



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 36

By Carol Patton

Chapter 36

The Hunt for Glass Balls

Mo read the sign on the side of the road: Point Judith.

“Who do you think Judith is?” he asked Finchy.

Finchy shrugged his tiny shoulders. “Have no idea,” he said. “She must have done something brave or important. Humans name stuff after people like that but do they ever name something after a bird that’s a hero? Never. Shameful. Simply shameful.”

Off in the distance, they noticed a ferry that shuttled people and animals back and forth to Block Island, which was roughly one hour south of Point Judith. Mo wanted to visit the island, partly because animals were allowed. They had traveled for approximately one hour that morning, mostly along Interstate 95 North and US -1 North, seeing signs for Newport, Kingston, and other cities.

Mo and Finchy heard several voices behind them. They turned around and saw a small group of dogs and cats walking toward the ferry.

“Cini (see-nee), did you bring the sandwiches?” asked a brown-spotted dog named Coco. “Oh, and what about the potato salad?”

Cini, a beautiful gray cat, rolled her eyes.

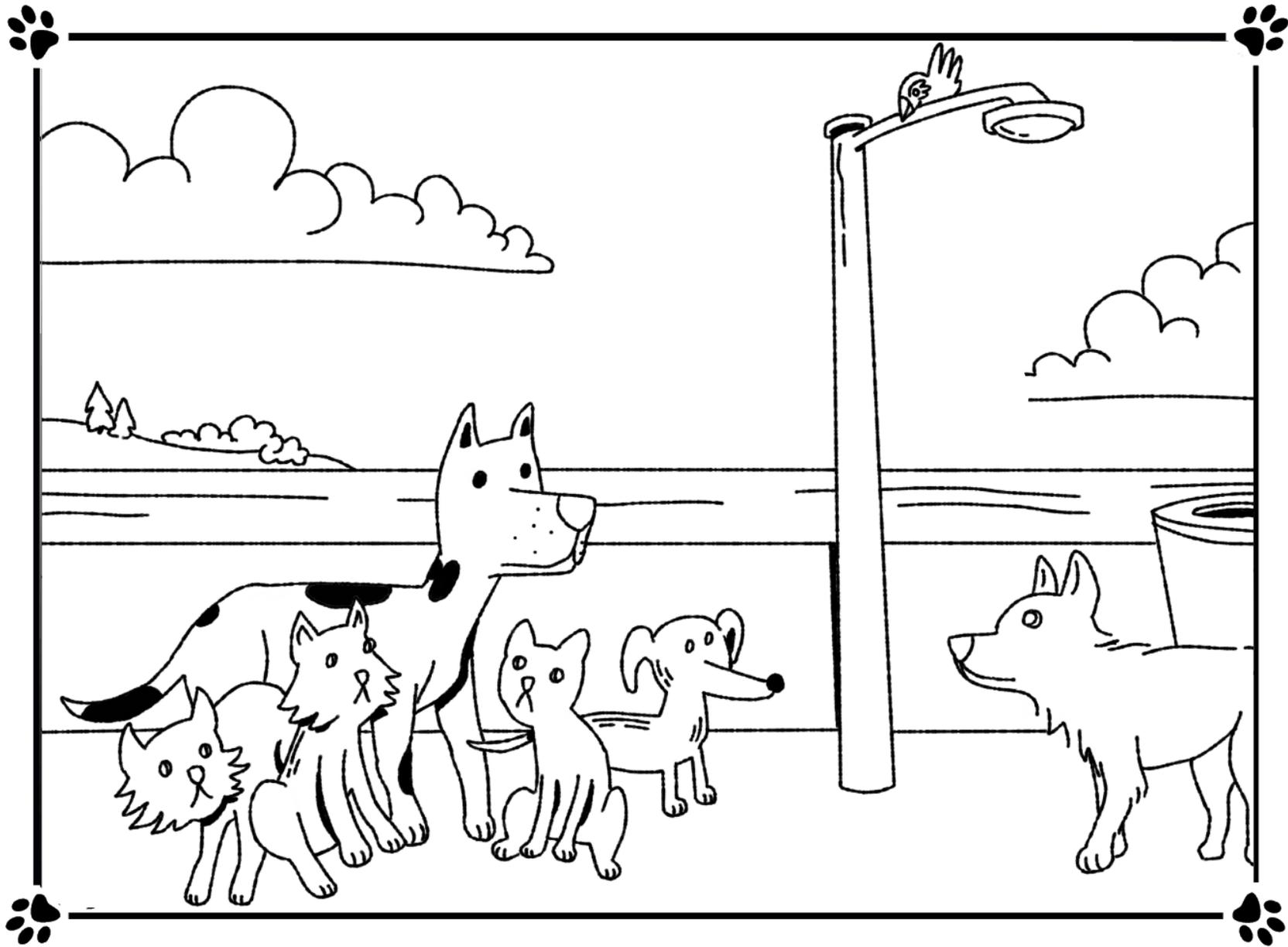
“Have I ever – ever – forgotten to bring the food?” she asked, rather irritated. “I brought enough tuna and roast beef sandwiches, potato salad, apples, carrots, and cookies to feed everyone twice over.”

Mo began walking toward them but Finchy yanked him back.

“What are you doing?” asked Finchy. “You know cats eat birds, right?”

“Finchy, you heard them,” Mo said. “They have plenty of food. You won’t even be on their minds, or in their stomachs.”

Mo walked over to the group while Finchy flew to the top of a street light.



“Hi, my name is Mo,” he said. “My friend Finchy and I are visitors. Can we join your group?”

The dogs and cats looked at each other. No one seemed to object.

“Sure, why not,” said an older cat named Copy.

“There’s just one small thing,” said Mo. “My friend, my best friend, is a bird. Will that be a problem for anyone?” He stared directly at the cats.

Cini, Copy, and a third cat, named Pixel, formed a huddle. They whispered to each other for a few minutes. Then Cini spoke: “We have plenty of food, Mo. You have our word. We won’t harm Finchy.”

Finchy carefully listened to every word they said and then flew over to Mo’s side.

All three cats looked at Finchy.

“Oh, he’s so small,” said Pixel as the other cats nodded in agreement. “He wouldn’t be worth our effort.”

Knowing that the cats believed he was too small to eat didn't make Finchy feel any more comfortable around them. Still, he boarded the ferry but perched himself on its roof, out of their reach, just in case.

During the ferry ride, Mo took the time to get to know the animals.

“It’s unusual to see dogs and cats so friendly with each other,” said Mo. “Have you known each other for a long time?”

Cini explained that they grew up together, in the same neighborhood.

“One day, we realized that it was kind of dumb how we were treating each other,” she said. “Since we have a lot more in common than differences, it made more sense to be friends. Now we help each other and hang out together instead of fighting all the time or chasing each other around the block.”

After the ferry docked, everyone walked on to the island. The beach was crowded with people sunbathing. The group of animals walked to their favorite spot, a far corner of the beach with no humans in sight.

“My stomach is growling,” said Coco. “The game can wait.”

Mo was more hungry than curious about the game so he didn't ask Coco anything about it. He helped her spread out a blanket on the warm sand so Cini and the others could set up the food.

Within seconds, everyone started grabbing this and that. Mo stuffed his mouth with a roast beef sandwich and potato salad while Finchy ate a tuna fish sandwich that had too much mayo for his taste. But he learned a long time ago to never complain about free food.

After lunch, the animals began talking about the game. There were five hundred glass balls – each were numbered and about the size of an orange – hidden on the small island's beaches and nature trail. All of them were made by a local, glass artist. The balls were clear, except for twenty that were colored or featured patterns.

“Every year, we play a game – dogs against cats – to see which team can find the most balls,” said a tan dog named Howie. “Each team records the number on each ball they find and its location. But we don't keep any. You can't eat them, can't chew them and, since they have no flavor or smell, there's no point in even licking them.”

Coco and Howie were excited because now the teams would be even in number. Since Mo agreed to compete, there would be three dogs against three cats.

The group divvied up. Finchy offered to cheerlead. He still planned on keeping as far away from the cats as possible.

Mo followed Coco and Howie to popular beach spots. They spread out and began searching for the balls. Coco quickly found one hidden in a bush and then shouted the number, “Twelve,” to Howie so he could record the number.

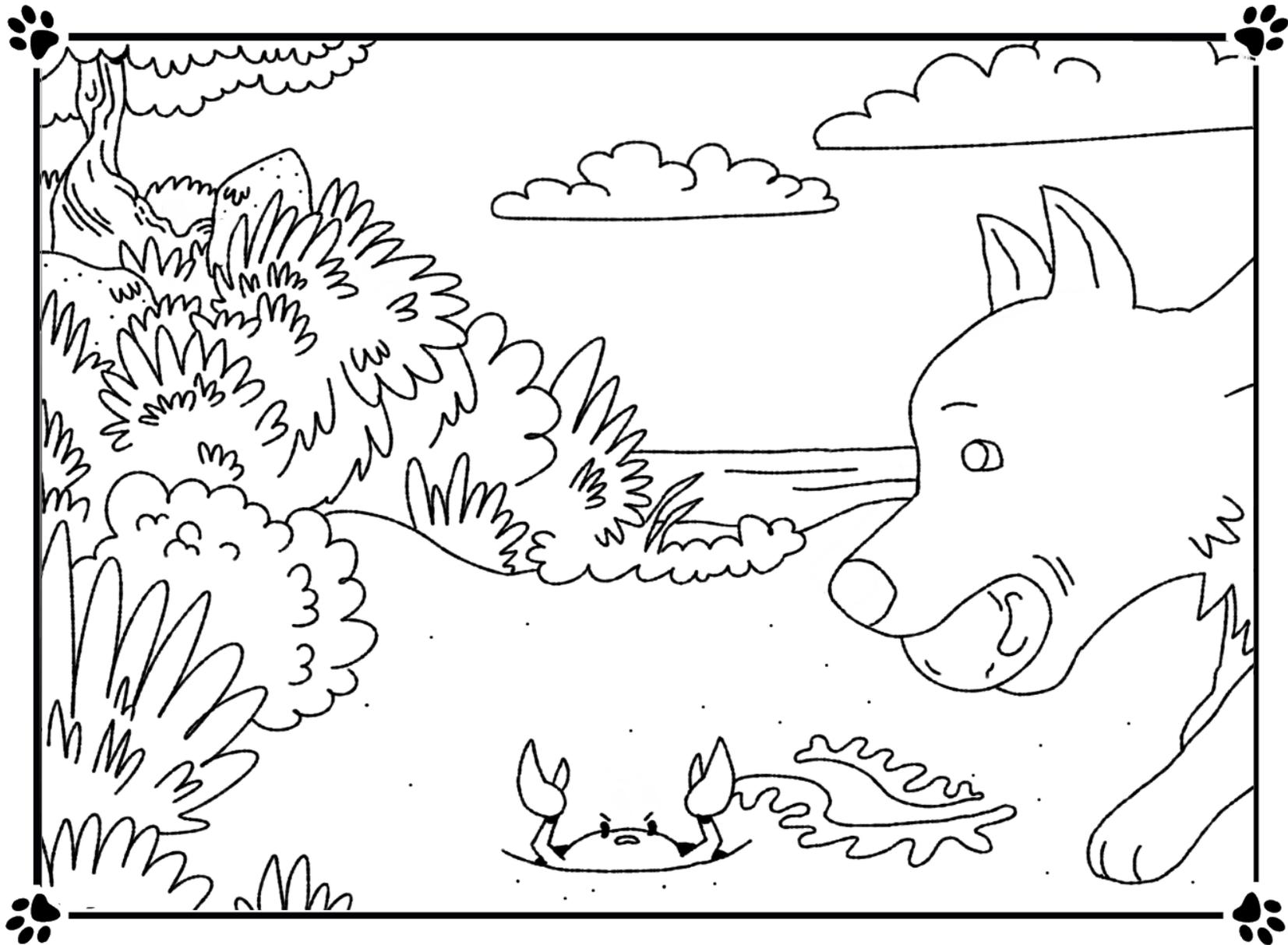
Mo found the next ball, partially covered in seaweed. As he picked it up, a tiny voice shouted, “Hey, what are you doing?”

Mo bent closer to the ground and discovered that the voice belonged to a small crab.

“Sorry,” mumbled Mo. “I didn’t see you.”

“Of course not,” said the crab. “Why would you? This has been my secret hiding place for years. Kindly put the ball back in place so I can finish my nap.”

Mo honored the crab’s request and then shouted the number, “Twenty-five” to Howie.



“Why don’t you collect the balls?” asked Mo to Howie. “I’m sure you could find a good use for them even if you can’t eat them.”

Howie explained that the animals didn’t want to ruin the game for humans. Instead, at the end of the game, they trusted each other about how many balls were found and where they had been hidden.

Then Howie added, “Humans have no imagination when it comes to hiding these balls.”

Mo was amazed at the high level of trust the dogs and cats had in each other. *Back home, that would never work. Some animals were simply too afraid to trust each other.*

While the dogs continued searching every inch on every beach on the island, Finchy was flying back and forth, keeping an eye on both teams. While resting on a high tree branch, he spotted one glass ball below him, tucked in the space between the tree trunk and a branch.

Should I tell anyone?

He decided not to interfere. That would be cheating.

By now, the game was half over. The three dogs met up with the cats.

“How many balls did you find so far?” Coco asked Cini. “We found ninety-two.”

“Same here,” she said.

The game continued for another hour. Another twenty-four balls were found. The score was tied.

The dogs and cats kept searching. Cini whispered to Pixel and Copy that there was a ball in the tree. She offered to climb the tree to get its number and then their team would win the game. She wondered if Mo and the other dogs had even noticed it.

Cini started walking toward the tree.

“Stop!” shouted Coco. “There’s a bunch of poison ivy on and around that tree.”

“You’re just saying that so we won’t win,” said Cini, pointing to the ball in the tree.

“Everyone knows cats, not dogs, can climb trees.”

“Please, don’t take another step,” begged Coco. “While searching for balls, I found a

map that shows where poison ivy is on the island. There's a bunch of it right in front of you.”

Cini looked at the other cats. They didn't know what poison ivy looked like and wondered if Coco was telling the truth. Would they be foolish to believe her?

They decided to trust Coco because she was their friend. Good friends tell each other the truth and believe each other, even if they don't like what they hear.

Both teams decided they were each winners and celebrated by eating the rest of the food.

On the ferry back to the mainland, Mo asked if they knew the name of the state they lived in or anything about Florida.

“Well,” said Pixel. “I don't know anything about Florida but do know that this is the smallest state in the country, it borders two states, and faces the ocean.”

For the rest of the ride, the animals chatted about their family and friends. Mo and Finchy talked about their mission and all the places they had visited. Even Finchy

seemed to be more relaxed around the cats, laughing at Cini's jokes about her human neighbors.

After the ferry ride, the animals said goodbye to each other. Mo and Finchy started walking back to the delivery truck.

“Mo, let's see how good of a friend you are,” said Finchy. “Did I ever tell you something that was hard to believe but you believed me anyway?”

“Let's see,” said Mo. “I believed you when you told me that you knew how to fly a spaceship but didn't. I believed you when you said you knew directions but didn't. I believed you when you said you wouldn't move from the spot we were hiding in but did. I believed you when . . .”

Finchy cut him off. “Okay, okay,” he said. “It's good to know that you still trust me even when you think I'm wrong.”