

The Best Sledding Day

 COLOR THE PICTURE



Overnight, the snow had frozen hard and smooth, and in the morning, the whole hill below Lookout Ledge shone like glass. When Mr. Monkey stepped on it, his feet went *skrrrrritch* and slid right out from under him.

"Mr. Moose," he said, sitting on his bottom. "It's PERFECT."

It was the best sledding snow of the year. Everybody knew it. And Daddy Monkey had built a brand-new sled out of an old piece of the bark slide from Fort Friendship, long and curved and smooth, with a vine to hold on to.

"Just one ride," said Mr. Monkey. "Before we help the birds."

He jumped on the sled, pushed off, and went *ZOOOOOOOM* down the hill, faster than anything, past the oaks, past the rocks, and straight into a big soft snowbank at the bottom. *FLOOMPF*.

The sled stuck out of the snowbank. So did Mr. Monkey's feet, kicking.

Mr. Moose pulled him out by the feet, and Mr. Monkey came out upside down, with snow in his ears and the biggest grin in the woods. "Hee hee hee! AGAIN!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose.

"Okay," said Mr. Monkey, shaking the snow off his ears. "We'll help the birds really fast. And then we'll sled ALL DAY."

So they went to Munching Meadow with one basket: Sammy's good acorns, and a bundle of Mama Moose's

dried berries, and a few seeds from Daddy Moose's cellar. That was all they had. Ricky came with his list. Bruno came because Mr. Moose was going. And Hazel, Dottie, Benji, Shiloh and Sammy came because everybody else was.

When they got to the meadow, they all stopped.

They had thought there would be a few birds. There were not a few birds. There were birds on every branch of every bush. Little brown birds, little gray birds, red ones and blue ones, all puffed up round against the cold. And under the bushes were rabbits, and mice, and a mama deer with two fawns, all pawing at the snow and finding nothing underneath but more snow.

The whole meadow was hungry.

Everybody turned and looked at the one little basket.

"Uh-oh," said Bruno.

Mr. Monkey looked at all the puffed-up birds. A tiny chickadee was sitting on a twig right in front of him, so round and fluffy it looked like a ball with a beak. It was looking at the basket.

He felt it in his chest, the way it always came. He wanted to go sledding. He really, really did. It was the best snow of the year. But these birds were cold, and they were hungry, and they had been looking for food under the snow all morning, and there wasn't any.

"Mr. Moose," he said quietly. "We can't feed all of them with one basket."

Mr. Moose was thinking. He looked at the meadow. Under all that snow were the berry bushes, still full of dried-up berries. The tall grass, still full of seeds. The clover, still green at the bottom. It was all there. It was just buried.

"The food is already here," said Mr. Moose slowly. "It's just under the snow. If we clear the snow off the bushes and the grass, everybody can find their own."

"The whole meadow?" said Ricky.

"The whole meadow."

Everybody looked at the meadow. It was very big. Then they looked back up at the shiny sledding hill. Nobody said anything for a while.

"It will take all day," said Mr. Moose.

Mr. Monkey looked at the hill. Then he looked at the little round chickadee. "Okay," he said. "All day."

Ricky held up his list. "Rule one!" he said. "Thanks first."

So before they did anything else, they said it. "Thank you, Sammy, for the acorns." "Thank you, Mama Moose, for the berries." "Thank you, Daddy Moose, for the seeds." Sammy's tail went all fluffy.

Then they set the basket down in the middle of the meadow, so the littlest birds could eat first.

Bruno shook the snow off the berry bushes, very gently, one bush at a time, *fwump, fwump, fwump*, until the dried red berries showed through. Hazel swept the snow off the grass with her long tail, back and forth, until the seed heads stuck up. Sammy zipped up every bush to knock the snow off the top branches. Dottie dug. Dottie dug so fast that snow flew out behind her in a great white fountain, and landed, *flumph*, all over Shiloh.

Shiloh stood there, a woolly white lump. "I'm a snowball," he said.

"Ha! Ha!" barked Dottie. "Sorry, Shiloh!" And she kept digging, in the other direction.

Mr. Moose pushed the snow with his nose, in long, slow lines, like a plow. And Mr. Monkey put the snow on the sled and dragged it away to the edge of the meadow, load after load after load.

The birds didn't wait. As soon as a bush was clear, they landed on it. As soon as the grass showed, the mice ran out. When Bruno sat down to rest for a minute, three chickadees landed on his head, two on his ears, one on his nose, and four in a row along his arm.

Bruno held very still. "I'm a bird tree," he whispered.

"Haw haw haw," he whispered, very quietly, so they wouldn't fly away.

Sammy zipped by overhead with snow on her tail. "Hey! What do you call a bird in the winter?" And she was gone, up another bush.

A minute later, from the far side of the meadow: "A BRRRRRD!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey, and the little chickadee on the twig fluffed up even bigger, like it had

heard.

They worked all morning. They worked all through lunch, which was a few of Sammy's acorns and a handful of berries. They worked all afternoon. Mr. Monkey's arms got tired. Mr. Moose's nose got cold. And every time they looked up, there was the shiny sledding hill, waiting.

But the meadow was full now. Full of birds, eating. Full of mice, nibbling. The mama deer and her two fawns were munching clover at the edge, where Mr. Moose had cleared a long green path just for them. And when they all finally stopped and looked around, there was so much food showing that the birds couldn't eat it all.

Ricky filled the empty basket with leftover berries and seeds. "For the old badger," he said. "For tomorrow night."

The sun was going down. Its long orange light came sideways across the meadow and turned the snow pink. Everybody was tired, and cold, and very, very happy.

Mr. Monkey looked up at the hill one more time. It was still shiny. There was just a little bit of light left.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "One ride?"

"One ride," said Mr. Moose. "All of us."

So they all climbed onto the sled together. Mr. Monkey in the front. Then Mr. Moose. Then Benji, Sammy, Shiloh, Dottie, Hazel, and Ricky, squeezed in tight. And last of all, right at the back, Bruno.

They pushed off. The sled went... very... slowly... because it had Bruno on it. Then it went a little faster. Then it went a LOT faster. Then it went *ZOOOOOOOOOM*, all the way down the hill, past the oaks, past the rocks, and straight into the big soft snowbank at the bottom, everybody, all at once. *KER-FLOOMPF*.

When the snow settled, there was nothing to see but a pile of tails and ears and hooves and paws, all sticking out every which way.

"AGAIN!" said the whole pile.

"What a day!" said Mr. Moose on the long walk home, with snow in his ears. "It was the best sledding snow, and Mr. Monkey went into the snowbank on the very first ride. Then we found the whole meadow was hungry. Dottie turned Shiloh into a snowball, and Bruno turned into a bird tree. We cleared the whole meadow, all day long. And then we all went down the hill together, even Bruno."

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

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

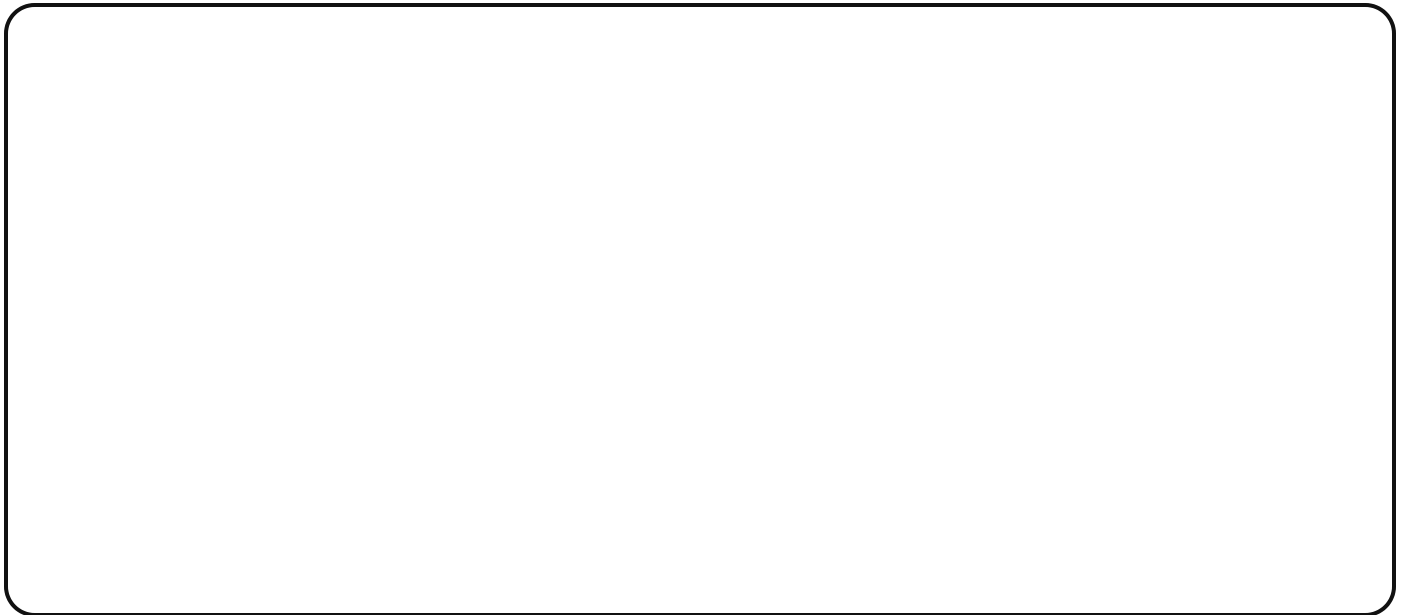
And in Munching Meadow, in the last pink light, a little round chickadee sat on a clear branch with a red berry in its beak, full at last.

Let's Talk

- 1 Mr. Monkey wanted to sled all day. What did he do with his day instead?
- 2 Who could use some of your time this week? What could you do together?

Your Turn

Give your time! Draw who you will spend time with and what you will do together.



I will give my time to _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE



What do you call a hippo at the North Pole?

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



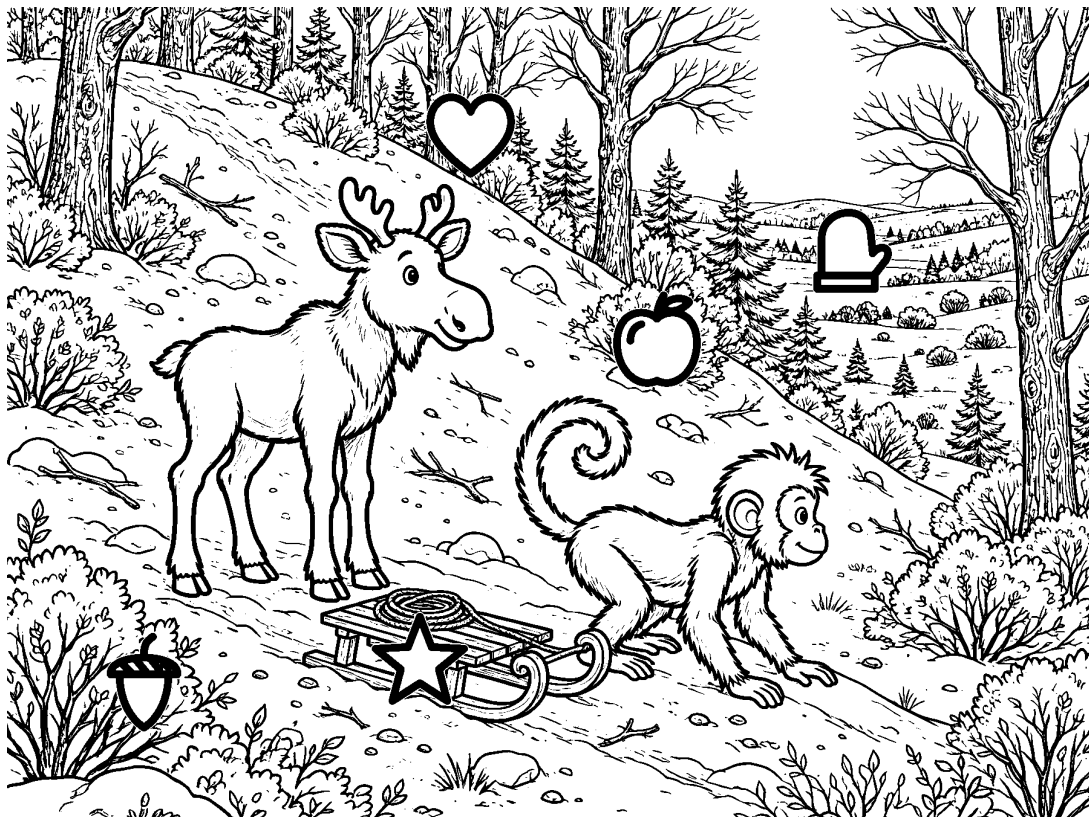
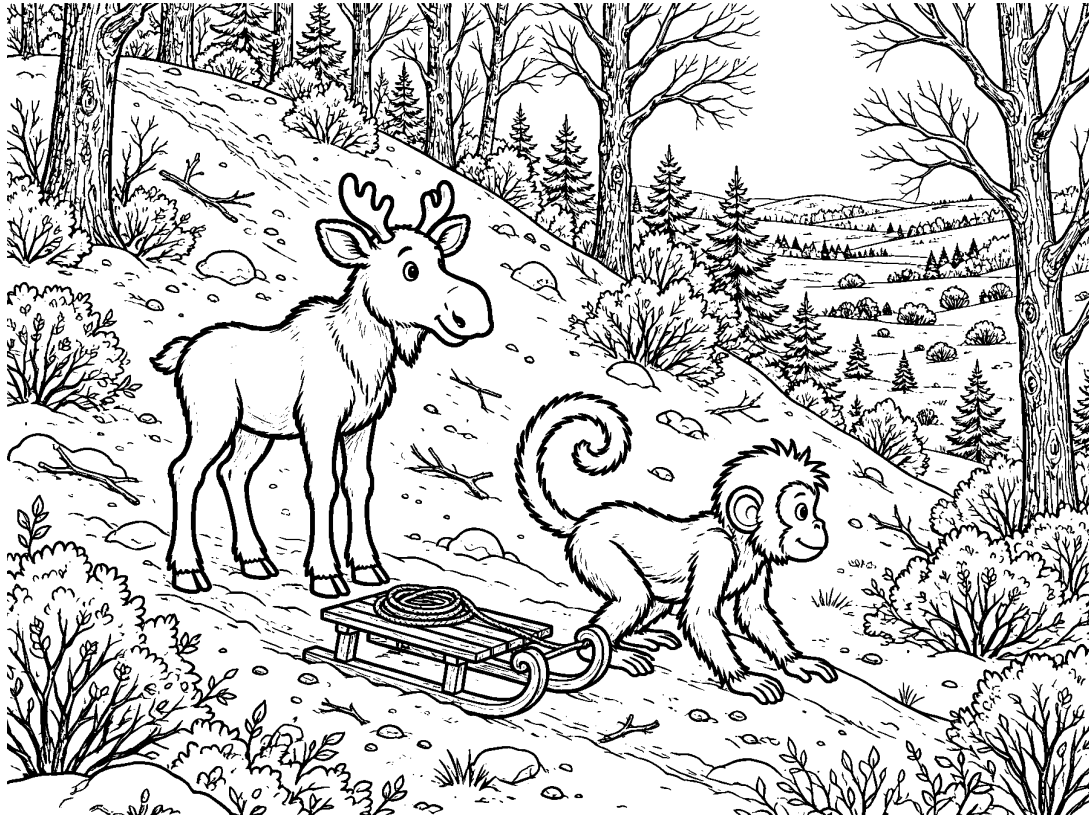
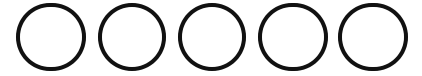
CLUE



____ !

👁 Spot the Difference

Look closely. Can you find 5 differences?



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

The Best Sled Run

 has a sled. Zip, zip, zip!

But a lot of pals can not get to the plants.

 digs.  digs.  digs and digs!

Up pop the plants. The pals get fed.

At last,  and the pals get on the sled.

Zip! Bump! It is the best sled run!

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Bruno  Hazel  Dottie

For grown-ups: New sounds: qu, v, and z.



Color a star each time you read it.

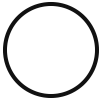
My Gift

Trace the dark word, then the light words. Who did you give your time to? Write their name on the line.

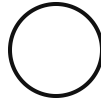
I gave my time to _____

What Happened First?

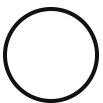
Write 1, 2, 3, 4 in the circles to put the story in order.



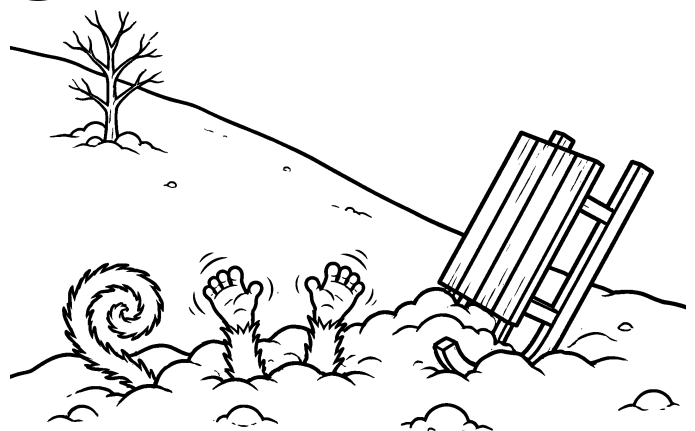
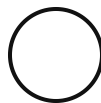
A



B



C



D