



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 32

By Carol Patton

Chapter 32

Show and Tell

Mo and Finchy were peering inside the front window of a giant, white house. Many humans were seated at a big table eating something that smelled warm and wonderful.

Mo's mouth was watering. His stomach was growling. Even Finchy's head was bobbing, which sometimes happened when he was hungry.

The people were eating tall stacks of golden brown circles that were drenched in brown liquid.

"Look how many of those round things they're eating," said Mo. "They must taste great. We have to figure out a way to grab some without anyone knowing it."

Finchy and Mo hadn't eaten anything all day. Not even a cracker. They had been riding on top of the delivery truck for about six hours, mostly along Interstate 91 North. They spotted highway signs for many cities like Hartford, Deerfield, and then Putney right

before Alex, the truck driver, drove off the highway and headed toward this huge house that had a sign above the door: “ILP Inn”.

Mo and Finchy came up with a plan. Finchy would tap his beak against the window, fly a few feet away from the window, and then return as if telling the people to follow him. He did this over and over until one small boy heard the taps and noticed Finchy.

The boy and several others approached the window. Then everyone at the table did and walked outside. One man said, “What does this crazy bird want from us?”

I’m the one who’s crazy? You’re the one who left a delicious meal to follow a bird you don’t even know!

Finchy had to make sure that the people walked far enough away from the house to give Mo enough time to grab some of those round things off their plates. But what could he do?

Finchy had to think fast. He sounded the alarm, calling for help from every bird within earshot. Three birds showed up. They were sisters named Lucy, Mango, and Sunny.

“What do you need?” asked Lucy.

“This better be important,” said Sunny. “I was napping.”

“You’re not from around here, are you?” asked Mango.

Finchy explained the situation, asked for their help, and promised to share whatever food Mo was able to snatch off the people’s plates. He also couldn’t stop noticing Mango’s beautiful orange, black, and white feathers.

“How about doing what we do best?” said Lucy. “Let’s sing.”

They quickly flew to a nearby tree and sat on one of its branches. The people followed. The birds selected three songs and then began chirping in perfect harmony. They took turns performing a solo. Finchy chose his favorite song, one that his mother sang to him when he was very young:

*I love to sing
Don’t ask me why
I love to fly
High in the sky*

Then the sisters performed Swan Lake, a popular ballet. They each twirled, leaped, and even stood on their talons, which are sharp claws at the end of their toes.

Meanwhile, Mo was inside the kitchen, trying to find a bag that would be big enough to hold the food. He spotted several more plates piled high with golden-brown circles and stuffed half of them into a plastic bag. But he left the food that sat on the table and wrote a note:

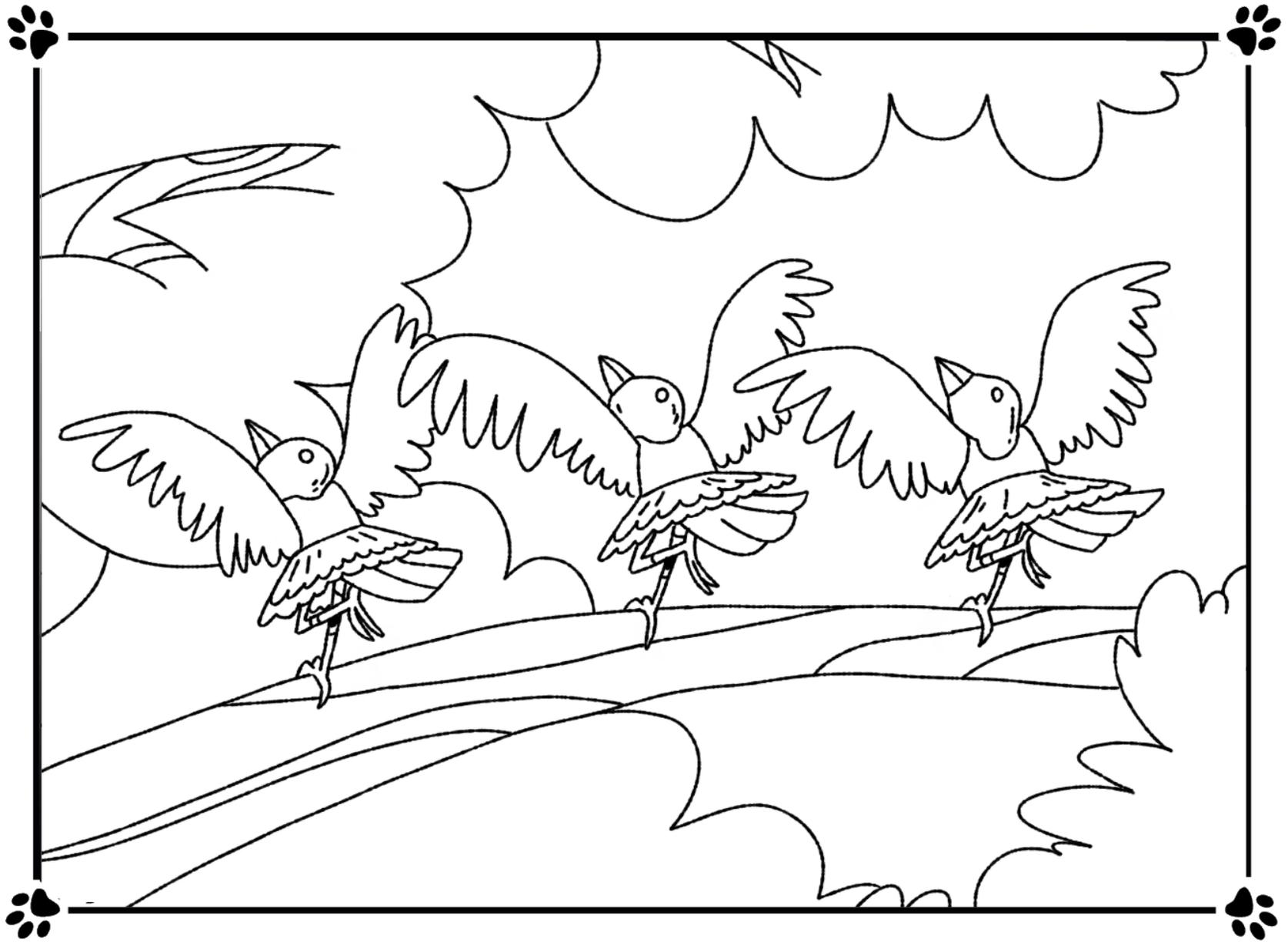
Since you have so much food, I hope you don't mind sharing. In return, I promise to share this food with others. Thank you, Mo.

On the way out, he grabbed a plastic bottle of the brown liquid, just in case. Then he ran outside and hid by the garage.

The concert and ballet had ended. Each of the birds took a bow as the humans clapped and cheered.

“I’ve never seen anything like this in my life,” said an older man.

“You would think they put on a show just for us,” said his wife, as everyone walked back into the house.



Mo ran toward Finchy and the other birds that were behind a very large maple tree. He placed each of the golden brown circles on the ground in rows and then smothered them with the brown liquid.

Then something strange happened. Finchy gave half of his food to Mango. Mo didn't know why but he was too hungry to care. It was only a matter of minutes before all the food was devoured.

"D-e-e-licious," said Lucy. "I especially liked the maple syrup.

"Maple what?" asked Finchy.

Lucy pointed to the empty bottle. "This stuff," she said. "It's called maple syrup. Ever hear of it?"

Finchy shook his head. "What are these round things called?" he then asked.

"Pancakes," said Lucy. "We usually eat them every Sunday with whatever berries we can find. But can't always get syrup, especially during summer."

She explained where maple syrup comes from and how it is made. She pointed to the

tall tree standing next to them.

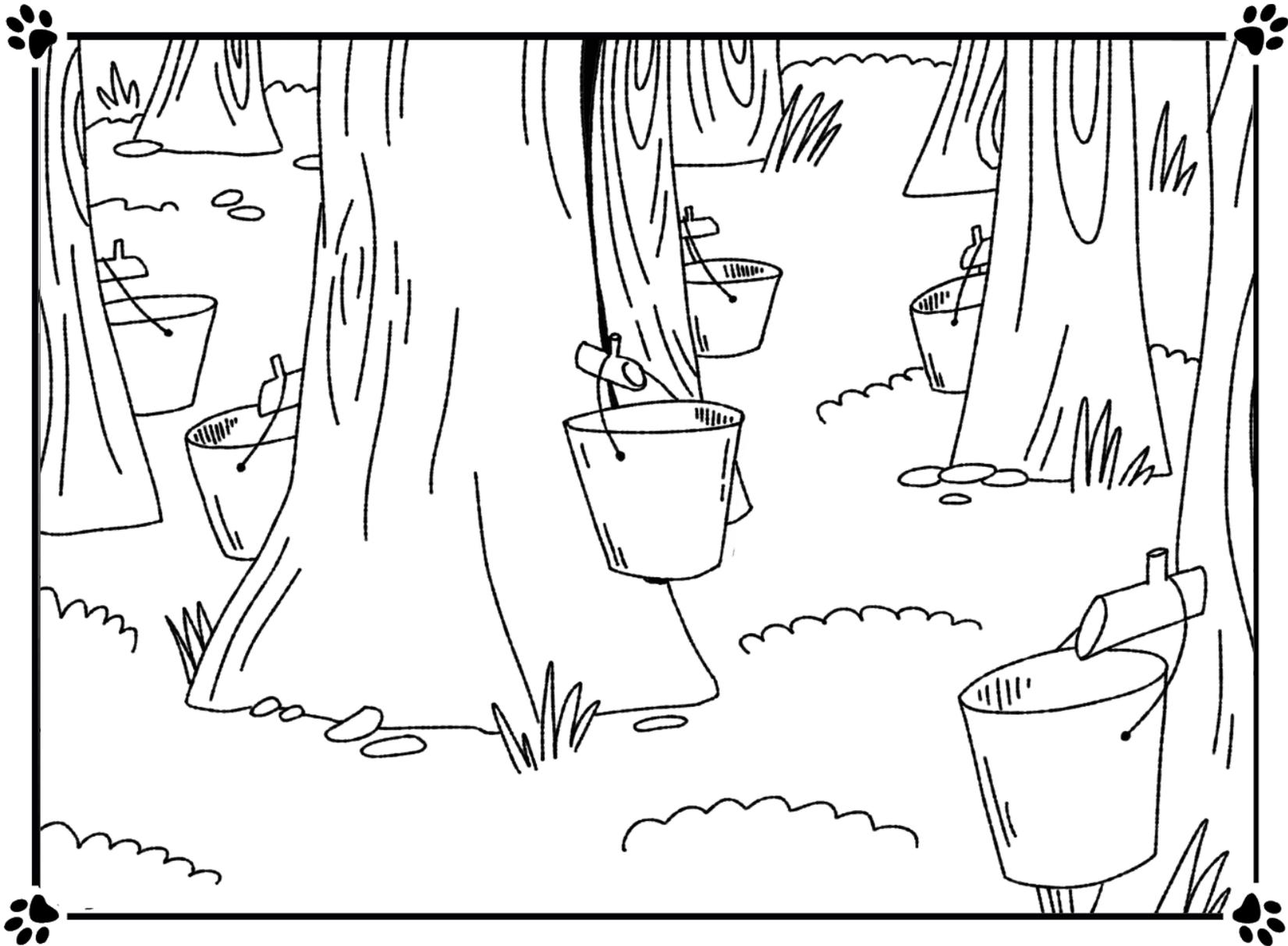
“This is called a maple tree,” she said. “You can always tell by the shape of its leaves.”

Lucy explained how to turn the tree’s sap, which is sticky water, into syrup. She said it flows best from the tree during late winter or early spring, when the temperature at night drops below freezing and rises to around thirty-nine degrees Fahrenheit during the day.

“I’ve watched people do this many times,” she said. “You drill a hole into the tree at an angle— slanting up. Then insert a spout, which looks like a small faucet. Tap the spout gently with a hammer so it stays in place. Attach a bucket to the spout. Now the tree’s sap can flow out of the tree into a bucket. When it’s filled, pour it into a big pot, and boil it on the stove. Then voila . . . you have maple syrup.”

“The maple trees don’t mind?” asked Mo.

“Not at all,” Mango said. “So long as you don’t drill too deep, no more than two inches.”



The three sisters talked about how they pour syrup over everything they eat, including worms.

Mo stretched out on the ground staring at the sky. His belly was so stuffed that he could barely breathe.

“This place is very beautiful,” said Mo. “Do you know what state we’re in or if we’re anywhere near Florida?”

The birds knew all about Florida. They flew there every winter.

Mo rolled over and sat up. Finchy could hardly keep quiet.

“How far away is Florida?” asked Finchy. “Know how to get there? Can I fly there and back in one day? How long would it take to drive there? Is it hot? Are there lots of birds and dogs? Does it have maple syrup? Know a bird named Flo? She’s my cousin. . .”

“Slow down,” said Sunny. “Why are you going there in the summer?”

Mo and Finchy told them about their mission, how they had to return a valuable key to its owner who lived in Florida.

After chatting for a few minutes, the birds then told Finchy that he simply needed to fly south but none of them had any idea how to drive there.

“Well, what state are we in now?” asked Mo.

The three sisters didn’t exactly know but told Mo and Finchy that the state shared a border with three other states and a country and that its name means green mountain in French.

“Oh, and it only has one area code, whatever that means,” said Mango.

Mo and Finchy looked at each other. They still had no idea how to get to Florida but didn’t seem to mind. It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon. They spent the rest of the day talking with the sisters and listening to them brag about how fast and high they could fly.

“I’ll bet that I could fly faster than a jet plane,” said Sunny.

“That’s nothing,” said Mango. “If I had a space suit, I could fly to the moon.”

Finchy couldn’t take his eyes off Mango. *I would gladly go to the moon, even Mars, with*

Mango.

The sisters continued to outdo each other, trying to impress their new friends.

Mo dozed off while Finchy chirped and chatted with the sisters about important matters. They shared grooming tips. They agreed that the water in the rivers and lakes tasted much better than the water in the ocean. Then they wondered why, unlike humans, all birds spoke the same language.

By now, the sun was in the western sky. It was time for Mo and Finchy to leave. Finchy felt sad to leave his new friends, especially Mango. It had been a long time since he had spent this much time with other birds.

“Mo, wake up,” said Finchy as he poked Mo’s side with his beak. “We need to go or we’ll miss our ride.”

Mo rolled over and stood up, but not before stretching all four of his legs and shaking the leaves and twigs off his furry body.

“It was very nice meeting you,” said Mo. “Maybe we’ll see you in Florida.”

“We’ll tell our friends, especially the ones who live in Florida, about you and your mission,” said Mango. “I’m sure they’ll want to help.”

Mo and Finchy began walking back to the delivery truck.

“They were very nice sisters,” said Mo.

“Mango is the most beautiful bird I’ve ever seen,” said Finchy.

Mo was surprised. During their journey, Finchy had met many birds but never – ever – mentioned their beauty.

“Did you tell Mango how much you liked her?” asked Mo.

“Yeah, but birds sing to each other all the time,” said Finchy. “I *showed* her how much I liked her by giving her half of my pancakes. That’s what birds do. We show we care about someone by sharing our food.”

Mo cringed. *Share half my meal with someone I barely know? Crazy.*

Finchy saw the look on Mo’s face. He hopped over to him and pulled out a pancake

drenched in maple syrup from underneath his wing.

“Here, I saved this for you,” said Finchy.

Mo was very touched by Finchy’s gesture. He placed his paw on his heart and tears filled his eyes.

Finchy quickly discovered that his wing was all sticky from the syrup.

“Uh, Mo, I can’t exactly reach this spot,” he said while trying to lick off the syrup. “A little help, please?”