

The Eagle Who Came Down

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The afternoon was gray and soft and still. Big, slow snowflakes were drifting down over Wanderful Woods, so fat and so lazy that Mr. Monkey could catch one on each finger.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "Where are we going?"

"Up the hill," said Mr. Moose. "Just a little way. I want to see the top of Everest's cliff."

Mr. Monkey knew why. Ever since the day Everest Eagle had carried the two leaves with no names all the way up to the top, Mr. Moose kept looking up at that cliff. He looked at it at breakfast. He looked at it at lunch. It was his wish, the highest place in the whole woods.

So they climbed. Past the edge of Sunny Square. Past the last of the oaks. Up the long white hill toward Lookout Ledge, where the snow was deep and fresh and nobody had stepped in it yet.

It was the best snow they had ever seen.

Mr. Monkey flopped down on his back and swished his arms and legs and tail, and when he stood up, there was a perfect snow monkey in the snow, tail and all. Mr. Moose tried to make a snow moose, but he was so heavy that he just sank, *crumff*, and when he stood up, there was a big moose-shaped hole.

Then they slid. They slid down a little slope on their bottoms, *whoooosh*, and climbed back up and slid again, and the snow kept falling on Mr. Moose's antlers, and

falling, and falling, until there was a great big pile of snow balanced on top of them, taller than Mr. Monkey.

"Mr. Moose," said Mr. Monkey. "You're wearing a snow hat."

Mr. Moose looked up, very carefully, without moving his head. "Is it big?"

"It's the biggest hat in the whole woods."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose, and the snow hat wobbled, but it stayed.

Then the wind came.

It came all at once, cold and strong, and the slow, lazy snowflakes turned into fast, swirly ones. They blew sideways. They blew in circles. Soon, everywhere Mr. Moose looked, it was all white: white sky, white ground, white air in between. He couldn't see the hill. He couldn't see the trees. He turned around to look for the little gold light of the lantern in Sunny Square, the one that was always there.

It was gone. Everything was white.

"Mr. Monkey," said Mr. Moose. His voice was very quiet. "Which way is home?"

Mr. Monkey looked. He couldn't tell either. Their footprints were already filling up with snow.

Mr. Moose started to worry. What if they went the wrong way? What if they went down the wrong side of the hill? What if it got dark? His legs started to feel shaky,

the way they did when something was new and he didn't know what would happen.

Mr. Monkey could see it. He could see the worry all over Mr. Moose's face, and it made his own tummy hurt. He scooted in close, right up against Mr. Moose's leg, so Mr. Moose would know he was there.

"We're together," he said. "That's one thing."

Mr. Moose leaned down against him. That helped a little. And then he made himself think. Who could see the way home? Somebody who could see the whole woods at once. Somebody who lived up high.

"Everest," said Mr. Moose. "Everest can see everything. Maybe if we call him, he'll show us which way to go. He could drop a feather. Or call down. Or point."

So they called. "EVEREST!" shouted Mr. Monkey. Mr. Moose tried to shout too, but he was a soft-spoken moose, and it came out more like a very loud whisper. "Everest?"

The wind blew. The snow swirled.

Then, out of all that white, something enormous came down.

Everest Eagle didn't drop a feather. He didn't call down from the sky. He didn't point. He landed. Right there, in the deep snow, beside them, so close that the wind from his wings blew the whole snow hat off Mr. Moose's antlers, *floomph*, all at once, right on top of Mr. Monkey.

Mr. Monkey stood there, white from his ears to his toes, with just two eyes blinking out.

"Hee hee heel!" he went, and he shook himself like a wet dog, and the snow flew everywhere.

Everest looked at them both with his great golden eyes. Then he did something nobody in Wonderful Woods had ever seen him do. He folded his huge wings. And he walked.

He walked down the hill beside them, one big, slow step at a time, in the deep snow, where any eagle could have flown home in a minute. When the wind blew hardest, he opened one great wing and held it over them both, like a roof, and the snow hit the feathers instead of them. Underneath it was quiet and warm and dark brown, and it smelled like sky.

The feathers tickled Mr. Monkey's nose. He tried not to. He tried very hard. "Ah... ah... ah... CHOOMPF!"

Everest looked down at him under his wing. And for just a moment, one golden eye seemed to crinkle.

"Ha-ha-ha," whispered Mr. Moose. "Bless you."

Everest didn't hurry them. When Mr. Moose's long legs got stuck in a deep drift, Everest stopped and waited. When Mr. Monkey got tired, Everest bent his wing a little lower, so Mr. Monkey could hold on to a feather. Step by step. All the way down. He never once left them.

And then, through the swirling white, a little gold light appeared. Then another. Then all the leaf-shaped lights of

the squash lantern, flickering on the Wishing Tree. Sunny Square.

They were home.

Everest stepped out from over them and looked at them both, one more time. Then he opened his wings, and with three great beats, *whumm, whumm, whumm*, he rose up into the snow and was gone.

Mr. Moose stood in Sunny Square for a long time, looking up at where he went.

"He could have just pointed," he said.

"He could have dropped a feather," said Mr. Monkey.

"But he came himself," said Mr. Moose. "He came all the way down. And he walked."

Mr. Monkey thought about how it felt under that wing. Warm. Quiet. Not scared at all. A feather would have shown them the way. But it wouldn't have held the wind off.

"He was the present," said Mr. Monkey.

Then the wind stopped. The snow stopped. And the clouds slid away, and over Wonderful Woods came out more stars than Mr. Monkey had ever seen in his life. Thousands of them. Little white sparkles from one side of the sky to the other, bright and cold and perfectly still.

So that night, by the little green pine at the Moose home's door, Mama Moose brought out white paint.

"These are for the gifts nobody can hold," she said. "The ones that come from farther away than anybody can reach."

Mr. Moose painted a white circle. On the back, he painted the night sky full of stars, and underneath it, two little friends under a great big brown wing. He left the front empty, the same as the sunrise leaf and the spring leaf, because he didn't know whose name to paint.

Mr. Monkey painted one too: a whole sky of white snowflakes and stars, every one of them a little dot, and there were so many dots that it took him all the way until bedtime.

They hung them on the little pine with the painted side to the trunk. Now the tree had gold, and red, and white.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "I made a snow monkey, and Mr. Moose made a snow hole. Mr. Moose wore the biggest snow hat in the woods, and then it landed on me. We got lost in the white. And Everest didn't point. He came down and walked us home under his wing, and I sneezed on his feathers."

Mr. Monkey whistled, and Mr. Moose hummed, and together they sang:

*We are better together,
Moose and Monkey forever.*

And high on the top of the highest cliff, under all those stars, a great eagle settled down beside two small leaves in the snow.

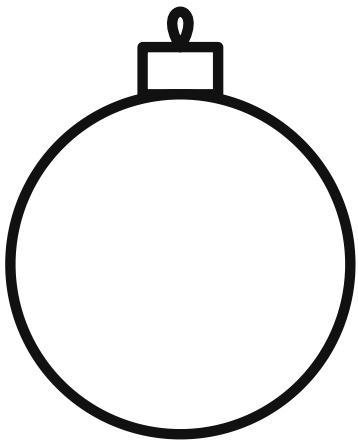
☁ Let's Talk

- 1 Everest lives in the highest place in the woods. Why did he come all the way down?
- 2 What good gift came to you that nobody could make? Snow? Stars? A brand-new day?

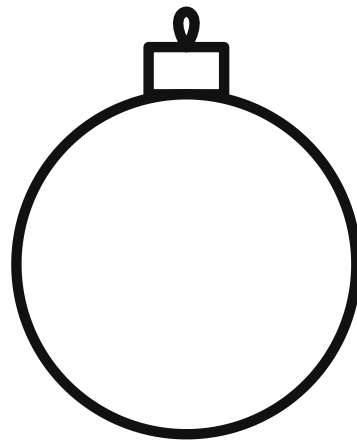
✎ Your Turn

Make a white ornament for a gift nobody made. Front: what it is. Back: draw it.

FRONT: WHAT IT IS



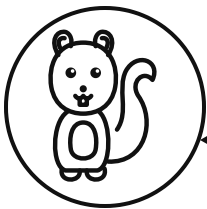
BACK: DRAW IT



This one stays white. When you are done, trace its edge with a gray crayon.

Make a real one: with a grown-up, hold plain paper over this page against a sunny window and trace both ornaments. Cut them out, glue them back to back, and hang it with your family's ornaments.

SAMMY'S JOKE

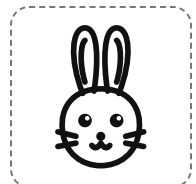


What is a bunny's favorite kind of music?

Unscramble the letters to finish the joke. The picture is a clue!



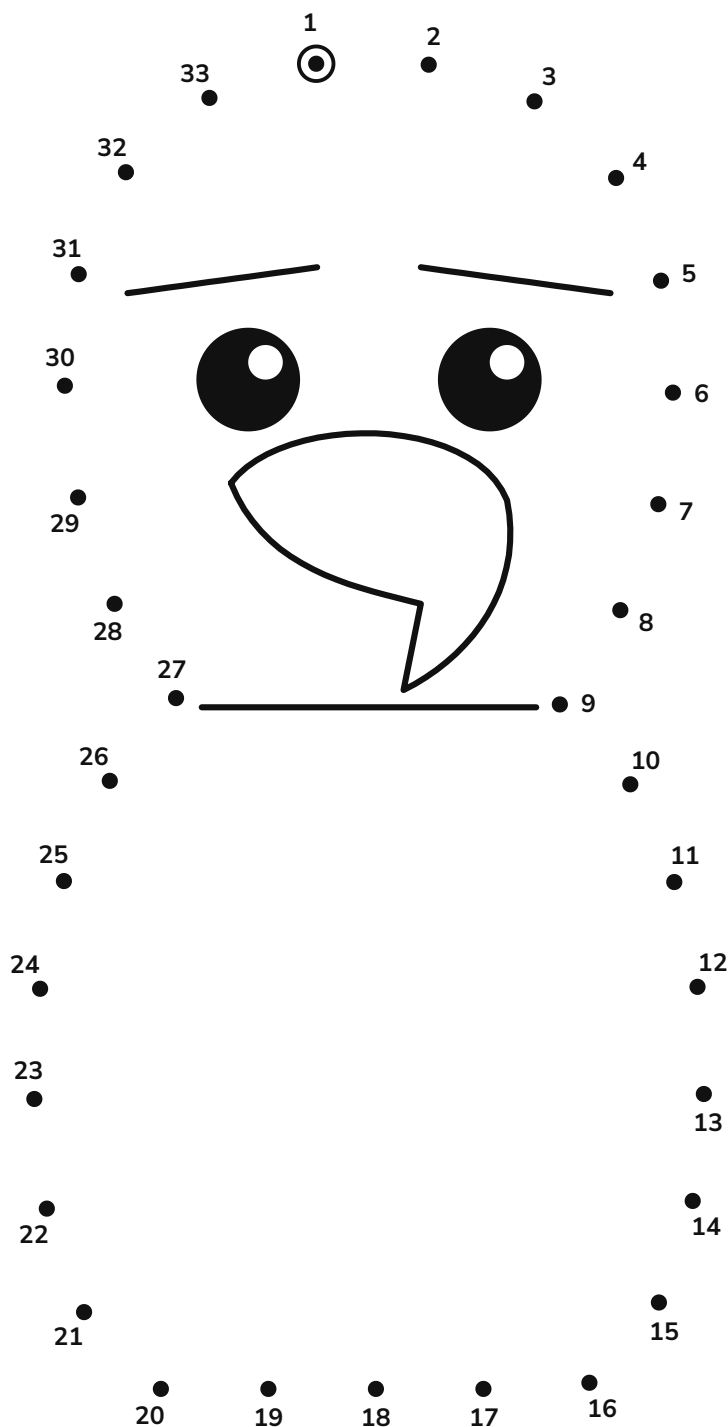
CLUE



____-hop!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find the friend who came all the way down. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 33. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY



Is Big

The wind is fast.  and  are lost!

 can not see.  can not see.

Flap!  lands.

 is big, big, big!

 and  get in next to . It is snug.

Step, step, step.  gets  and  to Mom and Dad.

PICTURE WORDS



Everest



Mr. Moose



Mr. Monkey



Color a star each time you read it.

For grown-ups: New words to learn by heart: are.

♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word, then the light words. What good gift did nobody make? Write it or draw it on the line.

Nobody made

It is a gift!

👁 Light Hunt

Light is a gift. Find things that give light. Check each one!



a lamp

☐

sun coming in a window

☐

a candle (just look!)

☐

something shiny

☐

the moon or a star outside

☐

a fire in a fireplace (just look!)

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