



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 41

By Carol Patton

Chapter 41

Running Like a Wild Horse

“And they’re off!” shouted a turtle named Oliver.

Mo and Finchy turned around to see what was happening. A deer and wild turkey were jumping up and down, shouting and cheering.

Not far from where they stood were three horses named Spirit, Magic, and Poppy that were running very fast next to each other. Spirit was in the lead with Magic just behind her tail while Poppy lagged farther behind.

“This is no longer a two-horse race!” shouted Oliver. “Spirit is losing ground, now just a nose ahead of Magic. But Poppy is gaining speed. Look at her kicking up all that grass and dirt! Which horse will win this race is anyone’s guess!”

The horses ran twice around a giant circle, zooming past the small crowd.

“C’mon, Poppy!” shouted the deer. “Run faster! Faster! You can do this. You can win!”

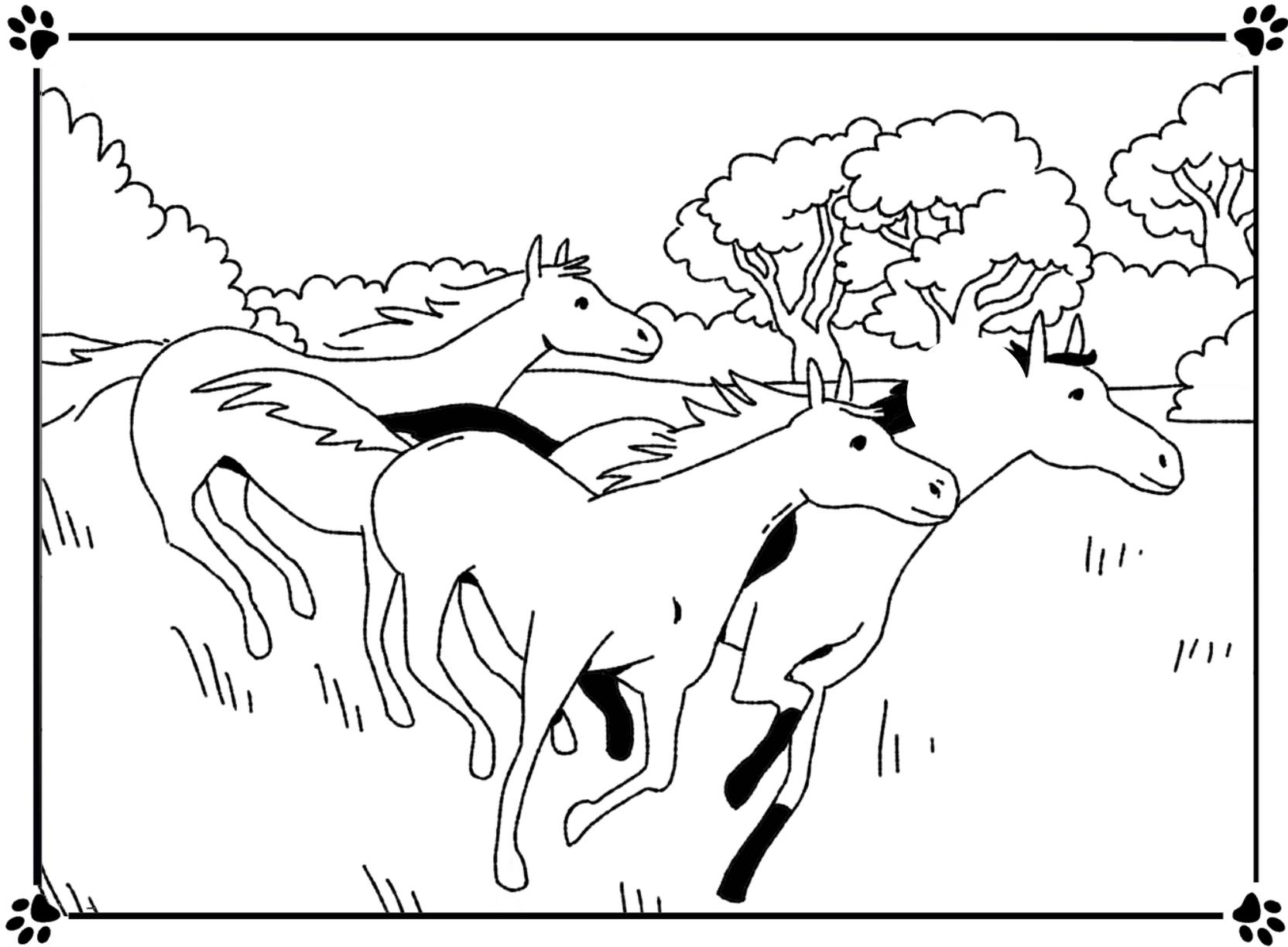
As Mo watched the horses, his heart was racing, too. The horses were so close to each other that he was afraid they would bump into each other and hurt themselves. Still, it was very exciting to see animals run that fast.

“This is going to be a very close race!” shouted Oliver. As the horses ran past him for a second time, he clocked their speed. “Fifty miles per hour! Wow! That’s got to be some kind of world record!”

Spirit ended up winning the race by one second. The three horses slowed down to catch their breath and trotted around the giant circle one last time. The animals in the small crowd rushed over to greet them.

“That was so exciting!” said the wild turkey. The color of his head changed from red to blue. “Have you been training or working out? I’ve never seen any of you run that fast!”

“I wish I could run like that,” said Oliver to the horses. “It would take me a month to travel the same distance you did.”



Mo and Finchy watched the race from behind a tree, not wanting to bother the animals. Earlier that morning, they had traveled on top of the delivery truck for about forty minutes, mostly along Interstate 64 East and US 60 East. They passed a state line and saw signs for cities named Lexington and Clifton Forge.

While Alex, the truck driver, was busy making deliveries to local stores, they wandered around and heard Oliver and the deer and turkey shouting.

Oliver noticed Mo and Finchy. “Looks like we have guests,” he said.

“Didn’t mean to bother you,” said Mo. “We wondered what all the shouting was about. That was a very exciting race!”

“Every now and then, the animals in our community race each other for fun,” said Oliver. “You missed the turtle race yesterday.”

Spirit didn’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings. She walked up to Mo and Finchy to whisper something in their ears.

“It was more boring than watching a bush grow,” she said in a low voice. “It was so boring that I took a long nap and woke up before the race was finished.”

Mo and Finchy had spoken to horses before but never a turtle or wild turkey and tried not to stare at them.

Oliver, the turtle, reminded them of Annie, the armadillo from Amarillo, that showed them a time capsule and taught them Spanish. But they had never met any animal that looked like the wild turkey. He told them that he flies up into trees to sleep, changes colors when he's calm or excited, and can see three times better than humans.

Mo continued talking about the race with the other animals. When he asked Poppy what it felt like to run that fast, Poppy turned toward Finchy and said, "I imagine it's like flying."

All of the animals introduced themselves. Mo and Finchy told them about their journey to find Florida and then asked for information about their state.

"Do you know the name of the state you live in?" asked Finchy. No one said a word. "Well, can you tell us anything about this place?"

"We live in a state that's one of the most historic places in the country," boasted Oliver. "I think the capital is Richmond, which is east of here. Or maybe its Norfolk. I

can never remember.”

“Our state was named in honor of a queen in another country,” said Spirit. “But I’m not exactly sure what a queen is. Sounds like someone important.”

“Our state is called, the Mother of Presidents,” added Magic, explaining that more US presidents were born here than in any other state.

“Who cares about any of that?” said the deer. “We’re the Internet capital of the world. We handle seventy percent of the Internet traffic on the planet!”

Mo and Finchy still had no idea if they were any closer to Florida than the last state they had visited.

The animals told them that their families had lived in this area for many years. They had worked hard to build a community that was a lot different than others.

They believed that everyone was just as important as everyone else, no matter if someone was a horse, turkey, or turtle. They told Mo and Finchy that all living things on this planet have a special skill or talent. All they have to do is discover it.

Oliver said his special skill was announcing. No other animal could announce a race better than him.

The turkey said he was a great problem solver. The deer was a healer. Magic was a brilliant scientist. Poppy was kind and helpful. One time, a turtle wanted to attend his cousin's birthday party that was very far away. Poppy ran as fast as she could with the turtle on her back to make it to the party on time.

“So what's your special skill?” asked the deer. “What are you good at doing?”

Mo and Finchy looked at each other, not knowing what to say. Did they even have a special skill?

“I know,” said Spirit. “You're good at exploring. That's your special skill.”

Mo and Finchy grinned from ear to ear. They liked the way that sounded.

While eating lunch, Mo and Finchy told the animals a little bit about every place they had seen. The strange looking people. Huge, but nice, creatures. Volcanoes. Caves. A science fair. Museums. A time capsule. Gigantic sculptures. A hotel for animals. A

giant telescope. Animals that hang upside down. And so many other wonderful things.

The animals hung on every word that Mo and Finchy said. They had never heard such tales! Was the country they lived in really this much fun, different, and exciting?

Everyone relaxed on the soft grass that felt like velvet, daydreaming about Mo's and Finchy's journey. Some wondered if they would have the courage to travel across the country and voiced their fears out loud.

“I would be afraid of not finding Florida,” said Oliver.

“I would be afraid of not finding the key's owner,” said the deer.

“I would be afraid of, well, just everything else,” said the wild turkey.

Mo and Finchy weren't afraid of failing. They always tried their best and never let fear stop them from doing something important.

It was late in the afternoon. Mo and Finchy needed to head back to the delivery truck. But before they left, Poppy wanted to give Mo a goodbye gift.

“Mo, you asked me what it felt like to run fast,” she said. “Why don’t you climb on my back? Then I’ll run as fast as I can so you’ll know what it feels like to run like a wild horse.”

Mo’s eyes lit up. Poppy lowered her head and bent her front leg so Mo could climb on her back.

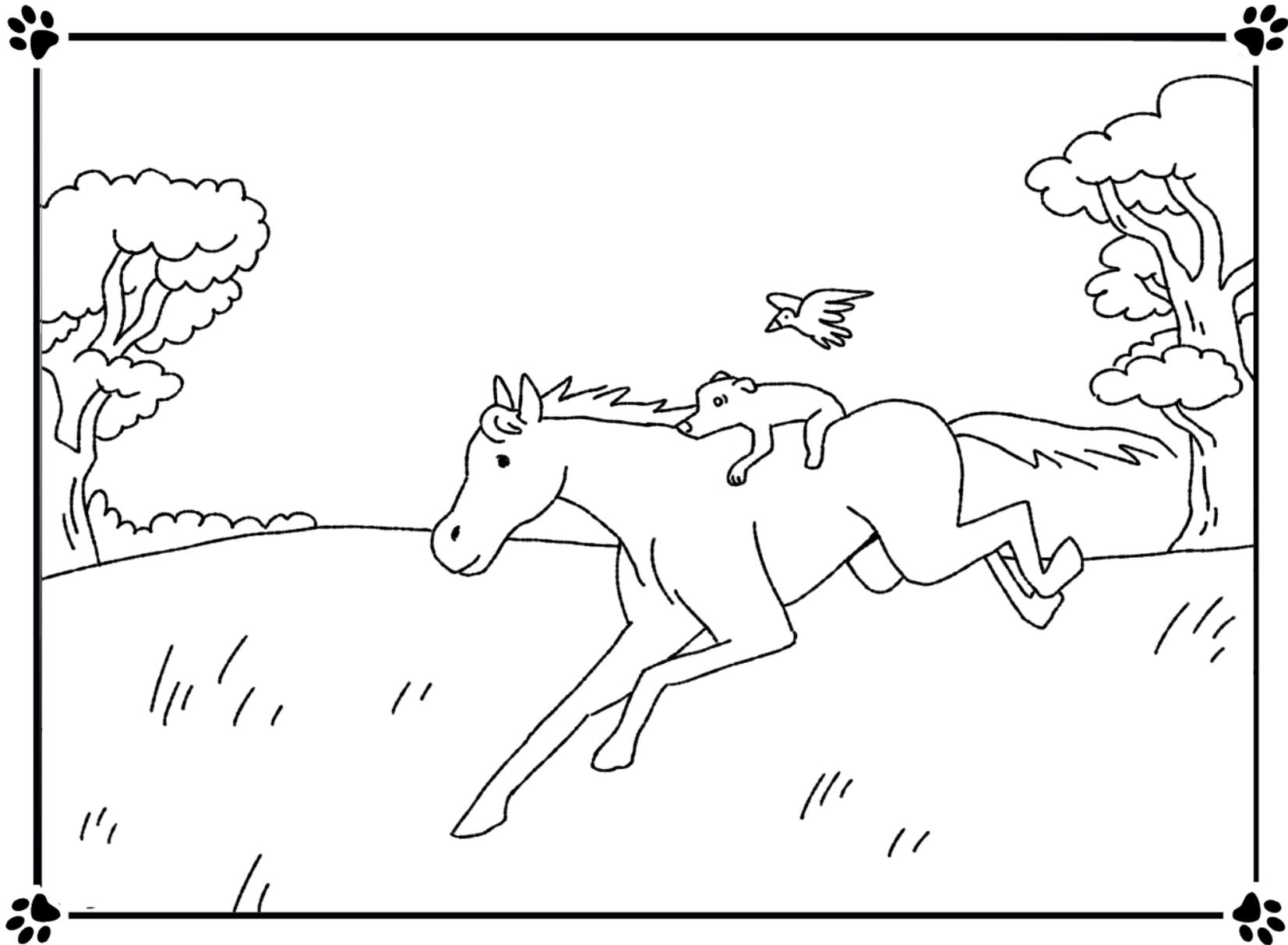
“Hang on tight, real tight,” said Oliver.

Mo laid flat on his stomach and hugged Poppy’s sides with his legs.

Poppy began walking at a nice even pace. After a short while, she began trotting, and then running.

At first, Mo thought this was fun. But as Poppy gained speed, he became afraid he would fall off. He closed his eyes tight, too afraid to look up, down, or even straight ahead.

When Poppy started running, Finchy flew alongside them, trying to calm Mo down.



“You’re a world-famous explorer,” shouted Finchy to Mo. “Act like it! Open your eyes. This is a great adventure!”

Finchy is right. Why am I being such a coward? Should I open my eyes? Well, maybe just one eye.

Mo took a deep breath. He opened his left eye and then the right one. The trees, bushes, and other animals zoomed by him.

He felt the cool wind against his furry face. It felt good. He sat up a tiny bit, and then a bit more, and then all the way up while clinging to Poppy’s mane.

I’m really doing this! Me, Mo. I’m sitting on top of a wild horse that’s running very fast!

After several minutes, Poppy began to slow down. When she approached the other animals, she knelt down so Mo could slide off.

Mo never had a bigger smile on his face. He first hugged Finchy, thanking him for lending him his courage.

Then Mo turned to Poppy.

“Thrilling, simply thrilling,” he said. “I can’t believe I did that! How can I ever thank you?”

“Come back and tell us about Florida,” Poppy said. “All of us want to know what the key unlocks.”

Mo and Finchy hugged each of the animals before heading back to the delivery truck.

“What did it feel like sitting on top of a race horse?” asked Finchy.

Mo was having trouble finding the words to describe it. So he talked Finchy into hopping on his back and grabbing his fur real tight with his legs or any other part of his body. Then Mo started running as fast as he could.

Finchy’s tiny body flipped and flopped. It was tossed to the right, left, up, down, and then right again. But Finchy kept his grip on Mo’s fur as if his life depended on it.

After a short while, Mo gradually slowed down to a normal walk. “Does that answer your question?” he asked.

Finchy’s head was spinning. When he tried to stand up, his legs were wobbly. He



decided to sit down until he stopped feeling dizzy or seeing double, whichever came first.

“Mo, I see two of you,” said Finchy. “Which one should I be mad at for coming up with this dumb idea?”