



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 17

By Carol Patton

Chapter 17

Ghosts and Shipwrecks

“Hear that?” asked Finchy. The weird sound ran shivers up and down his small body. “Listen. There it is again.”

Mo’s pointy ears perked straight up. He had never heard a sound like that in his whole life. It was a faint, eerie cry carried by the howling wind. Was it from an animal? A person? Someone or something else?

It was very early in the morning. Darkness still surrounded them and the other animals on the island. Mo and Finchy had always believed they were brave explorers. Until now.

“We should have never left Pier 39,” said Finchy who was clinging to Mo. “This place gives me the creeps.”

Mo remained silent. This was one of the rare times he agreed with Finchy.

“Those voices are the ghosts of the sea,” whispered a sea lion who had snuck up behind them.

Mo ran behind a nearby rock with Finchy close behind.

The sea lion let out a booming laugh. “I didn’t mean to startle you,” he said in a low, almost chilling, voice. “Welcome to my home. My name is Boris.”

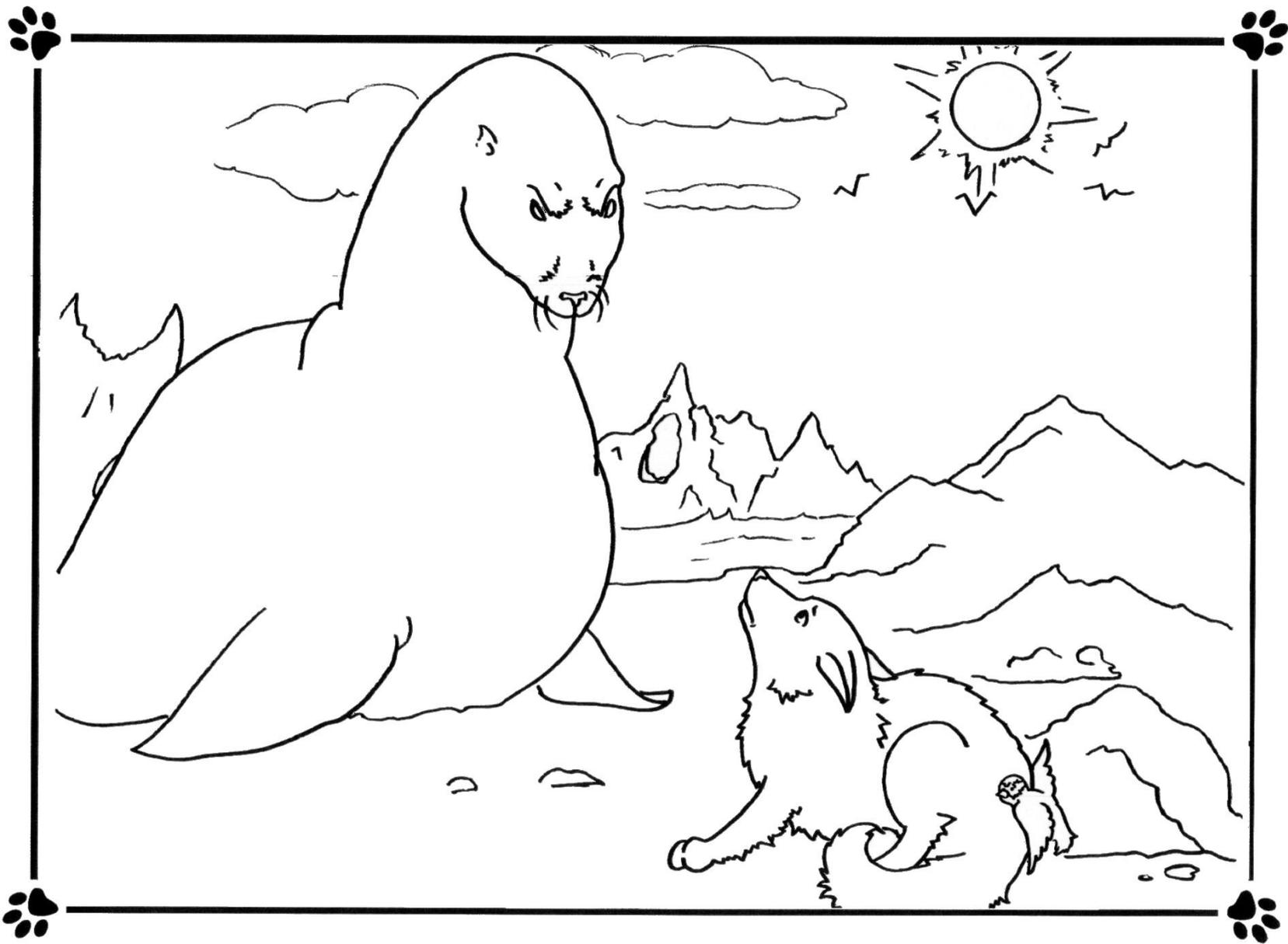
“I . . . I mean we . . . We didn’t mean to disturb you,” stammered Mo, as he poked his head out from behind the rock.

“Oh, yes you did,” insisted Boris. “Who are you? What do you want?”

Back home, Mo had many friends that were sea lions. But none were ever this rude.

He sat up straight with his head held high and introduced himself and Finchy. He then told Boris about their mission.

“Our truck driver made a big delivery yesterday and is relaxing at a hotel,” said Mo. “Early this morning, we snuck on a boat with those people, the ones over there.”



Mo pointed to a small group of scientists standing by the shore.

Boris stared at Mo, completely ignoring Finchy. By then, a crowd of other sea lions, elephant seals, and seabirds had gathered around Mo.

“Feed him to the great white sharks,” shouted a sea lion. “Better him than me.”

“Shove him into the ocean,” yelled an elephant seal. “Let the whales drag him down to the bottom.”

Mo couldn’t understand why they wanted to hurt him. Just because he was different than them didn’t mean he was bad or did something wrong.

“Wait!” shouted Mo whose voice started trembling. “One of my friends is a whale named Blue. “Do you know her?”

“You know Blue?” asked Boris whose tone turned friendly. “Why didn’t you say so? She’s been coming here for years. Her friends are my friends.”

Mo took a very deep breath and slowly let it out.

Boris placed his flipper around Mo's shoulders and invited Finchy and him to join their secret circle. Almost every day, the animals on the island sat in a circle, sharing scary stories about shipwrecks, treasures, and ghosts.

And so the storytelling began.

"In the 1800s, dozens of shipwrecks happened between these islands all the way north to Alaska," said Boris. "One ship named Lucas crashed right off these islands, which are called the Farallon Islands or Devil's Teeth. If you dove really deep into the ocean, you would probably find the skeletons of sailors who once worked on the Sea Witch, Lawrence, Georgiana, and Helen Hensley."

He explained that those were the names of ships that sank in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Francisco, which was where Mo and Finchy boarded the scientists' boat.

"San Francisco is about thirty miles east of here," he said. "Those strange voices are crew members who drowned. Every day, every night, they cry out for help."

"So they're . . . ghosts?" asked Finchy.

Everyone nodded in agreement.

“Do you ever see them?” asked Mo who didn’t believe in ghosts.

“No,” said Boris. “We just hear their voices. They seem sad. Maybe they can’t find their way back home. Wherever that is.”

Boris continued with the story. Since many people moved to San Francisco during the mid-1800s searching for gold, he explained that ships from faraway places sailed to the city with food, coal, and other essentials to help keep them alive.

“Some crashed along these jagged rocks,” said Boris, pointing to old debris scattered along the shoreline. “Or maybe a large wave hit their ship and sank it. No one knows for sure. Not even the scientists who visit us every now and then.”

“Why do scientists come here?” asked Finchy. “Do they want to learn about ghosts?”

Boris laughed and then explained that the scientists visit the islands to weigh, measure, and observe everyone living on the islands. “We always put on a show for them,” he said. “They’re easily fooled. One time, some of us swam backwards for a few minutes just to confuse them.”

The sun was rising. Mo and Finchy had to return to San Francisco before their truck driver left the hotel. However, they didn't want to travel back on the same boat or any boat, for that matter. So they climbed aboard a humpback whale that agreed to return them to Pier 39.

The sea was peaceful that morning as the whale glided through the ocean.

“Do you believe in ghosts?” asked Finchy.

Mo shook his head. “Don't be silly,” he said. “If there are ghosts, how come no one can talk to them or see them?”

Finchy didn't seem convinced. So Mo looked up at the sky and shouted, “Hey ghosts, if you really exist, prove it!”

Suddenly, a huge wave drenched both Mo and Finchy, almost knocking them off the whale's back.

Finchy flapped his wings to shake off the salt water while glaring at Mo.

“Sorry,” mumbled Mo. “It's possible . . . just possible . . . that I could be wrong.”

