



# The Adventures of **Mo**

**Chapter 42**

By Carol Patton

## Chapter 42

### **Metal Monsters**

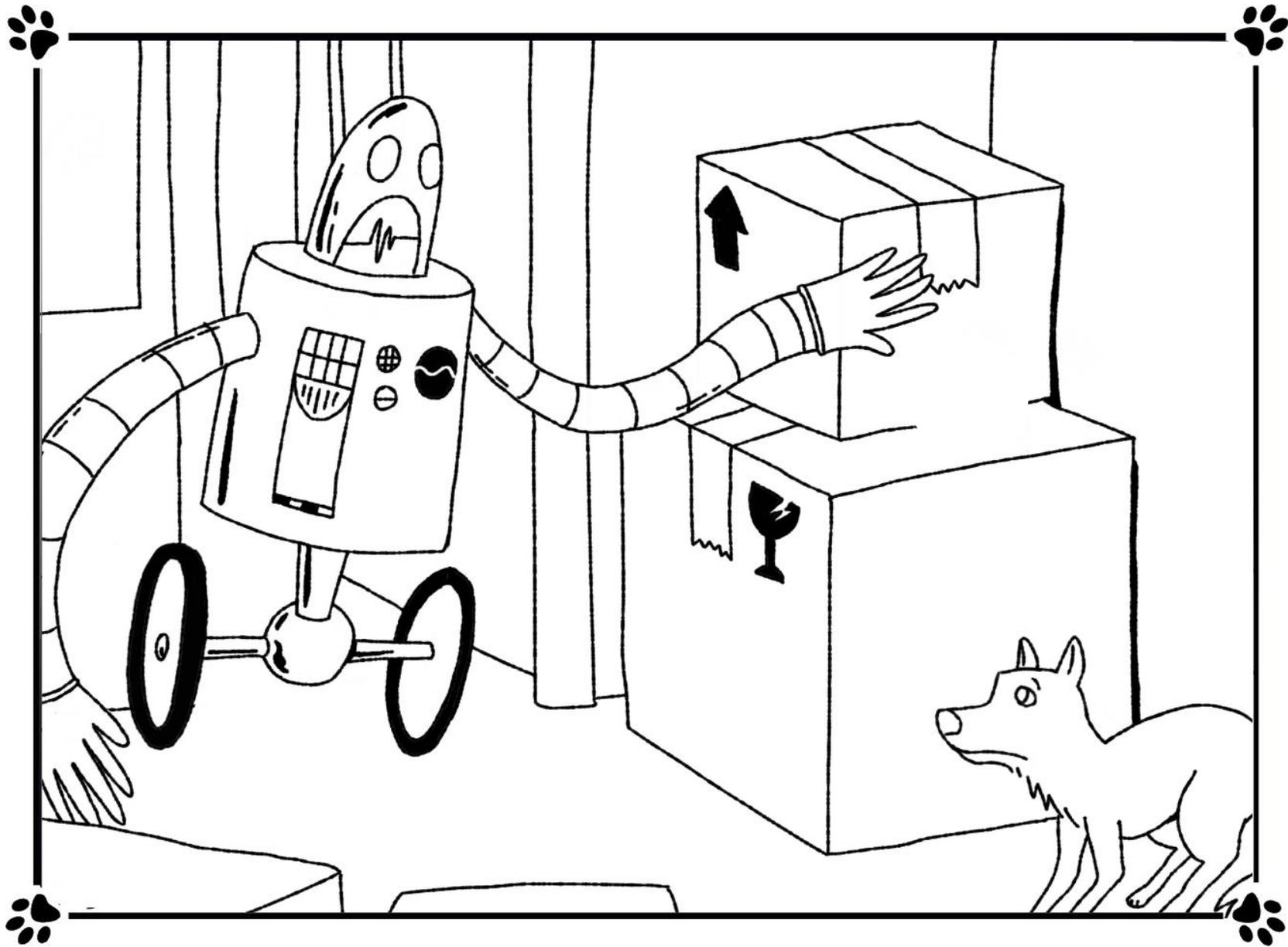
“Run, Mo, run!” shouted Finchy.

Mo ran as fast as he could to get away from the metal monster with bright, shiny eyes that made a strange noise as it moved. It had two huge arms, wheels instead of legs, and rolled easily across the tile floor. Mo entered a closet and hid in the corner behind several boxes. He hoped that this monster would not find him.

Mo heard the closet door open. He didn't dare move. He didn't dare breathe. The metal monster entered the tiny, dark closet.

“Hello,” he said in a very deep voice. “Why did you run? I wanted to introduce myself.”

Mo didn't know what to do.



The metal monster used one of his giant arms to push aside the boxes that stood in front of Mo.

“There you are,” he said. “No need to be afraid. I’m not going to hurt you. My name is Carbon. What’s yours?”

*Carbon seems nice. Should I trust him? He looks so scary, so different from anything or anyone I’ve ever seen.*

Mo gathered his courage, raised his head, and looked straight at him.

“M-m-my name is Mo,” he stammered.

“Welcome to my home,” said Carbon. “Is there anything I can get you? Maybe some chocolate chip cookies?”

He began to relax even though Carbon’s eyes looked like flashlight beams. He was also five times Mo’s size and weight. Still, Mo thought he could trust Carbon and followed him out of the closet.

“Where am I?” asked Mo, looking around a large room.

Carbon said that they were in a research lab at The Research Triangle Park, or The Triangle, as everyone called it. Many metal monsters lived here.

Just then, Finchy flew directly toward Carbon with a pen in his mouth.

“Finchy, stop, I’m OK,” said Mo. “So sorry, Carbon. This is my friend, Finchy. He thought I was in danger and was trying to protect me.”

Carbon didn’t seem upset, afraid, or even angry. In fact, he showed no emotion at all.

Mo and Finchy followed Carbon to a private area of the large room.

“Where are my manners?” asked Carbon. “I’ll turn more lights on so you can see better.”

When more lights popped on, Mo and Finchy saw several other odd-looking metal monsters standing right in front of them. But only one was awake.

Carbon introduced her as Kevlar, or Kev for short. Then he opened a cupboard, carefully removed several cookies from a bag sitting on a shelf, placed them on a plate, and set the plate on a table next to Mo and Finchy.

“We don’t eat food like you do,” said Carbon. “Instead, we charge ourselves.” Both robots plugged a cord from their metal bodies into an electrical outlet in the wall.

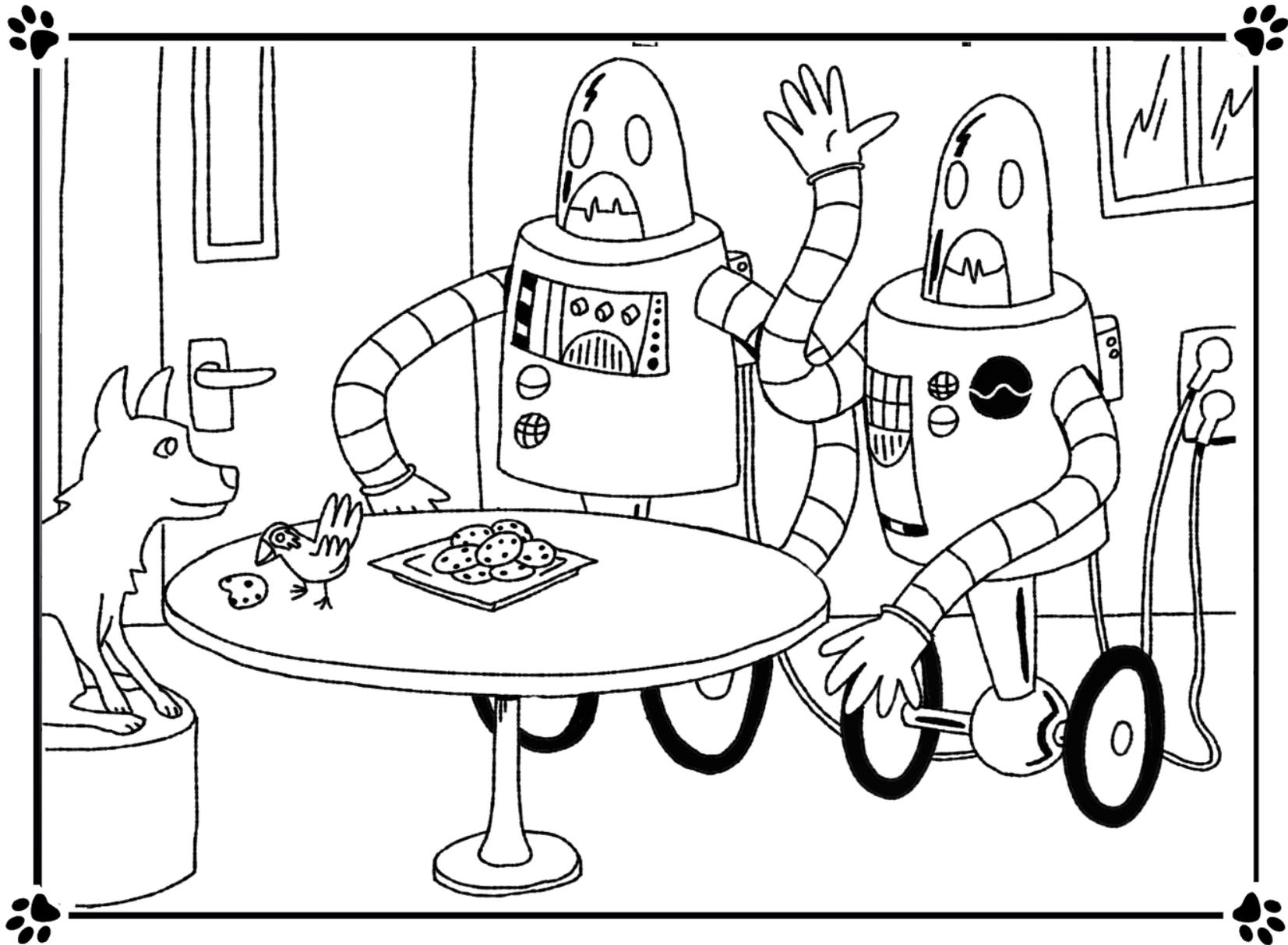
“So why are you here?” asked Kev. “Is there something we can help you with?”

Mo and Finchy told them about how they had been traveling all over the country to find Florida to return a valuable key to its owner who lived in the state.

“We’ve been traveling from state to state on top of a delivery truck for months,” said Finchy. “Today, we rode for almost four hours, mostly on Interstate 64 East, US 220 South, and Interstate 81 South. Our truck driver headed toward a city called Chapel Hill. He’s delivering packages to people in the building across the street so we thought we’d explore.”

Mo couldn’t wait any longer. He asked, “Who, I mean, what do you call yourselves? I’m a dog and Finchy is a bird.”

“We’re robots,” Carbon said. “We’re not human or even male or female, although humans made me sound like a man and Kev sound like a woman. We’re very smart machines.”



Mo and Finchy never talked to machines before.

“Since you’re so smart, do you solve the world’s problems?” asked Finchy, wondering if they were telling the truth.

“Not yet,” said Kev. “But we’re working on it.”

Finchy decided to test them.

“So what’s two plus five minus three?” he asked.

“Four hundred and thirty,” said Kev.

“You’ll have to excuse my friend,” Carbon said. “One of Kev’s circuits broke this morning. The answer is four.”

“Well, if you’re so smart,” continued Finchy.

Mo interrupted him. He didn’t want to be rude. Besides, these cookies were very tasty, probably home-made. He wanted to eat all of them and find out more about robots before leaving.

The robots told Mo and Finchy that they were being trained on how to do things that people do like pick up objects, carry them, and gently place them down on a table so they don't break. They said it took them many months to learn how to perform tasks like serving cookies.

“But math is really easy for us,” added Kev. “What’s hard is learning how to move, act, and talk like humans. In the future, robots will do many things that people do, only better, and without complaining.”

Finchy still wasn't sure he believed them and continued testing their knowledge. Carbon answered all of his math questions correctly, each in a split second.

While Mo was busy stuffing cookies in his mouth, he hoped the robots were smart enough to tell Finchy and him what state they were in, how far away Florida was, and how to get there.

“Do you know where we are?” he asked. “I mean, what state do you live in?”

At first, the robots were silent. Then they asked Mo and Finchy many questions. What were states? What did they do? Could they play with them? Were they good at math?

Mo and Finchy explained that this country is divided into fifty different places called states. Some states were very small. Others were very big. Some states were cold and had snow while others were warm and had strange-looking plants called cacti. Some had mountains and lakes and others had deserts. But every state had something unique and special about it.

As Mo and Finchy spoke, many of the lights on the robots' heads flashed on and off.

“Well, we can tell you unique things about where we live, or what you call our state,” said Kev. “We listen to what the scientists say to each other and store it in our memory or brain forever.”

Kev told Mo and Finchy that more than one hundred years ago, the Wright brothers were the first humans to build and then fly an airplane here with a motor. Finchy wanted to meet them but saw Mo shake his head back and forth.

After checking his memory bank, Carbon told them many more things about the state. More sweet potatoes are grown here than anywhere else in the country. This state also makes the most furniture. It's home to a plant called a Venus flytrap that has teeth and eats bugs. The scientists they worked with grew up in this state in places named Charlottesville, Raleigh, and Durham.



“Although we’re learning how to do things that people do, we can never be human,” Carbon said. “But we think faster than any human ever could and will never catch a cold, get sick, or need to take yucky-tasting medicine.”

"Why can't you be human?" asked Finchy, even though he thought being a bird would be a much better choice.

“The humans who made us haven’t figured out how to give us emotions,” said Kev. “But I think that’s a good thing. Who needs them? I don’t want to cry, or feel frightened, angry, anxious, nervous, or sad.”

Mo and Finchy wondered what it would be like to be a robot and not have any emotions. They really liked the idea of being smart, especially when it came to adding and subtracting numbers, which was really hard. Carbon said robots never make mistakes or forget stuff unless one of their parts breaks, which can then be replaced.

Mo and Finchy thought about how different their lives would be if they became robots.

Mo would no longer be angry or afraid when things didn’t go as planned. Finchy wouldn’t feel the need to show off or be ashamed about not knowing the answer.

They both liked the way that sounded.

But what would they be giving up? They would never again feel happy, excited, hopeful, surprised, or grateful.

Carbon asked Mo and Finchy what it felt like to have emotions. But there was one emotion they really wanted to understand, the one that humans talked about every day – love.

Mo could only think of one way to describe it.

“It’s probably like being fully charged or getting a brand new part,” said Mo.  
“Everything works really well. You’re at your best.”

The robots nodded their heads and seemed to understand.

Everyone agreed that being a robot with emotions would be the best of both worlds. But no one believed humans were smart enough to create such a machine. Robots would simply have to do it.

It was time for the robots to go to sleep. The word Carbon used for sleep was

“deactivate”. So Mo and Finchy thanked them for the cookies and headed toward the delivery truck.

When they were safely on top of the truck, they made a list of all the good and bad things about being an animal and a robot. When they got down to the bottom of the page, the number of items in each column was tied.

But then Mo thought about something very important that wasn't on their list.

"If we were robots, we'd be real smart, but then we could never eat food like French fries or chocolate chip cookies," said Mo. "Who would want to live like that?"