

# The Tail Train



COLOR THE PICTURE



**T**he sky over Sunny Square was turning from blue to purple, and the first stars were coming out one at a time, as if somebody was lighting them. The snow had a hard, crunchy crust on top, and every step went *krrunch, krrunch*.

Everybody gathered by the fire. The first light stood on its flat stone, burning steady in a fresh candle Mama Moose had lit from the old one that morning. Next to it stood a brand-new candle, not lit yet.

"Last week," said Mama Monkey, "we lit the first light. Tonight, the second one comes from the first. This one's for the light that keeps us walking."

Mr. Monkey took a twig and held it to the first candle until it caught. Then he carried the tiny flame over to the new one, very slowly, both hands around it.

He touched it to the wick. It caught. Now two candles burned side by side, the new one and the old one, with the squash lantern glowing on the Wishing Tree behind them.

"Now," said Mama Monkey, "the gold circles."

Everybody went to the little green pine and found the gold circles with their own faces. Daddy Moose turned his over and found the little hill, and the little moose with the sack on his back, and the big moose walking right beside him. He looked at it for a long time. Then he put it carefully inside his coat, right next to his heart.

Mama Monkey found the one about swimming. She laughed out loud, a big happy laugh, and hugged Mr. Monkey so hard his feet came off the ground.

And Mr. Monkey found one he didn't expect. It had his face on the front. He turned it over. On the back, somebody had painted a gray wall with a white staircase on it, and a tiny monkey at the very top, hanging on to a pine tree.

"From me," said Mama Monkey. "For saying yes."

Mr. Monkey looked at it so long that the candles flickered twice.

Over on the little pine, one red circle was missing: the one with Mama Hedgehog's tiny nose on the front.

Nobody had seen her come. Nobody had seen her go.

Then Mr. Moose said, "Can we go look at the lights?"

"What lights?" asked Bruno.

"All of them," said Mr. Moose. "From up high."

So everybody bundled up, and they set out for Lookout Ledge, not up the littlest trail, but around the back way, where the walking was easy, even in the dark.

The path was dark under the trees. Very dark. Mr. Monkey went first, because he could see best. Mr. Moose came right behind him and held on to the end of Mr. Monkey's tail with his mouth, very gently, so he wouldn't get lost. Then Hazel held on to Mr. Moose's tail, which was very short, so it was hard. Then Dottie held on to Hazel's tail. Then Benji, then Ricky, then Shiloh. And

Bruno came last, holding on to Shiloh's tail, which was mostly wool.

"All aboard!" called Mr. Monkey from the front. "It's the Tail Train!"

"Choo choo!" said Dottie, through Hazel's tail.

They went *krrunch, krrunch, krrunch* up the dark path, all in a long wiggly line. When Mr. Monkey went left, everybody went left. When Mr. Monkey went right, everybody went right. When Mr. Monkey hopped over a log, everybody hopped over the log, one after another, *hop, hop, hop, hop, hop, hop, hop, hop*, and Bruno hopped last, *THUMP*.

Then Hazel sneezed. "*AH-CHOO!*"

Every single animal on the Tail Train jumped at the same time.

"Hee hee hee... *SNORT!*" went Hazel.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "The Tail Train jumped!"

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno from the very back. "I jumped AND I'm still holding on!"

Then, halfway up, Dottie smelled something. A wonderful something, off to the side of the path. She let go of Hazel's tail to sniff it. And the front half of the Tail Train kept going up the hill, while the back half, Dottie, Benji, Ricky, Shiloh and Bruno, followed Dottie's nose right into a big snowy bush. *FLUMPF*.

"The train broke!" called Ricky from inside the bush.

"Ha! Ha!" barked Dottie, with snow on her nose. "Sorry! It smelled like cocoa!"

So Mr. Monkey came back down, and everybody grabbed a tail again, and the Tail Train was all in one piece.

And then the trees opened up, and they came out on top of Lookout Ledge, and they all let go of each other's tails and stood very still.

Down below them was Wonderful Woods, in the dark.

And it was full of lights.

There was the Moose home, its window glowing gold under the big maple. There was the squash lantern on the Wishing Tree, and the two candles by the fire in Sunny Square, tiny as fireflies from up here. But there were more. Over by the hollow oak, a little light in the mouse family's window. By the beavers' lodge, another one. On the old crow's branch by the river, one more, swinging gently. At the old badger's den, a light by his mended roof. And way down at the foot of the ledge, by the big gray rock, Mama Hedgehog's snow lantern, still glowing at the bottom of the littlest trail.

And there were even more than that. Lights nobody had left. Lights in windows they had never been to. Somebody had seen a little light by their neighbor's door, and they'd lit one too. And then their neighbor had. All over the woods.

"Look how many," whispered Benji.

Shiloh tried to count them. "One, two, three, four... eleven... twenty..." He stopped. "They keep coming," he said softly. Every time he counted one, he found another behind it.

"We only left five," said Ricky, counting. "There are... a whole bunch."

Mr. Monkey felt it bubble up inside him, warm and big. Every one of those little lights had started with the Feast fire. The Feast fire went into the squash lantern. The squash lantern went into the Moose home, and into the snow lanterns, and into the candles. And now it was everywhere, going from door to door, all by itself.

Then Mr. Moose looked up.

Above them, past the dark trees, rose the great gray shape of Everest's cliff. It was the highest place in the whole woods. And it was the only place that was completely dark.

Not one light. Not even one.

Everybody looked up at it.

"That's the only dark one left," said Mr. Monkey softly.

Mr. Moose didn't say anything for a long time. He was thinking. About the little hill behind the maple. About the littlest trail. About the frost staircase and the rope tied to the little pine. They had climbed so far. But it was still so far to go.

"That's where it needs to go," he said at last. "The lantern. All the way to the top."

"Tomorrow?" asked Mr. Monkey.

Mr. Moose looked at the cliff. Then he looked at his friends, and at all the little lights below. "Tomorrow," he said.

They rode the Tail Train back down the dark path, slower this time, because everybody was tired and happy. Back in Sunny Square, Mama Monkey had hot acorn cocoa waiting, and they drank it by the two candles, and nobody talked very much, because nobody needed to. Bruno drank his in one gulp and had a cocoa mustache all the way home.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "I lit the second candle from the first one. Mama painted me saying yes. We rode the Tail Train up Lookout Ledge, and Hazel sneezed, and the whole train jumped. We saw lights all over the woods, even ones we didn't leave. And Everest's cliff is the only dark place left."

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

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

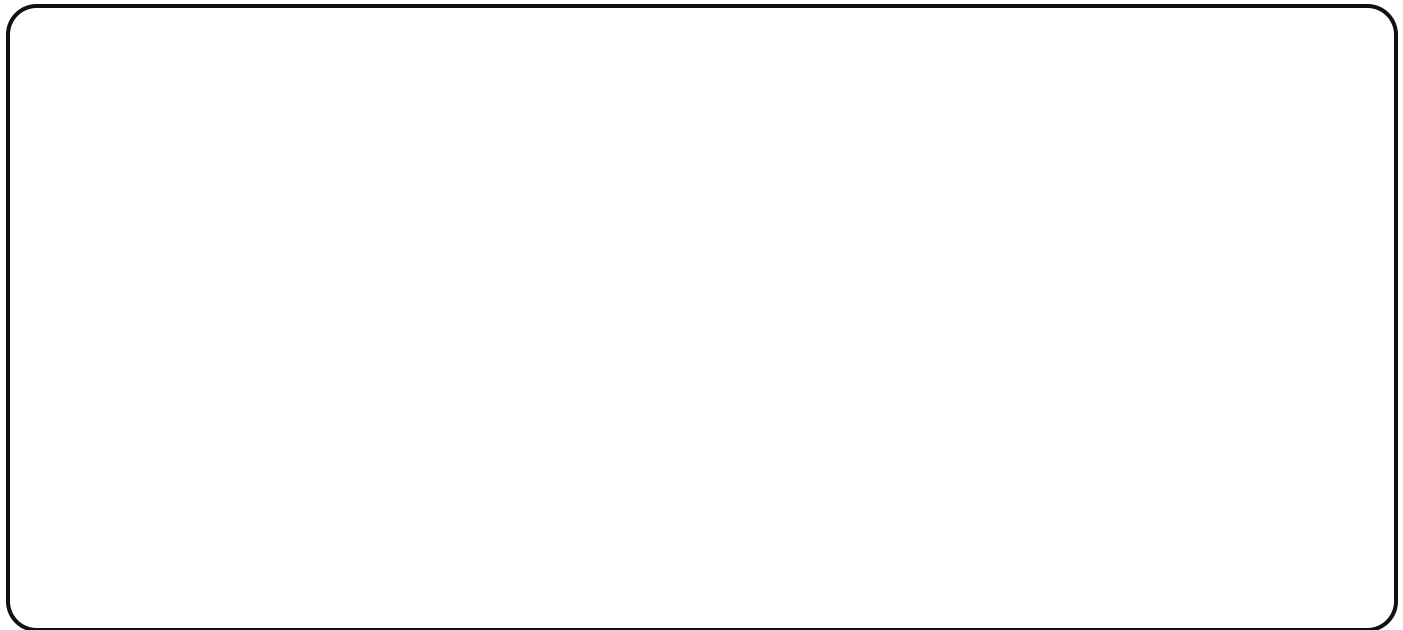
And all over Wonderful Woods, little lights glowed in little windows, while high above them all, the dark cliff waited under the stars.

 **Let's Talk**

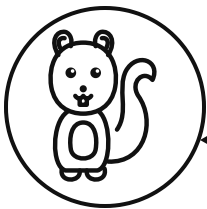
- 1 From the top of Lookout Ledge, the friends saw lights everywhere. Where did all those lights come from?
- 2 Tonight we light the second candle. What is something you hope for?

 **Your Turn**

Get ready to give hope! Draw someone you could help keep going this week.



I can help \_\_\_\_\_ keep going.

**SAMMY'S JOKE**

What do cows make on a hot day?

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

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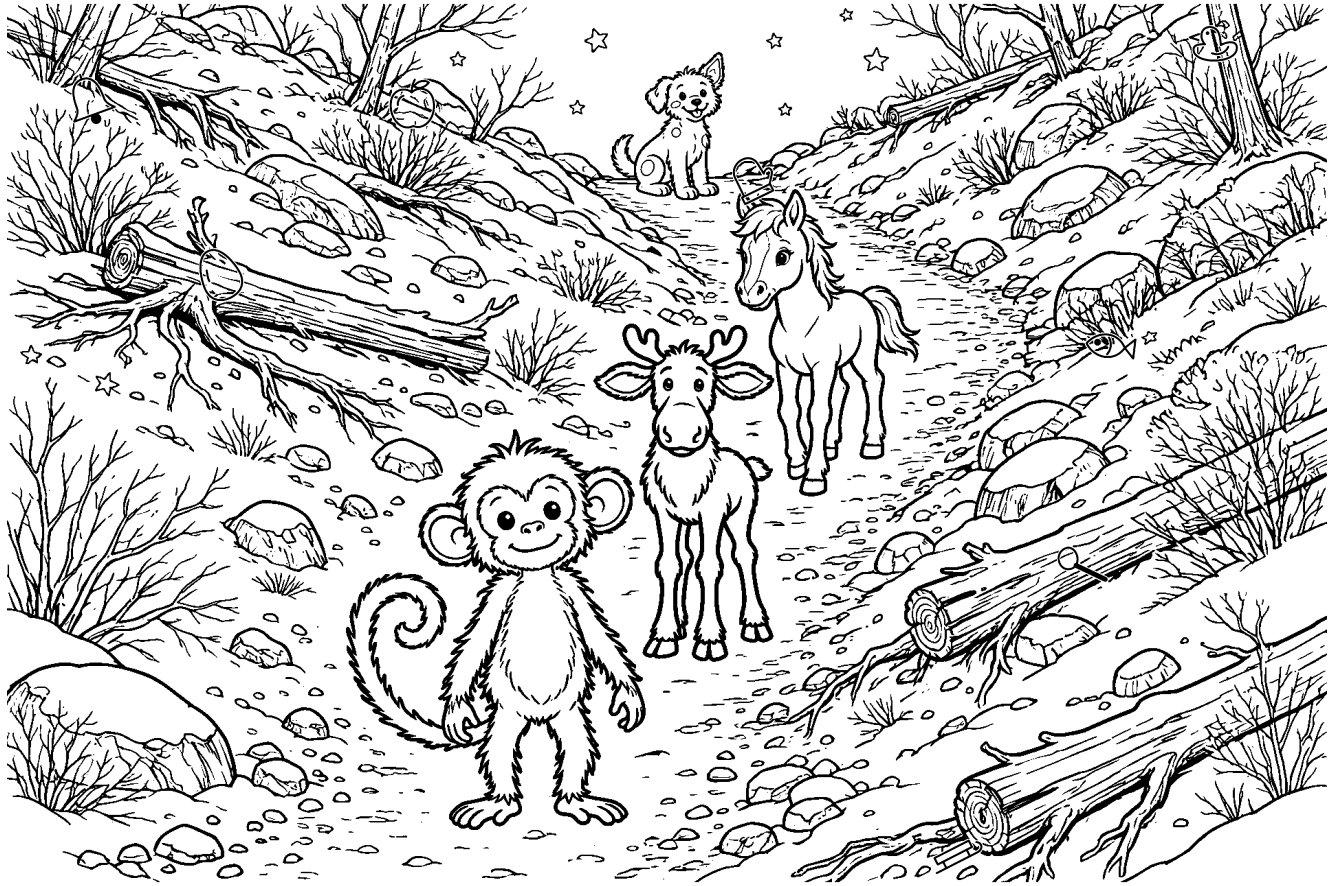
CLUE



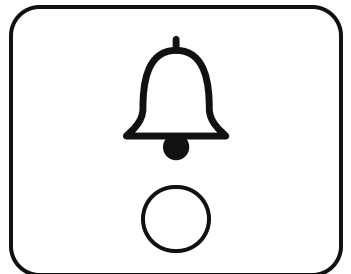
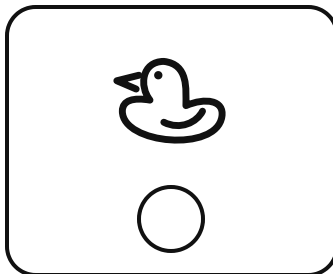
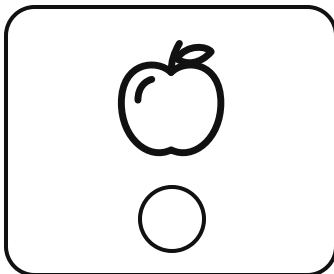
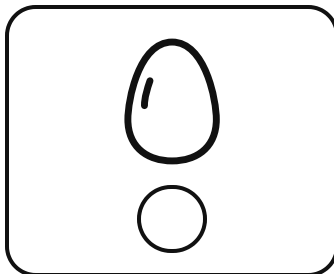
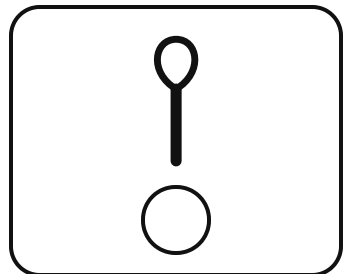
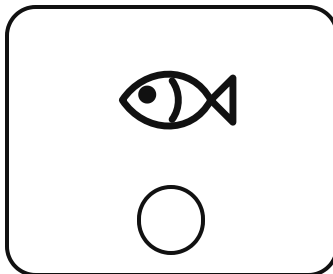
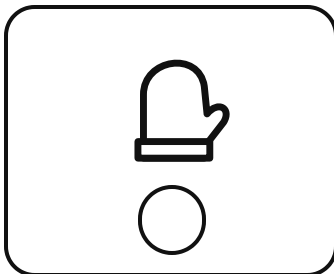
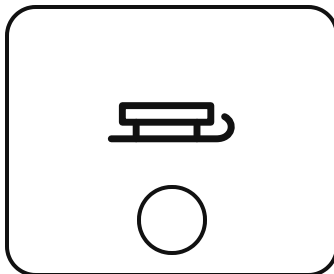
\_\_\_\_\_ shakes!

## 👁 Hidden Pictures

Find each hidden thing in the picture. Color it, then color its circle!



CAN YOU FIND THESE?



 **Read With Me**

DRAW THE STORY

**Hop On!** grips .  grips .  grips .

Up the hill went the pals. Hop, hop, hop!

 sniffs. “Ah... ah... AH!”

The pals jump! Ha!

At the top, the pals look.

Lamps! Lots and lots of lamps!

But the big cliff is dim.

PICTURE WORDS



Mr. Moose



Mr. Monkey



Hazel



Dottie



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

Color a star each time you read it.

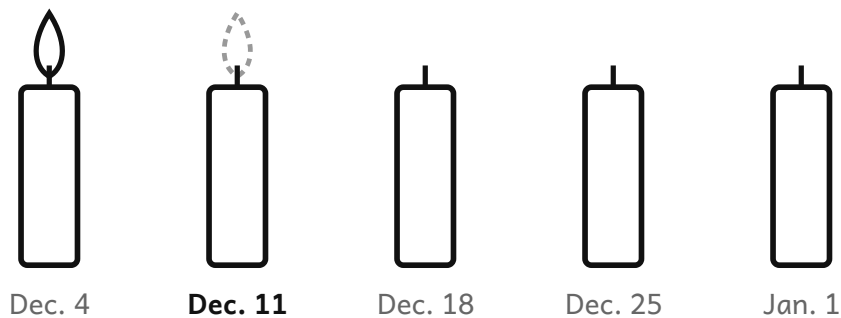
## ♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word, then the light words. Write their name on the line, or draw a tiny face. Read it to them!

Thank you.  
for helping me keep going.

## 🕯 Tonight's Candle

Tonight the second candle gets its light from the first one. One little light can light another!



Trace the flame on candle 2! Candle 1 is already lit.

**THE CANDLE WORDS: A GROWN-UP SAYS EACH LINE, AND YOU SAY IT BACK**

**Grace comes in.**

(cup your hands)

**Gratitude sees it.**

(point to your eyes)

**And graciousness passes it on.**

(open your hands to the candle)

Grown-up: "What do we pass on?" You: **Generosity and hope!**

**One light. Passed along.**

**DRAW YOUR FAMILY WITH YOUR CANDLES**

# ★ Celebration Night

Tonight your family celebrates. It has three parts:

**1**

**Remember:** The second candle

**2**

**Rejoice:** The Opening

**3**

**Ready:** Plan the giving

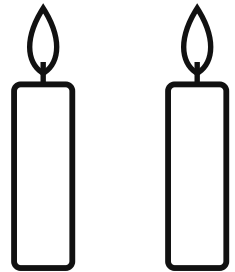


## Remember: One Light Lights Another

This week is about hope. Hope means wanting something good and walking toward it, even when you don't know how it will turn out.

Tonight, turn off the lights. (Ask if you can be the one to do it!) Watch a grown-up light the second candle from the first one. Then look around. What can you see by just two little candles?

DRAW WHAT YOU CAN SEE BY TWO CANDLES



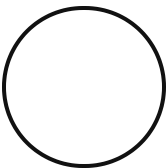
## Rejoice: The Opening

Your family reads the gold ornaments by candlelight. Find the ones with **your** name on the front. A grown-up can read them with you.

I found  gold ornaments with my name!

Write the number, or draw a dot for each one.

My favorite one is from:  
(Draw their face or write their name.)



WHAT DID IT SAY? DRAW OR WRITE IT.

 **Ready: Plan the Giving**

The next three days are for giving: your time, your things, and your words. Plan them with your family. Draw or write your ideas in the boxes.



**DEC. 12  
Your time**

Who is waiting for something hard, like getting well? Spend time with them.



**DEC. 13  
Your things**

What could you give to help someone’s hope?



**DEC. 14  
Your words**

Who will you cheer on with your words?

**EXTRA, IF YOUR FAMILY DOES IT**

**Lights Drive Bingo**

After the Plan, bundle up and go look at Christmas lights! When you see something in a square, color that square. Three in a row is Bingo!

|                                                                                                   |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>a star     | <br>a snowman       | <br>a tree with lights |
| <br>a candle   | <br>a lit-up window | <br>a giant present    |
| <br>a reindeer | <br>a bell          | <br>a snowflake        |

Pick your favorite house. Tell your family what you like about it!