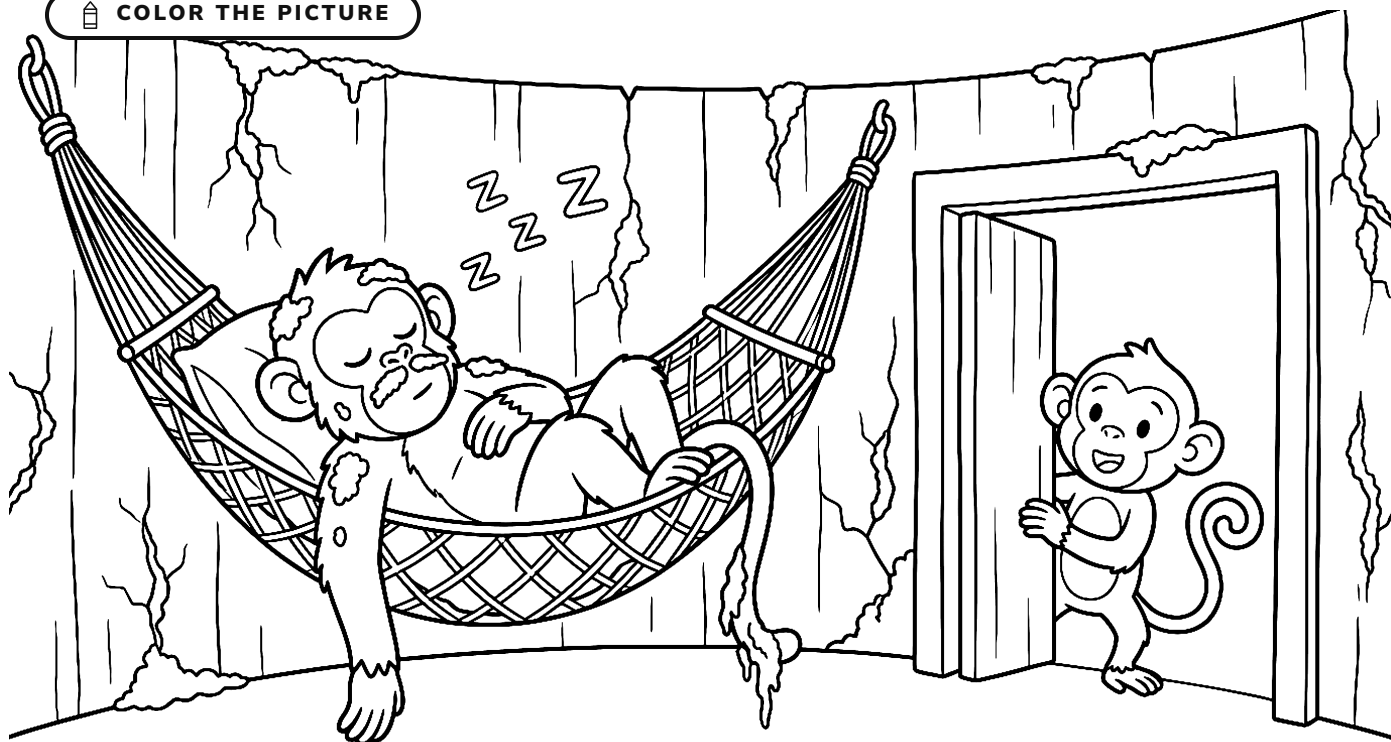


The Moss Boss

COLOR THE PICTURE



All night long, the wind blew through Wonderful Woods. It went *who-ooo-ooo* around the treetops and *rattle-rattle-rattle* through the bare branches, and in the morning, the grass in Sunny Square was flat and silver with frost.

Mr. Monkey woke up warm. He ate his breakfast. He swung on the vines. He was busy painting a face on his Swap present, and he didn't think about the wind at all.

Mr. Moose stood at the bottom of the treehouse and called up. "Mr. Monkey! The wind was so loud last night. Were you cold?"

Mr. Monkey poked his head out. "Nope. I was warm."

"But last time the wind blew like that," said Mr. Moose, "it whistled through the cracks. *Wheeeeo*. Remember?"

Mr. Monkey remembered. That was the night Mama Monkey gave him her striped blanket. He pulled his head back inside and listened.

The wind was blowing. But nothing was whistling. Not one crack. He went to the wall and looked. Every single crack in the whole treehouse was stuffed full of soft, green, squishy moss. Hundreds of cracks. Hundreds of little moss plugs.

"Mr. Moose!" he called down. "Somebody fixed it! And I didn't even notice!"

Then he heard a snore. Over in the corner, in the hammock, Daddy Monkey was fast asleep in the middle of the morning. He had moss in his fur. He had moss behind

his ears. He had a little green moss mustache, and a long piece of moss hanging off the end of his tail.

"He was up late every night this week," said Mama Monkey softly, "filling a few cracks at a time."

Daddy Monkey opened one eye. "Hm?" he said. The moss mustache wiggled.

"Daddy!" said Mr. Monkey. "You're the MOSS BOSS!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Daddy Monkey. Then he rolled over and went right back to sleep, moss mustache and all.

Mr. Monkey climbed down the vines with a funny feeling in his chest. The treehouse had been warm all week. Every night, he had snuggled in and never once wondered why. Somebody had been keeping him warm, and he never even saw it happen.

"Mr. Moose," he said, "what if there are more?"

"More what?"

"More things somebody's doing that nobody notices."

Mr. Moose looked around Sunny Square. It was very busy. In the middle stood Ricky's Swap pile, already as tall as Bruno, and Ricky was running around it with his list. Dottie was running her present to the river and back again. Hazel was trying to wrap a puddle. Everybody was thinking about the Swap.

"The Feast is the day after tomorrow," said Mr. Moose slowly. "Who's making the food?"

Nobody had thought about it. Bruno thought about it right then, very hard.

"The Feast just comes," he said. "Every year. It's always there."

"But who brings it?" asked Mr. Monkey.

Bruno thought some more. "The Feast," he said.

"Let's go find out," said Mr. Moose. "Let's look for all the things nobody notices. On purpose."

So they went hunting.

Behind the big maple, they found a woodpile taller than Mr. Moose's antlers, every stick stacked neat and tight.

"Daddy," asked Mr. Moose, "when did you make all this?"

Daddy Moose dragged one more branch onto the top. "A little every day," he said. "Since summer."

Under the maple's roots, they found the cellar. Mama Moose was down there, in the cool and the dark, with baskets of potatoes and carrots and onions stacked to the ceiling. "I've been digging since the leaves were green," she said.

Up in the treehouse branches, they found long strings of berries, hung up to dry in the sun like red and purple beads. Mr. Monkey swung right through them on his way to see, and when he came out the other side, he was wearing every single one. Berry strings around his neck. Berry strings around his tail. A berry string hanging over one eye.

Bruno sniffed him. "Is that a snack?"

"No," said Mr. Monkey. "It's me."

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose. "You're a berry bush."

Mama Monkey helped him out of the berries, one string at a time, and hung them all back up. "I've been drying these since the summer, too," she said.

Mr. Monkey looked at all of it: the wood, the cellar, the berries, the moss. Every year, the Feast just came. And every year, somebody had been getting it ready the whole time.

Back in Sunny Square, Mama Moose sat down on the long log with a piece of bark. "Now we plan the menu," she said. "So we know what to make. Stew, of course, with the big squash. Potatoes. Berry pies. Bruno, could you please bring something for the gravy?"

Bruno's eyes lit up. "Gravel?"

And before anybody could say anything, he was gone, down to the river. A little while later he came back with a whole basket of shiny, wet river gravel, very proud.

"For the gravel," he said.

Mama Moose looked into the basket for a long moment. Then she smiled. "Bruno," she said, "this is just what the fire ring needed." And she poured the gravel in a neat circle all the way around the fire pit, where it sparkled.

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

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno, happy as anything. "Is there more gravel on the menu?"

"Only around the fire," said Mama Moose.

Ricky came rushing by with an armful of wrapping leaves. "Can't stop! No time for food! I need WRAPPING!" And he was gone.

That afternoon, Mama Monkey brought out the paint. "These will be the very last new leaves before the Feast," she said. "Today, we paint the things that help us so quietly that we forget they're there."

Mr. Monkey painted the front of his leaf: the treehouse, with its little round windows. Then he turned it over. On the back, he painted a little monkey shivering, with the wind going *whooooo* through the walls. Then, right next to it, the same little monkey, snug and warm, with green moss in every crack.

"That's what it's like without it," he said, pointing at the shivering one. "And that's what it's like with it."

Then, way down in the corner, he painted one more thing: a tiny, sleepy monkey with a moss mustache.

Mr. Moose painted the woodpile on the front of his leaf. On the back, he painted a cold, dark fire ring with nobody around it. And next to that, the same fire ring, crackling and bright, with everybody sitting close, and a sparkly circle of gravel all the way around.

Benji painted the cellar. Shiloh painted the berry strings. And Bruno painted the Feast, a big, round, happy blob with legs, walking into Sunny Square all by itself.

"That's the Feast," said Bruno. "Bringing itself."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "It has legs!"

They tied all the leaves to the trunk of the Wishing Tree with two knots each, faces out, secrets in. The tree was so full now that the trunk was almost covered.

When they were done, Daddy Monkey came climbing down the vines at last, rubbing his eyes, with one piece of moss still stuck behind his ear. He saw the new leaves on the tree. He saw the treehouse on the front of one.

He didn't peek. He just looked at it for a long time. Then he reached up and took the last bit of moss off his ear.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey as the sun went down. "Daddy filled every crack with moss, and he's the Moss Boss. I swung through the berries and turned into a berry bush. Bruno brought gravel for the gravy, and now the fire has a sparkly ring. And we painted leaves for all the things nobody notices."

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

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

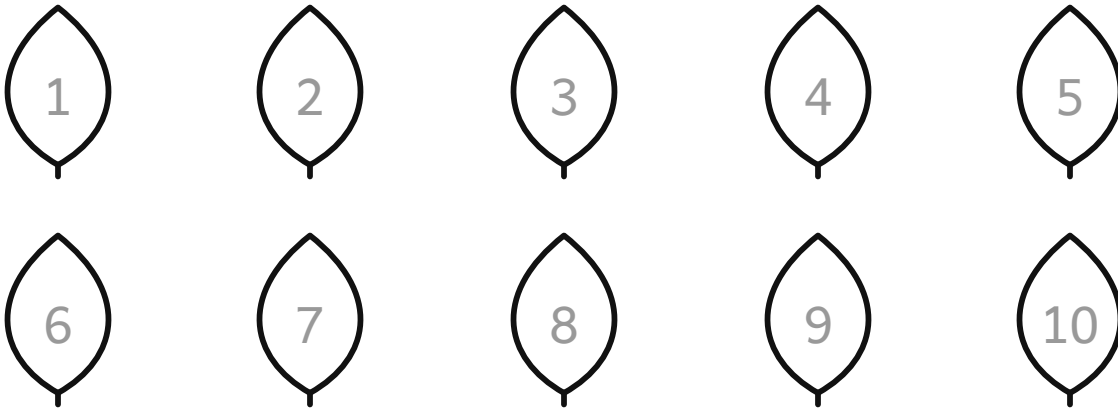
And that night, the wind went *whoo-ooo-ooo* around the treehouse all night long, but not one single crack whistled back.

Let's Talk

- 1 Who filled every crack in the treehouse with moss? Why didn't Mr. Monkey notice?
- 2 What in this room would make us sad if it stopped working?

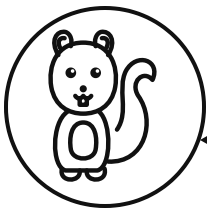
Your Turn

Thank-You Tally! Each time you say a real thank-you today, color a leaf. Say what the person did!



A thank-you counts when you say what they did: "Thank you for making lunch!"

SAMMY'S JOKE



What did the big flower say to the little flower?

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



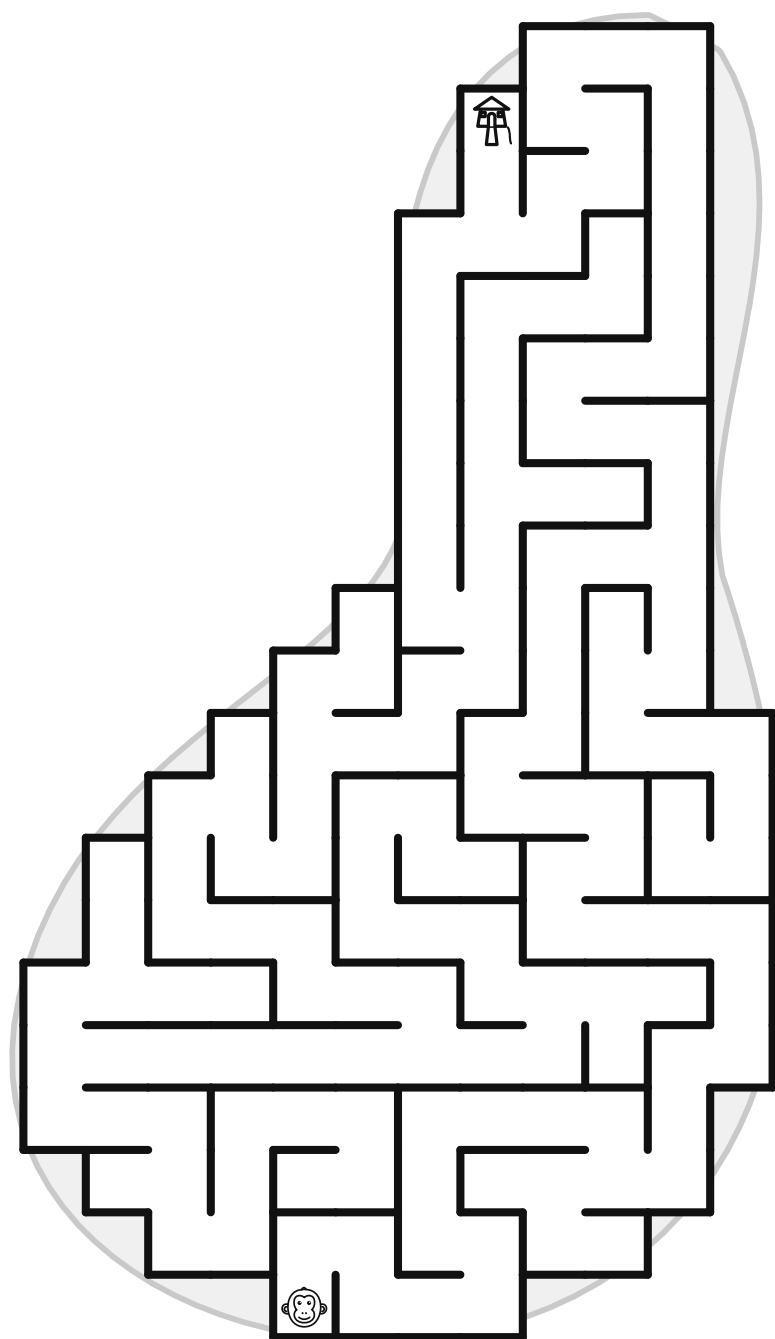
CLUE



Hi, _____!

☆ Moss for the Treehouse

Help Mr. Monkey carry the moss home to the treehouse. Start at Mr. Monkey.



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Snug in Bed sits up in bed. It is snug!“Mom did it?” said .

“Not Mom,” said Mom. “Dad did it.”

Dad naps and naps.

 hugs Dad.

Dad grins in his nap.



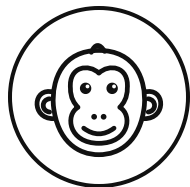
♥ My Thank-You

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

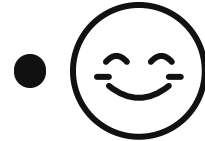
Thank you,
for the help I did not see.

♥ Feelings Match

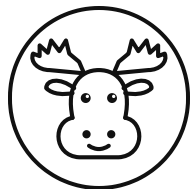
How did they feel? Draw a line from each friend to the face that matches. One face will be left over.



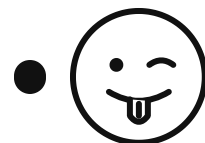
Mr. Monkey, finding moss in every crack



proud



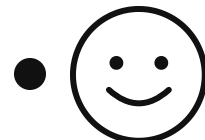
Mr. Moose, calling Mr. Monkey a berry bush



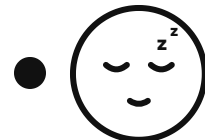
silly



Bruno, bringing gravel for the gravy



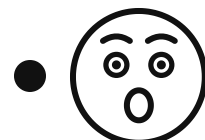
happy



sleepy



Hazel, laughing at the gravel



surprised

