



# The Adventures of **Mo**

**Chapter 25**

By Carol Patton

## Chapter 25

### Stand Up, Speak Up

“Did they really travel more than nineteen hundred miles?” asked Mo who was a bit skeptical. “On horses? In ten days? Without a cell phone?”

“Absolutely,” said Amigo, a shiny black horse. “They averaged ten miles per hour throughout the day and night. The route started here, in the Show-Me state, and snaked through Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada, ending in California.”

Mo and Finchy were sitting in a horse barn at the Pony Express Museum after traveling along Interstate 49 North for nearly six hours. Every Thursday afternoon, many of the local animals gathered in this barn to tell stories about the Wild West. Mo and Finchy were joined by a rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, fox, porcupine, and skunk.

Today was Amigo’s turn to share a story. He was telling them about the Pony Express, a company that was created in 1860. It hired more than one hundred

horseback riders to deliver letters and important papers to people throughout the Midwest and West. The mail delivery route was more than nineteen hundred miles long.

“Every ten to fifteen miles, they would change horses, and then after seventy-five miles, maybe even one hundred miles, they would hand off their letters or papers to another rider,” explained Amigo. “Since the horses had to run very fast, only those who weighed less than one hundred and twenty-five pounds could be riders.”

The animals blurted out many questions. Did they ever get lost? Were they attacked by bears or mountain lions? Did they fall off their horse? Were children ever riders?”

Amigo told them that the youngest rider was eleven years old. Although his real name was Charlie Miller, everyone called him Bronco Charlie.

“He worked as a sailor, a cowboy, and could tame wild bucking broncos,” Amigo said. “On his first ride with the Pony Express, he traveled fifty miles by himself, part of it at night, through rocky mountains in cold, blinding rain.





Mo trembled at the thought of traveling alone in a strange place, in the dark, and in the cold rain.

“That just proves that anyone, at any age, can be brave and do something important,” said Amigo.

Before continuing, he heard footsteps.

“Someone’s coming,” whispered Amigo to the animals. “Quick. Everyone hide.”

All of the animals scattered throughout the barn. Some hid under a pile of hay or behind several saddles. Finchy flew to the top of a hay loft while Mo hid behind a feed storage chest.

One young girl named Emily entered the barn. Two others – Ava and Karen – were following her.

“I really think that you’re the ugliest girl at school,” said Ava to Emily.

“Yeah, just look at your stringy hair and thick glasses,” said Karen.

“Even your clothes are ugly.”

“Leave me alone!” Emily shouted. “You’re just jealous because I’m smarter than you. I got an A on that spelling test and you didn’t!”

Ava laughed. “You know, everyone feels the same way we do. Olivia, Isabella, Kensey . . .” She rattled off more names of students at their school.

By now, Emily had spotted her cell phone that had fallen out of her pocket earlier that morning when everyone from her class was touring the barn. She picked it up off the ground and started walking out the door.

But Ava blocked her. The animals in the barn didn’t know what to do. They were scared.

“I’m not afraid of you!” shouted Emily.

Ava pushed her so hard that Emily lost her balance and fell on the ground.

Without thinking, the animals rushed out of their hiding places to help Emily.

They surrounded Ava and Karen, backing them in a corner of the barn. Emily ran out the door.

“What do we do now?” whispered a squirrel.

“They’re so much bigger than us,” said Finchy.

“And stronger,” added Mo.

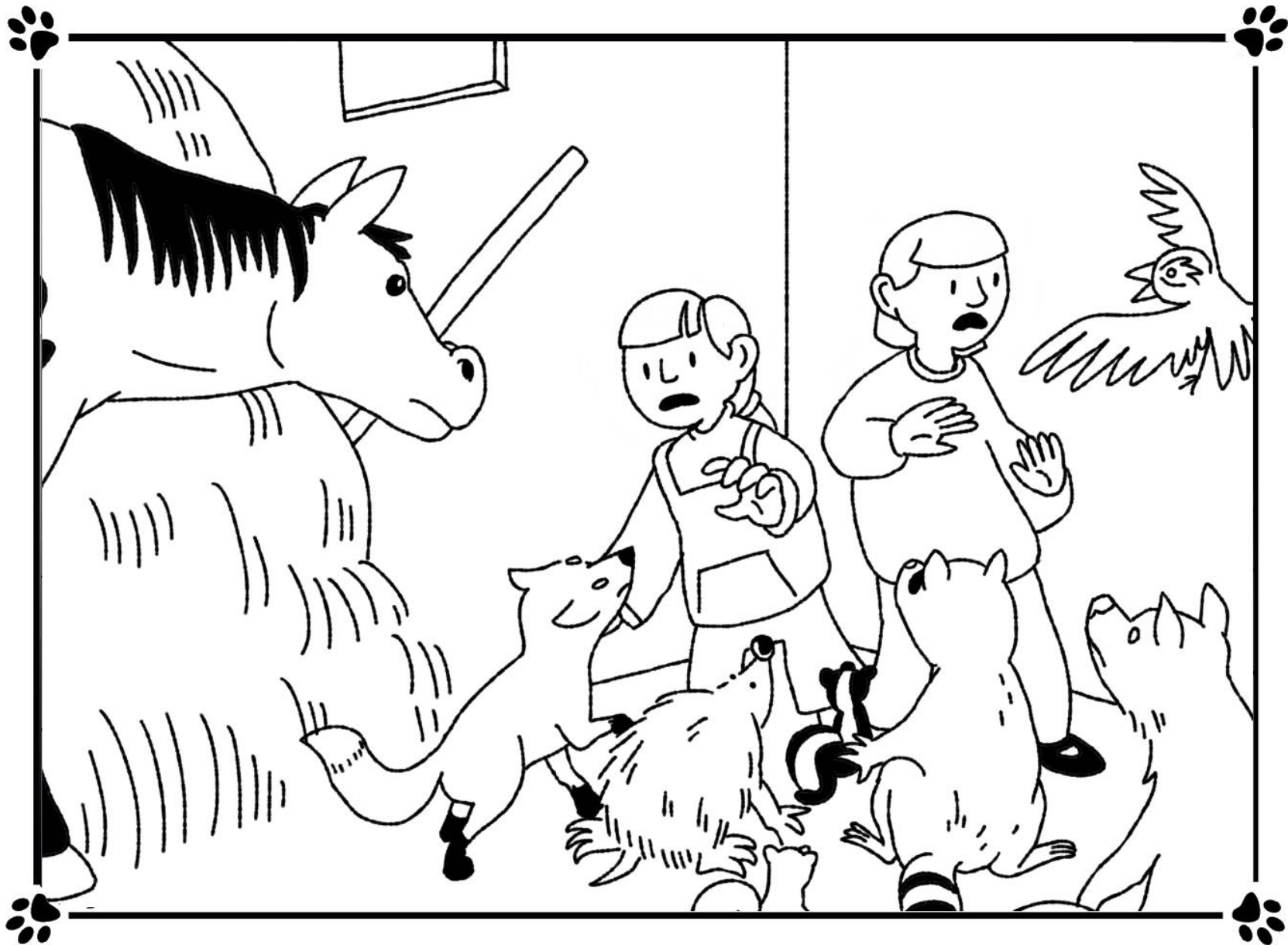
The animals explored their options.

“Maybe someone should get the teacher,” said the porcupine.

“Or one of the parents that went on this school trip,” said the fox.

Ava and Karen tried to walk past the small animals. But Amigo walked over, blocking their path.

“Do you have any idea what’s happening,” whispered Ava to Karen.





Karen shook her head back and forth. Both girls were afraid.

“What did we do to make them so mad at us?” Ava asked. “Think they’re angry because of how we treated Emily?”

Mo started barking. Finchy began chirping. The rest of the animals spoke, making their own special sounds.

Ava and Karen looked at each other and began to understand that what they did to Emily was wrong. They knew it. Even the animals knew it.

They apologized to the animals, promising to never be mean to Emily again or anyone else. The animals believed them and let them pass.

But as they approached the barn door, Ava turned around and said, “We fooled you! We don’t like Emily and never will!”

The skunk, who was standing near them, wasn’t very patient or forgiving. She had heard enough. She lifted her tail and sprayed both girls with an awful smelling stench.

They both jumped back in surprise, wondering what had just happened.

“We smell awful!” shouted Karen. “Everyone will make fun of us!”

The girls ran out of the barn trying to rid their hair and clothes of the horrible smell.

All of the animals turned toward the skunk.

“Why are you looking at me that way?” she asked. “I didn’t do anything that I haven’t done before.”

Everyone laughed, knowing that Ava and Karen will now think twice before being mean to Emily or anyone else.

They chatted for several minutes about how scared they were of Ava after she pushed Emily.

“But you overcame your fear to help someone you didn’t even know,” said Amigo. “You were very brave and would have made great Pony Express riders.”

As Mo and Finchy headed back to the delivery truck, Finchy asked, “Think those girls learned anything?”

“Don’t know,” said Mo. “But I sure did. I learned how important it is to stand up and speak up, not only for yourself, but for anyone who needs help. Even though you may be scared on the inside, acting brave on the outside is sometimes all you need to do.”