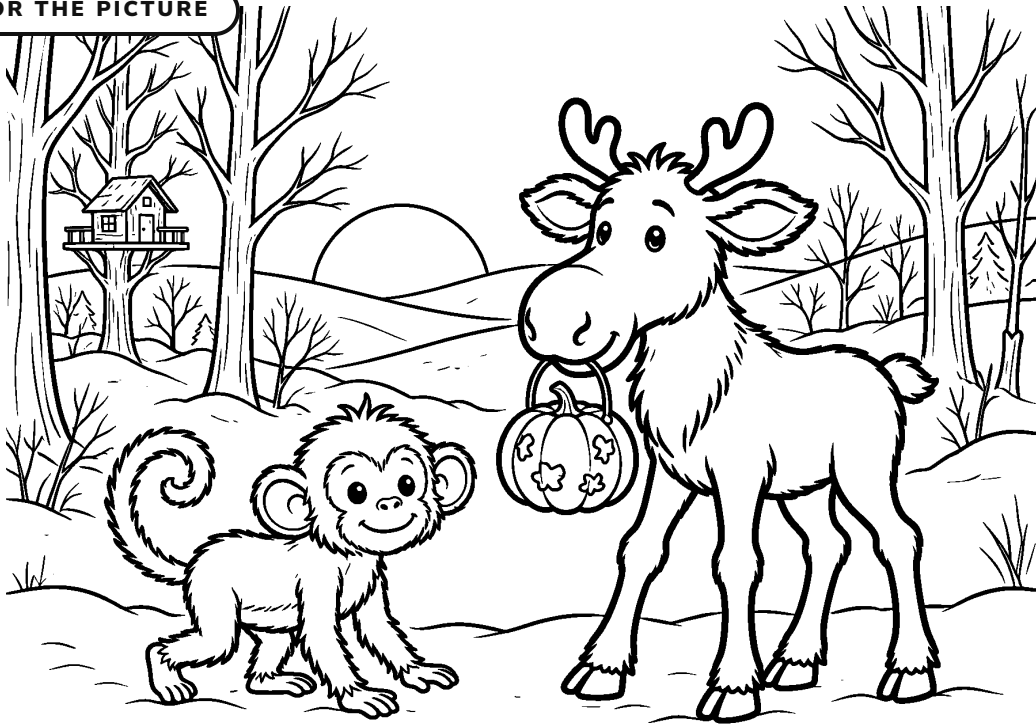


The Slow Way Home

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The morning was clear and cold, and the wind was already blowing. It whistled over the snow, fweeeeee, and picked up little sparkles of it and carried them across Sunny Square like glitter.

Mr. Moose stood under the Wishing Tree with his sack on his back. Daddy Moose reached up, unhooked the little squash lantern from its branch, and held it out.

"Careful with it," said Daddy Moose.

"I will," said Mr. Moose, and he took the handle gently in his mouth.

Mr. Monkey, Bruno, Ricky and Hazel went too. Up the littlest trail, past Mama Hedgehog's snow lantern. Through the bear-sandwich rocks. Up the gray wall, holding on to Bruno's rope, one ledge at a time, with Bruno carrying the lantern this time so Mr. Moose could use his mouth to hold the rope. Bruno held the lantern out in front of him so carefully, and walked so gently, that he went up the whole wall on his tiptoes.

"I'm being careful," whispered Bruno, on tiptoe.

"Haw haw haw," he whispered, also on tiptoe.

Past the little pine, a long, bare ridge led up toward the cliff. There were no trees up here. Just rock and snow and sky. And wind. Mr. Monkey pulled his yellow hat down tight over both ears.

The wind hit Mr. Moose's antlers and pushed. His antlers were wide, like two big hands, and the wind filled

them up like sails. He leaned forward. The wind pushed harder. And Mr. Moose went sliding backward across the snow, slowly, on all four hooves, without even moving his legs.

"Mr. Monkey," he called. "I'm going the wrong way!"

"You're a sailboat!" said Mr. Monkey. "Hee hee hee!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose, still sliding, until he bumped gently into Bruno, who stopped him like a big furry wall.

So Mr. Moose turned sideways, so the wind would go through his antlers instead of filling them, and they kept climbing.

Ricky had his list out. Then a gust caught it, and the whole long piece of bark flew straight up into the air and flapped over their heads, with Ricky hanging on to the bottom end.

"My list is a kite!" shouted Ricky.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey, and he and Bruno grabbed Ricky's tail and pulled him and his kite back down.

Most of the list was crossed off now. "What if the wind blows the candle out?" Ricky read.

"Don't worry," said Mr. Monkey. "The squash keeps the wind off."

And for a long time, it did. They climbed and climbed. The ridge got steeper. The air got colder. The top of

Everest's cliff got closer, and closer, until Mr. Moose could see the snow on its very edge.

Then the wind came around the side of the ridge, all at once, harder than before. *WHOOOOOSH*. It went right through the little leaf-shaped holes in the squash.

The candle flickered. It bent sideways. It came back. It flickered again.

And it went out.

Everybody stood very still and looked at the lantern. It was just a squash now. A cold, dark squash with holes in it, and a little curl of smoke.

"Can we light it again?" asked Hazel.

Ricky looked around. There was nothing up here to make a fire. No dry twigs. No coals. Just snow and rock and wind. And the sun was already going down toward the hills.

"We have to go back," said Ricky quietly. "Before it gets dark."

Mr. Moose looked up at the top of the cliff. It was so close. He could almost count the stones on it. He looked at it for a long time.

Then he turned around.

They climbed back down the ridge, and down the rope, and down the littlest trail. And when they got to the bottom, everybody was cold and tired and hungry, and Bruno and Hazel and Ricky hurried on ahead toward home, toward the warm fires and the hot suppers.

Mr. Moose walked very slowly. His head was low. He carried the dark squash lantern in his mouth, and he didn't say anything at all.

Mr. Monkey was cold. His fingers were cold. His toes were cold. The tip of his tail was so cold it felt like an icicle. He could see the treehouse lights in the distance, and he knew Mama Monkey would have cocoa. He wanted to run. His legs wanted to run all by themselves.

But he looked at Mr. Moose, walking so slowly, so quietly, with his head down. And he didn't want Mr. Moose to walk home alone.

So he didn't run. He walked slowly too, right beside Mr. Moose, at moose speed, one slow step and then another.

For a long time, they didn't talk. The snow went *krrunch, krrunch* under their feet. The sky turned orange, and then pink, and then purple.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Mr. Monkey finally.

Mr. Moose set the lantern down in the snow. "I had hoped," he said, "that we'd get there today."

"Me too," said Mr. Monkey.

"I practiced on the little hill," said Mr. Moose. "And we found the littlest trail. And you climbed the wall. And we got so close. I could see the snow on the top. And then the light went out." He looked at the dark squash. "Maybe it's too far. Maybe it's just too high for a moose."

Mr. Monkey wanted to say something to fix it. He wanted to say "We'll go tomorrow!" or "It'll be easy next time!" But he didn't know if it would be easy. He didn't know anything about next time. So he didn't say any of that.

He just stayed. He sat down in the snow next to Mr. Moose and leaned against his leg, so Mr. Moose would know he was there. And he let Mr. Moose tell it, all of it, the wind and the sailboat and the candle bending over and going out, and he listened to the whole thing, all the way to the end.

Mama Monkey called from the treehouse. "Mr. Monkey! Supper!"

"In a minute, Mama!" he called back. And he stayed.

When Mr. Moose was done telling it, he was still sad. But it was a little less heavy. He picked up the lantern, and they walked the rest of the way together, slowly, all the way to the Moose home.

The window was glowing gold. Daddy Moose was standing in the doorway.

He didn't ask if they made it. He looked at the dark squash lantern, and he looked at Mr. Moose's low head, and he knew.

"Come here," said Daddy Moose.

He took the squash lantern inside, to the table in the middle of the Moose home, where the fat gold candle was still burning. The light they'd first made from Bruno's wax, kept going one candle after another. The first light the lantern had ever given away. Daddy Moose put a new candle in the squash, and he lit it from the table candle, and handed it back.

The leaf-shaped lights came back on, all over the walls.

Mr. Moose looked at it. "It's lit again," he whispered.

"It's lit again," said Daddy Moose.

Mr. Monkey finally went home for supper. His cocoa was a little cold, but he didn't mind at all.

"What a day," said Mr. Moose to himself that night, in his bed, with the squash lantern glowing on the windowsill. "Bruno carried the lantern on his tiptoes. The wind made me a sailboat. We got so close I could see the snow on the top of the cliff. Then the light went out, and we had to turn around. And Mr. Monkey walked home with me the slow way, the whole way."

And far across Sunny Square, from the treehouse window, came a little whistle. And Mr. Moose hummed back. And together, across the snow, they sang:

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

And on the windowsill of the Moose home, the little squash lantern glowed again, warm and gold, pointing its leaf-shaped lights up toward the dark cliff.

Let's Talk

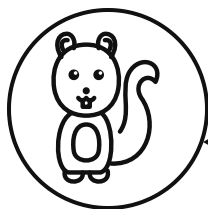
- 1 Mr. Monkey was cold and wanted to run home. Why did he walk slowly instead?
- 2 Who could use somebody to walk with them, or just listen?

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

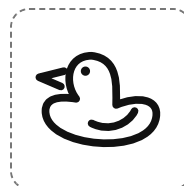


What do ducks eat with their cheese?

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



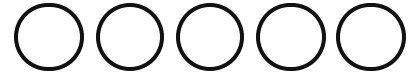
CLUE



_____ers!

👁 Spot the Difference

Look closely. Can you find 5 differences?



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

**Will Not Run**

The wind puffs and puffs. The lamp is not lit.



is sad. Back he goes, step... step... step.



can run to Mom. Mom has a hot cup for him!



But will not run. He will go with .



tells it all.  sits still and nods.

At 's, Dad lit the lamp. It is lit!

PICTURE WORDS

Mr. Monkey



Mr. Moose

For grown-ups: New sounds: all (ball, tall) and ck (duck, back). New words to learn by heart: for, go, goes, with.



Color a star each time you read it.

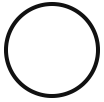
My Gift

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

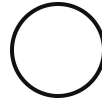
I gave my time to _____

What Happened First?

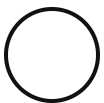
Write 1, 2, 3, 4 in the circles to put the story in order.



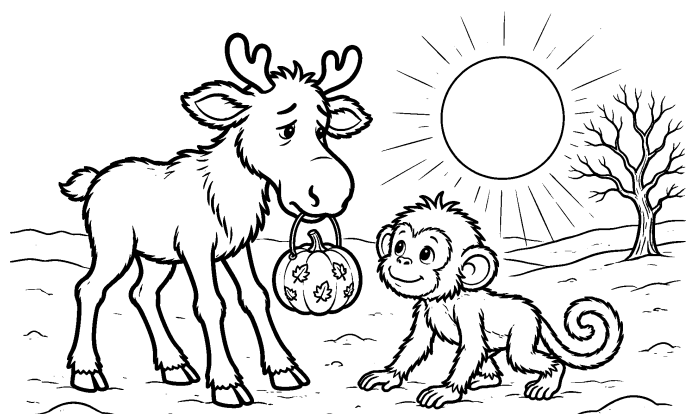
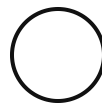
A



B



C



D