

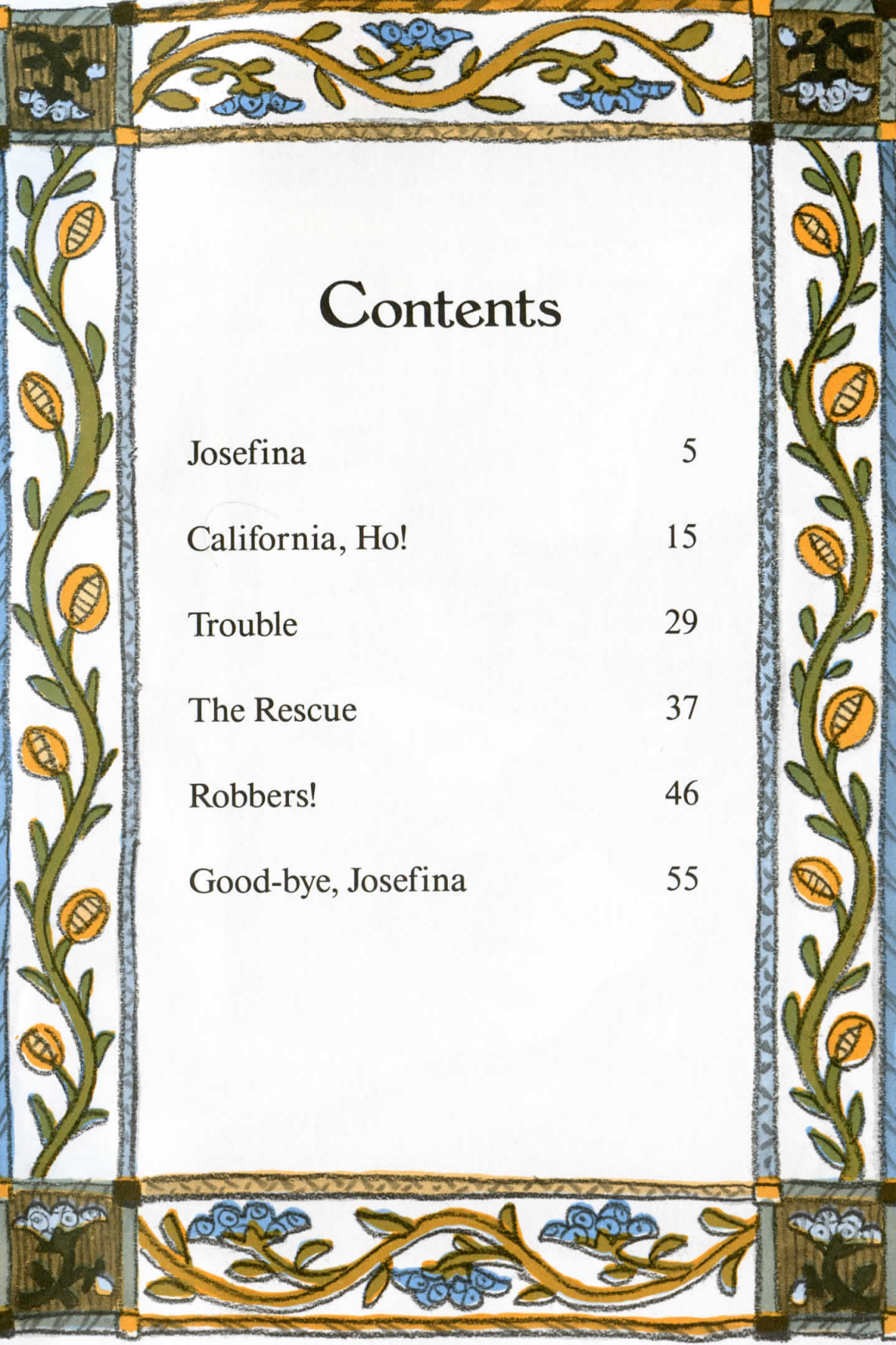
An I Can Read Book™

READING
3
ALONE

Eleanor Coerr
**The Josefina
Story Quilt**



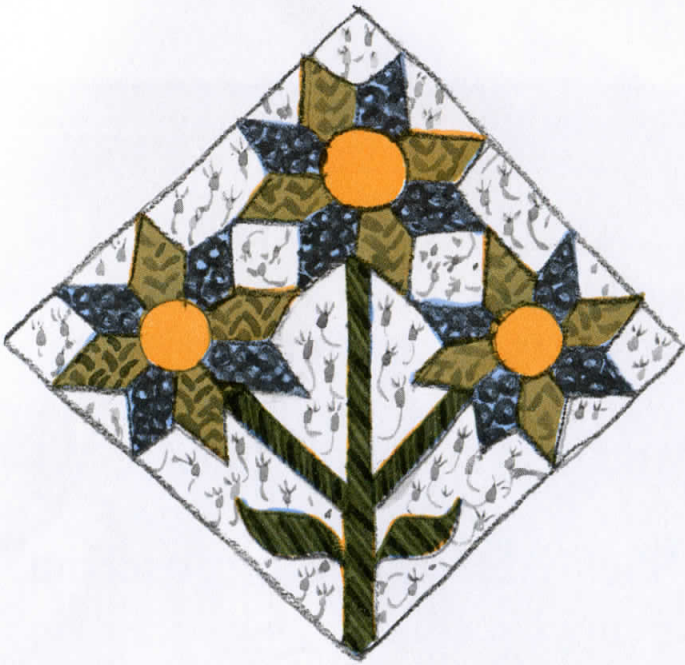
Pictures by Bruce Degen

The page is framed by a decorative border. The top and bottom borders feature a repeating pattern of stylized blue flowers and green vines on a yellow background. The left and right borders consist of a green vine with yellow, oval-shaped fruits or leaves. The corners are decorated with small, stylized floral motifs.

Contents

Josefina	5
California, Ho!	15
Trouble	29
The Rescue	37
Robbers!	46
Good-bye, Josefina	55





Josefina

It was May 1850.

Faith was excited.

They were going to California
in a covered wagon.

“Please,” Faith asked Ma,

“can I take Josefina?”

Josefina was her pet hen
and Faith loved her.

She liked the way Josefina
snuggled in her arms.

She liked the way Josefina
followed her around.

Ma was baking bread
for the long journey.

“Ask your Pa,” she said.





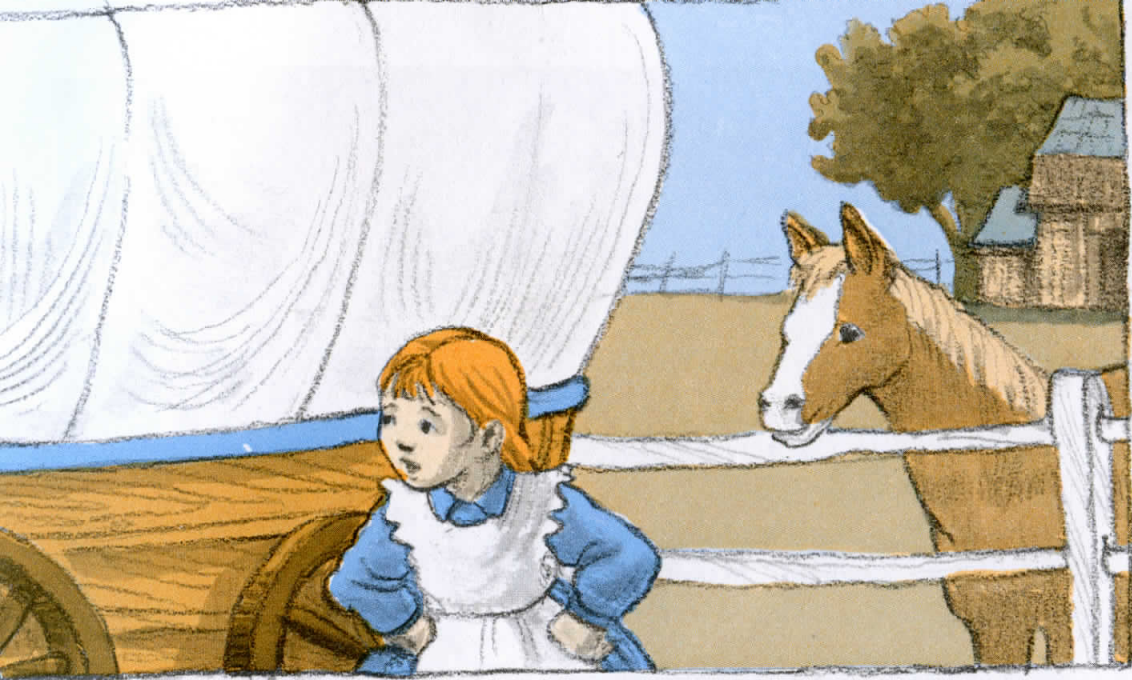
Pa and Faith's brother, Adam,
were loading the wagon.

"Please, Pa," Faith said,

"please can I take Josefina?"

"There is no room in the wagon
for pets," Pa said.

"That isn't fair," said Faith.



“Adam can bring his colt.”

“A colt is not a pet,” said Pa.

“A colt can carry a load of corn.”

“What can Josefina do?”

teased Adam.

“She is too old to lay eggs
and too tough to eat.”

Faith's eyes filled with tears.

She ran back to the house.

Ma sat down in the rocker
and held Faith on her lap.

"We all must leave things behind,"
she said gently.

"I love this rocker,
but there is no room for it
in the wagon."

Faith gulped down her sobs.



“I have looked after Josefina
since she was a little chick,”
she said.

“What will happen to her?”





“Perhaps a neighbor
will take her,” said Ma.
But nobody wanted a hen
that was too old to lay eggs
and too tough to eat.





California, Ho!

Early in the morning
the wagon was ready.

It had blue trim
and a white cloth roof.

Ma stood back to admire it.

“A big flowerpot on wheels!”
she said.

“Isn’t it beautiful?”

Faith did not answer.

She was worried about Josefina.



“Did you pack the food?”

Ma asked Pa.

“And my kitchen things?”

Pa nodded.

“Then that is everything
except the bedding,” said Ma.

Faith thought sadly,

“And Josefina.”

Pa threw mattresses
into the wagon.

Ma carefully spread
their patchwork quilts over them.



“We can’t leave these behind,”
she said.

“All our joys and sorrows
are sewn up into the patches.”

Faith picked up Josefina
and held her close.

“We can’t leave my hen, either,”
she said.



“Josefina MUST stay!” Pa said.

“So put her down.”

Faith just stood there.

She stroked Josefina’s feathers
and tried hard not to cry.

Ma gave Pa a special look.

Pa sighed.

“All right, Faith,” he said.

“But if she makes any trouble,
OUT SHE GOES!”

“Thank you, Pa!” cried Faith.

“She will be good, I promise.”





Faith put Josefina in her cage.

Pa hung it high up
at the back of the wagon.

Then he lifted Faith
up next to it.

Ma handed her the ragbag.

“Work on a patch
whenever you can,” she said.

Faith knew how important
quilts were for remembering.



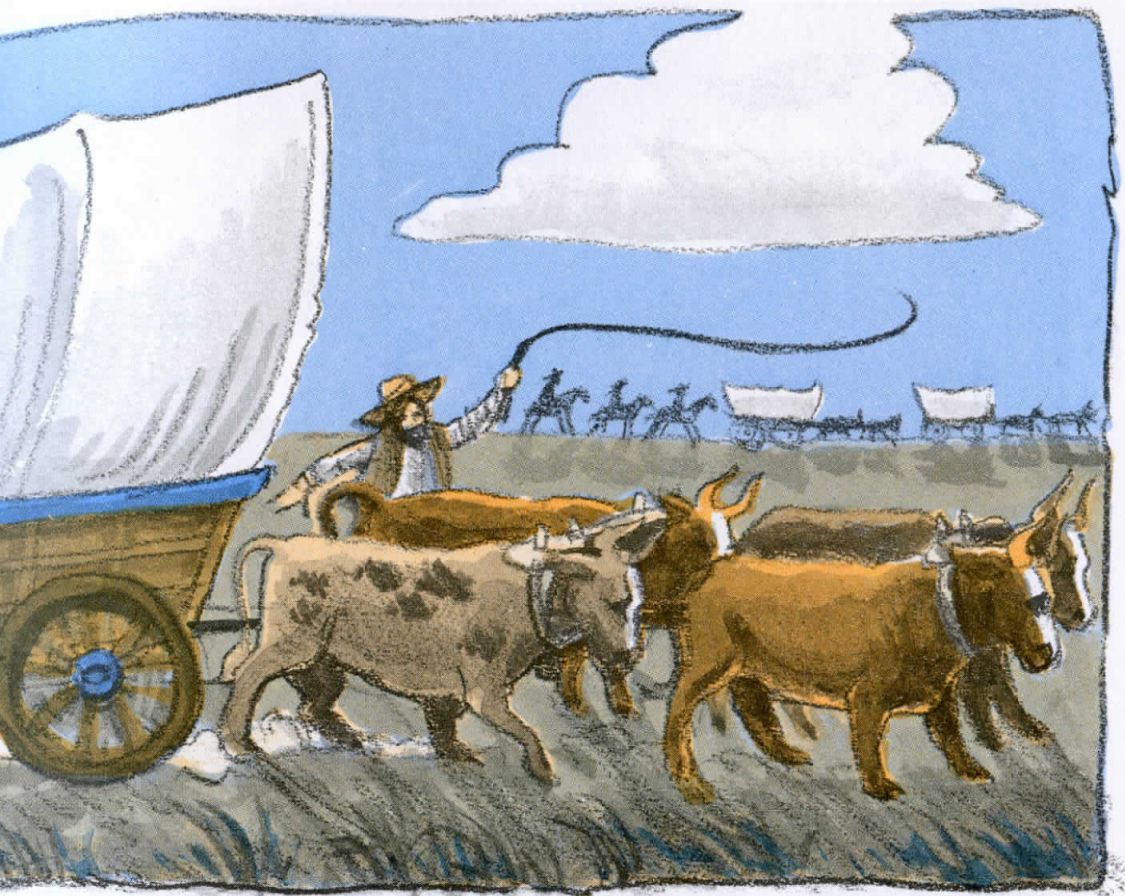


“California, ho!” shouted Pa.

He snapped his long whip.

C R A A A A C K!

The oxen began to move.



Their bells tinkled.

The heavy wagon chains clanked.

And the wheels began
their creaky song.



Faith smiled happily at Josefina.

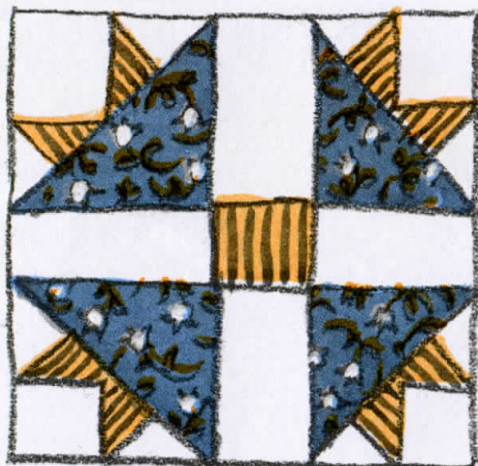
This would be their home
on the long trail West.

Faith took some calico
from the ragbag.

“I will make my first
wagon train patch,” she said.

Faith began to sew a wagon wheel
with careful, tiny stitches.





Trouble

At night

the wagons made a circle
around the animals.

Women cooked the meals
over a campfire.



Afterward,
there was singing and banjo music.
Faith put down
the wagon wheel patch
and let Josefina out for a stretch.

Suddenly,

“W O O O O F!”

A dog ran up to Josefina
and barked fiercely at her.
Josefina squawked and ran.
“Come back!” yelled Faith.





But it was too late.

Josefina was in the middle
of the animals.

Horses snorted and reared.



Cows kicked and mooed.

Oxen bellowed.

“That pesky hen!” Pa shouted,
and ran after her.



“She almost started a stampede,”

Pa said angrily.

“OUT SHE GOES!”

“Please, Pa,” begged Faith,

“give her one more chance.



It was the dog's fault."

"Faith is right," said Ma.

"I saw the whole thing."

Pa put Josefina back in her cage.

"Just one more chance," he said.

That night, Faith whispered,
“Josefina, please try to be good.”
“Cluck!...Cluck!...Cluck!”
said the hen.

They understood one another
as true friends do.





The Rescue

For a long time

Josefina was good.

She quietly watched Faith
sew patches for the quilt.

She didn't make a sound
when hail beat down on the roof,
or when spring rains blew in
and soaked her feathers.

She made just a little cluck
when coyotes howled at night.
But how Josefina fussed
when they crossed rivers!

One day they came
to a wide, muddy river.
Josefina made so much noise
that Faith had to take her
out of the cage.
She held her close.
“It’s all right,” Faith crooned.





Pa was driving the oxen into the river,
when S Q U O O O O S H!

A back wheel sank into a hole.



Faith let go of Josefina.

Josefina fell into the river.

The current carried her away.



“Help!” cried Faith.

“Save Josefina!”

Adam jumped into the river,
but the current was too strong.

It took three men
to get them out.

“That does it!” Pa shouted.

“She is too old to lay eggs,
too tough to eat,
and she falls into rivers.

OUT SHE GOES!”



Just then

Josefina ruffled her feathers,

let out a proud

“Caaaa—CACKLE—ackle!”

and laid a beautiful big white egg.

“By thunder!” Pa said.



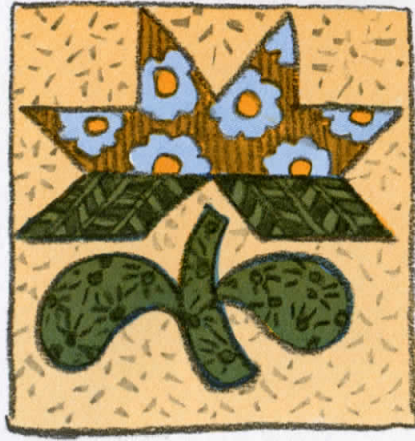
“She has begun to lay eggs again.”

“Wonderful!” said Ma.

“Now we will have fresh eggs.”

So Josefina stayed.

Faith found a white scrap
for the egg patch.



Robbers!

Spring turned into summer.

The desert was hot and dry.

Faith counted her patches.

Now she had fifteen.

It was time to sew one
about the desert.

But one bad thing

came after another.

Wagon wheels kept falling off.

There was not enough food

for the animals.

Then three oxen died.

Pa had to throw out his heavy tools

and Ma's black iron stove.

Two old people died.

They were buried

beside the trail.

Nobody laughed or sang

or smiled anymore.

Faith was always hungry,
but she walked on and on.
She looked for grain or seeds
for Josefina.

It was worse in the hills.

The trail was rocky and steep.

One morning Indians came to trade
buffalo meat and water.

They wanted Ma's quilts.

"Never!" said Ma.

"I would rather starve."

They wanted Josefina.



“Never!” cried Faith.

“I would rather die.”



So Pa traded extra clothes
for food and water.

Everyone felt better
after a good meal.

Soon the food was gone.

“If those Indians come back,”

Pa told Faith,

“we must trade Josefina for water.”

Faith prayed hard

that they would never return.



The night was bitter cold.
Men slept under the wagons.
Ma gave the quilts
to Pa and Adam.
She and Faith
bundled in old blankets.



About midnight

two robbers crept into camp.

They sneaked up to the wagon.

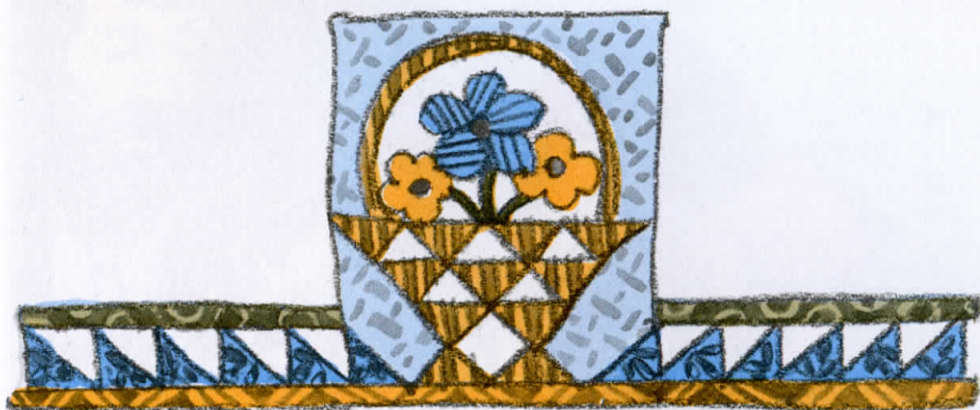
When they reached for the quilts,
Josefina heard them.

“CACKLE! CACKLE! CACKLE!”
she squawked.



Everyone woke up
and the robbers ran away.
Pa laughed for the first time
in days.

“Josefina may be old,” he said,
“but she is a humdinger
of a watchdog.”



Good-bye, Josefina

Pa reached for the cage
to thank Josefina,
but the poor old hen
was lying on the cage floor.
Faith hid her face against Ma.



“You must be brave,”

Ma said softly.

“Josefina lived a good long life.”

“You can be proud of her,”

Pa added.

“She died helping us,” said Adam.

Faith did not feel better.

She cried and cried.

Ma hugged her
for a long time.

The next morning
they had a funeral for Josefina.

Faith wrapped her
in the prettiest scrap of cloth.

Adam buried her
under a tall pine tree.



“I miss her so!”

Faith said between sobs.

At last Faith dried her eyes
and reached for the ragbag.

“I will sew a pine tree patch
for Josefina,” she said.



Soon the wagon train
found food and water.
When they reached California,
Faith finished the patches.



Pa built a quilting frame
in their new cabin.

The family helped Faith
stitch the patches together
into a quilt.

The quilt covered Faith's bed.

Every day the patches
helped them remember
the good times
and the bad times
on the wagon train.



And every night
Faith felt warm and happy
under the Josefina story quilt.