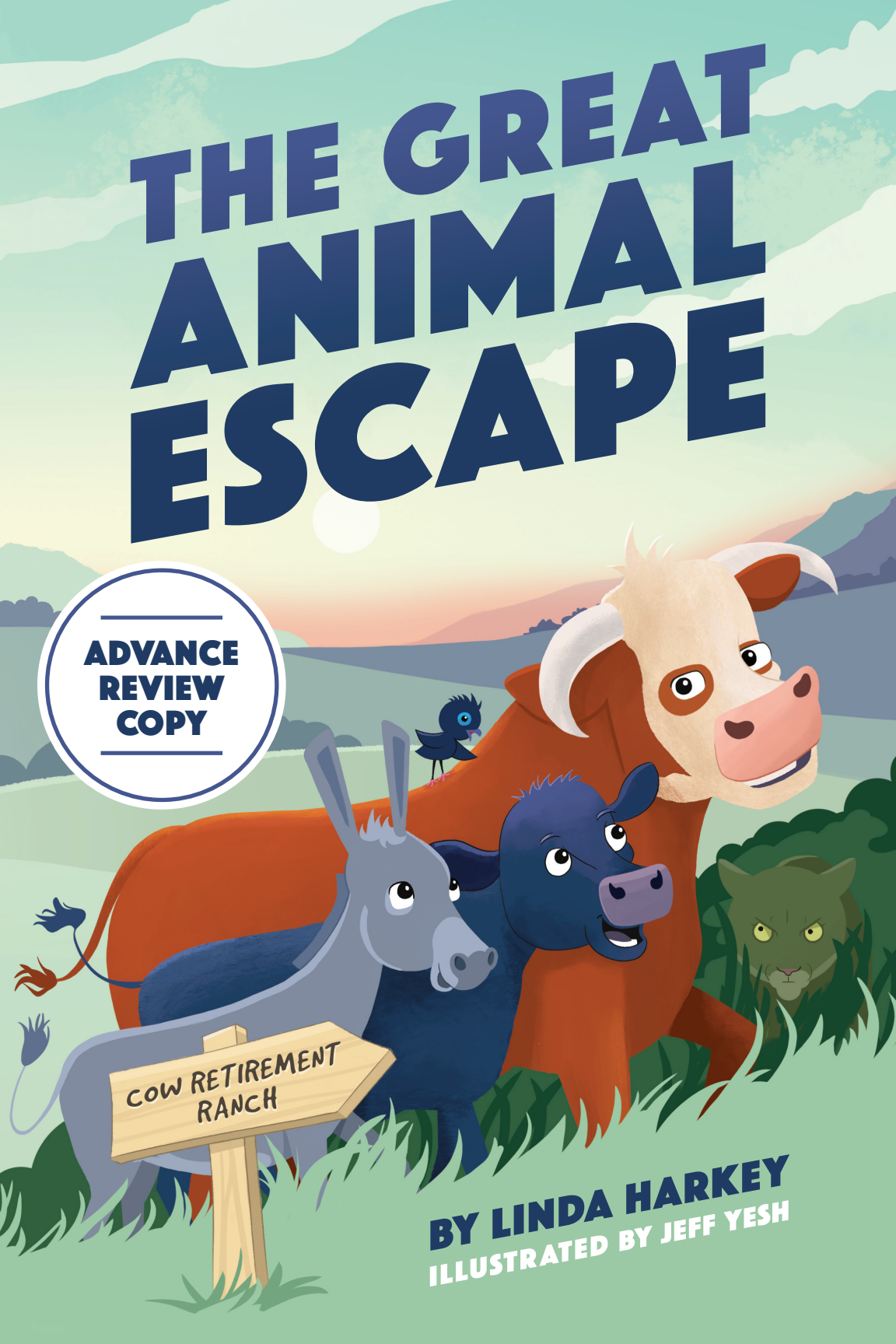
THE GREAT ANIMAL ESCAPE

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BY LINDA HARKEY

ILLUSTRATED BY JEFF YESH

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This book is dedicated to
Uriah Smart
The first great-grandson in our family

- Linda Harkey

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COWLICK RANCH
COWLICK RANCH
COOKING SCHOOL
BUS



CHAPTER 1
Going to Cooking School?

The red animal bus bounced over the potholes and gravel on the country road, sending dirt and rocks flying everywhere. The bus jerked to a stop at the entrance to Cowlick Ranch. Clouds of dust whirled upward. Cows and two-legged creatures called People swarmed around the open gate. The People prodded the Angus and Hereford bulls and cows aboard the bus.

No one noticed that two animals were missing —Lova-Bull, a small but powerful dark-red Hereford bull, and Mud Pie, a black Angus cow.

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Lova-Bull and Mud Pie hid beneath a large yellow aspen tree. The aspen was surrounded by evergreen trees, right along the bank of the murky Raven River. Above them, a tree held a gigantic raven nest packed with seven chirping chicks.

The nest was woven out of cow hair, bark strips, and grass. It measured five ravens wide and two ravens high. Both animals ignored the shouting and mooing from the bus and the commotion of shrieking birds in the nest.

The bull watched the cow closely.

Lova-Bull thought, *She chews her cud like those little two-legged creatures when they have globs of gum in their mouth. She can eat and moo at the same time. What a great friend. She's my kind of cow!*

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At that moment, the fall wind rushed from the north. It whirled and whistled through the trees. Bright red, yellow, and brown leaves were ripped from branches. They scattered through the air and littered the ground.

Bernie was one of the silvery black raven chicks in the big nest. The whirlwind swept him out of his home. He sailed from the nest and landed on Mud Pie's back.

Afraid that he might fall, Bernie sank his tiny pink claws into the cow. The chicks in this nest fell out so frequently, cattle in the herd rarely paid any attention to them.

Mud Pie jerked her head up. She snorted and mooed, "Is that you, Bernie?"

"Yep," Bernie cawed. "Hey, I heard the bus is taking the herd to cooking school today. They're going to learn how to make hamburgers. Why

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aren't you both going with them?"

Lova-Bull grunted, "Gracie told us something that scared us silly. That old gray burro said that we weren't going to cooking school to learn how to make hamburgers. Hamburgers were going to be made out of us!"

