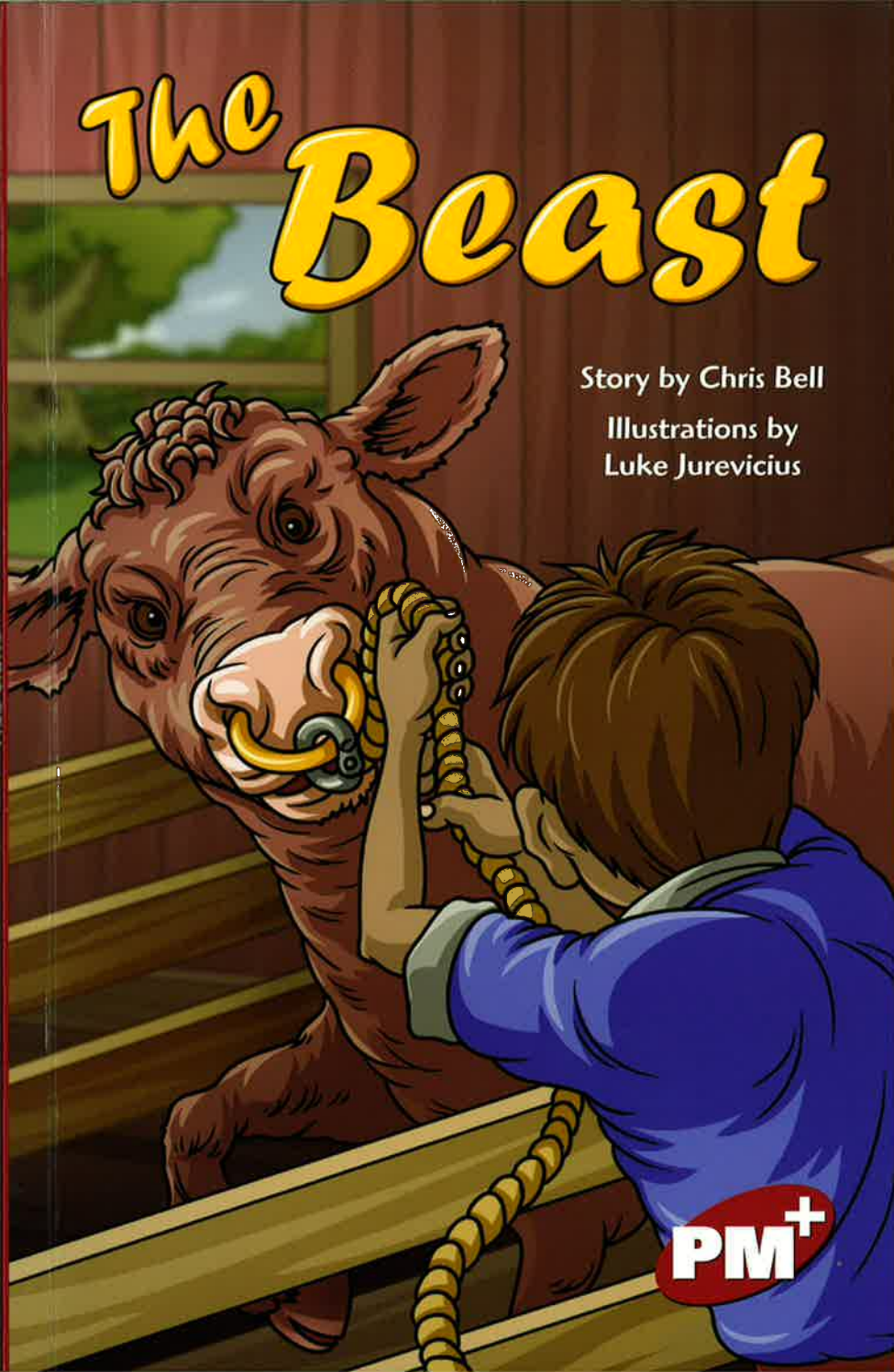
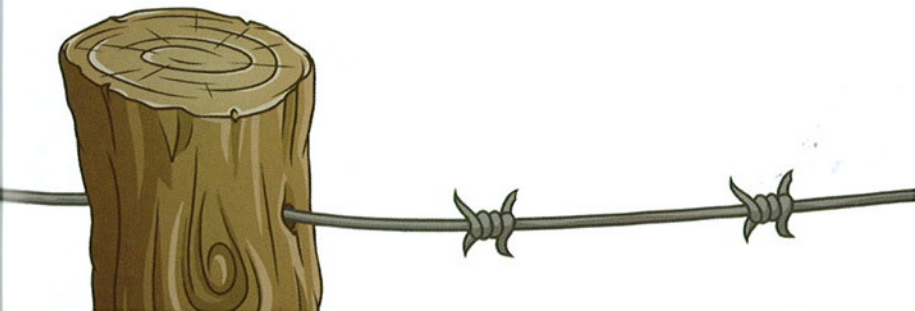

The Beast
Story by Chris Bell
Illustrations by
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PM+

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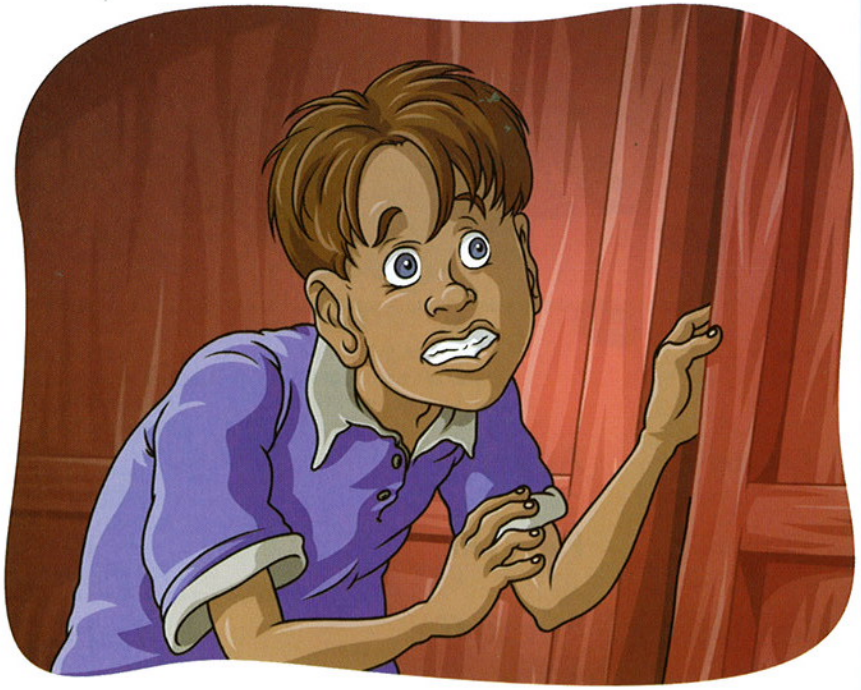


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Chapter 1

As If!



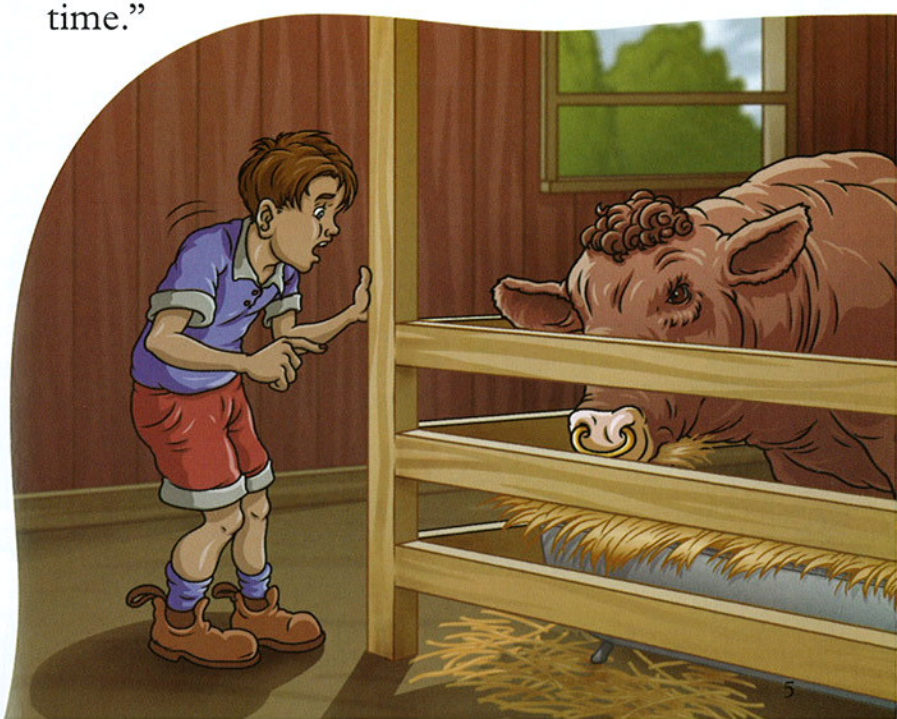
Bryn stood outside the barn stalling for time. He cringed when he heard the beast snorting inside.

Was it still in its stall? Or had it broken free? There was only one way to find out. Bryn took a deep breath and threw open the barn door.

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"Phew!" he sighed with relief. Drago was still inside his stall. "Come on, you lazy bull," said Bryn. "You're going back to the paddock." The enormous animal turned his head and stared at Bryn. Then he snorted again and turned back to munch from the hay trough.

"Don't ignore me, Drago. You've only lived in luxury while the paddock fence was being replaced. You're going back to where you belong – outside! Behave yourself this time."



Bryn hung back warily. He didn't trust the old bull one bit. His foot still ached from the huge bruise he'd gained from their last meeting. That time Drago had refused to leave his paddock and he'd stepped on Bryn's foot in protest.

Bryn didn't understand why he had to take Drago back to his paddock. Why couldn't Cara do it?

His stepsister was great with animals. They liked her and would do anything she wanted. But Bryn had no luck! Every time he went near an animal he came away with another bite, scratch or bruise.

It wasn't his choice to live on a farm. Just because his family was animal crazy, it didn't mean he had to be, too.

Bryn reached over the stall and attached the lead to the metal ring through the bull's nose. Enormous eyes turned to stare at Bryn and he saw the animal tense his muscles. Bryn knew he was in for a battle.



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After five minutes of tugging and pulling, begging and threatening, Bryn had failed to make the stubborn animal move at all. Drago kept munching on hay and ignored the frustrated boy beside him.

"Hey! Haven't you moved Drago back to the paddock yet?" asked Cara, coming into the barn. "Come on, old boy," she said, slapping the bull lightly on his rump.

Bryn could hardly believe his eyes. Drago backed out of the stall as if to say, "ready when you are." Bryn scowled and tugged on the rope. "Be nice to him," said Cara. "He's sweet as a lamb if you treat him right. You two could become friends!"

"Yeah right," said Bryn, dodging Drago's hooves. "He's about as sweet as a Tyrannosaurus Rex," he hissed. "And I know which one I'd rather be friends with."

As soon as they were out of Cara's sight, Drago took off at a trot, dragging Bryn along behind him.

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"Slow down," Bryn yelled, struggling to keep up. But Drago trotted on even faster. Bryn dug his heels into the soft earth, but Drago ploughed on, plunging Bryn headfirst into the mud. Bryn dropped the lead rope. The bull looked back over his shoulder, snorted and walked away to munch on some grass.

All the way back to the paddock the bull was well behaved but Bryn wasn't fooled. As if he would ever be friends with that beast!

