



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 44

By Carol Patton

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Mo and Finchy Help Build a House

Mo and Finchy read the sign on the front door: Volunteers Needed.

They walked inside the small building and were surprised to see so many different animals. There were raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, beavers, dogs, and birds standing in line, waiting to speak to a large cat sitting behind a desk.

“Hey, pal, no cuts,” said a bobcat to Mo. “I’ve been waiting in line for at least twenty minutes.”

“Waiting in line for what?” asked Mo.

The bobcat carefully looked at Mo and Finchy.

“You’re not from around here, are you?” he asked. “This place is nicknamed the Volunteer State. All animals that live here sign up to volunteer for something.”

Mo and Finchy had met animals that helped clean up their community park and Finchy once helped a sick bird and his family. But they had never heard of signing up to volunteer.

“What can you sign up for?” asked Finchy. “Can it be for just a day?”

“You can volunteer for a zillion different things,” said the bobcat. “You can babysit young animals, give music, singing, or dance lessons, deliver food, cook meals, or even offer fashion tips. You can do almost anything, anywhere in the state.”

Mo and Finchy had the whole day ahead of them. Yesterday they had traveled for almost eleven hours on top of the delivery truck, mostly along Interstate 22 West, heading toward a city named Memphis. Alex was now resting at a hotel and didn’t plan on leaving until tomorrow morning.

They decided to volunteer and stood in line. But what should they do? What could they do?

Now it was their turn to talk to the cat.

“Give me your name, address, and what you want to do,” said the cat without even

looking up at them.

Providing their names was easy but what should Finchy and Mo list as their address?

“I haven’t got all day,” she said, rather snooty.

“Our address is the rooftop of Alex’ delivery truck,” said Mo.

The cat wrote down what Mo had told her and handed him a long list of volunteer jobs.

Mo and Finchy read the list. An elk in Nashville needed help planting a garden. A bear in Knoxville needed help moving things out of a cave before her family moved inside it. A beaver in Brentwood needed someone to settle a family argument. The list went on and on.

They found something interesting on page seven.

“Need help building a house in Memphis for older animals.”

Although Mo had never built anything in his life, he liked the sound of it and thought

he would be very good at it. Finchy did, too. Since he had helped build dozens of bird nests, how hard could it be to build a house?

They signed up for the job, which was nearby. While walking there, they wondered many things. How big would the house be? How many animals would live there? Why did they want to live inside a house? Would it have a backyard?

They saw a beaver standing next to the wood frame of a house. He was shouting directions, telling everyone what to do. All sorts of tools were on the ground. Hammers. Screwdrivers. Nails. Pliers. Drills. Tape measures. Paint brushes.

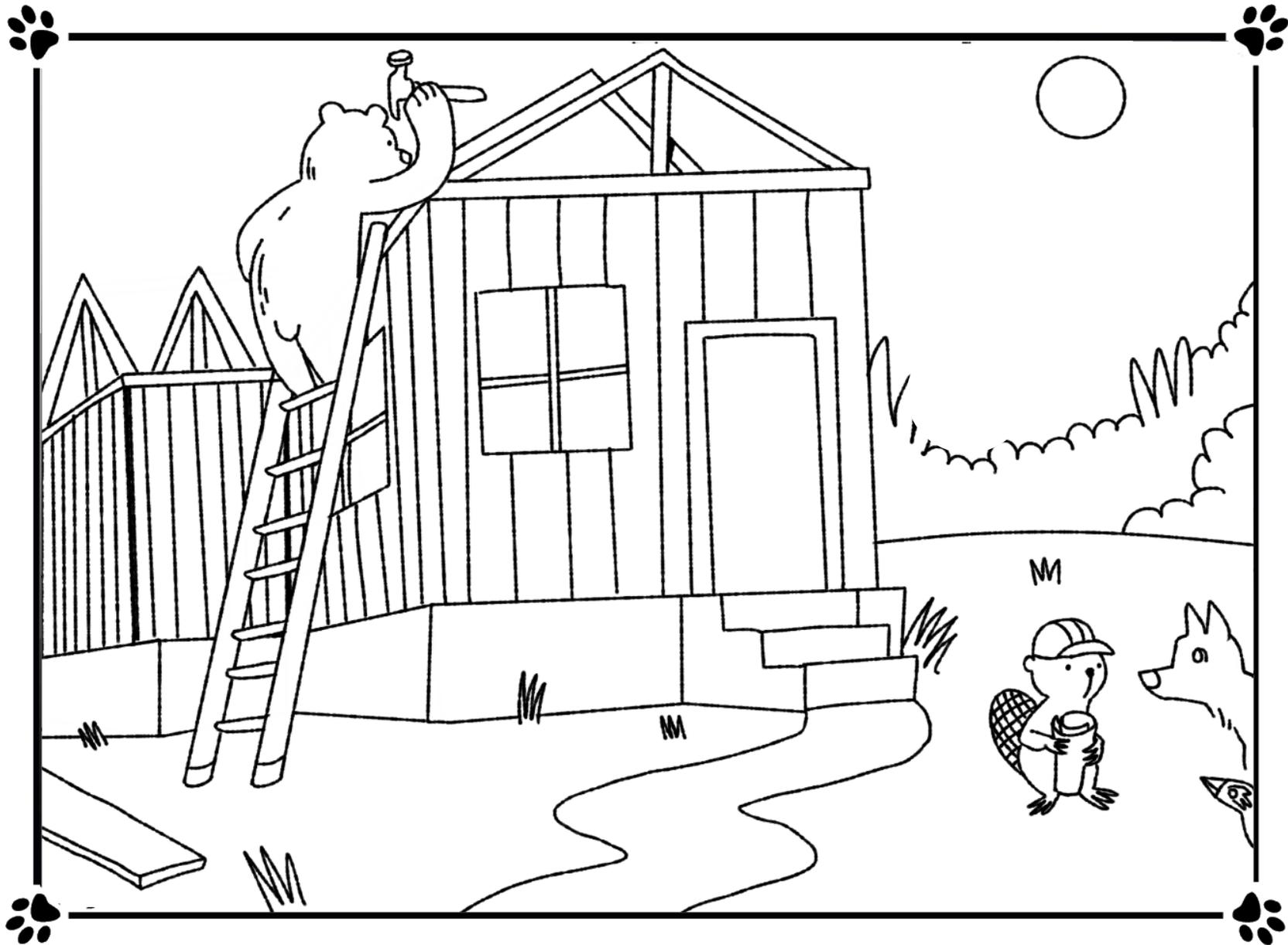
“Hello,” said Mo. “I’m Mo and my friend’s name is Finchy. We’re here to help.”

“Did you ever build a house before?” asked the beaver in charge that introduced himself as Bobby. Then he looked at Finchy. “Anything except a bird’s nest?”

“Not really,” said Mo as Finchy shook his head back and forth.

“Know how to use a drill?” asked Bobby.

“Not really,” said Finchy.



“Ever hold a hammer or paint or measure something?” asked Bobby.

Mo and Finchy looked down at the ground. They realized that this wasn’t going to be as easy as they thought.

“That’s OK,” said Bobby. “Just listen to Mason’s directions. She’s my master carpenter.”

Bobby introduced Finchy and Mo to Mason, a giant black bear.

“Glad you can help us,” said Mason. Did you just move here?”

Mo and Finchy told her about their mission and asked if she knew where they were, or the name of the state.

“Not really sure,” she said. “All I know is that this state borders eight states. Oh, and many humans come here to visit Great Smoky Mountains National Park and a very noisy place. I think it’s called Nashville.”

Mo and Finchy still didn’t know where they were. No matter. They were excited about building a house.

Finchy's task throughout the day was to measure every part of the house. He had to make sure everything was the size it was supposed to be and level, or the same height on all sides. While a dog held the tape measure, Finchy grabbed the end of the tape in his beak, flew to the other end of whatever they were measuring, and then recorded its height, width, and length in feet and inches.

Mo was asked to nail the walls of the house on to the frame. Mason handed Mo a hammer and then showed him how to use it. Mo watched as she held a nail in her left front paw and used the right front paw to pound the nail into the wall and frame.

Seemed easy. But the first time Mo did this, he missed the nail and made a small hole in the wall with the hammer. Same thing happened the second and third time.

“Let's try something else,” said Mason. “Are you strong? See those windows and wooden planks for the floor? We need someone to move them to that spot over there.”

Mo tried to pick up one window but could barely lift it. Then he tried lifting one plank. It was even heavier than the window.

So much needs to be done. There must be something I can do.

Mo thought he could help order supplies. How many more nails would be needed to build the rest of the house? What about screws, glue, or tape? Maybe the animals would need more hammers or drills. He was very proud of his math skills. He could add, subtract, and count all the way up to one hundred. But he soon found out that this job needed someone that could also multiply and divide numbers.

Mo looked around the job site. Everyone was busy hammering, drilling, lifting, measuring, or looking at blueprints. He felt useless.

When I get back home, I'm going to learn how to build stuff and multiply and divide numbers. There's so much I don't know.

Mo overheard Mason talking to Bobby. They were trying to find a task, no matter how small, that Mo could do.

“What about painting?” asked Mason. “All of the wood in that pile needs to be painted.”

They agreed that this was something Mo could handle. Mason gave Mo a paint brush and a crash course on how to paint.

“Move the brush this way and that way,” she said, while painting a scrap piece of wood. “We don’t want any streaks. Make sure your brush strokes are even and smooth.”

Painting all the wood in the giant pile would keep Mo busy for the rest of the day. He was determined to do a great job.

But after painting a small piece of wood, he noticed many uneven streaks. It was hard for Mo to hold his paw steady while painting back and forth.

I’m smart enough to figure this out. I will not fail. I will not let these animals down.

Mo stood up and began walking around the area for ideas. His tail got caught on a thorny bush. Without thinking, he easily wiggled and wagged his tail to set it free.

That’s it! I’ll use my tail as a paint brush!

Mo ran back to the pile of wood. He dipped his tail in the can of blue paint and started wagging it to the right and then left.

After painting one piece of wood, he turned around to check his work. It was perfect.

No streaks. His strokes were smooth and even.

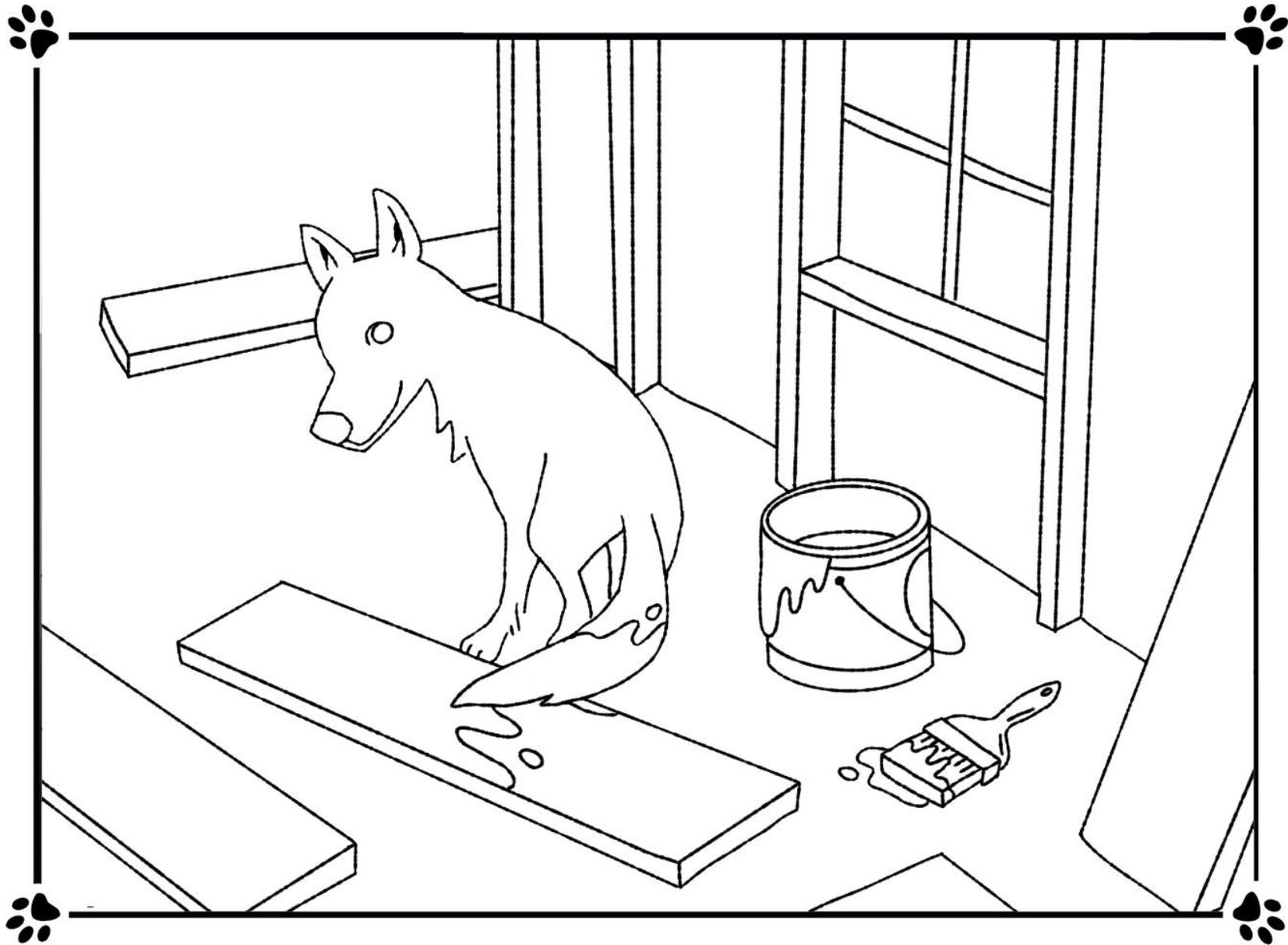
For the next six hours, Mo painted the entire pile of wood. He was so happy to help that his tail never got tired of wagging.

Bobby and Mason couldn't believe all the wood that Mo had painted. Then they noticed his blue tail.

“Your painting method may be a bit strange, but you're a wonderful painter,” said Mason.

“Your brush strokes are perfectly smooth,” added Bobby. “If you're interested, there are many other homes we're building around the state. We could use a skilled painter.”

Mo smiled at the word “skilled”. He finally found something that he was good at and enjoyed doing. He explained that he and Finchy couldn't stay, that they had to leave the state tomorrow to return a lost key to its owner in Florida.



By now, the other animals had nailed the walls and roof to the house's frame. They explained that each room would have water bowls with ice, squeaky toys, cushy beds, and a refrigerator that was always stocked with food. There would also be plenty of space to run and play.

Mo and Finchy were impressed. They only wished that they could meet some of the animals that would live in this house. But they had to leave. They said goodbye to everyone and began walking back to the delivery truck.

“We should really paint the roof of the truck a different color,” said Finchy. “Gray is such a boring color. Maybe green?”

“When you say, ‘we’ should paint, you mean me, right?” asked Mo.

“Well, you’re so good at it,” said Finchy. “I can supervise.”

“I’ll think about it,” he said, knowing he would never do it. “But there is something important I need to ask. How can I get this blue paint off my tail?”