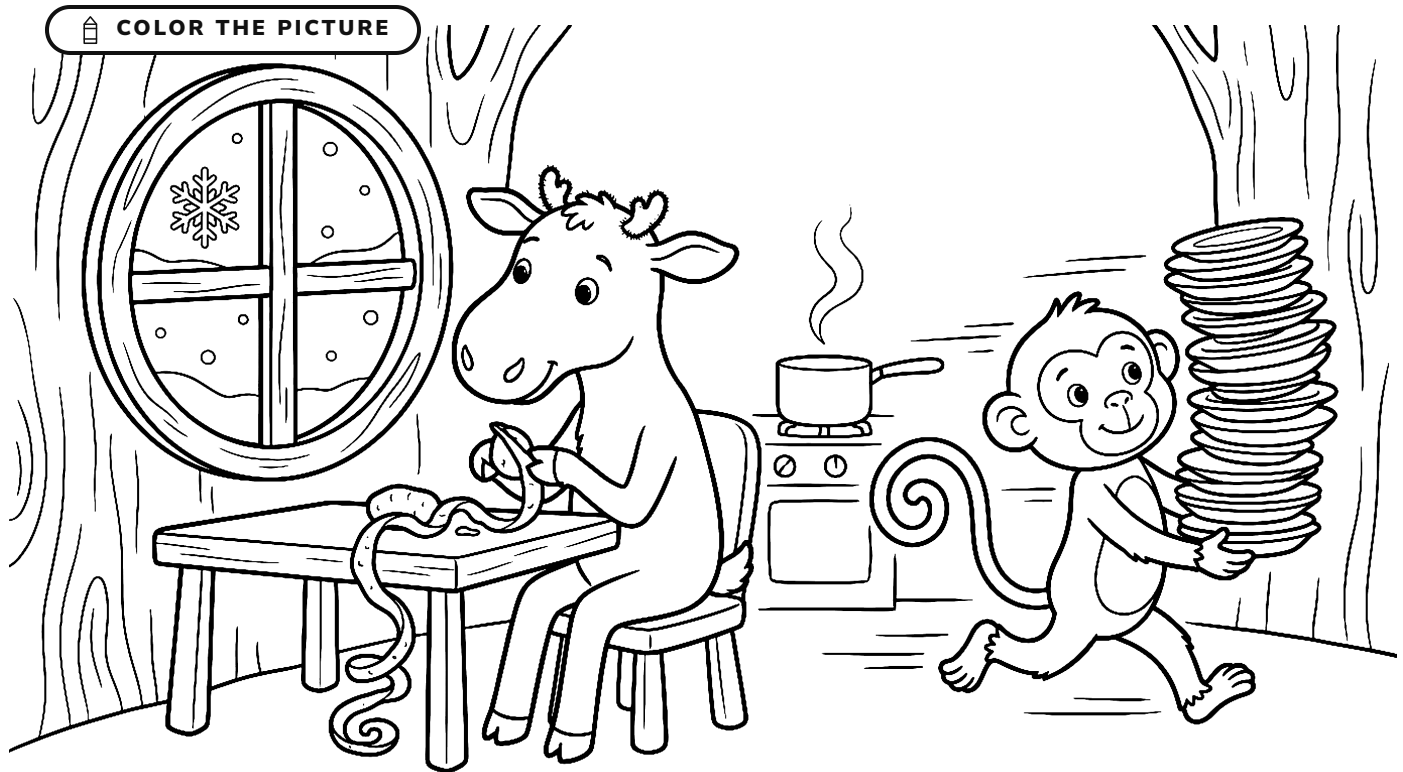


The First Snowflake



The sky over Wonderful Woods was soft and gray, and the air smelled cold and clean, the way it smells right before snow.

And everybody was hurrying.

Sammy zipped from tree to tree with acorns in her cheeks. Hazel galloped across Sunny Square with a basket of apples bouncing on her back. Down on Rainbow River, two otters came sliding along the water on their bellies, pushing a present in front of them, and a family of beavers paddled up on a little raft with three more. They all went straight to the Swap pile, which was taller than Daddy Moose now, and growing.

"I've got it! I've got it!" shouted Ricky, catching presents with both paws. He tied on a name leaf. He stacked it. He caught another one. "I've got it!"

"Ricky," called Mr. Monkey, "do you want help?"

"No time!" said Ricky, not looking up. "And rule twenty-two! No peeking! If you help, you'll see the names! I've got it!"

Inside the Moose home, under the big maple, Mama Moose had the oven going. "Tomorrow is the Feast," she said. "So today, we cook everything we can. That way, tomorrow has room."

She handed Mr. Monkey the potato peeler.

Mr. Monkey looked at the mountain of potatoes. Then he looked out the window at all the hurrying. He felt

hurry come right up inside him, too, buzzy and fast.

"I'll go FAST," he said.

He grabbed a potato in each hand and peeled them both at once. Then he put two more under his feet and mashed them while he peeled. Then he saw the pot of berry sauce bubbling on the stove, and he didn't have any hands left, so he stirred it with his tail.

Around and around went the tail. Faster and faster. Then he lifted it out.

The whole end of his tail was bright pink and dripping.

"Mr. Moose," said Mr. Monkey. "My tail is jam."

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose. "You're a jam monkey!"

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey, and he licked his tail. "It's good jam."

Then he was off again, jam tail and all, to the next job, and the next. He carried firewood so fast that he dropped half of it. He set the table so fast that he put a bowl on Bruno's head.

Bruno looked up at the bowl. "Is this my hat?"

"No time!" said Mr. Monkey, already gone.

Bruno thought about it. Then he decided to help, too. "I'll hurry and finish my nap," he said, "so I can help." He lay down in the corner and closed his eyes. One second later, he popped right back up. "Done!"

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno. "That was my fastest

nap ever.”

Out in Sunny Square, Hazel had a pie. She was galloping it to the big flat rock to cool. She galloped so fast that when she stopped, the pie didn’t. It flew up off the plate, flipped over in the air, and came down, *flump*, right on top of her head, upside down, like a hat.

Hazel stood very still. A little berry juice ran down her nose.

“Hee hee hee... *SNORT!*” she went. “I’m wearing the pie!”

Mr. Moose didn’t hurry. He couldn’t. He was sitting by the window, peeling one potato, slowly and carefully, around and around in one long, curly peel. And that’s why he was the one who saw it.

A single white snowflake came floating down out of the gray sky. It drifted past the window, turning slowly, and landed right on the windowsill, so small and so perfect that Mr. Moose could see every one of its tiny points.

“Mr. Monkey,” he whispered. “Look. The first one.”

“No time!” said Mr. Monkey, rushing past with an armful of plates.

“Mr. Monkey, it’s the first...”

But Mr. Monkey was already out the door.

When he came rushing back in a while later, he stopped beside Mr. Moose. “What was it? What did you want me to see?”

Mr. Moose looked at the windowsill. There was only a tiny drop of water.

“The very first snowflake,” he said. “Of the whole winter.”

Mr. Monkey stared at the little drop. All the buzzy hurry went right out of him, and his tummy sank. The first snowflake only came once. And he had run right past it.

“I missed it,” he said. “I was going so fast I didn’t even see it.”

Mr. Moose looked out the window at the hurrying. Ricky, stacking and tying, all by himself. Sammy, zipping. The otters, sliding. He thought about tomorrow. Tomorrow would be even busier: the Feast, the cooking, the Swap, everybody all together. What if tomorrow went by so fast that nobody saw anything?

“What if tomorrow is all hurry too?” he said slowly. “And we miss the leaves?”

Mr. Monkey looked out at the Wishing Tree. Its trunk was covered in painted leaves, all of them still turned to the trunk, waiting. “We can’t miss the leaves,” he said.

“Then we do today’s work today,” said Mr. Moose. “All of it. So tomorrow doesn’t have any left. And tomorrow, before anything else, before breakfast, even, we start at the Wishing Tree.”

They went back to the potatoes, but slowly this time, one at a time. Mr. Moose peeled. Mr. Monkey chopped.

They helped Mama Moose roll the pie crusts. They stacked the firewood by the fire ring with its sparkly gravel circle. They carried the big squash in and cut it open for tomorrow’s stew, and Mama Moose scooped out the inside and set the hollow shell by the door. And when the pies came out of the oven, they let them cool on the windowsill, where nobody could gallop them anywhere.

Then they went all around Sunny Square, telling everybody.

“Tomorrow morning,” said Mr. Monkey. “First thing. The Wishing Tree.”

“First thing,” said Benji. “The Wishing Tree.”

“First thing,” said Hazel, licking pie off her nose.

Last of all, they went to Ricky. It was almost dark now. The Swap pile was enormous, lumpy and tall, leaning a little to one side. And there was Ricky, curled up asleep at the bottom of it, with his list in his paws and a half-tied present on his tummy. He hadn’t finished. He couldn’t keep up.

Mr. Monkey felt it in his chest. “He did it all by himself,” he whispered.

Mr. Moose looked at Ricky, and at the pile. Ricky wouldn’t let anybody help with the presents. But maybe there was one thing they could still do.

They pulled a big, soft maple-leaf blanket up over Ricky, all the way to his chin, and left a slice of pie beside him for when he woke up.

Then, just as they turned to go home, it began.

Snowflakes. Not one this time. Hundreds of them. Thousands. Floating down out of the dark sky, slow and soft and silent, onto the grass, onto the pile, onto the Wishing Tree, onto Mr. Monkey’s nose.

Mr. Monkey stood perfectly still. He didn’t run. He didn’t hurry anywhere. He just tipped his head back, stuck out his tongue, and waited.

One landed on it.

“Mr. Moose,” he whispered. “I caught one.”

“What a day!” said Mr. Monkey on the way home, with snow on his ears. “I peeled with my hands and mashed with my feet and stirred with my tail, and now my tail is jam. Bruno took the fastest nap ever. Hazel wore a pie. I missed the first snowflake because I was going too fast. But then it snowed a whole bunch more, and I caught one on my tongue.”

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

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

And in the middle of Sunny Square, the snow kept falling softly on the tall, leaning Swap pile, and on one small, sleeping raccoon.

Let's Talk

- 1 Why did Mr. Monkey miss the first snowflake?
- 2 What is one thing we can do slowly today?

Your Turn

No hurry! Look out a window for one whole minute. Then draw what you saw.

I saw _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE



What has one head, one foot, and four legs?

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



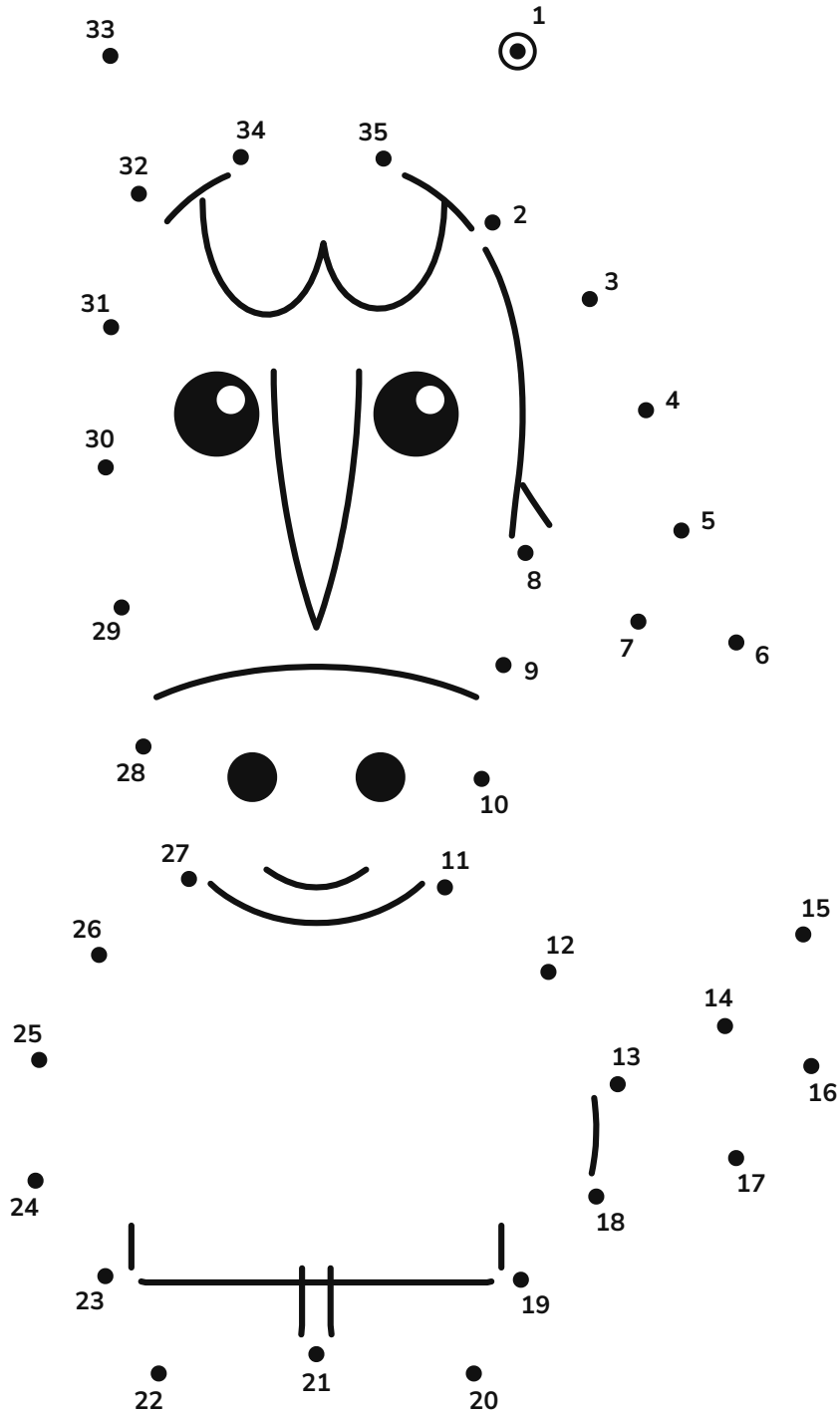
CLUE



A _____!

 Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find the friend who wore a pie for a hat. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 35. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Sit and See

 runs and runs.

 sits and sits.

A  drifts past .

 did not see it. He ran past.

 sits.

A  drifts on .

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Mr. Moose  snowflake



Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word, then the light words. What did you see when you slowed down? Write it or draw it on the line.

I slowed down

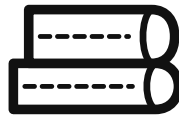
and saw

👁️ Slow Hunt

Walk slowly. Look closely. Check each thing you find!



something
white like snow

☐

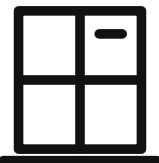
something soft
and warm

☐

something that
hums or ticks

☐

something that
smells good

☐

a window to
look out of

☐

someone to hug

☐