



# The Adventures of **Mo**

**Chapter 27**

By Carol Patton

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### Hazel, the Chipmunk

Mo and Finchy couldn't believe their eyes. Right there, right in front of them, was a man and woman wearing matching T-shirts with the word *Florida* printed on them.

Mo and Finchy spotted the couple while traveling on a ferry across Lake Huron to a place called Mackinac Island. Much earlier that day, they had been riding on top of the delivery truck for more than nine hours, mainly on US Highway 151 North. After the truck driver delivered packages to a variety of places – the GarLyn Zoological Park, Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum, and Fort de Buade Museum – he decided to visit the island overnight and hopped on the ferry with Mo and Finchy close behind.

During the twenty-minute ferry ride, Mo and Finchy stayed near the man and woman, hoping to overhear something, anything at all, about Florida.

Instead, they learned several things about the couple. They were married and lived in Florida. They bragged more about their two dogs than teenage children, which Mo

thought was perfectly understandable. The man eats chocolate ice cream topped with peanut butter. Yesterday, the woman accidentally swallowed a fly.

After the ferry docked, all the passengers headed toward the Grand Hotel. Its lobby was packed. Mo and Finchy hid near the registration desk and then followed the truck driver and couple up the staircase to the second floor. As luck would have it, their rooms were across from each other.

“I think I left my cell phone at the registration desk,” said the husband to his wife as she unlocked the door. “I’ll be right back.”

After she entered the room, Mo ran inside and hid under the bed. His brain was working overtime. *What should I do? Is it wrong for me to hide under their bed? Maybe I’ll hear something about Florida. Would that be spying?*

Shortly after the husband returned, the couple left the room. Mo unlocked the door to let Finchy inside so they could discuss their next move.

Should they follow the couple around the island? Should they approach them directly? If so, what should they say? Should they ask other guests at the hotel how to get to Florida?

They decided to leave them a note.

*Dear Man and Woman from Florida:*

*We're trying to get to Florida but have no idea where it is. Please write the directions down on this sheet of paper and then leave it outside your door. We will pick it up later.  
Thank you, Mo and Finchy*

Then they left the hotel room to explore the island, which sits between the state's upper and lower peninsulas. There was so much to do. They could swim in the hotel's pool, bicycle around the island, which was about eight miles around, or even play pickleball, a sport that combines tennis, badminton, and ping-pong.

They decided to visit the spa. It was a long time since either of them had a bath.

When they walked in, several young women were standing near the entrance.

"Do you have an appointment?" said one woman.

The others laughed.

“Hey Liz, guess who walked in to get their nails done?” said the same woman.

Liz, the spa manager, came toward them.

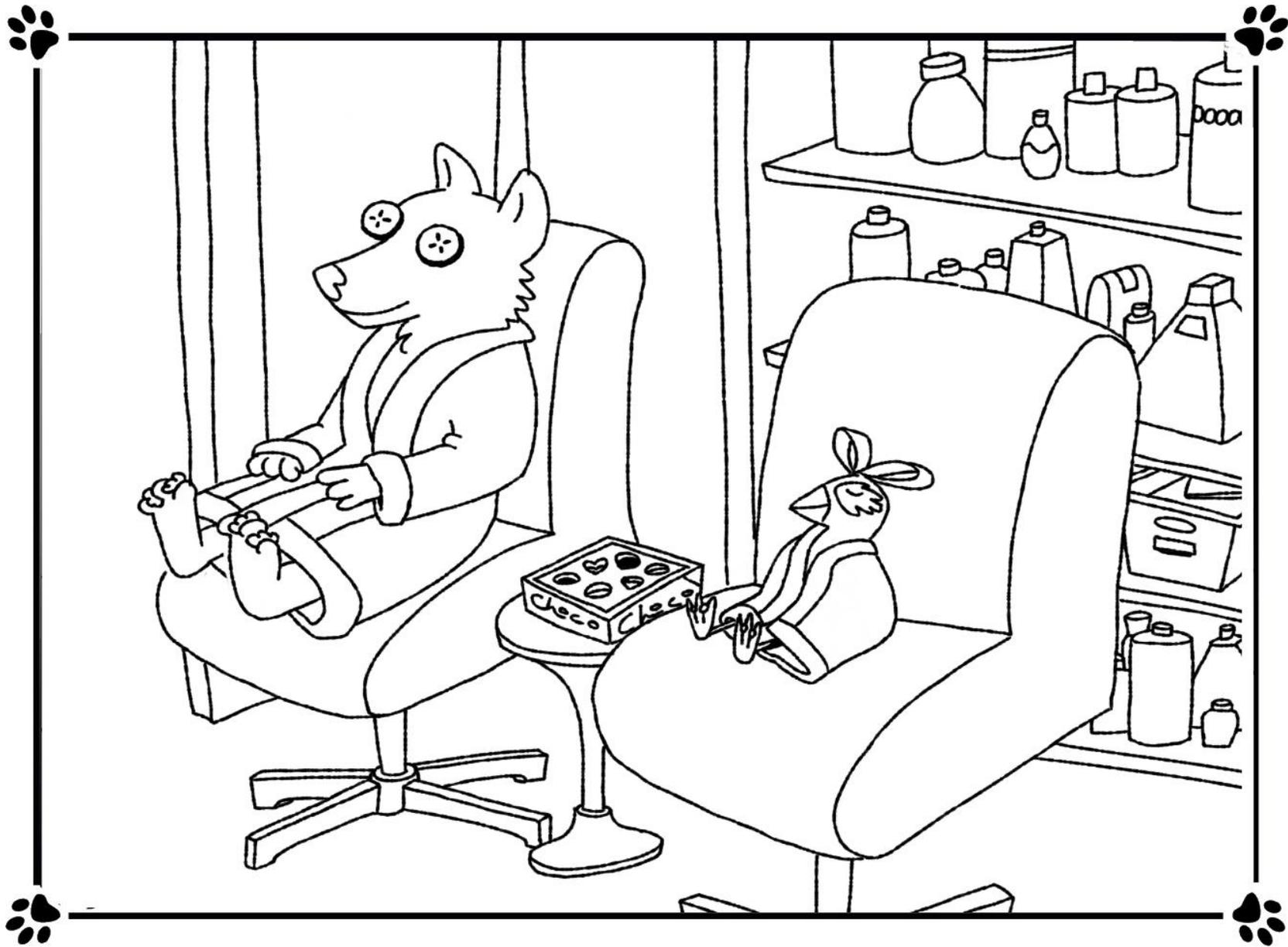
“Oh, that must be Sheila’s dog,” she said. “She said he was white and fluffy and asked us to groom him. But she didn’t say anything about a bird.”

No matter. Mo and Finchy were escorted to a back room where they both were washed, brushed, and blow dried. Mo’s fur was whiter than a marshmallow and Finchy’s wings were so fluffy that he appeared twice his actual size. Then they each had a pedicure while eating chocolates.

“When we get back home, I’m going to open a spa like this,” whispered Finchy to Mo. “And I know just the tree to build it in.”

They left the spa and headed downtown to visit the art studios and galleries and walk around the shopping district. They noticed a chipmunk across the street gathering acorns. Mo and Finchy introduced themselves.

“We’re on our way to Florida,” boasted Finchy.



The Chipmunk, named Hazel, replied, “F-l-o-o-r-a what?” Then she lifted up her left paw and pointed to a spot slightly above the tip of her paw. “This is where we are now.”

Mo and Finchy looked confused.

Hazel explained that they were in a state shaped like a human’s hand. The state also bordered four Great Lakes – Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Lake Superior. There was a fifth Great Lake but she couldn’t remember its name. But she knew that when you took the first letter of each lake’s name, it spelled HOMES.

She held up her paw once more, but this time, pointed to a spot on the lower right side. “This is where I was born, in Detroit.”

Mo and Finchy had never heard of the place. She told them that’s where humans build cars. It was also the first city to give people personal phone numbers and the only one in the entire country with a floating post office.

She invited Mo and Finchy to her family’s home, a burrow or underground space with many rooms and tunnels. But Mo couldn’t fit. He was way too big so they spread out on a patch of grass nearby.

“What’s it like to live here?” asked Mo.

“Well, in the winter, it’s really, really cold, “ said Hazel. “We sort of hibernate, relax or sleep most of the time. We only leave our home every few days to eat and, of course, go to the bathroom.”

She explained that her family collects seeds and nuts from all over the island and stores them in their burrow. “My cheeks are like shopping bags,” she said. “I can stuff up to five acorns in them at the same time. One time, I collected over 150 nuts in just one day.”

Mo and Finchy never met anyone who carried food in his or her cheeks. Was Hazel making this up?

“Let me show you,” she said, knowing they didn’t believe her. She scrounged around the ground for acorns and shoved five in her mouth. Her cheeks bulged to three times their normal size.

“Mycheefu,” said Hazel. Mo and Finchy had no idea what she said because her mouth was so full. Hazel spit out the acorns and said her cousin once stuffed six in his mouth at once. “But they got stuck and we had to pull them out one by one,” she explained.



The three friends sat on the grass near Hazel's home, basking in the warm sun. They chatted about how they should spend the rest of the day.

"Let's have some fun," said Finchy. "How about a contest to see who can gather the most nuts? Mo and me against you, Hazel."

"What does the winner get?" she asked.

They sat in silence for a few minutes.

"I know," said Mo. "If you win, Hazel, you get to keep all the nuts. We'll even move them to your front door. But if Finchy and I win, you have to find us dinner, even if it means climbing into the dumpsters behind the restaurants."

"You're on," said Hazel. "By six o'clock, whoever gathers the most nuts, wins."

They split up and began hunting. In the grass. Around the trees. In the flower beds.

By six o'clock, they stopped hunting and began counting.

Hazel's pile had seventy-two nuts while Mo and Finchy had only gathered twenty nuts.

“No offense, but you’d make lousy chipmunks,” said Hazel.

Mo and Finchy placed their pile of nuts on a stained tablecloth they found in a dumpster behind a restaurant. They each grabbed an end and moved the nuts to the entrance of Hazel’s home.

“That was the most fun I had since my mean cousin was chased by a bat,” said Hazel who still wanted to hang out with Mo and Finchy. “Let’s eat dinner together at my favorite dumpster. In the mood for Italian?”

The dumpster was overflowing with food. They stuffed themselves with spaghetti, meatballs, pizza, and other Italian food that no one could pronounce.

It was getting dark. Mo and Finchy said goodbye and thanked Hazel for a wonderful afternoon.

After arriving at the hotel, they went straight to the couple’s room. A note was on the floor outside the door. Mo read it out loud:

“To get to Florida, head south and then a little east. You will cross four states before entering Florida.”

They were only four states away! But which states? What were their names? How could they get the truck driver to take them there?

“Can you believe it?” said Finchy. “We’re so close!”

“We can finally return the key to its rightful owner and complete our mission,” added Mo.

Suddenly, they both became quiet. Their journey would soon come to an end. No more visiting exciting places. No more making new friends. No more hanging out together.

Right then and there they made a decision. Florida could wait. They were simply having too much fun. They would continue riding on top of the delivery truck, knowing they would eventually get to Florida.

“I really need to return to the spa,” Finchy said. “My nail polish is chipping. I’m not crazy about the way she styled my left wing. And what’s up with this blue bow stuck on my head?”