



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 4

By Carol Patton

Chapter 4

Max the Shepherd

“Get out of the way!” shouted Finchy.

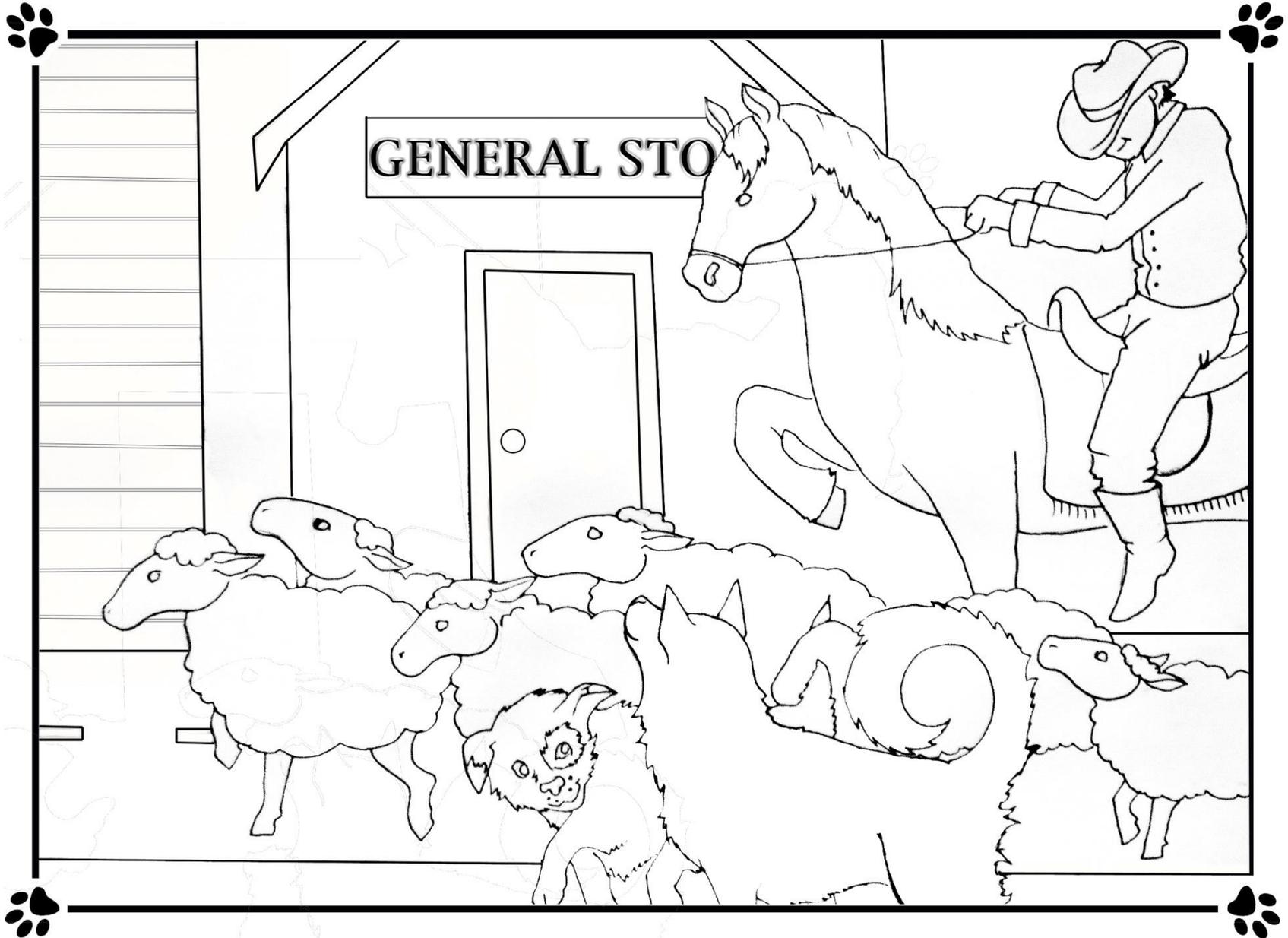
Mo turned around. Countless dogs, sheep, and people on horses were headed straight toward him.

Mo leaped to the side of the road. He had never seen so many sheep at one time. Where were they going in such a hurry?

“Hey, what’s going on?” Mo asked one of the dogs.

“Just movin’,” said the dog.

“Moving where?” asked Mo, trying to keep pace with the dog as he ran alongside the sheep.



“You’re not from around here, are you?” asked the dog who didn’t wait for a response. “My name is Max. I herd sheep. That’s my job.”

Job? What’s a job?

Mo watched Max keep the sheep in line, making sure they traveled along the wide dirt path. After nearly an hour, they reached a large pasture covered with bright-colored flowers.

Max laid on his belly in the cool grass. “So what do you do?” he asked Mo.

“Well, I uh...”. Mo didn’t know what to say. He pretty much did whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. Still, he wanted to make a good impression so he sat on his hind legs with his back perfectly straight and head held high.

“My name is Mo,” he said in a clear voice. “My friend, Finchy, and I are on a very important mission. We’re headed toward Florida. Ever hear of it?”

Max looked away from Mo, rather unimpressed. “I have absolutely no need to travel,” he said. “There’s no place better than where we are right now – Sawtooth Mountains.

Finchy didn't like Max' uppity attitude.

“If you've never been anywhere else, then how do you know this is the best place?” asked Finchy who was standing almost nose to nose with Max.

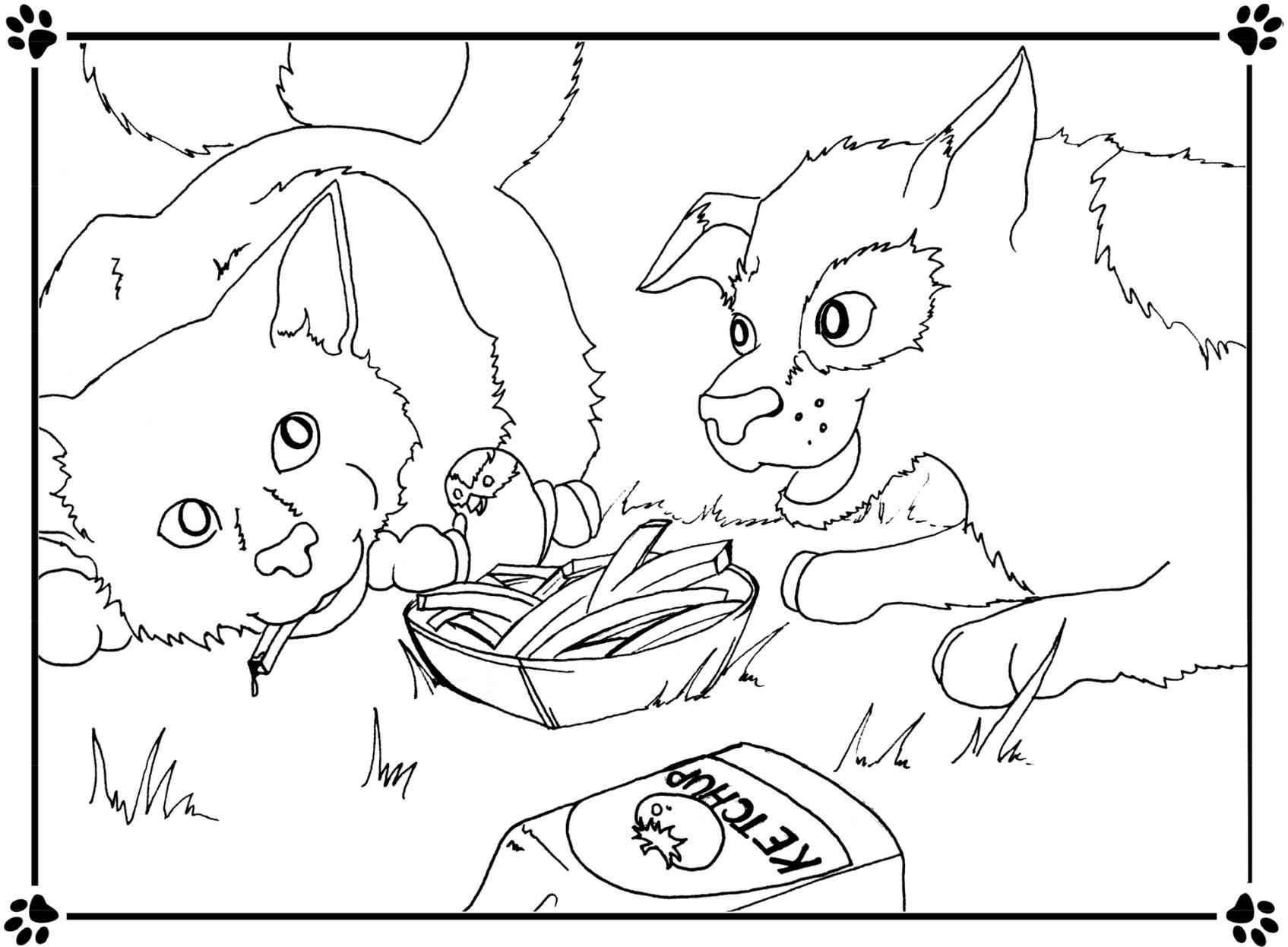
Finchy had a good point but Mo didn't want to be rude.

“Your home is very beautiful,” Mo said, giving Finchy a stern look. “How long have you been moving sheep?”

Max never missed a chance to brag about his job and family. He invited Mo and Finchy to lunch and began telling them all about his brothers and sisters who lived nearby, in a place called Ketchum, and how he belonged to a family of sheep ranchers whose ancestors were called Basques.

“You know,” said Max, “Basques came to California more than one hundred years ago to mine gold. When they didn't find any, some moved here, searching for jobs. Many became shepherders. Shepherding is in my blood. There's no other job I'd rather do.”

Job. There's that strange word again.



“So you move sheep every day?” asked Mo. “Is that your... job?”

“Well, I don’t move sheep every single day,” said Max. “But my family never moves sheep without me. That’s how important I am.”

“Are you always this arro... ,” Finchy started to ask. But before he could finish, Mo interrupted. He thanked Max for the scrumptious meal, especially the french fries. Mo had never eaten a potato before – baked, fried, or mashed.

Max explained that potatoes are grown in different states. Besides the state they were in now, he said they are also grown in Washington, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Colorado. He knew that Washington was in the Northwest part of the country and that Wisconsin was by Lake Michigan but he wasn’t exactly sure where the other states were located. Then he offered a few planting tips, just in case Mo wanted to plant potatoes in his own garden.

“Potatoes are sometimes called spuds,” Max said. “They like cool weather and are usually planted in the spring. They take about four months to grow.”

Mo nodded, thanking Max for the information, but knew he could never plant potatoes back home. He lived further north. It was cold. Way too cold.

Mo pointed to other dogs playing in the field.

“What about your friends over there?” asked Mo, wondering why they didn’t stop by to say hello.

“Don’t mind them,” said Max. “They’re just a bit . . . snobbish. This job can get to your head.”

Finchy rolled his eyes while Mo and Max rolled over on their backs, stretching their paws into the air. The warm sun was making them drowsy. Mo wondered what his family and friends were doing back home, if they were well, and most important of all, if they missed him just as much as he missed them.

It didn’t take long before Mo and Max fell asleep. But when Mo woke up, he found a note written by Finchy: Meet you back at the delivery truck. Have a gigantic surprise for you!

While walking back to the truck, Mo was a bit excited and a bit nervous. When it came to Finchy, he never knew what to expect.

When he stepped on to the truck’s roof, his tail started wagging fast and furious.

“Surprise!” shouted Finchy, who had created a roof-top, garden with just one vegetable–potatoes.

Mo grew teary-eyed. No one had ever done anything that nice for him. He gave Finchy a big hug.

“Easy, easy, Mo,” Finchy said. “You’re squashing me.”

“Sorry,” said Mo. “You may have a small body, Finchy, but your heart is gigantic.”

Finchy ignored Mo’s compliment. His mind was focused elsewhere.

“I can see it now,” said Finchy. “No matter where we go, animals will line up just to taste our delicious potatoes. We’ll be famous. We can serve potato pancakes, potato dumplings, potato soup, potato salad, potatoes au gratin. . .We can even create our own recipes. What do you think about fries dipped in chocolate?”