



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 40

By Carol Patton

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Which Way Is Out?

“Why are you hanging upside down?” asked Mo.

“Same reason you walk upright,” replied a creature named Bernie. “It’s the way we’re made.”

Mo and Finchy had just traveled nearly five hours on top of the delivery truck along Interstates 81 South and 64 West. They saw signs for many cities, including White Sulphur Springs and Alderson. Now they were in a place called Ronceverte where Alex, the truck driver, was delivering supplies to several hotels, cabins, and cottages.

While walking around, Mo and Finchy spotted a sign for Organ Cave. They had never been in a cave that was this big. It had eleven entrances, forty miles of passages, and fossils, which are the remains of plants and animals that lived a very long time ago.

There was only a handful of people ahead of them when they approached the cave’s

main entrance. Mo and Finchy entered without any humans stopping them.

They walked down a staircase. Only a small ray of sunlight poked through the cave, guiding their way. Then they crossed a bridge surrounded by lights that helped everyone walk from one side to the other.

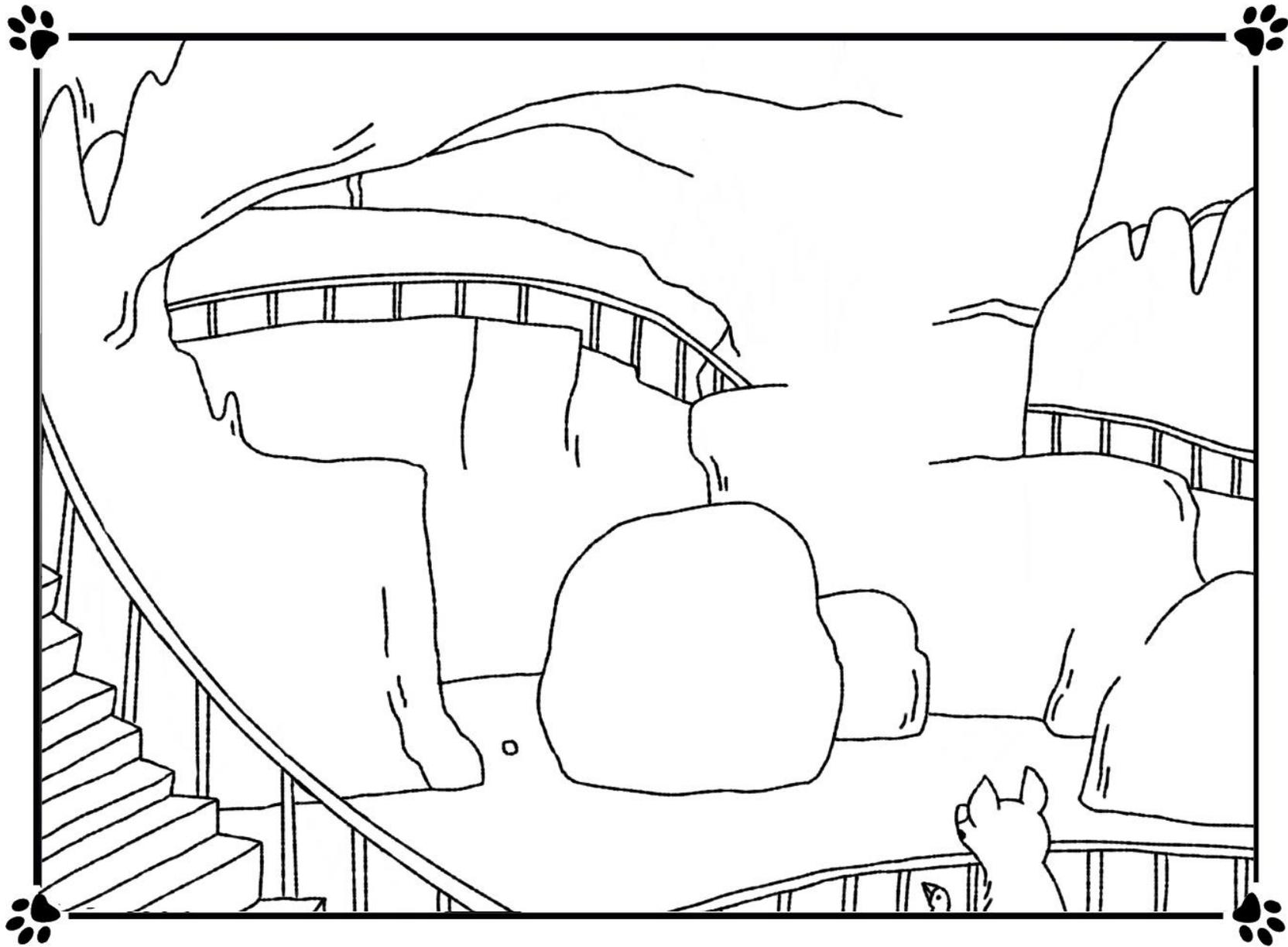
“Is this what the middle of the earth looks like?” asked Finchy to Mo. “I wouldn’t like to live here. Too dark. Too gloomy. I’d be too afraid that I would get lost and stuck in here forever.”

They continued exploring, climbing on top of rocks and squeezing through small passages. Without realizing it, they had strayed from the small group of people who were walking ahead of them.

“These rocks are so huge,” said Finchy. “And look at that one straight ahead. It looks like icicles. The one above it looks like an animal.”

The darkness continued to grow the farther they headed into the cave.

“This cave is getting spooky,” said Finchy. “Let’s get out of here.”



Mo agreed and they both turned around to head back toward the entrance. But which way should they go – through the small passage on the right or the one on the left?

They had no idea. They couldn't remember which way they came.

They chose the passage on the left, which was the wrong one. It led them deeper into the cave.

Even though there were scattered lights throughout the cave, it was still dark. They were all alone.

“If we screamed really loud, do you think anyone would hear us?” asked Finchy.

Mo looked around to find something, anything, that would help them find their way out. All he saw were rocks, rocks, and more rocks.

“We should have left a trail or made marks along the way so we could find our way back, “ said Mo.

“Now you come up with this idea?” asked Finchy. “A little late, don't ya think?”

Mo and Finchy tried not to panic. But they were afraid. Really afraid. No one knew that they were in this cave. No one would miss them if they didn't come back home, to the delivery truck. No one would search for them.

They sat on top of a rock in silence for what seemed like hours.

They decided to keep walking and began marking their trail. Maybe they'd find another one of the cave's entrances. Mo wrote a big "X" on every giant rock they passed and started looking for a safe and comfortable place to spend the night.

But then they saw something very strange. Dozens of creatures were hanging upside down from a ledge. At first, Mo thought they were birds.

"You really think those are birds?" asked Finchy, rather annoyed. "Do they look anything like me? Have you ever seen me hang upside down like that?"

They walked over to one of the creatures and introduced themselves. That's when they met Bernie and began asking him questions.

Bernie flipped right-side up and flew toward them. His wings were much larger than those of a typical bird. They were also webbed. That means that his skin stretched

over each wing, which they found out later was actually his arm, four fingers, and thumb.

He landed directly in front of them.

“It’s so nice to have visitors,” he said. “We’ve never had company before.”

“Well, we started exploring and then got lost,” Mo said. “Can you help us find our way back?”

“Of course,” said Bernie. “Which entrance . . .”

Before Bernie could finish his sentence, several of his family members flew over to meet Mo and Finchy.

“This is my family,” said Bernie. He began introducing them, one by one.

They were thrilled to have guests in their home.

“Won’t you stay for some appetizers?” asked Bernie’s aunt. “We always eat a little bit before we go hunting for dinner.”

Although Mo and Finchy didn't want to spend one more minute in this cave, they didn't want to be rude and agreed to dine with them.

One of Bernie's cousins placed a white tablecloth on a flat rock. Another brought candles, placed them in candlesticks carved out of rock, set them on top of the tablecloth, and then lit them so everybody could see each other better.

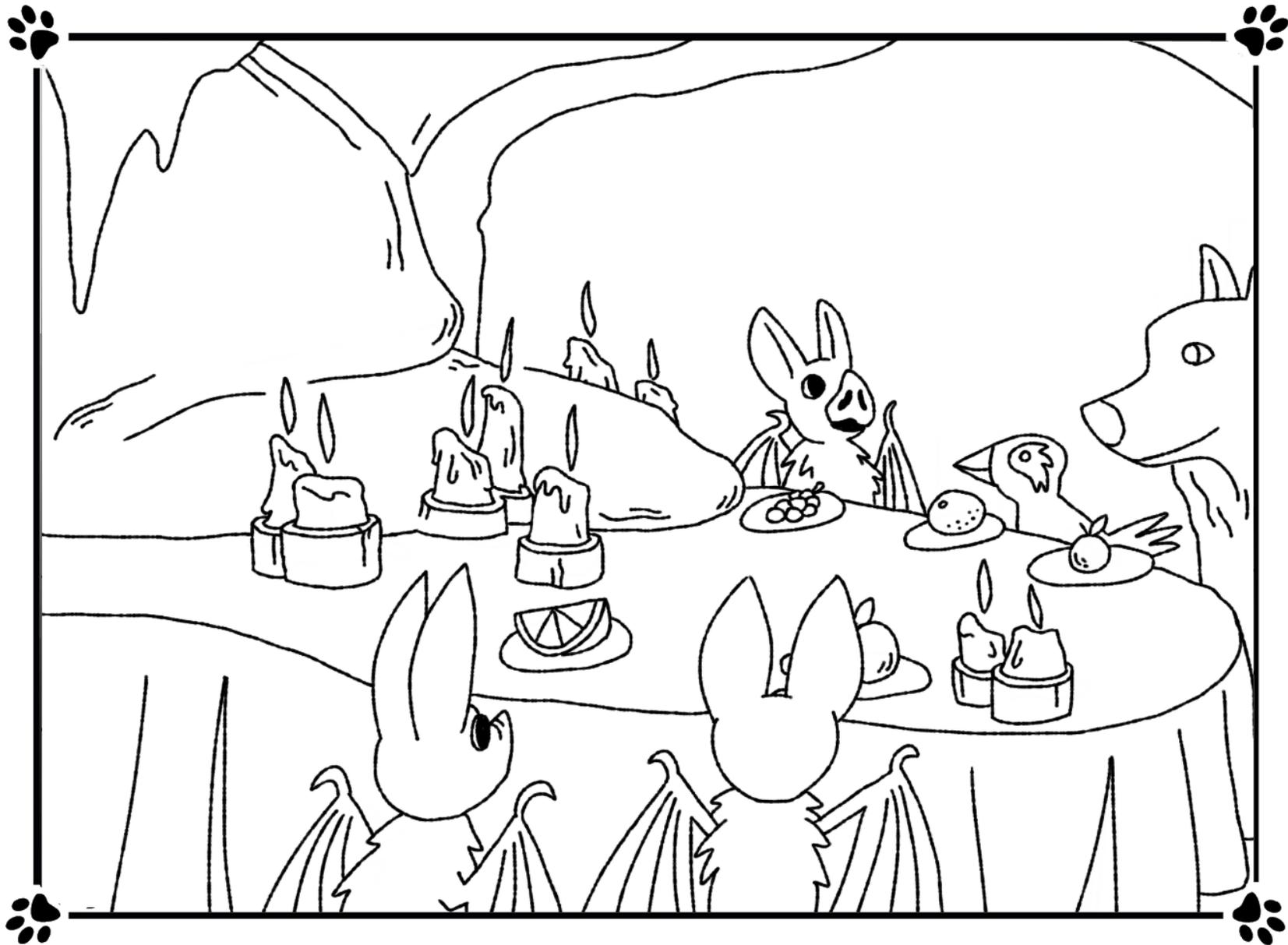
"We really don't like light," said Bernie, explaining that they only used candles for special occasions. "We usually go hunting at dusk, return at sunrise, and sleep during the day."

Mo and Finchy were surprised. Except for owls, they thought all animals slept at night.

"What kind of animals are you?" asked Mo. He explained that he was a dog and Finchy was a bird.

"We're bats," said Bernie. "Know anything about us?"

Although Mo had heard scary stories about bats from animals back home, he had never met a bat or knew if any of the stories were true.



Nearly every member of Bernie's family began telling them why bats were so special.

Bernie's uncle explained that without bats, there wouldn't be many fruits like bananas because bats pollinate them or help them multiply. Bats also help spread seeds for nuts and cacao, which is used to make chocolate.

The rest of the bats bragged about how fast they could fly, sometimes reaching one hundred miles per hour, or that some were more than twenty years-old.

"Despite what others say, we're very clean," said Bernie's aunt. "We spend a lot of time grooming ourselves."

"And we have belly buttons!" shouted Bernie's young niece. "Mine's an outie."

Mo and Finchy were very impressed with Bernie, his family, and his aunt's cooking. They licked their plates clean.

Now it was their turn to tell them about their mission to Florida. None of the bats had ever heard of the state but knew a few things about their own.

They said the shape of the state they lived in looked like a frog that was tilting

downward. Most of the state was covered in forest, but it had four rivers and four lakes that they could see from the air. Bernie's niece added that the capital city was Charleston.

They chatted until the flames on the candles almost burned out.

“It’s time for us to leave,” said Bernie. “We’ll show you how to get back to the cave’s main entrance.”

Bernie and the rest of the bats flew out of the cave in a straight line, each making sure Mo and Finchy were headed in the right direction.

When they reached the outside of the cave, Mo and Finchy waved goodbye as the bats flew away.

“I really had a good time,” said Finchy. “They were so friendly. I’m almost glad we got lost.”

“Me, too,” said Mo. “There are probably lots of bats that live in caves back home but I never met any of them.”

“I have seen them flying around at night but always kept my distance,” Finchy said. “Next time, I will introduce myself. You can never have too many friends. Besides, maybe one of them can teach me how to hang upside down!”

They both laughed. A few moments later, Finchy turned to Mo with a serious look on his face.

“There is something I need to ask you that’s kind of embarrassing,” said Finchy. He waited for several seconds before asking his question.

“Although I’m much older than Bernie’s niece and should know more than her, I had no idea what she was talking about.”

Mo wondered what she had said that confused him.

Finchy hopped closer to Mo and whispered, “What’s a belly button?”