



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 16

By Carol Patton

Chapter 16

What Courage Looks Like

Mo was hiding in a restaurant kitchen, watching a man who was wearing a tall white hat fry a hamburger.

Mo's stomach was growling. His nose was twitching. His mouth was watering.

“Hey Jack, your hamburgers are on the counter,” shouted the man before leaving the kitchen.

I'm so hungry. If I took just one hamburger, would that be stealing?

Mo decided he wouldn't be stealing if he left Jack a note saying that he was very hungry and would mail him another hamburger as soon as he had the chance.

Besides, the room was filled with all kinds of food that people, not dogs, enjoy. Mo spotted oatmeal, bananas, salad, bags of this and bags of that on several different



counters. He knew that Jack wouldn't go hungry.

Mo scribbled his note and placed it on the counter. Then he opened his mouth very wide, grabbed one hamburger off the plate, and ran out the door.

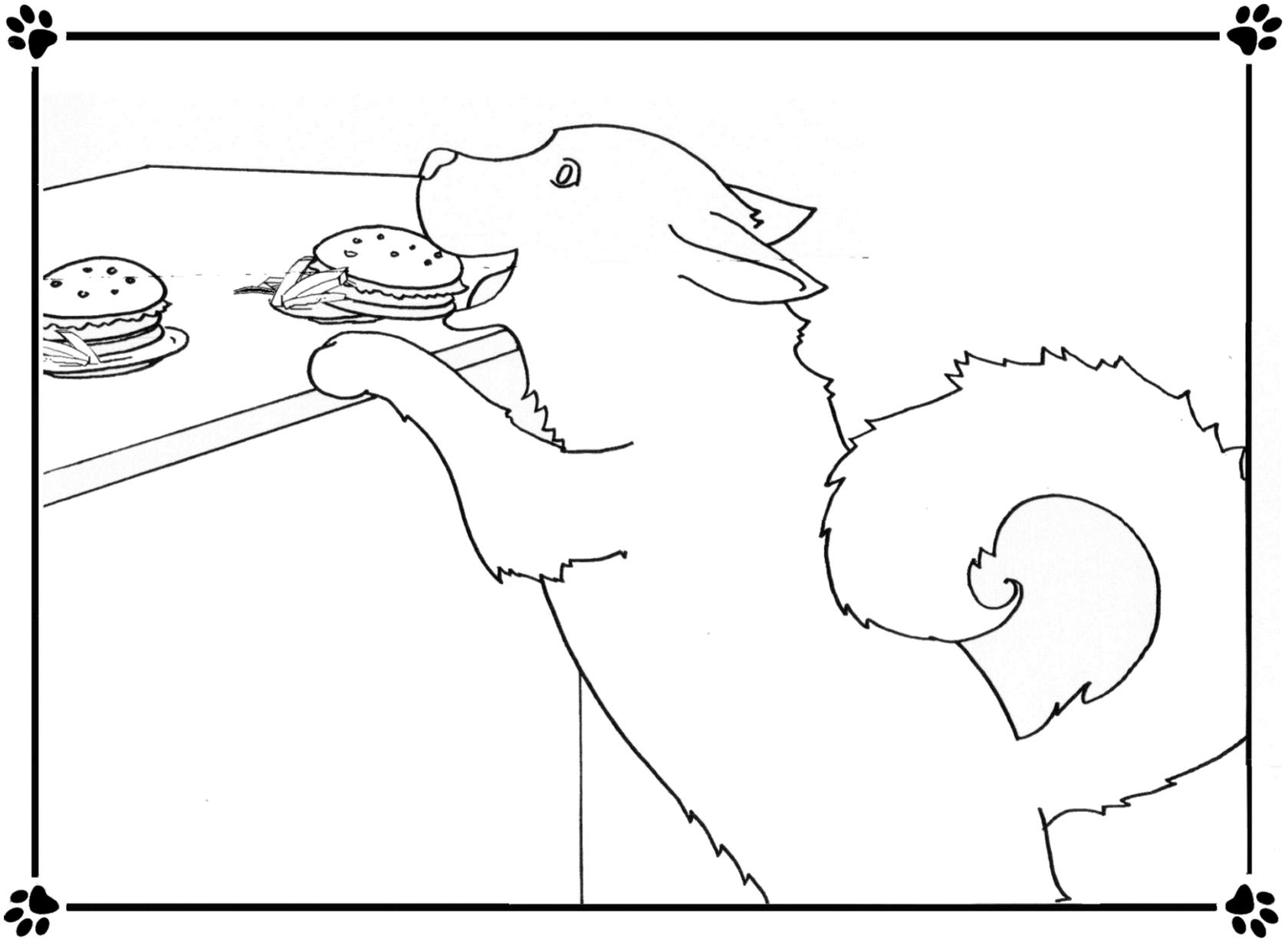
He kept running until he spotted a group of bushes next to the entrance of another building. There was a sign above its front door: Aquatics Center.

He hid behind the bushes and gobbled up the hamburger, ignoring the funny smell around him.

“I can't believe you ate that whole thing,” said Finchy who had watched him devour the hamburger. “You know how fattening that was?”

Mo was too busy licking his front paws to care. So what if he was a little overweight? What was the big deal?

Mo wondered if they were anywhere near Florida. The truck driver headed south on Interstate 25, passing places called Fort Collins, Boulder and Denver, and then pulled off the highway to this strange place – The United States Olympic & Paralympic Training Center.



Mo's nose kept twitching. What was that powerful odor? He realized it was coming from inside the building. So he opened its heavy front door and immediately sneezed. One. Twice. Three times.

Mo and Finchy entered the crowded room and hid under a table. They had never seen anything so strange.

There was a huge hole in the ground that was filled with clear water, which smelled awful. They could see straight down to the bottom. While they were familiar with lakes, rivers, and oceans, they had never seen or smelled an indoor swimming pool, especially one with chlorine.

Several people were in the pool. They moved their arms this way and that way, making their way from one end of the pool to the other.

“Fully extend your left arm,” said one woman to one of the swimmers. “You can probably shave a second or two off your time.”

Mo noticed a flyer taped to the wall. It showed a list of dates and times for Paralympic swimming races in places like Indianapolis, which was east from the training center, and Lewisville, Texas, which was south from it.

“They’re practicing for a race,” said Mo to Finchy. “Back home, we have swimming races every summer.”

Finchy laughed. “You, race? You can’t even touch your toes. I bet I can fly faster than the fastest swimmer in this room.”

Finchy wasn’t paying close attention to the swimmers. Although they were using their arms, they weren’t using their legs. Why not? Mo soon learned that the swimmers couldn’t use their legs. They were disabled.

“I’d be afraid to swim without using all four of my legs,” said Mo who admired the courage of the swimmers. They were really brave. They didn’t let their disability stop them from doing fun things, or even hard things they enjoyed.

Mo and Finchy watched the swimmers perfect their stroke and race each other. After an hour or so, everyone left the building.

Mo walked over to the edge of the pool and dipped his paw into the water. It felt cool against his fur.

“Wanna race,” asked Finchy? “I’ll give you a head start. I’ll wait ‘til you’re halfway

across the pool before I start flying.”

“I’m a runner, actually a magnificent runner, not a swimmer,” boasted Mo who believed he was a gifted athlete even though he had never won a race.

“If you win, I promise never to say another word about your weight,” said Finchy.

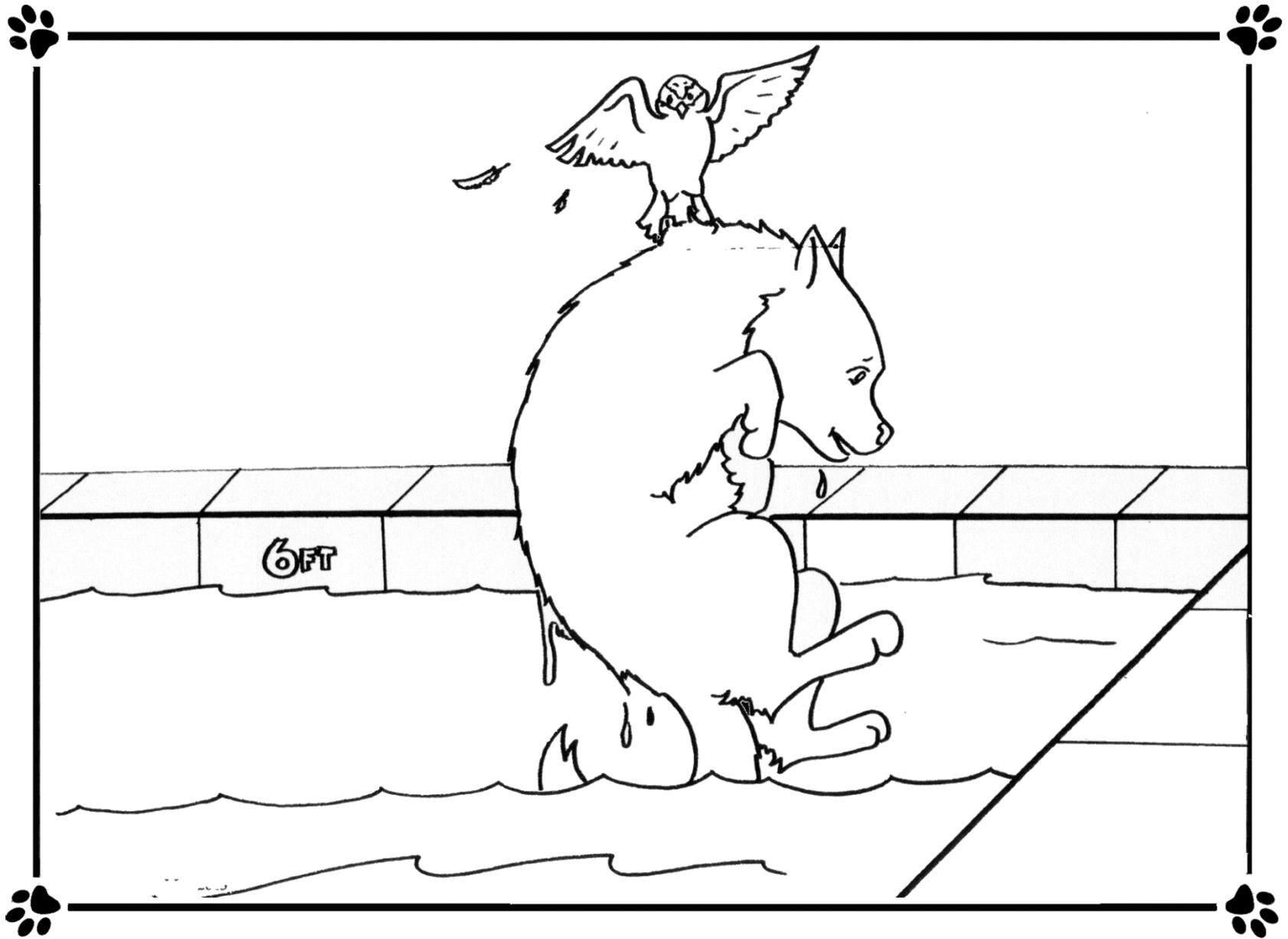
Mo couldn’t resist Finchy’s offer, especially since he thought he would win.

“On your mark, get set, swim!” shouted Finchy.

Mo jumped into the deep pool. His head quickly popped out of the cold water. By the time he reached the other side, he was huffing and puffing and didn’t have enough strength to climb out. Finchy grabbed Mo by the back of his neck and yanked him out of the pool.

“This is the second time I’ve had to rescue you!” he said while gasping for air.

Mo wasn’t listening. He was too busy panting, trying to catch his breath. *These Paralympic swimmers must train very hard!*



Finchy hopped over to Mo with a determined look in his eye.

“From now on,” said Finchy, “I am going to be your diet and exercise coach.”

Mo cringed.

“When we ride on top of the truck,” continued Finchy, “you’re going to do sit-ups. Maybe start with fifty. I can even help you swim faster after everything I learned today. Like your head was too far above the water. Were you paddling with all four legs? Didn’t seem like it. And what about . . .”

Mo had never done a sit-up in his life. Still, Finchy had a good point. By sitting on top of the delivery truck for many hours every day, he had gained weight. He didn’t realize how a few extra pounds could make such a difference in how he felt or what he could or couldn’t do.

Mo reluctantly agreed.

“You can count on me,” said Finchy, “to motivate, stimulate . . .”

And irritate. Mo covered his ears with his paws to drown out Finchy’s voice.

“As for your diet, ever try worms?” shouted Finchy. “They’re high in protein, low in calories, and very tasty.”

Mo’s stomach felt queasy. He would never – ever – eat a worm.

That evening, the two friends developed a diet and exercise program that Mo would start the next day.

But the moment Mo thought Finchy had fallen asleep, he yanked a bag of potato chips out from underneath his pillow.

He stared at it. Sniffed it. Even licked it.

Should I eat these potato chips before I start dieting tomorrow?

He stuffed the chips back underneath his pillow and dozed off.

Finchy just smiled.