

Not a Secret

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The morning after the night of the doors, the whole woods was buzzing. The snow was sparkling, the icicles were dripping, *plip, plip, plip*, and everywhere Mr. Monkey went, somebody was talking about the presents.

"Somebody fixed my roof!" the old badger was telling everybody, standing in the middle of Sunny Square in his nightcap. "In the night! And they left me a BANANA! I've never had a banana! Who would do a thing like that?"

Mr. Monkey opened his mouth. "It was..."

Mr. Moose looked at him.

Mr. Monkey clapped both hands over his mouth.

"Mmmf," he said.

"Did you say something, young monkey?" asked the badger.

"Mmmf mmmf," said Mr. Monkey, through his fingers.

"Ha-ha-ha," laughed Mr. Moose, very quietly.

The badger shrugged and went off to tell the beavers, and Mr. Monkey took his hands off his mouth and let out a big breath. "That was close," he whispered. "It almost jumped right out."

Then he heard a sound he knew. *Tap-tap-tap. Tap-tap-tap.*

It was Daddy Monkey. He was up on Dottie's den, fixing the door, which Dottie had bounced right off its hinges again. When he was done with that, he went to

Fort Friendship to fix the bark slide where he'd cut a piece off for the sled. Then he went to Hazel's stable to fix the gate. Then he went to Benji's burrow to fix a loose root. *Tap-tap-tap. Tap-tap-tap.* All morning long.

While he worked, he told a joke. "Hey, everybody. What did one snowman say to the other snowman?"

Everybody waited.

"Do you smell carrots?"

Nobody laughed. Somewhere, an icicle dripped. Daddy Monkey looked very pleased, and went back to tapping.

Mr. Monkey followed him all morning. And then, at lunchtime, Daddy Monkey came home and swung up to the treehouse on his own old swinging vine.

It was so fuzzy. It was so frayed. It was so thin in the middle that it went *creak* when he grabbed it. It was the same old vine he'd wished to replace, way back when Ricky was signing everybody up for the Swap. His wish card was still hanging on the Wishing Tree: NEW VINE.

Mr. Monkey stopped at the bottom and looked up at it.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "Daddy fixes everybody's things. And he never fixes his own."

He felt it in his chest. Daddy Monkey had fixed Dottie's door, and Hazel's gate, and the slide, and all the moss in all the cracks, and the badger's roof in the middle of the night. He fixed everything. And nobody ever said anything to him at all.

"I'm going to fix his vine!" said Mr. Monkey.

He climbed up and grabbed the frayed part, and he started tying knots in it, to make it strong. One knot. Two knots. Ten knots. Twenty knots. When he was done, the vine had so many knots in it that it looked like a long, lumpy caterpillar.

Daddy Monkey came out to see. He looked at the knots. Then he grabbed the vine and swung.

Boing. Boing. Boing. Boing. He bounced over every single knot, all the way down, bumping and bobbing like he was riding over rocks. His cheeks wobbled. His tail flapped.

He landed at the bottom. "Well," he said. "That was bumpy."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Bumpy Daddy on a lumpy vine!"

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

Daddy Monkey laughed too, *hoo-hoo-hoo*, and patted Mr. Monkey on the head, and went off to fix the next thing.

Mr. Monkey looked at the lumpy vine. "That didn't fix it," he said.

Mr. Moose was thinking. He thought about all the things Daddy Monkey fixed. Doors. Gates. Roofs. They broke again. Dottie would bounce off her door again next week. Things wore out. But last month, Ricky had given Mr. Moose a thank-you leaf, and Mr. Moose still had it, on the shelf by his bed. He looked at it every night. It hadn't worn out at all.

"Mr. Monkey," he said slowly. "Everybody gives your daddy things to fix. But has anybody ever told him what they see in him?"

Mr. Monkey thought. "No," he said. "Nobody ever did."

"Then that's what we give him," said Mr. Moose.

"Words. And we write them down, so he can keep them."

"And this one," said Mr. Monkey, "is NOT a secret!"

They went all around Wonderful Woods to everybody Daddy Monkey had ever fixed anything for, and asked them each one thing: "What do you see in Daddy Monkey?"

And Ricky, who had the best writing paws in the woods, carried a big piece of birch bark and wrote down every answer.

"He fixed my roof in the rain," said Dottie. "And he never once said I bounced too much. Even though I did."

"He showed me how to tie my knot," said Ricky, writing it down himself. "The one that never slips."

Bruno thought for a long time. "He has the biggest tools," he said, "and the gentlest hands."

Hazel said, "He fixes my gate every single time, and he always laughs."

Shiloh said, "He fixed the meadow fence, so I never get lost anymore."

Benji whispered his into Mr. Moose's ear, and Mr. Moose said it out loud: "He fixed my root so softly that I didn't even wake up."

Mama Monkey said, "I see a monkey who makes everybody else's house warm before his own."

Mr. Moose said, "I see somebody who makes everything in the woods work. And nobody even sees him do it."

And Mr. Monkey went last. He thought very hard about getting it exactly right. "I see that you fix everybody's things," he said, "and you never fix your own. And it makes me want to be just like you."

Ricky wrote it all down. Then everybody signed the bottom, with a paw print or a hoof print or a tail print, in berry paint. Even the old badger, who didn't know what it was for, but liked signing things. Bruno signed last, very carefully, with just the tip of one claw, so all he made was the tiniest purple dot.

"That's me," he said proudly. "I was being gentle."

They found Daddy Monkey at the bottom of the Wishing Tree, packing up his tools.

"Daddy," said Mr. Monkey. "This is for you. It's from everybody. And it's not a secret."

Daddy Monkey took the bark. He started to read. Then he stopped reading and sat down, right there in the snow. He read it again, slowly, all the way to the bottom, past every paw print and hoof print, and when he got to the very last line, the one from Mr. Monkey, he put his hand over his face.

Nobody said anything. Mr. Monkey came and sat right next to him, close, so their tails touched.

"Nobody ever told me any of that," said Daddy Monkey at last, very quietly.

"We all did," said Mr. Monkey. "Just now."

Daddy Monkey rolled the bark up carefully, very carefully, and put it in the bottom of his tool bag, under all his tools, where it would be safe. Then he put his arm around Mr. Monkey and held on.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey as the sun went down. "I almost told the badger the secret, but I held it in my mouth. Daddy told the snowman joke and nobody laughed. I tied twenty knots in Daddy's vine, and he went boing-boing-boing all the way down. Then everybody told Daddy what they see in him, and Ricky wrote it all down. And Daddy sat in the snow and read it two times."

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

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

And that night, up in the treehouse, Daddy Monkey's tool bag sat by the door, with a rolled-up piece of birch bark tucked safe at the very bottom.

Let's Talk

- 1 The friends wrote down the good things they see in Daddy Monkey. Why do you think he read the letter twice?
- 2 Think of someone. What good thing is true about them? Kind? Brave? Funny?

Your Turn

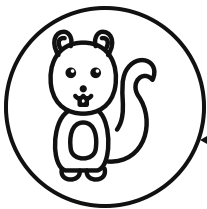
Write or draw a note. A grown-up can help you write.

Dear _____ ,

You are so _____. It makes me glad because _____.

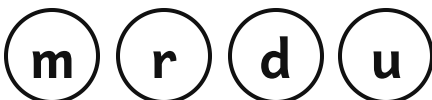
Love, _____

SAMMY'S JOKE



Why did the turkey join the band?

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



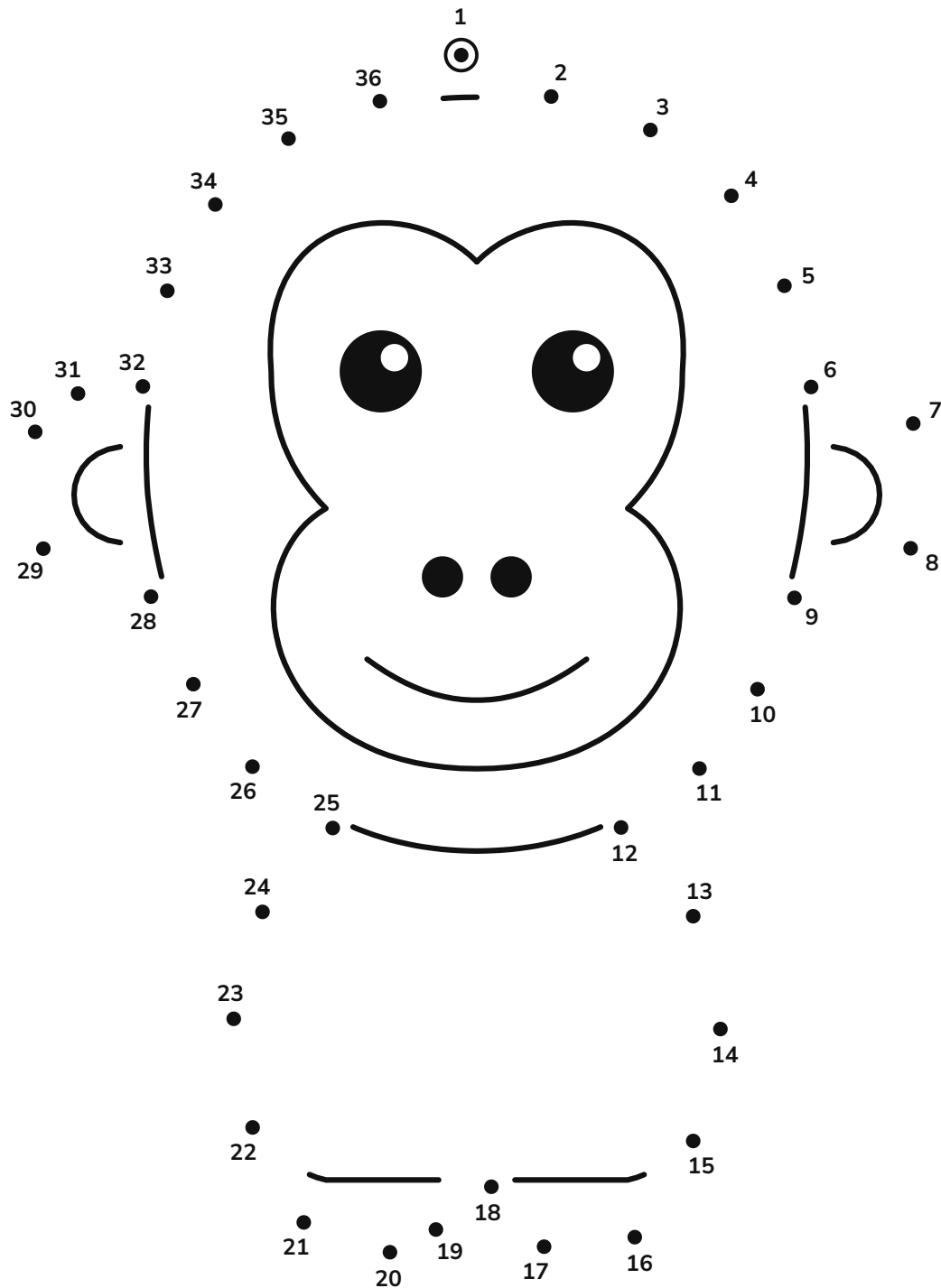
CLUE



It had _____ sticks!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find the friend whose daddy can fix anything. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 36. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Dad Can Fix It

's Dad can fix a lot.

He can fix a box. He can fix a pot. He can fix a big tent!

 and the pals have a plan. The pals jot a list.

It is a list of the best bits of Dad.

Dad gets the list. He grins and grins!

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey

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



Color a star each time you read it.

My Gift

Trace the dark word, then the light words. What good thing is true about someone? Write a word like kind, brave or funny on the line. Then tell them!

You are so _____

☆ Movie Bingo: A Christmas Carol

Watch it with a grown-up. Color a square the first time you see each thing. Three in a row is Bingo!

 snow	 a fire	 a candle
 a clock	 Free!	 a hat
 money	 a door	 bells

For grown-ups: watch the last scene of any version, from Christmas morning on. For little ones, The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) is rated G, though its ghosts can still scare some kids.



WEEK DONE!

Turn back to this week's map. Color any stones you missed.



Ladybugs I found in this week's storybook pictures: _____