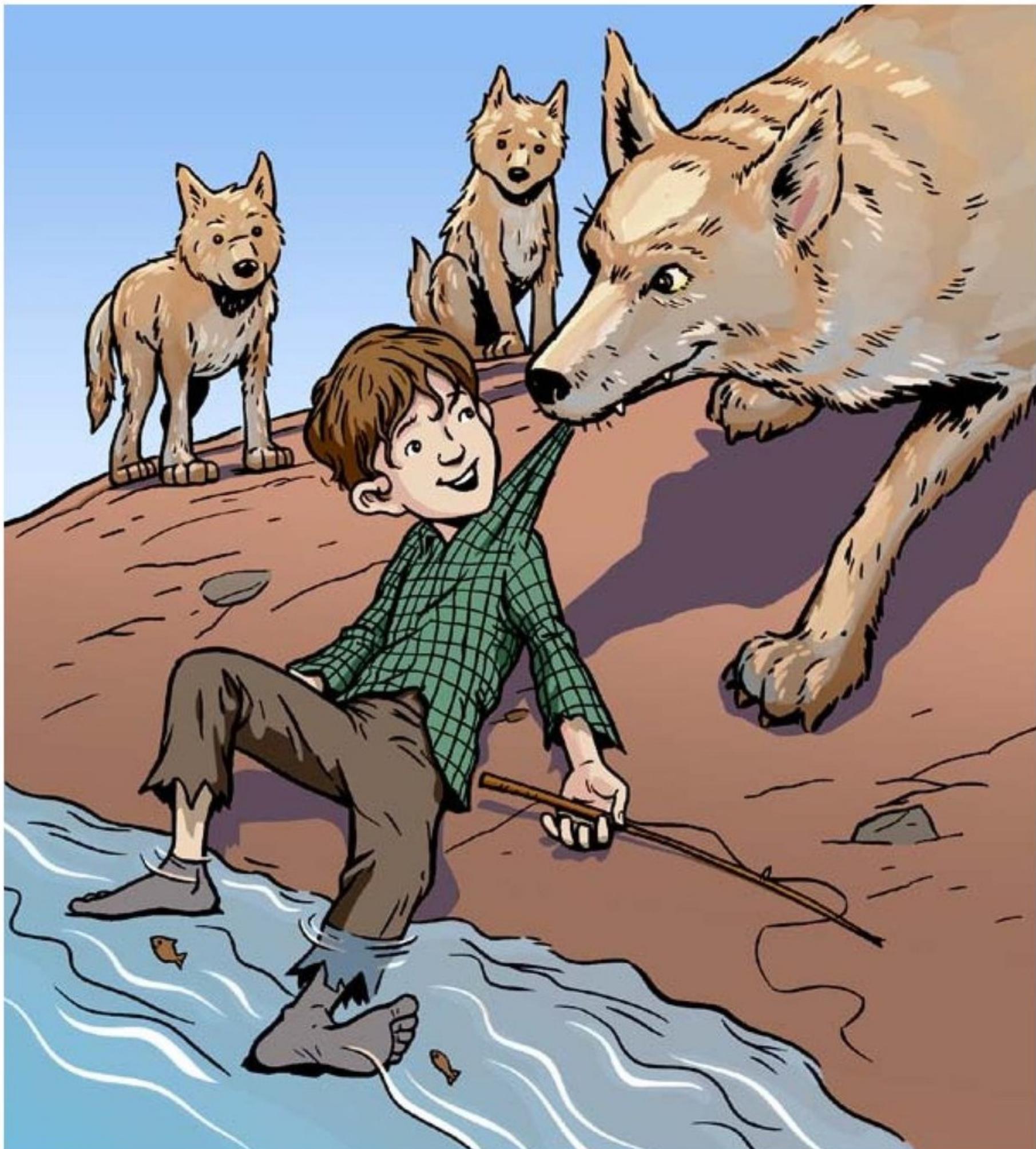
“He’s as strong as a bull!” said his mother.

“No, he’s as strong as three bulls!” said his father.

Soon, Bill's family was ready to leave. The covered wagon rumbled and tumbled west on dusty roads. After many weeks of hard traveling, they came to the Pecos River in Texas.

While the wagon was crossing the river, Bill tossed out his fishing line. A fish just about as big as all of New England pulled Bill right into the water!





That fish dragged Bill far downriver from his family. Bill thought he would surely drown, but an old coyote saw him struggling and ran to save him. That coyote mother must've felt sorry for Bill because she pulled him from the water. Her pack adopted Bill and taught him the ways of the wild.

Bill grew up faster than weeds in a cornfield. First his shirt popped off and then his trousers. He **romped** with the coyotes by day and howled with them at night.

Bill lived with the coyotes for fifteen years. Then one day, a cowboy riding along the Pecos River caught sight of Bill.





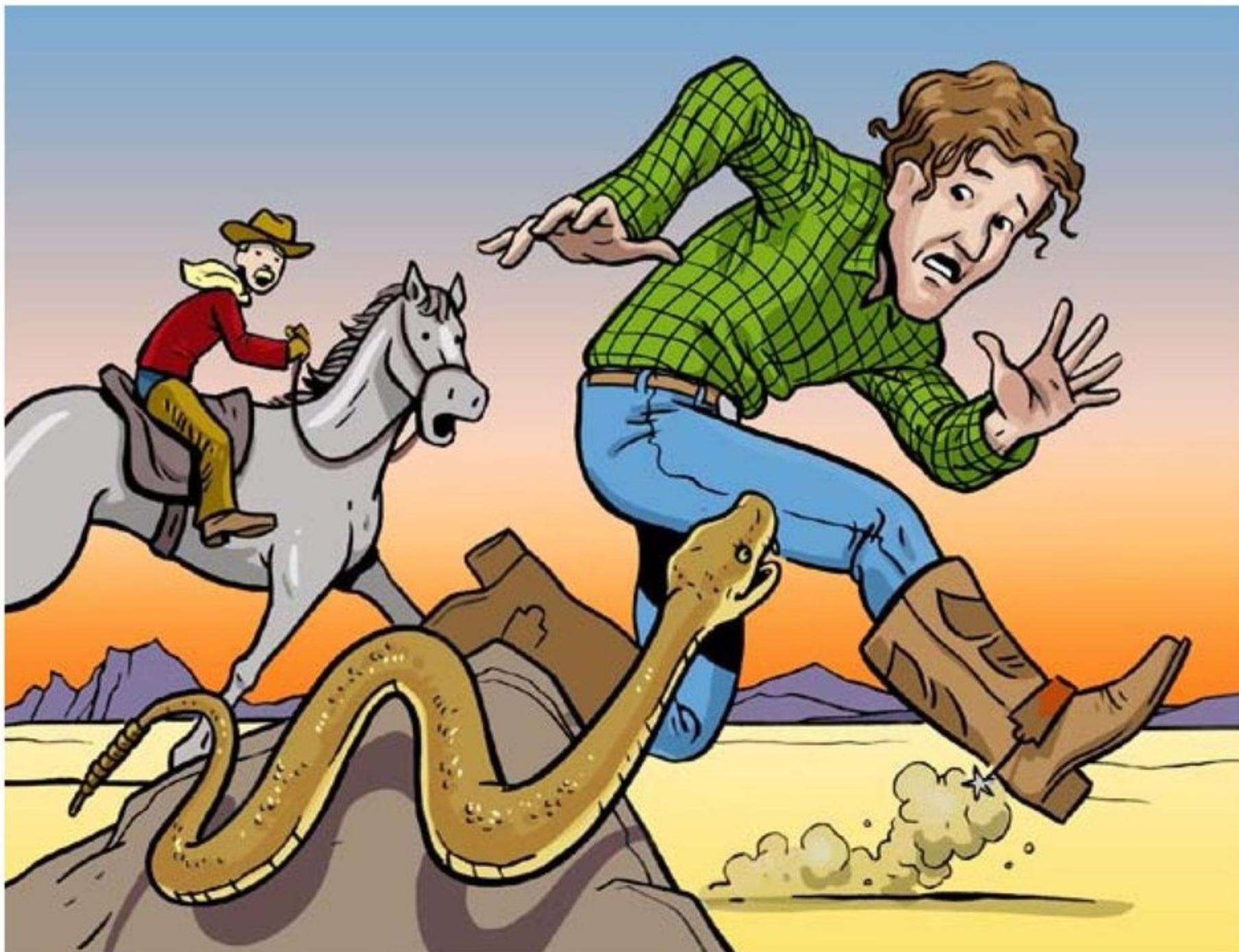
“Hey, kid,” said the cowboy, “where in the world are your clothes?”

“I’m a coyote, not a kid,” said Bill, “and coyotes don’t wear clothes!”

“Well, I’ll be!” said the cowboy. “But if you’re a coyote, then where’s your tail?”

Bill looked for his tail but couldn’t find one and got confused. “Well, if I’m not a coyote,” said Bill, “what am I?”

“You’re a mighty big boy,” laughed the cowboy.



The cowboy gave Bill some clothes.
“My name’s Curly Joe,” said the cowboy.
“What’s yours?”

“I’m Bill,” said Bill.

“I think Pecos Bill is a better name for you,” said the cowboy. And so it was.

Curly Joe rode off on his horse, and Bill ran alongside him. A rattlesnake behind a rock struck Bill’s leg. But Bill’s leg was so tough that the snake’s fangs couldn’t break his skin.



Bill laughed as he pulled the snake off his leg. "Well, snake," said Bill, "I guess you can come along with us now." The snake curled around Bill's shoulders as friendly as a kitten.

Curly Joe, Bill, and the snake came upon a camp filled with outlaws. When they saw Bill with a live rattlesnake wrapped around his neck, the outlaws gasped.

“What do you want?” asked the outlaws fearfully. “Food,” said Bill, “and water.”

Curly Joe and Bill spent the night. The next day, Bill watched as the outlaws practiced their cattle roping. “Let me show you the right way to use a **lasso**,” said Bill as he picked up a rope. Bill lassoed the hats off the outlaws’ heads. He lassoed **embers** from the campfire. Bill even lassoed the horns off a toad.



Bill saw a wild black horse near the outlaws' camp. "What's that horse doing out there?" Bill asked. "Her name's Widow-Maker," said the outlaws. "There's not a man alive that can ride that horse."

Quick as a whistle, Bill was on the black horse's back. She bucked. She kicked. She tossed Bill as high as the clouds, but Bill still landed on her back. For three days and nights, Widow-Maker tried to throw Bill to the ground. Finally, the horse realized she had met her match and decided to be friends.





One day in early spring, a storm came roaring in over the desert. Lightning flashed like fireworks, and rain pelted the rocks. The storm grew into a tornado. It swept up the snake, Curly Joe, and Widow-Maker and twisted them into the sky.

Acting fast to save his friends, Bill used his lasso to catch the ugly tornado by the tail. The twister spun him like an out-of-control locomotive. Bill hung onto his rope as the tornado pulled him high into the air.



Though he was miles above the ground, Bill wasn't worried. He put one hand over the other on his rope and climbed to the top of the tornado. He rode that tornado like a wild **bronco**.

The tornado twisted and turned until it finally put the snake, Widow-Maker, and Curly Joe safely back on the ground.

“Yippee!” Bill yelled as he kicked the tornado again. This time, the tornado spun toward a rainbow that was in their path.

Bill lassoed the rainbow and pulled it down to the desert. He didn’t let go of that rainbow. He yanked it everywhere. Before long, the whole desert was full of colors that rubbed off the rainbow onto the rocks. They call it the Painted Desert nowadays.

And that’s how Pecos Bill became the greatest cowboy who ever lived.



Glossary

bronco (<i>n.</i>)	a wild or untamed horse (p. 14)
dreaded (<i>v.</i>)	feared greatly (p. 3)
embers (<i>n.</i>)	glowing coals left in a campfire after the flames have gone out (p. 11)
lasso (<i>n.</i>)	a rope tied with a special knot and used to catch animals (from a Spanish word) (p. 11)
pioneer (<i>n.</i>)	a person who was among the first non-natives to settle in the western United States (p. 3)
romped (<i>v.</i>)	ran or played with great energy (p. 7)
tyke (<i>n.</i>)	a small child (p. 3)

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Level O Leveled Book
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