



The Adventures of **Mo**

Chapter 8

By Carol Patton

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The Mighty River

“Hurry up!” shouted Finchy. “You can make it!”

Mo never remembered running so fast. Just before the delivery truck’s engine started, he grabbed the ladder on the side of the truck and climbed to the top where Finchy was waiting.

“That was a close call,” said Finchy. “Ya know, it wouldn’t hurt you to lose some weight. And maybe exercise more?”

Mo was too busy panting to respond.

The bright sun and a few cloud wisps hung in the sky. Mo and Finchy couldn’t have picked a nicer day to travel.

Mo laid down on the warm roof as the truck driver drove slowly out of the rest stop’s

parking lot. He noticed that many of the car license plates had the same words: Pacific Wonderland.

“I’ll be right back with some breakfast,” said Finchy, who was always flying here and there, searching through trashcans for food and bragging to anyone who would listen about his journey with Mo.

When he returned, Finchy was carrying half of a veggie sandwich between his claws. Mo snatched it away from him, sniffed it once, twice, and then handed it back.

“That’s the thanks I get?” shouted Finchy. “I must have poked around a dozen, no a million, garbage cans to find you something healthy to eat.”

“I’m a meat and potatoes dog,” Mo said, unapologetically. “Besides, what’s so special about lettuce, cucumbers, and this other stuff, whatever it is? None of it has any flavor.”

They rode on top of the delivery truck for some time before exiting the highway toward a place called Bend.

Mo started wiggling his nose. He pointed it up. Down. Left. Then right.

A river. I smell a river.

The truck stopped in front of a long building.

The truck driver climbed out of the truck's cab to greet another man.

“It's been a long time, too long,” he said, patting the other man on the back. “How's the family?”

The two men chatted and laughed as they walked into the building.

This was Mo's chance to look around. After climbing down the truck's ladder, he walked along the side of the road while Finchy flew ahead.

The pair soon found themselves surrounded by many trees and thorny bushes. Mo spread apart the small branches of two bushes to see what was on the other side.

It was exactly as he thought. There was a river. A big one. The words “Deschutes River” were printed on a nearby sign.

There were so many people around that no one paid attention to Finchy and Mo.

But Mo couldn't take his eyes off them. Many were actually standing on the water, using paddles to move across it.

Mo didn't know what to think. *Can humans stand on water? All the people back home sit in canoes when moving across the water.*

“C'mon, Mo,” said Finchy. “Let's cool off in the river.”

Mo poked his head between two thick bushes and then tried to force his shoulders through the narrow opening. All of a sudden, he couldn't move. He twisted this way and that way. He was stuck.

“Do I have to do everything for you, Mr. Meat and Potatoes?” said Finchy, who now stood behind Mo's tail. With all his might, Finchy pushed Mo through the bushes.

They walked toward the river bank and felt the cool water against their warm bodies. Finchy relaxed on the sand with his legs crossed and closed his eyes.

But Mo couldn't relax. If only he could stand on water.

If humans can do it, I certainly can. But I need somebody to teach me. Maybe those

people over there, the ones sitting on that brown blanket.

While Mo was getting up his nerve to approach them, he overheard one man talking about his sister who works in Eugene. “She wants to buy a house in Springfield, just ten minutes east of her office,” he said.

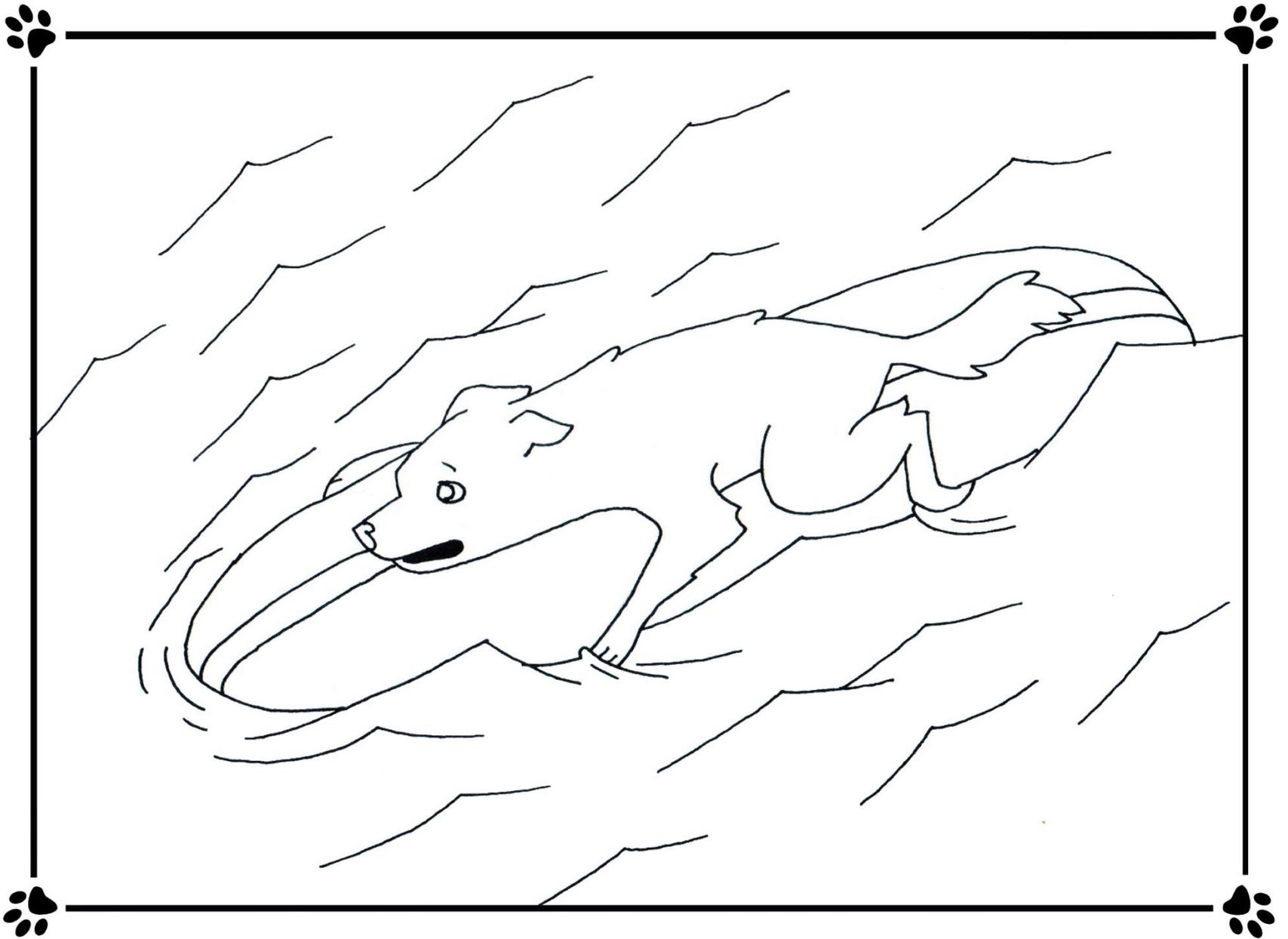
Mo glanced at Finchy who was fast asleep, probably dreaming about grand nests, juicy worms, or his family back home. Mo took a deep breath and walked toward the humans. Just then, he spotted two other people coming out of the river, jumping off their long boards.

So that’s how they do it. Humans don’t float. They stand on boards that float.

Mo had never stood on water. But today was the day he would do it. How hard could it be? All he needed was a board and some courage.

The people left the boards sitting on the river bank. Mo trotted over and sniffed one of them. It smelled OK. When no one was watching, he pushed it into the river with his nose and climbed on top of it.

The board started moving in every direction. So did Mo’s stomach.



He didn't dare stand up. He was sprawled out on all fours, clinging to its edges. This was not as easy as it looked. Worse yet, without paddles, he couldn't steer it.

Little by little, the board moved farther and farther away from the river bank, much too far for Mo to swim back. What should he do? He could bark for help but no one would hear him.

Mo peered over the board, trying to see how deep the water was but it was too dark to see the bottom.

He didn't remember a time when he was this frightened, this worried, or in this much danger.

Just then, he felt something grab him by the back of his neck, lift him off the board, fly high into air, and then place him near the river's edge.

"I close my eyes for just a minute and this is what you do?" shouted Finchy, who was huffing and puffing. Mo weighed fifty times more than Finchy. "What were you thinking?"

By now, Mo was dripping wet from head to paw. While his ears laid flat against his

head, his tail couldn't stop wagging. He wrapped his front paws around Finchy and gave him a giant hug.

"I've never been so happy to see anyone in my life," he said. "You may have saved my life."

"May have?" shouted Finchy, still angry with Mo. "I totally, absolutely, definitely saved your life. From now on, I don't want to hear any more complaints about the food I find for you, that I talk too much, that I . . .

Finchy kept talking and talking while they headed toward the delivery truck. Mo climbed up the ladder and stretched out on the roof. It felt firm. It felt solid. It felt safe.

Although Finchy drives me crazy at times, there are many wonderful things about him. I just never saw what was right in front of me.

