

The Knot That Never Slips

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The sun came out warm after the cold night, and the frost melted off the grass in little sparkles. Down at the river bend, the big swinging vine hung from a tall cottonwood, right out over the water.

"Watch this!" said Mr. Monkey.

He grabbed the vine, ran three steps, and swung way out over Rainbow River. "WHEEEEE!" Out and back. Out and back. He let go at the very top and splashed into the deep, cool water. *PLOONK*. He came up spitting. "Again!"

Mr. Moose watched from the bank. "Mr. Monkey," he said, "a year ago, nobody could use that vine."

Mr. Monkey climbed out. "Why not?"

"It was always slipping," said Mr. Moose. "Remember? It slid off the branch every time anybody grabbed it. Bruno tried it once, and the vine came down on top of him like a big green noodle."

Mr. Monkey remembered. He had swung on it once and ended up sitting in the shallow part with the whole vine in his lap.

"But now it doesn't slip," said Mr. Monkey. He looked up. "Then and Now! Who fixed it?"

They looked up at the branch. Way at the top, where the vine wrapped around the branch, was a knot. A big, tight, twisty knot. The kind of knot that never slips.

"I know that knot," said Mr. Moose. "That's the knot from the Wishing Tree."

"That's RICKY'S knot!" said Mr. Monkey.

Ricky had climbed all the way up there, sometime last year, and tied the swinging vine so it would never slip again. For everybody. And he never told anyone.

Mr. Monkey's chest went warm and big again, the same as yesterday. "We have to thank him!" he said. "Right now!"

They found Ricky in Sunny Square, under the Wishing Tree. He was surrounded by pinecones and leaves and bark, and he was very busy.

"Ricky!" said Mr. Monkey. "Ricky, thank you for..."

"Can't talk!" said Ricky. He was holding a pinecone up to a rock. "Too big." He held it up to an acorn. "Too small." He held it up to Dottie's nose as she walked by. "Just right!"

"Ricky," Mr. Monkey tried again. "We just found out that you..."

"Rule thirty-one!" said Ricky, scribbling on his list. "No presents that are pointy. Rule thirty-two. No presents that are sticky." He looked up. "Unless they're honey. For Bruno." Then he measured a beetle, and his own tail, which was exactly two pinecones long. He wrote that down too.

He hurried off toward Learning Land, still writing, and walked right under the apple tree just as an apple let go. *Plunk*. It landed in his basket.

"Thanks for the apple!" said Ricky, to the tree, and kept going.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. Then he sighed. "He

won't stop long enough to hear it."

Mr. Monkey followed him all morning. He tried to say thank you while Ricky measured Sammy's tail. He tried while Ricky was writing rule thirty-three. He even swung upside down in front of Ricky's face. "THANK... YOU... RICKY..."

"Rule thirty-four," said Ricky. "No monkeys in front of my list."

Mr. Monkey dropped down beside Mr. Moose. "It's no good," he said. "If I just say 'thank you,' he doesn't even hear it. It's like it floats away."

Mr. Moose thought about that. What does Ricky care about right now? Rules. Lists. Sizes. Measuring. He doesn't listen to talking, because his head is full of the Swap.

"Maybe saying it isn't enough," said Mr. Moose slowly. "Maybe he needs to see it."

"See what?"

"See what his knot did," said Mr. Moose. "Not the thank-you. The thing."

Mr. Monkey's eyes went wide. "The vine!"

So they made a plan. Mr. Monkey ran ahead to the river. Mr. Moose walked up to Ricky and said, "Ricky, I need to measure something by the river. Something big. Can you bring a pinecone?"

Ricky's ears popped up. "Something big? How big?"

"You'll see," said Mr. Moose.

They walked to the river bend. Ricky held up his pinecone. "Okay. What am I measuring?"

"That," said Mr. Moose, and pointed up.

Mr. Monkey grabbed the swinging vine. "Ricky! Watch!" He swung out over the river, out and back, out and back, higher and higher, and the knot at the top held tight, not slipping one bit.

Ricky's mouth fell open. "Hey. That's my knot."

"You tied it," said Mr. Monkey, swinging past. "Last year! And now everybody can swing on it! Bruno swings on it! Hazel swings on it! Benji swings on it, and he's scared of everything!"

Ricky looked at the knot for a long time. "I forgot I did that," he said quietly. "I tied it because the vine kept falling on Bruno."

"I want a turn," said Mr. Moose.

Mr. Moose had never tried the swinging vine. He was too careful. But he took the vine in his mouth, walked backward up the bank, and then he ran forward and swung.

Except Mr. Moose was a lot bigger than Mr. Monkey. The branch bent. The vine stretched. And Mr. Moose didn't swing out over the river at all. He went down, slowly, right into the shallow water, and then his hooves dragged along the bottom like a plow, *shhhhhlorp*, all the way across the river, until he stopped on the far bank, still holding the vine.

The knot at the top didn't slip one bit.

Mr. Moose looked back across the river with the vine still in his mouth. "Rigky," he said, without letting go. "Your nod ish shtill holding."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Mr. Moose, you're a plow!"

"Haw haw haw!" came a big laugh from the bushes. Bruno had been watching the whole time.

Ricky's whiskers twitched. Then he started laughing too, a raccoon giggle that went *hi-hi-hi-hi*.

When Mr. Moose waded back, Mr. Monkey stood right in front of Ricky so he couldn't hurry anywhere.

"Ricky," he said. "Thank you for tying the vine. Now I can swing on it every day."

Ricky looked at him. "Nobody ever said that before."

"Well, we're saying it," said Mr. Moose, dripping.

Ricky held up his pinecone and looked at it. "Want to hear a joke?" he said. "Why did the rope stay home from the party?"

Everybody waited.

"It was all tied up," said Ricky.

Nobody laughed. A frog went *ribbit*. The river went *gloop*. Ricky looked extremely pleased with himself anyway.

Then he hurried back to his rules, but he walked a little slower this time, and he looked back at the vine twice.

Mr. Monkey picked up a brown leaf with a twisty stem, curled like a knot, and put it in the basket. "This one is for Ricky," he said. "For the knot that never slips."

"Three leaves," said Mr. Moose.

Then Mr. Moose picked up another leaf. "And this one's for Bruno," he said, "for laughing first."

Bruno came out of the bushes and peeked into the basket. "Is that leaf me?"

"That's you," said Mr. Monkey.

Bruno smiled a big, slow smile.

On the way home across Sunny Square, they stopped under the Wishing Tree. Mr. Monkey looked up at his banana wish, turning on its vine.

"Mr. Moose," he said, "my tummy doesn't feel so heavy today."

"Mine either," said Mr. Moose. "Mine feels wet."

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "We found out Ricky tied the swinging vine. He was too busy to listen, so we showed him instead. Mr. Moose tried to swing and plowed all the way across the river with the vine in his mouth. And Ricky told the rope joke, and only the frog answered."

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

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

And at the river bend, the swinging vine swayed slowly in the evening breeze, its knot holding tight at the very top.

Let's Talk

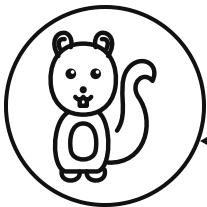
- 1 Ricky tied the knot so the vine would never slip. Who did that help?
- 2 Who helped you this year who didn't have to?

Your Turn

Draw someone outside your house who helped you.

Thank you, _____ !

SAMMY'S JOKE



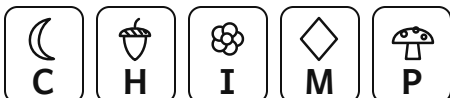
What is a monkey's favorite cookie?

Crack Sammy's code! Find each picture in the key and write its letter on the line.

Chocolate _____ !

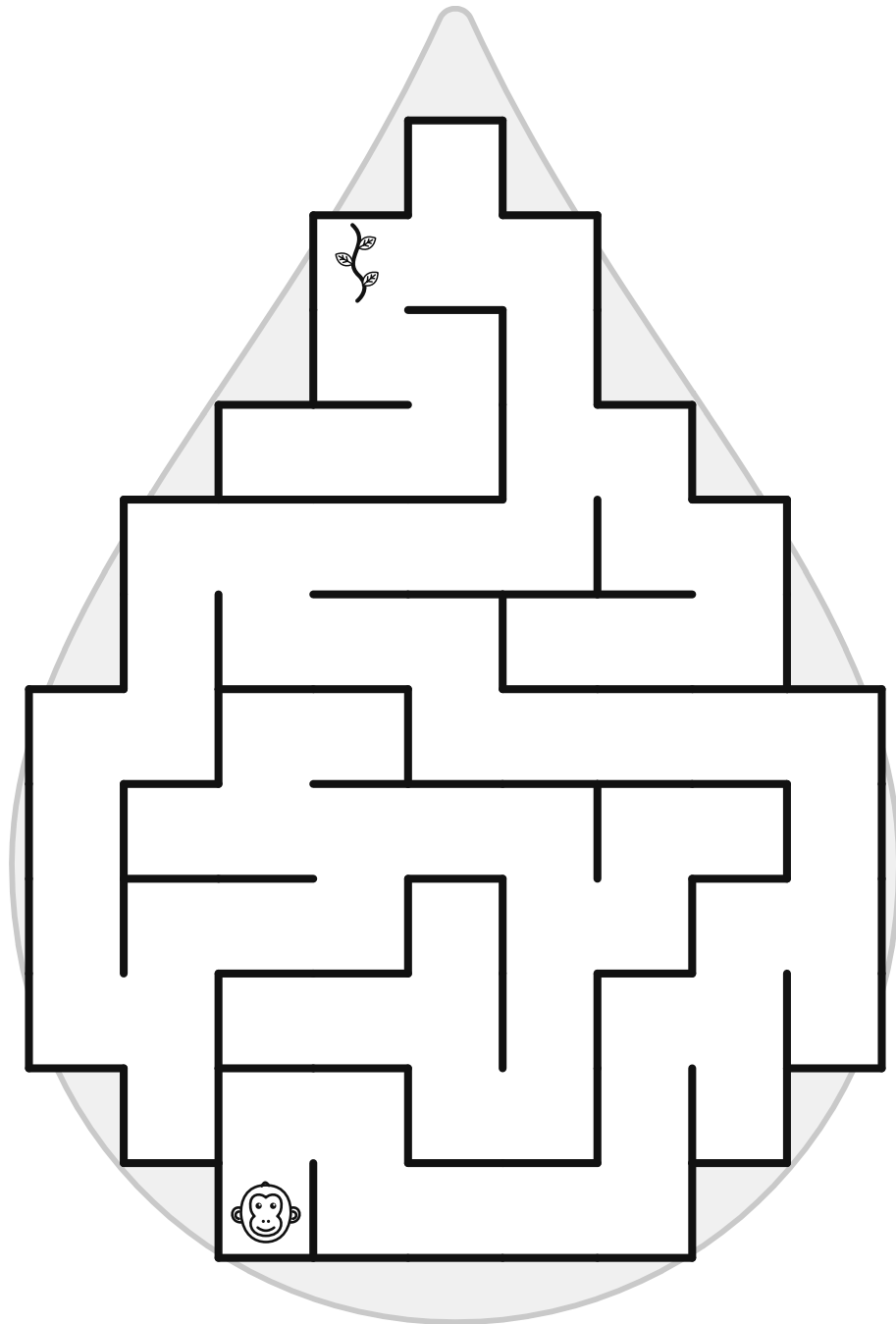


KEY



☆ To the Swinging Vine

Help Mr. Monkey get to the swinging vine. Start at Mr. Monkey.



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

It Did Not Pop!

 is on it. Dip, dip!

It did not pop!

Mom did it? Mom did not.

Dad did it? Dad did not.

 did it!PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Ricky

Color a star each time you read it.

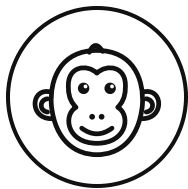
♥ My Thank-You

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

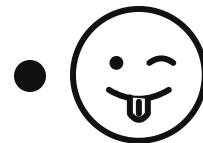
Thank you.
for making my life better.

♥ Feelings Match

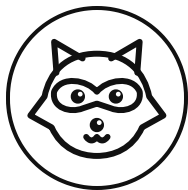
How did they feel? Draw a line from each friend to the face that matches. One face will be left over.



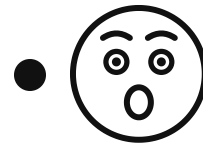
Mr. Monkey, when Ricky was too busy to listen



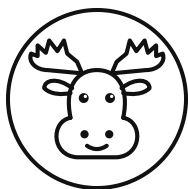
silly



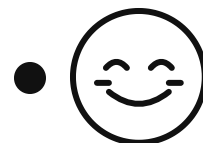
Ricky, when he saw his knot holding tight



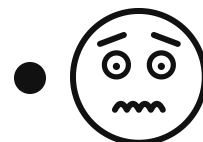
surprised



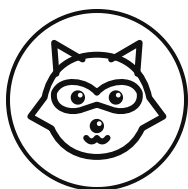
Mr. Moose, plowing across the river



proud



scared



Ricky, after telling his rope joke



sad

