



# The Adventures of **Mo**

**Chapter 39**

By Carol Patton

## Chapter 39

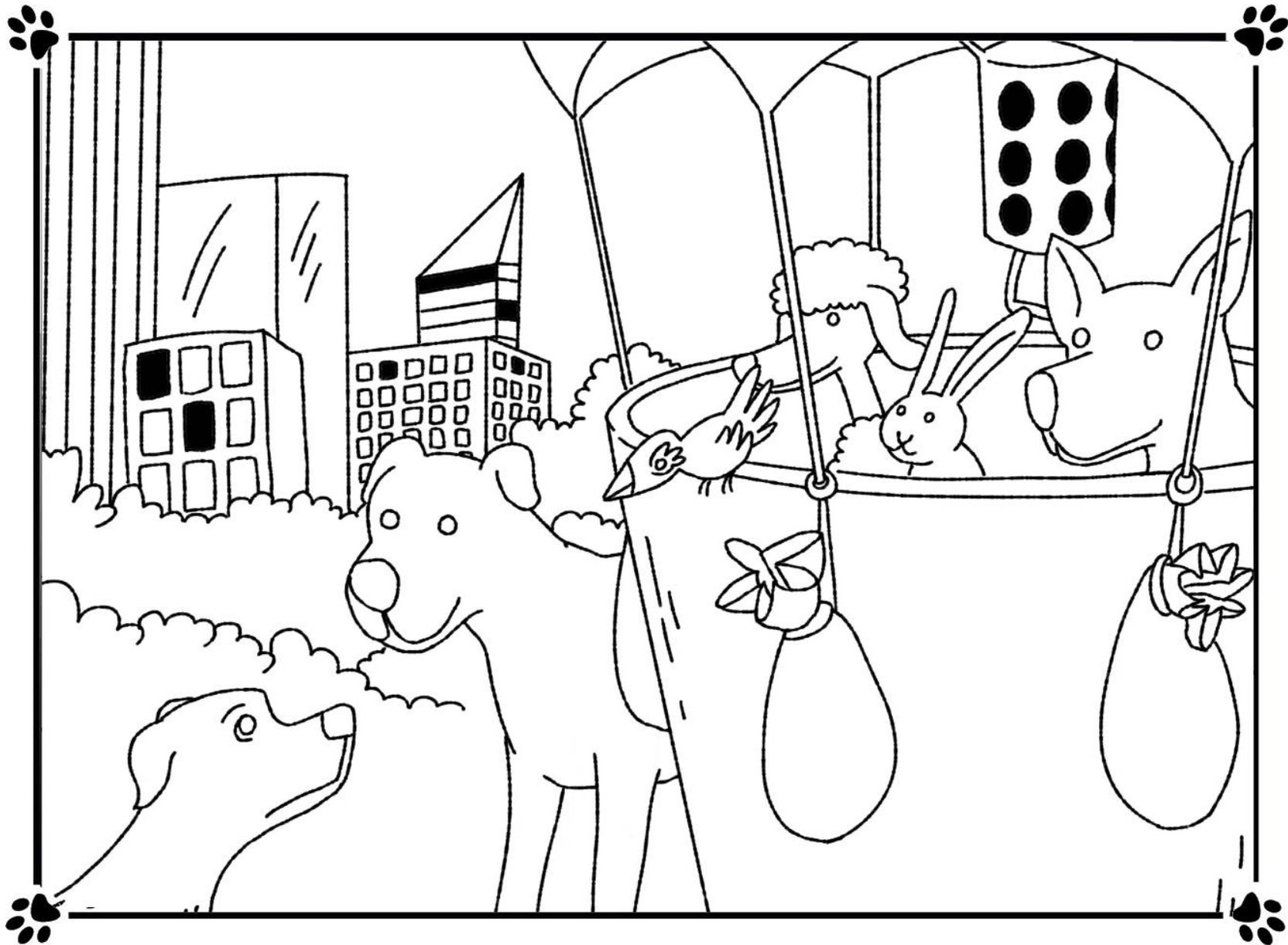
### Up, Up, and Too Far Left

“Aw, c’mon, Mo,” said Finchy. “You’ll love flying. It’s so much fun. Everything looks wonderful from way up here.”

Mo looked at the enormous hot air balloon. It was seven stories high. Two dogs and a rabbit were already inside the wicker basket – called a gondola – that was attached to the balloon with steel cords, waiting to take off. The pilot was a big dog named Ed. He had been piloting hot air balloons for many years.

“My parents were pilots, too, and they named me after Edward Warren who lived here,” he said. “He was the first person in this country to ride in a hot air balloon. He was just thirteen, a lot younger than you, Mo.”

Mo knew he was delaying their flight but couldn’t help it. Ever since he could remember, he was afraid of heights. He was never one of those dogs that went mountain climbing.



“Are you coming or not?” asked the rabbit named Alice. “I’ve got a tail grooming appointment this afternoon that I can’t miss. Hot date tonight.”

Mo overheard the dogs talking about how excited they were to fly.

*If they can fly in this balloon, so can I.* Mo took a deep breath, counted to ten, and then climbed inside.

“It’s about time,” mumbled Alice. Then she introduced her two dog friends.

“These are my very best friends in the whole wide world,” said Alice. “This is Jackie. She’s a French Poodle but doesn’t speak a word of French. And this is Claude. He once ate nine hot dogs for dinner.”

After Mo and Finchy introduced themselves, Ed pulled a cord that created a small, controlled fire – called a burner flame – at the bottom or mouth of the balloon. The fire forced the air inside the balloon to get hot, which made it rise in the sky.

As the balloon took off, Mo wrapped his paws around Finchy for comfort.

*Why did I ever agree to do this! What was I thinking!*

Ed tried to make Mo feel better by distracting him with a history lesson.

“If it wasn’t for animals, I’m not sure any humans would ever fly in a hot air balloon,” Ed said. “A sheep, duck, and rooster were the first living creatures ever to fly in a hot air balloon back in 1783. Humans were simply too afraid. That just goes to show you how much courage animals have, much more than humans.”

Mo faked a smile. He laid flat on the bottom of the basket with his eyes closed, wishing this balloon ride would quickly end. His stomach started doing somersaults.

“Mo,” whispered Finchy. “You’ll feel a lot better if you just look up at the sky. Just sit up and look up.”

Finchy kept nudging Mo with his beak until he sat up and opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was a cloud hanging very low in the sky. He had never seen one this close and stretched out his paw to touch it as the balloon floated right by it.

*That was really cool. Maybe this won’t be as bad as I thought.*

Mo’s fear slowly began to fade. He stood on his hind legs, placed his two front paws on the rim of the basket, and then looked down. He quickly closed his eyes and tilted

his head up. *I won't do that again.*

“So where are you all from?” asked Ed.

Claude, Jackie, and Alice said they had been friends for as long as they could remember.

“We all grew up together here, in Baltimore,” said Alice adding that she was born in nearby Catonsville. “I needed a day off from being chased by the same, annoying cat that lives in our neighborhood. So I thought it might be fun for us to take a vacation day, to see or sniff something different that’s not close to the ground.”

“Do you like living here?” asked Ed.

“This is a very cool state,” said Alice. “Did you know that the refrigerator was invented here? I don’t know what I would do without mine. Where would I store my celery and carrots?”

Jackie nodded her head in agreement. “This state also has an official dog. It’s the Chesapeake Bay Retriever.”

Mo was hoping that someone would know the state's name. No one did. But Ed added that the capital was Annapolis and that the state was surrounded by four other states.

Mo and Finchy were impressed that Ed understood directions. Maybe he could guide them to Florida.

“Are you on vacation, too?” asked Claude.

Mo and Finchy told them about their mission to Florida to return a valuable key to its owner.

“We’ve traveled all over this country on top of a delivery truck,” Mo said, adding that just this morning, they rode for nearly ninety minutes along Interstate 95 South. “All we know is that we have to head south to Florida.”

The animals chatted for a while about their family and friends. Mo started to relax. Every now and then, he’d stretch out his right front paw to touch a cloud or feel the sky.

The balloon continued gliding through the air, here and there. The cool air felt

wonderful against Mo's thick fur. Slowly, very slowly, he began gathering his courage to look down on the city.

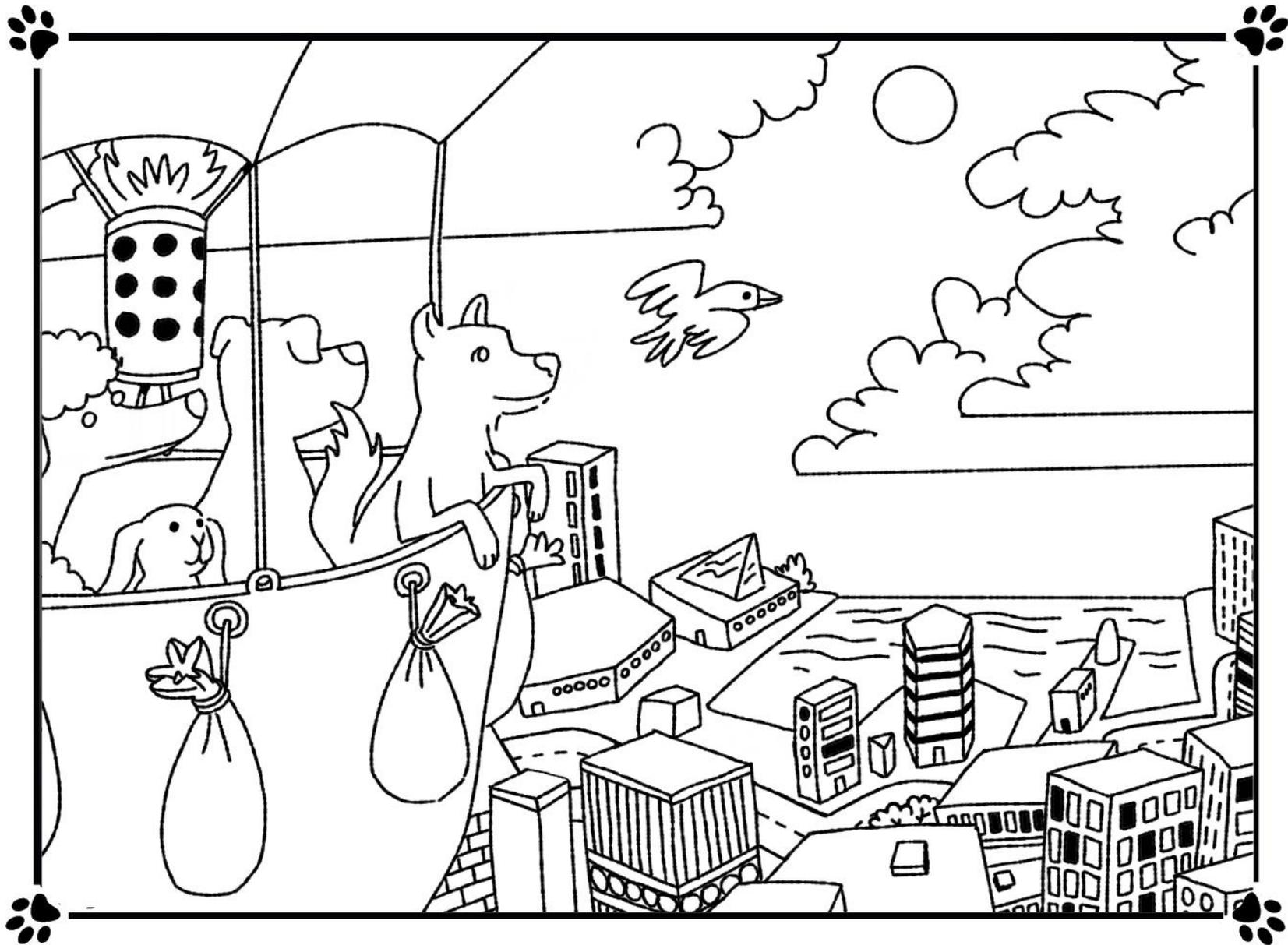
When he finally did, Alice pointed out a popular site.

“See that tall building Mo, the one on the right side of that ship?” asked Alice. “It has a well-known restaurant for rabbits and caterpillars. Several times a year, we dine at the rooftop's vegetable garden. So many fresh veggies. Simply d-e-e-licious.”

Mo's stomach was still queasy. The last thing he wanted to do was talk about food.

Claude, Jackie, and Alice pointed out other popular places to Mo and Finchy in case they wanted to visit them. Among them was the Baltimore National Aquarium where visitors can walk on Shark Alley, a catwalk that's inches above where hungry sharks swim.

Mo grew more and more comfortable as the balloon floated through the sky. His stomach even settled down. He looked up, down, to his right, and then left, simply amazed at how different the world looked from so high in the sky.



“Finchy, now I understand why you can’t sit still, why you’re always flying here and there,” Mo said. “I could fly forever and never touch the ground.”

Mo soon regretted saying those words. Out of nowhere, a huge gust of wind pushed the balloon all the way to the left. The animals looked at Ed. They were now flying in the opposite direction, over the ocean instead of the city.

Mo realized that there wasn’t a steering wheel on the balloon like there was in the delivery truck. Mo and the other animals started to panic as the balloon drifted farther out to sea. The animals sat on the bottom of the basket, holding each other very tight.

“Mo, you’re squashing me,” said Finchy. “I promise you that everything will be alright. Many birds know Ed and say he is one of the best pilots in the country. I would never put you in danger. I’m the guy who saved your life – twice as I recall – remember?”

Ed was doing this and that, trying to head back toward the city but nothing seemed to work.

“We’re going to crash into the ocean,” shouted Claude!”



“We’ll end up far, far away, maybe in a different country, or even on a different planet, and never see our family and friends again!” cried Jackie.

“Please, everyone stay calm!” shouted Ed. “I know what I’m doing.”

He explained that the wind determined the direction of the balloon. Whatever direction the wind blew was the same direction in which the hot air balloon traveled.

Ed needed the balloon to go higher in the sky so he could change its direction. He pulled the cord again to light the flame or fire on the bottom of the balloon, which forced hot air into it, and made it rise. Then he steered the balloon back over land.

Everyone took a deep breath.

The animals then cheered Ed’s name. Finchy even sang a sweet song about the friendship between a dog and bird.

They continued flying for another thirty minutes looking over the city, laughing at themselves for being so afraid. They felt grateful to have Ed as their pilot.

Ed gently landed the balloon close to the spot where it took off.



All of the animals climbed out of the basket.

“If I ever ride in a balloon again, I’ll make sure you’re the pilot,” said Alice. Claude and Jackie nodded their heads in agreement.

Mo thanked Ed, over and over. He had never done anything in his entire life that was so thrilling and frightening at the same time!

Everyone said goodbye, knowing they would probably never see each other again.

“So, what did you think of flying?,” asked Finchy to Mo. “I hope you won’t let that minor problem sway your opinion.”

“You call that a minor problem?” asked Mo. “I have paws, not wings like you. From now on, they’re going to stay firmly on the ground!”