



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 48

By Carol Patton

Chapter 48

Living on Mars

Finchy's tiny body was strapped to a chair that was inside a cage. That cage was inside a second cage.

Mo turned on the switch.

The chair began tilting sideways, forward, backward, upside down, and then right side up again at a fast speed. Finchy couldn't wait for this part of his astronaut training to be over.

“This isn't as easy as I thought it would be,” said Finchy, a bit dizzy after this ride. “Do I really need to travel in a spaceship to go to Mars? Couldn't I fly there on my own, just wearing a spacesuit?”

Mo laughed at the thought of Finchy in a spacesuit. Did they even make them that small?

As explorers, Mo and Finchy wanted to be the first dog and bird on Mars. But Finchy would not be able to fly to Mars. It would take him about nine months – without stopping – to fly to the red planet and another nine months to return to Earth. Mars is about thirty-nine million miles away. He would need a spaceship.

Earlier that morning, Mo and Finchy had traveled on top of the delivery truck for almost six hours along Interstate 65 North. After passing highway signs for cities named Mobile, Homewood, and Madison, they entered a city called Huntsville. Alex, the truck driver, needed to deliver supplies to a museum called the U.S. Space & Rocket Center.

That's when Mo and Finchy saw the sign: Space Camp. Humans come here to train like astronauts. The ride that Finchy was on would help astronauts learn how to steer or control their spaceship if it started tumbling through space.

They both thought that it would be very cool to travel through outer space, land on different planets, and meet all sorts of aliens. Would they be very different from humans or animals on Earth?

But then Mo thought about all of the animals he and Finchy had already met on their journey. Some hung upside down. Others had hard shells covering most of their

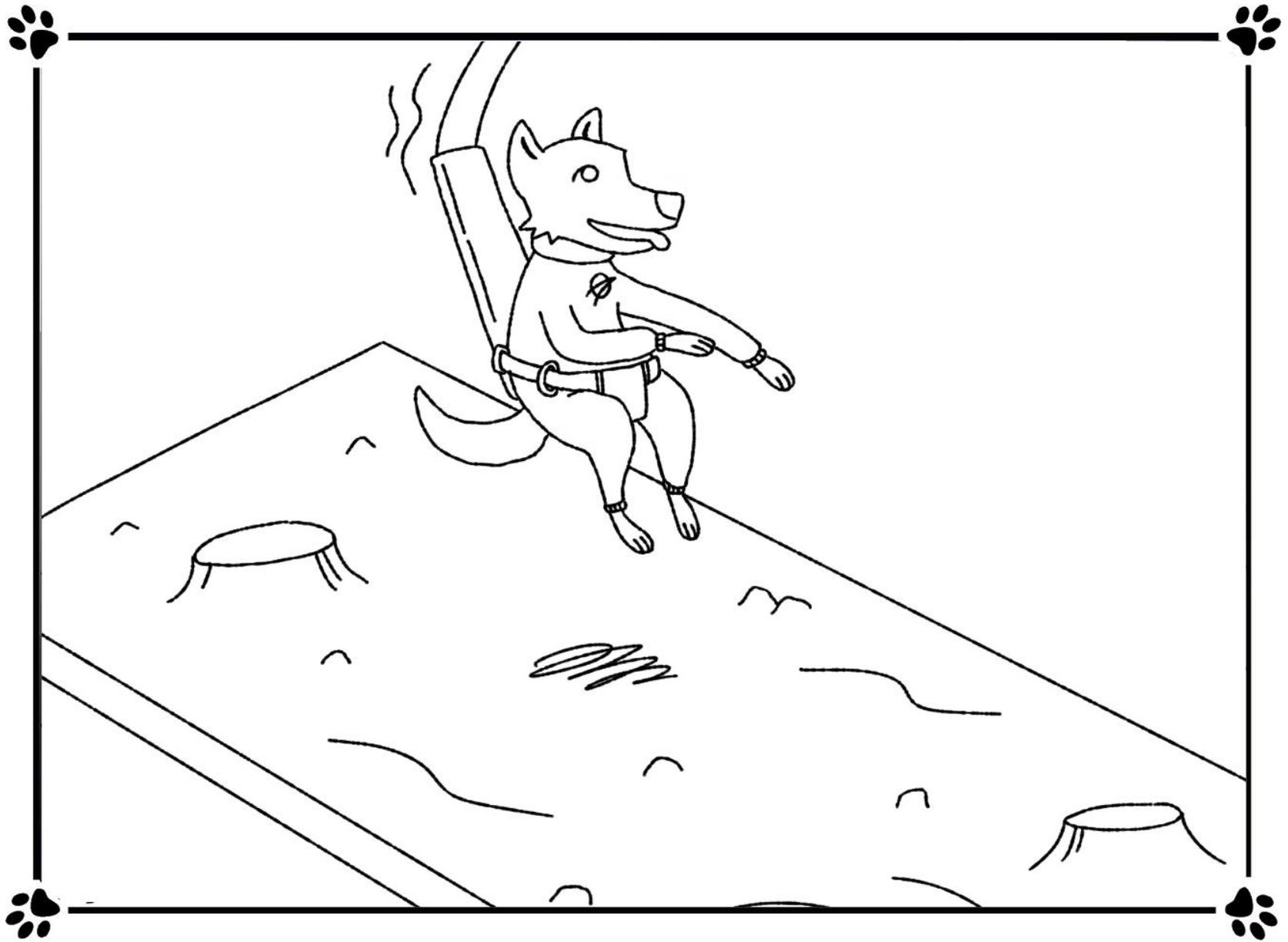
bodies. Not to mention how weird some humans looked and acted. Would aliens living on Mars or other planets really be that much different?

After arriving at Space Camp, the first thing Mo and Finchy did was put on blue jumpsuits that astronauts wear while training. If they couldn't be real astronauts, at least they could look like them.

But the smallest suit was way too big for Finchy. Mo had an idea. There was a washing machine and dryer in the next room. They stuffed the smallest jumpsuit they could find into the washing machine in hot water and then threw it into a hot dryer to shrink it. Finchy tried it on. Perfect fit.

Now it was Mo's turn to train. He strapped himself into a machine called a gravity chair. On the back of the chair was a very long cord that was hooked to the ceiling. The cord yanked the chair up and down like a yo-yo. It made humans sitting in the chair feel like they were walking on the Moon, which has six times less gravity than Earth. Gravity is the force that keeps everyone and everything on the ground.

In order to walk forward, Mo had to hold his two front paws straight out in front of him as if he were a superhero, soaring through the air.



His stomach flip-flopped every time he was pulled up or dropped to the ground. *Not sure I would like living on the Moon. My stomach wouldn't. Maybe visiting it would be better. I like my paws – all four of them – firmly on the ground.*

Mo and Finchy walked around the entire place. They learned what it would be like to live on board the International Space Station. The astronauts don't feel the directions of up or down. Every position feels the same, whether they are standing up, laying down, or upside down!

They returned to the training room and saw a report on the edge of a table. The title caught their eye: Future Martian Colony.

Mo and Finchy had many questions. What would this colony look like? Who would live there? Just humans? Maybe animals? Could they eat hamburgers, pizza, and popcorn? Could Finchy fly all over the planet? Could Mo sniff stuff outside?

They decided to read the entire report, page by page, hoping that it would answer all of their questions about what it would be like to live on Mars. They wanted to be prepared. The first page thanked the workers in this state who had built the first rocket or spaceship that took humans to the Moon. They built it in a city that was known as the rocket capital of the world.

The rest of the report focused on Mars. They learned that it's the fourth planet from the sun and second smallest planet in the solar system after Mercury. It's about half the size of Earth and has two moons. They could jump three times higher on Mars than on Earth because the gravity is much weaker.

“If we were on Mars, do you think we could jump high enough and far enough to reach Jupiter?” asked Finchy. “It's right next door. Only three hundred and forty-two million miles away. It has sixty-seven moons and is the fastest spinning planet in our solar system.”

But they soon learned that they would have to wait many years before going to Mars. Only humans would be allowed to ride in the first spaceship to the red planet. Just four, to be exact. Then every two years, a new crew of four astronauts would arrive and those who had been living there would return to Earth.

There was no mention of birds, dogs, or other animals riding in any spaceship to the planet.

“Humans probably want to make sure it's safe before they bring any animals,” said Mo. “That makes sense. You know how crazy they are about their pets.”

By the time they finished reading the report, they had changed their minds about living on Mars. The planet was also very dry and cold since it was farther away from the Sun than the Earth. Humans would need to live underground or in caves.

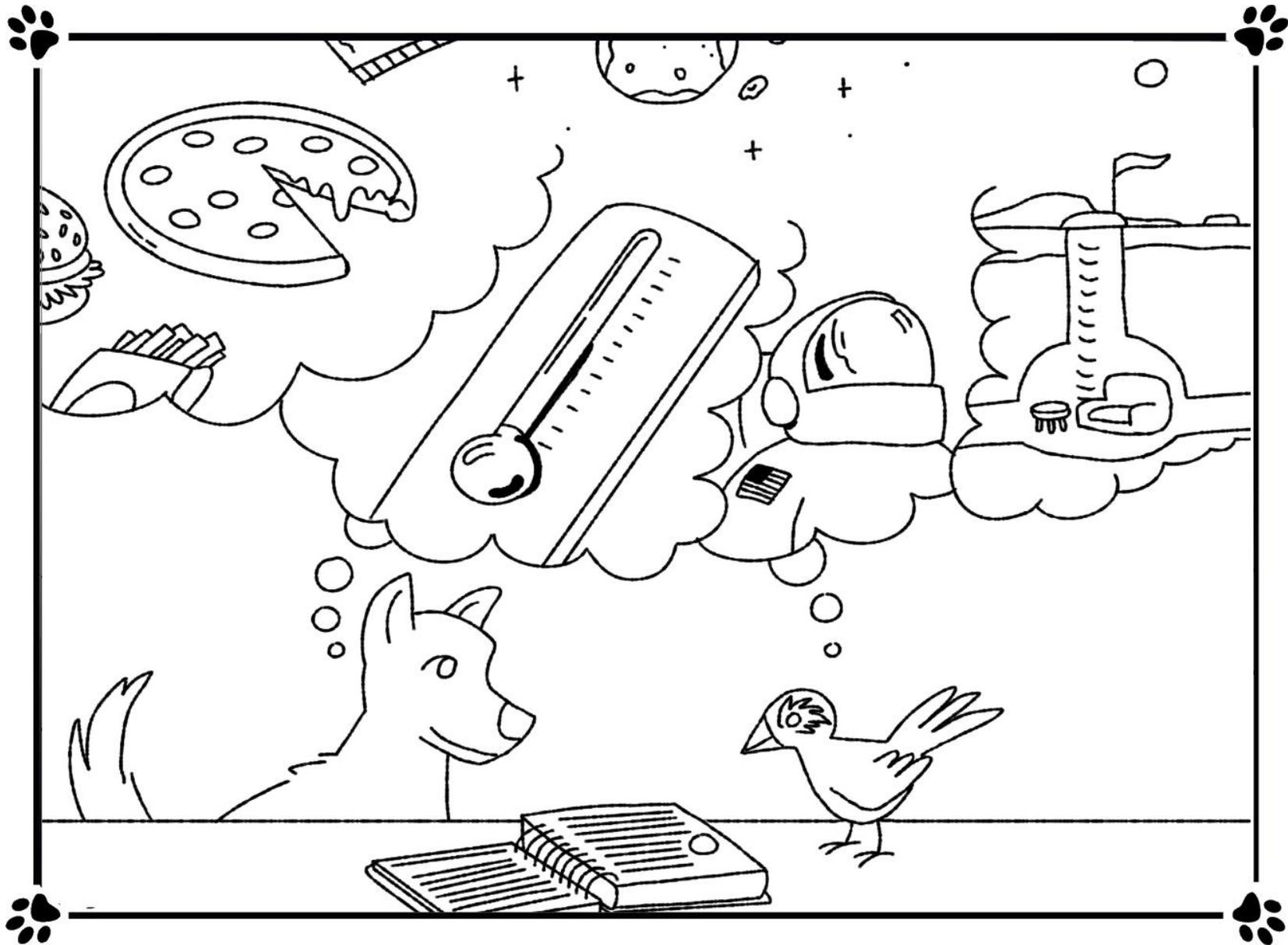
Mo lived in caves his whole life. No problem. But how cold *was* cold?

“The temperature on Mars could reach almost three hundred degrees *below* zero,” said Mo. “Ice cubes are cold. But they’re thirty-two degrees *above* zero.”

The coldest day Mo could remember was three years ago, when living at home. It was fifty degrees below zero. It was so cold that Mo, a pack of wolves, and a family of bears kept warm by snuggling next to each other in Mo’s cave. If Finchy and Mo lived on Mars, they could never play outside.

The report also had a chapter on food. Most of it would be powdered or freeze-dried. Mo and Finchy didn’t like the way that sounded. They would not be able to eat hamburgers, fries, pizza, or any of their favorite foods.

Suddenly, living on Mars didn’t seem all that great. They’d be stuck in a cave with awful food. Mo wouldn’t be able to dig holes, explore, or bask in the warm sun on a beach.



Finchy wouldn't be able to fly around the planet or rest on tree branches since Mars didn't have any trees.

“We could visit the Moon instead,” said Mo. “It would only take us three days to get there and another three days to get back home. Just think of all the exciting things that could happen!”

They agreed. They would focus on going to the Moon. Maybe their friends – The Voices – that lived there would be home and could show them around.

“We would still be heroes,” Finchy said. “We would be the first bird and dog to go into space and to the Moon. We could help the astronauts collect rocks. I'm sure they'd let us use the Moon buggy to explore. But we may have a curfew.”

That sounded like a plan. They would grab the first chance to ride in a spaceship that was headed to the Moon.

But until then, what they could do to make life on Earth better?

“All my bird friends say the air and water aren't clean,” Finchy said. “And every time I fly around, whether it's over land or sea, trash is everywhere.”

The more Finchy talked, the angrier he became.

“I don’t know why humans throw stuff on the ground, or in the lakes, rivers, and oceans,” he said. “They’re not the only ones who live on this planet!”

By now, Finchy was shouting and flapping his wings in every direction, something he did when he was really mad.

Mo tried to calm him down by speaking softly.

“If you only had one toy, you would take really good care of it, right?” he asked. “That’s how humans need to start thinking about this planet. They only have one home.”

They believed that humans need to buy less stuff, which would create less garbage. Not as many plants or factories would be needed that sometimes dirty the air or water.

Mo and Finchy realized that there were lots of things that humans could do to make Earth a healthier planet. But what about animals? How could they help?

They promised each other that when they got back home, they would hold a meeting for all the animals that lived in their community. They would share what they saw, what they knew, and then come up with ways to make the Earth greener and cleaner.

When they got back to the delivery truck, they thought of some ideas on how animals could help save the planet.

“Dogs could save water by not taking baths,” said Mo.

Finchy laughed. He knew how much Mo didn’t like baths. But he really liked Mo’s plan about how humans could ride on top of whales through the ocean – instead of on big ships that pollute the oceans – when traveling to places that were far away.

That gave him another idea. Birds could lift people into the air and then fly them to and from work or wherever they needed to go. They would no longer need cars that use gas, which pollute the air.

“We should start doing some of these things right now,” said Finchy. “But I’m just wondering. If birds start flying people all over town, do we need to give them snacks like they get on airplanes?”