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ADVENTUREMICE
MOUSEHOLE TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH



BY PHILIP REEVE AND SARAH McINTYRE

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One morning at the Mousebase, there was a rumbling noise. Pedro noticed it while he was eating breakfast in the kitchen with the other Adventuremice.

At first he wondered if it was his cereal – but cereal usually went *snap*, *crackle*, *pop* and this noise was definitely

going **rumble rumble rumble**.

'What's that rumbling noise?' he asked.

'It's probably my tummy,' said Fledermaus. 'Hurry up with those pancakes, Bosun, I'm starving!'

'Patience, young mouse,' said Bosun, who was cooking up a stack of his famous blueberry pancakes.

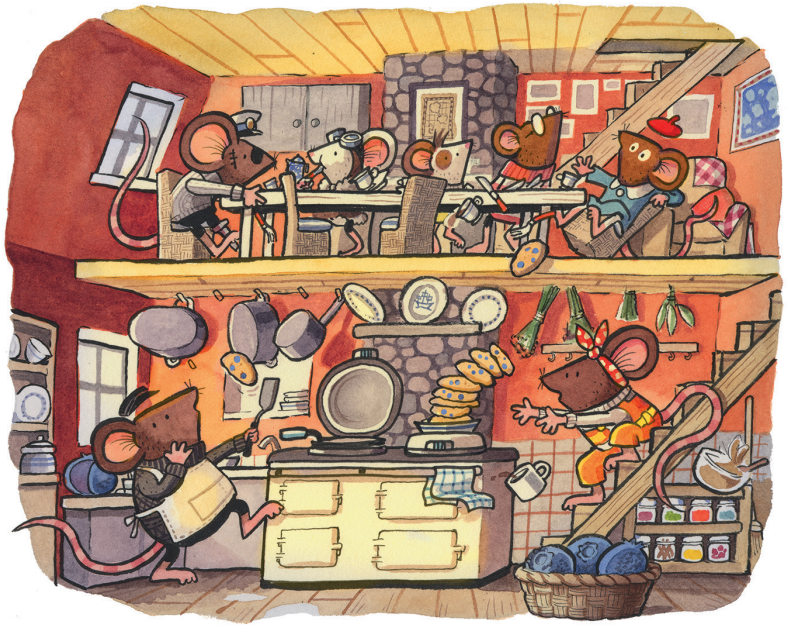
Rumble rumble rumble went the rumbling noise.

'It's getting louder,' said Pedro. 'I don't think even your tummy rumbles that much, Fledermaus.'

Rumble rumble rumble went

the noise again.

All the Adventuremice could hear it now. It was starting to make the windows rattle in their frames. It was starting to make the teacups tremble on the saucers. It shook dust down from the ceiling, and Millie fell off her chair.





'It's an EARTHQUAKE!' shouted Fledermaus.

'Don't panic!' Skipper told everyone. 'But let's all get outside.'

RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE went the noise.

The Adventuremice all ran down the stairs and outside into the sunshine.

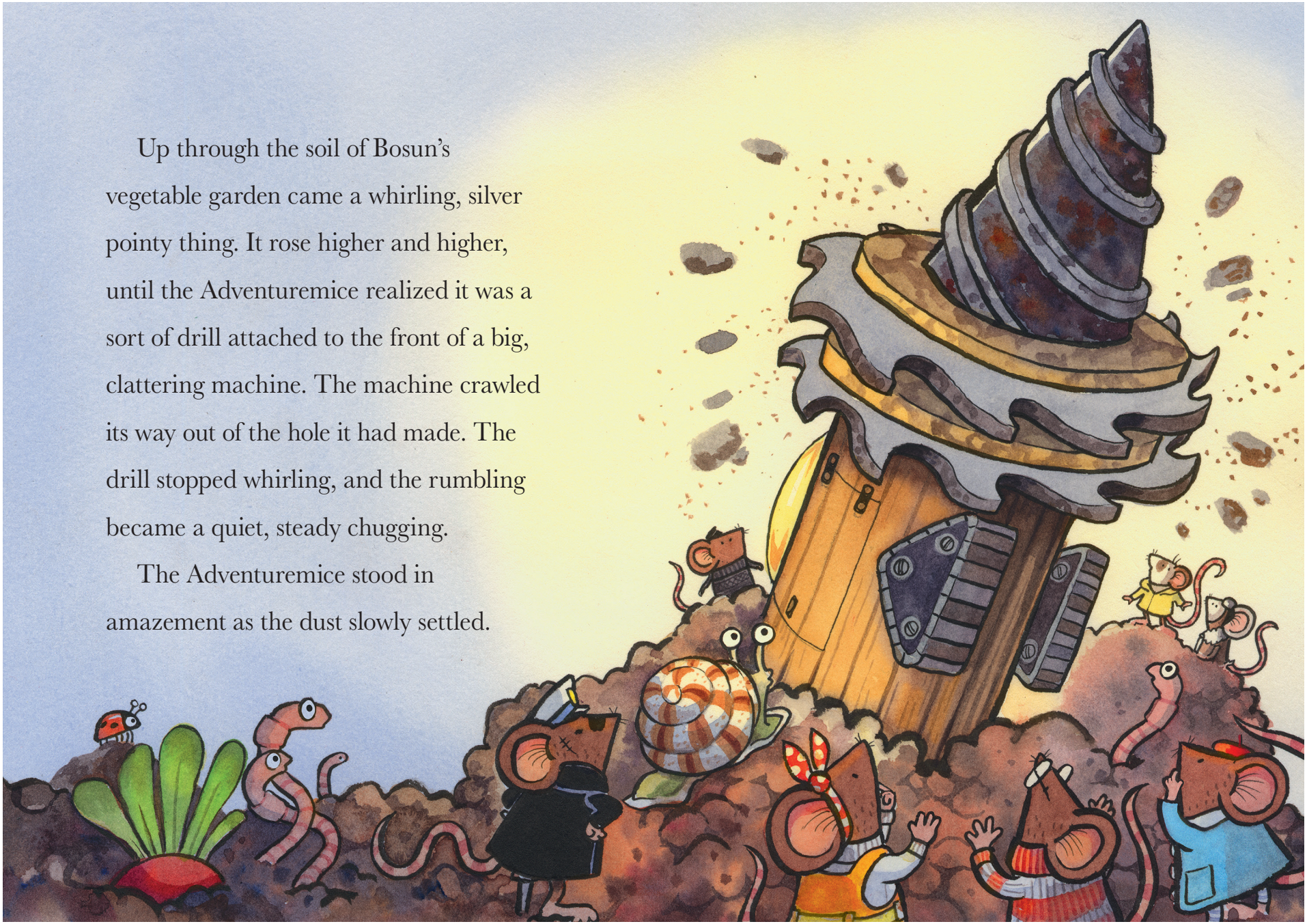
The rocks of the little island on which the Mousebase stood were shuddering. The rumbling noise filled the air.

'What is it?' asked Ivy.

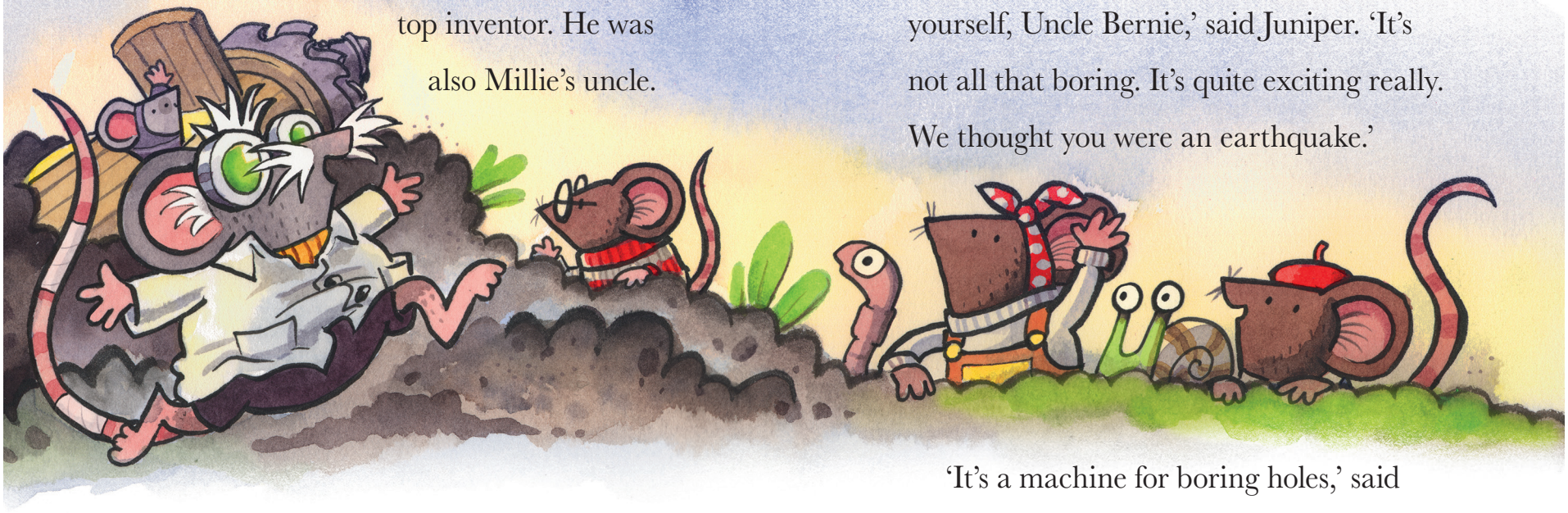
'I'm not sure,' said Skipper, 'but I don't think it's an earthquake. Look!'

Up through the soil of Bosun's vegetable garden came a whirling, silver pointy thing. It rose higher and higher, until the Adventuremice realized it was a sort of drill attached to the front of a big, clattering machine. The machine crawled its way out of the hole it had made. The drill stopped whirling, and the rumbling became a quiet, steady chugging.

The Adventuremice stood in amazement as the dust slowly settled.



Then a hatch on the top of the machine opened and a mouse jumped out. It was Professor Quatermouse, the Mouse Islands' top inventor. He was also Millie's uncle.



'Oh, hello Uncle Bernie!' said Millie.

'Yes, it is ME!' said Uncle Bernie proudly.

'And this is my new invention. I call it the Mechanical Mole. It's a boring machine.'

'I think you're being too hard on yourself, Uncle Bernie,' said Juniper. 'It's not all that boring. It's quite exciting really. We thought you were an earthquake.'

'It's a machine for boring holes,' said another mouse, scrambling out of the hatch after Uncle Bernie. 'That's what

we've just done – we bored a hole all the way from our island to the Mousebase, and now here we are.'

'You remember my assistant Pontiki?' said Uncle Bernie. 'Without her help, I would never have been able to create the Mechanical Mole. Magnificent, isn't it?! Like all my inventions, it's totally brilliant and can't possibly go wrong. With the aid of the Mechanical Mole, we'll be able to travel deep beneath the ground and learn all the secrets that lie at the Earth's core.'



'But why have you brought it here?'

asked Bosun, who was a bit annoyed about his vegetable garden.

'So that you can use it, of course!' said Pontiki. She pulled a folded-up inflatable dinghy out of her backpack and started to pump it up, while Uncle Bernie explained.



'Pontiki and I don't have time to go tunnelling around underground,' he said. 'We're very busy mice. Besides, it might be dangerous. It's more of a job for

brave, daring, expendable types like you Adventuremice. Have fun!'

Pontiki tossed the inflatable dinghy into the sea, and she and Uncle Bernie jumped down into it.

'Oh, I almost forgot,' Uncle Bernie started to say, but Pontiki started the outboard motor and the noise drowned out the rest of his words. A moment later, the dinghy was just a dot in the distance, speeding back towards Uncle Bernie's lab on Scrabble Island.

'What did he say?' asked Millie.

'I think he was saying the Mechanical



Mole has a slow reverse gear,' said Ivy.

'Fast or slow, it doesn't matter,' said Skipper. 'We're not likely to use it. In all my years as an Adventuremouse I've never yet needed to go burrowing underground.'

'Maybe I could turn it into a potting shed,' said Bosun.



Pedro looked at the big machine. He thought what a pity it would be if it never got to go tunnelling under the ground and just stayed here in the vegetable garden. He said, 'Couldn't we go exploring in it?'

'Underground?' asked Fledermaus. 'Why? It's not like the air or the sea down there, Pedro – it's just a load of mud and rocks and stuff.'

'You don't know that,' said Pedro. 'We might discover something.'

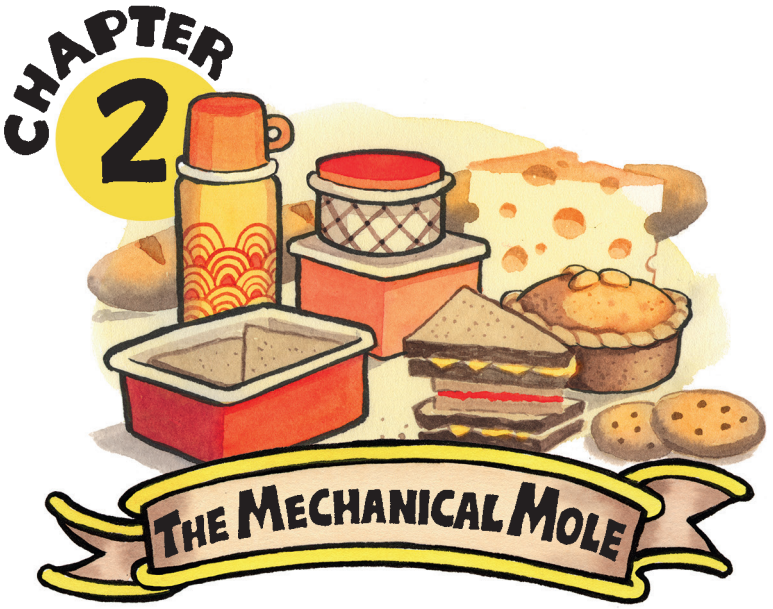
'Hmmm,' said Skipper thoughtfully. 'You may be right, Pedro. And the Squeakington Prize is about to be awarded – I'd like to get my paws on that.'



Pedro felt dizzy with excitement. The Squeakington Prize was a new prize for the Top Discovery Made By A Mouse. Pedro felt sure the Adventuremice could discover something underground that would make the judges sit up and take notice.

‘All right,’ said Skipper. ‘Let’s take this Mechanical Mole for a test drive and see what discoveries we can discover!’





Bosun and Juniper quickly made snacks and packed lunches for everyone. Then they all climbed inside the Mechanical Mole. Fledermaus looked at the confusing controls.

‘I wouldn’t know how to steer this contraption,’ he said.