

THE FERRET CAPTURE



Andrew Licht

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by

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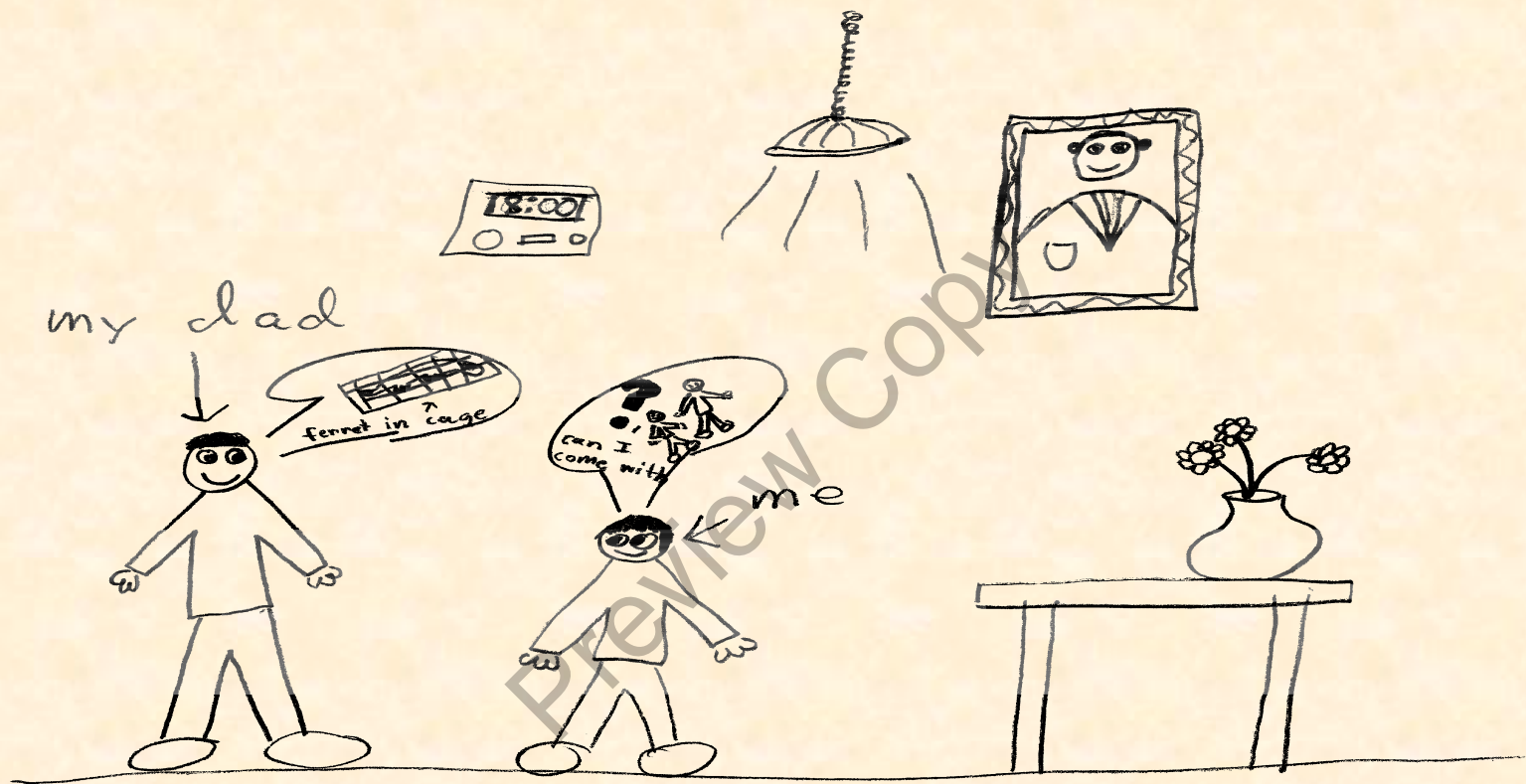
Thanks to Prairie Wildlife Research
and the staff of Wind Cave National Park

A portion of the proceeds of this book will be donated to
www.blackfootedferret.org

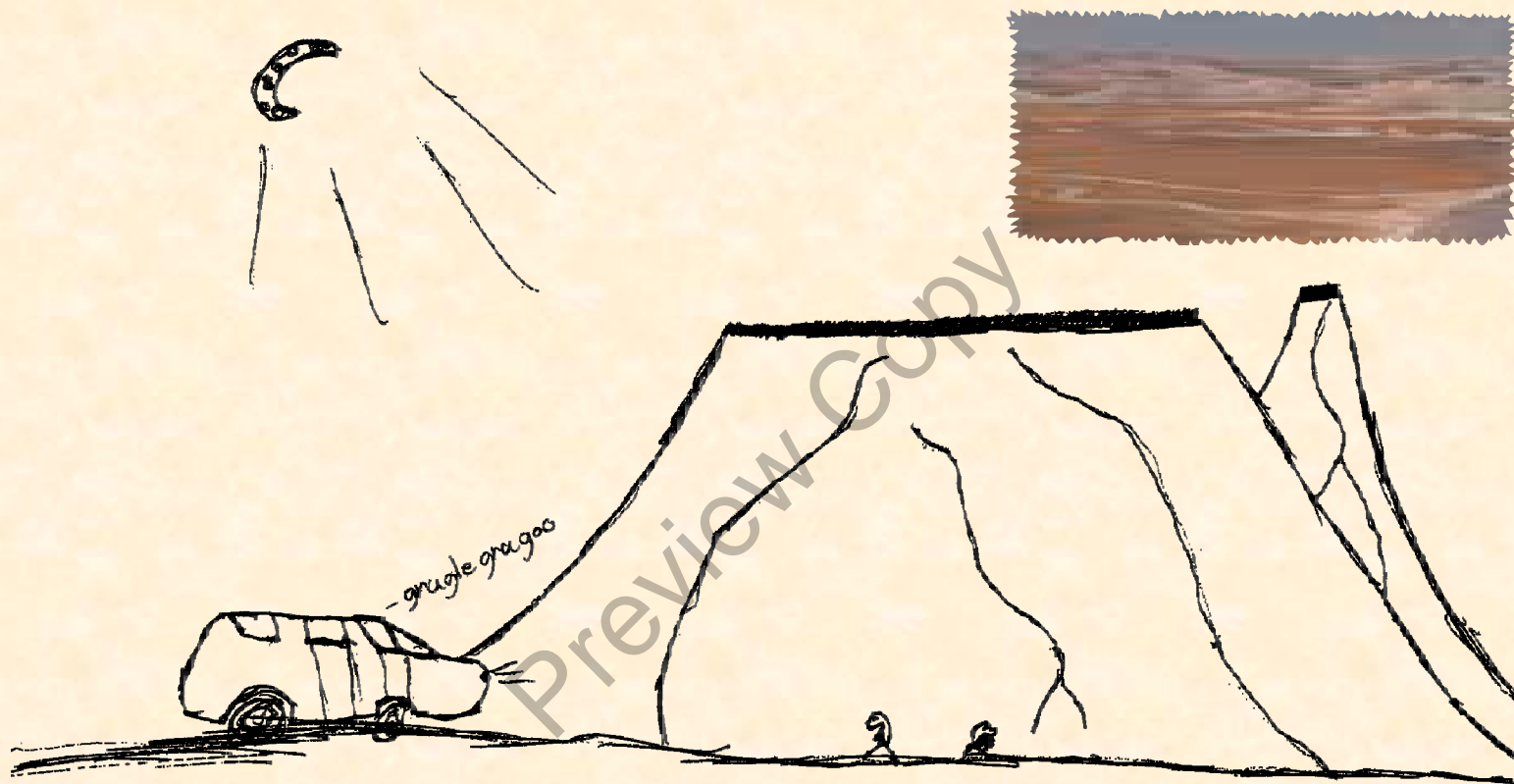
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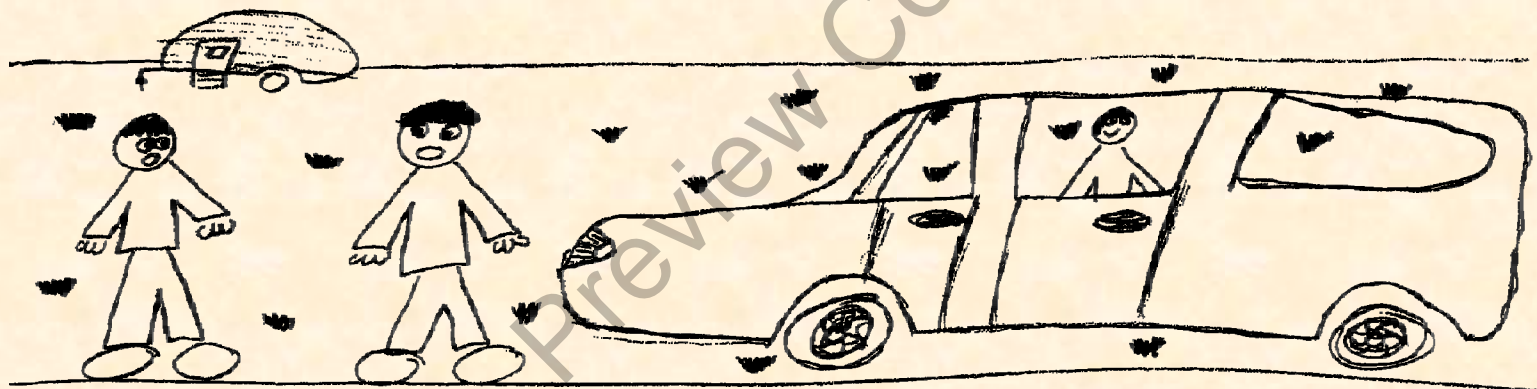
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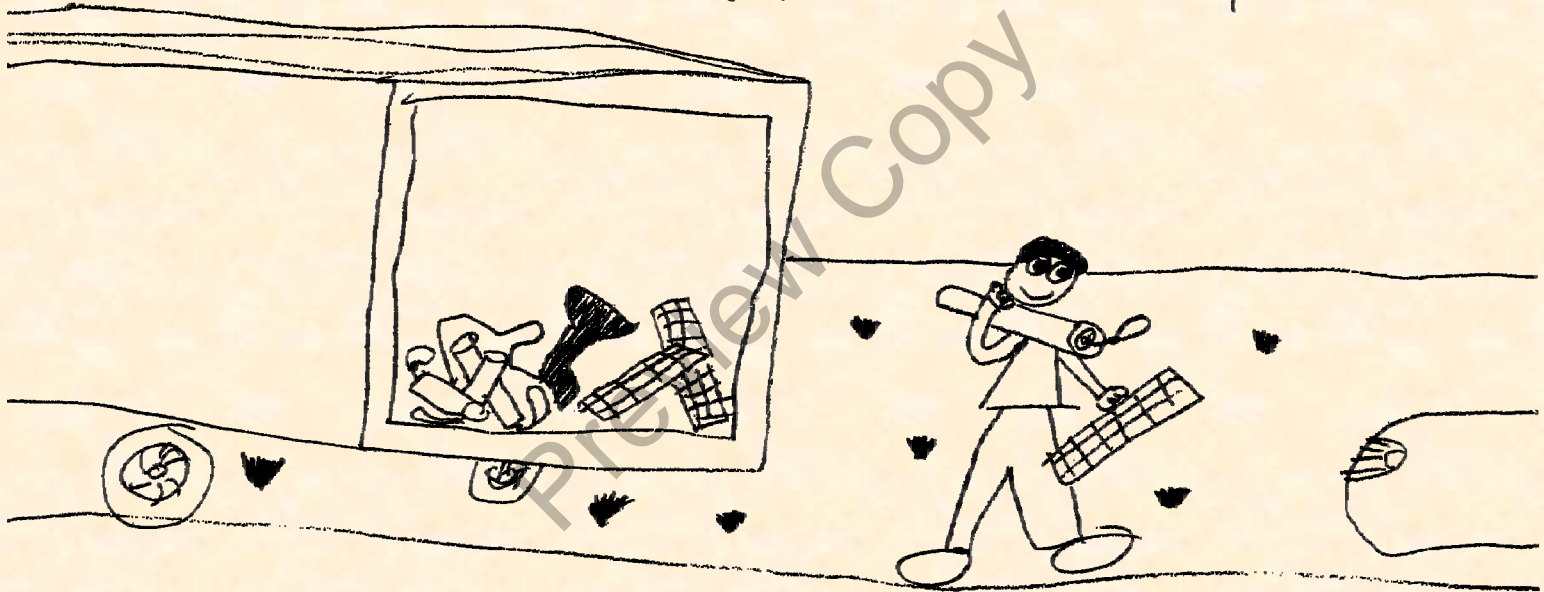
Vvvvroomm! The car started up, it was 8:00 Saturday night, October 3, 2006. My dad, a wildlife biologist, had to help capture black-footed ferrets so I came along to help out.



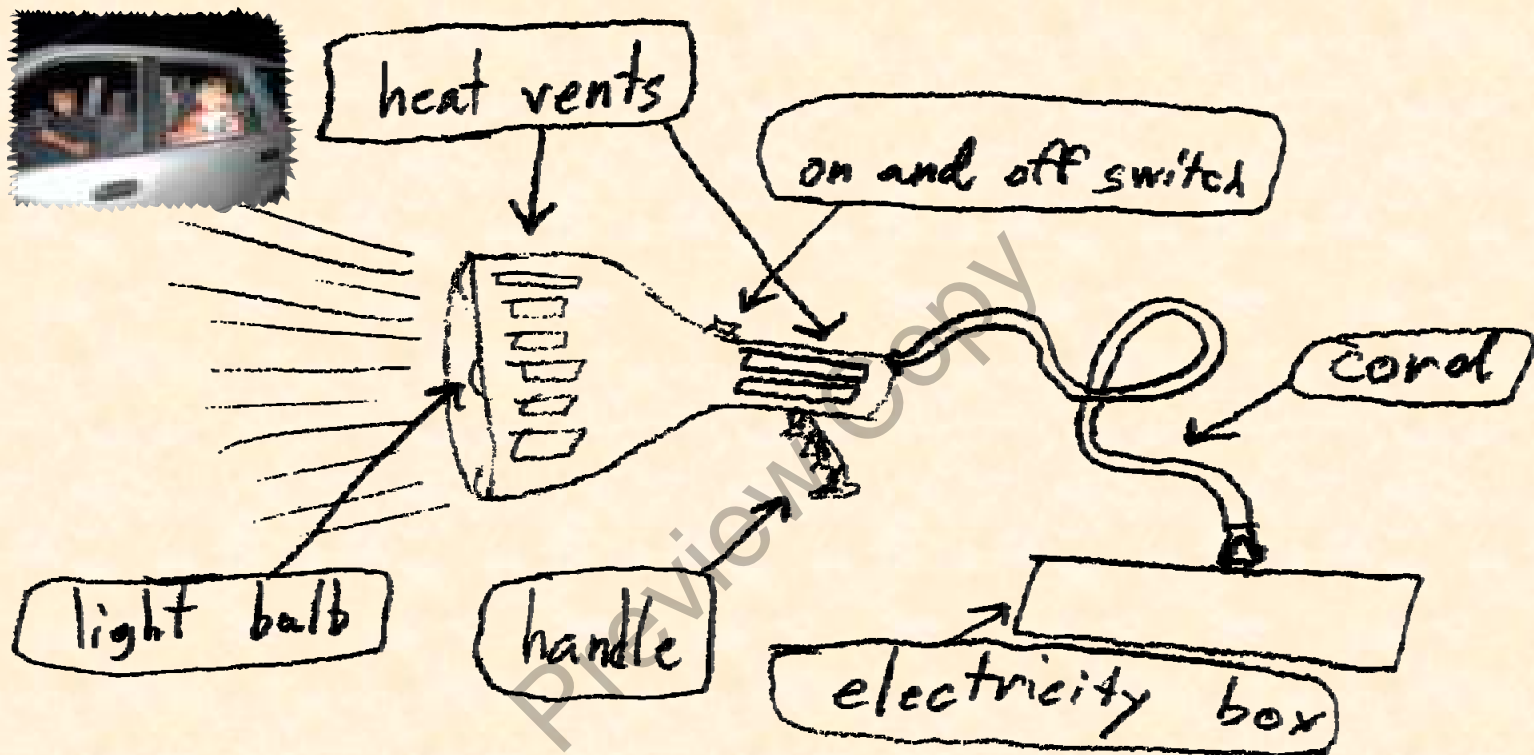
We were heading for the South Dakota Badlands. I slept in the car for about an hour. Gruglegrugoo! The car stopped on the dusty dirt road. I awoke.



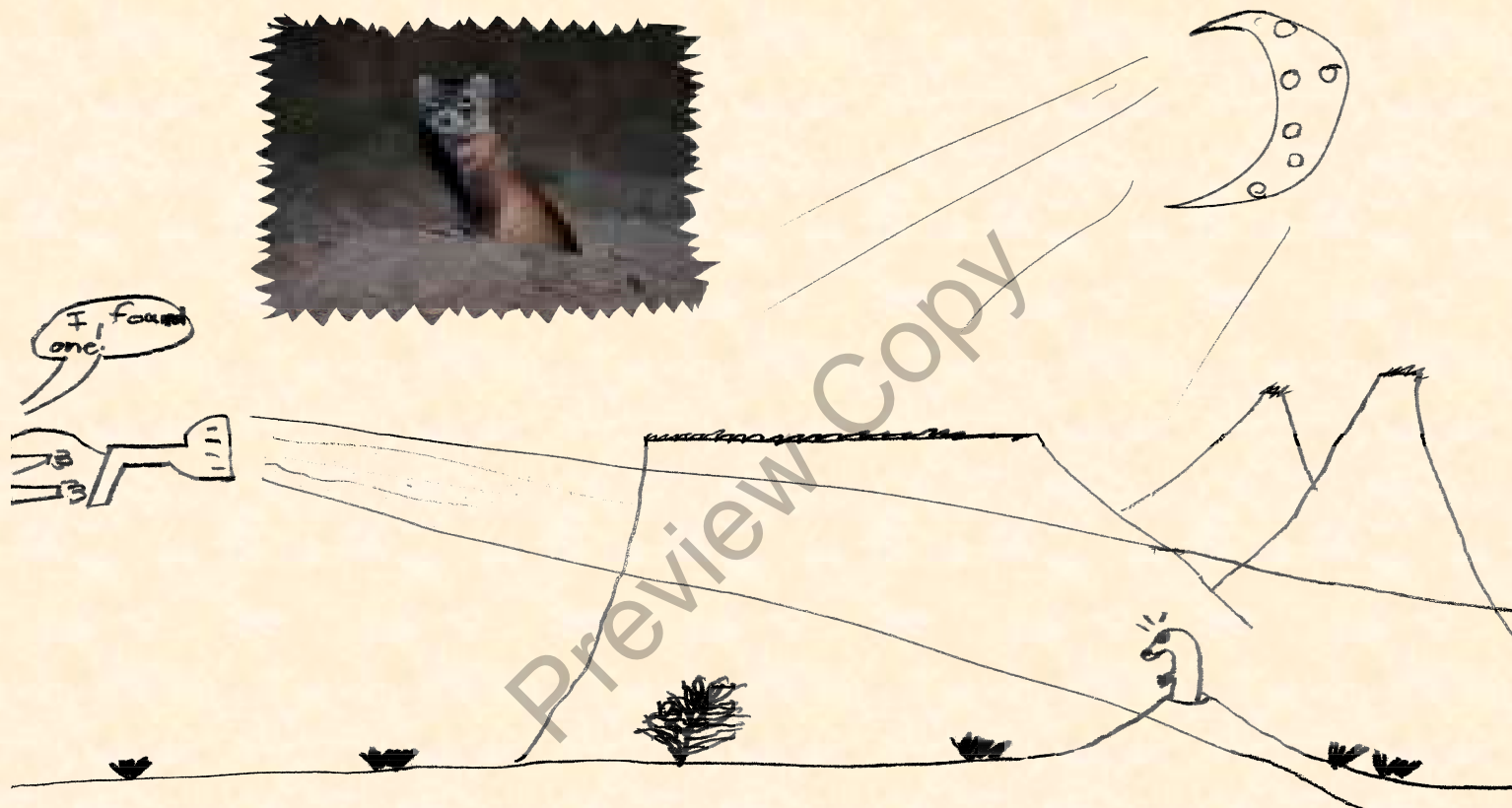
My dad got out and started talking with some other wildlife biologists that he worked with. I got out of the car and looked at the crescent moon. Everything was covered with a shade of bluish-gray from the moon.



My dad took some tools from the other workers truck and before I knew it we were back in the car driving across the dusty plain.



Once we got to a good point my dad handed me a spotlight. No! No, not one of the big ones in the movies, one of the ones that are one-foot by one-foot. He handed my thirteen-year old brother one too.



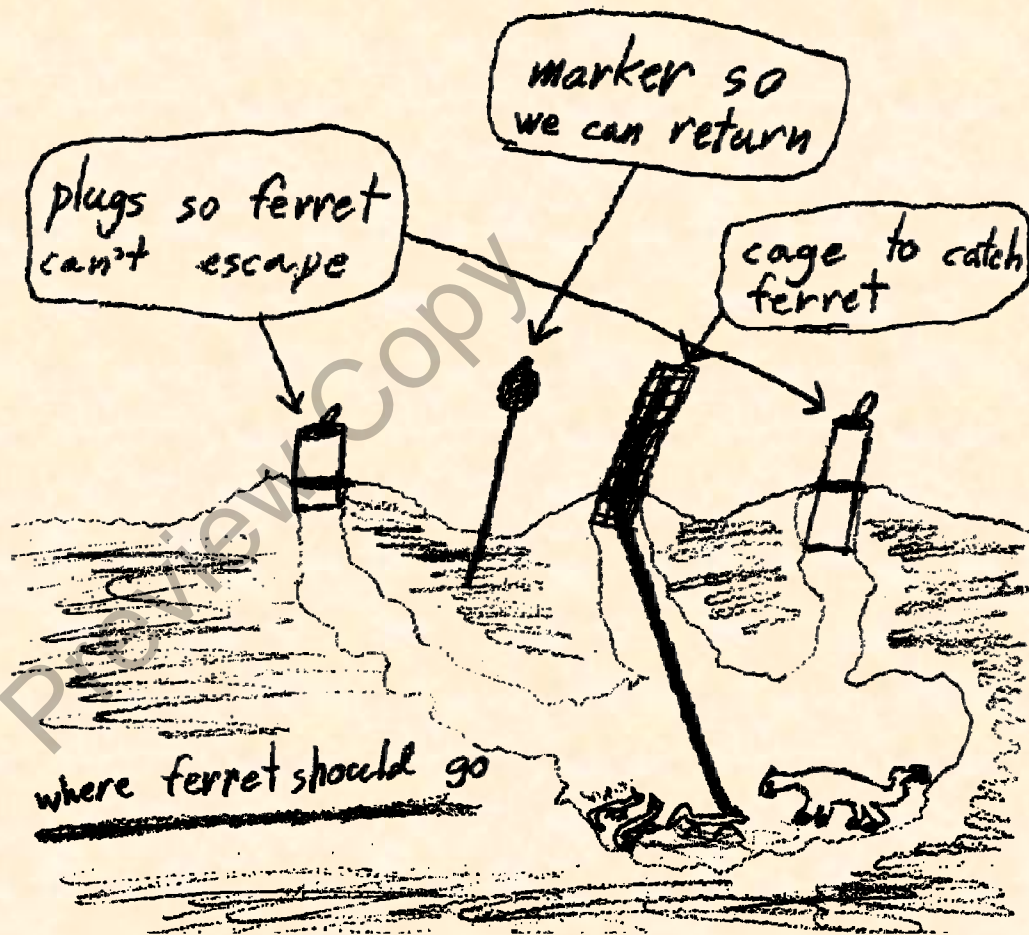
He told us to shine the light out on the landscape. He also said that how you know if you see a ferret is you look for two green gem-like eyes.

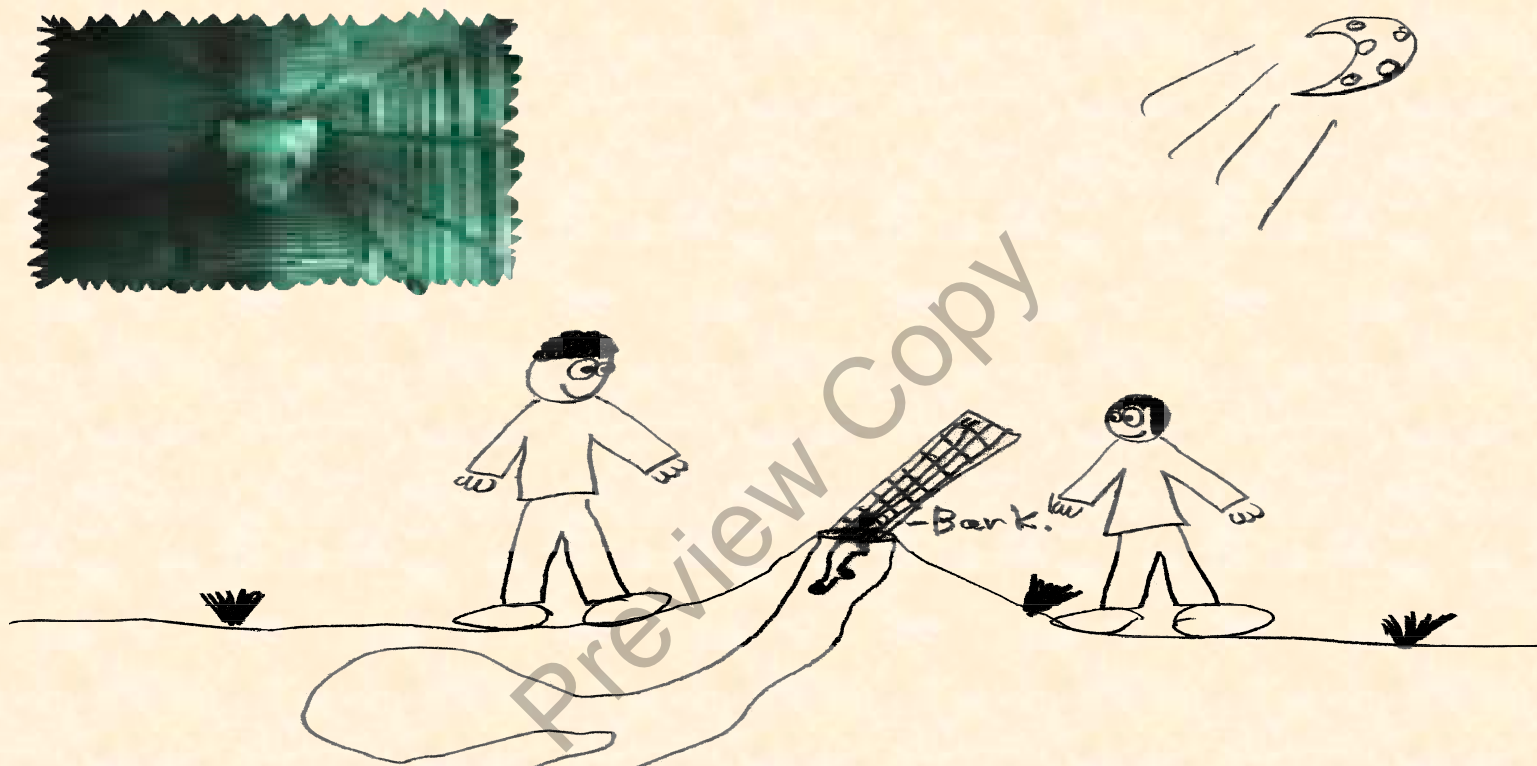


We searched for about thirty minutes and didn't find anything. Brady (my brother) was the first person to find one. We got close to it, but then it ran down a hole.



We got out some equipment that looks something like the picture to the right. Then we put the marker down and left to go look for other ferrets.





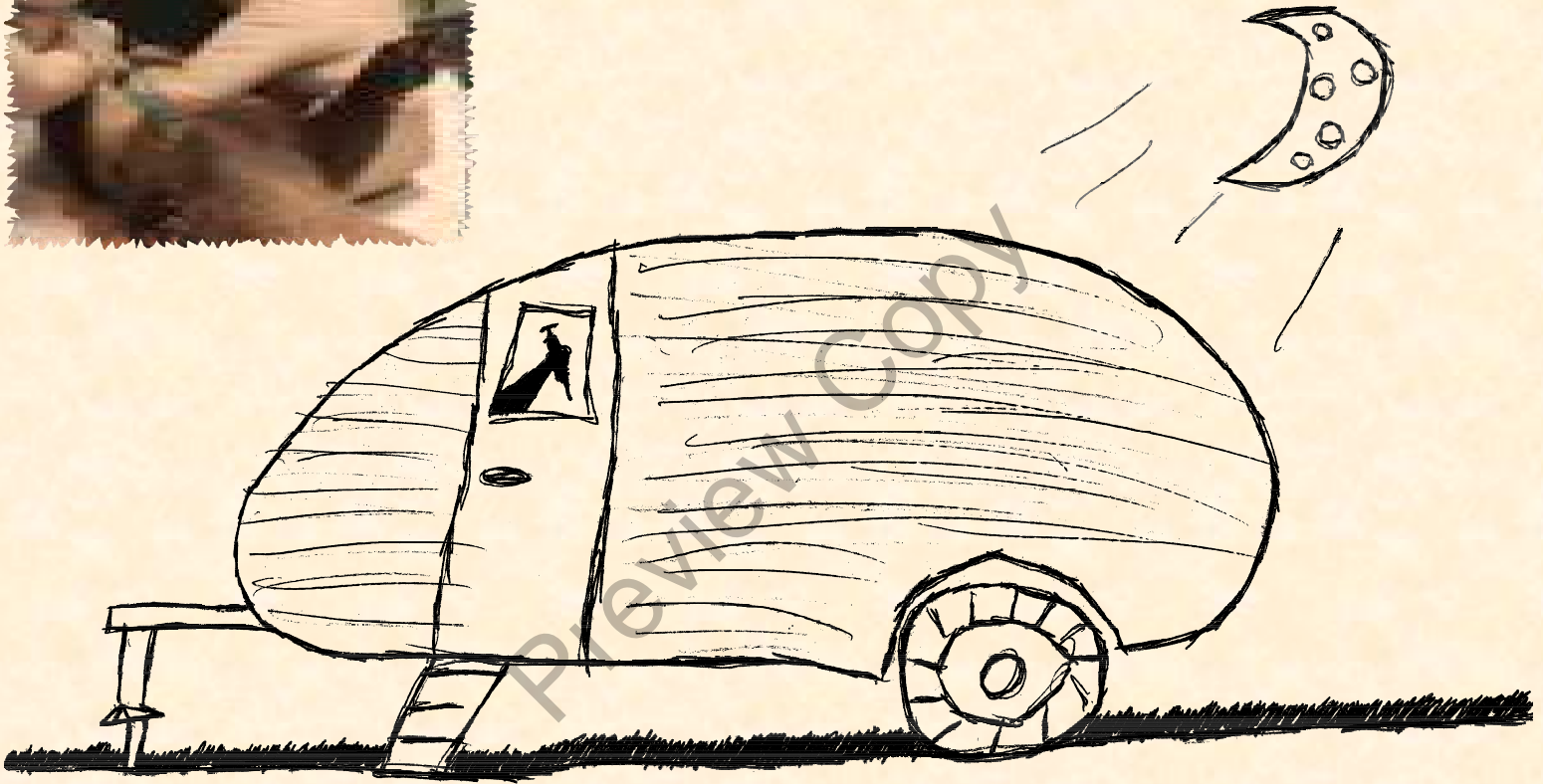
We came back about an hour later to see if there was a ferret in the trap. "Bark!" was the noise I heard as I peered in at the little ferret. I only have one thing to say about him, he was cute.



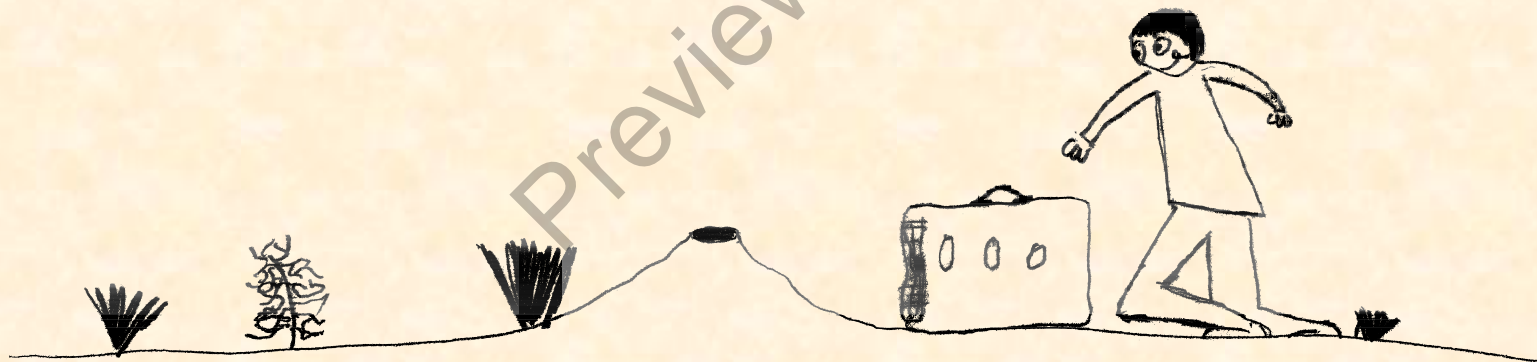
My dad opened the back part of the cage and put a black tube over it, the ferret ran in and my dad closed the lid. He gave the tube to me to hold in the car.



As we drove I notice that the tube was warm and moved around. Well duh! Of course it was warm and moved around a lot, there was a ferret in there.



Once we got back to the other workers I gave the tube to them and they took it into their trailer and put it to sleep. They did some things with it and gave it a shot.



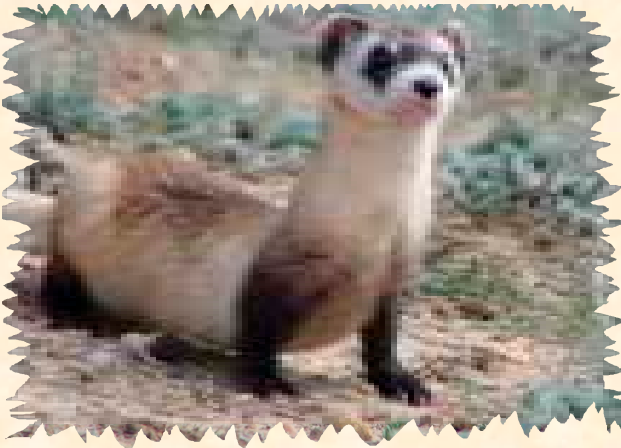
Then they put it in a cage and we returned it to where we found it.



We did this about four times. My brother fell asleep on the third. Then we returned home about 1:02am and I went to bed dreaming about the illuminating night that I just had.

THE END

12 Black-footed Ferret Facts



1. The black-footed ferret has short legs with large front paws made for digging. Its large skull, strong jaw, and sharp teeth are made for eating meat. Its long whiskers help it feel its way through dark burrows.

2. Prairie dogs make up 90% of a black-footed ferret's food. A ferret may eat over 100 prairie dogs in one year. Ferrets need large prairie dog towns to survive and raise their young.





3. Black-footed ferrets eat, sleep, and raise their young in prairie dog burrows. They spend about 90% of their time underground. They sleep during the day and hunt prairie dogs at night.

4. Young ferrets are called kits. They are born blind and helpless and stay below ground until they are 2 months old. Then the female takes them on hunting trips and puts them in different burrows. By October the young are on their own and find their own territories.



5. The black-footed ferret is sometimes called the prairie bandit because of the black marks on its face. It is a member of the weasel family and evolved in the Great Plains of North America.



6. Plains Indians called the black-footed ferret "pispiza etopta sapa," meaning "black-faced prairie dogs." They used black-footed ferret hides to decorate ceremonial clothing.



7. Black-footed ferrets once numbered in the tens of thousands, but habitat destruction and diseases from other countries almost eliminated them. People once thought they were extinct.

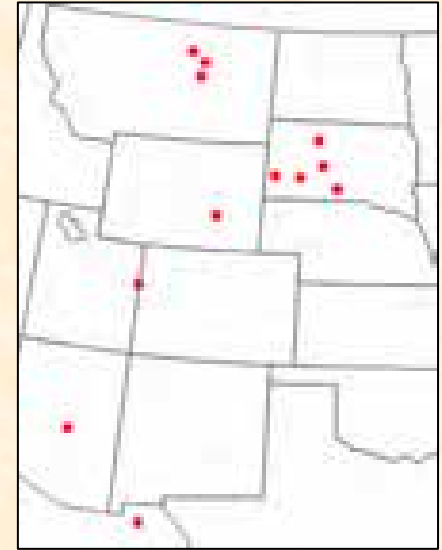


8. Then Shep—a ranch dog in Meeteetse, Wyoming—changed their minds. On a September morning in 1981 Shep brought home a dead black-footed ferret. People went to the area and discovered more than 120 ferrets. But by 1986 only 18 were left so they were captured and put in a safe building.

9. Many young ferrets have been born in captivity and released into the wild. Today, black-footed ferrets have been brought back to 11 areas within their old range in Wyoming, South Dakota, Montana, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and Chihuahua, Mexico. There are probably less than 1,000 ferrets in the wild.



10. Biologists capture ferrets so they can study them and count how many there are. They also make sure the ferrets are healthy and give them shots to protect them from disease.



11. Many other wildlife species live in prairie dog towns with black-footed ferrets such as burrowing owls, swift fox, badgers, and pronghorn antelope.



12. You can help conserve black-footed ferrets by telling people to protect them and their habitat and by going to www.blackfootedferret.org and adopting a ferret.

Preview Copy



Andrew Licht was 9 years old when he went on his black-footed ferret adventure. He wrote this book when he was 9 and drew the illustrations when he was 10. He lives in Rapid City South Dakota.