



# The Adventures of **Mo**

**Chapter 49**

By Carol Patton

## Chapter 49

### Mia and Friends

“He’s huge!” said Finchy to Mo. “Look at all of his teeth! I’m glad I live on land, not in the ocean.”

Mo felt the same way. He would not want to meet any of these sharks no matter where he lived.

“It says here that sharks have been guarding our oceans for more than five hundred million years,” said Mo, thinking that was a very long time. “Are sharks really that old? There are supposed to be four types living here. Sand tiger sharks. Great hammerhead sharks. Tiger sharks. Silvertip sharks. I don’t care which ones they are. They all scare me.”

Mo and Finchy were visiting the largest aquarium in the world. More than one hundred thousand water animals lived here. They had never seen so many strange-looking creatures in one spot. Some of them didn’t seem to have eyes. Others had

see-through bodies. One creature even had eight arms!

Mo and Finchy had no idea so many different types of fish or animals lived in the ocean. Why did they all look so different? Where did they come from? Other planets?

Earlier that morning, Mo and Finchy had traveled for more than three hours, mostly along Interstate 75 South. They crossed a state line and saw highway signs for cities named Shannon, Cartersville, and Woodstock before coming to this aquarium. It was so crowded that no one noticed them. They walked right through the main entrance.

They walked around the aquarium for hours. Finchy started counting all the different kinds of fish that lived here, but lost track after reaching ninety-two. They overheard a teacher tell her students many things about this state. It was named after a king, grows the most peanuts in the country, is the largest US state east of the Mississippi River, and is home to the first college in the world that gave women degrees.

Somehow, Mo and Finchy split off from the crowd of people and found themselves in a strange area.

Finchy noticed a door across from where they were standing. "Hey, Mo," he said. "This sign says the door leads into the aquarium or tank area."

“Why would I ever want to go into the aquarium?” asked Mo. “You saw how mean the sharks looked. No thank you. I’ll stay on this side of the door.”

Finchy begged Mo to at least open the door. Then he read another sign out loud: “All the big, mean-looking sharks live in a different tank. In this tank are rays, which look like flat fish. They’re related to sharks. But they’re very friendly.”

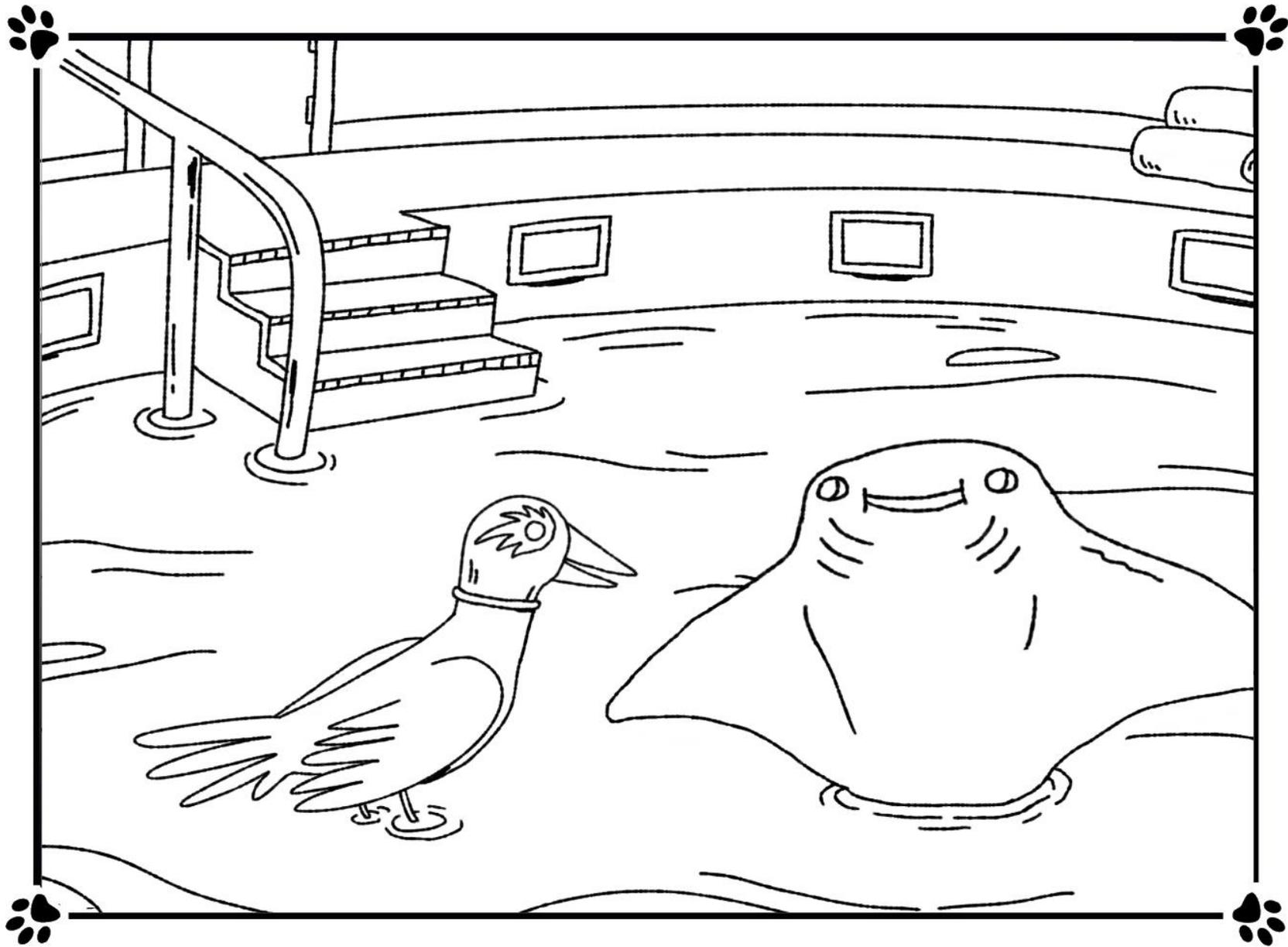
Finchy spent the next twenty minutes telling Mo how much fun they would have meeting fish. But what Finchy didn’t realize was that he could fly out of danger much faster than Mo could run away from it.

Finchy kept nagging Mo until he agreed. But Mo didn’t tell Finchy that he would stay safe, on this side of the door.

Mo opened the door. Finchy hopped out and dipped his claw into the water. It didn’t feel cold or hot. Then he jumped in, making a tiny splash.

“C’mon inside,” shouted Finchy. “The water is perfect!”

Just then a ray approached Finchy that was about a foot long.



“I’ve never seen anyone that looked like you before,” said the ray named Mia. “What type of animal are you? Land or sea?”

“We’re land animals,” said Finchy. “I’m a bird named Finchy and that’s my friend Mo standing back there. He’s a dog. He thinks you’ll eat him if he comes into the tank.”

“Nonsense,” said Mia. “Other than humans, you’re the first land animals to visit us. No fish here has ever hurt anyone. Well, except for the time a man hugged me. He wouldn’t let go no matter how much I wiggled. Fish don’t like to be hugged. So, I bit him, just a little.”

“Hear that, Mo?” said Finchy. “Everyone in this tank is friendly, so long as you don’t hug them. I feel the same way, Mia. Every time someone tries to hug me, they end up squishing me. Very unpleasant.”

Mo inched his way toward the tank. When he saw that Finchy was in no danger, he walked down the steps into the pool that wasn’t very deep but stayed close to the edge.

Mia swam up to Mo, and then around him several times. Mo froze. Mia had never seen a creature like him before.

“Hey, you’ve got a tail like me!” she said.

Mo nodded, trying to be polite.

Finchy asked Mia about the sharks that lived in this aquarium. Were they as mean as they looked?

“Tiger sharks are one of the largest and most dangerous meat-eaters in the ocean,” she said. “They’ll bite your head off!”

Although all sharks looked scary, Mia told them they’re not the same. She mentioned silvertip sharks that have very large eyes. They can see in the dark, even in muddy water, up to ten times better than humans in clear water. They can hear and smell really well, too.

“But I think sand tiger sharks are the nicest of them all,” Mia said. “Many of them are my cousins. They rarely get upset, no matter what. Once my cousin’s date showed up an hour late. She didn’t even get mad!”

More rays were now swimming toward Mo and Finchy.

“Mia, you’re having a party and didn’t invite me?” said one ray that sounded angry. “It’s just like you not to think of others.”

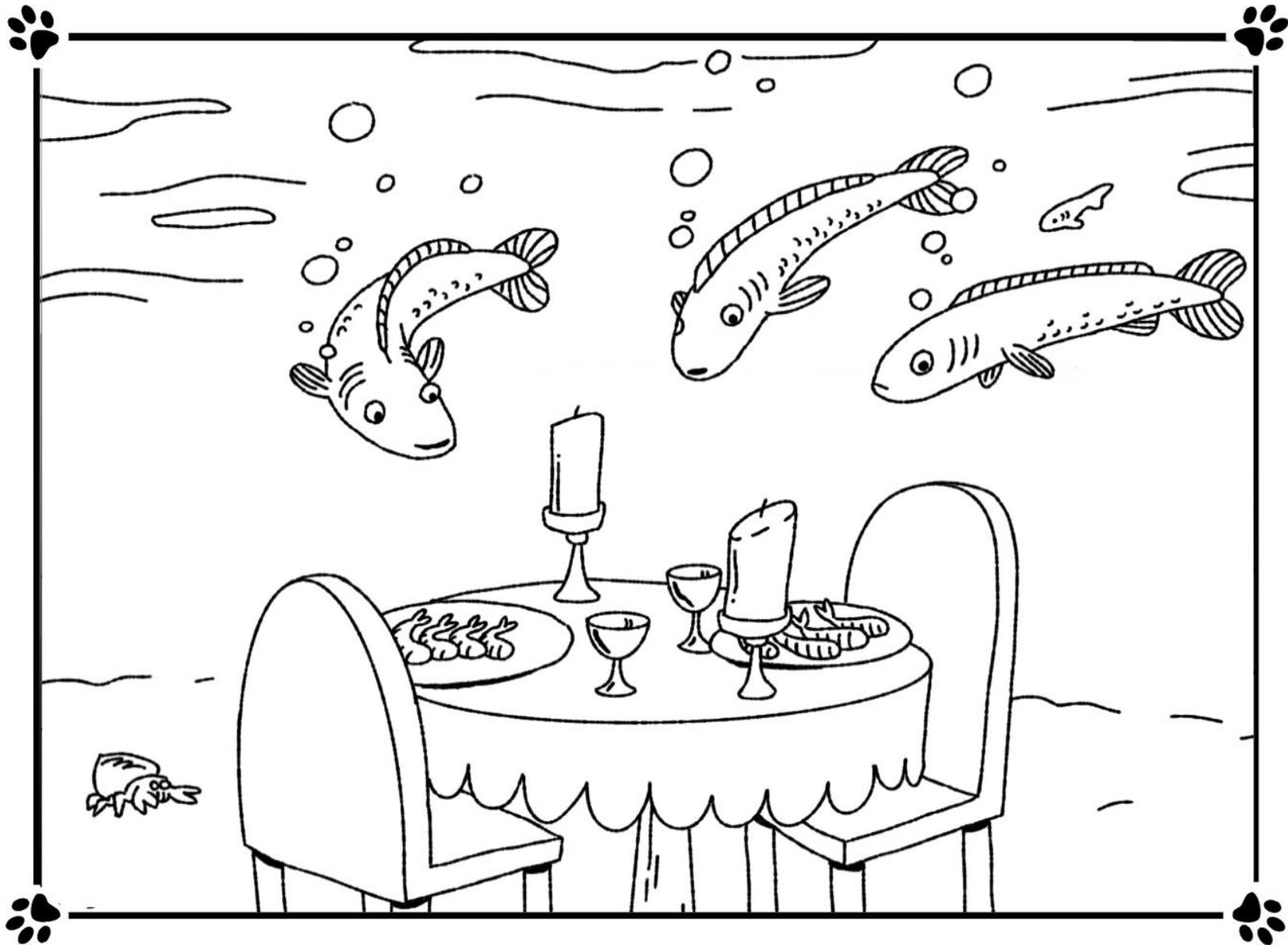
“Will you ever stop being mad at me?” Mia asked. “How many times do I need to apologize? I made a mistake and promised that it would never happen again.”

Mia seemed so friendly. Mo and Finchy wondered what she had done that made her friend so angry.

Mia’s friend kept silent as she explained. Last week, while swimming around, she spotted a small table with two chairs resting on the bottom of the tank. The table was draped with a red tablecloth. Candles and two plates of shrimp were on top of the table. Mia was really hungry and ate the shrimp off both plates. How was she supposed to know that her friend was planning a romantic dinner?

“You should have asked someone before eating the shrimp off both plates,” said the ray. “Everyone knew that I was planning a special dinner for my girlfriend.”

“I didn’t,” said Mia. “You should have left a note or something.”



Some of the other fish defended Mia, saying that she simply made a mistake. She said she was sorry and meant it. So why was her friend still holding a grudge?

“No fish is perfect,” said an older ray. “You’ll make a mistake one day and want other fish to forgive you. Staying mad makes you feel bad. But forgiving makes you feel good.”

Mia’s friend realized that the older ray was right. Holding a grudge did make him feel bad.

“I’m sorry, Mia,” he said. “I forgive you.”

At that moment, everyone’s mood changed. Now all the rays, Finchy, and even Mo were laughing and having fun. Mo wasn’t afraid anymore. He let the rays touch him and he touched them back.

The rays told them how much they loved living in this aquarium. There was so much room, so much space to swim. One ray said that the humans who worked here cared for them as if they were their own children.

Mo and Finchy told them all about how they were searching for Florida to return a

lost key. Then Mo asked the rays if they knew the name of their city or state. The fish looked at each other. What was a city? What was a state? Their home was this aquarium. It was just one big place.

But they did tell Mo and Finchy what it was like to be a ray. Their eyes are on top of their heads. Their favorite game is hide and seek, which they're very good at playing. Like dogs and birds, rays also come in different colors. Some are blonde or sandy-colored, pink, or bluish grey, while others are light brown and grey, with small brown spots and patches of yellow. Others are as pretty as butterflies.

Mo and Finchy told them all about themselves and what it was like to live on land.

“My favorite thing to do is soar through the air,” said Finchy. But then he realized that the rays didn't know what air felt like even though they breathed oxygen that's in the water. “Flying is sort of like gliding through the water.”

Mo talked about how he loved to run really fast and feel the cool wind against his fur. But the rays didn't understand what running was because they didn't have any legs.

Mo showed them by running around the tank's deck.



They spent the entire afternoon getting to know each other. Before Mo and Finchy left, Mo invited the rays to visit the ocean near his home but warned them that it would be a very long journey.

Once on top of the delivery truck, Mo and Finchy talked about how strange it was that the aquarium didn't have any cities or states. They wondered how fish knew where to meet each other for lunch or where their friends and relatives lived. How did they get their mail delivered?

"I'll bet the oceans have cities and states," said Finchy. "Ya know, there are five oceans. Each one is much bigger than the aquarium."

Mo never really thought about it. Finchy was probably right.

"I can see it now," said Finchy. "Giant cities on the bottom of every ocean with stores, houses, offices, movie theaters, bowling alleys, museums, parks, ice cream shops, and . . . Do you think they have seafood restaurants?"