



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 11

By Carol Patton

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Annie, the Armadillo from Amarillo

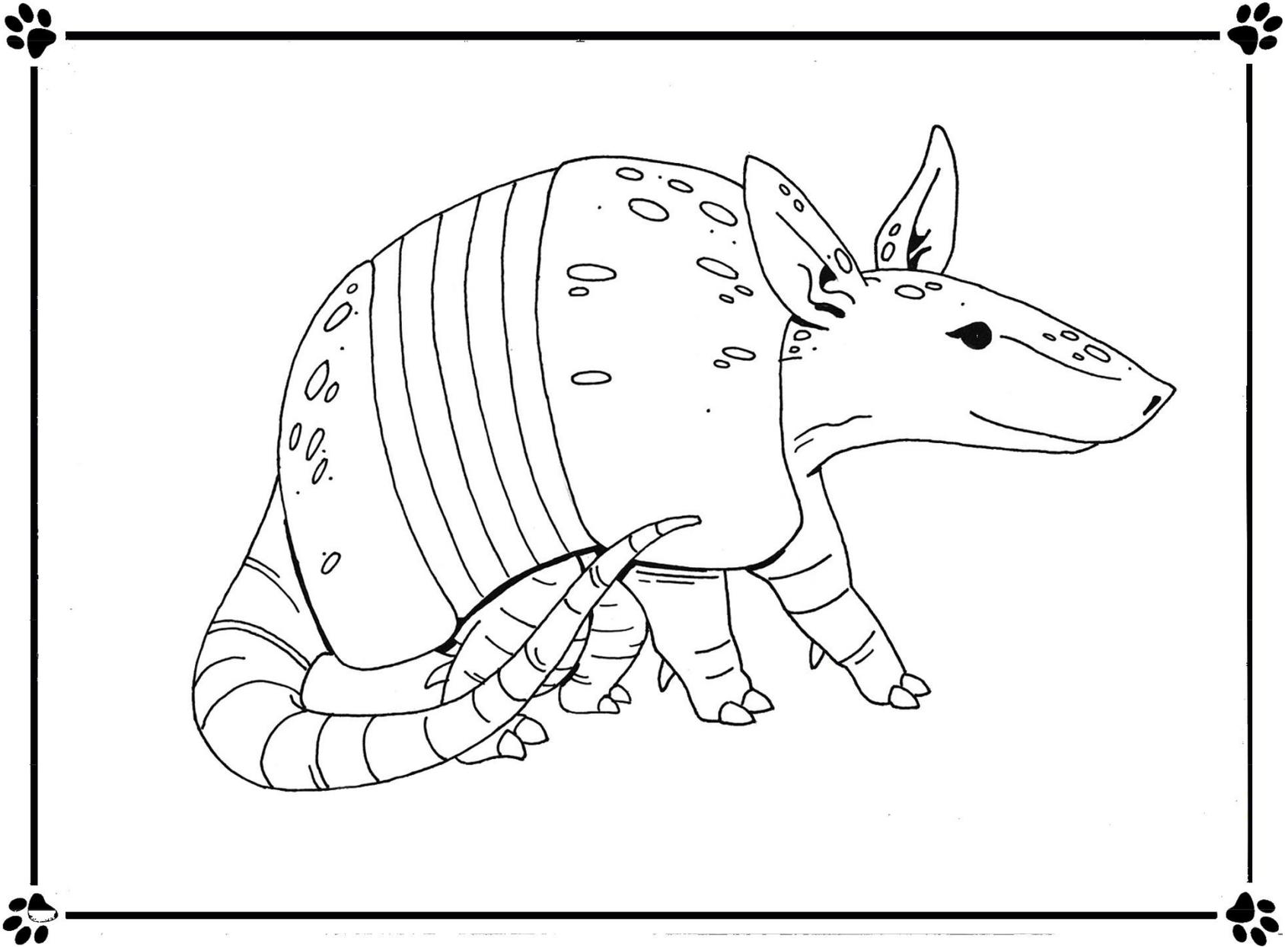
“That looks so weird,” said Mo. “Have you ever seen anything like it?”

Finchy didn’t respond. He was too busy staring at the very tall object in front of them. Was it alive? He kept poking his beak at one of its steel legs, trying to make it walk or talk. But it didn’t move or make a sound. It just stood there.

Suddenly, Finchy flapped his wings, something he did when he became excited.

“Buenos dias!” said the animal. “I’m Annie, the armadillo from Amarillo. Who are you?”

Mo and Finchy were stunned. They had never seen a creature this odd. She had a pointy snout, huge front claws and hard, little shells that covered most of her body.



“Why are you looking at me that way?” she asked. “Haven’t you ever seen an armadillo before?”

“Uh, uh...not really,” mumbled Mo, trying not to stare at her.

“Mucho gusto,” said Annie. “That means, ‘Nice to meet you’ in Spanish. Where are you from? My burrow isn’t too far from here. Have you seen any tasty beetles crawling around?”

Finchy and Mo hoped that Annie would know something about this strange object and their location. While traveling on top of the delivery truck, Mo saw highway signs for Interstate 35 South, Interstate 40 West, and Dallas, and overheard the truck driver say something about a Panhandle.

Annie told them they were in a place called Amarillo, which means yellow in Spanish. It was named yellow because of the area’s yellow wildflowers and yellowish soil near the local creek.

“Do you know if we’re near Florida?” asked Mo.

“Never heard of it,” said Annie. Then she looked up, way up, at the very tall object.

“Isn’t this the coolest thing you’ve ever seen?”

She explained that the sculpture was built in 1968, years before any of them were born, to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the discovery of helium gas.

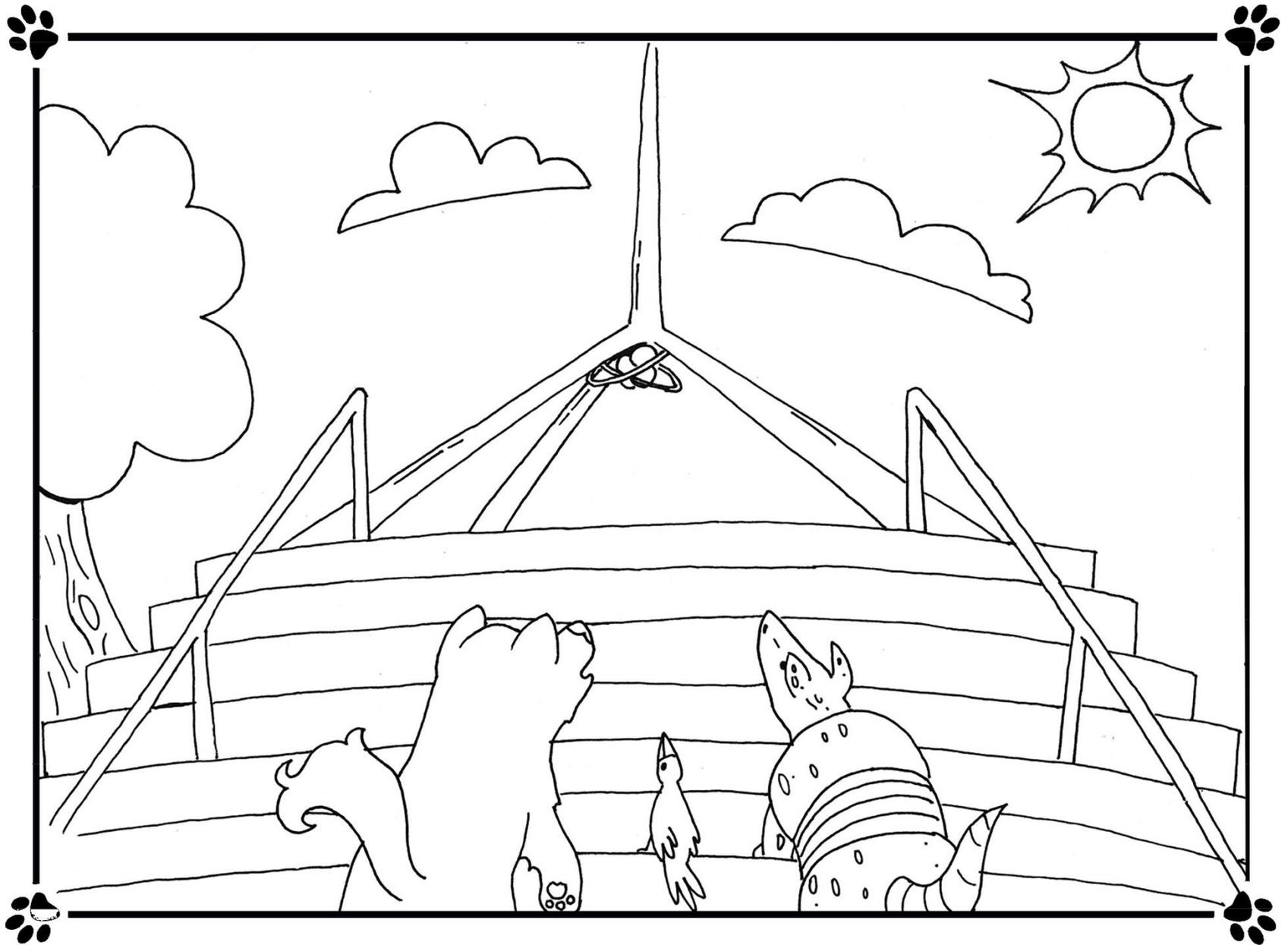
“Do you know what helium is?” she asked.

Mo and Finchy looked at each other. They had never heard of it.

Annie explained that helium is a gas used for many things. “People fill scientific balloons and birthday balloons with helium to make them float in the air,” she said. “Sometimes, they even inhale helium to make their voice sound funny.”

She said the sculpture was called the Helium Centennial Time Columns. Each of its four columns or legs is also a time capsule stuffed with information about how people lived in 1968. What did they wear back then? Did they have cell phones? What music did they like?

Annie said the next time capsule will be opened in the year 2068 and the last one in 2968.



“That’s almost one thousand years from now,” said Mo.

Will there still be tall trees in the forest back home? Will the ocean still taste salty? Who will be living in my cave?

“I heard that one of the time capsules has a passbook for a bank account with ten dollars that could be worth one-quadrillion dollars in 2968,” said Annie. “Mucho dinero. That means lots of money.”

Mo and Finchy didn’t need money. They never wore clothes, paid rent, or bought food. They didn’t even own a cell phone. But they were interested in learning Spanish.

Annie offered to teach them. But it would take many months for them to learn the language. Mo and Finchy couldn’t stay. They wouldn’t let anything interfere with their mission.

“How about teaching us one hundred words in Spanish?” asked Finchy.

“That’s an awful lot of words to learn,” said Annie. “Why don’t we start with ten. What should they be?”

Mo's eyes widened. "Only ten?" he asked. "Back home, we have one hundred different words just for snow. There are words for melted snow. Blowing snow. Slush. Night snow. Snow falling in the water. Snow on objects. Even snow that doesn't stick. How can we possibly pick ten words?"

"All I know is that popcorn must be on the list," said Finchy, telling Annie that it was his favorite food.

During the next hour, they considered many different words and picked ten that were the most important. Annie translated the words into Spanish and Mo and Finchy repeated them, over and over. They were almost done when Finchy heard the sound of the delivery truck's engine.

Feeling sad they had to leave, Mo and Finchy shouted to Annie from the top of the delivery truck, "Gracias, mi amigo," which means, 'Thank you, my friend'.

They were happy they included those words on their list.