

Yes Before How

 COLOR THE PICTURE



In the night, a cold fog had crept through Wonderful Woods. It touched every branch and every rock and every blade of grass, and wherever it touched, it froze. So in the morning, when the sun came up, the whole woods was covered in tiny white feathers of frost, and everything sparkled.

The friends climbed the littlest trail again, past Mama Hedgehog's snow lantern, past the bear-sandwich rocks, all the way up to the flat rock where they had stopped the day before.

And there they stopped again.

Above the flat rock, the littlest trail ended. In front of them was a wall of gray rock, straight up, taller than the Wishing Tree. No trail. No path. Just rock.

"Oh," said Mr. Moose quietly.

Then the sun came around the side of the hill and shone right on the wall.

And the frost lit up.

All across the gray rock, the sun made the frost sparkle, and where it sparkled, you could see them: little ledges. Tiny flat places in the rock, one above another, zigging and zagging all the way up the wall. Yesterday they had been gray, just like the rest of the rock, and nobody could see them. This morning, every one of them was outlined in shining white, like somebody had drawn a staircase.

"Stairs," whispered Mr. Monkey.

Mr. Moose looked at the ledges, very carefully, all the way up. They were small. They were steep. A moose could never jump up there. But at the very top of the wall stood a little pine tree.

"If somebody climbed up first," he said slowly, "and tied Bruno's rope to that tree, then everybody else could hold on to the rope and come up after."

Everybody looked at Mr. Monkey.

Mr. Monkey looked at the wall. It was very high. It was very icy. He had never climbed anything like it in his life.

"Yes," said Mr. Monkey.

"But how?" asked Mr. Moose. "It's slippery, and it's high, and you've never..."

"I don't know how yet," said Mr. Monkey. "But yes."

Ricky stepped forward with his bark. "Wait. We need a plan. What if the ledges are too slippery? What if the rope is too short? What if the tree is too little? What if a bird lands on your head? What if it SNOWS? What if a fish falls out of the sky?"

"Why would a fish fall out of the sky?" asked Bruno.

"I don't KNOW," said Ricky. "That's why it's on the list." The list was getting very long. It was hanging all the way down to his feet.

"Haw haw haw," went Bruno. "A sky fish."

Sammy zipped right up the wall and back down again, because Sammy could zip up anything. “Hey, Mr. Monkey! What do you call a snowman in the summer?” And she zipped away before he could answer.

Mr. Monkey didn’t wait for Ricky to finish the list. He didn’t wait for the punchline either. He tied the end of Bruno’s rope around his middle, and he went. Fast. As if he might change his mind if he stood still too long.

The first ledge was easy. The second one was a little harder. On the third one, his foot slipped on the frost, and both his feet came off the rock at once. But his tail was already wrapped around a little root sticking out of the wall. And there he hung, upside down, swinging gently back and forth.

“I’m okay!” he called. “I’m upside down, but I’m okay!”

“Hee hee hee!” he added, because the whole world looked funny upside down.

“Ha-ha-ha,” laughed Mr. Moose, but his heart was going fast.

Mr. Monkey flipped right side up and kept climbing. Fourth ledge. Fifth ledge. He didn’t know where the sixth one was until he got to the fifth. He didn’t know where the seventh one was until he got to the sixth. He couldn’t see the whole way. He could only see the next sparkly step. So he took it.

And then he was at the top.

He grabbed the little pine tree with both hands. He looked down. Everybody was very small.

“Now what?” he called.

“Tie the rope to the tree!” Ricky called up. “My knot! Over, under, around, and through!”

“Over... under... around... and through!” Mr. Monkey tied it. He pulled. It held. It was Ricky’s knot, the one that never slips.

One by one, everybody came up the wall, holding on to the rope, stepping on the sparkly ledges. Ricky came first, still holding his list in his teeth. Then Hazel. Then Mr. Moose, very slowly, his long legs finding one ledge at a time, Mr. Monkey calling down, “Left hoof! Now the right one! Now the big step!”

Bruno came last. He pulled himself up the rope, paw over paw, huffing and puffing, and at the very top he sat down on a ledge that was much too small for him. Only half of Bruno fit. The other half hung out over the air.

“I’m half on,” said Bruno.

“Haw haw haw,” he laughed, and Mr. Monkey and Mr. Moose grabbed his paws and pulled him the rest of the way up.

They were higher now than they had ever been. They could see past Lookout Ledge, past Resting Ravine, all the way to the far edges of the woods. And the top of

Everest’s cliff was closer than it had ever been. Still far. Still high. But closer.

They sat by the little pine and ate their snacks and looked.

And while they sat there, the sun got warmer. And the frost began to melt. One by one, the sparkly white ledges on the wall below them turned back to plain gray rock, until you couldn’t see the staircase at all.

Mr. Moose looked down at the wall. “The stairs are gone,” he said.

“If we’d waited,” said Ricky slowly, looking at his very long list, “they would have melted before we went.”

Mr. Monkey looked at the gray wall, too. He hadn’t known how. He’d only known the next step. If he had waited until he was sure, there wouldn’t have been any steps at all.

From way down below came Sammy’s voice: “A PUDDLE!”

“Hee hee hee!” went Mr. Monkey. “The snowman in the summer is a puddle!”

“Ha-ha-ha-ha!” came Sammy’s laugh from somewhere far below, because she had heard him, for once.

They went home the long way, around the back of the hill, where the walking was easy. The rope stayed tied to the little pine at the top of the wall, waiting for next time.

That night, by the little green pine, Mama Moose brought out the white paint.

Mr. Moose painted a white circle. He left the front empty, like the sunrise leaf and the spring leaf, because nobody had made the fog, and nobody had made the frost, and nobody had told the sun to shine on that wall at just that moment. On the back, he painted a gray wall with a sparkly white staircase going up it, and a tiny monkey at the very top, holding on to a tree.

“What a day!” said Mr. Monkey. “The frost made stairs up the wall. Ricky made a list, and it had a sky fish on it. I said yes before I knew how, and I hung upside down by my tail. Bruno was half on a ledge. The stairs melted. And a snowman in the summer is a puddle.”

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

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

And high on the hill, Bruno’s rope hung from the little pine in the moonlight, swaying gently down the gray wall, ready for whoever came next.

Let's Talk

- 1 Mr. Monkey said yes before he knew how. What would have happened if they had waited?
- 2 What did you see this week that nobody made? Frost? A sunny day? A starry night?

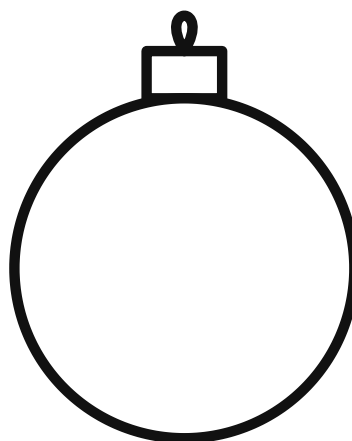
Your Turn

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

FRONT: WHAT IT IS



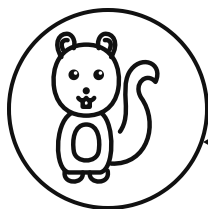
BACK: DRAW IT



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 did the mountain say to the little hill?

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



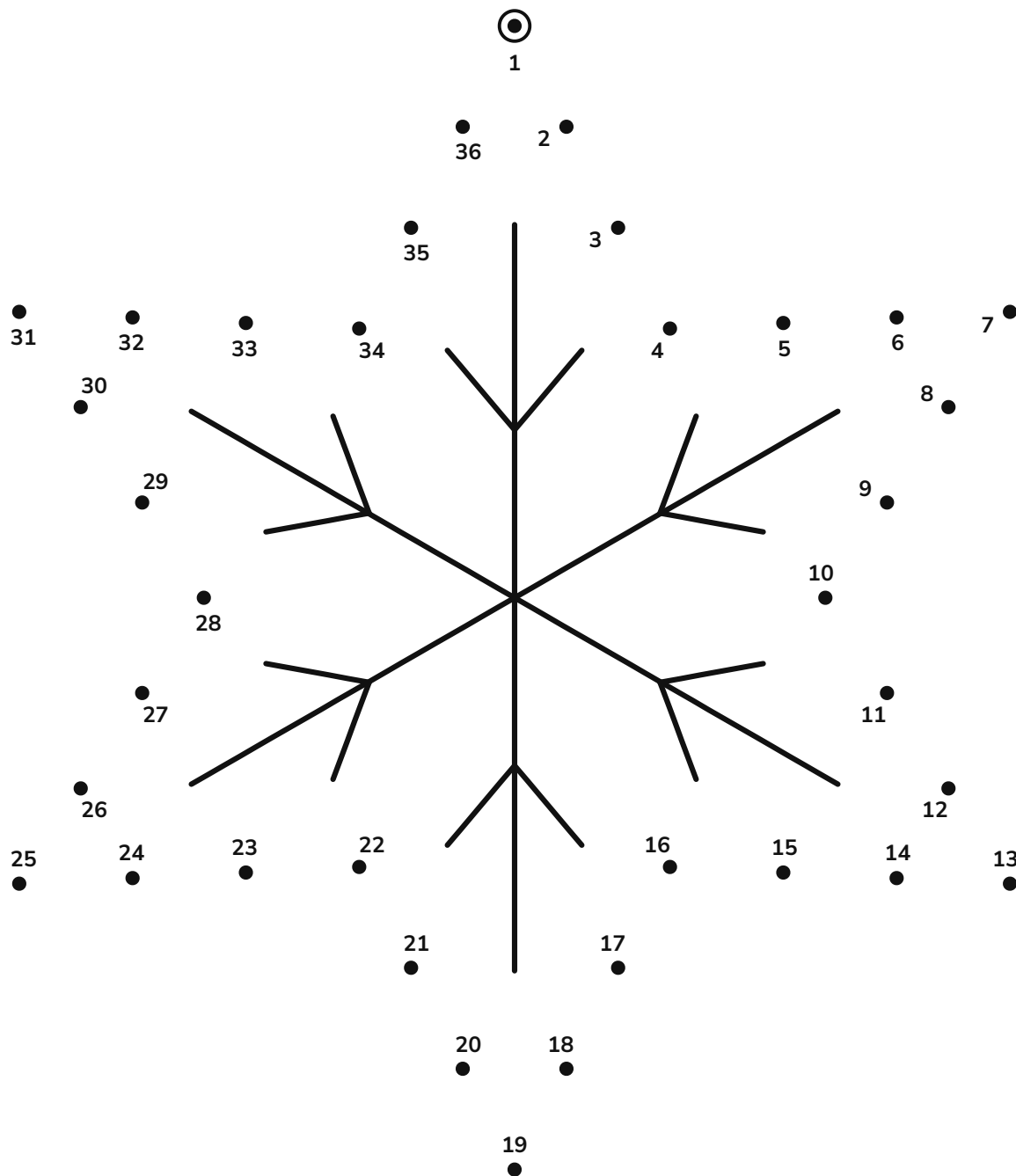
CLUE



____ -o there!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to make a snowflake. Frost is made of tiny ice shapes like this! 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

Yes!

Frost is on the cliff. The frost has steps!

“Can you get up?” said .“Yes!” said .“But it is big! Will you slip?” said .Step, step, slip!  grabs a twig.Step, step, step.  is at the top!

The sun gets hot, and the frost steps melt.

PICTURE WORDS



Mr. Moose



Mr. Monkey



Ricky



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

Color a star each time you read it.

♥ 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.

👁 Winter I Spy

Find and count each one. Write how many in the box.

