



# The Adventures of **Mo**

## Chapter 5

By Carol Patton

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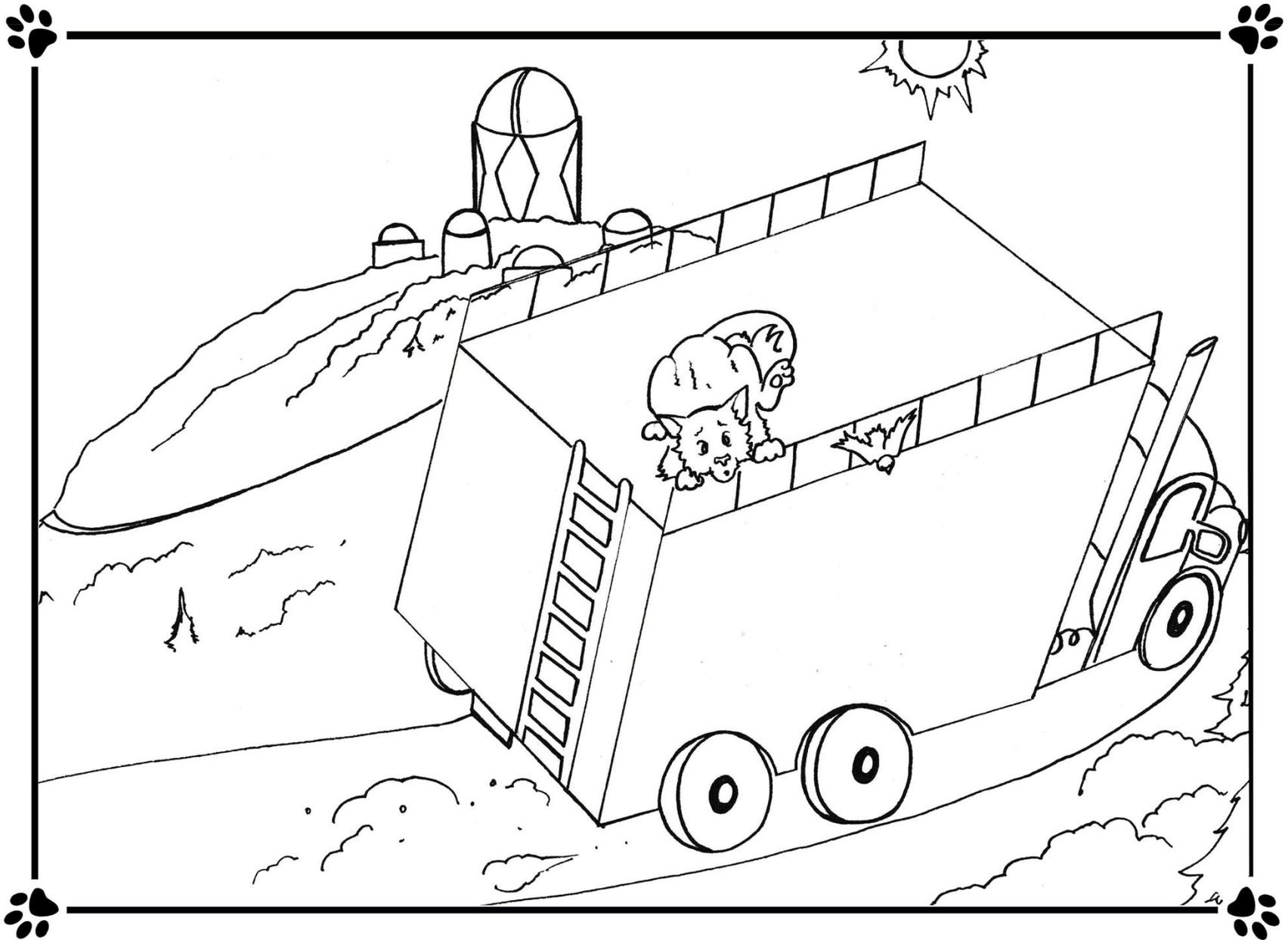
### Fearless Finchy

The last thing Mo recalled was the brown sign at the base of the mountain. Several strange words were printed on it: Tohono O’odham Reservation.

By now, he had become so dizzy that it was difficult to hold his head up straight. He squeezed his eyes shut, hoping that his head would stop spinning, but nothing seemed to work.

He was trying hard not to fall off the delivery truck as it turned sharply to the right, left, and then right again. It was a long way down—so far that he couldn’t even see the ground. He had never traveled on such a steep, curvy road that wound around such a tall mountain.

The truck finally reached the top of the mountain. The sun was sinking below the horizon. Mo opened one eye, and then the other. He quickly closed them both and opened them again.



He didn't know what to look at first. Strange-looking buildings surrounded him. Off to his left was a sign: Welcome to Kitt Peak National Observatory.

“Do you know where we are?” he asked Finchy.

“I think... well. . .maybe we're. . .uh. . .,” Finchy's voice trailed off. He didn't have a clue.

The truck driver was talking to another man, apologizing for his late arrival. “Engine trouble,” he said.

As the two chatted, Mo quietly climbed down the ladder on the side of the truck without being noticed. The hard ground beneath his feet steadied him. He didn't know which way to go. There were buildings to his right and left, each one stranger than the next.

Another sign caught his eye: Please be quiet. Scientists sleeping.

*This is a very strange place. Strange words, strange buildings, strange people. And why do scientists sleep during the day? Are they related to owls?*



Mo spotted two people heading toward one of the buildings. Finchy and him followed them inside.

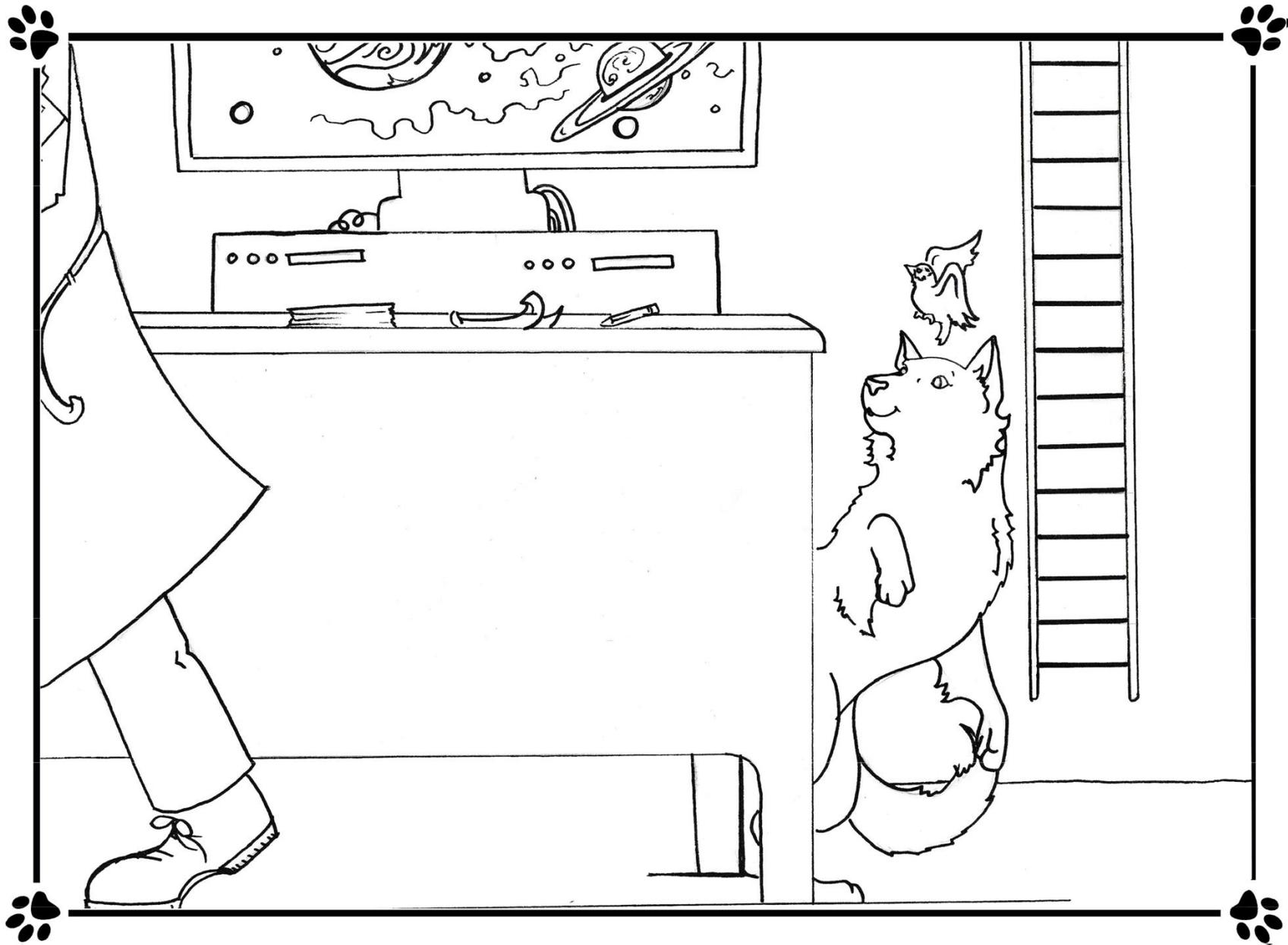
The room was huge and dimly lit. It was filled with stuff that Mo and Finchy had never seen before. There were all sorts of cables, cords, wires, ladders, and gadgets.

Near the center of the room was a tube so large that Mo and probably everyone in his hometown could easily fit inside. The tube was slanted and went right through the ceiling!

Mo and Finchy hid behind a desk while listening to one scientist talk about the fierce dust storms on Mars. While excited to learn about the red planet, Mo had always wondered about Saturn, specifically its three main rings. What were they made from? Why were they shimmering pink, gray, and brown?

“Yeah, I’m having lunch on Saturday with my sister and her family,” said one scientist. “She lives about two hours north from here, in Casa Grande.”

As the scientist talked about her family, the other one kept fidgeting with some of the gadgets. Every now and then, he would write notes on a pad of paper.



“He’s probably recording the secrets to the universe,” said Finchy. “I’ve got to see his notes. Then everyone will envy me because I’m so brilliant.”

“If you’re so brilliant, how can you say something so dumb?” whispered Mo. “Don’t move. I don’t want to get caught. They could stuff us in that long tube. We’d be stuck in there forever.”

Finchy agreed, at least for the moment. Throughout the rest of the evening, Mo and Finchy listened to the scientists talk about the universe. They saw colorful, vibrant images on a computer screen of planets, stars, comets, and galaxies.

So many questions entered their mind. What were the scientists hoping to find? What did they already discover? Was anybody looking back at them? Could Finchy fly to a star?

The questions seemed endless. But there was one question that really bothered Finchy. What did the scientist write on that pad of paper? Inch by inch, he hopped away from Mo.

Within a few minutes, he was standing on the other side of the desk.

By now, the sun was coming up and the scientists had finished their work. One was near the front door. The other was gathering his things, which were scattered on the other side of the room.

Now was Finchy's chance. He took a deep breath.

Mo realized what Finchy was about to do but couldn't stop him. He was too far away. If he said anything, the scientists would hear him.

Suddenly, Finchy took off, flapping his wings at lightning speed. He headed straight toward the pad of paper, ripped the top sheet off the pad with his beak, and then flew out the front door, right behind the scientist who never even realized that Finchy was behind her.

Mo's heart was beating so fast and so loud that he placed his paw on top of his chest to muffle the sound. The other scientist wandered toward the pad of paper and realized the top sheet was missing.

"That's strange," he mumbled. He searched his desk. The floor. A nearby table. His briefcase. Since it was nowhere to be found, he headed out the door. Mo followed him, sneaking out as the scientist waved hello to someone down the road.

Finchy was waiting for Mo on top of the truck.

“I waited until you got here so we could read this together,” said Finchy. “Our lives will never be the same!”

“Are you crazy?” shouted Mo. “Do you know the kind of trouble...!”

Finchy ignored Mo and started reading the piece of paper. Suddenly, a blank expression covered his small, furry face.

Mo snatched the piece of paper from him and read it out loud: oatmeal, bread, bananas. . . It was a grocery list.

Mo burst out laughing. He couldn't stop.

Finchy hopped away from Mo with his head hanging low. When Mo called his name, he wouldn't respond or even look at him.

“Oh, c'mon,” pleaded Mo, who didn't realize Finchy was so sensitive. Mo wondered how he could help his new friend not feel so foolish.

*I know. I'll focus on his strengths, what he's good at, not his weaknesses.*

“Look at it this way,” continued Mo. “While you may not be brilliant, you were very brave.”

Mo's words had a magical effect. “I *was* brave,” Finchy said, as he turned around to face Mo. “Really brave. I faced danger head on, just like a superhero.”

Mo stretched out on the top of the truck, soaking in the morning sun. As Finchy bragged on and on about his courage, Mo had one thought in mind:

*I may not be brave but I'm the one who's brilliant.*