



# The Adventures of **Mo**

## Chapter 1

By Carol Patton

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### Strange, Shiny Object

What's that? Right over there? Mozart, a white, fluffy dog, had never seen anything like it.

The small object was very shiny. At first, he sniffed it. Then he pawed it. Licked it. Shook it. Flung it. Even buried it, and then dug it up again. It never moved. It never made a peep.

What was this strange object?

He picked it up in his mouth, deciding to take it home.

He only took a few steps when he heard, "Morning, Mo. What ya got there?"

It was Monta the Moose who gave Mo his nickname. Mo's real name was actually Mozart. He was named after the famous composer of classical music. But Monta

couldn't say the letter "z". After calling him Modart, Mogart, and Mofart when Mo's stomach got upset, he just shortened it to Mo. The nickname stuck.

Mo dropped the item on the ground.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked.

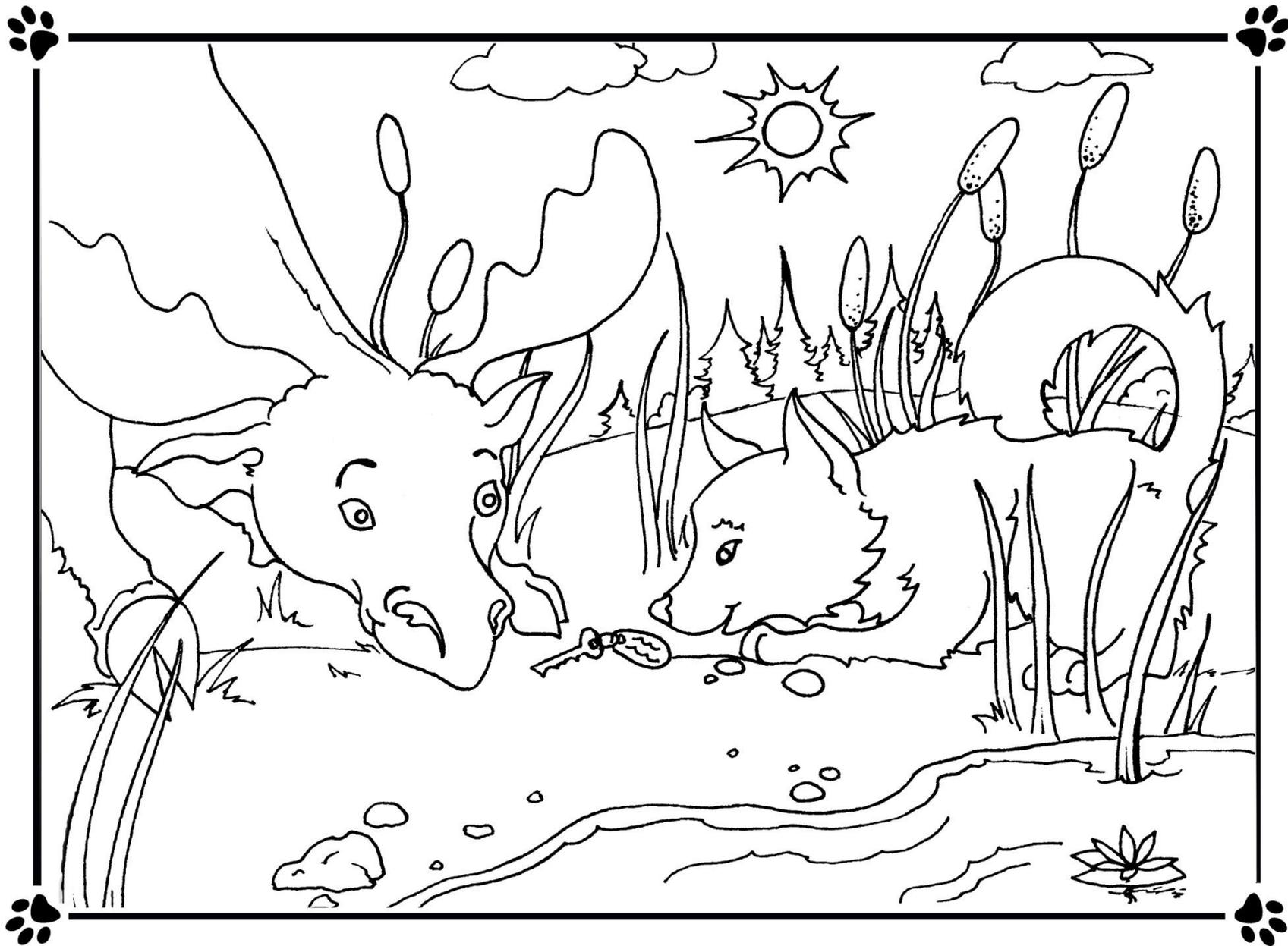
Monta first looked at it from the left, and then from the right. He tried chewing it, but quickly spit it out. The surface was flat and smooth like ice after a gentle rain. But it had no flavor and was attached to a jagged metal object.

"Look, there's a word on it," said Monta, one of the few animals who could read. He sounded out each letter.

"F-l-o-o-r-i-i-d-a-y."

He repeated it several times. They had never heard such a strange-sounding word.

"It's a message," said Monta. "A secret message. Maybe for someone smart like me." Mo started laughing.



“What’s so funny?” asked Monta. “I, unlike many animals, can read and solve hard math problems. One plus one equals two. Two plus two is four. Three plus three is six...”

Monta worked all the way up to seven plus seven before getting stuck. Although Mo liked Monta, he was always annoyed when Monta showed off.

“Fourteen,” said Mo impatiently. “Seven plus seven is fourteen. Now, any idea what this is?”

A bit embarrassed, Monta shook his head back and forth. “Not a clue.”

The curious pair showed the object to every creature they knew. Nann the polar bear. Chachat the wolf. Rang the caribou. Rap the golden eagle. But by mid-afternoon, they were no further ahead in solving the mystery.

Tired from traveling all day, they finally stopped and rested by the ocean shore, wondering what they should do next.

Suddenly, several huge waves rushed ashore, completely drenching both animals.



Blue, an enormous whale, came as close to the shore as possible, lifting her huge head out of the deep ocean.

“Good afternoon, gentlemen,” she shouted.

Mo and Monta shook the salt water off their bodies.

“Why do you always do that?” complained Monta. “We almost drowned.”

Before she could answer, Mo shouted, “Blue, can’t you give us some kind of a warning before you pop up like that? Geez, this salt water really tastes awful.”

“Why do you always complain?” asked Blue. “I’m trying to be friendly and. . . What’s that shiny thing next to you, Mo?”

“We don’t know,” said Mo after spitting out more salt water. “No one seems to know. I found it this morning.”

“Can I see it?” asked Blue. “I probably know what it is. I’m very smart, you know.”

Mo clenched the shiny object with his teeth and climbed on top of a giant rock near the shore. He dangled it from his mouth so Blue could take a better look at it.

“I know what that is,” said Blue. “It’s a key attached to a key chain. Humans use them. They collect things and lock them up in special places so no one else can use them. They don’t like sharing. Very selfish creatures, if you ask me.”

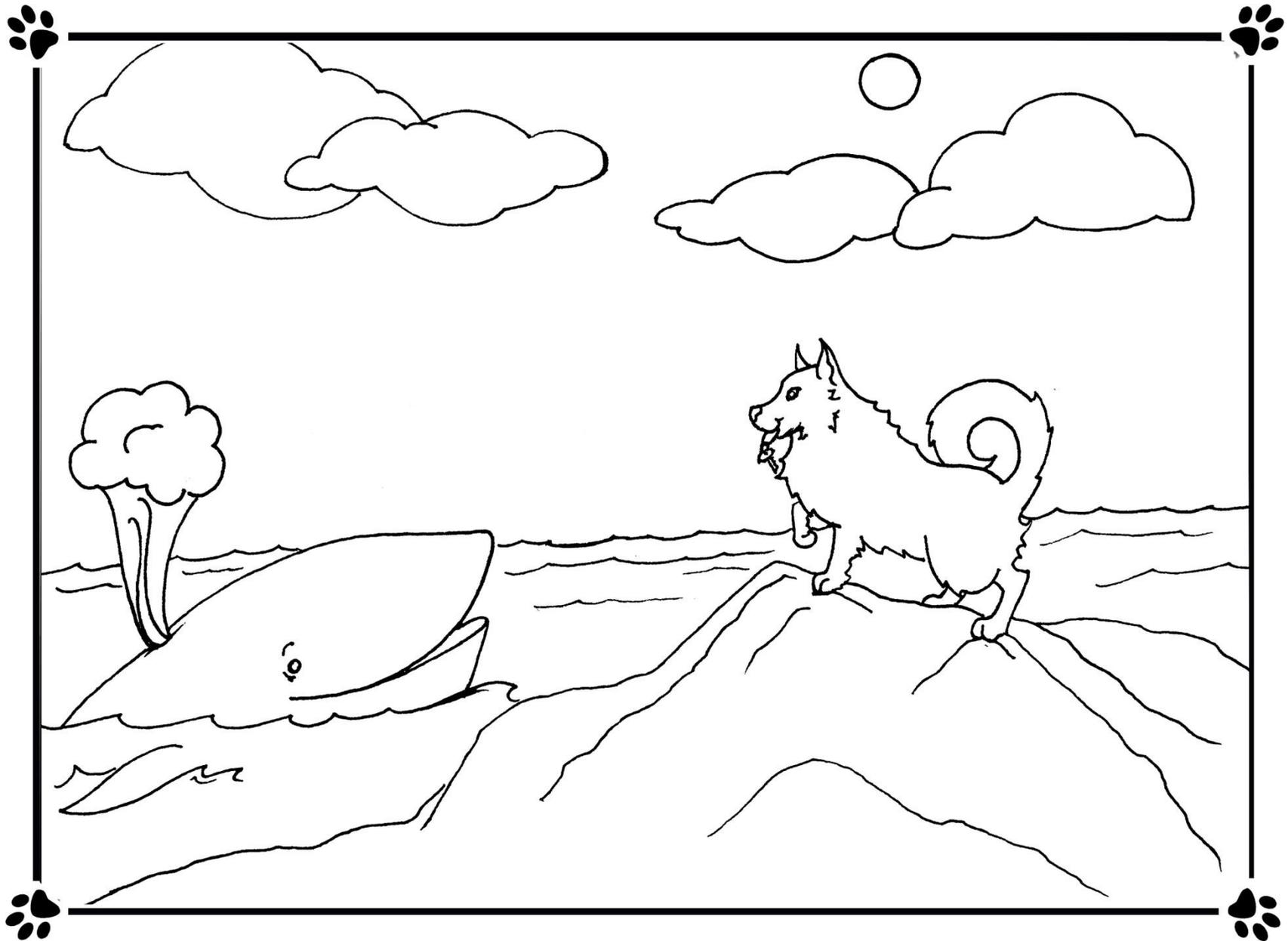
“What does the word mean?” asked Mo.

“It’s a state that’s w-a-a-a-y south of here,” Blue said. “I think it’s in the Lower Forty-Eight, near New York. Or maybe Georgia.”

Mo and Monta were confused. What was a state? What did south mean? What was the Lower Forty-Eight? What was New York or Georgia? They had many questions but mainly wanted to know what the key unlocked.

“Now that’s the mystery,” said Blue. “What are you going to do with it?”

“I don’t know,” said Mo. “Our forest meeting is next week. I’ll bring it with me.”



But by the next day, word about the key and key chain had reached every animal in the forest. An emergency meeting of all the local animals and trees was held that afternoon.

“Quiet, quiet,” chanted several grey-headed chickadees flying over the meeting site. “The meeting is about to begin.”

Everyone settled in. The trees lifted their branches so everyone could see the key and keychain.

“There’s only one question we must answer today,” said Guy, an old grizzly bear who led the meeting. “What should we do with this valuable object?”

“This is why you woke me up?” said Oscar, an owl who lived in a nearby tree.

“Throw it back in the ocean,” shouted a chocolate brown mink. “It’s evil.”

“If you can’t eat it, what good is it?” asked a wolf.

“Isn’t anyone curious?” asked a reindeer. Many others nodded their heads in agreement.

They decided to take a vote.

Curiosity won. The object would be returned to its owner. Since Mo found it, he would return it. Someone, somewhere, had to know something about it.

Blue offered to take Mo south, through the ocean. That's where his search would start.

The next day, Mo climbed aboard the beautiful blue whale.

“Just tell everyone you're from a very special place,” shouted Guy, who stood on the beach with the other animals. “Our home is called, “North to the Future.”

As Mo waved goodbye, his big, fluffy tail drooped between his legs. His pointy ears fell flat against his head. He was afraid, sad, and excited, all at the same time.

What would he find? Who would he meet? Would he ever return home, to Tongass?

The only thing he knew for certain was that nothing would ever be the same.